

## Strange Laws, Indeed

Some strange laws are still being carried on the books of state governments. Perhaps their passage seemed like a good idea at the time – based on whatever events or circumstances that may have prompted them – but years have gone by, technology has developed and societal mores have changed.

I am reminded of these odd pieces of legislation by a series of broadcasts on a Cleveland radio station, WBAC. The station does not give the source of its information. A review of the laws it cites proves to be entertaining, if not enlightening, and causes one to wonder: What were these people thinking?

Since Tennessee is my home state, let's pick on it first. It is illegal in this state to use a lasso to catch a fish. In Dyersburg, it is illegal for a woman to call a man for a date. In Memphis restaurants, it is illegal to give any pie to fellow diners (I'm sure that prohibition is broken often). It is also illegal to take unfinished pie home. All pie must be eaten on the premises.

Also in Memphis, it is illegal for a woman to drive by herself; "a man must walk or run in front of the vehicle, waving a red flag in order to warn approaching pedestrians and motorists."

Of Alabama, the first one on the list (in alphabetical order) and also the former home state of our president, Don Giardina, the station says: In Jasper, it is illegal for a husband to beat his wife with a stick larger in diameter than his thumb. It is illegal to play dominos on Sunday. It is illegal to wear a fake mustache that causes laughter in church. Putting salt on a railroad track may be punishable by death.

And if those seem wildly far-fetched, take a look at these statutes in California: In Los Angeles, a man may legally beat his wife with a leather strap, as long as it is less than two inches wide, or she gives him permission to use a wider strap. It is a misdemeanor to shoot at any kind of game from a moving vehicle, unless the target is a whale. In Pacific Grove, "molesting" butterflies can result in a \$500 fine. In Pasadena, it is illegal for a secretary to be alone in a room with her boss. It is illegal to set a mousetrap without a hunting license. In Long Beach, it is illegal to curse on a mini-golf course. In San Francisco, it is illegal to wipe one's car with used underwear. It is illegal to cry on the witness stand in Los Angeles courts.

All of this goes to prove that – even though these laws must have been created with good intentions – the best moral guide for us to use in our relationships with one another is the Bible – and some common, old-fashioned horse sense, as my grandfather used to say.

--Beecher Hunter