

EINSTEIN GOT IT WRONG

By Fred Hobbs

We're an unlikely trio ... Robert, Pat and I. Robert is a Japanese-American; Pat was born in Spain, but raised in Cuba. And I hail from Anglo-Saxon roots with a mysterious Frenchman in the mix somewhere along the line.

We meet once a month at a restaurant chosen on rotation with the chooser picking up the tab for all three of us. We talk about politics (mercifully we have basic agreements ... each a Democrat, but of slightly different stripes.) Also, social issues, sports, even religion sometimes.

But the most spirited discussions center on the question of "passing it on." What will be the impact of what we have done in our lives and what we are doing now? What's going to happen to our children or more especially our grandchildren in the future? How about our nation's fate in the global scheme of things?

Pat is by far the most pessimistic (or is he the only realist among us?) He sees America as essentially disappearing as a major world power. In his view, we can no longer claim to be "big number one" in everything. The rich are getting richer, he says. The middle class is losing ground, the needy are not being helped as they should, the economy is in the tank and won't ever recover fully, and it is all the fault of the "right wingers".

Robert's issues are more personal. Perhaps shaped by his boyhood spent in a relocation center for Japanese-Americans during World War Two, he is very worried about how his children are living today. "They spend too much," he says. He's concerned that they rely too much on that popular American piece of plastic called a credit card. "They don't realize that the money and the cozy lifestyle they enjoy could evaporate if they don't watch their budgets, put some money aside and think of the future". And, most of all, he complains they don't listen to anything he says!

As for me, I've always been a "middle of the roader". There are those who say that's Pollyanna, a cop-out, wishy-washy", but I believe that all of life is a series of choices. (Call them compromises if you wish.) I prefer to look for the possibilities, to, as the old song says "accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative and don't mess with mister in between." As a result, I wind up sparring with both of my lunch companions.

In these sessions, we don't solve any of the problems and pitfalls of dealing with the question of "passing it on", but we do enjoy the jousting. We all agree that Albert Einstein who, as smart as he was, probably got it wrong when he proclaimed: "I never think of the future. It comes soon enough."