

# YOU DON'T SAY

*By Fred Hobbs*

“Can you keep a secret?” That’s a question often posed by a confirmed gossip who is just itching to impart a juicy tidbit of news. First off, if you learn the secret, then it is no longer a secret. The only real secret is one you lock up inside you, maybe a secret of the heart, maybe of the brain or even one in the gut.

Admittedly, I have very few true secrets and if I did I would keep it..or them... secret from you. As usual, Benjamin Franklin left us with the best take on secrets. “Three may keep a secret, “ ol’ Ben wrote in “Poor Richard’s Almanac”, “if two of them are dead.” One fact is certain. I would make a lousy CIA agent, priest or football coach, or anyone who constantly must keep secrets.

I can tell a lie (mostly little white ones), but find it difficult to keep a secret. In my work as a broadcast reporter, a key part of my job was to find the truth of a situation and report the facts as objectively as possible. Sometimes, this meant uncovering secrets kept by some characters who were up to no good. This process remains controversial locally, nationally and certainly internationally. Maybe even more so today than historically. Should the government be allowed to keep secrets from the people? Should it be illegal for “hackers” and “leakers” to discover and divulge secrets from government files? In some instances, divulging secrets would have been devastating. The details of the invasion of Normandy on D-Day in 1944 were a closely held secret. The world as we know it might have been changed forever if that secret had been leaked.

Lately, the public attitude has begun to change on the most pertinent and poignant of secrets, sexual identity. Fear, public attitudes, unfair business practices, social ostracism, and even laws long have kept gays from “coming out.” Thanks to a more enlightened citizenry, the necessity of keeping that secret is rapidly disappearing.

On the lighter side of the subject, what about corporate and pop culture secrets? Advertising offers us all kinds of so-called secrets: secrets to better health, a more beautiful smile, a longer life or at least a more successful love life, and just plain “success.” How long will Coke be able to keep secret the recipe for the popular soft drink? Wouldn’t it have been embarrassing for Superman to admit he was posing as a lowly newspaper reporter? He had to find a secluded phone booth where he could keep his costume changes a secret. It appears we’ll never know the secrets of the great magicians/illusionists such as the current star purveyor of the art, David Copperfield or the fabled Harry Houdini.

Finally, one of the best kept secrets. Will Scotsmen ever reveal what is under their kilts?

Famed children’s author, Roald Dahl who wrote “Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory” has this to add to the discourse: “The greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who won’t believe in magic will never find it.”

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