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Moving Forward, Standing on Shoulders



As we embark on the third decade of the 21st century and the 30th Anniversary of the *National Barbecue News*, it's important to take stock of who we are and where we're going.

Who Are We?

Long ago, before universal access to the Internet, there was a popular expression, "Information is power," that was accepted as ironclad truth.

Now, thanks to the Internet, information, misinformation, truth and lies abound. Absent a highly refined BS Detector, swimmers for truth in today's Information Ocean risk drowning from exhaustion. Some escape into self-affirming Information Bubbles filled with a mix of information and misinformation that validates their beliefs and ideology.

The BS Detector life vest that works best for me is compliments of the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates. He could usually get at the truth with two questions:

1. What do you mean? &
2. How do you know?

When we speak of our "Barbecue Family" or "Barbecue Community," what do we mean? We use those terms because when we're together or in contact with one another, it feels like family and/or community. It's a place where we bond over our shared passion for barbecue. It's a place where we belong and are accepted.

With its nationwide and international outreach, how would you describe a "typical" or "average" reader of the *National Barbecue News*? My guess is that how we envision the typical *National Barbecue News* reader varies, based on each reader's personal experiences and friendships in their segment/s of the barbecue network. Those various profiles would relevant information, but profiles based solely on subjective impressions fall short of accuracy.

A complete profile of readers would start with gender, age, race, marital status, region, income, occupation and education. After that a breakdown would cover what readers do with barbecue at home, in their neighborhood, and/or in the larger barbecue net-

work. Readers who do barbecue in several roles—griller, smoker, eater, competition cook, judge, bbq business owner etc.—in all three arenas—home, neighborhood and barbecue network—those overlapping roles would be counted in all three categories.

Where Are We Going?

Predicting the future of barbecue and the *National Barbecue News* involves a large amount of guesswork tempered with inferences from what we know now and about the past. I liken it to what the late Stanley Vestal, in his fascinating book, *Rivers of America – the Missouri* (1945), said about paddling up the Missouri River "in a thin skinned birchbark canoe." Vestal said it "was like trying to kill a porcupine with a toy balloon."

That challenge duly noted, it is our want at the beginning of a new year to look ahead to what we resolve to do over the next year, as well as engage in predictions about what's in store for us over the next and future years. Resolutions aside, here's the future that I see for the *National Barbecue News* over the next decade:

Due to its full slate of timely, innovative recipes to up your game with delicious additions to your quinary repertoire from KC Baron of Barbecue Chef Paul Kirk and Barbecue Chef Ray Sheehan; stimulating business tips and social commentary from Larry Winget; travels with Mark and Gretchen Noordsy, treating us to sights, scenes and firsthand encounters with members of our Barbecue Family; outstanding reviews of the latest and best smoking, grilling and related books in the barbecue genre by barbecue scholar, cook, enthusiast and sage, Doug Mosley—and now, with the addition of monthly contributions on science, art, sport and history from Meathead's Amazing Ribs encyclopedic database of the what, why, when and how-to of barbecue, the *National Barbecue News* is ideally positioned to serve as a reliable, go-to resource for millions of casual and serious barbecuers across the nation. Bottom line: tremendous growth potential!

Standing on Shoulders

As we celebrate the New Year and anticipate the future, it is important to remember the *National Barbecue News* contributors who have passed away, as well as the outstanding pitmasters and other quinary personalities who have made their mark in the Barbecue Community.

That includes, but is not limited to, Doc Gillis, Joe Phelps, Brian Heinecke, Billy Bones, John Raven, Smoky Hale, Gary Wells, Silky Sullivan, Charlie Vergos, Nick Vergos, Ray "Red" Gill, Julia Child, Jimmy Bedford, Angelo Lucchesi, and most recently Rocky Danner. We stand on their shoulders and will forever miss their presence in our lives.