

Rodger on Retirement

Coffee Can Savings

I walked down the large hall, stopping to admire the art in this section of the city museum. The painting was large, almost too big for the space the museum provided. The simple wood –frame had stood the test of time, a perfect complement to the scene of a faded country kitchen, simply in appearance, devoid of beauty. Studying the scene, I saw that a portrait of George Washington hung in the corner of the kitchen, near a faded print of the stars and stripes. The artists name long ago worn away next to a date, 1949. The unknown artist made a powerful statement of the economic times. The country was in transition, moving through the post war period with confidence of *better times* to come and *peace* for the country. The kitchen was large enough to cook for and feed the farm couple as well as their 5 children seated at the table. It was an old painting, but I stood transfixed, staring at it.

Looking at the scene, the windowsill above the kitchen sink caught my eye. I saw 4 banged up coffee cans arranged in a row, each held bills and coins destined for diverse uses. I read the labels; water heater, washing machine, college fund and tractor. The farming couple was practicing some very sound financial planning! I smiled.

Studying the painting, I thought the couple would spit at the idea of credit. Nothing was purchased until the money to pay for it had been accumulated, in full. America would not thrive on debt and neither would her family. If you don't have the funds to buy something, you wait, simple as that. The mindset is as simple as a tractor on the back 40, plowing a field of wheat in a straight line, no ifs, ands or buts.

I was lost in my thoughts as I examined every square inch of the painting. Simple, frugal, family oriented, organized, no wasted effort evident anywhere in the room. Kitchen table, like the chairs hand carved of a heavy wood. They would last 100 years or more and be passed down to the kids, a gift from their wise and thoughtful parents. I couldn't help think that the farmer and his wife instilled a sense of financial responsibility in their children. After all, the coffee cans were on display for the kids to see. I imagined a bit of a celebration when enough funds were gathered to purchase the new tractor or a washing machine.

The painting was still fresh in my mind as I boarded the train behind two thirty something office workers; complaining that the interest rate charged on her credit card balances was high, and she was only making the minimum monthly payment. I thought back to the coffee cans lined up in a row on the windowsill in the painting and realized how America had changed; from paying cash to buying on credit, and I knew that the life blood and economic strength of the country was slowly bleeding away.

God Bless America

Rodger Alan Friedman has over 3 decades of experience designing and managing retirement portfolios and advising clients on retirement matters. For additional information and a free special report on preparing for retirement, please call 1-844-3-MY-PLAN or visit my website:
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