



# Cannon Blast

## *Classics*

### **IS IT GOOD FOR YOU OR GOOD TO YOU?**

*By Bart Cannon*

Josh wheeled the forklift around in a classic 180-degree spin, shut off the engine and reared back in his seat. This master of the warehouse paused to relish the gentle breeze wafting through the opening above the loading dock as we commenced our morning break.

With his head cocked back and the bill of his baseball cap pointed toward the ceiling, Josh paused as if mentally reviewing his agenda for the ensuing conversation. Rather than expound upon exploits of the past weekend, he waxed philosophical. This leader of the loading dock flared his nostrils, took a deep breath and declared, “Bart, somethin’s either good for you or good to you.”

Based on past conversations, I suspected that the “somethin’” Josh considered to be “good to you” was his favorite brand of Tennessee sour mash bourbon whiskey. That being the case, I wondered if the virtues of something ostensibly “good to you” sufficiently justified overriding its downside.

At the time, I was a 17-year old high school graduate trying to earn enough money to pay for my college expenses in the fall. Despite the suspect reliability of Josh’s “good to you” doctrine, I relied on him to teach me the ways of the warehouse and coach me in the manly art of manual labor. Josh took me under his wing and became my mentor—a role in which he flourished.

That summer in the sweltering Mississippi heat, I learned to match muscle for muscle alongside my coworkers as we inventoried and repositioned massive cartons, crates and cases. Josh taught me how to sort everything from galvanized cans to cases of thread and packing material. He schooled me in the use of the forklift or “tow motor,” which was like learning to drive all over again. I learned to steer along warehouse aisles without crashing into the merchandise and to stack full pallets several courses high without causing so much as a wiggle. Despite my success, Josh was still the master. He could maneuver those forks in tandem with the precision of a surgeon’s scalpel.

Josh helped my people skills, too. He became an advocate for workplace diversity before the PC police ever heard the term. My mentor coached me in the nuances of interacting with people of diverse cultures. I found out after the fact that Josh intervened on my behalf after I inadvertently said something that offended a coworker. Rather than correct my faux pas with the aid of a knuckle sandwich or a switchblade as some of his contemporaries suggested, Josh took me aside, put his arm around my shoulder and gently explained where I had crossed the line.

During the ensuing decades since my summer in the warehouse, vestiges of Josh’s tutelage occasionally upload into my consciousness. I’ve used “Somethin’s either good for you or good to you” many times—usually followed by a hearty laugh. Recent cases of vehicular homicide confirm that the results of pursuing certain activities perceived as “good to you” are not laughing matters.

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King Solomon observed, “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Those who linger long over wine...Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper.” (Proverbs 23:29-32).

After the initial buzz subsides, the residue of a person’s actions while “under the influence” may confirm that being “good to you” fails as a test for appropriate behavior. Some folks will have a long time behind bars to think about that.

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