

Leave the World a Bit Better by Ron White

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote a poem on success. One of his measures of success in that poem was to, "Leave the world a bit better." That line has always stuck in my head. Emerson said you have succeeded if you leave the world a bit better. I have made that line part of my life philosophy. When the tide goes out, there is a mark where the water was. When the waters of life recede from the shore of my being and my heart pumps for the last time, my desire is that there will be a mark where I stood. My aim is that the mark will say, "For some decades, a man occupied this space who saw others more important than himself and made an effort to leave the world a better place for them and those yet to come."

Our society tells us that success is measured by bank accounts, power, beauty and wealth. These are often the result of hard work, luck or birth. They are not evil and I strive for some of them daily. However, they are not the marks by which I will measure the success of my life.

So how do you do it? How do you "leave the world a bit better?"

- Give a percent of your income away to a charity or church. This makes your community better.
- Save a percentage of your income to pass down to your family when you leave.
- Volunteer your time for those who are less fortunate. Are you volunteering anywhere?
- Mentor someone who needs a positive direction in life.
- Follow and get involved in politics. Our laws and leaders will determine the future. You can have a hand in that future.

Or you can amass as much wealth as you can, spend it as fast as you can on the fading desires of your heart and seek to please yourself first. Our culture might tell you that this is success. Emerson tells us that it is not. I encourage you to realize that the waters of your life will eventually withdraw from the shore. When it does, will there be a watermark?