

Wrasslin'



Good morning, y'all. It turned cold, but without precipitation, so we're ahead of the game. Folks up in Virginia and West Virginia got a bunch of the white stuff, which I'm sure was shocking for the middle of April. We just got a lot of cold wind that made it difficult to move your fingers after a while. Planting a few \$5.00 azaleas to spruce up the place became a chore for my old arthritic hands.

It's a sad thing to have to put behind something you enjoy because your body just doesn't want to do it anymore. I guess that's true for every profession that has a physical component to it, not just park supervisor. I often think about professional athletes that have to decide that it's time to hang it up. Of course sometimes the decision is taken away from them, like Formula One racers. I think about Ayrton Senna who won the F1 world championship three times before his death at 34. In the documentary, "*Hunt vs. Lauda*", they point out repeatedly that Formula One racing is the world's deadliest sport. It was like it was preordained that if you were going to be a champion, you would die in the car. The competition is that fierce. Philosophers wax that if you "die doing something you love" it's not as bad. Seem like it's just as fatal to me. Formula One racing is not that important in our area, even though we do have a track nearby in Braselton. The South prefers NASCAR, where longevity is less of an issue.

The South also loves wrestling, or "wrasslin", as we call it. I can remember following "Georgia Championship Wrestling" very intensely back in the day. My participation in high school wrestling eventually led to the conclusion that professional wrestling was indeed fake, but that didn't stop of us from attending every live match we could in the Municipal Auditorium in Atlanta. I was also a devotee of the Saturday night telecasts on Channel 2. The TV telecasts were basically build ups for the matches in the Auditorium the following Friday night. There was always some grudge between two fellows that could only be resolved by a cage match in the Auditorium. I remember attending some big battle royal that former professional football player "Dick The Bruiser" won. In addition to a bunch of money, there was a new Cadillac awarded to

the winner. "The Bruiser" had the audacity to have a private train car brought down from his hometown Chicago, pre-match, to take the Cadillac back with him. All of us locals were incensed at the chutzpah.

Stirring up the hoypoloi was what professional wrestling was all about. Finding out that some of the most bitter rivals in the ring, were the best of friends out of the ring came as quite a shock to most of us. It was so easy to get trapped in the theatrics of the show that you were willing to discount the fact that if it was real, most of these guys would be dead. How many times can you get hit over the head with a folding chair and it not cause some permanent damage? Of course, we devotees of the sport believed in the reality of professional wrestling as surely as the Resurrection. Any suggestion to the contrary was heresy.

My first insight into the fakery was watching a wrestler take a bottle cap and open a cut on his own forehead. Profuse sweating made the wound look like he'd gone through the windshield of a car traveling seventy miles an hour. Since the wrestler was the "hero", all of us locals were outraged at the evil done to our champion. I'm sure that the "Bad Guy" in every match had more to fear from the crowd than he did his opponent. And yet, they survived, and most lived to very ripe old ages. Many of the old school wrestlers continue to [compete up into their sixties](#). One fellow, Bob Armstrong, is 76 and is still wrestling.

In recent years it seems that the thing that professional wrestlers have to fear the most, is themselves. There's been several losses due to performance enhancing drugs and the effects that they create in the body. I guess the philosophy is that they have to look like the biggest, baddest athletes and if it takes performance enhancers to get there, it's just how it is. That's real sad to me. I'd like to think that these guys will still be out there wrasslin' around in their old age, no matter how choreographed it is.

Well, I've got the NCAA wrestling championship DVRed and I'm all fired up to watch some wrestling, not wrasslin. I hear the heavyweights are going to be a real "battle royal" this year.