

Whutter (2014)

Houston Hodges, for Writer's Corner, WLRH Radio Huntsville, AL USA

It appears that the great sport of Whutter is nearing an end.

Whutter is a game not yet played in the Olympics. I invented it -- I think, though I don't have the patent on it, nor have I marketed it to Mattel yet; I invented it to irritate my kids - and later, my grandkids - and to make them talk. At the end of a vacation day, in the car driving home, I'd start it: "Whutter, whutter -- What are the three prettiest things you saw today?" Then I'd get them to answer.

"Whutter." What are the three things that surprised you most when we went to the Grand Canyon? What are the three things you'll put in your school report about our trip to Hilton Head? What are the three tackiest souvenirs you saw? What are the three best things you ate?

It generally worked, if I nagged enough. The number "three" was significant, almost magical, because it forced the kid to think a little, to look past the first, top-of-the-head, automatic response. I always learned something from the answer.

The last time I was with my now grown-up progeny, I tried again, with daughter Susan: "What are the three things you enjoyed most about today?" I asked, and instantly she responded, "Okay, but this is the last one!" Just as quickly I said, "No, no! Not that!" Whereupon she howled with glee and high-fived her big brother, who was also chortling. The scalawags had plotted about how to beat me. Where in the world did they learn to be that devious and conniving? It's an exceedingly great mystery to me.

So it appears that this sport that's fed me for lo nearly half a century is nearing an end. With the entire second generation allied in a conspiracy against me I haven't got a chance, and so I'll have to think of another way to make them talk.

But... on the other hand.... there's always the third generation! Whutter three things that grandkids are for? But I have to count on you not to tip them off... okay?

Houston Hodges says he's a "mostly retired" Presbyterian parson, but keeps his hand in by preaching once a month or so for the people at both locations of the Big Cove Presbyterian Church in Hampton Cove. He's grandfather to nine.

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