

Uncle Wiley vows to gain weight

Quick, what were your New Year's resolutions last year? If you can remember them, you are a rare bird. If you have successfully fulfilled them, you represent an endangered species.

The only person I know who has remained faithful to his first-of-the-year promises is my dear Uncle Wiley. It isn't that he is a master of self-discipline. On the contrary, Wiley has been said to have a will of tin, as opposed to the more rigid metals. Frankly, he is the last guy I'd expect to have pulled it off.

But then I remembered hearing Wiley's resolutions. It was in a conversation about this time last year. I told him I was planning to expand my vocabulary during 1985, and I asked about his plans.

"I gotta gain a little weight," he said, staring squarely at the paunch that rested beneath his chins. At that time he weighed in at about 220, which would have been reasonable poundage if he were about four feet taller.

I gulped. "How much would you like to gain?"

He grimaced at the question's apparent pointlessness and quickly settled on a figure: "Ten pounds."

"Ten pounds," I repeated, envisioning how my uncle would look wearing a bedspread. "How are you going to do it?"

"Give up jogging," he said gruffly.

"You jog?"

"Sure. I figure from the TV set to the refrigerator is one fifty-fifth of a mile, round trip. So last year I jogged — gotta be a hundred miles." He rose, trotted to the refrigerator, and returned with two beers.

"No more of this stuff," he continued, slamming a Bug Light down in front of me.

"No more beer?" I asked.

He looked at me as though I had suggested having his gills sewn shut.

"No more *light* beer, boy. Tastes like the rinsewater at

suspected this was not mere speculation.

"Back to the Pennzoil?"

"Back to nothing. I am going to brew my own beer," Wiley said proudly. He pointed out several sacks of barley and yeast on the kitchen counter.

"At least you'll save money," I said.

"Darn right I'll save money." Doing so was another of his New Year's resolutions, he explained. The extra cash would be distributed to needy bookies throughout the city. "I've been lax," he confessed.

Uncle Wiley also resolved to "stop working so darn

hard" during 1985, and to watch more TV and do less reading. He had me compose a two-sentence letter to *National Geographic's* circulation department. "Your recent coverage of colonialism in Senegambia was abominable," it said. "Cancel my subscription immediately."

I naively mentioned to my uncle that he may have been aiming a bit too low in his resolution-making process: that perhaps he should undertake a bit of self-improvement, such as expanding his vocabulary. He called me a dunderpate. What is a dunderpate?