

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

From the Desk of:



Sheriff Clinton of Towns County

2003, the North Carolina Department of Criminal Justice found attrition in municipal agencies ranged from zero to 87 percent.

The bottom line is that law enforcement officers tend to move on with a lot of frequency. Over the past 16 years, officers who have left employment at Towns County Sheriff's Office have left on average 4.5 times from other agencies, as well, for a variety of reasons.

Recognizing the fact that attrition occurs is important to us because we need to be in a position to properly staff those positions as they become vacant with the best qualified personnel. In order to do so, it is important that an agency uses the best accepted practices to recruit, hire, retain, and promote individuals within the agency. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has studied this issue and has recognized that it is important that an agency properly identify its goals and makes those goals a part of the recruitment and hiring process, as well as the process of promoting and retaining current employees.

This is an area that we feel we have done an excellent job in. We have clearly defined professional standards that are a part of our recruitment and hiring of personnel. We use these same standards in evaluating employee performance and promoting employees. In so doing, we are able to capitalize on the negative of natural attrition by continually raising the standards we expect from our officers.

Anyone who is interested in knowing more about your sheriff's office, please do not hesitate to call on us. We are here to serve you. We can be reached via phone at 706-896-4444, or online at www.townscountysheriffs-office.com.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

A few weeks ago we began a discussion of how we become addicted to our opinions and beliefs. Experience, thought and emotion create neural pathways in our brains. When these connections are reinforced and maintained they produce neuro-peptides that, in turn, cause brain cells to develop receptors specific to those particular chemicals. When these receptors are denied their accustomed "fix," withdrawal symptoms can occur. This is why challenging someone's beliefs can have unpredictable results. Many Americans are amazed that a tasteless film about Mohammed could cause such uproar of protest and violence in the Muslim world, though chances are that many of those so amazed have witnessed an adult fist fight at a Little League game. As far as the brain is concerned, the chemical reactions are very similar. I would venture a guess that Americans are amazed at the uproar because we are more accustomed to paying the price for freedom of speech. Having free speech means that we are quite often subjected to expressions that are tasteless and offensive and we have built up a certain amount of immunity as we change the channel and wear the label off of the mute button. Several years ago a movie was made from the book, The Last Temptation of Christ. Christian groups were certainly offended. They protested and issued statements of condemnation. No embassies were attacked.

The difference? Consider the demographics of the crowds throwing rocks at embassy grounds. They are predominately young. They have a high rate of unemployment. They have only in relatively recent times been exposed to the world stage through the Internet and are perhaps less aware than we that the world is full of inflammatory opinions and expressions. The neural pathways they have built around religion are likely a dominant aspect of their consciousness. They are also ripe for manipulation by cooler heads with more strategic goals in mind.

Our reaction to their "over-reaction" has been sadly indicative of our own habitual thought processes as we once again divide into our accustomed two camps. On one side of our divide we find condemnation of religion and even race, even though the vast majority of Muslims condemn violent acts just as the vast majority of Christians condemn abortion clinic bombings. On the other side we find apologists. I realize that my arbitrary division cuts unevenly and in many cases inaccurately. It was an apologist post on a social website that first disturbed my own neural pathways and inspired this week's article. The post condemned the movie in question as an offense to a religious group. With that, I agree. The author went a step further and made an "apology" from all Americans to all Muslims. I do not want to be included in this "apology" because

it fails to acknowledge all the facts of the situation. No mention was made of the slain diplomats and the Marines who died for their country in Libya. No apology was made to their families.

There are multiple reasons why America has enemies in the Muslim world. We have blown up much of it; quite a bit before the attacks of 2001 and certainly a great deal afterwards. We maintain military bases there. We have supported brutal regimes there; all in the interest of maintaining our supply lines of energy and natural resources to support our affluent and energy intensive lifestyle. As beneficiaries of this lifestyle we are not without responsibility for its consequences.

In writing this column we have always tried to be an equal opportunity offender and today we appeal to our friends on the "left." It is easy to occupy the moral high ground necessary for apology from the air conditioned confines of the average American living room or coffee shop. It is easy to condemn capitalism by posting opinions on a high tech device manufactured in China, made with rare earths mined in Africa and transported by oil shipped from the Middle East on Greek tankers. It is noble and necessary to defend the environment, but if you expect lasting peace in the Middle East, you must allow some compromise on the responsible development of North American energy. Green energy is an essential long term goal but we simply do not have enough of it to run on yet. We need American natural gas and oil during the transition. An energy independent America is much less likely to maintain such a large boot print in those most volatile areas of the world. You cannot have it both ways, enjoying the benefits of an affluent society without accepting the costs, and risks, of maintaining it. It is not all about oil. We are also witnessing a clash of civilizations. One is affluent, worldly and decadent with a declining population. The other is poor, traditional and paranoid with a rapidly growing population. Like oil and vinegar, we will not mix without some shaking. Apologists for western civilization might take note at the contrast in how our cultures respond to "offense." A cheap French tabloid deeply offended many by spying on members of the British Royal Family and publishing nude pictures of a couple's private moments. Thus far there have been no attacks on French embassies in the UK.

As for those who would abuse the right of free speech, take note also. You may have a legal right to throw a rock at a hornet's nest. If that hornet's nest is hanging in a public place, do you still have that right? The religious beliefs of a population under pressure from poverty, unemployment and overcrowding are in many ways just as volatile as that nest.



"IT'S ON MY MIND.."
Danny H. Parris

Casting a shadow

You can certainly tell that it is fall of the year by looking at God's landscape. All of the trees, bushes, flowers and grass are changing garments. God's fall fashion show gets better with each passing year. Spring is spectacular, summer is a sight and winter is wonderful but I like fall best of all! Another sure sign that it is fall is revealed by shadows. In our den we have a large window that faces east. During the spring time, as the wife and I have our morning coffee and devotions, we have to close the curtains. As the sun comes up it shines directly into our den and we cannot see to read. But now the sun does not rise in front of our den, in fact, you have to go to the window and look south to see the east.

This phenomenon is caused by the rotation of the earth on its axis around the sun. Really, the sun hasn't gone anywhere but the earth has. When you think about it no two days are exactly alike. Because of the earth's rotation the shadows cast by the sun are different each day. The change is so minute you don't notice it, until there is a large variation in shadows. What is true of the earth, the sun and shadows is also true of life. Shadows are cast because light hits an object. The change that takes place in the shadow is caused by the position of the object. When the object changes position the light casts the

shadow differently. Our world and our lives cast shadows in relation to the position we are with The Son. In my short sojourn of life I have seen a lot of changes spiritually in our nation. Most of these changes have taken place so subtly that they have gone unnoticed for years. But suddenly in our generation we feel the full impact of accumulated change. God The Son, has not changed. James, the half-brother of Jesus said, "All good things come down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Job said, "For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow" (Job 8:9).

We are constantly changing but God changes not. I have heard of people who were afraid of their own shadow. That may have something to do with the kind of shadow we cast. It is beyond any shadow of doubt that our entire nation is casting some scary and grotesque shadows. When Hezekiah, King of Judah, was sick unto death, Isaiah the prophet gave him a sign that God would heal him by letting the shadow return backward ten degrees on the sundial (II Kings 20:8-11). Spiritually, we need to turn back the shadow on the spiritual Sundial. The Psalmist said, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1). The shadows of evening are falling. God help us to number our days. Inscribed on a sundial are these words: "I am a shadow so are thou, I mark time, doest thou?"

RARE KIDS; WELL DONE
By Don Jacobsen

Q: Recently when our son started Kindergarten I think he was the only one in the room who couldn't read. It made this dad and me feel really bad that we didn't work harder with him. Do you think he will be behind now all during school and should we get him some special help so he can catch up?

A: Well, I would need some more information before I can give you a really definitive answer about your son, but let me give you some encouragement. The research assures us that, other things being equal, by the time he is in the third grade he will read as well as his peers - or better.

Reading readiness is a tricky thing and often tells us more about mom than it does about the child. What mother doesn't love to watch her child's mind develop as he learns to recognize the cow in the picture or point to the tree when mom says the word? But while we know that sitting on mom's lap while she reads to him is a healthy thing for Charlie, it's not likely to make a measurable difference in his report card when he's eight.

For years we lived in

Southeast Asia; let me tell you what I learned about life from the Chinese bamboo. The bamboo shoot is small when you plant it, not much more than a twig. The first year, even with proper moisture, sunshine, and fertilizer you see virtually no growth. The second year is the same. So is the third. By the fourth year there has been virtually no visible growth. Finally, in the 5th year there is growth. Big time. The plant will often grow to 80 feet tall in six weeks.

Did it really grow 80 feet in six weeks? No, it grew 80 feet in five years. The growth process was in motion, it just wasn't visible. Pre-kindergarten is a time we call childhood. One of the best gifts we can give that three, four, five year old is a childhood. Time to play. Time to be a child. Time to run. Time to lie on his back in the grass and watch the clouds. Time to laugh. Time to develop his curiosity. And did I mention time to play? My suggestion, mom, is don't worry; watch. You just may have a two-legged bamboo plant on your hands.

Send your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

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