

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor:
 We read in horror and disbelief the Towns County Herald's front page story of David Marvin Wheeler's one-vehicle, fatal wreck near Tate City.
 The victim, David Wheeler, was our physician for 13 years. Most people would remark about how tragic his life was.
 We moved to Cashiers, NC, in 1997 and moved to Hiawassee in December, 2010. Dr. Wheeler, who practiced in Cashiers, soon became our doctor.
 In 1998, he borrowed a friend's motorcycle. A ranger found him on Wayah Bald where he had run off the road and wrecked the motorcycle. He was paralyzed from the chest down. He still had the use of his arms and hands... Thank God!
 That didn't keep David Wheeler down. In weeks, he was back to practicing medicine in a wheelchair.
 One day I asked him about the accident. He replied, "I can't help what has happened. I just have to keep going forward."
 He had an almost intuitive talent for knowing what was wrong with his patients.
 Dr. Wheeler was a supporter of many charities. He always appeared at the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, wheeling around the track at a high speed in his wheelchair.
 Dr. Wheeler was divorced.
 We know that Dr. Wheeler's death left a hole in Cashiers' heart that will take years to heal. He was a good doctor and friend. Our sympathies go out to his family and his staff.

Ken and Celia Boswell

Letter to the Editor:

I would like to express my appreciation to Chatuge Regional Nursing Home and its staff for the wonderful Christmas Party they gave to their patients and their families this year. It was the first time our family attended this annual Christmas event and I can not express how much fun it was for the patients and all who attended.
 Wonderful Christmas music was provided by the Hogged Brothers and Cheerful Sounds/Macedonia Church - beautiful music which we all enjoyed. A special visit was made by Santa and Mrs. Claus (David & Doreen London) - and wow did they do a terrific job!
 In fact, a great job was done by all - the staff and volunteers did an outstanding job making sure this Christmas holiday was wonderful and special for each of their patients. The food and holiday treats couldn't be beat but the true magic was the warm and loving spirit shared by the entire staff, the patients and all the family members in attendance.
 Thank you Chatuge Regional Nursing Home for a job well done for some of the most precious folks in our county.

Sally Varao

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

As I write these words, here on the last day of the world, civilization is experiencing another one of those crescendos of fear which seem to come around more frequently these days. Here in the United States, gun sales are going off the charts. In China there is a run on candles and over a thousand people have been arrested for promoting rumors of apocalypse. In Europe people are gathering at sacred or rumored-to-be mystical "safe" locations. Prognosticators of Christian "end times" theory are already hedging their bets, claiming that though the world may not, in fact, end on Friday; it is certainly the beginning of the end.

If you are reading this, congratulations! You survived the "end of the world" predicted for December 21st, 2012. What shall we do now?? The "fiscal cliff" looms threateningly. The democrats are coming after our guns, the headlines say. The globe is still warming. Bird flu and North Korean missiles are subjects still available for worry.

Too many of us, especially in the western world, have spent too much of the 21st century expecting bad things to happen. Bad things always happen. Bad things have always happened. What is different now is the worldwide instant echo chamber that magnifies every bad thing out of proportion. Billions of dollars of commerce are now dependent on bad news and every sick mind with a death wish knows that lasting fame is instantly available for acting on the impulses of depravity.

The television and the computer screen mirror our herd mentality and they drive our herd mentality in a negative feedback loop, but blaming media is too easy. We are the ones flipping the channels and clicking on the links to the tacky headlines. We are the ones abandoning the holiday table to stand in line at Walmart.

We are addicted. First and foremost, we are addicted to drama. If it bleeds, it leads, and we are sure to follow. The signs of our addiction are everywhere, from the ups and downs of the stock market, which has long ago abandoned fundamentals in favor of headlines; to the grandmother I met today who was buying two automatic pistols and all the ammo she could carry because of something she read on the Internet.

We are addicted to instant gratification. Our closets are full of last year's styles, our basements full of the disjecta membra of a lifetime of shopping. Many of us who are finding the budget stretched thin are anguishing over being able to

afford the yearly shopping and gifting rituals.

Moving on now, perhaps we are at the threshold of an important opportunity. What shall we do with the tremendous energy built up in anticipation of the disaster that did not happen? Can we now achieve a moment of clarity, a sober reckoning of the unhealthy influences we have collectively allowed to affect our behavior? Can we begin to consciously filter out some of the negativity? The expression, "taken with a grain of salt" originates in the writings of Pliny the Elder, a Roman philosopher and naturalist. The Romans of Pliny's day believed that the effects of suspected poisons could be mitigated by taking the substance in question with salt. Perhaps it is time we begin to pour some salt on the constant stream of information that feeds so many of our fears.

There is no doubt that many suffer real hardships. The problems that have always plagued civilization - war, poverty, disease, malnutrition, illiteracy - are still very much with us. Overpopulation has spread our ranks into the earth's most sensitive and volatile areas. These things notwithstanding, the numbers consistently demonstrate that, worldwide, violence and hunger are at or near generational lows. Even though the dollar may be worthless, our debt limitless; even though we suffer an unfavorable comparison to the images of prosperity we see on the screen - we live better than Roman emperors. Today I am eating oranges in December. I have two "chariots" parked in the driveway. I can command actors to perform in my private theater at the touch of a button. I am warm and dry as the rain falls and the wind howls outside. If we measure prosperity in terms of real goods and services, we are living in some of the most affluent times humanity has ever experienced.

I write this in the sincere hope that we can shift our attention from the fear that is in the world to the gratitude inherent in the season without grinding our gears. The holiday season holds important reminders for our mental and emotional sobriety. Hanukkah reminds us of dedication and perseverance. Christmas reminds us of salvation and joy. The longest night and the changing of the seasons remind us that all things good, bad or indifferent move in cycles. The fellowship of friends and family reminds us of what is truly important.



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

Explore, adore & restore

Matthew records that "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem" (Matt. 2:1). They had come searching for Jesus, the King of the Jews. Their journey had begun when they saw a strange star. Their stated purpose was that they had come to worship Jesus, the Christ of God. Since my early teenage years I have been an observer of people. It is an interesting and helpful hobby. I think it is interesting to observe the responses of people groups at Christmas. I assure you worship is not on everyone's mind. Some people literally DEPLORE the Christmas season. Atheists are not too thrilled about the season. In fact, many of them are wretched, miserable and sad. Some of these people want to remove every visible symbol that reminds us of Christ! Every nativity scene, angel, shepherd, wise man, and every word that conveys Christ or God. It really does not make sense to me. Why would an atheist spend his life fighting something that he does not believe exists in the first place? Other groups IGNORE Christ. They are like the chief priests and scribes of Jesus' day. They are too busy with the traditional to understand that a baby changed the entire course of human history. Much of our Christmas tradition is more about SHOPPING, than it is SALVATION. By the way,

do you know what all that dangling mistletoe means in all the business places? It means that you can kiss your money goodbye! We really observe a lot of Christmas traditions that are good and healthy for us. However, if you ignore Christ you have missed Christmas. There are groups that DEPLORE and IGNORE Christ at Christmas, but there are multitudes that EXPLORE and ADORE Christ. Luke tells us (Luke 2:8-20) that a group of shepherds were visited by angels and informed that a Savior for all people had been born. They hastened to find Mary and Joseph and the child Jesus. They EXPLORED the Message and hurriedly came to ADORE the Christ. Matthew tells us of those wise men who came to explore and adore Him. They brought gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. Gold is the king of metals and was considered to be a gift suited for a king. Frankincense is the gift for Deity. It was used in the temple sacrifices. The aroma of Frankincense was thought to be pleasing to God. This gift was symbolic that Jesus is the Son of God. Myrrh is a gift for one who is going to die. This substance was actually an embalming fluid. It was used to anoint the body of a dead person. The gift of Myrrh was witness to the fact that Jesus came to die for the sins of mankind. The worship due Him demands my life, my soul, my all! Please don't DEPLORE, nor IGNORE Christ, but EXPLORE then you will ADORE Christ the Lord.

When you EXPLORE and ADORE Christ, you will help to RESTORE the true meaning of the Christmas season.

RARE KIDS; WELL DONE
 By Don Jacobsen

I was chatting recently with my friend, Wintley Phipps, founder and CEO of US Dream Academy - an organization that educates children of prisoners - and something he said really stuck in my mind. He said: "A child with a dream is a child with a future." I like it. I believe it.

But how to plant a dream in the heart of a child? How to get them to think beyond their own wishes, their own interests, their own present projects, and think bigger, think outside their own box, past their own instinctive selfishness? No magic bullet will fix this; no patented formula. But let me suggest what will help.

A two-year old is not particularly interested in how he can be helpful to others. That hasn't changed much by three, either. By four and five kids begin to discover that they can intentionally cause pain to others; by the time they head for school they are able to understand that they can be helpful, they can do favors, they can help make others happy. And the environment that best develops that sense within them is when they see it modeled in their world - mom and dad speaking courteously, showing respect. An attitude at home like: How can I help?

Kids, let's help mom set the table. You've had a busy day; let me vacuum.

It begins young, but it doesn't end there. For several years some friends of ours have taken their children - now teens - a couple of hundred miles from home early in November, to help with the preparation of Christmas boxes for Samaritan's Purse. They drive three hours, work feverishly all day filling shoe boxes with toys, clothes, and school items, then drive three hours home. They are exhausted when they return, but as their kids watch videos of the children opening the boxes it creates an inner sense of achievement money can't buy.

Few things bring us greater satisfaction than the realization that we can make a difference in the lives of others. Lectures on the topic do very little good, but when a youngster begins to observe in his own family that being helpful is a tightly-held family value, then bringing happiness to others is likely to show up high on the list of life goals. It's magic when our kids discover how much joy they can create in their world, and it's never too late to begin.

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.

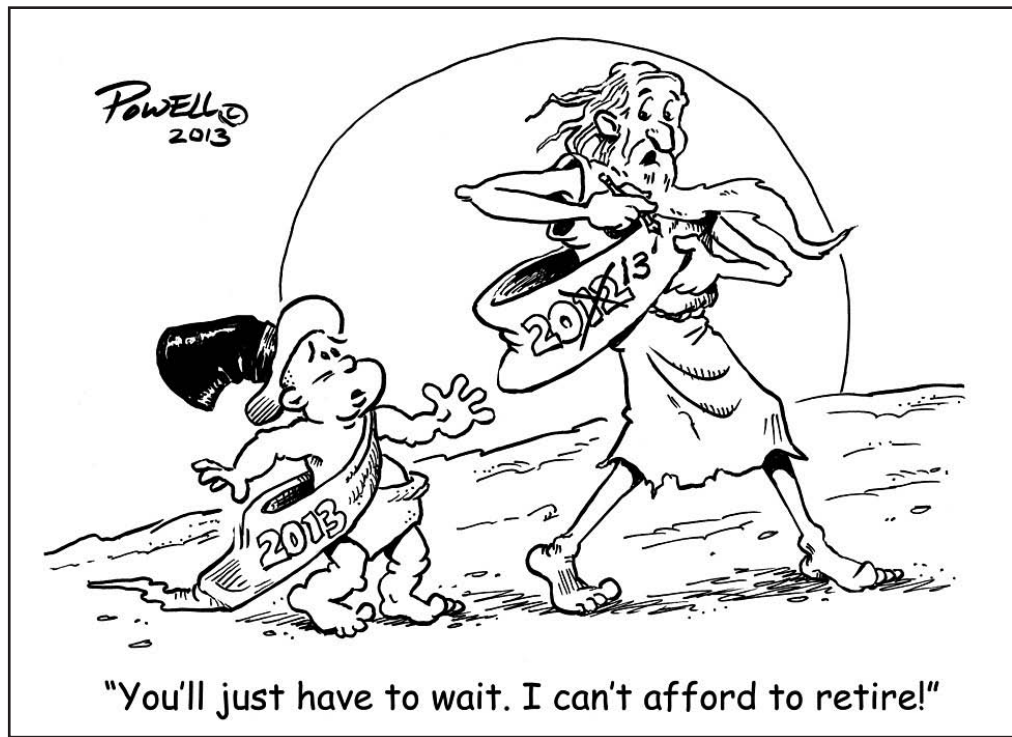
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