

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY



From the desk of Ralph T. Hudgens
Georgia's Insurance and Fire Commissioner

Fireplace safety tips

Prompted by the recent tragedy in Stamford, Connecticut, Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner Ralph T. Hudgens wants to remind Georgians of some safety tips for fireplaces to help keep their homes safe this winter.

"Fireplaces are great for keeping warm, but a few precautions should always be taken when using them," Hudgens said. "Therefore, when using one, please also keep these things in mind:"

Always use well seasoned wood in the fireplace with a fire screen or firebox doors. Wood that has not been well seasoned leaves additional creosote in the chimney. Unseasoned wood pops more due to the additional water vapor it contains causing embers to be expelled from the fire box resulting in a potential fire hazard.

Dispose of ashes in a metal container with a lid. The ash container should be placed at least three feet away from the dwelling on a non-combustible surface. Extra precaution should be taken on a windy day so as to prevent

the ash container from being knocked or blown over.

Make sure to have your chimney and fireplace inspected annually for cracks and faults. The best cleaning program is to have a professional chimney sweep clean it since creosote buildup varies greatly due to such things as frequency of usage, type of fires, and wood variety.

Do not burn coal in a fireplace or a wood stove designed to burn wood; coal burns much hotter than wood and can cause damage to the fire box enclosure and flue potentially resulting in failures in the material itself and exposing the surrounding structure to heat and fire. Wood and other combustible materials should not be stored on the hearth near the fireplace, as it could ignite and cause a fire to spread quickly in a home.

As always, make sure that you have working smoke alarms with fresh batteries. Carbon monoxide detectors are also recommended and should be installed per the manufacturer's instructions.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

It is an odd and arbitrary quirk of history that most of the world celebrates the beginning of a new year on the first day of January. The name "January" derives from the Roman god, Janus, depicted with two faces, one looking forward into the future and one facing behind, into the past. It was Julius Caesar who, in 46 AD while reorganizing the calendar, decreed that the year would begin on the first day of January. By the 18th century most of the Christian western world had also adopted this date.

Reflecting on the year just gone by is customary for many of us in January, and media rides this wave of cogitation and sentiment with presentations and opinions on the events of the past year which were "significant," though a quick read of opinions from years gone by reveals a difficulty in assigning significance to the historical perspective from such close proximity, like declaring how a cake will taste right after closing the oven door. Yet the challenge of understanding even the events which have come to pass does not seem to deter many from peering into the future and passing judgment there as well.

The Year 2012 has been a target of speculation for decades and it joins a host of other dates given the dubious honor of hosting the end of the world. This year the apocalypse is tied to a controversial interpretation of a few stone fragments from the Mayan civilization inscribed with a calendar which apparently ends on the 21st of December. Adding fuel to the speculation is the astronomical myth, debunked by NASA, that the earth will somehow align with the center of the galaxy on that date and the resulting gravitational tides will create destruction through earthquakes, volcanic activity, the violent shift of the earth's poles or a host of other disasters. The fact is, the earth and the sun align with the approximate center of the Galaxy every December.

The desire for apocalypse may be an archetype of the human condition. Almost every religion and culture on earth has spawned, at one time or another, a belief in some kind of doomsday scenario. Often in the religious scenarios a just and vengeful god destroys the earth while preserving a chosen few to carry on. Most Americans are familiar with the Christian view of Armageddon. Many in the Muslim world hold similar beliefs and the Quran describes the splitting of the moon, falling stars and the heavens being rolled up. Many Hindus believe that we are living in the fourth and final period of the earth's current age and that sweeping change will occur with the advent of a new age. Many Buddhists believe in a future war that will end as a golden age begins. Some Native Americans, notably the Hopi,

believe that it is they who are the chosen ones who will survive the coming apocalypse.

Apocalypse is a fascinating topic, and a profitable one. Thousands of books have been written and movies made dealing with the subject, but it is the age of Information which has created the latest confluence of belief focusing on 2012. Before we start digging our underground bunkers and duct taping our windows this year, it might behoove us to take a look at some of the other dates in history when the world was surely to end.

In 1000 AD, Catholic Church authorities believed that Jesus would return. When this did not happen, the birth of Jesus was recalibrated and a new date set for 1033. In 1843 William Miller convinced his followers that the world would end between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. The date was moved to October 22nd and when the world still failed to end, some members split from the group to form the Seventh Day Adventists. In 1876 Charles Russell, founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, predicted that Christ would return in 1914. The group has predicted at least seven other dates for Armageddon since then. For a more modern, "scientific" prediction, astrophysicists Stephen Plagemann and John Gribbin claimed in 1974 that an alignment of Jupiter on March 10, 1982 would cause devastating earthquakes. Let's not forget Y2K and the run on canned goods and dried beans at Sam's Club. Finally we have the prediction by evangelist Harold Camping that the Rapture would occur on May 21st and, again, on October 21st of last year.

The world will undoubtedly end at some point; civilization even sooner. Barring manmade disaster, a direct hit by an asteroid, the eruption of a super-volcano or a coronal mass ejection from the sun, in a few billion years the sun will grow into a red giant and completely engulf earth's orbit. If we are still here, perhaps we will have found a new home by then, but in the meantime, no one can say for certain when Jesus will return or when the next mass extinction event will occur. No one can say for certain whether any of the predicted events for 2012 will occur or whether any of us will be among the chosen few to survive them. Personally, I am not about to make a prediction for the world's end, but I do predict that I will need a new truck sometime in 2012. If you are among those convinced that the world will end this year - and if you have a serviceable truck that you aren't planning to use after the apocalypse, please remember to sign the title and drop it off at the newspaper sometime next December.



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

Running the race

The writer of Hebrews said, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:1-2).

As the year has run out and we begin a new year, the last word most of us want to hear is the word run. We feel like we have run out of whatever you run out of. After completing our busy Christmas schedules we feel all used up but it's time to start anew. After we have run through (consumed) a whole year our inclination is to try walking awhile rather than running. On the other hand some people are tired and exhausted because they have been running away. They have been like Jonah. They have tried running away from God, from life, from family, from work, from church, etc. Maybe you are one of those who are on the run. Others who read this feel run down. All you feel like doing is lying down. You would describe your race of life with the words of the old hymn: "My latest sun is sinking fast; my race is nearly run..."

For some who face the new year you just want to make a run for it. You want to run to some kind of

shelter, safety or security. You are looking for some place to hide out until life runs out. You enter the new year with the feeling that life has given you the run-around. To you the race of life seems very evasive. You can't seem to get a handle on it. You can't discover its purpose. You have run up this street and down that street but you haven't found the peace and joy of running your race.

Some of you have started the new year on the dead run. You are moving at full speed. You have the throttle wide open. You are making good time; you just don't know where you are going. Be careful that you don't run in vain. Be sure you are not in it just for the short run, but for the long run.

In conclusion, if you want to give life a run for its money, give it your best effort. Don't give in, give up or give over to the least resistance to the Godly life, but be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Be committed, competitive, fight the good fight of faith, finish your race and be a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Run your race, at His pace, looking (fixed firmly) at His face. Listen to the past witnesses, lay aside the weights, look to the winner, Jesus, the beginner and completer of our faith. Don't fizzle before the finish. Cross the finish line for Jesus. Take courage for the new year from the prophet Isaiah: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). I must run. I have run out of time, run out of words and run out of space!



RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

If you are a regular reader of this column you have noticed that we rank obedience really high on the list of desirable traits to build into our kids. I am discovering that idea is a bit radical for some of my readers. The feedback I often get suggests some parents have been taught that if they just love their kids, pamper them, work feverishly to keep them happy and help them feel good about themselves they will turn out just fine.

A recent email from a mother says she was reading a book which promised that if she just loved her kids enough they would turn out with all the right qualities and she didn't have to worry about teaching them such things as self-discipline, good work habits, respect, unselfishness, or obedience.

Good luck with that. The theme of the parenting classes we conduct is Parenting With Love and Leadership. Love is first. Love drives everything we do. But leadership is an indispensable part of parenting, too. Ideally a teacher loves her kids, but she also has to teach them math and spelling and geography, else how will they learn?

Children arrive with a lot to learn, and a lot to un-

learn. We are all selfish by nature. Someone has suggested that we are born crying to have our needs met, and if nothing happens to help us tame that urge we never outgrow it. I've met adults who haven't outgrown it and I have a hunch you know some, too.

Mom says something like: "Billy, could I ask you to pick up your toys now, OK?" Parents don't need to get permission from their 5-year old to find out if it's acceptable to give instructions. A better way might be, "Billy, it's time to pick up your toys now; I'll be back in five minutes to see that it's done." If it isn't, Billy can know there will be consequences. Not yelling or scolding. Rather, perhaps a privilege taken away or an early bedtime. Obedience is an expectation.

All of us will have authority figures in our lives as long as we live. Parents, teachers, law enforcement, boss, etc. Appropriate response to those authorities is part of the character development we need and one that will help us become productive and respected citizens.

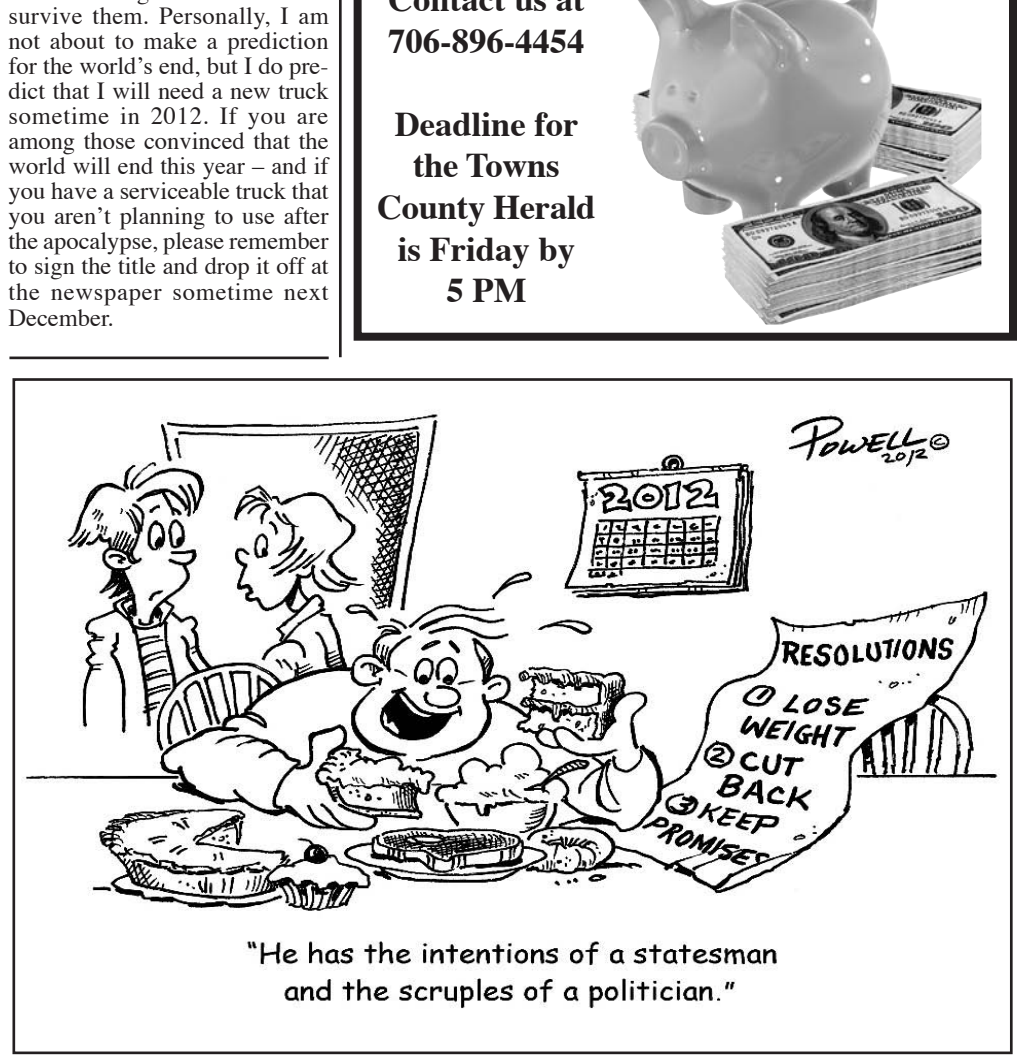
Send your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.

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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