

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

A Tribute to Rainer Arnold

Towns County lost a good man this past week. Rainer Arnold passed away after a valiant battle with cancer.

I moved my family back home to Towns County early in the winter of 1999. My wife and I left Gainesville to raise our children near family and to live in a small town environment. My first recollection of Rainer was reading his stories in the local newspaper. He covered mostly sports and since I am a sports junkie I naturally gravitated to his articles. I found them to be informative and passionate about the local kids. I also picked up the fact that he loved to watch and play Soccer.

Living in a small town, sooner or later, you have a tendency to bump into one another. I would see Rainer at the grocery store, post office or on the sidelines covering one of the local sports games. My first conversation with Rainer didn't take place until sometime after 2004 when I was elected to the local school board and we met at a school function. We did finally have several conversations in which I was able to come to understand that Rainer was very sincere about his passion for Towns County kids.

In 2005, Rainer became the coach of my daughter Elizabeth's soccer team, the Sidekicks. Vicki, my wife and I didn't know it at the time but this was to be the beginning of getting to know a wonderful person. The first night after practice several of the young girls came away from practice sniffing with bruised feelings. When we got home that night I asked 10 year old Elizabeth how practice went?

She responded, "He's mean Dad, he called us Weenie Girls." I'll have to confess I had to stifle a big grin. "What do you think he meant by that," I asked her? "He said we weren't playing hard enough, we were playing soccer like a bunch of little girls," she lamented.

So started the transformation of a bunch of "Weenie Girls" into a great soccer team that would have multiple unbeaten seasons. In fact, one of my fondest memories is seeing Rainer jump over a fence and flee into the woods with all these little girls decked out in fluorescent green jerseys trying to douse him with a cooler of water to mark the culmination of one of those undefeated seasons.

Many girls played on Rainer's team throughout the next several years but a core group of around 10 girls stuck with it and last year were the nucleus of an unbeaten Middle School team. Rainer, because of his health had given up the helm to a good friend of his, Paula Whitehead but never the less these were Rainer's girls that once again posted a hard fought undefeated season.

The thing that is more important to me than how to play soccer is what he taught these girls and especially my daughter. He showed them how to be tough yet full of compassion. He showed them how to give a good effort if you want to have good results. He taught them how good a team could be when they all played together. Most importantly, he taught them when they did lose to not give up, to get back up when you get knocked down, not accept defeat but keep working and sooner or later things would work out your way. These life lessons are the essence of what youth sports is meant to be.

All of us who have been blessed to live in small towns are given a remarkable gift that we may be unaware of. Life has a sharper edge to it in a small town. In a community of our size we get to brush against the lives of so many varying people that we would never have known if we had lived in larger towns. We get to experience with each other the joys of ball games and dance recitals, births and weddings, graduations, fundraisers, parades and a multitude of other everyday events that make life precious for each one of us. On the other hand, we share in the sorrows, a terrible terminal disease like Rainer fought, a late night car accident, a public fall from grace, a devastating business failure. We may not personally know the individual going through the trial but many times we know who they are or have a friend that knows them well. Interwoven, all these seemingly unconnected events blend into a vibrant tapestry that makes life here in our small town deep and rich beyond description. Rainer was a big part of that tapestry.

He didn't just teach and coach a group of girls the game he loved. He gave a bit of himself to others to take with them forever. Isn't that the best of what we could hope to accomplish in our time here. In the New Testament, Jesus tells us that the second greatest commandment is to Love others more than yourself. Rainer lived that. He transformed a bunch of "Weenie Girls" into young women that know how to live life.

Rainer kept fighting in his "Epic Match" with the big C. Last week the whistle sounded and he came up on the short end of the score. He didn't lose the match, he just completed an undefeated life.

We will miss Rainer but celebrate having known him.
See you on the other side!
Todd Turner



**RARE KIDS;
WELL DONE**
By Don Jacobsen

I have huge respect for people who run marathons. Twenty-six and 2/10 miles of numb-making torment. It tests your focus, your heart, your lungs, your knees, your feet. Oh, and did I mention your focus?

And it's not just the race; it's also the months of solo agony building the stamina and dealing with the pain to even qualify to compete. You don't have to win to be a hero in my book; if you finish you're a winner.

Rosie Ruiz, a Cuban, was the first woman runner to cross the finish line of the 84th Boston Marathon in 1980. Her world record-setting time of 2:31:56 immediately vaulted her into global prominence in the athletic world. But there were some questions...

Some of the spectators reported that they had not seen her running at the beginning of the race. She did not appear in videotape footage at the start. Several came forward to report that they had seen her run into the race near the 25-mile point.

When asked by a reporter how she had run the grueling race and didn't seem to be fatigued, Rosie replied that she just "got up with a lot of energy" that morning.

Rosie Ruiz was stripped of her Boston Marathon title and I don't recall ever hearing of her since. But I had some questions, too. I've wondered who her coach was. Were her dad and mom out there with her on her training runs? Who was there to bring out the best in her? Who was there, cheering her on, reminding her that in all of life's competitions it's not just winning that counts, it's also how you run the race.

That's our role, mom, dad. We're coaches, encouragers, helping our kids find strengths they didn't know they had, urging that they give nothing less than their best. Insisting on impeccable honesty and no shortcuts. That's why we can call them Rare Kids; Well Done.

Submit your parenting questions to: DrDon@rarekids.net.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

There is a foot of snow on the ground in our cove this morning. Reclining in front of a warm fire, I'm watching the birds through the window as they energetically carry away sunflower seeds from the feeder. Firewood stacked in the shop, propane tank full, gas in the generator and food in the pantry, I am content that the thin line of technology separating us from the forces of nature will hold for the day. I am thankful for the excellent maintenance of our electrical right of way that has enabled me to sit in a warm and lighted room watching the snow fall out of the window and the Atlanta traffic snarl on the television. I'm grateful for the crews who risk life and limb to keep the power on whatever the weather may bring. I'm mindful of the plight of our neighbors to the south who will get more ice than snow in this second major storm during a winter that was predicted to be "warm and dry."

In last week's column I threatened to leave the Christmas decorations up in civil

disobedience to our culture's mandate to rush ever onward. Last night with the whole family under the same roof (and at the same time) the glittering lights reflected in the new fallen snow helped rekindle some leftover holiday magic. A good snow storm, if used properly, can offer us something we usually only get on our holidays, stretched out so few and far between, and that is an excuse, if not a demand, to simply stop and be - be at home, be with our loved ones, be content in the knowledge that there is nothing to do and nothing that can be done. A culture defined by megapixels, measured in nanoseconds and driven by relentless needs can do with a little reminder that so much of what drives us, so much of what we choose to believe is so urgent and important, is but a footprint in the snow. Life on earth moves in rhythms older and deeper than we can imagine and occasionally they remind us that our own brief moment is much like the snowfall, to be enjoyed before it melts away.

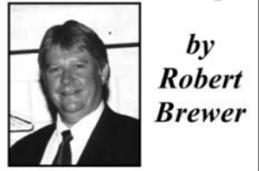
Letters to The Editor

Sincere Appreciation

This family of Mary Lou Mathis appreciates every act of love and kindness, from each one of you, at her death. Please continue to keep us in your prayers. Jesus promised to send a comforter and He did. He also promised to prepare a place for us and take us to be with Him.

Her place is finished - ours is still in the works.
Myrtle Sokol

Extension Tips



by Robert Brewer

January gardening tips

*When using salt to melt ice on walks and driveways, spread it carefully to avoid damage to nearby shrubs. Consider using sand or sawdust instead.

*Brush snow from evergreens as soon as possible after a storm. Use a broom in an upward, sweeping motion. Serious damage may be caused by heavy snow or ice accumulating on the branches.

*When pruning large limbs, always undercut first. This means to cut from the bottom up, one-third of the way through the limb, and

then finish by cutting off the top. The undercut keeps the limb from splitting and breaking off, which could damage the trunk and become an entryway for insects and diseases. Do not cut flush to the trunk, the collar or enlarged base of a branch produces hormones that help heal wounds.

*For easier lawn maintenance, eliminate the hard to mow spaces. Eliminate acute angles in beds and borders. Combine single trees or shrubs into a large planting connected with ground cover. Put the bird bath in a flower bed or surround it with ground cover.

*Avoid heavy traffic on a dormant lawn. Dry grass is easily broken and the crown of the plant may be severely damaged or killed.

*Review your vegetable garden plans. Perhaps a smaller garden with fewer weeds and insects will give you more produce.

*When reviewing your garden catalogs for new vegetable varieties to try, an important consideration is improved insect and/or disease resistance. Watch also for drought-tolerant types.

*Analyze last year's planting, fertilizing and spraying records. Make notes to reorder successful varieties as well as those you wish to try again.

*Check stored fruits and vegetables such as potatoes and apples for bad spots which may lead to decay. Remove and use those which show signs of spoiling. Separate others into slotted trays or bins to increase air circulation and reduce decay possibilities.



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

The Baby Bucket Generation

Some of you "old codgers" like me, remember when life was all about buckets. I was born a "bucket baby." These modern day labels of "baby boomers", "baby busters", millennials, etc., seem a little sissy when you compare them to the "Baby-Bucket" generation.

The Baby Bucket generation had it tough. If it hadn't been for buckets my generation wouldn't have survived. Buckets were made tough from wood or metal and were made for tough work.

The number one bucket at most houses was the water bucket. You used the water bucket to either draw your water from a deep well or to carry water from a spring. When you wanted a drink of water you dipped it from the bucket with a dipper. You didn't sip it from a recycled bottle. (Growing up as a boy the thought never crossed my mind that I would one day buy water.) Many times as a boy, I was scolded because the water bucket was empty. The scolding usually came this way: "If the house were to catch fire the water bucket would be the first thing to burn", which meant that you had better fill up the water bucket!

As I recall there were a lot of lard buckets and syrup buckets that were recycled for various uses. Some of the larger lard buckets were scrubbed and cleaned to be used as a milk bucket. I can still hear the sound the milk made as it ricocheted off the side of the lard bucket when the cow was milked.

Every family had a few blackberry and blueberry

buckets that were used at berry picking time. Some of these buckets were used as feed buckets to carry corn and other food products to the livestock (chickens, pigs, cows and horses.) I don't mean to nauseate any readers but, "ugh", there was that "slop bucket." It was mighty important to that fattening hog for he was blest with all of those table scraps that were blended together in that bucket.

That old black coal bucket was oh, so important on those cold winter days and nights. Like the water bucket, those coal buckets had better not be empty. Speaking of those cold nights some of those lard buckets and syrup buckets, out of necessity, became the forerunners of the modern day commode.

As I look back, the only thing called a bucket that excited me was the bucket seat in some of those 1930's automobiles. I always wanted to ride in one of those bucket seats, but never had the opportunity. Some of you reading this think that my bucket has tipped over, but what I started out to say was "Don't let the bucket get empty."

As I write this column we only have 360 days left in 2011. Paul J. Meyer said, "Most time is wasted, not in hours, but in minutes. A bucket with a small hole in the bottom gets just as empty as a bucket that is deliberately tipped over." When we begin a new year there is the temptation to let day after day slip away until the "bucket" is empty. Before that happens or before you "kick the bucket" make it a practice to redeem each day because it is the day that God has made (Psalm 118:24). Do not listen as the devil whispers, "tomorrow", "tomorrow". Do everything you have the opportunity to do today. Living a long life means nothing unless you have been productive to glorify God who gave you life.

*To prolong bloom, protect poinsettias from drafts and keep them moderately moist.

*Turn and prune houseplants regularly to keep them shapely. Pinch back new growth to promote bushy plants.

*Check all house plants closely for insect infestations. Quarantine gift plants until you determine that they are not harboring any pests.

*House plants and holiday gift plants should not be placed on top of the television. This location is too warm and in most homes too far from windows to provide adequate light.

*During the winter most houses are too dry for house plants. Humidity may be increased by placing plants on trays lined with pebbles and filled with water to within one half inch of the base of the pot. If you heat with wood, keep a pot of water on the stove. The added moisture will be healthier for you as well as your plants.

*House plants with large leaves and smooth foliage, such as philodendrons, dracaena and rubber plant benefit if their leaves are washed at intervals to remove dust and grime, helping keep the leaf pores open.

*To clean crusty clay pots, add one cup each of white vinegar and household bleach to a gallon of warm water and soak the pots. For

heavily crusted pots, scrub with a steel wool pad after soaking for 12 hours.

*If you have some time this winter, paint the handles of the garden tools red or orange. This will preserve the wood and make the tools easier to locate next summer when you lay them down in the garden or on the lawn.

*Move garden ornaments such as urns or jars into the garage or basement to prevent damage during the cold winter season. If containers are too large to move, cover them to prevent water collecting in them or turn them upside down during the winter so water will not collect and freeze in them causing breakage.

*Add garden records keeping to the list on New Year's resolutions. Make a note of which varieties of flowers and vegetables do best and which do poorly in your garden.

*Feed the birds regularly and see that they have water. Birds like suet, fruit, nuts, and bread crumbs as well as bird seed.

*Do not wait until late in the winter to order seeds. Many varieties sell out early.

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