

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Making Music...

Making Music with What We Have Left

Last month, I watched a story go viral about Sarah Hughes, a 72-year-old former accountant who took up watercolor painting despite advancing arthritis. Her hands shake constantly, but the landscapes she creates are stunning – not despite her tremors, but somehow because of them. Her unsteady strokes add an ethereal quality to her water scenes, a natural movement that perfectly trained artists spend years trying to replicate.

It reminded me of a story that's stuck with me for decades, one that feels especially relevant as many of us navigate our golden years. Back in 1995, Itzhak Perlman – the violin virtuoso who contracted polio as a child – was performing at Lincoln Center. Those who were there that night witnessed something extraordinary.

Perlman had just settled into his chair, positioning his violin after his characteristic slow entrance with crutches and braces. A few bars into the piece, a string on his violin snapped with an audible pop. The audience held their breath, expecting him to struggle back up and leave the stage for repairs. Instead, Perlman closed his eyes, nodded to the conductor, and did the impossible – he played the entire concerto on three strings.

Anyone who knows anything about violins will tell you this shouldn't work. A violin needs all four strings, just like we think we need all our faculties intact to live a full life. But Perlman created music more powerful, more moving than anyone had heard before. When he finished, he simply said, "Sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."

This wisdom echoes an ancient teaching from the Torah about Moses, who's often remembered as the greatest prophet in Jewish history. What's less discussed is that Moses had a speech impediment. The man chosen to be God's spokesperson, to stand before Pharaoh and lead an entire people, struggled with clear speech. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe often pointed out, this wasn't a divine oversight – it was precisely because of this limitation that Moses was chosen.

The Rebbe, Menachem M. Schneerson, the most influential Rabbi of the modern era, explained that when we face our limitations head-on, we tap into something deeper than our natural abilities. We access a reservoir of strength we didn't know we had. In fact, the Rebbe taught that our perceived weaknesses often become the very source of our greatest accomplishments – not by overcoming them, but by working through them. Consider Diana Nyad, who at age 64 became the first person to swim from Cuba to Florida without a shark cage. She didn't succeed despite her age – her decades of experience and wisdom helped her accomplish what younger athletes couldn't. Her limitation became her strength, just as the Rebbe described.

We're part of the first generation to regularly live into our 80s and 90s. But longevity isn't just about surviving – it's about thriving with whatever hand we're dealt. Take Barbara Beskind, who became a designer for IDEO at age 89. Her perspective on aging didn't just inform her work – it transformed it. She designed products that younger designers, with all their technical expertise, had never even conceived.

The real magic happens when we stop viewing these adaptations as compromises and start seeing them as opportunities for reinvention. Like Perlman on that stage, we're not just making do – we're creating something new, something that could only emerge from our particular circumstances.

This isn't about putting on a brave face or denying the very real challenges of aging. It's about recognizing that our limitations don't define us – our response to them does. Whenever we figure out a new way to do something we love, we compose our own symphony with whatever strings remain.

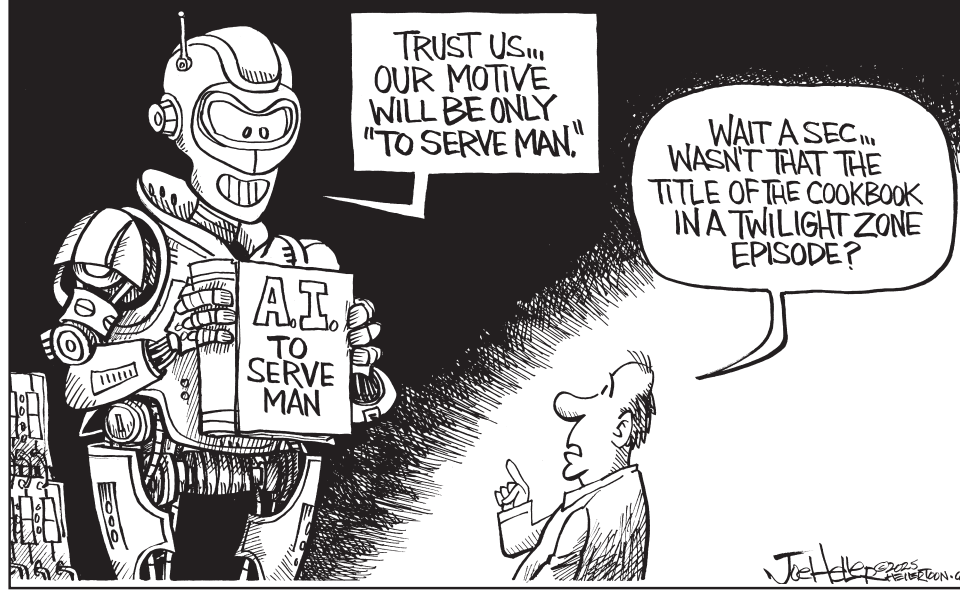
As I read about these inspiring individuals, I'm reminded that creativity, contribution, and joy have no expiration date. We're all artists in our own way, tasked with discovering how much music we can make with what we have left. From what I've seen, these later-life compositions often turn out to be our most beautiful work.

The concert hall of life doesn't demand perfection. It asks only that we play on, that we keep making our unique music. Sometimes, the most moving performances come from those who've learned to play with whatever strings they have left.

Yonatan Hamburger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports communities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at y@tasteof Torah.org.

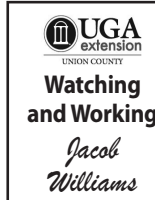


Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



Monarch Butterflies

Monarchs are often used as a flagship species for conservation and pollinators. They are important pollinators and are beautiful to find. Let's talk about how to create habitat for these insects.



Any good pollinator garden can be a host for monarch butterflies and serve as a nectar source. However, to support monarch caterpillars you must have plants from the milkweed genus planted for them. Here are some good plants to have in your garden for monarchs. Redbud, blue mistflower, Joe Pye weed, beebalm, blackeyed Susan, goldenrod, ironweed. Because of the altitude where monarchs will fly it is good to have a tall pollinator plants like Joe Pye weed mixed

Country Boys

Hubert Brooks, William Shellnut and Tommy Trapp were lifelong friends of Paul and Bud Cummings. I have been told by my Father and Uncle that the boys were always together and had been since any of them could remember.



Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings

William's mother had died when he was very young, and his father had a difficult time raising his sons afterward. Paw Henry was a kind and gentle man, but he worked all the time, and the Cummings family had to help raise young William. My grandmother, Glenna Mae, loved to have William over to their house. Glenna Mae could not stand a dirty body, and William's body was dirty simply because he was a boy and hated taking baths. Spending the night at the Cummings house meant taking a bath in a big old washtub using lye soap. Glenna Mae would grab the boy by the hair of his head and scrub his ears and neck with a scrub brush. William acted as though he hated bathing. But, he secretly loved the attention he received from my grandmother. She loved William and could see that all he needed was a bath, some positive discipline and good home cooking.

Hubert Brooks and Tommy Trapp also spent a lot of time with their neighbors, Paul and Bud Cummings. The boys loved to camp out under the bluffs next to Turkey Creek on the Cummings Farm. Hubert was always very nervous and constantly had to be doing something. He loved to camp, but, he was also afraid of the dark. One night Hubert, Tommy, Paul, Bud and William decided to camp out next to the creek. Their camp was next to a bold spring head. They laid their blankets between the fire and the limestone face of the bluff. The rock face of the bluff would absorb the heat from the fire and help keep the boys warm during the cool evening. The boys had plans for Hubert that evening.

The boys met at the Cummings house and when everyone had arrived Tommy began complaining of a stomach ache. So, he finally told the group he would not be camping that evening. The other four left and walked east across the cotton field toward Turkey Creek. Tommy began walking north toward Trapptown. He let the boys get across the 200-yard-wide cotton field and began to follow the group of four boys. The boys settled into their usual camp site and caught a few fish for supper. After supper they cleaned up the camp and settled in for the evening. It was just beginning to get dark when the fun began.

Tommy was on top of the 65-foot-tall bluff and knew where Hubert was sitting. As the camp darkened Hubert began to get nervous, and so he pulled out his pocket knife to whittle. Then he tried to whistle. But, his mouth was so dry the whistling was more like a whisper. Tommy knew it was time. He began to toss acorns and small pebbles in the dried leaves all around the camp. Hubert heard these acorns hitting the ground and he exclaimed, "Boys, they're a painter out there and he's a huntin' us." William told Tommy it was his imagination. Bud recollected that he'd heard that Old Man Landers over at Dime had seen a black "painter" last week. Paul told Hubert that if he thought something was in the woods he should go out there and "stob" it with his Case Knife. None of his friends' words helped to relieve Hubert's anxiety.

Finally, William was supposed to take the teens over to the spring to refill them for their morning coffee. It was in view of the campfire, so, Hubert picked up the canteen and walked to the spring. Unknown to Hubert, Tommy was on top of the bluff directly above the spring and was climbing down a slick, tall poplar. He came noiselessly while Hubert was filling the canteen. The other boys knew what was about to happen. Paul, with an urgent voice, said, "Hubert, I think I hear something to the other side of us." Hubert looked away from the spring and toward the fire. Tommy, now directly behind his friend, was bigger and taller than the boy, wrapped his arms around his friend's waist and let out a blood curdling yell. Hubert's feet went into hurry up mode and were not touching the ground. But, they were running just like you would see in a cartoon. When Hubert realized he was not moving any closer to the fire he cried out, "Hit's got a hold of me. Run boys and save yourselves. Whaaaaaagh." He also used other indiscernible words. It took the boys most of the evening to calm the nerves of their young friend.

Through the years my Dad would tell this story and would laugh with much energy as he remembered Hubert Brooks.

in. In any pollinator garden you want to have a diversity of bloom times, flower colors, and flower shapes planted. Generally annual plants are good to have a long bloom time, while perennials have a shorter, timely bloom period. For milkweeds butterfly weed is the primary milkweed that you will see growing in the wild around here. It blooms in the summer with a bright orange flower. It is also a good idea to plant swamp or whorled milkweed in your garden because they have a bloom time that extends into September. Swamp and whorled milkweeds can spread aggressively, so plant them in a place where they have room to grow. These milkweeds provide a place for the monarchs to lay their eggs and the caterpillars that hatch a food source. Some local nurseries will carry milkweeds that you can plant.

Most of the monarchs that we see are part of the southern migration. They will travel spend the summer in the northern half of the United States and southern Canada. In August and September, they will travel south to southern Mexico to overwinter. After overwintering they will travel north again. The monarchs that travel north will mate, lay eggs, and die along their journey. The eggs that are laid will hatch and continue the journey. The butterflies that overwinter in Mexico live longer than the butterflies that are migrating.

Rearing monarchs has become controversial in the past couple of years. Many people enjoy capturing wild monarch caterpillars, moving them indoors to protect them, and then once they have pupated and turned into butterflies, release them into the wild. Monarch conservationists have a couple of concerns with this approach. One is that you increase monarch numbers because more monarchs make it to adulthood, and there is not enough food to support these monarchs once they are released to the wild. This increases competition for resources which is a problem, especially in urban areas. When people rear monarchs the survival rate is higher. So, you are potentially introducing more monarchs that are not biologically fit into the wild. Another concern is that these reared monarchs could be spreading disease like the protozoan parasite OE, if you are not taking sanitation precautions.

You can have your garden certified as a Monarch Waystation. This certification means that you have planted the right plants to support monarchs in your garden. There are numerous other pollinator garden certifications, but this one is specific for monarchs.

If you have questions about monarchs, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Ordo Amoris

"The order of love is that by which the right measure of affection is expressed in what is loved." -St. Augustine

When Vice President J.D. Vance invoked the medieval Catholic phrase in response to criticism of the current Administration's immigration policy, I confess that I had to look it up to resurrect memories of a history class long ago when I sat next to the radiator on a cold winter morning and the embrace of the enveloping heat made it hard to keep my eyes open.

Ideas sound more sophisticated when they are recorded in Latin, but the concept is simple. Augustine encourages us to love God first, then family, community, country, and finally, humanity at large.

A nation where citizens fully adhere to Augustine's order is destined to be peaceful and prosperous. While it is humanly impossible for any country to achieve complete compliance, I believe that the United States once had a population that embraced these principles to a far greater extent than it does today.

My parents attended church regularly and were devoted to our family. They were exemplary stewards of their community and patriotic citizens. They had friends of various races and nationalities and showed compassion toward people whose lifestyles they did not agree with. They were five for five, and in this, they were not unusual for their time.

In just a few generations, however, the love of God diminished in the US, and we became a four out of five nation. Time passed; ideology replaced reason and compassion, and the political process degraded to the point where we are so fragmented that we struggle to achieve three out of five.

Republicans do well in loving God, family, and country. However, they sometimes fall short in their treatment of neighbors with alternative lifestyles or the broader humanity that wishes to be their neighbor.

Democrats appreciate their community of like-minded individuals and their family, provided that family shares their political views. Many Democrats love their country, while others may feel contempt for it. If they lack affection for any of the first four orders of Augustine's hierarchy, they transfer that love to humanity at large.

Both parties believe they have the moral high ground. Republicans believe Democrats are people with bad ideas. Unfortunately, Democrats perceive Republicans as bad people with ideas, which, in my opinion, has significantly contributed to shifting the political pendulum back to the right.

What both sides seem to overlook is that the hierarchy of love is the driving force behind a civilization. Remove any one of the components, and it is akin to cutting a spark plug wire under the hood of your car.

Outside The Box
By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Letters to the Editor

Not Intended

Dear Editor,
No matter the issue or the party, it seems congressional hearings are characterized by rude, acerbic vitriol. And yet the hearing members refer to each other as "the lady from ___" or "the gentleman from ___." Not what was intended by our founders.
Claude Spears

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P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546
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Towns County Community Calendar

First Monday of each month: School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
Every Tuesday: Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
First Tuesday of each month: Hiaw. City Council... City Hall YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 6:30 pm
Second Wednesday of each month: Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
Third Monday of each month: Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
Third Tuesday of each month: Commissioner's Mtg... Courthouse City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall TC Water Authority Board Meeting	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

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