

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

To the Editor:

So why exactly aren't you a member of the HRWC?

The Cuyahoga River in Ohio caught fire for the last time in 1969. Over a hundred year period, the river had caught fire numerous times, sometimes resulting in extensive damage to buildings, bridges and boats. That last fire was just one of many environmental disasters that inspired the Clean Water Act in 1972. What does that have to do with this article? It merely points out that enough people realized that clean water is not a partisan issue and everyone has a stake in the quality of the water that surrounds us... and they did something about it.

I was talking to a life long resident of Clay County the other day and I mentioned something about the HRWC (Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition). She looked a little puzzled so I said, "You know, the non-profit organization that monitors area water quality, stabilizes creek banks, removes invasive plants, organizes clean-ups, brings in thousands of dollars in grant money... I could go on." She replied, "Oh yeah, I've heard about that." I said, "You spend a lot of time on the lake. You ever think about all those houses along the almost 140 miles of shoreline... and the fact that they all have septic systems and drain fields, some of which have failed and all of which will eventually fail?" She got this look of horror on her face and said, "Oh my God, I never thought about that!" In recent years we have started paying closer attention to that and the current permitting process is designed to minimize the impact of homes along the streams and rivers and lakes.

We are just extremely fortunate that 20 years ago, the HRWC was formed to do the thankless, often very dirty work of monitoring and improving the quality of the water that surrounds us. As you will hear over and over, this organization surpasses all other area non-profits in their ability to obtain and spend wisely the limited grant monies available. It is for this reason that I am not alone in finding the Clay County Commissioners' decision to defund the HRWC mind-boggling. At first I assumed this was a matter of the new all Republican Commission making some attempt at "proving" their fiscal conservative credentials. (In reality, it is the exact opposite of fiscal responsibility). But the more I learn, it's looking more and more like good 'ol boy politics at work. In the coming weeks, more information will become public as to what really entered into this very poor decision making process. Hopefully, once you have been informed of the facts, you will not only care, but do something about it.

In the meantime, the most important thing you can do right now... and right after reading this... is go to the HRWC's website at www.hrwc.net or call them at (828) 837-5414 and donate! Clean water is non-partisan and funding this excellent organization of hard working volunteers is one of the best investments you can make in your community.

Bill Tibbetts

To the Editor:

Thank you Dr. Claire Worthy. The best dentist ever... I didn't know you could still find a dentist like this. Gentle, caring (as in really cares) and pain free. It's a long drive, but worth it. Hiwassee is a great little place. And yes, there's still gold in them thar hills. As a matter of fact, right there on Main Street.

Thanks Dr. Claire,
Charlotte Strickland



RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

Uh, oh. Do you know Ashley Madison? If you're happily married you probably don't. If you do know her, it's possible that life has taken a very scary turn recently for you. The marketing line on the home page of her website says, "Life is short. Have an affair."

You probably know by now that some well-intentioned but lawless hackers have accessed the names, credit card numbers, nude selfies, and some other very personal information of 37,000,000 people (yup, that's thirty-seven million - mostly in the US and Canada) who have used the website to discuss with strangers intimacies that are meant for discussion only between husband and wife. You can be sure there are millions of married folks - both men and women - who now get up every morning and in terror scan their emails to see if a list appears with their name on it.

Dr. Don, you're being a prude. Call it what you wish, the fact is I'm honoring a commitment I made many years ago when I said, "...And will keep myself only unto her as long as we both shall live, so help me God." No compromise of that promise is an option.

But this is a parenting column. I know and that raises for me the most gut-wrenching part of this whole story. Is this really the moral values we want in those who are coaching the next generation of marriages? If you figure the percentage of population of the two countries who are old enough to use the web in this way, that's nearly one out of every ten people in North America. So, in nearly one out of every ten homes a spouse and the children they are raising are being lied to. At least one of the parents is attempting to get the kids to obey in a way that they themselves are not. Hypocrites seldom raise all-star kids.

If you know your name is not on Ashley Madison's list, tell your spouse and your kids that it isn't, and why it isn't. This is a great opportunity to give your kids an illustration of why the way of integrity is the way your family has chosen. Let the kids hear you tell your spouse that he/she is number one-and-only and they can rest assured that will always be true. The revelation of a tragedy like this can be a powerful teaching moment.

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

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

On the cover of *New York Magazine* this week is an image of 35 of the 40 women who have accused Bill Cosby of sexual abuse. Pictured also is an empty chair to represent the women who have not yet come forward to tell their stories.

The Cosby story made a splash in the headlines months ago, and then simmered on the back burner while the national spotlight moved on to other sensations. Cosby's celebrity friends defended his reputation and in the media, which makes its bread and butter by facilitating trials by public opinion while posturing to appear fair and impartial, we occasionally heard repeated that central plank of American jurisprudence: "innocent before proven guilty." Meanwhile various institutions, schools, and charities with ties to Cosby quietly severed those ties.

Then in early July, Judge Eduardo Robreno unsealed a 2005 deposition in which Cosby admitted to obtaining Quaaludes with the intention of drugging women. The judge explained that Cosby's public moralizing about various topics justified the unsealing: "The stark contrast between Bill Cosby, the public moralist and Bill Cosby, the subject of serious allegations concerning improper (and perhaps criminal) conduct, is a matter as to which the AP - and by extension the public - has a significant interest."

We reference the Cosby story this week because it touches on themes we have often discussed here in this forum. In particular, it highlights the special treatment celebrities are given in legal matters. It underlines the problems inherent in allowing media to be so tightly controlled by such a small cabal of corporate interests. A common denominator in the stories of many of the women accusing Cosby is their frustration at feeling powerless to challenge Cosby's wealth, power and celebrity status as well as frustration with the corporate media that turned a deaf ear to their stories.

We will say it again and again: The primary motivation of the corporate entities which decide the national narrative is profit. While there are outstanding individual examples of integrity among those who report the news, that integrity is sacrificed on a regular basis for profit and for politics. When your primary source of information about the world is a news reader working for a network or a website hosted by a network, everything that you see and hear has been calculated to produce the greatest sensation and often carries with it an agenda which has nothing to do with informing the public.

There are alternatives, but those alternatives involve a bit of work. Vast amounts of information is available on the internet and through social media. The hazard in mining those sources of information for fact is twofold. First of all, much of what is presented as fact is actually opinion or editorial.

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Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*
Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

The standards separating fact from opinion have dissolved, especially on the Internet.

Consider for example, one of my favorite websites, "Business Insider." Every day of the week the site offers "top ten" lists and judges superlatives in various arenas. Many of those stories, with nothing to identify them as opinion, are written by "twenty-something" year old interns with little or no experience in the areas they are judging. Consider the famous Drudge Report, where the headlines are consistent with an ongoing emergency of imminent, unrelenting doom, but the stories linked to those headlines often have little to do with the actual headlines.

Opinion now regularly sits on the front page of newspapers and magazines and on the home pages of websites right alongside fact, with nothing to distinguish one from the other.

The second hazard involved in gathering our own information is our own cognitive bias. When we search for information, there is a marked tendency to gravitate to sources with which we already agree. Instead of seeking truth, we seek verification of our own opinions. Conservatives turn to Fox News and Liberals read the *Huffington Post*, for example.

If we really want to know the truth, or at least the facts, we need to read both, and many other sources as well. Every possible extreme of opinion now has its own website. Truth is often to be found somewhere between those extremes, but as we mentioned before, finding it takes effort.

No amount of searching would have revealed the truth of the Cosby story, however. Celebrities and the wealthy are able to hire expensive attorneys and pay settlements. When they are found guilty of crimes, they receive reduced sentences or do community service. They can afford more justice than you and I.

Hopefully the many women injured by Cosby can now begin to find closure. Perhaps the public can take heed of yet another example of why a culture which worships celebrity is delusional. We can all be reminded that if we accept without question either the pronouncements of corporate media or the rantings of social media, we are deluded as well.



The Veterans' Corner

By
Scott Drummond,
USCG Veteran

A letter from a foxhole

I don't know if this has been offered up for many to read, however we found the actual article on original newsprint saved in a scrapbook by my wife's family and thought it was worthwhile to share. America could have never been if it weren't for determined patriotic folks willing to serve our armed forces, especially in hard times. This letter, simply written, expresses much which we seem to have forgotten today. Imagine the conditions so many endured and those who gave their lives, for America, and their fellow brethren. I know nothing of this soldier who wrote this letter home, other than my wife's step dad served in the Army in WWII and his family kept this in a huge scrapbook we inherited. The love, faith in God, dedication, patriotism, purity, hopes and prayers reflected in his sincere words are simple, yet magnificent. I surmise that each and every veteran who has struggled through combat conditions, from WWII, Korea, Viet Nam, and all other conflicts can relate to these honest words. This is genuine history we can all learn from. And honor those who served. We have a lot to be thankful for, stand for, and cherish.

This letter was found in an old scrapbook kept by a young woman in Atlanta. All that she saved indicates that the year was 1943 and 1944. This letter was cut from the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*.

"If you could print this maybe it would help in the bond drive." Said a brief note to 'The Journal accompanying the following letter written from a foxhole in France by a Buford lad to his father.

Dearest Dad:

Up until now I am O.K., but am scared so I can hardly write. For I am in a foxhole, and praying to God to take care of me. If a guy was here and said he wasn't scared, he would either be a liar or a fool. Boy, I prayed last night like I had never prayed before. For we were getting mortar shells all around us. I am hoping and praying God will take care of me.

Dad, I can remember some of the things you told me now. You know, when I was home on furlough and you said remember this when you are on the battle field. Boy, it's plenty tough over here! If I was only home I could tell you a lot of things - some of them you wouldn't believe.

People in the U. S. A. don't know what war means. It's terrible. You don't know from one minute to the next whether you will be alive or not.

Gosh, it rains every day over here, and it's the stickiest mud you ever saw. We are wet all the time, and part of the time hungry.

Dad, if you hear anyone griping about anything, tell them they are lucky to be in the U. S. A. Maybe I will be home for Christmas in '45.

- Buddy

Semper Paratus

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