

OPINION

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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER
founding editor, 1963

AT ISSUE

Coretta Scott King died last week at age 78. Her funeral will be Tuesday.

OUR POINT

Often labeled as "widow of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.," she made her own mark on the civil rights movement and on America.

King's own legacy not obscured by husband's

The Daily Journal

America will bury a soldier on Tuesday. Not one who fought on the battle lines of Iraq or Afghanistan, but one who has battled oppression and discrimination here at home.

Coretta Scott King died Jan. 31. She was 78.

King is almost always referred to as "the widow of slain civil rights leader the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr." This is certainly true, but it is equally true that her marriage was not her sole defining characteristic. She was a leader in her own right.



KING

King was born April 27, 1927, in Heiberger, Ala. She spent her childhood on her parents' farm. During the Depression, the children picked cotton to help earn money. Her father, Obediah Scott, was a resourceful man who was the first black person in the district to own a truck and who eventually opened a country store.

As a young child, King walked five miles each day to attend a one-room school. When she was older, she studied at Lincoln High School in Marion, nine miles away. Since this was too far to walk, her mother, Bernice (McMurray) Scott, hired a bus and drove all the black students in the area to and from school — a most unusual course of action for a black woman in the 1930s.

She graduated at the top of her high school class and attended Antioch College in Ohio, where her sister Edythe had been the first full-time black student to live on campus. After college, she studied at the New England Conservatory of Music. It was in Boston that she met the young divinity student she ended up marrying.

Mrs. King knew her husband's work would affect her. Their first child was born in 1955, two weeks before the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott. In 1956, their house was bombed.

Four days after her husband was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn., in 1968, King led a march of 50,000 people through the streets of Memphis, and later that year she took his place in the Poor People's March to Washington.

Her two most prominent legacies are the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta and the national holiday in January that bears her husband's name.

But her greatest legacy was her dignity and perseverance. She was neither intimidated nor eclipsed by her husband's shadow. And it was as a wife, a mother and a leader in her own right that she made her mark on America.

Focus: President Bush

State of the Union vague on legislative initiatives

Scrrips Howard News Service

President Bush is on the road pitching the proposals in his State of the Union address, but his real goal is to regain political momentum and public confidence for his presidency, rather than any specific legislation.



BUSH

When he took office, Bush said he wanted big, bold initiatives, that he didn't want to waste his time and political capital on mini-initiatives of the kind his aides dismissed as "school uniforms," a derisive reference to just such a proposal in the Clinton administration.

In last year's expansive State of the Union, he notably proposed a sweeping reform of Social Security. It flopped. When Bush acknowledged that defeat, Democrats cheerfully leaped to their feet in applause, unfazed that they, as with so many other pressing national problems, had no alternatives of their own.

The president said he would pass on the problem of Social Security, and the even scarier problems of Medicare and Medicaid, to a special commission. There was no mention of the recommendations of another Bush commission for a sweeping overhaul of the tax code.

The big, bold proposal in Tuesday's address was the American Competitiveness Initiative, in a curious historical twist a return to the issue of schools. The heart of the plan is to train 70,000 teachers to teach advanced math and science classes and to hire 30,000 scientists and engineers to work as teachers. The down payment on the plan: a relatively modest \$5.9 billion.

The president unveiled a new theme, "America is addicted to oil," but the means of addressing that addiction were largely ideas, or variations on ideas, that he has offered before. He set a goal of reducing American imports of Mideast oil by 75 percent by 2025, but that sounds a little more sweeping than it actually is since only 11 percent of our oil imports come from the Mideast now.

As promised, he made a robust and forceful defense of his foreign policy, which the White House said candidly was meant to calm public unease over the course of the Iraq war. Bush did not back off at all from Iraq, stating his confidence in ultimate victory, the will of the Iraqi people and the skill of the U.S. military.

The era of big, bold domestic initiatives is very likely over for the Bush presidency. Because of budget deficits that began the year after he took office and will continue at least for several years after he leaves it, there simply is no money to pay for them.



Sherri Eastburn

New bride faces fear of cleaning

During the dating game, I noted all that I have in common with Plowboy. I spent just as much time examining our differences.

For instance, Plowboy doesn't mind cold weather, I hate it. He likes barbecue, I hate it. He doesn't like ice cream, I love it. He likes action movies. I like comedies.

I decided there was nothing earth shattering about those differences. Nothing really so drastic that it could spark a ground war.

My biggest concern about wedded bliss is wrapped up in our most blatant difference. The farmer is a neat freak.

And his blushing bride is ... well, OK, I am a walking pig pen.

Plowboy's clothes hang neatly on hangers, facing the same direction. His belts hang neatly on a hook beside a neat little parade of polished boots and shoes. His hat collection lines a freshly dusted shelf. And I probably don't even have to tell you this, but the man never loses anything.

I, on the other hand, rarely have the patience to hang my clothes on hangers. Because of that, my clothes are tossed in various little piles on the closet floor, by the bed, in the bathroom, under the coffee table. My shoes are a mountain of mismatches. I can never, ever reach into my closet and pluck something from it that isn't wrinkled.

And every morning I cuss my head off while digging around for matching socks and shoes like I'm on a constant, frantic Easter egg hunt.

By the way, Plowboy also has a supply closet of all the newest cleaning supplies, including high-tech duster equipment with attachments. I obviously do not.

Our very opposite approaches to organization and cleaning were magnified last Saturday when we decided (he decided, actually) to clean the back porch.

Since I haphazardly whip through a cleaning project like I carelessly approach everything else in my life, I figured it would be a 22-minute job, tops.

Plowboy, however, had a much different approach.

"We need to take everything out of the room," he said.

"What?"

"To clean everything thoroughly, the room has to be empty," he said.

"Of course," I sighed, still trying to hide at least a little bit of my pig side.

"When the room is empty, it is also easier to dust the baseboards," Plowboy said.

"What's a baseboard?" I asked. Plowboy mumbled something that didn't sound printable as he walked over to the window.

"Can you help me get these curtains down?" he asked. "We're washing curtains, too?" I asked, panicked.

"And we're washing windows," Plowboy said. "When I clean a room, I really clean it."

Since we've been married less than a month and since I'm still trying to hide at least a bit of my bad side, I jumped into a fake cleaning frenzy.

"I love the scent of Lysol," Plowboy said as he scrubbed his head off.

"Oh yeah, I'm the same way," I said as I rolled my eyes.

Twice, I told him I had to go to the bathroom, I'd be right back.

Actually, I stood in the bathroom, talking to myself in the mirror.

"Embrace the cleaning process," I told my pig side. "Try, for once in your 46 dusty, dirty years, to get invested in the art of cleaning."

It didn't work. When I left the bathroom, I still didn't give a rip about cleaning that darn porch.

Three hours later, the porch sparkled. Plowboy was obviously pleased as punch with his labor.

"It looks great," Plowboy said. "Yes," I nodded. "It smells just like a hospital."

"I love a job well done," Plowboy said happily. "This porch hasn't been this clean in years."

"Oh yes," I said. "This place is so sterile, you could perform surgery in here."

Then I turned and quickly walked away.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I don't deal well with such a sterile environment," I said. "I'm going back to my office, where it's dirty and messy and homey."

Feature writer Sherri Eastburn writes this weekly humor column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

YOUR

VIEWS & COMMENTARY

Smiling neighbor will be missed but not forgotten

To the editor:

I would like to add to Tina Morphew's views on Myla Smith (Daily Journal, Jan. 30).

We moved into the house next door to Myla. The day we moved in, we were greeted with a smile at the back fence. As we talked and introduced ourselves to her, it was not long before we felt as if we had known her forever. She was a great neighbor.

When she had to put up a privacy fence to keep her dog from jumping the fence, we were saddened that the back fence conversations would be blocked. But no, Myla went above what most neighbors would have considered and put in a window so we were still able to talk. That was Myla, a friend to anyone she would meet and a stranger she could never be.

There are few people in neighborhoods today that even know the names of their neighbors. I was blessed to know her. She will be missed at the fence but will always be in our hearts.

Jill Lightle
Franklin

Cities' mayors should be fiscally honest, responsible

To the editor:

Residents of Franklin and Greenwood be warned: Hold on to your wallets.

Mayors Brenda Jones-Matthews and Charles Henderson are starring in a new movie titled "Romancing the Tax."

The storyline goes that they are trying to figure out new ways of separating you from your hard earned money. Mayor Jones-Matthews has been spurned twice by her paramour, the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance. Mayor Henderson lost a duel with his archrival, the state legislature, when members decided not to hear a bill allowing for a myriad of new taxes for cities.

Mayors Jones-Matthews and Henderson are victims of their own success. The zoning boards of both Franklin and Greenwood have never seen a housing addition or apartment complex they wouldn't approve. In other words, there has been no planned growth of either community, which begs the question, with all of this growth has come increased revenues from property tax collections, so why do we need to collect more property taxes?

Please note that the land developer puts in all utilities and roads. Large fees are collected for water and sewer hookups, all of which are paid for by the occupant of the house or apartment at the time a mortgage or business loan is originated. The cities take over care of the roads, but it would certainly be reasonable to assume that there would be no repairs needed on these roads for at least eight to 10 years.

If people have read the Daily Journal, they know all of this. So government officials be aware: We are no longer in the dark on how our government works.

Mayor Jones-Matthews needs to come clean with the taxpayers of Franklin. According to published reports, Franklin was collecting \$4.7 million under the allowed limit in 2003 when property tax rates were frozen. But, according to Mayor Jones-Matthews, Franklin has been balancing its budget for the past three years with the city's cash reserves.

This means Franklin had been over-taxing its residents for quite some time. This, to the mayor's chagrin, is why the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance has turned down her request twice to increase Franklin's property taxes by 33 percent. Mayor, there was no error.

Why are you wasting the people of Franklin's tax money on suing the state for more property tax money that at this time you do not need? Shame on you.

Both mayors should be more concerned with being fiscally responsible. If I were in their shoes, I would conduct an audit of each department. A real audit, not one done by your department

WRITE A LETTER

The Daily Journal invites readers to submit letters, opinion columns and e-mail comments for the opinion page.

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heads. When you scratch the surface of department budgets, you will probably find out things you wish you never knew. Waste will be one of them. Embezzling may be another.

If you have read the Daily Journal in the past year, you would know this is a possibility. You also need to do a better job of discerning between "wants" and "needs." The burden taxes put on families is crushing.

Citizens of both Franklin and Greenwood need to let their respective mayors and city council representatives know that enough is enough. It's your wallet and your family.

Bill Chernisky
Greenwood

Telephone deregulation bad for state, Hoosiers

To the editor:

Indiana telephone customers could lose some important protections if the General Assembly approves a controversial approach.

Senate Bill 245 and House Bill 1279 deregulate the telecommunications industry, including Indiana's biggest phone companies. The proposals allow price increases for basic local service and limit the state's ability to oversee the customer service you receive from your phone company. SB 245 would allow phone companies to charge by the minute for local calls.

Consumer groups like AARP Indiana believe these bills will lead to higher phone bills and lower service quality for Hoosiers by eliminating the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission's authority over critical aspects of phone service.

Commission members recently said the agency should still play a role in regulating telecommunications because it's not clear that competition exists and regulation is needed to protect customers. Hoosier consumers, especially older adults, could be hurt if Indiana deregulates its giant telephone companies. Phone service affordability is very important to older adults and ratepayers in general. What might happen to your phone bill if big companies such as AT&T and Verizon can increase local phone rates, particularly since these companies own 93 percent of the land lines in Indiana?

SB 245 is a bad call for Indiana. We need to keep protection for basic phone service in Indiana. Call your senator and your representative today and ask them to vote no on SB 245 and HB 1279.

Mary Jane Philippe
Greenwood

Newspaper shed light of truth on important issue

To the editor:

Thank goodness a lot of truth is coming to light and your paper printed it.

I'm referring to the "Big bosses, big paychecks" article (Jan. 21, Daily Journal). These executives are being under the light of the clamp-down of the Securities and Exchange Commission. These 10 top executives are hauling in outrageous salaries plus many perks, while a big part of the country is on welfare or just barely making it.

Something is wrong with this. There is a tremendous imbalance. When I worked for General Motors in 1983, they lost \$850 million that year. Our union was asking for a pay raise of 50 cents an hour. It was turned down. In fact we gave up \$2

an hour and gave up any year-end bonuses. A union meeting was called. The local president of the union stood up to the podium and said, "The reason the company is losing money is that you hourly people make too much money."

After the racket had quieted down, he then read a report on the salaries of the top 10 executives of General Motors. The lowest one made a little more than \$1 million plus stocks and other perks. It looked like the report you printed in the Journal.

It is high time that the public knew the truth about the exorbitant difference between workers your articles show. It is your right to know about people who violate the laws, etc.

Thanks again for this exposé.
Donald L. Sandlin
Franklin

State legislators correct to propose property tax reform

To the editor:

Indiana Farm Bureau and its 280,000 members across the state applaud the recent action taken by the Indiana House of Representatives, which voted 98-0 to end property taxes in the state of Indiana by 2009.

Indiana citizens, farmers and businesses continue to struggle with a tax system that was established more than a century and a half ago by the Constitutional Convention of 1851. In 1851, the ownership of property was a relatively true measure of wealth and perhaps a fair way to tax individuals. But times have changed.

In today's world, property taxes do not reflect the taxpayer's ability to pay nor do they reflect the value of the services received by the taxpayer or the benefits provided by government to the property itself.

Property taxes often tax debt rather than wealth. This is especially true in the case of homeowners with large mortgages. Moreover, they penalize those homeowners who take pride in the maintenance and upkeep of their property.

Our system demands 1,100 separate assessing officials applying the same set of rules, rules which require a high degree of subjective interpretation by the assessors themselves, uniformly and equally across the state. A recent study conducted by the highly respected Indiana Fiscal Policy Institute verified and highlighted the inequities of our assessment system. Notwithstanding the best efforts of Indiana's assessors, it is inevitable that taxes on similar parcels of property will vary widely across the state.

Our property tax system shelters completely those whose wealth is invested in intangibles such as stocks, bonds and other Wall Street securities but penalizes those who reinvest their life savings in Indiana property.

Property taxes are expensive to collect and the assessment process itself consumes much of the revenue that property taxes generate.

Farm Bureau believes it is time for the state to embrace real financial restructuring. Too often alleged restructuring has been no more than a quick fix that silences those taxpayers who happen to be complaining the loudest at that time but leaves the state's antiquated property tax system intact. This approach does nothing to address the larger problems that are inherent in our property tax system.

We understand this measure has a long way to go in the legislative process, but Farm Bureau congratulates Rep. Chet Dobis, D-Merrillville, and his House colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have unanimously endorsed a measure that would address these inequities by throwing out Indiana's unfair property tax system.

They would give the state three years to develop an alternative system of revenue. Farm Bureau applauds this genuine bipartisan effort to correct our state's antiquated and inequitable tax system and we look forward to working with progressive legislators to move Indiana into the modern world.

Don Villwock
President,
Indiana Farm Bureau