

OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

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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



Hearts and more hearts

The Daily Journal

EDITOR'S NOTE — *Hearts and Darts* is published as space is available and each Monday in the Daily Journal. To submit an item, please call Editorial Assistant Kelly Boggs at 736-2712. Items can also be submitted by e-mail to kboggs@thejournalnet.com, by fax to 736-2766 or by mail to *Hearts and Darts*, P.O. Box 699, Franklin, IN 46131. Items should include the writer's full name, street address and telephone number and the full names of all people mentioned in the item. Readers are asked to name no more than 10 individuals and/or five businesses per item.

Hearts

• I want to give a great big heart to my Center Grove bus trainer, Darlene Sidebottom. She has been training me for six weeks and went with me to pass my commercial driver's license test.

Without all her help and the help from the Lord, I wouldn't have made it through. I also want to thank all the trainers for their help as I practiced with Joanne Jenkins, Bev Beers, Elaine Collins, Garry Gilbert, Tom Murphy and Mary Lee Cridlin.

Center Grove has a wonderful program that trains their bus drivers beyond what the state requires. It takes a tough but gentle team to pull together and help out the trainees.

To all the mechanics in the bus garage, thanks to you, too. Gail Allison, Pressley Kegley, Tracey Powers and Jeff Nance helped me with all the underneath the bus stuff that I never much cared about, but I guarantee I now can give in detail what everything is.

What a great team to be part of. Thanks for all the support from the bus drivers, and for the encouragement they gave to me. I needed it and appreciate it. To my close friends and my family, I know I had a team pulling for me. I've been trying to find my place in life and, with their prayers, I've found it.

Stephanie Hensley
Bargersville

• Hearts to all the wonderful volunteers and donors to the Pleasant Grove Elementary Family Fun Night. With your help we had a great evening of fun for our kids and families. Special hearts to the folks who worked on the committee to make it happen.

Pleasant Grove Elementary School PTO Board

• Hearts to Danielle Burris, Carissa Dresslar and Pet Supplies Plus on County Line Road. Carissa and Danielle did a super job arranging for the Humane Society of Johnson County to have a Pet Adoption Event for their Girl Scout project. The drawstring bags they put together were a great addition.

The Humane Society of Johnson County was very impressed at how well your project was thought out. Hearts to Pet Supplies Plus for hosting the Pet Adoption Event.

Christie Killinger
Bargersville

• Hearts to The Checkered Flag restaurant, across from the old ArvinMeritor in Franklin. They have great food, great atmosphere and a great staff.

Connie Dile
Franklin

• Partnership for a Healthier Johnson County thanks the following businesses for their recent donations in support of Partnership's Stop Smoking 2006 Program: Jonathan Byrd's Cafeteria, Aunt Judy's Country Kitchen and Starbucks (Franklin).

With their generous donations these businesses recognize that helping others to live a healthier, tobacco-free life is beneficial for individuals, families and our community. Again, thank you for your investment in the current and future health of Johnson County.

Cathy Bailey
Program support specialist,
Partnership for a Healthier Johnson County

Focus: Internet access

Merger may leave some with weaker service

The Providence (R.I.) Journal

AT&T's proposed purchase of Bell South, in a vast \$67 billion deal, would almost certainly provide initial benefits for some consumers, although the long-term effects are far more difficult to predict.

At first, some AT&T patrons could presumably see certain cost and time savings, and simplified billing, as they bought old-fashioned "land-line" phone service, broadband Internet services and cell-phone service all from the same company.

The company would reap considerable economies of scale by absorbing Bell South, and some of these savings would presumably go to the customers.

The proposed new AT&T is starting to remind us of old "Ma Bell" — the American Telephone & Telegraph Co., a.k.a. AT&T. However, Ma Bell was a heavily regulated entity; the new behemoth would probably not have to worry much about regulation in today's wild communications marketplace, in which "deregulation" is still a mantra — especially in the Republican White House and Congress.

Some worry that the proposed BellSouth purchase would give AT&T excessive power, and accelerate the economic impulse to cut deals with big customers to give them better and higher-speed Internet service (though perhaps at a premium price), while leaving small customers with slower, less reliable service.

A company this big and pervasive would have impressive pricing power, and could become a formidable gatekeeper at portals in the Internet and telephone worlds.

The natural search for profit maximization might lead it to demand more from potential customers than we'd want such a public utility to get.

Thus government officials, including members of Congress, need to look carefully at the proposed AT&T deal and other signs of growing consolidation in the telecommunications market. In particular, they should weigh whether new regulations are needed to ensure that access to the Internet remains as open as technologically possible.

Loss of bladder control, puking nothing a farmer can't handle

Well, the marital waters were muddied recently when I suffered a touch of the flu.

For some weird reason, I was embarrassed to admit to the farmer that I was sick as a dog. That is how I discovered that quietly puking your head off is next to impossible.

To violently lose my cookies, I sprinted off to the bathroom and turned on the faucet to drown out the hurl.

Now let me tell you something else that made the nausea even more important to hide.

I have false teeth and the bottom ones are too loose. Therefore, it is imperative that I drop my teeth in my hand before I stick my head over the toilet bowl.

There I was, on my knees, in my flannel-footed pajamas, hanging over the toilet. My bottom teeth were in my palm.

I was mid gag when, to my horror, I heard the farmer, on the other side of the bathroom door:

"Did you say something?" Plowboy asked.

Actually, I had just finished mulling a string of bad words between gags.

"No," I said quickly. "Huh uh."

"What are you doing in there?"

"Taking off my make-up, washing my face," I said. "Nothing exciting."

"I thought I heard you say something," he said.

Actually, he might have heard me say, "Oh God, I'm dying." But again, I insisted that he was hallucinating.

I listened for him to walk away, wondering why I didn't just go ahead and admit that I was sprawled on the bathroom linoleum, at death's door.



Sherri Eastburn

Somehow, I willed myself to delay the projectile vomiting until I heard Plowboy go into the living room and turn on the TV.

"Are you feeling ok?" he asked me later.

"Sure," I lied. "Why?"

"I thought I heard you getting sick in the bathroom," he said.

"No," I said. "I wasn't sick. I don't ever throw up."

Now, why I said that, I don't know. I have a weak stomach. I can puke at the drop of a hat. But I'm still trying to present myself as a halfway sane, romantic, sexy bride.

Throwing up just doesn't fit into that picture.

As if the flu problem wasn't enough stress, I developed a nasty case of bronchitis two days later.

I spent the entire day at work, coughing my head off and peeing my pants, in unison.

I went to the doctor, begged for major medications and went home, thinking I would curl up on the couch and rest.

Well, if you've ever had bronchitis, you know you don't dare rest your head on anything except perhaps your hand. Lie down and you pay for it with 20 minutes of violent coughing spasms.

By the second day of bronchitis hell, I meekly asked Plowboy if he would please do me a favor:

"When you go to the grocery, would you mind buying me a package of feminine hygiene products?"

"Sure," he said.

"Are you sure you won't be embarrassed?" I asked.

"Yes," Plowboy nodded. Well, I should have closed my mouth and zipped it shut at that very moment. But of course, I had to blab myself right into another round of humiliation.

"I want to explain something that is really embarrassing," I said.

"I'm 46, and my bladder is worn out. When I cough, I wet my pants."

"I know," Plowboy said.

What?

My bottom lip quivered. It was hard enough to explain why I needed what I needed from the store, especially since I don't have a uterus.

Somehow, the situation seemed worse. How did Plowboy know about my incontinence issue?

"You peed on me last night," he said calmly. "You started to cough in your sleep and you wet the bed."

Oh...my...Lord...

"It's OK, though," Plowboy said quickly.

"I'm so um ... sorry," I said.

"No big deal," he said with a shrug.

As he started out the door, Plowboy turned back and said, "A few days ago, I heard you throwing up in the bathroom. And guess what? That's OK too."

"Thank goodness," I sighed.

"It's really been stressful to conceal my issues."

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

Without polygamy, Mormonism isn't reason to doubt qualified candidate

Say the name Mitt Romney and three words invariably follow: The Mormon Factor.

Especially this political season as Romney considers a 2008 presidential bid at the same time HBO premiered a polygamy sitcom, "Big Love," on Sunday.

Yes, we've apparently exhausted all comedic plotlines and have had to turn to a small sliver of oddball humanity for new material. You can imagine the producers brainstorming:

"OK, we've done 'Desperate Housewives'; we've done 'Sex in the City'; we've done the gay thing. Hey, don't bogart. I've got it! A Viagra-popping polygamist with his three wives."

"Dewd!"

And we wonder why they hate us.

Of course polygamy is illegal in the United States, and the Mormon church stopped the practice more than 100 years ago. Even so, a few polygamists still practice the multiple-wife arrangement such that now we can gather 'round the tube and enjoy the fantasy no one really wants to enjoy. Schadenfreude never felt so good.

"Big Love," which frankly sounds like something people deny ever having accidentally watched in their hotel rooms, has people wondering again whether the Mormon Factor will be a problem for Romney should he decide to run for president.

Romney hasn't said he's running yet, but he has announced that he won't seek re-election as governor. That fact along with his travels, speaking engagements and frequent television appearances suggest that he's on the ballot unofficially. Romney also has made several visits to South Carolina, where he's officially stumping for Gov. Mark Sanford's re-election.

Perhaps more to the point, South Carolina is home to the first



Kathleen Parker

Southern Republican primary. Life in South Carolina these days feels like fraternity rush week as both Democrats and Republicans try to charm would-be voters in perhaps the longest pre-election presidential campaign in history.

Inevitably, the question of Romney's Mormonism comes up. Romney isn't worried and already has demonstrated his sense of humor about some of the stereotypes television viewers will enjoy with "Big Love." During a now-famous speech, he joked that he believed that marriage is between "a man and a woman ... and a woman ... and a woman."

Otherwise, his strategy is to shift focus away from Mormon doctrine and theological differences to shared values. Unlike some candidates who quote scripture to establish their religious bona fides, Romney walks the walk.

"Family values" isn't just a campaign slogan; family values define his life. He married his high school sweetheart, and together they raised five sons.

Whatever Romney's Mormon distinctions, he is a social conservative and has fought most of the important battles on his home turf, from same-sex marriage to cloning to stem cell research.

He's pro-life, though he promised during his gubernatorial campaign that he wouldn't do anything to change abortion laws if elected. And he's got a track record of "competent conservatism," as

some of his admirers have put it.

When Romney became governor of Massachusetts, for example, the state had a \$3 billion deficit. Today, Romney can boast a \$1 billion surplus.

Moreover, he's filed legislation that would ensure health insurance coverage for every citizen in his state. He also is pushing for education reforms that would force parents to be better partners with schools in low-performing districts.

"Force" is perhaps too strong a term, but "voluntary" doesn't quite cover it either. As proposed, parents who receive state child-care funds, and whose children are in underperforming districts, would have to attend a couple of weekend parenting seminars.

Surely there must be something wrong with a man like Romney, who is unfairly handsome and, perhaps, too squeaky-clean. Like a good Mormon (and some Evangelicals), he never has taken a drink or smoked. He doesn't even drink coffee or tea, though does permit himself an occasional Diet Vanilla Coke. (Note to Mitt: Drop the vanilla.)

What else? He's been hugely successful in business; saved the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics from scandal and bankruptcy; is rich and doesn't accept a salary as governor. He's smart, articulate, a workaholic who knows his material.

"No one's whispering in his ear," in the words of S.C. Republican Party Chairman Katon Dawson, who also used "charisma," "charm" and "wow factor" to describe a recent Romney visit down South.

So, what is wrong with this guy, anyway?

Oh, yeah. He's a Mormon.

Kathleen Parker is a syndicated columnist for the Orlando Sentinel. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Action, policy needed to fix state's energy problem

To the editor:

The saying "patience is a virtue" often proves true, but sometimes waiting too long to act can produce negative results. Such would be the case if Indiana fails to address its current energy situation.

The State Utility Forecasting Group's recently released forecast shows that in 2010 Indiana will be faced with a significant shortage in electrical resources. The problem can be fixed, if action is taken now.

Prior to 2003, the forecast only identified a need for additional power at peak demand times. The 2005 forecast now shows a need for substantial baseload power in the near term.

The forecast projects that Indiana will need an additional 4,800 megawatts of power in less than 10 years, which is the length of time it takes to build a base-load/coal-fired power plant. To generate 4,800 megawatts, Indiana would need to build about six sizeable power plants.

While the numbers are startling, the forecast is based on many input assumptions and analysis. Only time will ultimately prove its accuracy.

The choices are limited. We need to build new power plants and increase conservation efforts. Purchasing electricity from other generators on the power grid is another option, but with neighboring states also looking to the grid for additional supply, this becomes less attractive.

In recent years the Indiana Chamber of Commerce has raised concern over the state's dwindling electric power reserves and urged the development of a comprehensive energy policy. Given the recent report, the need for that policy is greater than ever.

Kevin Brinegar

president,
Indiana Chamber of Commerce
Indianapolis

Politicians with money have time to meet voters

To the editor:

In his letter, "Get to know candidates before primary in May," (Daily Journal, March 2) Eugene Nix pretends to believe Ron West generously set aside time to meet with him while Rep. Woody Burton chose to conduct a fund-raiser. What a bunch of garbage.

Two facts are worth noting. First, anyone who reads the newspaper knows Burton appears at town meetings to speak with voters all the time. I have never seen an elected official who has availed himself to the public as much as Burton. My hat's off to him.

Second, political campaigns cost money. If we want regular guys like Burton to hold public office, they have to raise money to do it. Unfortunately, rich guys who own multiple golf courses may not need fund-raisers to get their message out. They think they can just buy the office they want with their own money.

Also, with the time the rich guy saves not having to raise funds, he can meet with his little friends like Eugene Nix who can then fire off contrived letters calculated to make it look like the rich guy cares about the little guy.

After this campaign season is over, I hope Mr. West retains his wealth since he probably earned it. But I also hope he's not another rich lawmaker as well.

Mark Fowler
Greenwood

WRITE A LETTER

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

GUIDELINES

- Letters published in the Daily Journal must contain the writer's name and city or town.
- Letters sent to the Daily Journal must be signed and must include a daytime telephone number for verification to be considered for publication.
- Make sure the e-mail letter includes the writer's name, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address for verification.
- Opinion columns for the community forum section of the editorial page also will be considered for publication. The article should be kept to a reasonable length and should include the writer's name, address and telephone number for verification.
- Because of space and legal considerations, the Daily Journal reserves the right to edit any letters or articles and to limit comments.

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