

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

• Special hearts and thank you to all those in the area who made some people's Christmas a little brighter.

Especially a heartfelt thanks to the Trafalgar Grocery for allowing the project and the time spent on receiving gifts and donations, and also to all those who went shopping or donated gifts or money to those in need.

You did make a difference in their lives. We were able to help families including people ages 4 months to 77 years living in Johnson County in the Nineveh, Morgantown and Trafalgar areas.

To Trafalgar United Methodist Church, you may be a small congregation, but you made a large impact on donating funds and time to this local community's needs.

Lastly, to my very special co-chairs Stacey Adams and Deb Pahl, you were the driving force behind this program, and I couldn't have done it without your help.

We will, to the best of our ability, continue this program each year.

May all have a blessed new year.

Sandy A. Adams
The Tree of Caring

• A great big thanks to Mary Facemire for the nice way she looks after the senior citizens of our 50s-plus group. Mary, you are doing a great job at the parks department for all of us from seniors to children. May God bless you for your love and concern for your family, loved ones and friends.

Versa Petro
Whiteland

• Hearts to some of my friends in Franklin for remembering me during the holidays. I'm incarcerated for a few months in Henryville, but hearts to Steve and Arlene Andrews for writing me and getting me the Daily Journal for Christmas, and to the guys at Trisler Hardwood Co. for sending me a Christmas box full of joy and funny stuff. I need a good laugh.

Thanks to all, and God bless you guys.

Bob Villarreal
Henryville Correctional Unit

• Hearts go out to our good neighbors Jim Hawk and Carl Harrison. After the big snow Dec. 8, they both came over with their snow blowers and cleaned our drive for us.

Also, hearts go out to Ed Roush for his continuing help with keeping our garden plowed. Neighbors like these are greatly appreciated.

Nina and Kenneth Burton
Franklin

• To all of the wonderful people who helped in so many different ways during our recent house fire and since then, we would like to extend our heartfelt thank you.

The Joe Doyle family
Trafalgar

• I would like to send a big heart to American Legion Post 205, Masonic Lodge 107, Community Congregational Church and Franklin Memorial Christian Church for all of their prayers and support during my time of deployment in Iraq.

I would also like to send hearts to all of my children's teachers for all of the continuing understanding and support that they have given my children.

And a big heart to all of my family for being there for me and supporting me every step of the way.

Scott Cantwell
Franklin

Focus: Immigration

Building wall along Mexican border loony

San Francisco Chronicle

In a country as diverse as ours, there will always be some people pushing such crackpot ideas as building a nearly 1,000-mile fence along the U.S.-Mexico border.

But when those ideas are approved by a majority of members of the House of Representatives, you have to wonder whether the inmates have indeed taken over the asylum.

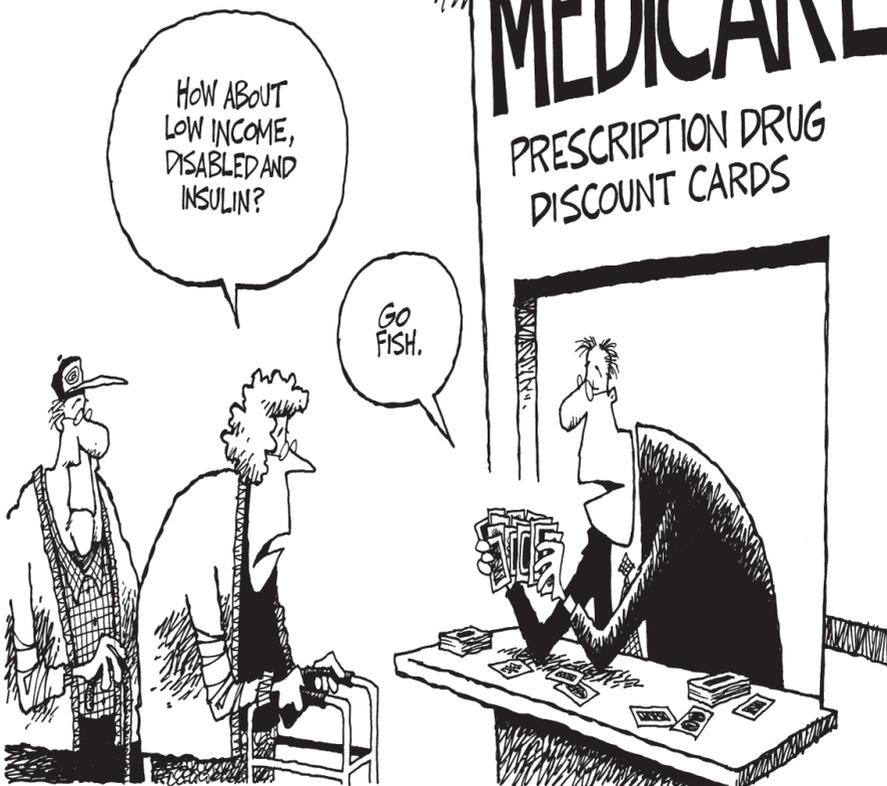
There might be a sliver of rationality to building a border fence, if there were any evidence that such a barrier would keep out illegal immigrants. But the experience on the U.S. border shows that just the opposite is the case.

During the past 20 years, the federal government has increased funding for border security by 519 percent, including building fences at some of the most heavily crossed sections of the border in California, Arizona and Texas. But during this same period, the illegal immigrant population has increased from 4 million to nearly 11 million, according to a report from the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute in Washington.

What numerous studies have shown is that our border fences have not deterred people from making the crossing. All they have done is force people into areas that are more difficult to cross, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of would-be migrants each year.

The fence is just one of numerous bad ideas in the bill approved by the House in December before its winter recess by a 238-184 vote. We're counting on the U.S. Senate to restore some sanity to the halls of Congress by rejecting the bill. Until it does, watch out for crackpot ideas becoming the law of the land.

edStein '06
Rocky Mtn.
NEWS-NEA



Hunt for high-wattage relief results in tanning-bed panic

During one of those gray days last week, I parked my car in front of a tanning salon, sprinted inside and signed on for 20 minutes of pretend.

I've done it before, when winter makes my back and legs scream from the big A (arthritis).

I also suffer from a miserable case of seasonal affective disorder. So I talked myself into buying moments in the Mega Malibu bed, hoping for miracles.

"When you press the button, this bed automatically closes," said the brown-as-a-berry tanning-bed clerk, who weighed 97 pounds.

"OK."
"After 15 minutes, the cover automatically raises on its own," she said. "There's an emergency button on this panel if, for some reason, you have to get out of the bed."

Well, well, well.
I smiled at the realization. It was pretty darn obvious to me. I had just purchased imaginary sunshine in the Cadillac of tanning beds.

As the clerk excused herself, I hurriedly stripped down, grabbed my goggles and prepared to hear sea gulls in my head. Maybe this special bed would tan my cellulite beyond recognition.

I pressed the button. And the automatic cover slowly eased its way over me. And locked.

Uh-oh.
Ten seconds went by before I placed my left hand over the side of the tanning bed to test the amount of space available between the cover and the bed.

Four fingers of space was there. As the tanning bed clerk explained, the Mega Malibu lid was locked in place. I pushed up on it. And the lid refused to budge.



Sherri Coner

That's when the heart palpitations set in.

I told myself not to wig out. "The lid is supposed to lock," I whispered under my breath. "In fact, you paid extra to stretch out in a tan bed with a lock."

I tried to hum reggae music. I tried to remember the words to "Margaritaville." I tried to stop trying to force the lid of the tanning bed to open.

Some kind of fan kicked on inside the bed. And the heat intensified.

"Now I can't breathe," I whispered. "I feel scared. Why do I feel scared?"

I started to tick off the reasons I was suddenly terrified.

That fan is too loud. I can't possibly visualize waves lapping on the shore when it sounds more like I'm riding inside a trash truck.

It's also too hot in here, which is affecting my perimenopausal estrogen levels.

"I am probably growing chest hair right this moment," I gasped.

Because the lights are too hot, my skin is also burning off.

But the top reason for the first panic attack of my entire life was that I couldn't open that dang lid.

What if the bed is broken? What if the automatic lid refuses to open? What if the flirty clerk and her boyfriend are making out

behind the counter and they forget to check on the 40-ish customer in the Mega Malibu? What if I fry alive?

I had to set myself free. There was no way I could spend 15 minutes locked inside this Malibu inferno. Like Helen Keller, I pawed blindly at the panel, looking for the emergency lid release.

To find the stupid button, I was forced to remove my protective goggles, which threw me into a new panic.

"Oh my gosh, my poor, vulnerable retinas," I panted as I slammed my fist against the emergency button.

"I could go blind, trying to save myself from Mega Malibu," I sobbed.

Finally, the lid began to lift. I rolled my flushed hind end out of that tanning bed like a chubby, disoriented ninja.

After the roll to freedom, I tripped over my shoes and went flying, sweaty-face first, into the wall.

"Shake it off," I hissed to myself, dizzy from the impact. "At least you're free. Look how close you came to becoming a French fry."

I shuddered at the image in my head. My girlfriends would identify my remains when they saw my toe ring hidden in the ashes.

"Who are you kidding?" I mumbled to myself as I jumped in my car.

"You wouldn't look like a petite little overcooked French fry. Your body would much more resemble a mozzarella stick."

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

YOUR VIEWS

Recent research shows basis for global warming

To the editor:

It is a shame that Dr. Charles Thomas does not exercise the discipline that his title represents and look at the most recent research findings on the topic of global warming (Daily Journal, Dec. 27.) Citing eight-year-old references for such a rapidly changing scenario is a red flag that this person, like the Bush administration, does not want to be confused by the facts. At present, the scientific academies of the 11 largest nations, including the United States, China, India, Brazil and Russia, are unanimous in three major conclusions:

1. The global average surface temperature has increased over the 20th century by about 0.6 degrees Celsius. Temperatures have risen during the past four decades in the lowest 8 kilometers of the atmosphere. Snow cover and ice extent have decreased.

2. There is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed in the past 50 years is attributable to human activities. Emissions of greenhouse gases and aerosols due to human activities continue to alter the atmosphere in ways that are expected to affect the climate. Natural factors have made small contributions to radiative forcing over the past century.

3. Human influences will continue to change atmospheric composition throughout the 21st century. Global average temperature and sea level are projected to rise under all Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on Emissions Scenarios.

These are documented in the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published in 2001, and currently being updated with additional evidence supporting those conclusions. This report has the unqualified endorsement nearly every trained and informed scientist on the planet Earth.

In the wings are three small groups of "scientists" who are out of step with their colleagues and are primarily consultants to the political factions and businesses who have the most to lose if positive action is taken to correct the situation.

The most blatant of these critics totally denies that global warming has occurred, citing the absence of satellite data to support the claim. That is an outright fabrication, since satellite data was one of the primary sources leading to the unanimous conclusions above.

As a trained scientist and an informed citizen, I much prefer to believe the conclusions of the scientific academies of all the major nations, including the largest polluters, than the ranting of the paid sycophants of the business community.

The real shame is the way conservatives pick and choose the facts they want to believe so their preconceived ideas are not compromised. While some liberals do the same, they usually are open to the total body of evidence from the scientific community.

Donald A. Smith
Indianapolis

Ads on both sides of Supreme Court debate wrong

Paid commercials on radio and television are bad enough when they try to sell, or skewer, political candidates. Since they're too short and too shrill to convey useful information, they usually play to base emotion instead of reasoned intellect.

But campaign-style ads are a truly dreadful device when it comes to promoting or opposing a Supreme Court nominee. And independent groups on both sides of the confirmation battle involving Judge Samuel Alito seem intent on proving how distorting and disturbing these commercials can be.

Subjecting Supreme Court nominees to merciless political pounding started with Judge Robert Bork, defeated in 1987 after his nomination by President Reagan. To his foes, Bork was a right-wing ideologue who placed himself outside the mainstream of American judicial thought. To his supporters, Bork was a victim of a vicious liberal campaign to demonize his views and personality.

Almost 20 years later, the fallout from Bork continues to pollute the capitol. Judicial battles can resemble the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with both sides cursed by memory and harboring bitter grudges against the other: This long-running feud almost erupted into open warfare last spring, with Democrats threatening to filibuster against a Supreme Court pick and Republicans threatening to change Senate rules to prevent use of that tactic.

In a brave, and rare, act of



Cokie Roberts and Steven V. Roberts

statesmanship, 14 lawmakers — seven from each party — saved the Senate from self-immolation. The Democrats announced they would not support a filibuster except in extraordinary circumstances, and the Republicans promised to oppose rules changes aimed at muffling the minority.

But interest groups on both sides of the Alito debate (and their more hot-tempered allies inside the Senate) are not the least bit interested in compromise or comity. They're yearning for battle. Conflict gives them the attention, and contributions, they crave. Their stock in trade is stirring up passions and playing down fairness.

These groups have every legal right to raise money and spend it on ads. But that doesn't mean the public, or the Senate, should pay any attention to the allegations made in those ads.

Start with the anti-Alito crowd.

Two different organizations, IndependentCourt and MoveOn, are running ads focused on a single opinion written by the judge in 2002. Twelve years earlier, during his Senate confirmation hearings, Alito had promised to avoid cases involving Vanguard, the company that handles his investments. But in one instance he failed to do so.

The New York Times, no friend of President Bush's judicial selections, reported that "Judge Alito's lapses were minor" and that in all but a few cases, he kept his word to the Senate. No matter: IndependentCourt's commercial accuses Alito of deception and dishonesty. In Vanguard's ad, a character advising the judge tells him, "You broke your word."

As Judge Alito conceded at his hearings this week, he should have handled the situation differently. But even his foes don't allege any pattern of unethical behavior.

At most he's guilty of a single small indiscretion. To portray him as a dishonest person who breaks his word is an act of dishonesty.

The other side is just as bad. In one radio ad, sponsored by the Judicial Confirmation Network, a black preacher named Bill Owens brands Alito's critics as extremists who even oppose the greeting "Merry Christmas." In an ominous tone he says, "You know who they are, (foes of) religious liberty ... who tell little girls in the first grade that they can't draw pictures of our savior,

Jesus Christ, for class projects."

Owens has it exactly wrong. In America, religious liberty means freedom from orthodoxy imposed by the state. If the preacher, or any parent, wants his daughter to draw pictures of Jesus in the first grade, he's perfectly free to send her to a Christian academy or Sunday school. It's hardly extremism to say religious instruction has no place in a public school, paid for with taxpayer dollars.

The Alito nomination is a serious matter worth serious debate. One example: since he was nominated to the court, courageous reporters have revealed vast abuses of presidential power, from lawless eavesdropping to secret prisons. When President Bush was asked at a press conference whether there were any limits on "unchecked" presidential power during wartime, he never answered the question. So any new justice will cast critical votes in the next few years defining those limits.

But as this debate goes forward two things are clear: Samuel Alito is not dishonest, and his critics are not extremists. Paid ads making those charges are plain wrong.

Cokie Roberts is a political commentator for ABC News and senior news analyst for National Public Radio. Her husband, Steven V. Roberts, is a contributing editor to U.S. News and World Report and a TV and radio commentator. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.