

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Letter to the Editor:

Unless you've been asleep in your den for the last month you must have seen a variety of variously attired vaguely human forms wandering our streets. Don't be alarmed, this is merely the usual Spring migration of north bound Appalachian hiker hikers challenging themselves and the "trail" as they move towards a mythical mountain called Katahdin located in far off Maine. You'll see them prowling the streets wearing Crocs and shorts and tee shirts worn over long underwear. No, these aren't Madonna wannabes. This or rain suits is normal hiker attire as the rest of their clothes tumble through the washing machines located in various businesses in town.

The hikers come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and ages and when they hit town they are all in search of at least two of the basic human needs. Food and shelter. Hikers are estimated to burn through from 4000 to 6000 calories a day and generally are carrying no more than 2000 calories in their hiker meals. Town days, sometimes referred to as Zero Days (as in zero miles) are just made for replenishing that shortfall. The hiker grapevine which moves up and down the trail via word of mouth and websites such as whiteblaze.net or hikinghq.net are valued sources of information regarding the best bargains in "all you can eat" (AYCE to hikers) places or the places viewed as most hiker friendly. The hikers have been sleeping in tents, hammocks, or communally in goat sheds referred to as shelters which are spaced from 6-12 miles apart the entire 2176 mile length of the trail. A dry room and a shower becomes a truly luxurious experience.

Hiawassee is generally viewed as a hiker friendly town with it's collection of resupply options as well as understanding hoteliers. One of the best known hostels on the trail, The Blueberry Patch is right outside of town on Hwy. 76 and the Hiawassee Inn specifically tailors itself to the needs of hikers by providing laundry facilities, an outfitter, and a lenient view towards when a room is full. The Hiawassee Inn is also tolerant of pets, who sometimes are among it's best behaved guests.

Some 2000 hikers generally start from Springer Mountain by Amicalola Falls State Park and from 2-300 will actually complete the entire trail in one year. Injuries, homesickness, and just general fatigue takes it's toll on hikers. The largest part of the north bound (NOBO) hikers tend to begin in March and will continue into May with some hikers passing through in every month of the year. A much smaller migration occurs in the Fall as south bound (SOBO) hikers near their goal of Springer Mtn. By the time the SOBOs reach our area they are like the horse headed for the barn. It's 67.5 miles from Dicks Creek Gap to Springer and few hikers have the patience (or the money) to stop.

The oldest hiker on the trail this year is an 88 year old retired Naval Officer using the nickname Cimmarron. A fall on the trail required a visit to the Chatauge ER, but he's back on the trail and reportedly currently on the Trail north of Franklin, NC.

So help Hiawassee keep its friendly reputation and give these outlanders a friendly welcome. For most hikers this is a once in a lifetime dream that they are living and let their memories of Hiawassee be pleasant ones.

Gene Roll

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

When someone can't make up their mind, there is more involved in that statement than simple indecision. We are all of "two minds." We have a left brain for logical processes and a right brain for emotion and intuition. In fact we actually have two brains functioning independently of each other, joined at the base by the corpus callosum, which is similar in function to a high speed network cable. Our personalities are to a large degree a function of the blending of our left and right brain processes.

Apparently our political views are also influenced by the structure of our brains. Researchers at University College in London have discovered that those who consider themselves liberal have larger anterior cingulate cortexes and a greater ability to process conflicting information. Those who consider themselves conservative have larger amygdalae and a greater ability to recognize threat. The cingulate cortex is involved in executive function, learning and abstract thinking. The amygdala is involved in fear response and, interestingly, memory consolidation.

Perhaps it is understandable that a species with two brains, two eyes, two ears and pairs of limbs would habitually divide itself into two opposing camps. Conservatives and liberals, democrats and republicans compete for what they perceive as their own best interests, but what if those perceptions are filtered through brain structure like fall colors through tinted glasses? Unfortunately for all of us, many people allow their habitual thought processes to become a permanent template against which they measure new ideas and new information. Rather than applying reason and intuition and consciously activating more functions of the brain to arrive at a conclusion, we take the easy way out and

measure new information against our old template. In politics this results in people who always vote along party lines, no matter what ideas or experience the candidate has. It results in resistance to change even when change is necessary. It results in unfunded mandates when new missions are begun without proper attention to execution and control.

As humans we have a need to identify with other humans in order to clarify our sense of self. We are also wired to look for cues which separate "us" from "them," and there is a natural tendency to view "the other" with suspicion. It is easier to consider every democrat a liberal and therefore wrong or every republican a conservative and therefore wrong. In the United States, most of us have evolved beyond judging people based upon surface features such as skin color, but we still judge each other passively based on the artificial constructs of politics.

We are conscious beings and, unlike animals, we can choose to process information with more of our brain function than we often do. A remarkable feature of our brains is that they are capable of continuing evolution and "rewiring." Habitual patterns can be overwritten by consciously choosing new behaviors and allowing new information to be incorporated. It would behoove us, during these changing and often dangerous times, to perceive truth as directly as we are capable, without the filters of our preconceived notions and prejudices. To do otherwise is to be willfully ignorant. We do not need to be exclusively liberal or conservative. We can be both at the appropriate juncture. We need liberal thinking to conceive the notion of putting a man on the moon. We need conservative standards to build the rocket.



"IT'S ON MY MIND..."
Danny H. Parris

Uction required before jumping

Is this a jumpy world or what? Does it seem to you that much of our world has caught Barney Fife's disease? If you remember Barney Fife, Sheriff Andy Taylor's deputy, had a severe case of the "jumps". Poor Barney, the least little thing would send Barney's body into a spasm of nervous twitches, but even worse would cause his mind to rush off into a jumpy rampage. He was forever more jumping the gun. As a young fellow growing up kids spent a good deal of their time jumping rope, jumping gullies, jumping puddles and playing with jumping beans. Now all of these activities were harmless games played by children. The most harmful result would be that you would get a scolding or spanking for staining or mudding your clothes. I get a little jumpy today because a lot of our adult leaders have started playing dangerous jumping games. Now I understand why people are jumpy. We have natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and snow storms over which we have absolutely no control. Often when these disasters occur people immediately blame God or question why God let them take place. It is strange that most of these folks never thought to thank God for the hundreds of days before these tragedies where God had blest them with peace, prosperity and good health. All of a sudden it is God's

fault for tragedies that take place. After Katrina I heard about a TV reporter interviewing a preacher. He was asked, "What is God trying to tell us through this?" His response, "That we shouldn't be building cities and houses near large bodies of water!" When bad things happen to us we should not be too eager to jump to a conclusion. A quote I read recently is applicable at this point: "When bad things happen don't draw any conclusions until God is through with it." Then we have man-made disasters such as nuclear mishaps, economic failures, stock market crashes, oil spills, wars, etc. It is enough to make one jump out of his skin. Mind you, it is more than a hop, skip and jump from the jumping games children played and the jumping games that some of our adult leaders want to play. Some of them don't seem to know which way to jump. They keep jumping the track. Most politicians jump at the chance to run for office but when elected all the jumping they do is jumping through hoops to please everyone in order to get re-elected. The complexities of our times demands more direction than mere man has to offer. We need a bunch of brave souls who will jump on God's bandwagon and pray for God's unction ("God's wisdom", "discernment", "anointing", "rubbing in") (I John 2:20). God's unction provides man gumption (common sense) to function (perform proper work) without consumption (using up, wasting). Some of you readers would like to tell me to go jump in the lake, but I am not trying to jump down anyone's throat, I am only reminding us that God is always a jump ahead of us!

RARE KIDS; WELL DONE
By Don Jacobsen

Last time we talked about lesser consequences for lesser disobediences and greater consequences for greater disobediences. Like what, for instance?

OK, Erika rushes off to school and forgets to feed the cat. So? So when she gets home that evening and dinner is over she is sent to bed, lights out, 7:00. No TV, no play time, no special privileges. It's a minor infraction (though the cat may not think so) and a minor consequence. The purpose is to build responsibility into Erika's character and this will help her remember.

But, a bigger infraction deserves a bigger reminder. Eleven-year old Zach breaks a treasured vase in the living room and then lies about it. Though the vase is valuable, to Zach's parents the dishonesty is the bigger issue. What's an appropriate consequence?

Here are some guidelines: First, consequences don't have to be administered immediately. With an eleven-year old you can wait a week or two. Not only is Zach uncomfortable knowing the shoe will fall but not knowing when, but it also gives Dad and Mom time to decide unemotionally on a proper response. On the spot a simple, "We are very disappointed by your conduct and we will deal with the mat-

ter later," is itself part of the consequence.

Second, reflect on your own strategies and make sure you are showing consistent intolerance of misbehavior. Think back on your own integrity and make sure Zach is not learning his devious ways by watching Dad and Mom.

Third, thoughtfully decide on a response, and be sure it is memorable, the kind that Zach can some day tell his grandkids about. Here's an example - you will come up with others: Strip his room of its entertainment value (I call it revoking his spa membership... most kids' rooms today are miniature amusement parks), removing his TV, computer, CD player, iPod, and other electronics, then announce that he is room-bound except for school, meals, bathroom, and accompanying the family (like to church), for thirty days with no time off for good behavior. If he should complain, the 30-days start over. There is no doubt in Zach's mind as to how Mom and Dad value honesty. He won't soon forget.

But what about the annoying little behaviors that don't deserve punishment, I just want him to get over them? Next time.

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

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

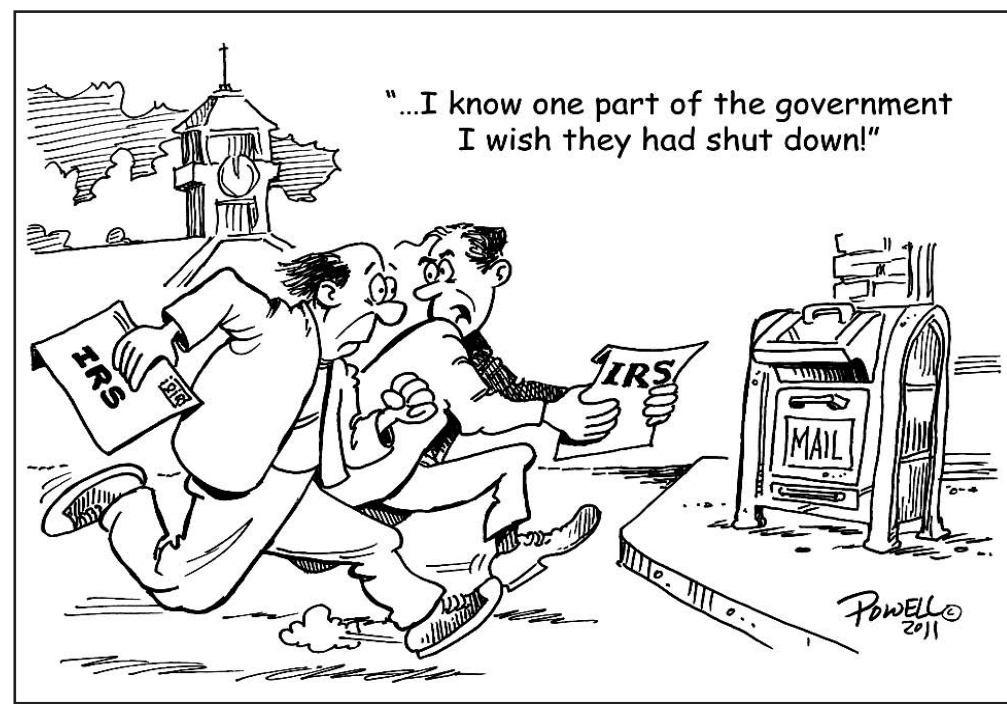
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