



Up The Creek Without A Paddle

Give Thanks!

by Terry Toole

Lord, it's good to be thankful. If you really think about it, if you can still think, there are so many things to be thankful for; it make me almost ashamed of myself.

I was visiting an older person in the hospital last week while checking on my first wife. I asked my old friend, "How are you doing?"

"I'm doing right well for a boy my age," he answered. "The doctors over in Dothan said the only thing that would fix my heart is open heart surgery, and I am too old to take that," he continued.

I told him that he had already lived 19 years longer than we are promised if we are good.

My older friend laughed and said, "That's something to think about. I'm not in any hurry to go, but when I'm finished here, I'm ready."

At my age, it's good to have older friends, and I have lots of them. It's even better when even though they are not in any hurry to leave this world, they are ready for eternity.

I was also most thankful for the doctors letting my first wife out of the hospital last week. It took a pickup to take her medicine home and will probably take a bank loan to pay for all of this, but thanks also to the doctors, nurses, cleanup folks, cooks and technicians at our hospital, she is home, and getting better. We are blessed people.

Several friends have said, "I know you have your wagon full taking care of Betty Jo, Uva and helping get out the newspaper each week."

I would always reply, "It is my pleasure. I've got some good help, good friends, and the Lord gives me the strength to do it all with love."

My Mama taught me that about all we are remembered for is what we do for others, especially those who can't help us back. It is sorry folks who don't or won't do for their own.

I talked to a younger friend that was nursing a machine in her lap that kept her heart beating, hopefully long enough for it to heal. She was proud to be here and glad to be on the heart transplant list. Her husband was proud he had retired recently so that he could help care for her. Talk about being thankful.

We Americans, and especially we Southwest Georgians, have so much to be thankful for; it's almost sinful. Most of us think that this really is Eden. We've messed it up a good bit, and the gnats were put here just to keep the nonbelievers out.

In times like these, which, by the way, most people in the world would like to have, we have so many things to be thankful for. We in this area can look around and see what a bountiful crop our farmers are bringing in. For that we should be thankful.

We just celebrated and honored our many veterans and gave thanks to those who are serving now to protect and preserve the freedoms that we enjoy. Many have given the ultimate gift, their very lives. We should not forget

and should be thankful.

As I write, there are volunteers who are helping prepare to give at our local food bank gifts to those in need. We should be thankful for those who volunteer and help those in need.

Most of those who have jobs to go to are thankful to have one. There are thousand who have not had a job this year, and it's getting worse.

We who have more than most of the rest of the world should be the most thankful.

We should be most thankful for our freedom to worship. We are losing it, but we will fight to keep it.

We should be thankful for every man and woman returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who fought for our freedoms.

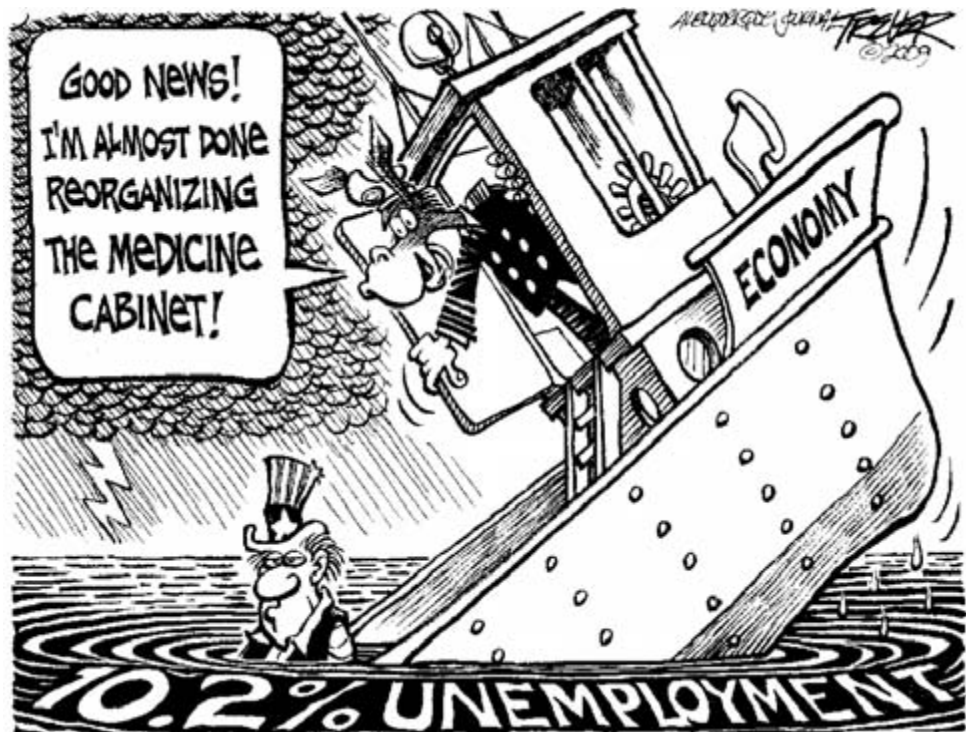
We should be thankful for health. We don't seem to miss good health until we don't have it.

We should be thankful to have food, drink and shelter. Most of the people of this world do not have enough of any of the three.

We should be thankful for a loving spouse, children, family and friends.

We should be most thankful for a loving, forgiving Lord who looks over our failures as long as we look to Him for eternity.

If you really want to be thankful for what you do have, go to a wing of a children's hospital and walk down the halls. If that doesn't make you thankful for your lot in life and your condition, Lord bless you.



Another failed president

By Geoffrey P. Hunt

Barrack Obama is on track to have the most spectacularly failed presidency since Woodrow Wilson. In the modern era, we've seen several failed presidencies--led by Jimmy Carter and LBJ. Failed presidents have one strong common trait-- they are repudiated, in the vernacular, spat out.

Of course, LBJ wisely took the exit ramp early, avoiding a shove into oncoming traffic by his own party. Richard Nixon indeed resigned in disgrace, yet his reputation as a statesman has been partially restored by his triumphant overture to China.

But, Barack Obama is failing. Failing big. Failing fast. And failing everywhere: foreign policy, domestic initiatives, and most importantly, in forging connections with the American people. The incomparable Dorothy Rabinowitz in the *Wall Street Journal* put her finger on it: He is failing because he has no understanding of the American people, and may indeed loathe them. Fred Barnes of the *Weekly Standard* says he is failing because he has lost control of his message, and is overexposed.

Clarice Feldman of *American Thinker* produced a dispositive commentary showing that Obama is failing because fundamentally he is neither smart nor articulate; his intellectual dishonesty is conspicuous by its audacity and lack of shame.

But, there is something more seriously wrong: How could a new president rid-

ing in on a wave of unprecedented promise and goodwill have forfeited his tenure and become a lame duck in six months? His poll ratings are in free fall. In generic balloting, the Republicans have now seized a five point advantage. This truly is unbelievable. What's going on?

No narrative. Obama doesn't have a narrative. No, not a narrative about himself. He has a self-narrative, much of it fabricated, cleverly disguised or written by someone else. But this self-narrative is isolated and doesn't connect with us. He doesn't have an American narrative that draws upon the rest of us. All successful presidents have a narrative about the American character that intersects with their own where they display a command of history and reveal an authenticity at the core of their personality that resonates in a positive endearing way with the majority of Americans. We admire those presidents whose narratives not only touch our own, but who seem stronger, wiser, and smarter than we are. Presidents we admire are aspirational peers, even those whose politics don't align exactly with our own: Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, Harry Truman, Ike, Reagan.

But not this president. It's not so much that he's a phony, knows nothing about economics, is historically illiterate, and woefully small-minded for the size of the task-- all contributory of course. It's that he's not one of us. And whatever

he is, his profile is fuzzy and devoid of content, like a cardboard cutout made from delaminated corrugated paper.

Moreover, he doesn't command our respect and is unable to appeal to our own common sense. His notions of right and wrong are repugnant and how things work just don't add up. They are not existential. His descriptions of the world we live in don't make sense and don't correspond with our experience. In the meantime, while we've been struggling to take a measurement of this man, he's dissed just about every one of us--financiers, energy producers, banks, insurance executives, police officers, doctors, nurses, hospital administrators, post office workers, and anybody else who has a non-green job. Expect Obama to lament at his last press conference in 2012: "For those of you I offended, I apologize. For those of you who were not offended, you just didn't give me enough time; if only I'd had a second term, I could have offended you too."

Congress can get voted out next year. With a new Congress, there's always hope of legislative gridlock until we vote for president again two short years after that.

Yes, small presidents do fail, Barack Obama among them. The coyotes howl, but the wagon train keeps rolling along. Hopefully, we will all have the will to make sure this will be a one-term presidency as I don't think we can survive two terms.

Time for serious business

by Alex McRae



Nothing like Mother Nature to remind you what's important. I got a memo from the old girl just this morning. After endless weeks of rain, flooding and the kind of dampness usually associated with Noah, the sun broke out and the morning was clear, bright and cool as James Dean.

It was a glorious event. Instead of roaring angrily, the creek behind the house was back to its peaceful, bubbly chatter. Birds chirped in joyous abandon, the grass peeked shyly from its leafy cover, and the world seemed genuinely at peace. I took a moment to savor the scene, then wandered back inside to grab a tablet to record some random thoughts. Big mistake. Mostly because I had forgotten to turn off the TV, and I was assaulted with a rude reminder that no matter how good things seem to be going, evil always lurks around the corner.

I shuddered as a loud-mouthed TV announcer reminded me that instead of daydreaming about upcoming family reunions and festive Thanksgiving feasts, I should be focused on the really important stuff ... Christmas shopping. Yuk. I hoped that since the economy is still in the tank and unemployment remains as high as a die-hard hippie, the annual retail orgy would be subdued this year, if not buried under all the bad news. Apparently not.

Halloween is over, and now the sales spooks are out of the closet and hawking

their wares and reminding us that Christmas Day is coming, and nothing says "Happy Birthday, Jesus" like bruising the bottom line of your credit card account.

Since I'm still insecure enough to believe that the only way to show love is to spend money, I have to start thinking about it. The only question is what to buy for those I love. The kids will be easy. My daughter is a newlywed, and I figure the post-marriage glow will still be strong enough at Christmas that she'll gladly settle for a nice new coffee maker. My son has two kids under age three. What a snap. A few toys for the tots and a day of complimentary babysitting will make me look like a saint. The cats aren't a problem, either. Several nights in the heated indoor laundry room when the temperature dips below freezing, and they'll think I'm Santa himself.

But my sweet wife deserves better. Which means I need to get in that gift-giving mindset and pay more attention to TV ads pitching stuff that will "show her how much you really care." I tried to do that last summer when I bought a raccoon trap to improve the evening outdoor ambiance, which was increasingly threatened by an invasion of masked bandits who ate the cat food as fast as I could put it out. Even while I was watching. Instead of a 'coon, I caught a neighbor's cat. My wife wasn't impressed. I wasn't, either. And she still doesn't realize the lumber I've left on the deck for months is actually the start of a new screened porch. Tying a bow to a 2-by-4 won't improve that situation. She loves tea and all things associated with drinking and brewing that classic beverage, but she has so much tea stuff that buying a tea gift puts me at risk of getting something she already has. That would make me look like I wasn't paying attention. Too risky.

Thank goodness I've got plenty of time to work the problem. And I plan to get busy and get it right. I'm determined that come Christmas morning, my sweetie won't have to settle for a brand new snuggly. Of course, if they come in pink ...

(Send your e-mail comments to: alex@newnan.com)

When is Christmas...Christmas?

I have long ago gotten to a place in my life that company or companionship near the holidays is more important than the gifts someone gives you.

But this year my mind has changed. My direction in life has changed and some other things too. As many of you know, my son Sam passed through the Valley Of The Shadow of Death. This took place on March 17. I am sure without a doubt that he is with his Redeemer. On his last breath Sam opened his eyes, and I could see almost a sigh of relief.

Where has the time gone?

Anyway while crawling around in the attic looking for the Christmas tree, I found some things that Sam had given me in the past. A side note; this year is the first time I have put up a tree in some time. But it seemed like the thing to do. Two of my friends put the tree together for me, and we had some laughs doing it. J J had a basic idea, and Jennifer helped him with encouragement and laughter. Eventually she did give it some shape and purpose.

Back to the story. Please do not misunderstand. I miss my son as



Ren Summerlin

much as any parent can miss one of their children. Also the holidays approacheth, I know too that I could not have gotten this far without God. And those of us that do not put more of Christ in Christmas, then shame on us.

I don't have a lot of decorations. When Sam moved out and started to make his mark on the world, he carried many of them with him. He had pride in what he did. At this time of year he would begin to decorate.

A frenzy is a good word to use here. He went at it with a passion. A mission to accomplish. But his was the most decorated and prettiest house in that part of town.

Living in the country, I had little desire or need to do

a lot of decorating. I would be about the only one to see it. But Sam worked in it as if it was his life's calling.

This year times are different. So this is what I am going to do. I am going to take some of the things we shared in the past and put near the tree, maybe some on it. With all due respect to God and Sam, there might be a shirt hanging on the tree. Maybe a tie or two. One of the letters he wrote me or an email, there will be lights and other things too.

Yes, this Christmas will be different, but in a way I can celebrate it with my son.

Yes there will be food and memories.

Merry Christmas, Sam. I love you and miss you. But I am not putting that gosh awful tie you gave me that changed colors in different lights. But I might. He had his Daddy's sense of humor.

Some time he would put his Christmas wish list on the refrigerator or inside the refrigerator, my pickup truck, on the carport door and once he even mailed me one from our home.

Yes, he did. All of you. Let's enjoy the good times and make more good memories.

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