

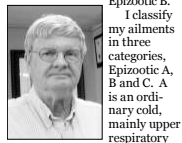
OPINION PAGE

THE GUM LOG

by Van A. Tyson

Big Events — Sermon 2-5-06

I write this column with my mind in a cloud. The cloud results from being in the second week of Epizootic B.



I classify my ailments in three categories, Epizootic A, B and C. A is an ordinary cold, mainly upper respiratory distress; B is more serious, with coughing and the need for some bed rest during a coughing fit at Lions Club. After a trip to the doctor, I am taking an antibiotic.

This B was more serious than usual, causing me to pass out during a coughing fit at Lions Club. After a trip to the doctor, I am taking an antibiotic.

So I guess I was into C or at least B-plus Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Anyway, I don't feel up to writing a full-blown column, so I present here a column I wrote before the Super Bowl. In 2006, I had to do a sermon at our church that Sunday, so I let it serve as sermon (at Memorial Presbyterian) and column (minus some of the anecdotes and flourishes of the sermon).

We tend to measure our lives by big events. Many of us have been looking forward to the Super Bowl today.

Watch parties are planned. Other events are put aside to concentrate on this one. Predictions are made. Bets are placed.

Excitement builds. So let's have a little class discussion. How many are for the Pittsburgh Steelers? (New York Giants) How many are for the Seattle Seahawks? (New England Patriots)

How many don't care and don't even know there is a super bowl game? (Ginnie)

Some may be more interested in the half-time show. Last year it was Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction. This year it is the Rolling Stones. (Madonna) So the concern this year may be more about language than costumes. I am more interested in the new commercials than the game. They now put those on the internet to view any time.

Okay, that's enough class participation for now, but I may have other questions later.

So one kind of big event is sports. We can win a championship and other big games against rivals.

This can be relative. We had another big event Saturday. Moir's peevee basketball team for the United States last year. The earthquake in Pakistan and the Tsunami in Indonesia were even bigger in terms of people who died.

In the last few days, there was the tragedy of the ferry boat with hundreds of deaths on the Red Sea, just after the boat left Saudi Arabia for Egypt. (This year the passenger ship in Italy) Those are big national and world events. We also have big personal and family events. Let's concentrate on the more joyous

I have it all recorded on a DVD, if anyone is interested. I did that partly because my Editorial Writing class was supposed to write about it. (Now retired from Tech, I didn't record it.)

I was interested in what he had to say about alternative fuels, because that is a major interest of mine. I was disappointed to learn later that the federal budget for developing alternative fuels had been cut during recent years.

Locally, we had a big event Friday morning when a train hit a truck on the railroad tracks beside Atkins Prepared Foods, scattering chicken parts around the crossing. Apparently the truck had crossed and was backing up to turn around. We got a phone call at 2 a.m. from our Democrat-Gazette delivery person. Fortunately, Mark was at the Chronicle so he could go take the picture. Ginnie and I took some more pictures after daylight.

Disasters are big events. Katrina and what it did to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast provided one of the biggest events for the United States last year. The earthquake in Pakistan and the Tsunami in Indonesia were even bigger in terms of people who died.

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See Log on page 10



South of the Border & Over the Hill

By Annie Laura Jagers-Grady

In Memory of Ellen Cleveland Bracken

I have gone around composing in my mind what I wanted to write as a tribute to my friend Ellen and could not get settled on any one writing that suited me; therefore, I have decided to tell about my playing cupid to Ellen and Larry Bracken's courtship and eventual marriage that included the heartbreak of Ellen's verbal paralysis. I took time to talk to Ellen on the phone several times a year. All she could say was her one phrase, "way, way, way", but she could get much of expression with those phrases. I am sure that Larry and I will stay in touch until Larry or I one die. And I am fairly close to their children, particularly Mary Margaret.

When Larry graduated from Tech, they moved to Hot Springs where they each got employment with the junior college there. Contacts there put Larry in touch with other junior college personnel. Soon Larry got a job as coordinator of the four junior colleges in Pensacola, Florida. While living there Ellen experienced a car wreck and subsequent surgery that limited her speech. They were informed that it was a surgical mishap that caused the damage. They considered suing, but decided against it because of the stress and ill will that such would cause.

Ellen then entered an assisted-living facility where she lived her life out. Larry to complete the final semester

of his degree.

He was given a student labor job in the English Department. It didn't take long for him and Ellen to be attracted to one another. I took it upon myself to encourage a romance. I really can't remember exactly what I did, but I do know that it wasn't long before Larry and Ellen were getting married in my living room with Dr. Tom Wilson conducting the ceremony in the presence of a few friends.

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Ellen then entered an assisted-living facility where she lived her life out. Larry

would take her home on weekends and would visit through the week when in town. He was generous with his praise of Ellen's upbeat morale.

He said that she never complained or felt sorry for herself. She did cross-stitching and similar needlework and was an avid reader and was able to fill her time intelligently.

Certainly Larry never told me that he was a patient and accepting husband in a partially fulfilled marriage, but I could tell that he was, and was told so by mutual friends. He maintained his duties as a husband in such circumstances with the excellent character that he possesses.

My character was strengthened by being her friend. Annie Laura Jagers-Grady has published the following books: A Nudge Singularity; Lily Peter of Arkansas; Billy Freeman; Florida Keys Sheriff; A Professor's Unforgettable; and Carl & Me & WWII.

by "Pete Moss"



THE HISTORY LESSON

by Kenneth R. Walker

Problems of Being a Pastor

Discussing their lives is a difficult topic for preachers. They are afraid if they do they will either sound like braggarts or martyrs or both. Lucy in *Peanuts* presented another perspective on this topic. Her brother Linus was producing an art work with crayons. Larry gave him all kinds of advice and criticism on his picture. She concluded that it took a layman to set practitioners straight on a subject.

Pastors are faced with frustrations and criticisms. Even Jesus Christ in Matthew, chapter 27, verse 46 said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In Luke, chapter 23, verse 34, he further stated, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Despite adversities, ministers are expected to remain optimistic and hopeful. They are to devise inspirational and substantive sermons once or twice

each week. They are to be sympathetic and supportive without becoming so deeply involved in the problems of persons that they cannot stand it emotionally. In other words, they must be professional in their work.

They are to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. They are supposed to help people cope with life and live better lives whether the counselees and parishioners want to do so or not.

Moreover, they are to be available night and day to visit in time of emergency, to be pleasant, calming, reassuring no matter how they feel or how inconvenient it is for them. They are also to be administrators, money raisers, secretaries, transporters, etc.

In addition, they usually need to support a family and look affluent on a relatively low salary. In the social values

system, the public gives lip service to the concept that religion and education are two of the most important institutions in society. Yet the professional people who serve in these areas are among the lowest paid. On the other hand, entertainers, professional athletes and entrepreneurs in the business world are among the highest paid. If the adage "Where the treasure is, there is the heart also" is true, it would appear that society's values are somewhat skewed.

People should try to remember that ministers have very difficult and important tasks, and that people should help them as much as possible by supporting them in their endeavors and also by becoming better men and women.

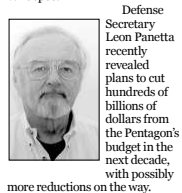
Kenneth R. Walker, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus of History at Arkansas Tech University.

BEYOND THE BELTWAY

by Donald Kaul

Profiting from the Pentagon

Washington's talking about cutting the military budget. Whoopee.



Defense Secretary Leon Panetta recently revealed plans to cut hundreds of billions of dollars from the Pentagon's budget in the next decade, with possibly more reductions on the way. We're going to have fewer soldiers, fewer warplanes and ships, and not so many missiles. We'll cut back a bit on nuclear weapons. If Congress buys this plan, the Pentagon's \$530 billion-a-year base budget, which excludes extras like the wars we're actually fighting, would shrink to a mere \$472 billion by 2013. Double whoopee.

Not everyone is happy with the plan. Critics say that so piddling a sum as \$472 billion would leave us naked to our enemies. We wouldn't even be able to fight two wars at a time, they say.

To which Panetta replies, maybe not. But we'll be able to fight one major war and have enough strength left over to "spoil" a second enemy's malign intentions elsewhere. Half a whoopee.

Not everyone was suspicious of the two-war strategy. To me, it's like having a two-car garage. You may not really need two cars, but if you have a two-car garage, chances are you'll own two cars sooner or later. One-and-a-half

wars are plenty. If we have more enemies than that, let them take a number and form a line.

There's also a contingent of critics who complain that cutting troop levels might leave us unprepared to fight a grinding and long lull in Asia.

Oh, darn, and that's what I wanted for my birthday this year — another protracted land war in Asia. Now I'm going to have to settle for diplomacy, sanctions, and boring stuff like that.

But in the folks. Even with those cuts and more like them we still be — by far — the most militarily powerful country on earth by several orders of magnitude. We just can't go off and invade a country any time we had a hint of a suspicion that they might be planning to do something bad to us.

Which is what we do. We're the most war-prone people on earth. Over the past 60 years we've invaded, bombed, or sought to subvert more countries — Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, Cuba, Somalia, Ethiopia, Panama, Iraq (twice), Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Chile, Laos, Cambodia, the Balkans, Grenada, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Indonesia, Guyana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Brazil, Greece, and Libya, as well as Guatemala, Nicaragua, Angola, and El Salvador by proxy — than our bean counters can count. Some of these operations took place under a NATO or United Nations umbrella, but most didn't.

One of the chief targets of the budget cutters is the new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, a stealth model that theoretically eludes

radar detection and is presently budgeted at \$400 billion for 2,500 planes, or \$160 million-a-pop. And if past history is any indication, it won't work.

Which won't matter, because very little of this is about "defense." It's about the money and political profit to be gained from the building of ever more expensive weapons systems of dubious utility.

A friend of mine, Nick Kotz, once wrote a book on the development of a similar weapons system, the B-1 bomber.

Built in the 1980s, it cost \$28 billion (not chump change in those days) and hardly ever saw combat. It was designed for nuclear war, you see, and we haven't had one of those yet (unless you count Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which no one does). A few can still fly, but they're hideously expensive to operate, so they don't.

Toward the end of his book Kotz takes us through a B-1 assembly line in Palmdale, California. First we learn about the forward fuselage, which was made in Ohio, then the middle and rear elements (Texas), the tail section (Maryland), and the nose landing gear (California) with ties from Ohio. And so it went. Before the plane was fully assembled, more than 70 manufacturing sites were accounted for, each represented by a pious member of Congress with a handout.

That's what military spending is all about and why it's so difficult to cut. It's called the military-industrial complex.

OtherWords columnist Donald Kaul lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. otherwords.org

Strange But True

Wouldn't you think? Well, my best excuse is that the last few weeks have been hectic, filled with medical events and other unexpected surprises, but let's not go there. . . . The main event is that I'm right on par with all of my plans to do something — and not get it done!

What the heck am I talking about? Well, along about the time I was expected to have our first frost, the really bad one, I had plans to dig up certain plants, but didn't get around to digging them all. That frost never materialized here. It did in the valleys, but not on our mountaintop, where the tomato vines were still green. When the next warning came, well before Christmas, I figured the weatherman meant business. I had originally meant to dig up an entire tomato plant, pot it and tuck it in the greenhouse to see what would happen. Instead, I came home exhausted from work (Christmas rush) and nipped off only one branch of the tomato. That would have to do, thought I. It went into a glass of water on the kitchen windowsill, over the sink, where it was sure

to generate enough attention to get potted. Right! That poor little cutting is still there — in the water, with lots of roots.

Here's where the "strange" part comes into play. (You know already that the "true" portion of the cutting is still in the soil.) That little cutting must have had a few flower buds ready to pop out when they did. I did exactly what I used to do each year when we had the hydroponic tomato greenhouses. I shook the stem in order to pollinate the blossom. Because tomato flowers are complete, with both male and female organs on the same flower, they usually pollinate each other and are mostly self-fertilizing. That's what happened on our windowsill, because soon there was a little tomato the size of a pea on the stem. It grew, not much, but enough to be a surprise to me.

Now I've figured out why that cutting is still not in soil. I usually write during the peace and tranquility of early Sunday mornings. This is Saturday and in the course of writing there have been at least three hours of interruptions. I believe it has

to do with all the things that need doing on the weekend. Tonight we split up, one going to a gymnastics meet and the other attending a function at church. It gets that way sometimes.

Why write today, you ask? Insurance is the answer. Sometime Friday they, not we, changed out the connection to our internet; needless-to-say, it isn't working yet. By writing a way early, I can put the article on a disk and hand it down to the newspaper office — like in the days before internet at our house. (Believe it or not, last week was the beginning of the nineteenth year of "Pete Moss' week." How time flies!) If the internet decides to behave before Monday morning, I can email it like usual.

Oh yes, the tomato cutting. . . . Last night when I got home from work I saw something that I almost didn't believe. The little tomato is nowhere near the size that I'd expect it to be in the garden outside, but it is growing — just a bit. The strangest thing, though, is that it is beginning to get ripe! I guess I'd better get it potted this weekend!

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