

Editorial

Ric's Ramblings

When the minister said, "Do you take this woman in sickness or in health?", I said, 'I do.'

When I repeated those words in front of friends and family at my wedding eight years ago, I didn't really think much about it. Now I know why the authors of marriage vows stuck that little clause in the contract.

For the past week, my wife Kathie has been hit with a bout with pneumonia. So far it hasn't been too serious, it has just knocked her out to the point that walking from one end of the house to the other leaves her tired and breathless.

Being the selfish man that I am, I immediately considered how this would affect me the moment Kathie told me of the doctor's diagnosis.

She told me that the doctor said that this meant I'll have to wait on her 24 hours a day until she is better. I usually don't believe her



Ric Webb

when she says that because she says that even when she has a cold.

But with pneumonia - that's a different story. I knew this meant that the bulk of the household duties would fall on me. Our daughter Shelly will gladly help out (as long as I tell her there will be no allowance if she doesn't help), but still, I knew it was mostly going to be up to me.

So I told my wife not to worry, I'll pick up your prescription from the drug store on the way home from work. Then I'll make a quick

stop at the grocery store to pick up dinner that I'll be more than happy to cook. (hamburger, rolls and Manwich should do the trick), and before I come home, I'll pick up Shelly from the school after her volleyball practice is over.

Woman's Magazine should nominate me "Husband of the Year" because it didn't bother me that once I got home from those chores, I didn't mind doing the pile of dishes that were eye high in the kitchen.

After the dishes were done and while the hamburger meat is cooking (barbeque is one of the few things I can make without bothering Kathie for instructions), it's time to gather the garbage to take out to the curb. Recycling isn't until Thursday night, so I don't have to worry about that.

After this is completed, I find time in my busy schedule to be a nurturing husband. I sit down on the living room chair and ask how my loving wife is doing. While listening to her explain in great

detail exactly how badly she feels, I keep one ear peeled for any kitchen noises, such as the noise of burning hamburger, or the noise of a nosy cat trying to get to the burning hamburger.

After five or ten minutes of quality nurturing time, it's back to the kitchen to open up the rolls and get ready to serve my family a delicious meal.

I dish out a couple of sandwiches for Shelly, then two more for my wife. I worry about my sandwiches last because - well, that's just something the "Husband of the Year" does.

Of course what the "Husband of the Year" didn't realize is that his wife wasn't feeling up to eating barbeque, or anything else for that matter. So I put away the third paper plate and sat down with my sandwiches.

I don't like to brag, but I thought the barbeque sandwiches were so good, that I got up and made a third one for myself. Even Shelly didn't complain too much.

Next it's back in the car and driving my daughter to the school dance. A lesser man would have gone off to play a round of golf with the boys. But since I'm not only "Husband of the Year", but also "Father of the Year", (that plus the fact I haven't played golf with the boys or anyone else for 10 years) I chauffeured Shelly to the dance.

After an eight hour day at the office, you can imagine how tired I was at this point. I sat in my comfortable chair and realized that this is a typical day for a single parent. I've got to hand it to them, it's no walk in the park. And we only have one child.

By the time I got myself relaxed enough to watch a good movie, it was time to get back in the car and pick up Shelly from the dance.

The minister really should go into a little more detail when he says, "in sickness or in health."

Opinion

Ridge move is a start in the right direction

The following is a statement by the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association, the Pennsylvania Society of Newspaper Editors, the Keystone State Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and the First Amendment Coalition in response to Governor Ridge's open records proposal.

We are grateful to Governor Ridge for his interest and leadership on open records reform in Pennsylvania. The governor has recognized the need for reform of the Commonwealth's outdated and deficient Right to Know Act, which regulates the public's access to the documents of the state and local governments. We appreciate the hard work by the governor and his staff, particularly Tim Reeves, for undertaking this needed reform.

We have long sought to have a law that clearly provides that records belong to the people. since accessing public records is a fundamental right, the burden should be on the government to show something should be closed. While this measure falls short in this regard, the governor does offer a statement of public policy that providing access to public records is a basic task of government. This is needed and appreciated. While such a statement seems self evident, there are too many cases in which governmental bodies do not treat access to information as a core function.

Several years ago, the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association, in consultation with the Pennsylvania Society of Newspaper Editors, the First Amendment Coalition and other groups, came up with a list of nine fundamental elements that a new open records bill needed. The governor's proposal addresses five of these points.

The governor has proposed that (1) copying costs should be reasonable and not exceed actual costs; (2) the government should be liable for the costs of litigation, including attorneys' fees, under certain circumstances; (2) the government may not deny public access to a document that contains information that is legally exempt from examination but rather must redact (black out) the sensitive information; (4) an agency must respond to a document request within ten business days; and (5) that an agency must give a specific, written explanation of the reason for denying a request. The governor partially addressed a sixth element; he proposed an agency may not deny a requester access to a public record due to the intended use of the records. We believe that a request to examine a record should not have to be explained at all. Otherwise, it is too easy to intimidate citizens.

While we consider the governor's proposal an improvement, we do have concerns about this proposal. The two most serious involve the definition of a public record and the deadlines for government to respond to requests. Under this proposal, Pennsylvania would continue to have probably the narrowest definition of public records in the country. This means that citizens will be denied access to information that they could get if they lived almost anywhere else, or requested it from the federal government.

Regarding the deadlines, the proposal creates a lengthy, mandatory administrative appeals process. We believe the unintended consequence of the language in this bill means that citizens could routinely have to wait many months before even having an opportunity to be heard in court in a dispute over a public record. While most governmental bodies would not abuse the process to avoid records requests, the fact remains that the bodies most inclined to delay are often those where the requests are the most urgent. Our legal analysis is that this portion of the bill could be a significant step backwards, even from the current law.

In summary: We are committed to continuing to work with the governor and the members of the General Assembly to address the remaining issues with reasonable, compromise language. In recent months, members of both the House and Senate have issued serious, substantive proposals. Now we have a sitting governor taking this issue to heart. The times seems ripe for this long-needed reform of our public records law.

Candidates take note

It's that time of year again! If you are a candidate for office, or seeking another term, we want to hear from you!

We would like to tell everyone your views and what you think are the hot topics in your campaign.

Send your views, a biography and a picture to: Editor, Boyertown Area Times, P.O. Box 565, 124 N. Chestnut St., Boyertown, PA 19512. Do it today!

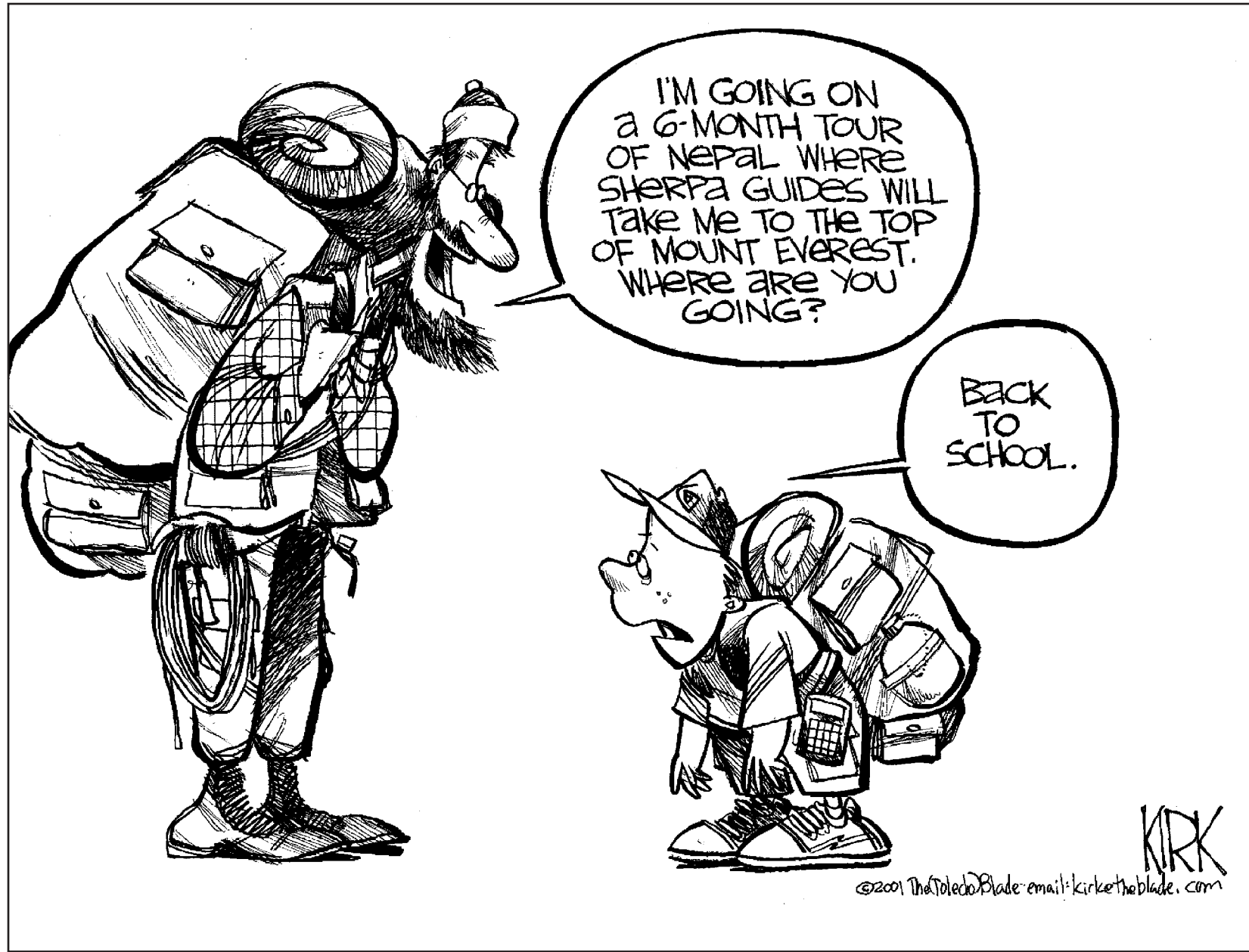
The editorial board of the *Boyertown Area Times* welcomes input from its readers on issues of local interest, but we encourage all letter writers to adhere to certain basic codes of conduct.

Chief among those tenets is the avoidance of personal attacks on non-elected officials. The public decisions of school board members and municipal representatives is open to scrutiny and criticism but private citizens will not be subjected to personal ridicule.

Attacks on private citizens will be omitted from letters to the editor. In the case of a letter composed solely of attacks, the letter will be resubmitted to the writer for changes.

Send letters to: *The Boyertown Area Times*, P.O. Box 565, 124 N. Chestnut St. Boyertown PA 19512-2000.

Letters must include the writer's signature, address and telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published.



Adams' Apples

For 50 of my 77 years, I had been quite a heavy smoker. For the last eleven years, I have not smoked. (I get steamed a little at times, but no smoke).

This little disquisition may wind up being a bit controversial, especially with those in my own family that don't wish to give up the unwholesome and odious practice.

Because my habit lasted 50 years, I have not become a "born again" non-smoker. You want to smoke--what do I care? This is only to tell you of my addiction to the weed.

My habit started with a gigantic Italian cigar that two friends and I shared in the woods behind my house. At the tender stage of adolescence, we also partook the disgusting, nauseating propensity to throw-up.

Now, one would think that with this brilliant introduction to what would become nearly a life-long addiction to the tobacco weed, that it should stop here.

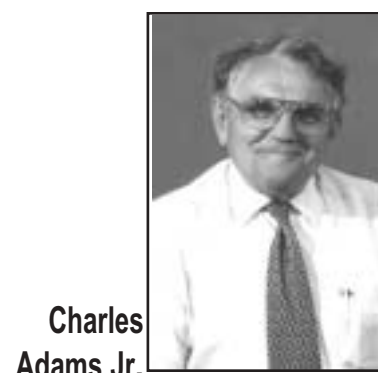
Ah, remember, we are now a mere 15 years old and feeling the germs of puberty. There's nothing to stop us now. On to cigarettes.

With not much of the where-withal to obtain the paper wrapped poisonous alkaloid known as a cigarette, we resorted to "shooting butts." The best place to pick up a good-sized unburned butt end of the roll of nicotine was at the entrance of a movie theater. Sometimes we got lucky and found a hardly smoked "stump."

Again, remember our age and the time period--the great depression of the 30's (Excuses?) Oh, smokes were 10-15 cents a pack back then.

After a while we got smart. We started to break up the little butts into a 10c corn cob pipe and we got a pretty good smoke out of it. With me it was the start of many years of pipe smoking.

So I got older, school is a thing of the past. I go to work and now



Charles Adams Jr.

I can afford my own packs of "Luckies" or "Camels". Once in a while, a good 5c (King Edward) cigar.

No more shooting stumps to put in a pipe. Now I can afford a can of "Prince Albert" or "Half and Half" pipe tobacco.

Posing with the pipe in my mouth. Yes, posing! A colored pipe at that.

"Why posing?" I guess I thought it made me a man. After all, I was all of 16.

Moving right along in years, it's now World War Two, and I am in the U.S. Navy. (On the landing ship LST 281). This is where the "pollution" was at it's worst. The smoking lamp was lit most of the time--and my supply of smokes was at it's peak.

Picture this: My Navy work shirt had two pockets. The left pocket had a pack of butts. The right pocket contained two or more cigars.

That's not all: My right back pocket had the tobacco pouch, with one or more pipes in my belt. That was really "going over-board." A paradox to be sure.

Hey, remember I was an acned kid of 19. There was this big war going on.

(It was in all the papers). Nerves! Danger!--excuses?

Three major invasions, Kamikaze attacks. Fight both the Nazi and the Jap.

"No more smoke"

Little wonder we felt it necessary to puff away every chance we got. After all, a pack of butts only cost a nickel in the ship's "small stores."

Back then, thank goodness we knew little or nothing about marijuana or narcotics. Nicotine we did know about, but what the hey, we were young.

In foreign liberty ports, a few packs of cigs were better than money. It got us pretty near anything we wanted or needed.

Time goes on: The war is over. I continue to smoke, but confine it almost entirely to the pipe (or an occasional cigar) for the next 45 years.

Somewhere along the line, I guess I wised up, what with the bad rap smoking was getting from the Surgeon General's report. So one day about 11 years ago, I tapped out my pipe for the last time. I stopped, as they say, "cold turkey."

I tried chewing gum---hated it.

Now my "pacifier," (I concluded that is all smoking is anyway) is used periodically as a toothpick.

At this writing, a carton of 200 cigarettes can run you as much as 30 bucks. Buy the pack, 40-50 - YOW!

Toothpicks: 250 round ones about 53c. No need for matches or a lighter.

No one shuns me anymore, at least not because of tobacco smell.

Anyone want to buy more than 200 pipes? I'll even sterilize them for you.

(Soap and water). No more burn holes in my underwear, rocking chair or slippers. No more stale odor of tobacco in my toupee.

Conclusion: Smoking the alkaloid weed is a "no-brainer." It only took me 50 years to find out. Nuff said!

If you want to contact Mr. Adams, send your comments and suggestions to: LST281@AOL.COM

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