

Opinion

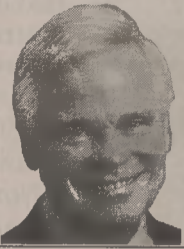
The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

ONE-ON-ONE

Don't let it pull you under...

What is the biggest challenge that we, as individuals, face in this time of angry, petty, and deceptive politics that has infected

"All this seems like a lot of trouble for me..."



- D.G. MARTIN

our public life and seems to be pulling each of us under, sucking

out of us every ounce of our humanity?

It is as if we are in an angry and turbulent ocean. The riptide is carrying us away from shore, and even as we fight with all our strength, it is still pulling us under.

So it is with the riptide of politics of anger and disrespect.

So what can we do to save ourselves and not give up our strong political beliefs and principles?

I have no magic answers. I'm still caught in that riptide. But I think there are things we can do to calm our personal waters without giving up our commitment to participate in the political system and try to strengthen our country and improve the lives of its citizens.

Here are a few things I am going to try to do:

1. Cut back or cut out cable news and opinion channels. Instead, watch the informative and enriching programs like those on UNC-TV's Explorer and North Carolina channels.

2. Be kind to those who oppose you, even when they show no kindness and reek of anger.

3. Resist mean-spiritedness. It is so easy to let provocative statements that ooze with anger jar us off balance and tempt us to respond in a similar fashion. Such responses are almost always ineffective and drag us down to the level of the person who made the original statement.

4. Think critically, check facts, and frame your conversation about issues based on your own thinking, rather than on what people on your side have asserted. In The New Yorker in 1983, Ken Auletta wrote that the most important thing he had learned was to "have an independent mind—to think for oneself, to analyze by oneself, not to follow fashions, not to think like everyone else, not to seek honor or decorations, not to become part of the establishment."

5. Build relationships with people who have distinctly different political views. Find ways to work with them in areas in which you both can agree to be helpful to others. Habitat for Humanity, prison ministries, and food services seem to be able to gather volunteers from all political persuasions to work together. In a recent column in The Herald-Sun, retired minister Joe Harvard asked, "When someone does something to you that hurts or something happens that shakes you to the core, how do you respond?"

His answer: Build bridges.

6. Set aside a quiet time each day for reflection. In your prayers or meditations, seek wisdom rather than ask for specific help for your partisan political cause.

7. Generously support those who've taken on the burden of political service, and even give appropriate moral support to officials with whom you disagree.

8. Rejoice when there are unexpected acts of kindness from opponents. For instance, the next time the governor sends out cookies for you when you are demonstrating in front of the governor's mansion against him or her, be gracious. Take a break and invite the governor to come eat the cookies with you before you go back to your protest.

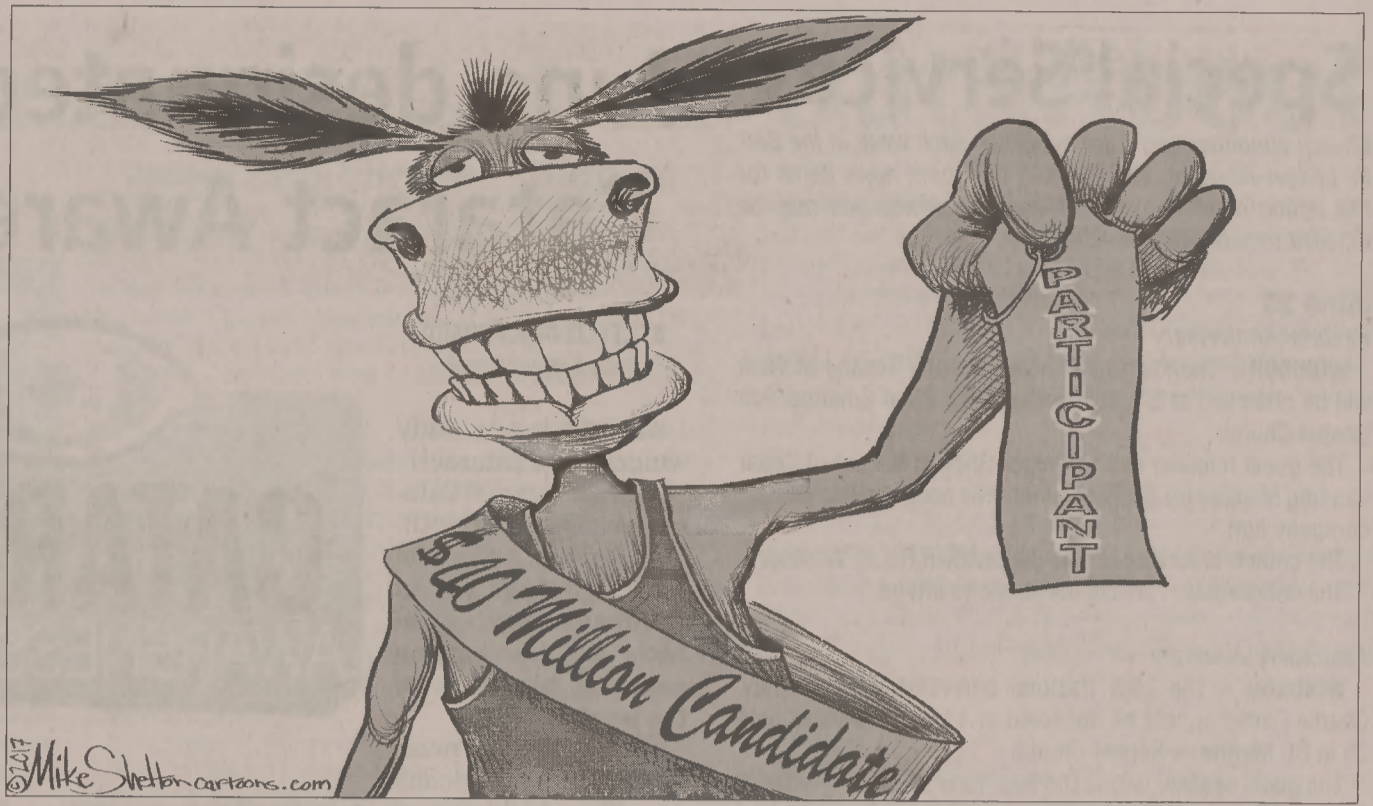
9. Be cheerful, even when it hurts.

10. Smile.

11. Don't give up your fight for your principles, but never give in to the evil mean-spiritedness that too many others on all sides have adopted.

Don't let that riptide of angry politics pull you under. Swim away, find calm waters, and save yourself.

D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch," which airs Sundays at noon and Thursdays at 5 p.m. on UNC-TV.



FARM LIFE WIFE

Thankful for Independence...

It is almost Independence Day, and I am reminded of how much I take for granted every day.

I am reminded that I don't have to wake up in fear of someone invading my home just because I don't believe in the same things they do.

I am reminded that I have the freedom to work, play and pray without reprisal.

I am reminded there are loyal men and women who left the freedoms they fight for to keep this country safe.

I am reminded that my boys will have the opportunity to grow up without the fear of being killed or dismembered by fanatical fighters.

They will have the freedom to choose what they want to be, live where they decide and devote themselves to the people they desire to love.

It reminds me of how blessed I am - that I don't have to worry about how I am going to feed my family.

I don't have to worry that my children will go hungry.

Sometimes it bothers me that we have just the opposite problem.

As a family we sometimes argue over where we will eat, while there

"There is an overabundance of food in our cabinets..."

- DEBORAH GRIFFIN



I witnessed a flag retirement ceremony last week and the words that were read reminded me of that fact:

"The flag of the United States of America is an honored symbol of our nation's unity, its hopes, its achievements, its glory and its high resolve.

As the fire consumes the worn and tattered material in its purifying flame, let us remember the words of George Washington when the Star-Spangled Banner was first flown by the Continental Army: "We take the stars from heaven and the red from our mother country. We separate the red by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and the white stripes shall go down to posterity representing liberty."

Thus the Stars and Stripes became what it is; born amid the strife of battle, it has become the standard around which a free people have fought to preserve the greatest nation in the world."

Deborah Griffin is a Staff Writer at the Martin County Enterprise & Weekly Herald. She wishes all a happy Fourth of July. She can be reached at (252)-792-1181 or dgriffin@ncweeklies.com.

are people all over the world - even in this county - that wonder if they will eat.

There is an over-abundance of food in our cabinets.

We have the choice of what we will eat, when we want to eat it, while there are those that pray to just to get through the night while hunger gnaws away sleep.

I am reminded that there are both soldiers and refugees that lay awake at night, listening for things that will harm them, while I sleep soundly in my temperature-controlled room in a comfortable bed, not worried about much except what I will wear the next day to work.

I am reminded that there are still refugees, through no fault of their own, on the run, because the lack of freedom in their country forced them to find solace.

Our country is far from perfect, but it is still the greatest nation on earth.

MY WORLD

A crazy adventure with dad...

We're vacationing on Florida's beautiful Anna Maria Island this Father's Day weekend, which is perfect. Traveling through Florida always brings to mind the only two trips I made into the Sunshine State with Dad during his lifetime.

Those trips were clear through to Miami. The man never did anything halfway.

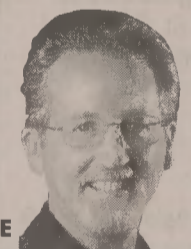
A family vacation when I was five was the first trip. I have three shadowy memories from it: Repeatedly asking when we would get to "my momma's ami"; eating my very first pimento cheese sandwich at a roadside picnic table; and a wire clothes hanger held above the ocean by a girl who asked my sister and me to count how many seconds she could hold her breath under water.

The second trip was in 1975 and I remember most every detail. I was 13 and Dad was in the throes of a glorious midlife crisis. He decided it would be great if we doubled on his motorcycle from Johnson City, Tenn., to Fort Lauderdale - where we stayed for his convention meetings in Miami.

I've told this story before but it bears repeating every few years. Fathers should be reminded that a crazy adventure is the fastest

"He knew it would be that way and he was a genius."

- MARK RUTLEDGE



way to a son's heart.

Ours was on a 1970 Honda 350 Scrambler. Designed for street or trail, Dad had it outfitted with a sissy bar and luggage rack. We strapped two suitcases to the rack and hit the road.

He was going to let me do some of the driving, but it rained all the way and the bike was not exactly well balanced with our luggage and me on the back. Dad had to lean forward to keep the front tire on the pavement.

When I say it rained all the way, I mean all 830 miles.

Riding that far on a motorcycle that small meant no feeling at all in my lower extremities for most of the trip. I kept checking every few minutes to be sure my feet were not dragging the road from vibrating off the wet pegs.

We stopped in Statesboro, Ga., and holed up in a motel hoping the rain would pass. Dad rolled the motorcycle into the room, as

if parking it in the rain was detrimental in some way that riding in the rain was not.

Racing through the steamy and flat landscape past orange groves and pine trees, Florida was a strange and exciting frontier. The fresh orange juice really did taste better than the stuff at home. Everything tasted better.

We stopped at each convenience station along the toll road, where a dollar would fill the tank for another 100 miles, but the vending machine prices were criminal.

Shortly after we arrived in Fort Lauderdale, the sun came out and Dad was astonished that I was not too exhausted to make a few solo laps around the motel parking lot. The bike needed to be tested without all that weight, and a group of young girls by the pool needed to witness my cycling skills.

Dad and I bonded on that trip in a way that I'm not sure we could have without it. He knew it would be that way and he was a genius.

I'm just glad he wasn't into little sailboats or hot air balloons.

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