

Opinion

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

Take away their power...

I have been a self-proclaimed feminist since my college days.

In fact, in undergrad I majored in Political Science and minored in Women's Studies with the dream of getting into a Women's Studies PhD program. My plan was to plant myself on a campus somewhere and spend the rest of my life empowering young women.

Of course, as a result of some twists and turns I followed another path and built my career advocating for the voiceless. Nevertheless, the fact that I am a woman and a mother of girls, keeps issues which affect girls and women at the forefront of my mind.



TONZA RUFFIN

SouthernmomJD

As I was walking the other day, I realized my idea of feminism has grown so much over the years. Had I gone on to become that Women's Studies professor I dreamed of being in my twenties, I probably would have been focused on empowerment through equal pay, equal rights, equal opportunities and the right to choose. My forty-something Women's Studies professor self would center my empowerment talks around taking away the power men have over us psychologically.

Evolution, and life experiences, have led me to believe the equality we are seeking as women will never come to be until we rid ourselves of the grasp men have on us mentally. This does not mean we cannot have loving relationships with men. So, don't run off saying Tonza is a "man hater" just yet.

I believe that taking away the power men have over us psychologically would simply cause a shift in our mindset.

When I sit around and talk to my teenage daughter and her friends, they talk to me about the pressure of having to always be on "fleek" (I'm not really sure if young people are still saying that but oh well...) in order to attract men.

The sad thing is while many of these girls work hard at being on "fleek," they find themselves disappointed when they finally get the attention they were seeking because they then realize they are not really interested in the guy they were pursuing.

There is often a delay between her acceptance and announcement of disinterest because many of these young girls waste time questioning whether or not something is wrong with them after realizing "he is just not that interesting."

To take away a man's power psychologically means to simply shift our focus as girls and women to what makes us feel happy and whole without giving any consideration to the male desires. Many women eventually come to this point.

Unfortunately, it is only after we are older, and we realize that life is too short to waste on situations causing more stress than happiness. Imagine the possibilities for a little girl who gets the tools she needs early on to embrace this notion.

She would no longer be bombarded with the emotional baggage coming with trying to live up to a man's standards. Therefore, her energy could be spent in areas that create peace and happiness for her.

What if we began teaching little girls that the true key to happiness and peace is found when they truly love themselves and the life they have been gifted with. Shifting the focus to self-love would greatly minimize the amount of time women struggle with low self-esteem. This would ultimately lead to a more balanced and peaceful society.

While we have taken great strides to teach young girls they are able to accomplish anything they want to in the workplace and in the world, we still have a lot of work to do when it comes to giving young girls the tools they need in order to be empowered psychologically so that men no longer have the power to decide for women what their "happy" should look like.

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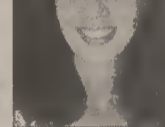


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Christmas came early...

Christmas is less than one week away, and I can say I am only half ready for the big holiday.

I did get the decorating completed the weekend after Thanksgiving, but it was not an easy task.



LESLIE BEACHBOARD
Small Town Girl

With the idea of a live Christmas tree, the family went on a mission to find the perfect tree. I have always been used to having a pre-lit tree, so trying to string newly bought, scrunched up lights on a nine-foot tree made me want to throw the tree and lights out the front door for someone else to deal with.

Several crystal ornaments were in shattered pieces on my hardwood floor before I realized they must be placed farther back on the limb to avoid them falling to the floor.

I have not bought a single present, but I guess it could be a good thing. There were no pretty wrapped packages underneath the tree when the urge of peeing on a "real tree" in the house hit Coby, my St. Bernard, Sunday night.

As I threw my tree skirt in the trash I thought to myself, I spoke too soon about him not seeming interested in my tree.

This last week before Christmas seems as though it is planned to be torture for me.

We are planning to do eight newspapers this week, and I know my tradition of last minute Christmas shopping adventures will be hectic trying to find every present in one weekend.

But it is all going to be fine for two reasons.

The first reason is my children begin their Christmas break today at 11:30, and I don't know who is happier. Don't get me wrong the children attend an amazing school, but by the time Christmas break arrives we all need a break.

My oldest child almost always completes her homework on her own, and never asks for help. But my youngest three require more attention.

After several hours a night of homework a night and the morning chaos of children who are usually grumpy because they are not "morning people, I get tired and the routine gets old.

I need a break.

The second reason is Christmas arrived early for me this year.

"Shenon Claus," my daddy, and several helper elves took on the job of picking up and delivering a baby grand piano through the front doors of my house.

I have played the piano since I was eight, and always wanted a baby grand piano.

After moving into my house, I found the perfect place for a new toy, in the bay of windows in the foyer.

Now, my want is a reality. This weekend, after much planning and engineering to find a way to move the 500-plus pounds of piano, it rolled through front doors.

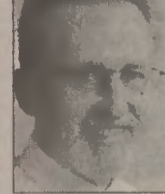
I always joked about playing a baby grand in the bay, and now I can do that.

The funny thing is because it was unexpected my Christmas tree was sitting where the piano needed to go. We moved the tree with lights and decorations still attached.

Leslie Beachboard wishes all of her readers a Merry Christmas, and is a Staff Writer for the Bertie Ledger-Advance. She can be reached via email at lbeachboard@ncweeklies.com.

A highly engineered used vehicle...

When you maintain a fleet of vehicles, there's going to be a lemon in the bunch now and again. I'm ready to cut my losses and pass our lemon on to the next citrus sucker.



MARK RUTLEDGE
Today In North Carolina

With three teenage drivers, we have a lot of cars in the family. My strategy has been to put the kids in older and heavy vehicles engineered in European countries with lots of snow. These are cars that are rated highly for safety and should withstand a bit more banging around without need of a tow truck.

I was a new driver once, and I've acknowledged my contribution to the destruction of several automobiles during those early years. My dad's strategy evolved toward acquiring old, heavy, slow, and rusting heaps for me to drive - and turning the insurance payment over to me as well.

The car I found for my first young driver was a fantastic find. It's a 2001 Volvo Cross Country, a marvel of Swedish ingenuity. I think I used up all of my used-car luck on that machine, because

the next buy has been a highly engineered disappointment from day one.

But oh, the Volvo. The Cross Country is an all-wheel-drive absolute tank that will go anywhere in the snow. Few people know that it was designed for carrying Scandinavian cross country skiers to the highest and most snow-covered mountain trails.

The skiers could then send the car back to the base of the mountain - driverless and bouncing between trees - where it would arrive unscathed and ready to transport the next group of skiers.

Not a word of that is true, but it's entirely plausible.

Our Cross Country has paid off on my teenage-driver strategy twice by coming through crashes without subsequently needing to go through a body shop. One daughter backed through a snow-covered yard and slammed squarely into the front of another teenager's parked car.

The friend's car was totaled. The Volvo has a small scratch on the rear bumper.

Another daughter was exiting our driveway in the Volvo at the same time that our next-door neighbor was arriving home. The neighbor's car was smashed into

pieces that had to be loaded onto a truck and hauled away.

I was able to glue the Volvo's cracked taillight back together.

Seeking to replicate the solid Volvo experience when the twins started driving earlier this year, I looked at a 2004 Cross Country in excellent condition. The car lot wanted nearly twice what we paid an individual for the 2001, and I walked away.

Now, I kick myself every time the German-engineered SUV that we finally bought chokes on another dead component. A water pump here, a starter there, and pretty soon you've piled up half the vehicle's dollar value in repair bills.

I once crawled under my Dad's old Chevy Caprice and had a new starter installed within minutes. The same job on our used SUV requires a degree from Darmstadt University of Technology.

I'll pay another DUT grad to fix it one more time. Then I'm going to stick a sign in the window:

"Will trade for Volvo Cross Country. Comes with five free-towing coupons and a flare gun."

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Bertie Ledger-Advance

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

THE BERTIE LEDGER-ADVANCE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1928 THROUGH THE HERITAGE OF THE WINDSOR LEDGER AND THE AULANDER ADVANCE. THE NEWSPAPER TRACES ITS HISTORY TO 1832 WHEN IT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED AS THE WINDSOR HERALD AND BERTIE COUNTY REGISTER

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THE BERTIE LEDGER-ADVANCE (ISSN 051-700) IS PUBLISHED EACH WEDNESDAY FOR \$32.10 (TAX INCLUDED) PER YEAR (IN BERTIE COUNTY) BY ADAMS PUBLISHING GROUP 109 S. KING ST., WINDSOR, NC 27983. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT WINDSOR, NC AND ENTERED AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.

POSTMASTER:
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