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Campaign trail can be hazardous

Now in my third week in town, I'm still getting the same question - what are you doing here? As many of you know, I've been with the paper to our south for the past 28 years. However, I recently had to leave employment there. Don't worry, I wasn't dipping in the company till or making googly eyes at fellow employees. No, it was something much worse - I'm running for office.

Since I'm not running for anything here and since they needed some help at the *Review* after the departure of my good friend Steve Warner a few weeks back, I got the call up. So now, I'm living a double life. By day, I'm your mild mannered news reporter at the *Smithville Review*. By night, I'm campaigning for office back in Warren County.

Of course, my campaign almost came to a screeching halt this week.

Why? Scandal? Torrid affair? Breach of ethics? None of them. Try manslaughter. That's right, my campaign nearly killed someone. Maybe I should explain.

So anyway, I'm cruising down Manchester Highway at about 55 miles per hour just minding my own business with my very large and top-heavy campaign sign bearing my name in the bed of a friend's truck. I'm chatting with a friend when suddenly I catch something move out of the corner of my eye.

"MY SIGN!" I exclaim, hitting my brakes. It was too late. The large sign had already done a Dorothy out of the back of my truck and had taken flight like a big old gold and blue wooden kite.

As I slowed, I looked over at my



THAT NEW GUY
by Duane Sherrill

friend. "Man, I sure was lucky that no one was ..."

I was cut off mid-sentence as a pickup truck slammed into the wooden sign, splintering it into a million pieces.

The words I uttered at that point are not safe for work so I will not include them in this family newspaper.

I jumped out of the truck as I came to a halt on the shoulder and went running toward the truck that had just hit it.

"I'm in trouble," I said to myself, visualizing someone pulling a splinter of wood out of their chest. "I'm so going to get sued."

I could see the headline - "Candidate kills constituent."

However, instead I was met by the driver who was busy gathering up pieces of my splintered sign.

"I'm sorry I tore up your sign, sir," he said with pieces of wood in his hand.

"Sorry?" I bellowed. "I'm the one who's sorry. Are you alright?"

Actually, there wasn't even a scratch on his truck. The sign and its wood supports were blown to bits on impact.

Anyway, as we were picking up the last bits of my sign, I turn to the guy and extend my hand. "I don't know if it's a good time, but I'd sure appreciate your vote. My name is ..."

He stopped me before I could get it out. "Sir, you don't have to tell me your name. I just saw it coming toward my windshield at 55. I'll never forget it."

Contact Duane Sherrill at news@smithvillereview.com

Who does Blackburn represent?

Opioid abuse is costing each and every Tennessee an approximately \$4,793 a year, according to a study by the American Enterprise Institute.

The opioid epidemic is, without a doubt, one of the most severe health crises our nation has faced. While the causes for this epidemic are multi-faceted and complex, we have to be honest about the unfortunate reality that the United States Congress has taken action that has, at the very least, allowed the epidemic to continue and, in some cases, actually helped to make it worse.

Late last year, an exhaustive investigative report by "60 Minutes" and the *Washington Post* revealed the extent to which Tennessee's own Representative Marsha Blackburn has helped distributors continue to flood our streets with opioids. The Center for Responsive Politics reports that Blackburn has taken \$711,385 in campaign contributions from the pharmaceutical industry since 2002. The inference here is obvious.

The Tennessee Department of Health tells us that 6,039 Tennesseans died of opioid abuse between 2010-15. This trend didn't slow in 2016 when 1,631 Tennesseans died. As of 2015, there were more prescriptions for opioids in Tennessee than there were people. In 2012, more Tennesseans died of opioid overdoses than died of vehicle accidents, homicide or suicide.

Yet as this epidemic continued to worsen, Rep. Blackburn sponsored legislation that literally stripped the United States Drug Enforcement Agency of its ability to keep opioids off our streets. She claimed her bill would ensure that the many un-



GUEST EDITORIAL
by Dr. Andrew Pfeffer, MD

fortunate Americans that suffer from chronic pain could continue to get the medicine they need. In reality, it held the floodgates open for the unscrupulous to continue to peddle drugs.

Now we're in an election year, and Rep. Blackburn is asking us to promote her to the U.S. Senate, but we have to ask ourselves if that would be in our best interests. At this point, Blackburn has taken \$15,000 in campaign contributions from McKesson and \$17,500 from Cardinal Health, two of the Big Three opioid distributors. We can legitimately ask exactly whom does she really want to represent in the Senate.

Based on her previous legislative action, the answer is clearly that Blackburn is more concerned about the interests of the drug distributors than she is in the interests of the far too many Tennessee families that are struggling with the horrible ramifications of opioid abuse.

Shortly after the press revealed her role in the opioid crisis, Blackburn told the USA Today Network, "If there are unintended consequences, we will fix it." The blunt reality is that she has done nothing in the five months since.

It's far past time that we took substantive action to curb opioid abuse in Tennessee. If we truly want to make a change for the future, we can start by asking where Blackburn's loyalties lie. Can we trust her to take our side over the opioid distributors?

Andrew N. Pfeffer, MD is an attending emergency medicine physician in Middle Tennessee. Dr. Pfeffer has worked in both rural and urban settings.

LETTERS TO THE
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You Only Live Once

Kids say it all the time: YOLO. You Only Live Once.

It's the excuse they use when they want to do something silly, stupid or dangerous.

"Let's see how fast Mom's car will go -- YOLO!"

"Let's eat worms -- YOLO!"

"Let's put cherry bombs in our pants -- YOLO!"

You can imagine how those all turned out. Not that I didn't do stupid stuff when I was a kid, it's just that I don't ever remember saying YOLO. I think we usually just said, "Watch this!" before each trip to the emergency room.

YOLO came along with all the other internet acronyms: LOL, BRB, IMHO and who knows what else.

It's something you expect from young people. But on a plane ride last week, I heard two women who were well into their golden years talking about their upcoming cruise, and one said, "My children say I'm spending their inheritance, but I say you only live once, and Bob and I are going to spend any time we have left enjoying it."

Even if we don't use those words, I think more and more older people are joining the YOLO movement. It is a puzzlement as to why the children of the woman I overheard would think YOLO is a good idea for themselves, but not for their parents. Isn't what's good for the goose, good for the gander?

We've all heard stories of great fortunes left to spoiled, unseasoned children who wasted it -- or worse, created great evil with their unearned wealth. Most of us can name



VILLAGE IDIOT
by Jim Mullen

a family where money seemed to be a curse, not a blessing. The old TV show "The Millionaire" would show how receiving a million dollars, tax-free, seemed to wreck people's lives, not improve them. Many successful people believe they are successful because they had tough, rocky, almost abusive childhoods.

Any college administrator can tell you stories about parents who will do anything for their kids: do their homework for them, write their admissions essay for them, make sure they never hit a bump in the road. It's almost hard to imagine a better way to raise an unsuccessful, unhappy adult who won't be able to afford therapy. It would almost be like your personal trainer saying, "The less you train, the stronger you'll be."

YOLO encourages bad choices and risky behavior. A better philosophy for an adventure-filled life would be the old phrase, "You'll be dead for a long time." It leaves plenty of room for saying "yes" to all kinds of learning and enjoyable experiences, yet it has a built-in warning about trying the truly dangerous stunts. It discourages speeding and cherry bombs, but allows for eating worms and going on cruises.

YOLO doesn't leave room for a next life; the other phrase simply encourages us to make the most of this one. Don't waste it.

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