

FRIDAY **JANUARY 19, 2018**



Southern 🕑 Standard

McMinnville, **Tennessee**

WE HAVE A NEW

PSYCHOTIC KILLER AROUND TOWN ...

OLD MAN

WINTER

Standard online reader survey



Q: Do you think having a new head coach will help the **Tennessee Titans?**

YES	41%
NO	59%

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Addressing our county officials should be easier

TO THE EDITOR:

I read the *Southern* Standard's editorial in the Friday, Jan. 12 edition seeing no small degree of irony.

The viewpoint expressed was their indignation that a teacher in "faraway Louisiana" had been physically removed from a school board meeting during the public comment time allotted. The irony, of course, is the same would likely occur here in a Warren County Commission meeting, should a citizen not jump through all the hoops erected by the commission to keep them from voicing their views

It wasn't that long ago, by my recollection, that citizens were not even allowed to speak except by permission of the county executive at a commission meeting until a 3rd District commissioner took the initiative to provide them with a platform to air their thoughts on local issues, be it taxes, the animal shelter, etc. Still, in order to speak,

a citizen must provide notification two weeks prior to the meeting as well other details. Does that sound like the commission really wants to hear from those they work for?

So, while I applaud the Southern Standard for supporting the right of citizens to be heard, I have yet to see an editorial that takes to task the County Commission here in Warren County for erecting a process that basically says: We don't care what you think and don't have to listen to you.

One would have to ask why the county's paper of record hasn't commented on this form or repression right in their backyard. Could it be that the editors travel in the same social circles as many of those commissioners and wouldn't want to offend them? As Mark Twain once said: "Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often."

Keeping the president honest

As Donald Trump marks his first year in office, this question is more critical and consequential than ever: How should the media be covering the president?

NEWS

There's no doubt Trump has changed the rules of the game. He fabricates repeatedly and never apologizes. His vast social media network enables him to communicate directly with his supporters. He withholds critical information that other presidents have routinely released, like his taxes. And he regularly attacks the credibility of the press.

undermine an institution that is empowered by the First Amendment to hold him, and politicians of all stripes, account-

able for their actions. Sen. John McCain criticized Trump's campaign in the Washington Post: "Journalists play a major role in the promotion and protection of democracy and our unalienable rights, and they must be able to do their jobs freely."

Journalists are taking a more aggressive stance in covering the Trump White House, and that's a good thing. The voting public deserves to know that what the president tweets at midnight, or rants at a rally, is not the whole story One key moment came in September 2016, when The New York *Times* used the word "lie" in a story about Trump's promotion of the "birther" conspiracy. NPR asked Times editor Dean Baquet, "Has something changed in the way the paper covers

and writes about Trump?" And Baquet answered, "Yes, the simple answer is yes.'

Trump "sort of crossed a little bit of a line," explained Baquet, and what he said "was just demonstrably a lie. ... And I think we owed it to our readers to just call it out for what it was.'

Baquet was right about that. So were the news organizations that labeled Trump a "racist" for favoring immigration from predominantly white countries like Norway over predominantly dark-skinned nations in Africa and the Caribbean.

The risks for the media are considerable. Incendiary words like "lie" and "racist" have to be used rarely and precisely, saved for the president's most egregious and destructive comments. Otherwise,

words lose their power and journalists lose their credibility.

And as Baker warns, even small mistakes have to be avoided at all costs. Brian Ross of ABC made a serious error, going live on the air with a story the former national security adviser Michael Flynn was going to testify that Trump, during the campaign, had



Fewer people a great thing

At noon on Wednesday, McMinnville was one of the coldest cities in the entire United States. At a very nippy 10 degrees, we were 4 degrees colder than Buffalo, N.Y., and 21 degrees colder than Anchorage, Alaska, according to AccuWeather.

The snow and frigid air had one detrimental effect. It kept local residents tucked away in their homes where it was nice and warm. It seemed few people mustered the courage to venture outdoors.

The snow and frigid air also had one glowingly positive effect. It kept local residents tucked away in their homes. This meant there weren't as many folks flooding the streets and cramming into stores.

As a result, I had two days where it felt like I had the town



Jeff Mathes Peach Ave Morrison





instructed him to contact Russian agents. The story missed a key fact -that this happened after Trump was elected, not before -- and ABC News President James Goldston was furious.

Journalists cannot afford to get it wrong. In covering Trump, they have to be as fearless, as accurate, and as fair as possible. Otherwise, they jeopardize their essential role in keeping the president honest.

Steve and Cokie Roberts can be contacted by email at stevecokie@gmail.com.

Oprah Winfrey and religion

No one has to tell Marcia Nelson about America's rising number of "nones" -- people claiming zero ties to a religious tradition -- because she meets them day after day while working as a hospital chaplain in Chicago.

Lots of people want you to pray with them, but they'll also make comments that let you know they really don't like the institutional church," said Nelson. "They want you to pray, but they don't want traditional religious language. ... When you're in that situation, what you have to do is try to pray like Oprah."

America had another Oprah Winfrey moment the other day, when

the 63-year-old billionaire media maven delivered a Golden Globes sermon that created rapture in Hollywood and a heady buzz among journalists and politicos. NBC gushed on

Twitter: "Nothing but respect for OUR future president.

Winfrey raced from the birth of the Civil Rights movement to today's headlines, while focusing on the pains and triumphs of abused women.

"In 1944, Recy Taylor was a young wife and mother walking home from a church service she'd attended in Abbeville, Ala., when she was abducted by six armed white men, raped and left blindfolded by the side of the road," said Winfrey. "They threatened to kill her if she ever told anyone, but her story was reported to the NAACP, where a young worker by the name of Rosa Parks became the lead investigator on her case. ... But justice wasn't an option in the era of Jim Crow."

The men who tortured her were never prosecuted, a common story in a "culture broken by brutally powerful men. But their time is up ... It was somewhere in Rosa Parks' heart

almost 11 years later, when she made the decision to stay seated on that bus in Montgomery, and it's here with every woman who chooses to say, 'Me too."

If Winfrey seeks the presidency, she might offer Democrats a friendlier approach to faith and some of the hope Barack Obama brought to discussions of race, said Nelson. And it's hard to name another American with Oprah's ability to face a camera and tell women -- white and black, suburban and urban, rich and poor -- that a specific belief or decision will change their lives.

"Oprah can say, 'This will work,'

and people believe her," said Nelson. Clearly, this is linked to Oprah's vague, "spiritual but not religious" approach to life. The result, accord-

ing to Ross Douthat of

The New York Times, is a "religious individualism that blurs the line between the God out there and the God Within, a gnostic spirituality that constantly promises access to a secret and personalized wisdom, a gospel of health and wealth that insists that the true spiritual adept will find both happiness and money, a do-it-yourself form of faith that encourages syncretism and relativism and the pursuit of 'your truth.'

Is Oprah the "pope" of the religiously unaffiliated? If that label fits anyone, it would be Winfrey, said Nelson.

"She talks about God, but for Oprah that can almost be the God of the

week, the spiritual flavor of the week. ... How she talks about spirituality and about truth is constantly changing. That's her gift. That's who she is. For her, that stuff will preach."

Terry Mattingly is the editor of GetReligion.org. He lives in Oak Ridge. largely to myself. And like a child suddenly getting all the attention because a brother or sister was away at summer camp, I loved it.

Tuesday and Wednesday were great days, even with the numbing cold. It's amazing how much more enjoyable it is to drive to work in the morning without having to share the road with other motorists who seem poised to constantly cut in front of my car.

This is an unscientific guess, but I'd say the snow reduced traffic by about 90 percent, which increased my enjoyment of the road by about 700 percent.

When it comes to shopping, Walmart is the store folks love to hate, but for me it's the store I just love. I say this because I can't imagine the misery I would endure if I didn't have the convenience of shopping at any time of the day or night.

What makes a trip to Walmart even better? You got it -- no other customers. When I ventured to Walmart on Tuesday night, it was like a vacation cruise. The parking lot was so empty, I thought I'd made a wrong turn and gone to Roses. I almost grabbed the very first parking spot.

Once inside, it was like my own personal shopping dream. I didn't have to navigate through other shoppers completely blocking the aisle oblivious to me trying to squeeze by. Walmart employees looked legitimately happy to see me because I wasn't just another customer. I was the only customer.

I didn't have to try and judge which line would be faster and then spend the next 10 minutes mentally kicking myself for picking the slowest possible line in North America. There were no customers waiting at any of the registers.

All of this is not to suggest I don't like people, but the roads are so much more enjoyable when there's less traffic. And while I enjoy bumping into friends and neighbors at the store, shopping is so much more relaxing when you're not stampeded by other customers.

While most folks were resting comfortably at home on Tuesday and Wednesday, I was enjoying the comforts of a much less congested McMinnville. For everyone so eager for rapid growth, there are some benefits to staying small.

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