

Opinions

SUNDAY
JANUARY 21, 2018

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Southern Standard

McMINNVILLE, TENNESSEE

Standard online reader survey



Q: Who do you blame for the government shutdown?

- Democrats
- Republicans
- The president
- All of Congress

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GUEST EDITORIAL

More must be done to prevent false alerts

They might as well have said "We're from the government and we're here to scare the bejeezus out of you," because that's what they did.

Last weekend's false warning of an incoming missile attack sent Hawaiian residents and visitors scrambling for cover, believing for a terrifying 15 minutes — and, for many, much longer — that the islands had come under attack.

Some hid under furniture. A man lowered a child into a storm drain, hoping it would provide protection from a nuclear blast. Many called family members and friends on the mainland and around the world to say goodbye.

It was all a mistake — a cruel false alarm caused by, officials said, human error.

Officials with the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency later said an employee "pushed the wrong button" during a routine shift change. Instead of an internal test of the messaging system, the worker mistakenly sent it to the public, warning: "BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER."

Providence Journal Rhode Island

THIS IS NOT A DRILL"

It took 40 long minutes for the Emergency Management Agency to send a correction via text alert. "NO missile threat to Hawaii," it said.

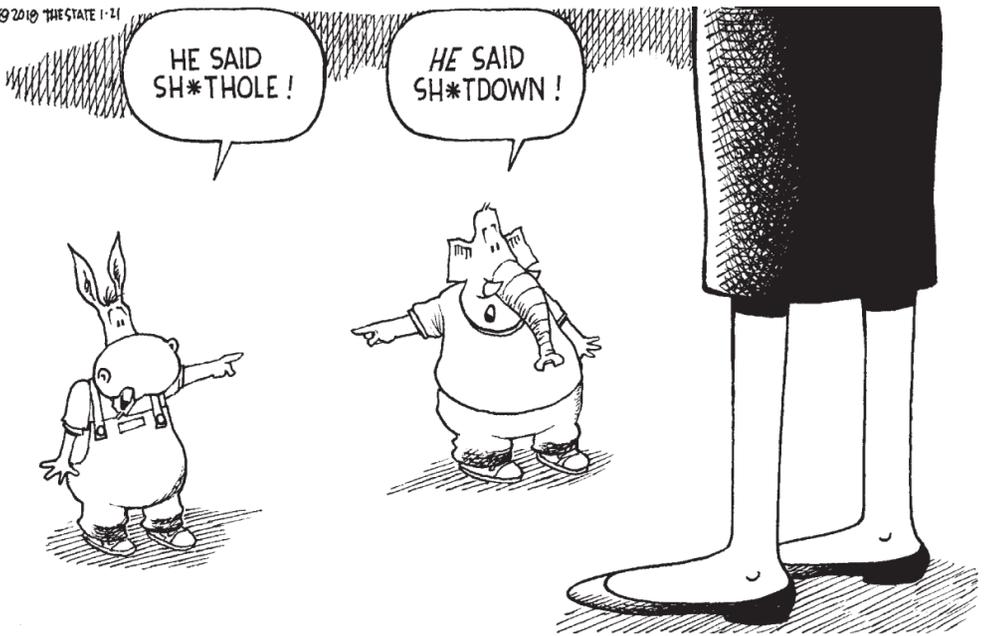
Meanwhile, confusion reigned. Public officials in Hawaii had few answers for the people whose panic turned to anger as they learned the warning was a mistake.

The episode is a monstrous black eye for the emergency management agency and for public officials who were caught off guard. It was a startling reminder that even emergency systems staffed by trained public servants are prone to monstrous errors. And the false alarm may make Hawaii's residents less inclined to believe the next warning.

It's not enough that a single state emergency agency staffer was disciplined and reassigned to a different job.

Everyone involved, from bottom to top, should take a lesson in how to avoid making the next human error into something much worse.

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Should Oprah run for president?

In case you missed the Golden Globe awards ceremony recently, like I did, you also missed Oprah Winfrey's splendid speech to the friendly audience. As my esteemed editor and friend James Clark aptly stated, she "made a heart-warming speech Sunday night ... and woke up Monday morning to calls for her to run for president."

Constitutionally, Oprah meets all the qualifications for President of the United States. She's a natural-born citizen, on the far side of 35 years of age, and a United States resident for well over the required 14 years.

That said, should Oprah run for POTUS, as in President of the United States? Who knows?

The answer depends on who you ask.

According to some of the billionaire TV star's friends, "she is actively considering running for president in 2020."

Meanwhile, Oprah's best friend, "CBS This Morning" co-host Gayle King reportedly said, "Oprah was intrigued by the idea."

The so-called progressive wing of the Democratic Party is giddy with glee over the prospect of having Oprah run for the White House in 2020.

Oprah's life narrative is certainly extraordinary. She is a self-made billionaire who rose from the depths of abject poverty to the pinnacles of power and influence in the media and American pop culture. She also has a storied history of helping and mentoring others along her own road to stunning success.

Oprah is also immensely popular,

especially among working-class women, who believe she understands them and cares about them. In many ways, she is the anti-Hillary Clinton and anti-Nancy Pelosi. And most of all to some, she is the absolute anti-Donald Trump.

In my view, Oprah could probably win the Democratic nomination for president in 2020, if she decides to run. After all, she has the power of popularity, prestige, instant name recognition, and plenty of money, including her own.

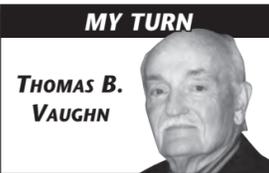
However, winning the presidency is a far greater challenge for Oprah. Just ask Hillary Clinton about that. She went from "In like Flynn" to "Out like Gout" in the 2016 presidential elections.

Despite her self-serving "memoir" of "What Happened," I doubt if she really gets what actually happened, even now.

Only Oprah knows for sure if she will run for president in 2020. Being "Intrigued by the idea" is a far cry from being committed to running the gauntlet of primaries and caucuses, just to get the party's nomination. Then comes the much more daunting challenge of winning the magic number of 270 electoral votes in the general elections for president.

For now, one thing is for sure. Oprah's "actively considering" a run for the White House has captured the media and public attention it so richly deserves. Stay tuned for my own take on the pros and cons of Oprah for POTUS in 2020.

Retired Army Col. Thomas B. Vaughn can be reached at tbv@vumi@blomand.net.



MY TURN

THOMAS B. VAUGHN

There is hope to be found

By the time you read this column, there will no doubt be some new President Donald Trump tweet or utterance — on record or leaked — that will have the media and country aghast at the demons exposed by it. People not typically defending Trump may find themselves doing so simply because they don't think the latest is definitive proof that he's Hitler.

With everyone talking about the latest expletive the president reportedly used in a closed-door meeting with lawmakers, I couldn't help but think about Haiti, one of the countries on his leaked list of undesirables.

There's a beautiful nurse I know who has gone there in the years since the big earthquake to help in a hospital for some of the poorest and otherwise most forgotten. Sometime in the last few years of doing this, she broke her leg. She's giving time and resources — even risking her safety — to people she wouldn't be thinking about if she were simply cursing the darkness or thinking "poor dears" in the wake of earthquakes and other disasters.

As social media and news networks seemed to revel in the ability to use an expletive with abandon, I kept thinking of a story about Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York. He, too, went down to Haiti after the earthquake in 2010. And he asked: "Is there anything I can do for you?" Foremost in some minds was Mass. The Haitians had lost priests and bishops, the next day was Sunday and they wanted Mass. They wanted God. Hope in the midst of death and debris.

The same day America was abuzz with reports of the president's profane remarks, a report was released that found life expectancy in the United

States had dropped for the second year in a row. Addiction and suicide are some significant factors. Right here at home, people are living in what seems to them an impenetrable darkness. There is a world of people in pain — some of them right next door to us. When we plug ourselves into the unending reality TV show, we miss them. We close ourselves off to the possibility of hearing their cries.

More often than not, when we think we're reaching out to help someone, they wind up ministering to us. I often think of Christians in Iraq and Syria, who overflow with gratitude simply for being alive with their families, in whatever makeshift home they've found. Their close encounter with genocide has been an opportunity for them to prioritize their

faith — or so they so often tell the story. Death is a certainty, and hope is the only thing that gives us understanding.

The morning after the President's remark, Pope Francis tweeted: "The encounter with God and our brothers and sisters cannot wait just because we are slow or lazy. We are called to that encounter today!"

Whatever the pope makes headlines for, he's always nudging us to the best part of ourselves. If you find yourself outraged by Trump — or Hollywood, or politicians, or whatever else the anger machine of social media generates — don't sit there, don't stew or get into online arguments about it. Instead, do something good in the world. The world could use it. And you might even encounter some hope along the way.

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JUST A THOUGHT

LISA HOBBS



For warmth, just add bubble wrap

Bubble wrap works.

My statement about the plastic material that most people use for packing fragile items probably isn't all that impressive, if you're thought process is focused on moving. I am not. I'm winterizing in an effort to hunker down, stay and withstand the cold.

Now that I have most of you completely confused and trying to figure out what winterizing and bubble wrap have in common, I'll tell you.

During the first bout of winter weather, the temperature went down to 4 degrees. It was very cold in my house. Realizing there would be more cold surges to come, I started looking for winterizing options and I stumbled across an online suggestion to use bubble wrap on my windows.

Your reaction probably mirrored my initial one. I was perplexed. I remember years ago using plastic on my windows and it working. I hated it, though. It damaged the house due to the nails that had to be used. I eventually stopped using that old-fashioned form of window insulation.

Then, pop, in comes bubble wrap.

The sites I found said placing bubble wrap on the windows is an easy way to reduce the heat loss and lower heating bills. Windows are the biggest sources of heat loss. By using bubble wrap, there is no taping, no blow-drying, no thin plastic drying out after a season or two and splitting, and no replacing of expensive window kits. The method is fast, easy, and hassle free, and your cut sheets can be applied to windows within seconds. Pre-cut sheets can be used for repeated applications.

All you have to do is cut the wrap to the size of the window, mist the window with water from a spray bottle and press the bubble wrap (bubble side against the glass) onto the window. Once placed, it serves as multiple insulating pockets filled with air.

Some sources claimed that on a single-pane window, bubble wrap can reduce heat loss by up to 50 percent. On a double-pane window, it estimated about 20 percent.

I felt a little foolish trying such a thing, so I only purchased one roll. I cleaned the windows first. When I covered larger windows, I used clear tape on the overlapped seams of the bubble wrap. To my shock, it worked. Prior to placement, I could feel the cold on the glass. Afterwards, I could not. A mist of water holds it up nicely.

I've subsequently bought more rolls and every window in my house has bubble wrap on it. I'm not sure exactly what the insulating value is for me, but I can tell you it is warmer. The next time temperatures dropped to 4 degrees, it wasn't as cold in the house. I was happy. My happiness continued when the temperatures dipped down to negative 4 degrees.

My favorite part is that it still allows in sunlight. I definitely do not want to block any sunlight during winter months.

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