

Standard online reader survey



Q: How much do you typically get from the IRS on your tax returns?

- Under \$1,000
- From \$1,000 to \$2,000
- From \$2,000 to \$3,000
- Over \$3,000

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EDITORIAL

Valentine's Day a chance to show some kindness

The Beatles sang, "All You Need Is Love."

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."

And Mahatma Gandhi is crediting with the uplifting quote, "Where there is love, there is life."

On this day we celebrate as Valentine's Day, there will be many greeting cards exchanged. School children will hand out crunchy candy with phrases such as "Be Mine."

It's a day where the National Retail Federation projects Americans will spend \$19.6 billion on Valentine's-related gifts. There will be dinner dates and flower bouquets.

This special holiday is the perfect time to ask the question: How much love do we really have in our society?

Social media has become a breeding ground for nastiness with people unloading vulgarities about others they've never met.

We yell at people we don't like in traffic, escalating into road rage confrontations that occasionally lead to violence.

We allow our elected officials to lie to us, then reward them by re-electing them to Congress nearly 90 percent of the time.

Students bring guns to school and disgruntled employees bring guns to work. Police officers are killed seemingly every day in the line of duty.

Valentine's Day has evolved into a day to embrace romance with our current celebration getting its roots in the 1400s when written Valentine's began to appear. It's a day to express fondness and exchange kisses.

But it would be a refreshing change on this day of love to make a simple effort to be nicer to our friends, neighbors and fellow man.

Greet someone with a warm smile. Offer a friendly wave. Refrain from flying off the deep end when someone cuts in front of your grocery cart. Realize that just because someone may have a different opinion they're not a bad person.

It may seem trite to say we should use holidays like Valentine's Day to express goodwill and spread cheer. It may seem trite, but it's worth a try.



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Why does FBI believe Steele?

One of the most remarkable take-aways from the new documents released in the Trump-Russia investigation is the degree to which FBI officials were determined to believe Trump dossier author Christopher Steele -- even after it became clear he had lied to them.

In their drive to win a warrant to wiretap sometime Trump volunteer adviser Carter Page -- along with Paul Manafort, one of only two Trump figures known to be wiretapped in the investigation -- the bureau rested most of its case on Steele's information.

In part, the FBI trusted Steele because it had to; the bureau had no other evidence that would have sufficed to win a warrant to wiretap Page. The FBI also placed so much faith in Steele because he was a former British spy -- a fellow professional -- who had worked with the bureau a few years earlier in the world soccer corruption investigation.

But there were two problems with Steele's credibility, according to the referral. The first was the lack of corroborating evidence. The other was convincing evidence Steele lied to the FBI.

The credibility issue focused on whether Steele shared his dossier allegations with the press. When, in the late summer of 2016, the FBI asked Steele to join the Trump investigation -- an extraordinary move, given that it was the middle of a presidential campaign and Steele was being paid by the Hillary Clinton campaign -- one obvious condition was that Steele not share his information with the press.

Then, on Sept. 23, 2016, Yahoo

News published an article that was obviously based on Steele's dossier information. That seemed a clear violation of Steele's agreement with the FBI. What to do?

Steele himself had provided the information to the press. In September, he personally briefed reporters from Yahoo, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, CNN, and the *New Yorker*. That was a lot of talking to the press. So the FBI formally terminated its agreement to work with Steele.

But what to tell the court? Could the FBI say, "Oh, this guy who provided the bulk of our case against Carter Page has lied to us?"

In its next statement to the court, the bureau conceded it had ended its relationship with Steele because of his "unauthorized disclosure of information to the press."

But the FBI had an excuse. The FBI explained that Steele was so upset about the FBI's re-opening of the Clinton email investigation that, in his anger, he took his information to reporters.

The story wasn't true. No matter how angry Steele might have been about the re-opening of the Clinton investigation, the fact is, Steele talked to the press before the Clinton investigation was re-opened. That had nothing to do with any anger at the FBI. It was part of his work for the Clinton campaign.

Top FBI officials wanted to believe Steele. They needed to believe Steele. So they believed Steele.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

COLUMNIST

BYRON
YORK



I don't love Valentine's Day

Stressed? Overworked? Frazzled? Broke? Not to worry! Valentine's Day is coming up. That'll give you a chance to relax.

Oh, yeah, I forgot: It will only make you crazier. What to get? What to do? Where to go? Over the years you've bought (or been given) flowers, candy, jewelry and dinner, and nothing seems to change. If you're already in love, candy isn't going to change that. If you're not, dinner once a year isn't going to get the job done.

Is something wrong with you? Is something wrong with your partner? Or, just maybe, is something wrong with Valentine's Day itself? Or all holidays, for that matter.

Do we have any holidays where we're not required to buy, do or cook something, or travel somewhere? Or do all four of those at the same time? Not that anybody gets Valentine's Day off work, but you get the picture: It seems the entire function of a modern holiday (as opposed to a religious Holy Day) is to add stress to our lives, not to take it away.

Holidays are no longer a pleasure. They've become unholy days of obligation, where we have to run around like crazy people trying to make other people happy, and yet all it does is make us all "busy." I've got news for you: You can't make other people happy if they're not happy to begin with. That's something we each have to do for ourselves.

Now, before you think I am blaming St. Valentine for all this, let me just say that I'm not against love. I'm just against what it's been turned into. We

even expect first-graders to be happy about Valentine's Day, giving out cartoon-themed cards and candy kisses to their classmates. As if there won't be enough time in their little lives to obsess about social status and candy. What's the rush?

Like everyone else, I'd like to make the world a better place, but the Holiday Industrial Complex makes that harder and harder. Turn on the TV or walk into one of those dollar stores, and you'd think Valentine's Day was bigger than Black Friday,

VILLAGE IDIOT

JIM
MULLEN



love happy this Feb. 14, please realize that no gift can "make" a person truly happy. Your bright and shining face is enough. If Valentine's Day is the only time you tell someone that you love them or care about them, you're doing it wrong.

People may think I'm out to kill the florists and the restaurants here, but that's missing the point. I want friends and lovers to buy flowers and candy for each other every day, or as often as they can. I want people to go on dates all the time, or as often as they can. Under my plan, MORE flowers get bought, MORE candy gets shared, MORE restaurants are full.

Stop doing this once a year -- make every day Valentine's Day. You'll still be over-worked and frazzled, but someone will love you for it.

Contact Jim Mullen at mullen.jim@gmail.com.

FAMILY MAN

DUANE
SHERRILL



Saying farewell to the Standard

This is it. After 28 years on the job as your crime and courts reporter for the *Southern Standard*, I'm bidding my career farewell.

I'd always wondered how I would word my final column. I mean, despite serving longer in this position than anyone (than we can find anyway) has ever served, I knew there'd be a day when I'd have to say goodbye to the job I love and move on to something else. They say a man should reinvent himself every 10 years. Math tells me I'm a couple of decades overdue.

So, what to write about? Should I be sentimental and talk about how I'm going to miss sitting at my desk every day, turning a blank sheet of paper (actually it's now a blank video monitor) into a story thousands will read.

Should I be that old guy and talk about how technology has changed during my time here, going from having to laboriously develop our own black-and-white pictures in the darkroom to using the latest in digital technology where I can cover a story and have it before your eyes in an instant through the magic of the internet?

Should I talk about the crazy things I've seen since assuming the position back in March of 1990? I mean, I've seen it all during my time, some things that are stranger than even my alter-ego R.D. Sherrill could dream up in one of his novels.

Actually, after debating what to write, I settled on a subject -- dust. As I dug through the memories on my desk on Tuesday, dust filled the air, sending reporter Lisa Hobbs running for allergy medicine. As I dug deeper through the layers of stuff like an Egyptologist digging beneath the shifting sands around the pyramids, choosing which to keep and which to trash, it hit me how much of my life has been spent right here. The Standard is about the only job I've known aside from some stints in sales and banking.

I began here quite by accident. I came in to put in a yard sale for my mother and decided to put in an application since I needed money to go to law school. However, I never quite made it to law school as I got addicted to covering the courts and police.

Funny thing was, I originally applied for the sports job here and was convinced to babysit the crime and courts job until the sports job came open. Since that time, the sports job has been open on 25 occasions while the crime and courts job has remained filled. I chose to dance with the date that brought me.

So, this is it. While it might sound egotistical coming from me, this marks the end of an era. Thanks for reading my stories and columns over the years. It's been a heck of a ride but don't worry, R.D. Sherrill will continue churning out the books and I may even try my hand at blogging. After all, ink flows through my veins.

Duane Sherrill served as crime and courts reporter for the Standard for 28 years.



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Patricia Zechman, Publisher
James Clark, Editor

Phyllis Vanatta, Business Manager
Jeffery Simmons, Advertising Director

Phone: 473-2191
105 College St., McMinnville, TN 37110
FAX: 473-6823
Email: standard@blomand.net
Website: www.southernstandard.com

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