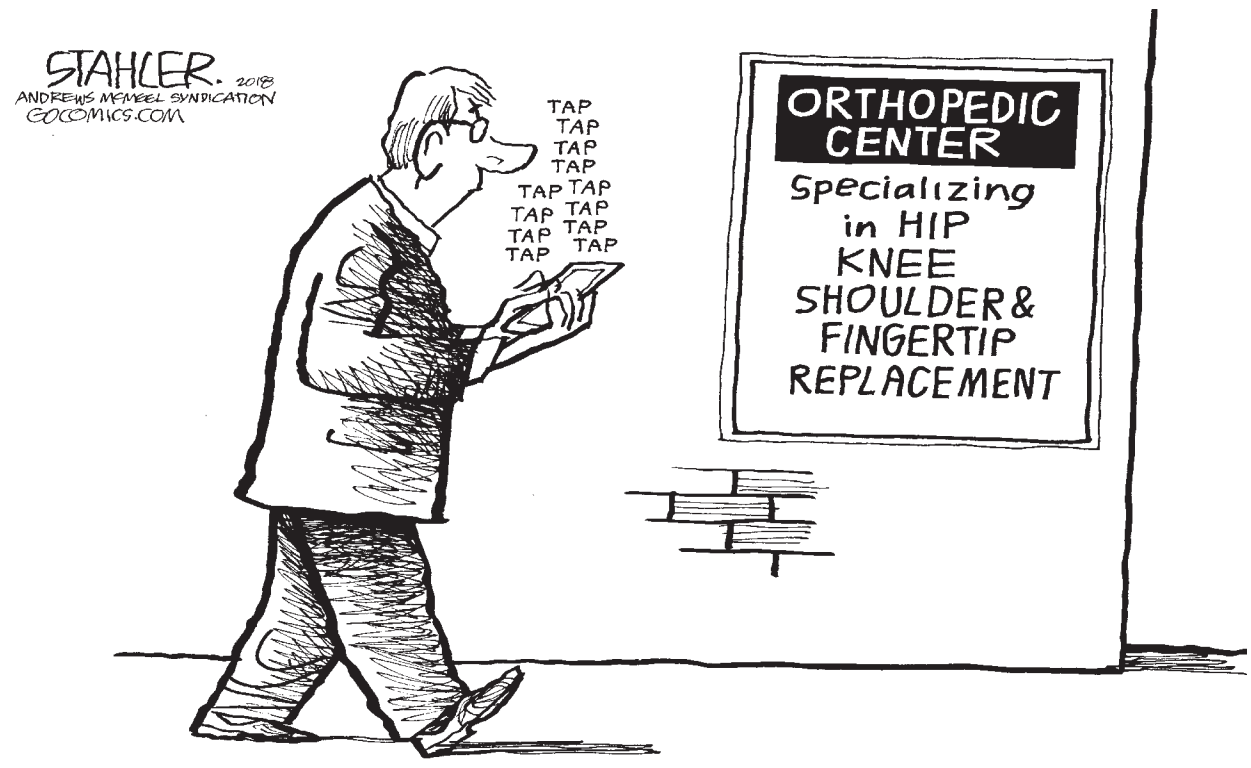
Standard online reader survey

Q: Do you use social media on a daily basis?

YES	**54 percent**
NO	**46 percent**



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Less harassment please at 2018 Back to The Strip

TO THE EDITOR:

This coming May 5, McMinnville will have its annual Back to The Strip Night. The event can be summed up as a nice spring day when car lovers gather at Court Square in McMinnville for a car show featuring a hip collection of hot rods, sport cars, modified trucks and classics.

After the car show, car owners drive their rides up and down what is known as The Strip, aka North Chancery Street/ Smithville Highway. Families park, pull out lawn chairs and enjoy the vehicles as they drive back and forth.

T-shirts are sold and businesses hand out souvenirs and memorabilia. Vendors sell pizza, burgers, hot dogs, BBQ, popcorn, bottled water and soft drinks.

A highlight with Back to The Strip is when a car owner will slightly rev the engine and bark a tire -- even an occasional burnout. Last year, I feel local law enforcement was a bit too stern with car owners who participated. Far too many owners were blue-lighted and ticketed.

Indeed, I understand the safety factor here. However, the mere title Back to The Strip indicates that the roar of a high-powered engine and the light smell of burnt rubber should be par for the norm, which was the case for those who were ticketed in 2017.

All in all, Back to The Strip should be both a fun day and a profitable day for Warren County, its residents and folks from several surrounding counties.

About the profitable side of Back to The Strip:

The city gave $62,500 to Bluegrass Underground in 2016 and 2017. Since then, Bluegrass Underground has left. What will the city do with this money?

The city gave $5,000 to Meals on Wheels.

The primary goal of Back to The Strip is to raise money for Meals on Wheels. It raised approximately $27,000 in 2017.

A human cannot survive without food or drink. The same human can survive without music. It's not that I am against good music. I'm merely stating a fact.

My point: I am humbly asking local authorities to allow the 2018 Back to The Strip to unfold safely, minus the harassment. Allow it to make some money. Allow car owners and families to enjoy a day out. Most importantly, allow a hungry belly to get full.

Respectfully,
Wade Sparkman
McMinnville

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Stakes high for midterms

When House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and Rep. Dennis Ross (R-Fla.) announced last Wednesday they won't be running for reelection this year, they became the latest GOP lawmakers to decide they've enjoyed as much of partisan politics as they can stand.

In my view, Speaker Ryan's impending departure will be another big blow to the already fractious and fractured Republican Party. By joining the ranks of 25 House members who are calling it quits, with more political casualties to come, he becomes a "lame duck leader" at a time when party unity is crucial to crushing a rising wave of Democrats seeking to regain control of the House following the midterm elections in November.

What looked like a long shot for House Democrats just a few months ago is starting to shape up as a potential slam dunk for them come November. Sure, Republicans enjoy a comfortable 237 to 193 majority over the Democrats, with 5 House seats vacant now. However, politics is a "zero sum" game. Therefore, all the Democrats have to do is flip 23 seats to their side of the aisle, hold on to the 9 Democratic seats being vacated by current incumbents, pick up 2 more of the now-vacant House seats and presto, they'll be "in like Flynn," with 218 seats, and the GOP will be "out like gout," with 217 seats.

That said, a lot can happen between now and November. And Democrats have been known for their uncanny ability to "snatch defeat from the jaws of victory." Just ask Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi about that. Still, the wave is flowing their way to regain control of the House -- with or without returning Pelosi to House Speaker.

The Senate is a different story. Although Republicans have a razor-thin majority of 51-49 over Democrats now, they have only 8 senators theoretically up for reelection in 2018, and only 3 of them have decided not to run.

Democrats are facing a more daunting challenge, with 23 of their senators theoretically up for reelection in 2018. GOP strategists will likely target Missouri Democratic incumbent Sen. Claire McCaskill for defeat this year, along with Florida Democratic incumbent Sen. Ben Nelson, Indiana Democratic incumbent Sen. Joe Donnelly, Minnesota Democratic incumbent Sen. Tina Smith, and West Virginia Democratic incumbent Sen. Joe Manchin. If the GOP can hold what they've got in the Senate and flip 5 or 6 seats to their side of the aisle, that will be icing on the cake for them and a bitter pill for the Democrats to swallow.

Clearly, there is a lot at stake in the 2018 midterm elections for both Democrats and Republicans in both houses of Congress, for President Trump, and for our country. That's why we the people need to voice our views and cast our informed votes at the national, state and local levels every chance we get, starting with early voting.

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

MY TURN

Thomas B. Vaughn

30 years of 'On Religion'

Through the decades, the Rev. Billy Graham was known for saying three words over and over: "the Bible says."

But the world's most famous evangelist quoted another authority during his 1994 speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors: Shirley MacLaine. A year earlier, Graham noted, the actress and spiritual adventurer told the editors that religion plays a major role in news worldwide and that it's high time for journalists to accept that.

"What has happened to us?" asked MacLaine. "Why is the discussion of spirituality considered so publicly embarrassing, sentimental or, God forbid, New Age? Why does it make us squirm, when our own Founding Fathers recognized the spiritual aspect of man as his most fundamental?"

"Amen," said Graham. Journalists and preachers, he stressed, both communicate news about what's happening in life and culture. Both care about people and truth. Both care about injustice, racism and corruption.

It isn't every day that a religion writer gets to quote Billy Graham and Shirley MacLaine making essential points about journalism.

Then again, this isn't just another column for me. This week marks my 30th anniversary writing this national "On Religion" column. The first piece ran on April 11, 1988 and focused -- wait for it -- on arguments about evangelicals and White House politics.

Three decades is a long time, so allow me to pause and make something clear. I still believe if journalists want to cover real news in the real lives of real people in the real world, then they need to get real serious about religion.

"Lots of journalists think that when religion is doing what it's supposed to be doing -- helping the poor, things like that -- it's just ordinary, everyday stuff. That isn't very exciting," said Stewart Hoover of the University of Colorado, author of "Religion in the News: Faith and Journalism in American Public Discourse."

He added, "It would be easier if religious faith stayed private and out of sight."

What are newsroom managers supposed to do? Graham gave the editors four pieces of advice that still ring true.

1. Increase local, national and global religion news coverage -- period.

2. Dig deeper than the "bare facts," probing the ethical and moral angles of issues in medicine, science, business, academia and law.

3. "Build bridges" to religious leaders through face-to-face contacts, just like media leaders do with business people and politicians.

4. There's no way around it: Hire experienced religion reporters who have demonstrated excellence on that beat. Isn't that, Graham said, the way you hire sports reporters?

Graham stressed his respect for the crucial role journalism plays in public life. He said, "Some of you may be afraid of offending some readers in our pluralistic society by dealing with religious topics, and you find it easier to avoid them altogether."

But one truth cannot be denied.

"Religion often sways whole societies," Graham said, "and can even change the course of history."

Terry Mattingly is the editor of GetReligion.org. He lives in Oak Ridge.

ON RELIGION

Terry Mattingly

JUST A THOUGHT

Lisa Hobbs

Just say no to legal marijuana

I've been asked more than once: Has the state legalized medical marijuana? Everyone seems to be waiting with breathless anticipation or holding their breath before letting it out slowly. Some humor right there.

While I'm used to people thinking I have the inside scoop on things, we are jointly in the dark. I honestly don't know any more about the future viability of this legislation than you do. I can tell you it has gotten further in the process than it has in years past. Is that a sign it will make it through the entire process? Supporters of the bill hope so. Opponent hope not.

I think most people are probably missing an important part of this legislation. It would allow only the sale of cannabis oil, which can be vaped but not smoked. The level of THC would also be limited. That's the chemical that causes a high. Because of that, the plan is controversial among marijuana supporters. Backers of medical cannabis hope they loosen those restrictions as the measure moves along, and they'll get several chances if the legislation continues to survive.

That's about all from me on the legal process of medical marijuana in Tennessee. Sorry, Charlie. No inside scoop on getting tattered.

Now that I'm done with that, I'm going to plant the seed of dislike among some of you people. I'm not in favor of legalizing recreational marijuana. Before you start trying to convince me I'm wrong, let me tell you my best friend and I have had quite a few debates on it. Probably 420. She's in favor and I'm against. If she can't roll me onto her side of the argument, I doubt anyone can.

I'm also not in favor of medical marijuana, unless strong restrictions can be placed that limit it to individuals with life-threatening diseases or severe, debilitating conditions. While I'm fine with helping someone who is truly suffering, I don't want any of my tax dollars going toward someone who "feels stressed" and a doctor thinks they might benefit from burning one. Sorry to be blunt, but there it is.

I know medical treatments must be approved by the FDA before health insurance companies will pay. Marijuana, at this time, is classified as a Schedule 1 substance under the Controlled Substances Act and it's not covered by insurance. However, FDA is seeking input on reclassifying marijuana. That tells me someday it will be reclassified.

If I have to choose between the two, I'd rather legalize it in and leave the classification alone. Set down the rules on where pot can be consumed, whether consumers can grow their own, whether employers can test for the drug and whether weed can be taken outside state lines. If you want to use it, you pay for it.

The ***Southern Standard*** has instituted random drug testing. I think I've gotten a contact high. That'll make my white papers turn pink.

Standard reporter Lisa Hobbs can be reached at 473-2191.