

# Opinions

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Southern Standard

McMINNVILLE, TENNESSEE

## Standard online reader survey



**Q: Do you post comments online you would never say to someone in person?**

**YES or NO**

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Online conversation growing more toxic

Haters really gotta hate. Trolling has become the blood sport of the modern age. Somehow, it is "entertaining" to some to turn any topic — no matter how benign — into mean-spirited cyber bullying.

According to a series of Wired articles — the Great Tech Panic — Vermont is the worst of the worst in America when it comes to online trolls. Wired partnered with Disqus, an online commenting platform, to determine who among us is the most hateful. Per capita, more than 12 percent of all online comments generated in Vermont were considered "trolling."

Disqus analyzed 92 million comments over a 16-month period, written by almost 2 million authors on more than 7,000 forums that use Disqus software. In all, nearly 25 percent of all comments made were generated by trolls.

The Wired/Disqus data showed: — Park Forest, Ill., is the most toxic city in America, where 34 percent of comments are hostile. Notably most of the comments originate from, or are instigated by, a handful of authors.

— Sharpsburg, Ga., is the least toxic city in the U.S.

— Bellflower, Calif., wins the distinction of being the most unlike its neighbors; while it isn't the most toxic city in the U.S., it is 335 percent more toxic than the rest of California.

### The Times Argus Vermont

— Beverly, N.J., population 2,513, has the chattiest commenters in the U.S.: 114 authors are responsible for more than 150,000 comments. That averages 1,317 comments each.

On the clock, the most toxic time of day is 3 a.m. (when about 11 percent of all comments go mean). And the most talkative time of day is 9 p.m.

Studies show trolls have short attention spans. "With trolling, the attack must captivate an audience, whereas with cyber bullying it may not be required. Without the shock and attention of others, trolls quickly get bored and move on to the next platform to begin baiting other unsuspecting victims," one study found.

One facet of social media that's given space for trolls to thrive is the "online disinhibition effect." This is the idea one can remain anonymous online and so not experience any of the negative impacts similar face-to-face encounters elicit.

Unsurprisingly, trolls usually have poor social skills. Rather than act as an outlet for pent-up frustration, researchers found that trolling actually ended in negative psychological outcomes for the troll, even though they were the perpetrator.

I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT I THINK THE MCCAIN MEMORIAL CROWDS ARE BIGGER THAN TRUMP'S INAUGURAL CROWDS.



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### An ode to John McCain

Senator John McCain died a week ago yesterday. The news of his death spread rapidly around our nation and the world. Accolades and condolences poured in aplenty. And rightly so.

Following memorial services in Arizona, McCain's flag-draped casket was flown to Andrews Force Base in Maryland, and from there to our nation's capital to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Speaker Paul Ryan and Vice President Mike Pence all gave eloquent eulogies to McCain. Each in his own way praised McCain as a true hero, maverick and patriot.

Shortly after the formal ceremony, the doors opened for the public to pay their respects to John McCain as he lay in state in the capitol with a Capitol police guard of honor, which would keep vigil overnight.

Yesterday McCain was carried from the Capitol by Armed Forces body bearers and moved by motorcade to the National Cathedral. The motorcade paused at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for Cindy McCain to lay a ceremonial wreath honoring the fallen from the Vietnam War.

The National Cathedral program featured eulogies by former President George W. Bush, former President Barack Obama and others, including former Sen. Joseph Lieberman and McCain's daughter, Meghan McCain.

Today, retired Navy Capt. John McCain will be laid to rest with full military honors at the U.S. Naval Academy Cemetery in Annapolis, Maryland. His family and friends, along with the U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1958, Navy and military leaders, plus the Brigade of Midshipmen will be there to pay

their final respects.

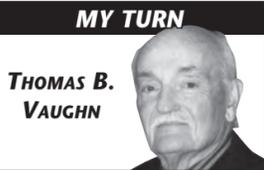
In my view, John McCain personifies the physical and moral courage that transcends war and peace. From five and a half years of captivity in a North Vietnamese prison, where he endured torture and solitary confinement, to his 30-plus years of public service in Congress, John was a fierce fighter for what he believed in. He always tried to do the right thing as he saw it, including normalizing relations with his former foes, and opposing "enhanced interrogation techniques," a euphemism for torture.

John McCain's Farewell Letter to his fellow Americans says in part, "Thank you for the privilege of serving you and for the rewarding life of service in uniform and service in public office has allowed me to lead. I have tried to serve our country honorably. I have made mistakes, but I hope my love for America will be weighed favorably against them."

"Ten years ago, I had the privilege to concede defeat in the election for president. I want to end my farewell to you with heartfelt faith in Americans that I felt so powerfully that evening. I feel it powerfully still. Do not despair of our present difficulties. We believe always in the promise and greatness of America, because nothing is inevitable here. Americans never quit, we never surrender, we never hide from history. We make history. Farewell, fellow Americans. God bless you and God bless America."

Well said, John McCain. May your courage and service above self be your legacy.

Retired Army Col. Thomas B. Vaughn can be reached at [tbvwm1@blomand.net](mailto:tbvwm1@blomand.net).



#### MY TURN

THOMAS B. VAUGHN

#### JUST A THOUGHT

LISA HOBBS



### Playing dating game in my 40s

What's the difference between dating in my 20s and dating in my 40s?

I've had that questioned asked of me numerous times since my divorce three years ago. People my age seem to be interested in the answer. I need to answer that question before my 40s turn into 50s.

There really is no difference. Dating is the same. The basic premise remains the same at any age: You spend time with someone to get to know who they are and determine if you like them.

The discussion of marriage is different. Quite a few people (men and woman) my age say they'll never get married again. Never. Absolutely not. The door is closed. Elvis has left the building. Done.

Happily, I do not feel that way. I do want to get married again. Sadly, I've felt some slight judgement from people who don't seem to understand why I would ever want to take the plunge — like there's something wrong with my decision or me for making it.

I'm keeping an open mind on the subject of marriage. Rather than allow a past failure to be a pre-determining factor in a future relationship, I decided to use that experience and be a little smarter next time. I want a healthy relationship, one that actually makes me happy and vice versa.

No, I'm not in a hurry to get married. Making sure you'll be truly happy takes time. Look deep before you leap. No impulse decision for me. It might take years before I'm comfortable enough to make that decision.

While I'm not being critical of anyone, I will urge caution in being too quick to tell someone that you have pre-determined the outcome of a relationship based on past failures. What you're saying is "It doesn't matter how awesome you are and it doesn't matter how happy you make it, it will never be enough because someone else hurt me."

That's a lot of punishment to dish out onto someone who hasn't hurt you. I don't see myself ever becoming so jaded that I'd punish someone else for a mistake they weren't even involved in. Who knows, you could be saying it to the one person who might make you extremely happy. You may never get to know.

After saying all this, I will say that I never wanted to be divorced in my 40s. No one begins their adult life thinking they'll have to start a new relationship just when you should be looking toward vacation possibilities now that the kids are grown. Most of us have a vision, although somewhat delusional and idealistic, for how our lives will be.

My original vision: work, get married, have two children, and live happily ever after. I've accomplished all those. I haven't revised that list. Marriage is still an option, after strong consideration.

Divorce happens to some of us. When it does, you deal with it the best way you know how by taking one day at a time.

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



### Lessons from Lamentations

In the Book of Lamentations, written about the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., you can find heartbreaking descriptions of loss and grief, betrayal and absolute despair. "Hear how I am groaning; there is no one to comfort me. All my enemies hear of my misery and rejoice," is one line among many.

These ancient words resonate today, in the wake of a brutal summer of news about the most recent abuse scandal in the Catholic church. Certainly, lamentations are an appropriate response. Groaning. Grieving. Struggling to see hope. It stings.

And no one is immune. Cardinal Timothy Dolan in New York just confessed this. Talking of his own mother, a woman whose love of faith and church has always been strong, he related that she told him:

"I skipped lunch today. I'm ashamed to go to the dining room. I'm so embarrassed to be a Catholic. I don't know what to say to anybody!"

An Uber driver ferrying me around the city recently told me how Jesus Christ has saved his life and the only good that can come from evil in the Church is a cleansing that will bring more people truly to Christ.

"Priests who do evil do not read their Bible," he said. At a service at St. Joseph's Church in Greenwich Village later that evening, the pastor added that such priests do not know Jesus Christ and are not His friends. It was an intensely prayerful hour and a half that included a singing of the Lamentations, as they are typically

sung during Holy Week services, at which Christ's tribulations on the cross and death are dwelt upon.

It's not just Catholics suffering this news that will continue to unfold. Some of my most heartening conversations lately involve people of all faiths or no faith. People want a healthy Catholic Church, which serves all.

Also at St. Joseph's that night, Dominican friars prostrated themselves down the main aisle of the church, in front of the Blessed

Sacrament, what Catholics believe is the real presence of God. There was shame and sorrow expressed in front of God and man. In his homily that night, the pastor admitted to having

had his faith be "shaken" and implored everyone in the church "choose a side."

God or evil are the choices. And if it's God, you've got to be all in. Not walking away, but loving more and leading the renewal where you are.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God," is the refrain during the singing of the searing Lamentations. That return is the only recourse. The Church isn't any one person. It belongs to Jesus Christ, and the baptized are called to live the Gospel. And reform and renewal will benefit from every witness to the reality of God's grace in the face of evil — mothers, spiritual fathers, TV hosts, Uber drivers, and all.

Kathryn Jean Lopez is senior fellow at the National Review Institute. She can be contacted at [klopez@nationalreview.com](mailto:klopez@nationalreview.com).



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Patricia Zechman, Publisher  
James Clark, Editor

Phyllis Vanatta, Business Manager  
Dale Stubblefield, Circulation Director

Phone: 473-2191  
105 College St., McMinnville, TN 37110  
FAX: 473-6823  
Email: [standard@blomand.net](mailto:standard@blomand.net)  
Website: [www.southernstandard.com](http://www.southernstandard.com)

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