

Opinion

A community forum for viewpoints from around the world to your backyard

The Clinch County News

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TALL TALES

By Lem Griffis
Fargo, Georgia

I enjoy listening to the honk of a wild goose except when he is at the steering wheel of a car.

Preachers generally have different views, but they all fall in line when it comes to fried chicken.

A man can make mistakes and get over it, but just let him make one success and he never gets over it.

I just love rodeos. It's so different, seeing the bull throw people.

I saw an old couple sitting on the ground doing something. I thought they were playing marbles. I said, aren't you a folks a little old to be playing marbles. The old fellow said, who is playing marbles.... me and my wife had an argument and she is helping me pick up my teeth.

Truthfully yours,
Lem Griffis

What should a parent do at a game?

My son took the SAT a couple of weeks ago.

That's pretty important stuff – taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test. It could decide where he goes to college, and the trajectory of his life, in some respects.

But I didn't go to the place where he took the SAT and watch as a spectator. I didn't sit in bleachers behind a fence near where he was taking the test and shout encouragement or instructions to him.

"You're taking too long on that question! Move to the next one!"

"Keep it up! You're doing great! I believe in you!"

"C'mon, you can do it. Put a little power to it. Do it! Ya, ya, ya. Do it!"

Why didn't I do that? Well, first of all, they don't have bleachers for the classroom where he took the test. And, secondly, it would have been stupid. Cheering him on would be nothing but a distraction. It wouldn't help his performance. It would put even more pressure on him in a tense moment.

And I don't think the other students taking the test would appreciate it either.

Mike Matheny agrees. But not about the SAT,

Len Robbins

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necessarily. About little league baseball and youth sports. That's right. Matheny, the former manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, longtime MLB catcher, and also a little league baseball coach, believes the best role for parents and fans at games is that of "silent encouragement."

"Well, just think about, you know, you had a group of people that you care about most, and you're getting ready to go make a big presentation for work, and someone's yelling at the top of their lungs, 'You can do this! You can do this! You can do this! And all of a sudden, it doesn't work out. You feel like you let everybody down,' Matheny said in an interview on the topic on NPR (National Public Radio). "You know, these kids put so much pressure on themselves. And whether it is learning an instrument or it's playing a sport, trying to

get that right and do it perfectly to everybody's expectations is tough."

After he retired from playing baseball professionally, Matheny coached a little league baseball team, and sent the parents of his players a letter that said the same – that parents shouldn't holler encouragement at their kids during a game. Clapping and cheering after a play – fine. He bases this not only on his own experiences, but on studies that have shown that it only puts more pressure on young players.

"This is really coming from a number of studies where they've interviewed collegiate, high school and even lower-level athletes and asked them, 'What do you want your parents to do at the game?' And the overwhelming answer is: Absolutely nothing," Matheny said.

For a lot of us, myself included, this mode of

thinking is borderline blasphemy. Parents not cheer and yell at a little league baseball game?

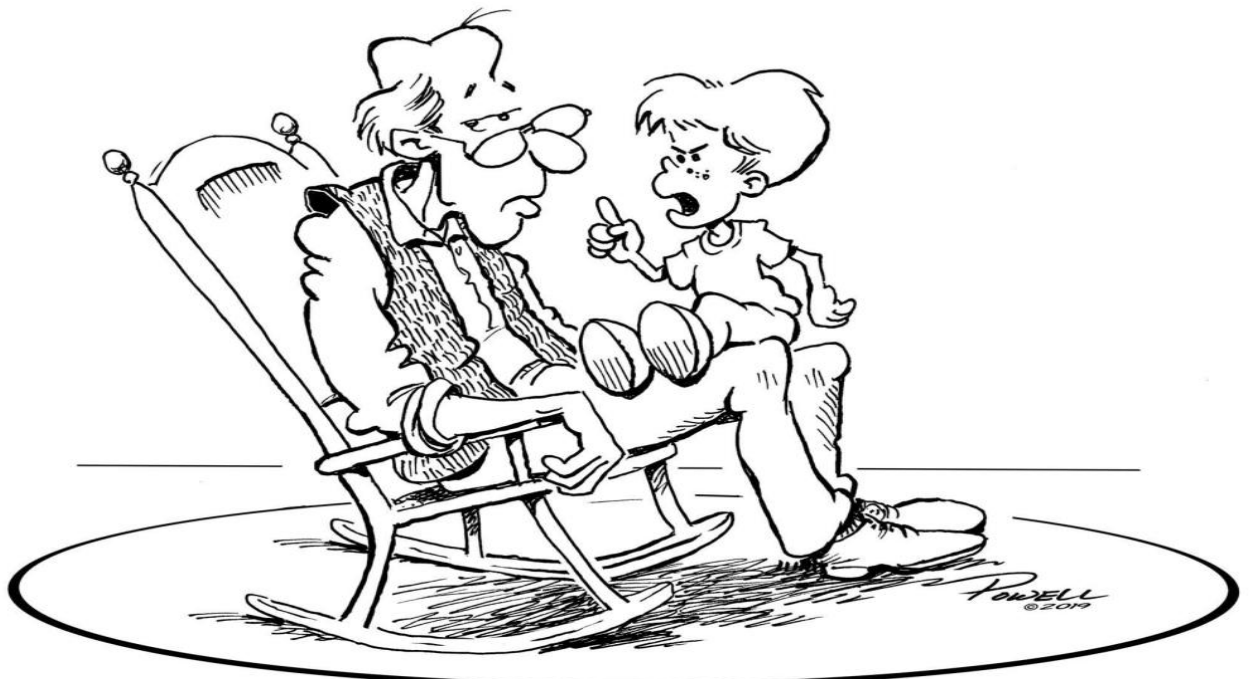
But the more I think about it, and apply it to the little league teams I've coached, the more I realize the merits of "silent encouragement." Hitting a moving ball with a bat is one of the hardest things a kid will ever do athletically. I've seen kids get in that batter's box and be torn seven different ways – their coach is telling them one thing, Dad is telling them another, Uncle Joe is screaming to choke up on the bat, Mom is asking if they're wearing sun screen. With all that going on, how can they be expected to focus on that little white ball?

As I'm writing this right now, I don't have a radio on, no sound in the background, my mother isn't cheering me from the other side of the desk. I have the silence to concentrate on the task at hand, albeit poorly. Maybe that's the way it should be with youth sports – which will be a steep learning curve for a lot of us.

But it's not about us, is it?

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"So you had to walk to school in the snow? Well let me tell you about the Governor vetoing mandatory recess!"

The Men in My Little Girl Life

Two uncles in Meridian stood in for my traveling father on many occasions. They spent many lazy hours with me and never seemed hurried or worried about grown up stuff, whatever that was. These two lived across the road from one another so when one was unavailable the other could usually be found. Mind you, we did not live in Meridian but, as I have written in many other columns, we visited my mother's hometown throughout the year and on holidays.

Uncle Eric and Aunt Madge owned a jewelry store, ergo, they were rich! Anybody who owned cases full of diamonds and gold had to be. My childish mind with zero concept of what it meant to own a business jumped to this conclusion based on many errant presumptions. Uncle Eric also drove a big shiny black Buick. Back in the 1950's a Buick was considered a high-class automobile. The inside was lined with soft gray fabric and was always spotlessly clean due,

no doubt, to the fact that children and pets seldom rode in it. 'Snookums', he called me and in the evenings after dinner we would go for a walk and collect rocks to store in one of his old shoeboxes. Once home I sat in his lap while he read me the comics from the newspaper. If we watched TV I would 'style' his hair, that being a fringe around his mostly bald head. When I think how good it feels to have a head massage I see why he was such a willing participant.

Right across the road from Uncle Eric and Aunt Madge's house was the home of Uncle Floyd and Aunt Mavis. This was the house with a gold mine in the cellar.

One thing Uncle Floyd did for a living was fill candy machines all around town. In a locked room only to be entered by invitation and accompanied by an adult my sister and I were allowed to go in the secret place on the last day of every visit to Meridian. Once inside we were each given a small brown

Linda Davis

NOTES FROM CANEY BRANCH

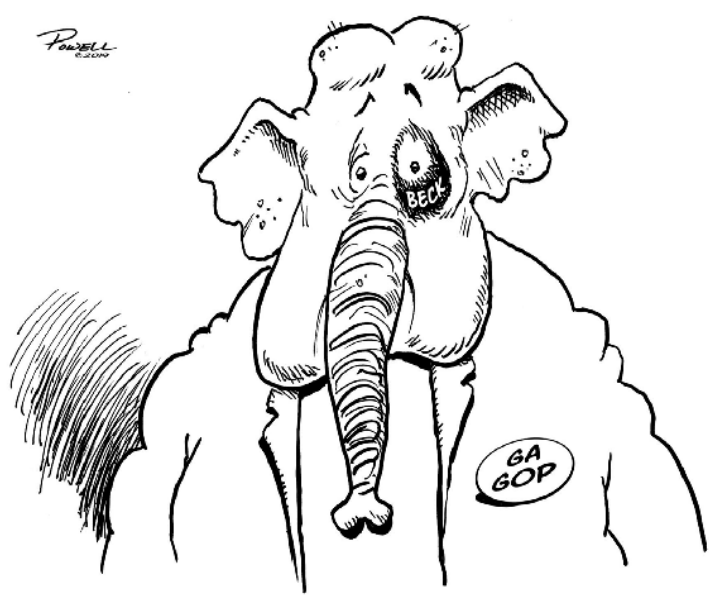


paper bag, which we could fill with our selection of favorite candy bars. Mother would caution us not to take too many; I wanted to top off my bag with Milky Ways and Butterfingers but I was obedient.

When Uncle Floyd was not out filling vending machines he was very active with Boy Scouts. Up on the hill deep in the back of his property there was a natural sort of cave. This was the scene of many BSA campouts and cookouts. One night he invited me to come stay the night with the boys and him. Mother and her sisters took bets on how long I would make it; no one expected me to sleep through the night in a sleeping bag on that cold, hard packed Mississippi mud with nothing but a campfire for light. I made it through toasted marshmallows and a few scary tales before my dear uncle had to leave his troop and walk his little niece down the

hill and back to the house. Never mind, I could still look forward to sitting outside in the front yard with him on a warm winter night. His tall, rangy, Abraham Lincoln-esque frame folded into one of those bouncy old metal lawn chairs left his knees practically poking him in the chin. I threw my arms over those bony protuberances and swung my feet while he told the best stories. It was magical.

Children perceive wealth, at least in part, as large quantities of whatever they love most. Time spent with a trusted and loving adult who focuses on them alone is the greatest wealth of all. I knew without question that I was loved and accepted just as I was even if that made me a scaredy-cat who didn't really want to spend the night outside in a cave with a bunch of boy scouts. I took that confidence into my adult life and am forever grateful to these two uncles who loved me so well.



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174th District
John Corbett (R) – john.corbett@house.ga.gov; 404.656.0287 - Office

Clinch County Commission – 912-487-2667
Regular meeting – first Monday of every month, 9 a.m.
Chairman-Roger Metts (Post 3); Vice Chairman-Debra Thomas (Post 4); Chad Brown - Post 2; Kenton McLaine-Post 1; Henry Moylan-Post 5.
Clinch County Board of Education – 912-487-5321
Regular meeting – Third Thursday of every month, 7 p.m.
Chairman-John Davis (Post 2); Vice Chairman-Charlie Mae Cross (Post 4); Stanley Thrift-Post 1; Laura Landrum-Post 3; Charles Handley-Post 5.
Homerville City Council – 912-487-2375
Regular meeting – Third Thursday of every month, 5 p.m.
Mayor Tom Kennedy; Mayor Pro Tem Willie Hardee; J.E. Witherspoon, Elexis Williams, James McBride.
Fargo City Council – 912-637-5597 or 637-5520
Regular meeting – Fourth Monday every month, 7 p.m.
Mayor John L. "Bappy" Griffis; Council members Johnny Griffis, Landa Hart, Clifford Wells, Roy Wilson.
Dupont City Council – 487-2630 or 287-2500
Regular meeting – Second Tuesday of every month, 7:30 p.m.
Mayor Jimmy Rawls; Council members Catherine Register; Jane Lee, Tommy Davis, Brent Westmoreland.
Argyle City Council – 487-2279
Regular meeting – Third Thursday of every month, 6:30 p.m.
Mayor Kaye Riley; Council members Glenda Jordan, Ann Grady, Lee Rudd, Otis Fleming.