

Editorial



Our heroes and the actions that define them

This past week as we were putting together the Memorial Day tribute for this week's edition, one question kept popping into my head. With each photograph that came in of a veteran and with each story submitted of heroic, courageous and selfless acts, I kept asking myself, "Could I have done what they did? Could I have been that brave? Could I have been that selfless? Could I be a hero?" Could you?

So what makes a hero? Who is a hero? Is it the decorated general who leads his army to victory, or the unknown soldier quietly obeying orders? Is it the researcher who finds a cure for cancer, or the country doctor treating the sick? Should a hero be



Impressions

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one who saves thousands of lives, or who comforts just one? And what drives them, these men and women we call our idols, our mentors, our elders, our friends? Is it duty? Determination? Perseverance? All these factors play their part, but I believe in addition to these traits you have to include another vital, unquantifiable element, and that is love. Love of our country and a love of humanity.

Each Memorial Day we salute the heroes

who have given their lives in defense of our nation. Without their sacrifices we would not have this wonderful opportunity to live our lives in the land of the free. To them we owe an un-repayable debt.

The United States of America was born from the blood and ashes of a war. It was fought to defend the "self-evident" truth "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Since the war of 1776, nearly two and a half centuries ago, countless men and women, countless heroes have died for the same cause. Tyranny does not reign in America - as it does in so many places around the globe - because the men and women of our military have loved and love their country more than their own lives. These guys are our heroes.

Every society needs heroes. And every society has them. The reason we don't often see them, outside the ranks of our deserving military and public safety officers, is because we don't bother to look. The aforementioned heroes shine in the face of great adversity and perform amazing feats in difficult situations. But there are also heroes who live among us and perform their work unceremoniously, unnoticed by many of us, and make a difference in the lives of others.

All heroes are selfless people who perform extraordinary acts. The mark of heroes is not necessarily the result of their action, but what they are willing to do for others and for their chosen cause. Even if they fail, their determination lives on for others to follow. The glory lies not in the achievement, but in the sacrifice. Heroes serve to remind us of the higher purpose of self and society. Heroes represent greatness and aspirations.

This community is full of silent heroes. Countless people who wake each day with the goal to make this day a little better than yesterday for their neighbors, as well as themselves.

When I meet a veteran who has defended our freedoms, or a local teacher who is making a positive impact in the lives of students, or any other person making a difference, I express my appreciation, but I always wonder, could I be like them? I certainly hope so.

Heroes are admired for their achievements, noble qualities and selfless drive to make a better world. Becoming one is so much more about what they do than who they are.

Who are your heroes?

Have a safe and happy Memorial Day weekend!

Editor's note: Look for my annual words to the graduates on Page 3B in the Graduation Salute inserted in this edition of your Donalsonville News.

Comments and impressions are welcomed and requested at donalsonvilnews.com

Letter of recommendation

I joined part of my family on a Zoom meeting this past week. We were celebrating my cousin's graduation from Yale. After four years of enduring the weather in New Haven, Connecticut and spending untold amounts of his parent's money, Cormac Byrd has earned his degree. He already has a job in New York and is well on his way to realizing his dreams.

Cormac did not have the opportunity to walk across the stage, accept a sheepskin, and endure endless pictures with his family. Instead, he sat in front of his computer and listened as friends and family recited various haikus they had written in his honor.

In case you do not remember from your literature classes from high school, a haiku is a three-line poem. It has five syllables on the first line, seven syllables on the second line, and five syllables on the third.

This is a strange and crazy world we are living in these days. This is a time when high school students are missing proms and heading off to jobs or colleges without the closure of a graduation.

College students, like Cormac, have spent four or five years preparing for their own chosen future. They have reached the end of a long and sometimes challenging road to finishing a degree only to learn they will receive it in the mail.

During this time of year, I would often be writing letters of recommendation. Some would be for high school graduates that were applying for acceptance at a college or applying for a job.

Other letters would be recommending college graduates who had spent years preparing for jobs in a field they enjoyed. Unfortunately, they currently find themselves in a challenging job market at best.

My own letter of recommendation to the graduates of the Coronavirus pandemic are still evolving. I realize that each experience is different, and the



Ponderings

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future challenges are not the same for all. You and I are members of this class.

With that being said, I would recommend slowing down and experiencing the world around you. Our own neighborhood is so much quieter now that it seems the birds are singing louder. I have occasionally been tempted to take a shotgun to the mockingbirds outside our window every morning. Why do they sing so early?

I would recommend that you savor the home cooked meals that have been forced upon us. It has been a very, very long time since my wife and I have sat together for so many meals. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Meals from our past. Fresh vegetables. What an unexpected blessing.

I would recommend exercise, especially for those that find excess time on their hands. I now walk eight to 10 miles a day. That is not for everybody, but I have found that it does two things for me. It keeps me from listening to the depressing cycle of news and it makes me feel better.

I would recommend binge watching some television series. My wife and I settled on a Netflix series, Longmire. We watch at least two episodes each night. For two people that have never

watched much television, it has become addictive. It is like going to the movies together every night.

I would recommend reading or listening to books. I was a voracious reader in earlier years. The internet and multiple newspapers changed my reading habits. I have rediscovered the joy of good books, especially through listening to audio books. It is a blessing beyond compare. A great book takes the place of endless hours of Fox News, CNN, or MSNBC.

I would recommend reaching out to friends and family. Face-time with my 88-year-old mother is rewarding for us both. Virtual cocktail parties with friends. Zooming with our children and grandchildren. I believe in some ways we are becoming more connected than ever with our extended families.

I would recommend walking in your yard, looking at your flowers. Nature has always been a soothing presence in our lives. I find myself looking at each blooming flower and learning the name of different plants. A bloom in your yard is a gift, to be savored and enjoyed. You just need to take the time.

I would end this letter of recommendation with a suggestion that we continue to nurture each other. Be respectful of our differences, but aware of our responsibilities to each other. Keep anxiety at bay. Suppress your fears by helping others. Lean on your friends. Lean on your faith.

Congratulations to the graduates of 2020. My recommendation to you is not to mourn what you have lost. I cannot remember the speaker at my own graduation, who I was sitting by, or much of anything else.

Savor what you have learned and embrace the future. Yours is the graduation that will never be forgotten during a time that will hopefully pass away.

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A dash of proper punctuation can go a long way

Have you ever put spicy mustard on a sandwich? If you inadvertently glob on too much of the good stuff, you'll swear you just snorted wasabi. When it comes to spices that are in your face (literally and figuratively), a little bit can go a long way.

In the same way, hyphens and dashes — when sprinkled into sentences properly — add just the right punch. Not only will we learn how to use the hyphen (-) properly today, but we'll also learn how to use both the en (-) and em (—) dashes.

Let's start with hyphens. Hyphens are like glue for two words that are connected. Use hyphens in compound adjectives, which are adjectives that precede a noun they modify in order to connect them together. Examples of compound adjectives include well-known, blue-haired, one-eyed, and ill-conceived. Hyphens are also used to separate numbers (three hundred sixty-five) and to create a line break when syllables of the same word get separated. We still see this sometimes in books and newspapers, but we see it less often now that text is not set by hand. En dashes (–) are all about range.



The Grammar Guy

Curtis Honeycutt

Use an en dash in order to show a range of numbers. Barack Obama was President from 2008–2016. The Thunder beat the Jazz 120–101. The store is open Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. The en dash is named as such because it is about the width of the letter "n." To type an en dash on a PC, press ctrl+minus. For PC laptops without numeric keyboards, you can type alt+0150 or insert-special characters in Word. On a Mac,

press option+hyphen.

The em dash (—) is the length of the letter "m." Generally use it as a more dramatic substitute for other punctuation, like commas, colons, semicolons or parentheses. Do not—I repeat—do not put spaces around the em dash; allow the words to bump up right next to the em dash to show the immediacy and drama it interjects. To type an em dash on a PC, press alt+ctrl+minus. For PC laptops without numeric keyboards, you can type alt+0151 or insert-special characters in Word. On a Mac, press option+shift+hyphen.

Dashes and hyphens are generally used incorrectly because, in order to use them correctly, you have to know the right way to employ them. If you want to get a shiny gold star sticker on your grammar chart, learn the difference between hyphens, en dashes and em dashes.

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