

BLONDE AMBITION

Finding a way for a hug and a handshake



Dee Ann Campbell
Publisher and Managing Editor

Hugs and handshakes. Our Southern culture has long existed on the hospitality that is such a part of who we are.

Not here in the South. We say it with our whole selves.

We hug. We wrap ourselves around each other as a gesture of caring -- and we offer the token three pats on the back while we're at it.

It's our way of saying 'hello and how are you?' It's our way to show our support, to issue our comfort, to show our friendship, and to tell others that we are there for them.

In the South, a hug is a greeting that says 'I care'.

And we shake hands. Whenever we hold meetings, greet a stranger, or make a deal, we shake on it. It's our gesture of agreement, a statement of solidarity, and a contract of good will that is, in many circles, still as binding as a signed document.

For hugs and handshakes to be removed from our existence is a difficult change of life for us. To tell that sweet church member that she can't offer her hug of reassurance to others is like removing from her the ability to show her love and her faith.

To see that person on the street that we haven't seen since, well, last Tuesday, and not be able to offer that 'glad to see you' hug is like taking away our greeting, removing our way of friendship. To know that a person is in need and not be able to give that warm squeeze and back-pat takes away a part of who we are and how we love.

For now, we are asked to do just that -- give up the hugs to our friends and neighbors, refrain from the handshakes

that are such a part of our lives. The new social distancing may be easier for those in other areas where hugs and handshakes are not so ingrained, but for Southerners, it's a drastic change that we are, no doubt, finding one of the more difficult parts of the new way of life thrust upon us by a virus that we didn't expect.

Many of these new habits will likely become part of the norm, just a new way of life for us.

We may not, for a long time, go back to our former habits and ways of life. We may continue to keep our distance, wash our hands repeatedly, and be more conscious of the hugs and handshakes that are such a part of our Southern heritage. We may become instinctively more aware of the passage of viruses and the possibility of sickness.

The new way of life may force upon us a new way to express our Southern hospitality, our rural way of life, and our love for others who cross our paths. It is forcing us to change, whether we like it or not.

But the Southerners that I know will adapt. They will continue to show love and support, if not by hundreds of hugs but by hundreds of words -- if not by handshakes then by pledges that are strong and vital and lasting.

For now, we live our lives separately, for the most part. We close our doors to the outside world, distance ourselves from those who are sick, and stay 6 feet away from the world around us. We live with this together... but separately.

Yet, I believe that in all of this isolation, through all of this distancing and quarantining of our lives, we, as Southerners, will find a way to hug despite it all.

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JP DOODLES



FROM THE PRESSBOX
Simple as just staying home?



Clint Franks
Sports Reporter

These are strange and frightening times we are living in and that's an understatement. A few short weeks ago our nation's economy was in unprecedented territory. Unemployment was low, the stock market was booming.

The COVID-19 virus was merely a blip on the radar. I mean let's be honest, we've faced viruses before and the world didn't for all intents and purposes shut down.

Now we are in the last week of March and our nation's economy has pretty much ground to a screeching halt. People are being laid off left and right and the stock market that had been booming has now lost all of the gains that it has enjoyed and people's retirements are in shambles.

Everywhere you look things are closed, events are cancelled and in one-way or another the COVID-19 virus will affect all of us.

In recent days, it has been discovered that the Chinese government hid or suppressed information about the virus; various American news outlets have been kicked out of the country for covering the event.

Back at home, you can't go out to eat, you can't go to a movie, you can't go to school and there are no sports on television. I've become addicted to YouTube. I've watched old football games, basketball games, baseball games, NASCAR races and even WrestleMania III. It's still pretty cool to watch Hulk Hogan body slam Andre' The Giant

Our leadership is telling us to stay home and to limit contact with people. Is it really that simple? We all have jobs and we have bills to pay and the fear of losing your home, your vehicle and all of your possessions is real and I'm right there with you. I hear you, I fear the same things. I heard a politician say some-

thing that made sense to me. He said, "If our government wants us to stay home then it should pay us, otherwise people are going to go out and work, they aren't about to sit at home and lose everything that they have worked for." He hit the nail on the proverbial head.

It seems that measures are going to be taken that will allow us to limit our interaction in public and the result will be lives saved maybe even your own.

This thing isn't going to last forever and there are sure to be plenty of lessons learned especially the hard consequences of having so many of the things we depend on being made in a foreign country.

There will come a time to examine all of these lessons but now is not the time.

It's past time that we got really serious about this virus. What we do in the short-term will have a lasting effect on how we fare not just on a national level but also all the way to Choctaw County.

Our favorite restaurants vacation spots, sports venues and all the things that we love and enjoy are hurting right now and when this is all over are going to need our support. In the meantime the best thing we can do is to sit back, take a deep breathe and adhere to what our officials are telling us to do and to take care of each other.

I'm not happy about being limited to just running to the grocery store and coming home, not at all.

I'd much rather be covering a baseball or softball game. I wouldn't mind heading to the hills or the beach. But for now, I plan on doing my part and maybe, just maybe this thing is over sooner rather than later. To put it another way, the longer we stay out and do what we want without regard to who we may infect with this, the longer this mess lasts and the longer it lasts means that it might just interfere with football season and that just won't

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GUEST COLUMNIST
Who am I?

By Janett Crosby
Guest columnist

If someone asked you to introduce or describe yourself how would you answer? Maybe tell them your name and where you live? I'm easy to get along with, love life and family. Would you paint a pretty picture of yourself?

It would probably depend upon who is asking as to what your answer would be. We can and will be identified many different ways. How I describe someone and how

someone else describes them could be completely opposite.

I remember doing a get to know you game at an educational event we had at my place of employment.

We were given a roll of bathroom tissue and told to roll off as much tissue as we would normally use at a visit to the "potty". Now that in itself really got us to wondering and laughing? We were encouraged to be serious and honest with how much we used.

We were sitting in a circle and told to

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Let's not become a people who dread the sunrise

By Bill King
Contributing columnist

I can remember a time when I dreaded sundown. I was a kid afraid of the dark and the monsters that lived under my bed. Eventually, I realized the monsters were not under my bed but in my head. As an adult, I remember an incident that scared me beyond terrification. (No, it's a good word; I didn't make it up). Jean and I were married and I was a student at Samford University, in Birmingham. After classes, I worked at Berry High School. Jefferson State Community College had evening classes that met there. One of my jobs was to turn out the lights and lock up after their classes. Obviously, I was the last one to leave the building. The light switches were at the ends of the halls, but I had to exit through a storage-room door, in the middle of a hall. That meant I had to turn off the lights and walk down a long dark hall. That had never posed a problem before, but I had never seen the movie called "The Town That Dreaded Sundown" before either. Jean and I

had scraped together enough money for a big evening out on the town. I think that consisted of a couple of Big Macs, followed by a movie. The movie was a true story about a serial-killer in Texarkana, Arkansas. The small town was terrorized in the 1940s by an unknown hooded man who killed young couples parked in lover's lanes. He was never caught. With the frightening scenes from the movie playing fresh in my mind, I began that long walk down the dark hall that night. My fear turned to terror when I heard a crashing noise come from the room I had to go into to exit the building. I prayed...out loud...really loud! That was the longest walk of my life. When I finally made into the room, a cat jumped up and bolted out the door and into the hallway. He tested the strength of my heart, as well as my kidneys! I'm not sure how he got into the building or how he ever got out, but I quickly decided his freedom wasn't my problem!

We are living in frightening days. If we allow it, we can be filled with terrification that will test our hearts and our faith. We must not allow it. As a toddler, my dad sur-

vived The Great Flu of 1918 and as a teenager The Great Depression. His generation knew hard times, but we are experiencing things most of us have never faced. We still don't know what is ahead for us. We may fear getting pulled under the bed by monsters, or feel like we are walking down a long scary hall to face down the unknown. We are not the town that dreaded sundown, and we cannot allow ourselves to become a nation who dreads the sunrise of each new day. We must keep our faith and hold to hope. We can't look at each new day as bringing us new problems, but as bringing us one day closer to the end of this nightmare. We don't know when, but this too shall pass.

Jesus' disciples found themselves in a storm on the sea. Jesus came to them, walking on the water, and said, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." In the midst of our current storm, let's allow His words speak to us. One of the most common phrases found in the Bible is "Fear not." May we all stay safe, stay home, stay well, and stay in prayer. The monster will eventually jump up and run out. The storm will pass.

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