Editorial



Our heroes and the actions that define them

This past week as we here at the *Donalsonville* News began putting together the paper's annual Memorial Day tribute, scheduled as a special edition in the May 26th edition, one question kept popping into my head. With each photograph of a veteran that has been submitted and with each face expressing a story 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 one who saves thousands of lives, or who comforts just one? And what drives them, these



Impressions David Maxwell

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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

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 quarter centuries ago, countless men and women, countless heroes have died for the same cause. Tyranny does not reign in America - as it does 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?

If you would like to spotlight a veteran, or sponsor a page, in our annual Memorial Day Tribute call 229-524-2343 by Tuesday, May 17.

Comments and impressions are welcomed and requested at david@donalsonvillenews.com

The unbroken chain

The only teenager I ever met with the last name of "Ponder" that was not my sibling happened to be my future wife. We met in the seventh grade at Girard Junior High School in Dothan, where our Algebra teacher made us sit in alphabetical order.

Mary Lou and I were great friends for ten years, before we discovered that we were meant to be more. 44 years ago, she became Mary Lou Ponder Ponder. Twenty five years after we were married, our oldest daughter connected the final dots of our common lineage. We are 10th cousins.

Our common ancestor was the immigrant John Ponder, who once lived where Heathrow Airport welcomes planes into the London area. Our common bloodline intersected some three hundred and fifty years

I have often thought about the mathematical odds that the continuing male descendants of two brothers would produce offspring centuries later that would one day sit beside each other in a junior high school

It was an unbroken chain in our family tree that allowed our children to be "pure Ponder". But it was not the unbroken chain that I am referring to in this article. Just a day after Mother's Day, I am reminded that we all have a chain, an unbroken chain, of our mothers. Very few would have the same last name, but their connections tie families together since the beginning of the human race.

I was blessed to know one of my great-grandmothers and to see how much my own grandfather loved her. He was a reflection of her influence and he honored her until the day she

My other grandmother lost her



Ponderings Dan Ponder dan@ponderenterprises.net

mother when she was only four years old. She was raised by an aunt and uncle, proving that motherhood does not have to be genetic. In fact, I could supply a long list of women I have known that never had biological offspring but provided unconditional love and positive influences in the lives of countless children.

This year during Mother's Day, Mary Lou and I were keeping grandchildren in Auburn. I am not sure, but there must have been other times when we were not around our mothers, or our daughters who later became mothers during this holiday. Nevertheless, the circumstances made me think about the common thread that weaves through our family. Indeed, most families.

There is a powerful link between a mother and a child. That relationship may manifest itself differently between siblings and mothers. Certainly, the relationship is not always perfect, but it is always there, in some form or fashion.

For the most part, that con-

nection continues through grandchildren and if the family is lucky enough, through a relationship with great-grandparents. Genetically, it is the same as the paternal line, like our Ponder connection. However, each and every Mother's Day, I am reminded of how strong and powerful the maternal relationship is between a mother and her children.

Over twenty years after my own father passed away, I still treasure our time together. He taught me more than I ever gave him credit for, and I still rely on those lessons in my life. My mother, 90 years old and still healthy and wise, continues to influence my life. That is a result of luck, fate and incredibly good genes, which I hope I have inherited.

Nevertheless, as I watched my grandchildren run to their parents upon their return this weekend, I smiled inwardly about watching my daughter as a mother. Both of my daughters love their children and are raising them to be a better part of themselves, thankfully with the full help and aid of their spouses.

I have now lived long enough to see the influence of mothers and grandmothers going back three generations in my life, and my daughters as mothers going forward two more generations after me. My wife is the mother that connects this family past, present and future.

I was and continued to be touched by them all. Happy Mother's Day to all those mothers that have had an impact on my life, and on the lives of so many others. You touch many more than your own children and provide that unbroken chain that binds us together.

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The mysterious order of the adjectives

Everyone's on the lookout for their next clever party anecdote for that awkward pause between the cheese course and dessert (I know I am). The perfect quip at the perfect time will make you feel like a million bucks in the tuxedo people are now assuming you own. If you memorize today's grammar gem, you're guaranteed to be the hero at the next soiree or gala you attend.

Do you remember the mnemonic device from math that goes "Please excuse my dear Aunt Sally?" This helps you remember the order of operations in a math equation (parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction). In English, there's an equivalent, but largely unknown "order of operations" for the order in which adjectives go in front of a noun. Even more shocking is that this rule is taught to most non-native speakers, but native speakers are never taught it. The order is quantity, opinion, size, physical quality, shape, age, color, origin, material, type, purpose, noun.

We are never formally taught this adjective order, but we know that "five



The Grammar Guy

Curtis Honeycutt

wrinkly octogenarian bronze Italian sunbathers" sounds correct (albeit an odd scenario), but if you say "octogenarian five Italian wrinkly bronze sunbathers," you sound like a total weirdo. You don't know how you know that's wrong; you

Let's try it with some simpler phrases. You'd never say "old little lady": you would always say "little old lady." Likewise, "blue suede shoes" sounds right, but you would never say "suede blue shoes." You've probably heard someone remark about their baby's "big brown eyes," but if that same parent went on about their baby's "brown big eyes" you'd think something was wrong with them. Try saying these phrases out loud and you'll hear how truly ridiculous adjectives in the wrong order sound to your Englishpreferring ears.

And, while I don't have a clever mnemonic device for adjective order, it's something you should feel privileged not to know — unless, that is, you want to be the talk of your town's small secretive Sicilian social circle.

Curtis Honeycutt is a syndicated humor columnist. He is the author of Good Grammar is the Life of the Party: Tips for a Wildly Successful Life. Find more at curtishoneycutt.com.



Join the BetterWay Initiative's campaign to transform the historic fire station in downtown Donalsonville into a community cultural center, art gallery, museum and event venue. Tax deductible donations to the project are now being accepted. To join the campaign, or for additional information, contact David Maxwell at david@donalsonvillenews.com

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