

Opinion

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

The Clinch County News

USPS #118-140
 113 E. Dame Avenue • Homerville, Georgia 31634
 Telephone: 912-487-5337
 Published by
 AIR Publications, Inc.
A.I. "Len" Robbins, IIIEditor & Publisher
 lrobbins@theclinchcountynews.com
Holly Mullis.....Business Manager
 airpublications@outlook.com
Ben Murray.....Production Manager
 news@theclinchcountynews.com

Established in 1894 and published every Wednesday. Entered at the Homerville, Ga. Post Office as periodical rate, Permit No. 118-140. Member of the Georgia Press Association and the National Newspaper Association. Subscription Rates: In Clinch County, \$35 per year. Elsewhere, \$42 per year. Single copy price is .93 cents. POSTMASTER: Address all correspondence to The Clinch County News, P.O. Box 377, Homerville, GA 31634, or e-mail at clinnews@windstream.net.



TALL TALES

By Lem Griffis

A fellow came to my place and said he was a tree sprouter. I laughed and said, I don't see any twigs growing out. He said, you needn't try to make a fool out of me, I was appointed this job from Washington. There are so many labor saving devices on the market today that a man has to work a lifetime to pay for them. Notice seen in the newspaper: The ladies of the First Presbyterian Church have discarded clothing of all kinds. They may be seen in the basement any evening. You can never tell about these lady drivers, what strange things they may do. I was driving behind one and she did not even have on her turning blinker lights. Sure enough, she did not turn.

Truthfully yours,
 Lem Griffis

Our letters to the editor are intended to be a free and open forum for local and area citizens to comment on items of general public interest. If you wish to write a letter to us, please type it or write legibly, double-spacing preferred. Letters are subject to editing for length, good taste and newspaper style. Subjects of a personal nature are generally not acceptable. Endorsements of political candidates are also not acceptable during a campaign. All letters must be signed but names may be withheld under certain dire circumstances. Please include a daytime phone number and address. You can also e-mail us a letter at clinnews@windstream.net, or visit our website at www.theclinchcountynews.com.



How to artfully avoid an awkward situation

Today, as part of my one-man crusade to save the world, I will explain how to artfully avoid a potentially embarrassing situation that we have all experienced. And when I say "we," I mean probably only me.

Here's the situation: You call someone by the wrong name.

Sometimes, such a faux pas can be hilarious – like when you mess up on your wedding vows by saying, "I take you, (old girlfriend's name), to be my wedfully awful wife," or when you accidentally call your boss by his unbeknownst-to-him nickname of "Napoleon Skinflint."

Everyone gets a kick out of those types of gaffes and hearty guffaws are had by all.

But, other times, mislabeling a person can get downright ugly, and that's when you need to take the proper courses to escape embarrassment. I am providing three such courses, which I have named "Solution #1", "Solution #2", and "Mickey."

Len Robbins

lrobbins@theclinchcountynews.com
 EDITOR & PUBLISHER



Here's what to do: Solution #1 – The best way to explain Solution #1 is to give an example. Say you're at some type of social function, or a cockfight, and you see an older, distinguished lady.

"Hey, Mrs. Huffnagle, my, that's a lovely shade of green you're wearing this evening. Put some holes in it and you'd look like a pool table."

"Young man, I am not Mrs. Huffnagle."

At this point, you must make a conscious effort not to react at all, but rather stare intently at an object behind and to the right of the woman you thought to be Mrs. Huffnagle.

Then say, "Why, I'm sorry, I was partially-blinded in a lemon-eating incident recently, and by the illuminating, angelic glow that surrounded you, I thought you to be

Mrs. Huffnagle. Please accept my sincerest apologies."

If conversation follows, just go with the flow. But make sure that you keep staring behind her and to the right, and for good effect, trip over a coffee table or a lamp or something as you leave.

If she mentions the "lovely shade of green" remark and questions how you could see that, start coughing profusely, bend over, and hobble away.

Solution #2 is simple. It's much like Solution #1, except that it's different in a lot of ways.

Under Solution #2, if you are caught calling someone by the wrong name, slowly lift your hands over your head, start sobbing, and run in the opposite direction as fast as you can, making sure to flail your arms as

you run.

I know – flailing is hard – but to escape these types of awkward moments, you have to go the extra mile.

"Mickey" is for those special dummies like myself, who can remember a face from 40 years ago, but rarely a name to go with it.

Under "Mickey," you forego the use of names – first, middle, last – altogether. Everyone is "pal" or "dude" or "girl" or, my personal favorite, "chief." As in, "Hey, Chief, how are you doing, today?" Or "Good to see you, girl." Or "Hey, pal, you're blocking my view of the TV."

I've found that the best way to avoid potentially embarrassing situations is to avoid potentially embarrassing situations – which "Mickey" accomplishes.

You may now go back into the world of social interactions with fellow human beings with the confidence to elude embarrassment. You're welcome.

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Listen to Your Story

Editor's Note: This essay is an excerpt from local author Roy Rhodes's new book "Half Wit-Half Wisdom," available on Amazon.com. The News will publish excerpts from the book for the next few weeks.

We all love to tell good stories. They can be as simple as the last joke we heard or what happened to us over the weekend, but people enjoy sharing their experiences with others. When people find out that I'm a writer and that I've self-published some books, they usually say something like, "I wish I could do that. I've got some interesting stories to tell." I'd be willing to bet that they do.

The sad truth is that most people will never tell the rest of us what it was like to grow up the way they did. They'll never tell us the valuable lessons they learned along the way or about crazy old Uncle Walter who shot six holes in the movie screen one night.

I've heard most of the excuses for not writing the book that in each of us.

- The most common are:
1. I don't know how to get started.
 2. I'm too busy.
 3. I'm going to someday.
 4. I can't spel veny

gud. But here's the other sad truth I've seen in folks who fail to write their stories down: They regret it. And the older they get, the harder it becomes to do, and the more they regret the excuses they made.

If you're one of those people, you're probably about to quit reading this article, but hold on. Here comes the good news. A friend of mine used all of the excuses listed above for about twenty years, but then he wrote his first book. Here's how he did it.

1. Write or record little episodes from your life several times a week. Keep them short.

My friend put his stories about growing up in south Georgia on Facebook, and his friends couldn't get enough of them. There were misspellings and grammatical errors, but who cared? The stories were interesting, and they touched people's hearts and memories.

2. Think about the point of your story, but don't overthink it.

Are you writing about a lesson you learned the hard way? Someone you admire? Your first love? Your last heartbreak? Whether your story is humorous or serious, write with some emotion.

3. Accumulate

Roy Rhodes

GUEST COLUMNIST



those pages and look for patterns.

As you write, themes and patterns will emerge. It's how our brains work. Organize your writing to flow smoothly from one chapter or anecdote to the next, and your readers will go with the flow and enjoy it. Also, know that if you decide to self-publish your stories, the publishing company will require a minimum number of pages. Keep writing.

4. Get help when you need it.

People who have the ability to write well and the desire to help you are closer than you might think. Most will be flattered and excited that you asked them to help tell your stories. Got any teacher friends? There you go.

Let me encourage you to self-publish your stories in a book format. Why?

1. You will get a sense of pride and accomplishment.

2. A book is an easy way to share your stories with others.

3. The potential for income will always be there.

4. You will leave a legacy for your friends and family.

5. You could have a lot of fun if you decide to do book-signing events.

6. You won't have to shop hard for birthday and Christmas gifts.

You can find self-publishing companies on-line that will provide services ranging from the editing of your manuscript to the layout and style of the book pages and the design of the book cover. Once your book is in print, you can order any quantity you want, any time you want, and your book will be available until the cows come home.

I self-published my first book, In My Father's Generation, in 1999 under the pen name, James Martin Rhodes. You can still order it today from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and many other booksellers. And, you should!

Plenty of books have been written about how to write books, so you can go much deeper on this topic. I hope I've encouraged you to tell your stories and see them in print soon, not someday.