

Opinion

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

The Clinch County News

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Letters to the Editor

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The Wall

Editor, The News:

The names engraved on Vietnam Veterans Memorial represent those who never made it home from Vietnam, but there are countless others whose battles did not end when they stepped off the plane. Many carried wounds — physical, emotional, and spiritual — for years afterward. Their sacrifice was no less real simply because it happened quietly and away from the battlefield. There will never be a wall large enough to inscribe those names

My wife Shelley Allison was one of those who carried the scars of war for years and her story honors that reality.

The pain and disabilities carried home from Vietnam affected not only veterans themselves, but also the families who stood beside them, loved them, and helped carry those burdens long after the war had faded from the headlines. Those names may not be carved into black granite, but they are forever written on the wall of our imagination.

I have visited the wall several times and on one occasion volunteered to help families find their loved ones. For many families, those moments were sacred and unforgettable. Simply having someone there who understands the weight of that experience matters more than words can express.

Keeping those memories alive matters. Every time a story is told, every time a name is spoken, every time someone pauses to remember, those sacrifices continue to live on.

Thank you for remembering our local heroes like Don Manac and Jackie Morgan who never made it off the battlefield and for honoring Shelley and for others who still carry the scars, and for reminding people that the true cost of war extends far beyond the battlefield.

John Allison
Homerville



T-ball then, T-ball now, T-ball forever

I remember three things from my own T-ball experience, many moons ago, with the Shaw Park Yankees.

One, there was a guy on my team named Steve, who hit a home run every time he went to the plate.

Two, Steve wore real, white baseball pants. I wore Toughskins with patches on the knees. I was certain that the only difference between Steve's towering home runs and my weak dribblers to the pitchers' mound was our mode of trouser.

"Dad, can I get some real baseball pants like Steve has? Real baseball players, like the Atlanta Braves, don't wear jeans when they play," I humbly stated.

Pre-cable, the Atlanta Braves were the only professional baseball team I had ever seen. Apparently, my father knew that.

"Well, you play for the Yankees, and the New York Yankees of major league baseball wear jeans," he said without a smirk. "You look just like Oscar Gamble with



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your uniform on." To those not immersed in major league baseball trivia, Gamble was a journeyman outfielder in the 1970s, and he possessed a mammoth 'fro roughly six-feet wide by eight-feet high. About a year later, I purchased his baseball card and realized I had been duped.

The third thing I remember is that after every game, I would ask my coach, Steve's brother — who was probably in the ninth grade — if we won, and he would reply affirmatively. Midway through the season, I got into a verbal altercation in the boys' bathroom with some kid named Robert, who said his team, the Royals, had won every game. I knew this not to be true, because Steve's brother said we had beaten the Royals twice. The



argument ended when Robert stabbed me with a pencil — a scar that remains on my right index finger to this day.

I weave this back story mainly to amuse myself, but also to celebrate we are in the midst of another youth baseball season.

My children have graduated from T-ball, but I recently caught a few moments of T-ball at the local recreation park, and the memories came surging back of my children's first experience with "competitive" sports.

Little has changed in T-ball since my kids played, or even when I played in the dark ages.

They still don't keep score. There's still one guy on every team who hits a home run every at-bat.

Every inning, there is one kid who suddenly leaves his position at

first base and bolts across the diamond to go to the bathroom. Once a game, there's also a kid who runs to third base instead of first. Most of the outfield is chasing butterflies. Every infield hit ends up in a pile of little bodies scrambling for the ball. The kids slide into every base.

And at least once a T-ball contest, sometimes twice, while some kid edges his bat carefully next to the teed-up ball, then brings his bat back, then edges it up to the ball again, then pulls the bat back, then slowly moves his bat to the ball, another kid (it used to be mine) will scream loudly, "HIT IT ALREADY!"

It's a comedy of errors — literally — and a lot of fun for the crowd, unless your child doesn't make it to the bathroom in time.

"Dad, did we win?"
"Uh, sure."
"What was the score?"
"24-to-36."

That will satisfy them, or at least confuse them enough to avoid a bathroom altercation.

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Scribbled Notes 7

I found a scribbled note with "Silver Linings" written at the top. Below that I'd mentioned a long-ago example - a vehicle mishap involving David Fullington. We'll get to that after covering a little background.

David's been a good friend since first grade at Pinehurst Elementary. He helped create some lasting memories there, like the gopher turtle he brought to school. The big fellow, who lived in David's yard, was the star of recess. If we'd had "Show and Tell" David would have won.

Another Pinehurst memory is from third-grade when I was the preacher in "A Tom Thumb Wedding." Two second graders, Debra Peavy and Alex Everett, were the lucky couple. I don't remember the play, just David's unscribed line during our one rehearsal.

Debra was cute as pie and David had aspirations of becoming her boyfriend. Rehearsal was going fine until it was time for me to say,

"You may kiss the bride." David became the worst best man ever. "You better not kiss her," he warned Alex. I guess our teacher overheard. The kissing scene was deleted.

One more memory, then we'll get to the main event. David and I were sophomores at Unadilla High School when we went on a double date in his 1958 Ford Galaxie. His Uncle, Tommy Davis, dealt in used cars and had sold him what seemed a fine ride for a country boy of sixteen.

The black paint was shiny and the interior spotless. Even the engine was sparkling clean. David wanted to make a big impression on the gorgeous young lady and that's what he did. She gasped when hot water spewed from under the dash onto her ankles. The burn wasn't serious, but Cupid's arrow was no match for a faulty heater core. Their first date was also their last.

Now to the vehicle mishap. One afternoon during our senior year, David and I were in my



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1964 Chevy Impala on the way to his house. As I turned off the highway onto the unpaved Lonesome Pine Road, the front end slid into the ditch. We laughed, thinking my careless driving had gotten us stuck in the sand.

We walked to David's house to get a chain but only found a short rope in his father's shop. David tied it to his car bumper and pulled on mine, which accomplished nothing except to destroy the rope. His father came home from work and saw that a tie rod had come loose on my car, which had rendered the steering wheel useless. Mr. John, a professional mechanic, adeptly fixed the problem. He then noticed the shredded strands on the shop floor.

With a mischievous grin he said to David, "You little s.o.b. - You

broke my favorite rope." His colorful words were spoken with affection and tickled two teenage boys. That oddly tender moment still reminds me that love is sometimes expressed in unconventional ways.

Over the years David and I have shared multiple laughs about that afternoon. A lot of time passed, though, before I saw a silver lining. If that tie rod had come loose in a different place or time, it could have been a sad occasion instead of a humorous one.

I don't know if God regularly intervenes in everyday matters or lets things work out in the natural order of his creation. What I do know is this. I treasure good memories made with old friends, and I'm thankful for silver linings, even those I fail to see.