

Open forum

Samson and Delilah scene has relevance through ages

I was looking through my collection of VHS tapes and I saw "Samson and Delilah," starring Victor Mature and Hedy Lemarr. It is a classic movie. The scene that inspired this writing is where Samson is a prisoner of the Philistines and is tied up in ropes and being pulled behind a chariot. He broke his bondage and killed all but one of a hundred or so soldiers with the jawbone of an ass which he took from a midget jester. I started wondering if a jawbone of an ass would hold up through such a battle as described. At first, my reply to myself was, "No, dried up bones couldn't withstand that much beating and pounding". Then my thought went in this direction, "Yes, it could have because Samson repented for his wrongdoing and God gave him his strength back. God could have made the jawbone very, very durable." One other thought I had, "Of course, thanks to Hollywood, the jawbone could have lasted through WWI and WWII and.... Remember Gene Autry and Roy Rogers could fire 12 or 20 shots from a six shooter and never reload?"

I continued thinking about that scene and I found myself creating an opinionated correlation of the jawbone and politician's mouths and that jawbone leads those who are led around by the ear, they do what they are told to do.

The most recent incident that would carry out that analogy is the person who was the president for eight years and created jobs for czars. He was *hell-bent* on destroying America. I haven't heard of this happening yet, but I wouldn't be

surprised to hear about those who want to declare our Constitution as unconstitutional. There is a female politician who wants to raise the income taxes and create new taxes on citizens of the United States so the money can be given to those who have no money and are not citizens of the United States. Does that idea border on the fringes of communism/insanity or *Robin Hoodism*?

Samson used the jawbone of an ass to kill and maim Philistines; a lot of politicians use their jawbone to ruin the United States, run it into the ground, to desolate it, to turn it into another piece of real estate like the aftermath of the A-bomb test on Hiroshima.

Another example of the "jawbone of an ass" happened when I was stationed in Germany. The Army was in charge of Europe and a general was in charge of Germany. A new Army general was sent to replace the one who was leaving. The new general set out to let everyone know that he was in charge, the omnipotent leader of the U.S. forces in Germany. The NCO clubs opened for business at 3 p.m. every day. He didn't want his troops coming to work after having a beer, so he decreed that the clubs couldn't open until 4 pm. If you have been to Germany, you know, figuratively speaking, that a German pub exists on every street corner, just like the Walgreen's stores here in the U.S.A. But then, he did make his presence known and how well his jawbone and brain worked.

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Honoring Minnesota's — and our nation's — job creators: small businesses

Every year since 1963, the president has officially designated a National Small Business Week to honor the contributions of entrepreneurs. This is a perfect time for us to renew our commitment to America's small businesses — our nation's job creators and the foundation for the strongest, most resilient economy in the world.

This year, National Small Business Week is from May 5 to 11. Across the country, the U.S. Small Business Administration will recognize the big impact our nation's 30 million small businesses have in building our communities. Today, they are driving our nation's economy forward by creating two out of every three new private-sector jobs, employing half of the private workforce and increasing global competitiveness.

For more than 200 years, American innovation has sparked ideas that have changed the course of history and improved lives for millions. The SBA's mission to help businesses start, grow, expand — or recover from a natural disaster — is reflected in the wide range of services we provide to help entrepreneurs in their pursuit of the American dream. We are determined to ensure they continue to have the financial tools, resources and expertise they need to succeed.

For example, Minnesota's 2019 Small Business Person of the Year Christine Lantinen, owner of Le Center-based Maud Borup, Inc., leveraged her growth plan developed in SBA's Emerging Leaders program and three SBA-backed loans to grow her candy company from five to over 100 employees (96 percent of them women). As Christine transitioned the business

Small Business Week

By Rob Scott



from a retail storefront to wholesale production, she purchased a manufacturing facility in rural Minnesota and created a second company, EcoEggs, the first-ever manufacturer of plant-based compostable Easter eggs.

Entrepreneurs like Christine fuel the engines of America's economy and define the entrepreneurial spirit. If you own a small business, follow her lead and take advantage of the SBA's services and those provided by our national partners: Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers and SCORE chapters.

Together, let's seize the opportunity during the first full week of May to highlight the impact of outstanding small businesses such as Maud Borup and their supporters from all 50 states and the U.S. territories. To learn more about in-person events in your area and online events, including a comprehensive virtual conference available to all, visit www.sba.gov/nsbw and follow on social media with #SmallBusinessWeek.

Rob Scott is the U.S. Small Business Administration's Great Lakes regional administrator, serving Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.



Smell of success changes with times

When the Tribune was located on the southeast side of downtown Spring Valley about a decade ago, I got hit with a definite smell as I walked out the back door into the alley. The pleasant aroma, courtesy of the Spring Valley Bakery, was often a sweet smell, but sometimes a more potent smell when garlic toast was in the ovens of Pete and Brenda Haack's bakery just a few doors down from my newspaper office.

That memory is all I have left as the ovens have gone cold with the recent death of Pete, which shocked many in the community. The business was a true husband-wife operation and Brenda, who was injured not that long ago, wouldn't be able to take it on herself even if she wanted to continue the longtime family business.

The loss is just about the last remaining downtown tie to my beginning in Spring Valley as, like many small towns, the business district has changed significantly. Pete and Brenda took over from Pete's father the same year I came to southeastern Minnesota to settle down with my family to help my father at the newspaper.

The loss goes far beyond me, though, as the bakery is also one of the last ties to an old-fashioned, true mom and pop business that served the community and region well.

One of the perks of the newspaper business is you get to go behind the scenes, something that isn't only possible in the role as journalist. When I became publisher, I called on downtown businesses for advertising for several years.

When I walked into the Spring Valley Bakery, if Brenda wasn't sure about the ad, she ushered me into the back to talk to Pete, who was often mixing dough. It was a fascinating process with the huge, industrial mixers that still required a lot of manual labor, as did everything else in the bakery.

The back room looked much like the front — dated, but in a charming, tidy, functional, nostalgic way that highlighted

Reflections from my Notebook

By David Phillips
Bluff Country Newspaper Group



the connection to the past.

The bakery was no relic of the past, though. It had a rabid following that reached across southeastern Minnesota and beyond.

I remember pulling a chamber of commerce float through a parade in Stewartville when a guy came running out of the crowd to ask me when the bakery was going to open up again so he could get some long johns. It had only been closed a few days for vacation. Because the Haacks took care of nearly every part of their operation, they had to close when they wanted a break.

A musician-teacher who lives west of Grand Meadow used to come into my office occasionally to visit. During one visit, he revealed his true reason for making the trips into Spring Valley and it wasn't to see me. He always wanted to stock up at the bakery.

I've heard enough similar stories that you might call the bakery's pull a viral sensation. But the bakery's pull didn't come from social media, analytics or digital marketing.

The Haacks' longtime marketing strategy involved my newspaper and the local radio station. Their staying power is attributed to hard work and providing a quality, tasty product that brings people back for more.

Pete started his daily routine well before sunrise, staying on his feet most of the day unless he was delivering his garlic toast to the Branding Iron in Preston and other area restaurants in the afternoon. Brenda was on her feet all day as well, shifting between the front and back rooms

depending on need. The two worked as a team, anticipating each other's moves throughout the long workdays.

That kind of operation is becoming more a memory than a reality as the modern economy shifts to one based on technology and service. Spring Valley Bakery is the last remaining small town bakery in Fillmore County and beyond.

One reason for the decline of this type of operation is it is tough for a husband and wife to go into business together. Besides the risk of putting all their eggs into one basket, there are challenges involving health insurance, daycare, financing, family responsibilities and other issues.

Also daunting is the hours needed to succeed in such a small business. Not many people would be willing to get up in the middle of the night like Pete did day after day.

In today's economy, there are many entrepreneurs putting in long hours to make their businesses successful, but most of them rely more on technology than the manual labor that was predominant in the Haacks' operation. And rare is the new business that is a true mom and pop operation — a labor of love.

There are still a few of these types of businesses in our small towns throughout southeastern Minnesota, but as owners retire, or die, they are becoming a vanishing relic of a time that is passing us by. The bakery was the last remaining downtown business of any type that I called on for advertising those many years ago.

That's why I won't only miss the aromas — not to mention the maple long johns that I consumed — but also the comfort in knowing that this type of noble business was in operation just down the street from mine. That reality kept me grounded, giving me perspective on the effort that goes into my own labor of love.

Soon, all those hard-working mom and pop business owners will become just memories for all of us as progress marches on, for better or worse.

Personal experience guides actions for Minnesotans with mental health issues

I've learned the lessons of depression the hard way. It's something I experienced first in my late teens, and then again in my 30s.

Depression makes you feel so hopeless that you can't even see hope on the horizon. You can't feel joy or love or contentment, and you can't see a way you'll ever feel that way again. And at that point, what's the point?

The worst part about depression is how treacherously it saps your capacity to function. Treacherous because depression can feel like a personal weakness rather than what it is: a malfunction of our brain.

First, I want to say that, if you or someone you know is feeling this way, there's help, and you deserve help. Each county in Minnesota has mental health resources available. In Fillmore County, call: 1-844-274-7472. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is toll-free: 800-273-8255.

Sometimes just getting up the courage to ask for help can be difficult. I was struck by the bravery of a Lake City woman who has been a dairy farmer for 33 years. With year after year of terrible markets putting her family's financial future on the ropes, she felt "hopeless." But after taking the chance to reach out to a counselor, she is speaking out publicly so more people understand that, while seeking help won't raise dairy prices, it can raise awareness that there's help for mental health issues.

In my 30s, when my psychologist suggested that I take a diagnostic test, and then informed me that I clearly was suffering from depression, I rejected her

View from the U.S. Senate

By Sen. Tina Smith



diagnosis. What's wrong with me is me, I thought. But I listened. And thank God for her. I honestly don't know where I would be if not for her empathy, but most of all her medical and professional expertise, which helped me get better.

I know how blessed I am to have had early help. Everyone should have the same access to mental health care, regardless of our insurance, our zip code, or our age. Yet too many people can't get the help they need.

Recently, at schools in St. Paul and Rochester, I highlighted what thousands of Minnesota families and educators know to be a pressing need: expanding mental health services in our schools. I also discussed the growing understanding by Minnesotans — of all ages — that problems like depression, stress, and anxiety can upend anyone's life and need to be addressed.

We are making progress. Last year, I worked with Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski to pass a law to bring mental health professionals from the National Health Service Corps into schools and community-based organizations.

And we need to do more. My bill to bring comprehensive mental health services to schools in Minnesota and across the country would expand access to care

and help reduce the stigma that surrounds mental health care. We need to get it passed. And, as we take up the Older Americans Act this year, I'll focus on what we can do to help older adults deal with the social isolation they feel in their later years.

Minnesota senators have long worked to help the millions of Americans who suffer mental health issues, and I'm determined to carry on this work. Sen. Paul Wellstone was the first to champion mental health parity — the fundamental value that insurance coverage for mental health should be just like coverage for any other medical service. After Paul's death, Sen. Al Franken worked with Paul's son, David, to write the final rules for the law Paul pushed for.

Their work put us on the path toward true mental health parity, but we still have work to do to finish the job and to ensure all Minnesotans, and all Americans, have complete coverage for mental health services. So, I ask you to join with me. Speak out. If you or someone you love are struggling with mental health challenges, don't let anything get in the way of getting help, any more than you would resist getting help if you had the flu or a broken arm.

My experience showed me how important getting help can be. Just as clearly as I remember the shock of my diagnosis, I also remember the sensation of slowly emerging from depression: a little more energy every day. A little more capacity to pay attention to the people and things I love. The colors of the world came back.

Tina Smith represents Minnesota in the U.S. Senate.

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