

Masking our feelings

"Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

That quote about the implied meaning of objects in dreams is often credited to Sigmund Freud, pioneer psychoanalyst. It turns out that Freud really enjoyed cigars, but never said the famous quote.

I wonder what Freud would make of the recent hubbub centered around wearing face coverings.

As we continue to deal with the social and economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, face coverings have become a seemingly partisan issue.

The lockdown we all endured was intended to give hospitals time to prepare for the increased number of cases that are occurring now. It was never intended to be a permanent solution to starve the virus of hosts by virtually eliminating all person to person contact.

The lockdown was oppressive, financially devastating and scary as hell. It is understandable we all want some return to normalcy, but until a vaccine is developed, each of us needs to find ways to live our lives and manage health risks associated with everyday life.

The concept and practice of social distancing worked in earlier pandemics and scientific evidence regarding the spread of the coronavirus indicates that in instances where close contact cannot be avoided, face coverings can help minimize exposure of the virus.

Research indicates some people who don't display symptoms of the virus (referred to as asymptomatic) can spread it. Studies show that simply talking in an enclosed space can put the virus in the air.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends "wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission."

When I think about this and face coverings, I think about how strange I feel when I wear a mask and how funny I look wearing one. They also make my glasses foggy when I exhale.

But then I think about the folks who wore face masks before the pandemic (and still do now): doctors, dentists, hygienists, surgeons and nurses. They wear them in serious instances to protect their patients and themselves.

When I think of it that way, it makes sense to wear one in places when shopping. It's a sign of courtesy to others. I am adjusting to wearing a mask in retail environments and it feels a bit less strange. I find imagining myself as an outlaw helps.

I also understand that many people don't want to wear a mask, for a variety of reasons. In addition to it feeling strange and making a person look different, some people are hard to understand speaking while masked. Others feel wearing a mask infringes on their personal liberties. Some feel coronavirus is not serious and we need to develop immunity from the virus.

I get it and can see both sides of the issue.

But to generalize that mask wearers are frightened and weak is wrong. It's also wrong to think those who choose not to wear masks are bullies and less intelligent.

I think the first thing we all need to work on is understanding and respecting the choices of others. Tolerance of others is deeply rooted in our national conscience. When times get tough, we need to remember who we are as a nation.

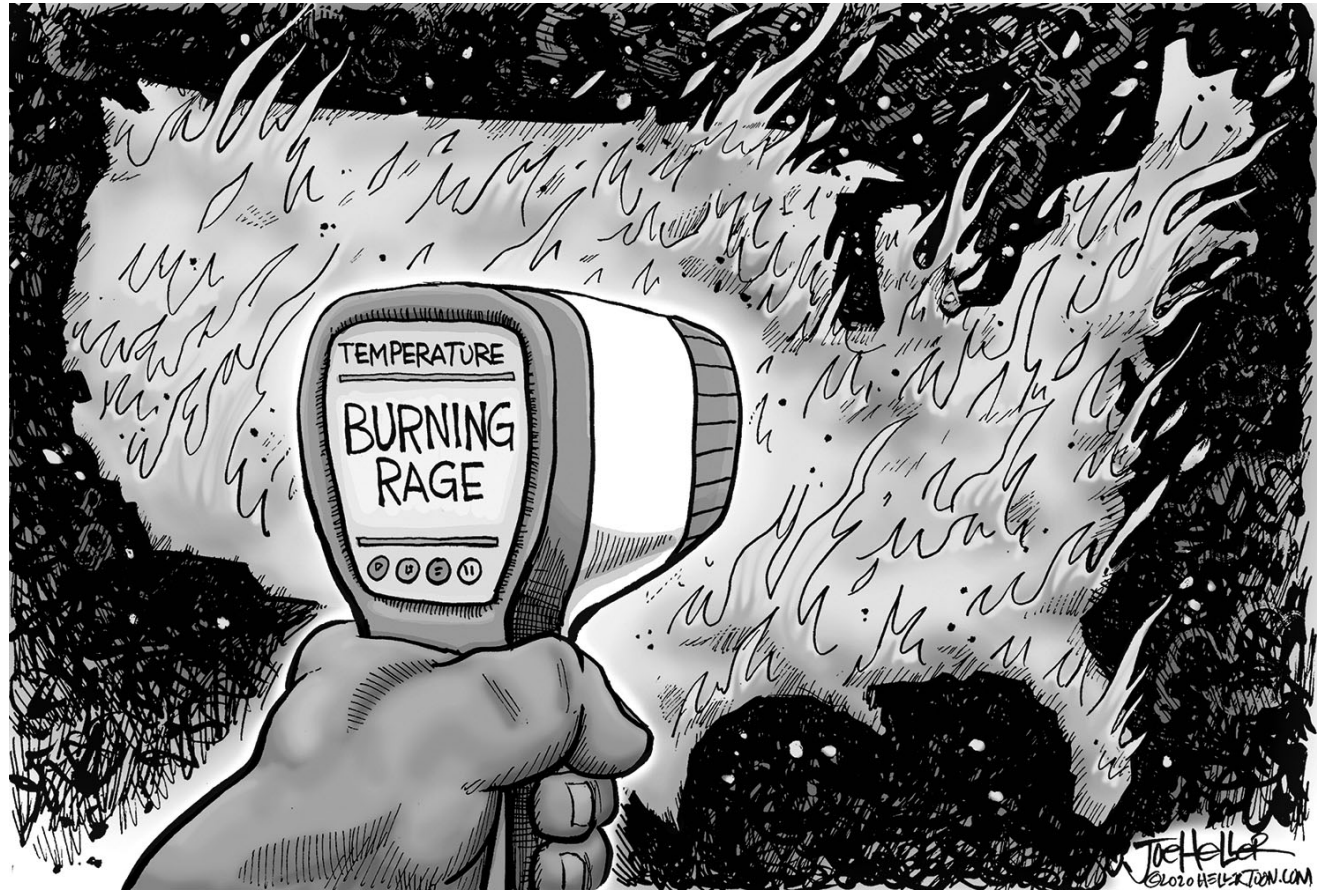
And sometimes, a mask is just a mask.

As always, I welcome your comments. You can reach me by email at tstangl@theameryfreepress.com, telephone 715-268-8101 or write me at P.O. Box 424, Amery, WI, 54001.

Thanks for reading I'll keep in touch. Feel free to do the same.



Publisher
Tom Stangl



The boat from hell

I'm fairly certain my boat is cursed.

At the end of last summer I bought a 14-foot Carolina Skiff off a slightly creepy dude on Craigslist. They're wide, flat bottom boats made of fiberglass that are generally associated with fishing saltwater shallows. They're heavier than a dead preacher, but very stable and perfectly suited for fly-fishing.

When I bought the boat, it was mostly held together with duct tape. I've spent the last year doing my best to fix it up and while I've made some progress, it's been marred by a continuous cycle of disasters and mishaps.

The boat's maiden voyage was a day trip to Hayward in search of musky. One mile (not an exaggeration) into the trip, the lid on the boat's middle bench flew off and smashed into a million pieces on the side of I-94. When we got to the lake, the battery for my newly purchased, never used trolling motor was dead

and when I tried to start the outboard I pulled the choke clean out of the motor like a Three Stooges' routine.

Fall came quickly last year and that was the only trip we took before other priorities trumped fishing. I did manage to fix the trailer lights three different times (the right turn signal still doesn't work), but other than that the boat sat forgotten all winter.

This spring I felt a renewed invigoration for the ship and figured the time had come to put the Hay-

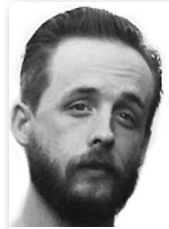
ward incident behind us. Last weekend Dan and I hauled the boat up to the Apple River Flowage to cast for bass and northern. We made it to the boat launch without incident, but as we motored away from the dock and Dan gave it some gas, my brand new, still never used trolling motor slipped off its mount, pulled the battery cords loose and sank to the bottom. We turned around and went home.

The first thing I did when we got back to the house was call my dad to ask him how he could have raised two sons who were such idiots.

Dad cast a large shadow over us as kids and it remains mostly intact today. That phrase sounds kind of negative, but it's not meant to be. He wasn't one of those dads who would scream at you for missing a ground ball or losing a wrestling match (which I did on a regular basis). He was quiet, knowledgeable and supportive. Most importantly he was always, always there. Didn't matter if we were playing cowboys and indians or struggling with our homework, he was never too busy for us. We were spoiled rotten, but with time instead of money.

Dad's shadow was cast not by intimidation or fear, but by expertise. He was, and still is, good at everything — including putting a boat in the water without some kind of stadium sized meltdown. And as these disasters kept piling up, it started to make me a little mad at him for not being a better teacher. "If you're so damn good at this, why couldn't you make me better at it."

SEE SILL, PAGE 6



Editor
C.L. Sill

LETTER GUIDELINES

Letters to the Editor are published with priority given to letters that are concise (400 words or less) and exclusive to our newspaper, from readers in our general distribution area.

All letters are subject to editing for grammar and clarity and must contain the undersigned's full name and their address and daytime telephone number for verification. (Addresses and phone numbers will not be printed.)

Letter writers must live, work or have another connection to Country Messenger's coverage area. One letter per author may be

submitted every 30 days.

Due to space limitations, letters that don't address local issues are not guaranteed publication.

Staff reserves the right to refrain from printing a letter.

Anonymous letters will not be printed. Letters may be emailed to: editor@countrymessenger.com no later than noon Friday the week preceding publication.

Election endorsements

The Country Messenger accepts election letters endorsing or advocating

for or against a ballot measure, party or candidate as paid advertising announcements. The fee is \$25 minimum for up to 250 words and 10¢ each additional word. Like other letters to the editor, the writer's name, address and phone number are required. Phone numbers are not published. The Country Messenger has the right to reject letters which don't meet publishing standards and will determine if the letter qualifies as a paid endorsement. Paid letters will be identified with a label and may or may not appear on the opinion/letters page.