

postscript

by Frances Edstrom, columnist

How 'Little Women' speaks to us

I took my 13-year-old granddaughter to see the newest "Little Women" at the local movie theater. I loved it, even with the poetic license taken by the screenplay that deviated from the original novel by Louisa May Alcott.

At home later, I happened to read a few reviews of the film, and was dismayed to find that it is almost an impossibility for media critics to describe the film as not feminist enough or too feminist. And, a couple critics decried the fact that it was about white women of privilege.

Of course it is about white women. Alcott was white and her novel is based on her family and experiences, which, 150 years ago in Massachusetts, were overwhelmingly white. That's like calling Maya Angelou or James Baldwin's writing too black.

When I first read the book, snuggled in my top bunk in a room I shared with my sister, connected by a door to a room shared by another two sisters, I related to it not because it was about a family of four white girls in Massachusetts, where I lived, but because the emotional experiences of the girls were so real to me, reading it nearly a century after it was written.

When I saw it in the movie theater the other day with my grand-

daughter, it again resonated with me. However, I wonder why it is that in 1868 and in 1968 readers could understand by the written words that Amy had to marry someone rich in order to support the family, but in 2019, it has to be spelled out in neon letters? Have readers and viewers become less intelligent and sensitive to implication?

The film, and story, also resonated with my granddaughter. We laughed in the same places, cried in the same places. On the way home, I told her about my younger self sobbing when Beth dies, and my sister saying, rudely, "What are you crying about?" My granddaughter asked, "But when your sister read the book, did she cry at that part?" "Of course," I said.

Good literature speaks to us because it reflects the passion of the human condition. It doesn't speak to us over the centuries because it is mirroring the political passions of the present day. That denies the work's validity and place in history.

Good literature is neither feminist nor misogynist. It's neither black nor white. Good literature examines the universal human reactions to this life we all share.



letters

Duck hunters rescue man who portrays Santa Claus

From: Rocky Rohn
Winona

On October 31 (Halloween), I decided to go duck hunting that afternoon. I used my brother's small 12-foot boat.

To make a long story short, the boat capsized and over and under I went. I was able to hang onto the boat with one hand. Only the back corner of the boat was above the water.

Two fellow hunters were about 150 yards away but could not hear me because another guy went by with a motor. I was yelling for help for about 10 minutes or so. Final-

ly, these two young gentlemen came to my rescue. I was able to reach under the water twice and the second try retrieved my gun. By this time, I was quite cold. These gentlemen took me in their boat they had, took me to shore, started my truck, turned the heater on, went back to where I was, retrieved my brother's boat, my decoys, life vest, cushion, and shell cases with one having my wallet and house keys in it.

These two guys are named Bryan Wanek and Don Zahrt. Talk about heroes. If anybody in Winona deserves a hero award, these two gentlemen should be first on the list. I do know Bryan's father personally,

whom I have the utmost respect for. Obviously, the parents of Bryan and Don raised them right.

The owner of Midtown Foods should be proud to have these young men as employees, as well as their parents.

And so I am lucky to have them there and I am also lucky and God willing to hopefully continue to portray Santa Claus and help others in need for years to come.

It's a hard way to meet two new friends. I hope day I can hunt with them; I'd truly be honored.

The feds are failing our disabled veterans

From: James Puz

You've probably received solicitations (again and again) in the mail or seen numerous ads on TV asking for money to help disabled veterans obtain artificial limbs and the needed therapy that accompanies those items. These funds would also be used for those veterans who have varying degrees of paralysis and emotional issues inflicted on them due to their service to this country.

With all this prodding and poking to get your \$19 per month to help those individuals, have you ever asked yourself, "Why?" Why are outside organizations needed to do something our federal government is supposed to do ... obligated to do?

The current Defense Department budget for fiscal year 2020 has been approved at \$738 billion, while the Veterans Administration is seeking \$220 billion for fiscal year 2020, a 9.6-percent increase over that of fiscal year 2019.

Here we have the defense budget at more than three times the budget of the VA. That in itself might be logical. However, there does seem to be a problem with this picture.

The money the DOD receives is to maintain the strongest, most sophisticated military in the world. And keep in mind our military is an all-volunteer military; men and women of this nation choose to serve in the different branches of service ... they choose to go in harm's way.

The budgeted money is used extensively to buy planes, tanks, ships, and all

sorts of other weaponry, along with training those men and women to fly those planes, drive those tanks, helm those ships, crouch behind a machine gun, and guide a drone-mounted missile to its target.

Many of our service members are definitely in war zones ... "shootin' wars" ... because they run the risk of not only being wounded but of being killed. Many come home incomplete ... in more ways than one.

When these men and women come home, they should be able to rely on the government they've served to be able to supply everything necessary to help them adjust to life, especially if wounds and injuries suffered prohibit the person from staying in the service; they should get more than just a slap on the back, a "You done good soldier," and a weak assurance the government will try to replace or repair broken or missing parts of their bodies.

It's ironic, too, that our military personnel work with some of the most sophisticated — and expensive — military hardware on earth, yet when the time comes for many of them to need sophisticated — and probably expensive limb replacements — Washington, D.C., comes up short.

Thus, the DOD can purchase the most expensive combat aircraft available, yet the VA apparently has difficulty coming up with enough money to replace missing arms and legs for the veterans who volunteered to accept our nation's call to go into harm's way. This is shameful and a gross insult to the sacrifice these men and wom-

en have made.

I'm fully aware the Veterans Administration does a tremendous job when it comes to our veterans, but is the money allocated each year insufficient or is it being wasted? Why must the American public, through donations, be asked to help disabled veterans to the tune of \$19 per month? Why can't the VA do this work ... work it was designed to do ... all on its own? Why must our disabled veterans become "charity cases"? And that's what all of this solicitation amounts to — turning our valiant warriors into a national spectacle, with organizations, hat-in-hand, seeking "charitable" handouts from the American people.

The wealthiest nation, with the strongest military might, can't afford to help supply, without outside assistance, veterans with artificial limbs, often more than one, and other forms of much-needed therapies. WHY?

We pay taxes so that the VA can obtain the needed funds to do the job it was commissioned to do. With donations at \$19 per month being requested, it's like we're being taxed twice.

It would seem, therefore, that the federal government is failing some of our most vulnerable veterans. Again, I ask, "Why?" Why can't more than \$200 billion do the job helping our veterans when they return home with less than they entered military service with, with less than they started out with when they ventured forth to fulfill their assigned duties ... their assigned missions ... going in harm's way? "WHY?"

Snow and ice on vehicles and the law

From: Sgt. Troy Christianson
Minnesota State Patrol

Question: I see many vehicles driving down the road with ice and snow coming off them. What is the law about clearing ice and snow from your vehicle prior to driving?

Answer: The law states that no vehicle shall be moved on a roadway, unless the load is secured to prevent any leaking, blowing, shifting or falling debris. Ice or snow that may fall from a vehicle could be considered an unsecured load.

Drivers should always take the time to

remove all snow and ice from the vehicle so it does not become a hazard on the roadway. It is also important to always clear all frost, snow, and ice from all windows so vision is not obstructed.

Drivers should be aware of civil liability if they fail to take reasonable steps to remove snow and ice that result in property damage or injuries from a crash.

When traveling behind a vehicle with an unsecured load or ice/snow falling from it, give yourself plenty of room to avoid any obstacles that may fall off and strike your vehicle. Pass the vehicle only if it is safe to do so.

If your vehicle is damaged and/or crash-

es due to falling debris, try to get a license plate number and report it to law enforcement and your insurance company.

You can avoid a ticket — and a crash — if you simply buckle up, drive at safe speeds, pay attention and always drive sober. Help us drive Minnesota toward zero deaths.

If you have any questions concerning traffic-related laws or issues in Minnesota send your questions to Sgt. Troy Christianson, Minnesota State Patrol, 2900 48th Street NW, Rochester, Minn., 55901-5848; or reach him at Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us.

Political letters policy

Note number 10: our word-count restrictions have changed, but only for writers who think ahead and do not wait until the last minute to craft their political endorsements.

1. Letters must be originals. Duplicate copies and form letters will be rejected.

2. All letters must be signed and include the writer's full address. Names will not be "withheld by request."

3. Anyone who signs a letter is assumed to be the writer, and while this cannot be proven or disproven by the Post, the writer is expected to assume full responsibility for the contents of the letter. In some cases the writer will be contacted to verify this responsibility. The Post will not knowingly publish any letter that has been written by one individual and signed by another, and does not approve of this practice.

4. No letter will be published that constitutes a personal attack on another individual, is demeaning, or potentially libelous.

5. Letters will not be accepted from candidates for any office except when making a direct reply to an issue raised by another writer against the candidate himself, and then it will be restricted to that single issue. Post advertising is suggested as the proper format for candidates to use in their campaigns.

7. Overly long letters, or handwritten letters that are difficult to read, cannot be published.

8. Letters from the same writer are restricted to two per month, as space allows.

9. Letters are printed as space allows, and may be carried over to a future edition.

10. Political letters to the editor that are deemed by Post editorial staff to be simple endorsements will be published as space permits. Letters will be restricted to no more than 200 words. However, letters received later than 10 days before a general election will be restricted to 50 words.

11. Rejected letters cannot be returned, nor will the writer be notified a letter has been rejected. However, all letters will be held on file for one week before being destroyed.

letters

Helping youth stay tobacco-free

From: April Loeffler
Buffalo County Health
and Human Services

'Tis the season to indulge a little in sweet treats — desserts, candy, mint, and chocolate. With the current tobacco trends, youth are enjoying these sweet flavors year-round in the form of many tobacco products. According to the 2019 results of the National Youth Tobacco Survey, about one in three high school students in the U.S. are current tobacco product users. Among those youth that use tobacco products, 70 percent report that they use a flavored product.

Preventing youth access to tobacco products is the first step in decreasing the number of youth that are becoming addicted to nicotine. This starts with local retailers being consistent and checking IDs when selling tobacco products.

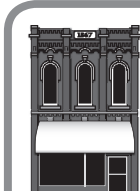
The Wisconsin WINS program wants to thank our local clerks this busy holiday season for taking the time to check youth IDs for all tobacco products no matter how sweet the flavor.

Retailers that sell tobacco products can get ready for the new year by visiting WITobaccoCheck.org where you can access a free retailer training for all employees to learn how not to sell tobacco to minors.

Thank your clerk today for checking IDs and helping Wisconsin youth stay tobacco-free.

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