

OPINION

Thanks for laundering my money and other things, Mom

She was the last to know it was raining. I headed home from somewhere. Somewhere else someone had said, "Rain, rain go away, come again another day." This was another day.

The windshield wiper activity made me think of my mother. She was the shortest one in my extended family. I teased she was the last to know when it was raining. I was a foot taller than my mother when she told me I was taller than she'd been at my age.

I took a detour and stopped at St. Peter's Cemetery near New Richland. I visit there often as the cemetery is peppered with the final resting places of family and friends. I walked past gravestones, checking the dates writ large. The dates are odometers demonstrating life is given in unequal portions.

I stood in the rain and said, "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

I repeated the words because they needed to be repeated. The wind tried to blow them away and the rain threatened to drown them, but I persisted.

I was stationed at the grave of my mother. I could say "thank you" endlessly, and it wouldn't come close to covering my gratitude.

We visited cemeteries regularly when I was a young blockhead. Mom believed in long goodbyes. I do, too. Sometimes she packed a lunch for a gravesite visit. Mom believed there were no bad foods. Gravy was considered a beverage. Her cooking laid nicely upon the tongue. It tasted like love.

She taught me to never say anything is the best food I'd ever eaten when anyone other than the cook was around for fear I'd hurt somebody's feelings. She made birthday cherry pies so good, I felt sorry for all the pieless people of the world. Mother cut undesirable foods into small bits so an unpleasant taste would arrive in limited editions. She wasn't thrilled by my inclination to put wild leeks on a hot dog resting on Wonder Bread and wash it down with a Twinkie. She wasn't a member of the wild leek appreciation society. The leeks gave me breath bad enough to knock a vulture off a garbage truck at 100 paces.

Who ate all the cherry pie? That question echoed in various voices. There had been three pieces. I was a little boy as skinny as a snake who loved cherry pie. Accusing eyes glared at me for no reason other than I was guilty. I cracked on the stand



Tales from Exit 22
By Al Batt

like a witness being interrogated by Perry Mason. Everyone was disappointed in me except my mother. She had made the cherry pie. She loved the fact I loved her cherry pie enough to eat three pieces. Tenneva Jordan said, "A mother is a person who seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie."

The pie came with coffee so strong, one neighbor claimed he drank one cup of Mom's coffee and didn't sleep for 23 days.

Her father died young. Life can be a dinghy on a choppy sea. The family wasn't in dire straits, but times were hard. She told me she'd learned life couldn't be perfect but each day was the pinnacle. She found magic in the mundane and the calm. Edward Everett Hale said, "Never bear more than one trouble at a time. Some people bear three kinds — all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have."

She was of a generation that was never without electricity but didn't grow dependent upon it. She taught me to check my pockets because when Mom laundered money, she kept it. She dressed up to go shopping. You never knew who you'd meet at a grocery store. When she and my father argued (they had to, they were married) my mother whispered. Dad wasn't good at whispering. I think all arguments should be whispered.

She searched for nice things to say, "We're proud of Allen. A boy got in trouble in school today and it wasn't him."

I gave her a crude ashtray I'd made in Bible School. She didn't smoke and never had, but she smiled — a common currency for her.

As rain dripped from all parts of me, I remembered helping a woman with her luggage on a similar rainy day. She said, "Tell your mama she raised you right." I smiled my mother's smile at that memory.

I stood smiling in the rain by my mother's grave. The smile and the rain mixed with my tears.

Al Batt's columns appear every Wednesday in the Tribune.

TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES

National Small Business Week is typically celebrated the first week in May every year, recognizing the important role small businesses make in society.

It has been a difficult year for many small businesses because of the pandemic — Albert Lea is no different — and we encourage people to continue to think of ways they can support local businesses.

Whether it's getting into their stores and buying their products, writing reviews about the local businesses that you love or sharing about positive experiences you have with businesses on social media, there are many ways you can give a boost to these establishments this week and into the future.

Your reviews and your posts on social media will be seen by your friends and family and often will spark an interest in that business for them as well.

If you're caught up on the shopping for yourself, consider buying gift cards to use or giveaway later, or plan ahead for birthdays for family and friends.

Even a simple message of appreciation to store owners on social media can go



"Whether it's getting into their stores and buying their products, writing reviews about the local businesses that you love or sharing about positive experiences you have with businesses on social media, there are many ways you can give a boost to these establishments this week and into the future."

a long way if it has been a challenging week for a business owners.

It's a small price to ask to support these establishments that give back so much to our community.

Whether it be donating to youth events or other organizations or causes, small businesses form the backbone of the community and represent our friends and neighbors.

What events are in store this summer?

Let's be honest. People are getting a little antsy to attend the summer events that we have grown to love over the years. I know I am.

As I have started working this week on our annual Summer Times publication, I've been reminiscing about times of the past — times when people didn't seem to have a care in the world.

One of my favorite times in Albert Lea is the Fourth of July — with the parade, the fireworks, the car shows, food trucks and sometimes even carnivals. Even though it's usually hot as blazes outside by that time of year, I love seeing the patriotism and the community spirit — getting together with all our friends and family and welcoming out-of-town visitors to this place I call home.

Our family sometimes slips away to the small-town festivals in the neighboring communities for car shows or other events, and it's fun to see what these little towns have to offer.

I think it's safe to say we all have taken these events for granted in the past, and after living through the last



Nose for News
By Sarah Stultz

year and a half I know I found a newfound appreciation for those who take the time to plan these events in the community.

I'm crossing my fingers that many of the summer festivals and annual events will take place this year, and with Gov. Tim Walz slated to announce a dialback of some of the state's coronavirus restrictions on Thursday, this is looking more and more likely.

Last year, our Summer Times publication looked unlike any other year since I have worked at the Tribune because many of the longtime events were canceled due to COVID-19.

With minimal events to include in the publication, we instead focused our efforts on the established outdoor opportunities available

in the community and the events that were able to take place either in-person or virtually.

Through that process I was reminded that even though the events weren't taking place, we still had a lot to offer for outdoor recreation — be it biking and walking paths, camping, golfing, fishing, canoeing, kayaking and visiting the state park, to name a few.

As we're preparing this special section this year, we'd love to know if you have an event you're planning.

While we've heard about a few cancellations, such as the Freeborn County Fair, we know there are several events moving forward.

Please email me at sarah.stultz@albertleatribune.com or give me a call at 379-3433, so we can let readers know about these opportunities.

I'm hopeful of a fun-filled summer ahead — if it's not fully back to normal, it will definitely be closer than last year.

Sarah Stultz is the managing editor of the Tribune. Her column appears every Wednesday.

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Drivers need prescription for darker tint

Question: If a person has a medical exception to a specified window tint level (per medical prescription by medical provider), do you have to register that exception/prescription with the state? Or register the car that has the applied tint?



Ask a Trooper
By Troy Christianson

Answer: It is not necessary to notify the Department of Public Safety Driver Vehicle Services (DPS-DVS) in Minnesota. DVS doesn't place window tint/medical restriction on the driver's license or on the vehicle's registration. Drivers will need to have a prescription or proof from their doctor regarding the medical need to have tinted windows below the 50% light transmittance plus or minus 3%.

The proper document will need to be in the vehicle to show law enforcement upon request. The document will need to specifically state the minimum percentage that light transmittance may be reduced to satisfy the prescription or medical needs of the patient; and the prescription or statement contains an expiration date, which must be no more than two years after the date the prescription or statement was issued.

If the window tint is below

are limited to 50% on the front side windows.

- Pickups, vans and SUVs are not limited on the rear side and rear windows. (Can be less than 50% behind the front seat).

- Squad cars, limousines and vehicles used to transport human remains by a funeral establishment are not limited on the side and rear windows.

Troopers have window tint meters in their patrol cars and will test the windows for the legal percent of light transmittance if they look to be below the statutory limit. If they are found below the legal limit, the driver may be issued a citation.

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, at 2900 48th St. NW, Rochester, MN 55901-5848; or reach him at Troy.Christianson@state.mn.us.

Troy Christianson is a sergeant with the Minnesota State Patrol.

The Albert Lea Tribune is an award-winning daily newspaper.



2021: 7 state awards
2020: 9 state awards
2019: 12 state awards
2018: 10 state awards
2017: 2 state awards

2016: 9 state awards
2015: 10 state awards
2014: 6 state awards
2013: 10 state awards
2011: 9 state awards

THE FIRST AMENDMENT: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What happened to personal responsibility?

The letter written by Jim Jirele in the Tribune of May 1 resonated with me and I had to respond. I am not a personal friend of Lisa Hanson; I know her only slightly from being a customer at her husband's business. In addition, I agree that she did break what was a state law, be it a necessary law or an exercise in government tactics to control people. But Mr. Jirele's statement that Mrs. Hanson was "promoting the spread of a deadly disease" makes me wonder what has happened to personal responsibility in our society. A business can have an open door, the lights are on, the music is playing, the food is ready to be served, but if no one comes through that door, it changes the entire scenario. In the midst of a pandemic, any reasonable person who felt uncomfortable around other people not in their families would simply not patronize any business that might lead to him or her becoming ill. The mere reason that a location is open for business in no way pressures people to enter that business. We all have the freedom of choice; it's one of the great blessings of living in America that many other countries do not enjoy. That means that any choice a person makes will have consequences, either positive or negative. And, we are *all* responsible for the choices we make. Unless Mrs. Hanson employed people in front of her building who strong-armed others to enter the bistro, those who did were responsible for their actions. Yes, if the business was shuttered and locked no one would be tempted, but we are all tempted on a daily basis to do things that might not be in our best interest, and it's our responsibility to do what is right for us as well as what might be right for others. I'm definitely not a constitutional scholar, so I can't argue whether anyone's rights were violated but I do know that when I make any decision that affects my well-being, I will take responsibility for that decision and I expect others to do the same.

Sandy Olson
Northwood

Present your own positions

I have been at a loss as to how to respond to the columns from Mr. Hoffman, Mr. Farris and Mr. Kramer. Their goal seems to be defining Democratic positions. I can understand the advantage of defining your opponents. I would prefer they addressed their Republican positions on issues. People could then make a fair comparison. For example, contrary to Republican

misrepresentations, I believe law enforcement needs more resources. They need more resources for psychological evaluations during the hiring process. Law enforcement personnel are subjected to carnage responding to our accidents and emergencies. This impacts them. They have a dangerous job protecting us from criminals. They should be provided continuous psychological review during their working career.

Mr. Kramer in his April 14 My Point of View accused Democrats of embracing socialism — a common accusation by Republicans. He labeled many of the initiatives being championed by Democrats as nothing more than "participation trophies" being given to buy votes. Remember Trump's trade wars? (Trump said they are fun and easy to win). When that did not work out, Trump paid billions of dollars to farmers to make up for lost sales. That is really buying votes and an example of a real participation trophy!

Mr. Kramer states "since our beginning, America is the place where you can come with nothing and if you are willing to work hard have unlimited opportunity." We have people coming to our southern border who fit this profile and who are also "hungry." I am thrilled Mr. Kramer is embracing these new immigrants.

The bottom line is that there should be fair treatment of people at all income levels. Government aid should not be reserved for only the rich and large business. The first COVID relief bill is an example. At least \$500 billion of the aid went to big corporations. Republicans have embraced the discredited trickle-down theory. In my opinion they have let it degenerate even further into the crumb-down theory. Lower-income people should be satisfied with the crumbs that fall off the tables of the rich. The Republicans have rewarded the rich with the real "participation trophies."

Joe Pacovsky
Hayward

Medical and mental health services in the prison system

Each day, men, women and children behind bars suffer needlessly from lack of adequate medical and mental health care. Chronic illnesses go untreated, emergencies are ignored and people with

serious mental illness fail to receive necessary care. For some people, poor medical care turns a minor sentence into a death sentence.

The failure to provide prisoners with access to needed health care too often results in tragedy. It also violates the U.S. Constitution. Forty-five years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Estelle v. Gamble* that ignoring a prisoner's serious medical needs can amount to cruel and unusual punishment, noting that "[a]n inmate must rely on prison authorities to treat their medical needs; if the authorities fail to do so, those needs will not be met. In the worst cases, such failures may actually produce physical torture or a lingering death. ... In less serious cases, denial of medical care may result in pain and suffering, which no one suggests would serve any penological purpose."

The overwhelming majority of people behind bars will someday be released. Providing prisoners with care today means having healthier neighbors who will be contributing members of their community in the future.

Now, it's your turn! I would like to hear of your experiences and/or concerns regarding the treatment of people with mental health issues and the lack of medical and/or mental health services while incarcerated. I may be reached at: got-tahavehope38@gmail.com

Mark Jacobson
Winona

It really pays to be Republican

It pays to be a Republican. You get to pick and choose which laws you want to obey. You do not have to obey any laws passed by a Democratic governor. Those laws are illegal. And, most important, those laws are unconstitutional. Republicans become constitutional experts at birth and know what they are talking about.

Do not worry if you get fined for breaking one of those laws. You will get plenty of support from Republican politicians and others. You will become famous. The city you are from will get lots of free publicity. You can even sue everyone who offends you and become filthy rich. It does not get any better than that.

It really does pay to be a Republican.

John Wojszynski
Albert Lea

How to send a letter

Send letters via mail to Letters to the Editor, Albert Lea Tribune, 808 W. Front St., Albert Lea, MN 56007, or via email to letters@albertleatribune.com. Letters cannot exceed 500 words. They must have one author. Petitions are not printed. Letters must include address and telephone number for verification purposes — only your name and city of residence will be printed. Each author may write one letter per calendar week. Letters are published as soon as space allows. To request a guest column, contact Managing Editor Sarah Stultz at 379-3433. Feel free to call if you don't see your letter.

MY POINT OF VIEW

White supremacy sets back human achievement



My Point of View
By Jennifer Vogt-Erickson

Rick Santorum recently said in a speech to young conservatives, "We birthed a nation from nothing. I mean, there was nothing here. I mean, yes, we have Native Americans but candidly there isn't much Native American culture in American culture."

Living in a state that derived its name from the Dakota phrase "Mni Sota Makoce" ("Where the waters reflect the skies"), this is ridiculous on its face. Whether he's revealing flabbergasting ignorance or embracing centuries of physical and cultural erasure of indigenous Americans, Santorum is flat earth wrong.

Last month several representatives in the U.S. House briefly floated a nativist "America First" caucus promoting "Anglo-Saxon political traditions."

Anglo-Saxons lived in small kingdoms in England during the Middle Ages. I can't think of a single American who aspires to recreate a feudal society like that. Life was often nasty, brutish and short, even with the protection of a king against terrifying raids by the Viking ancestors of many people around here, including myself.

Last month Tucker Carlson went full "White Replacement Theory" on his Fox News platform and expressed fear about new immigrant voters who "dilute" his vote and "disenfranchise" him. (Later in the month, Carlson also urged his viewers to call police on parents who send their children outside to play wearing masks, which he equated to child abuse. Unfortunately for him, these children will someday turn 18 and probably "dilute" his vote as well.)

Members of the Republican Party and other conservative figures are frequently cleaving to ignorance, espousing nativism and courting white supremacists. Where is the party of Lincoln or Reagan I grew up with?

I wrote earlier this year about the CPAC convention's stage in Florida being designed in the exact shape of a Nazi symbol (an Odal rune), which I believe was a deliberate nod to white supremacists.

Two weeks ago, our state Rep. Peggy Bennett spoke in Blooming Prairie to a group called "Minnesotans4Freedom." Patty Mueller, who represents Austin, shared pictures from the event on her Facebook page, Mueller for Minnesota. One of the organizers, Chad Rafdal, was a Capitol insurrectionist. According to Unicorn Riot, an independent media organization, Rafdal said he was pepper-sprayed and forced back by police near a Capitol entrance. On Twitter, the media outlet shared an earlier picture of Rafdal in front of the Minnesota governor's mansion during a rally, and he and at least seven other people in the picture are making the "white power" hand sign.

Deron Slater, who spoke for more than half an hour at the Blooming Prairie event, claimed

that Derek Chauvin, recently convicted by jury for the murder of George Floyd, was "on trial for being white." Unicorn Riot reported that Slater was also in D.C. on Jan. 6, and it tweeted a picture of Slater with Jason Hakala at the Alibi Drinkery. Hakala, who was photographed in D.C. on Jan. 6 as well, has an arm slung around Slater and is making the "white power" sign with both of his hands.

Why is our local state representative accepting a speaking invitation from a group associated with open white supremacists and Capitol insurrectionists?

Former Republican standard bearer Mitt Romney was booed at the Utah GOP convention this past weekend. Liz Cheney, who has staunchly condemned Trump's lies about election fraud which incited the Capitol insurrection, is facing challenges to her leadership position in the U.S. House.

I would have *never* imagined any of this happening while growing up in the 1980s. Does the Republican Party see a future for itself in a vibrant, diverse society?

Belief in white supremacy is like being mired in the idea that the sun orbits around the Earth. It has no basis in biology, and it sets back human achievement and destroys intrinsic worth.

White supremacy is also a threat to domestic tranquility. Like President Biden said in his address last week, "We won't ignore what our intelligence agencies have determined to be the most lethal terrorist threat to our homeland today: White supremacy is terrorism."

We learn from the mistakes of the past, and we move forward together. We value the pursuit of truth and knowledge, even if it means changing our minds, even if that is hard to do. We are Americans, and we are created equal and are equal before the law. We are committed to building a more perfect union.

There is only one major party, the Democrats, that carries this message right now. This is the party that embodies rural values. It rewards work instead of wealth, it supports working families and it opens the doors to education and innovation. It builds from the middle class out.

Trickle down economics doesn't work and never did, especially for rural America. We sure tried it, and "there was nothing here."

Jennifer Vogt-Erickson is a member of the Freeborn County DFL Party.

Farm to food shelf is a lifeline for farmers and is a key to hunger relief

As what's hopefully the worst of the pandemic is behind us, we must recognize the long road to recovery that's ahead — especially for Minnesota farm families whose lives and livelihoods were enormously disrupted. The shock to the agricultural system was broad and varied, including bending the link in the chain between farmers and the hunger relief system.

Within the last decade, farmers have become increasingly important players in the fight against local hunger. At the beginning of 2020, the optimistic outlook on hunger showed that the country had finally reached pre-Great Recession levels of food insecurity. But COVID-19 has undone a decade's worth of hunger-fighting progress: Currently one in nine Minnesotans, including one in six children, is food insecure.

Second Harvest Heartland — one of the largest food banks in the country — distributes more than 105 million meals to nearly 1,000 agency partner programs across 41 counties in central and southern Minnesota and



Guest Column
By Allison O'Toole, Virginia Merritt and Jon Van Erkel



18 counties in western Wisconsin. Channel One Food Bank serves 14 counties in southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin, and provided more than 7.3 million meals last year alone. We cannot serve our partners,

their clients and your communities without farmers as our hunger-fighting partners. That's where Minnesota's Farm to Food Shelf Program comes in.

The state program enables food banks like ours to source millions of pounds of local produce, protein and dairy each year and distribute it to our community partners. Their clients — families, seniors, college students — are increasingly seeking out from their food shelves high sources of nutrition, like meat, cheese, yogurt, fresh fruits and veggies — and Farm to Food Shelf ensures food banks can source these products from local growers and producers. Since the program began in 2015, our partnership with farmers and elected officials has helped put more than 30 million pounds of produce and protein, and more than one million gallons of milk, on the tables of Minnesotans facing hunger.

This is why the current base funding of \$1.7 million per year included in the Senate Agriculture omnibus bill must be sustained. It will maintain

funding levels we have received over the last biennium, ensuring food banks don't see a decrease in funding at a time when Minnesota families — farm and otherwise — are most in need.

We're grateful for the support the program has received so far. Last month, Sen. Gene Dornink, chief author of the Farm to Food Shelf bill in the Senate, toured Second Harvest Heartland's new hunger-relief facility in Brooklyn Park to learn more about our operations and how we work to address hunger in Minnesota. Amid growing food demand, we hurried to open the facility filled with bigger coolers to store nutrient-dense foods like protein and dairy and deployed our larger fleet of trucks to deliver it all across our service area. Food banks like Second Harvest Heartland and Channel One couldn't do what we do without the support of legislators like Sen. Dornink.

No one should face this virus or its aftermath hunger. Farm to Food Shelf has been and continues to be a vital part of our efforts to

ensure that Minnesota families can stock their fridges with healthy, locally grown food, while enabling food banks to support our state's agriculture industry during unprecedented times. You can support this program by reaching out to your state legislators, including Sen. Dornink, to thank them for their support of Farm to Food Shelf and encourage them to continue to invest in Minnesota's food banks and food shelves through the duration of the COVID crisis.

Finally, we will all need to give and receive help if we are going to build back stronger as a community. If you or someone you know is in need of support, please visit 2harvest.org or helpingfeedpeople.org to find resources near you.

Allison O'Toole is CEO of Second Harvest Heartland in Brooklyn Park; Virginia Merritt is executive director of Channel One Regional Food Bank in Rochester; and Jon Van Erkel is the co-owner of Van Erkel Farms Inc. in Hollandale.