

### OUR VIEW

## Have some fun, name a snowplow

It's cold outside and meteorologists are forecasting snow for this area.

To help everyone get in the holiday spirit, or at least thinking about winter driving, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) kicked off its second annual "Name a Snowplow" contest this week.

Last year's District 6 winning entry was Snowbi Wan Kenobi and with the district ranking fifth in the number of votes received.

We think residents in District 6 can do better. Last year's winning entry was creative. No question, about it.

We also know how witty our neighbors are. So, let's put Steele County on the map. Let's have the District 6 winning entry originate in Steele County and let's make sure it gets the highest number of votes this year.

Submit your entry on MnDOT's website at [www.dot.state.mn.us/nameasnowplow](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/nameasnowplow) by Wednesday, Dec. 15

### GUEST COLUMN

## There's another side to COVID-19?

BY PHILIP HEIM

I am responding to a Dec 1. column written by Brandon Balzer, who apparently is representing the opinions of members of the Steele County United Patriots for Accountability when he uses the word "we" in his column statements.

I assume the controversy Balzer mentions is about whether people should have the individual freedom to choose to be vaccinated or unvaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. He then states "we know there are many of those vaccinated and partially vaccinated individuals that were bullied or coaxed into vaccination. We are asking for a respectful 2-way dialogue on this issue because being unable to ask questions outside the mainstream narrative leaves out vital information about what is happening in the community." I will attempt to start a respectful dialogue here and hope it will stimulate other respectful dialogues throughout our communities.

I would like to know what vital information Balzer and others have to share concerning the COVID-19 vaccines?

Our extended family is largely vaccinated and some of those who aren't have been infected and have experienced varying degrees of illness without any being hospitalized that I know of. My mother was fully vaccinated but apparently because two health care staff were infected she was a breakthrough case and died less than two weeks after testing positive and two days short of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. My mother was in the dying process, but I believe the further isolation of being quarantined and the infection contributed to her death.

Here are some facts from the Center for Disease Control. People who are unvaccinated and have been infected with COVID are two times as likely to be re-infected than people

who are vaccinated. Currently there have been more than 787,000, deaths attributed to COVID and more than 49,000,000 infections. That is a 1.59% death to infection ratio.

Balzer stated there is a less than 1% death to infection ratio. Where did he get his information from? He suggests Scott Gottlieb, the former FDA commissioner, who is now on the board of Pfizer Pharmaceutical, had influence in having Pfizer's vaccine being the first to be approved in the world. I agree with Balzer. Gottlieb probably did have some influence, so what? Isn't that how many business decisions are made? Does that change the fact that the Pfizer vaccine is effective?

I believe people walking off the job or being fired because they refuse a vaccine mandate is reflective of their attitude that they are willing to risk being infected with disregard for welfare of other people they may infect. That attitude I believe is a losing strategy in limiting the spread of COVID. A leader in charge of limiting the spread of COVID in Portugal stated his country is fighting a war against COVID and citizens have to decide which side are they on, a side that trusts medical experts and growing factual accounts of prevention or a side that is fearful and mistrustful and more willing to believe in their capacity to fight off infection. Portugal currently is one of a few countries where the Covid infection has been greatly reduced.

With more than 40% of Steele and Dodge Counties remaining unvaccinated how many more infections and deaths can we expect in 2022? What do you think?

**Philip Heim lives in Medford. His mother, Luella Heim, passed away on Sept. 28 just two days prior to her 100th birthday while living at the Medford Senior Care.**



**Hot Pursuit**  
RICK BUSSLER

Every once in a while I'm reminded why I need to stick to journalism and writing stories.

It happened recently when I did a story on the flight school based at Owatonna's Degner Regional Airport. Jim Jacobson and Clayton Peterson operate one of the region's few aviation schools.

Without any warning, Jacobson put me behind the controls of a flight simulator, which is a device used to artificially simulate aircraft flight in various environments and conditions. Flight simulators are used to train pilots on how to fly in addition to jumping behind the controls of an actual aircraft. Rest assured, I didn't do the latter.

## No smooth landing for me

For this particular maneuver, Jacobson programmed us to fly out and back to the Duluth airport. I successfully lifted off from Duluth and circled around in a 4-mile radius before descending back to the airport.

Even though I knew I was grounded in a simulator, the heart still pounded and the blood flowed with lots of anxiety. I tried my best to fly the friendly skies.

Not surprisingly, Jacobson had to correct me several times on what to do to achieve a smooth flight. Things seemed to be going pretty well until the arrival back at the airport.

I had my eyes fixed on the runway and my brain knew what needed to be done. But from there, it was all a blur.

Quite honestly, I don't know what I all did, but within seconds I crashed the plane and it was all over. No smooth landing for me.

Lucky for me, I wasn't physically hurt.

Perhaps my pride, however.

I think I overcorrected myself with "the yoke," which is the airplane's steering wheel. The yoke controls the plane's ailerons. In simplest terms, it allows the pilot to move the airplane up, down, over left and over right.

Jacobson said one of the most common mistakes young aspiring pilots make is moving the yoke too much. "Nice and steady," he often warned me. I found myself cranking the yoke like a steering wheel on a vehicle, but it's not the same and only needs to be moved ever so slightly to the left or right.

"Landing an airplane is the hardest part," Jacobson said. "It's a little bit of juggling act to keep it level."

Most student pilots spend an average of 90 minutes at a time in the simulator. I can't imagine as I spent only about 10 minutes. I was mentally exhausted and a little motion sick from

everything going on around me.

Being in a simulator definitely wears you out physically and mentally.

Jacobson described it this way: "I could have done eight hours of physical labor and been less wore out."

He said there is a lot of thinking and mental work that goes into being a pilot. "It's thinking ahead of the airplane," Jacobson said, adding you always need to be two steps ahead of the plane.

Asked what makes a good pilot, Jacobson said: "Experience and good judgment." And, he quickly added, you can only get experience by going out and doing it.

So true. Maybe with a little more experience, I can figure out how to not crash the plane.

Second thought, I'm sticking to journalism. I think I have a better shot at going in hot pursuit of a smooth landing by putting out a quality newspaper.



### GUEST COLUMN

## Christmas is about hope, love

BY JAN MITTELSTADT TIPPETT

As American Christians, most of us link Dec. 25 with Christmas, the Star of Bethlehem and the birth of the Christ child.

December is a great time to have a birthday party for Jesus. It's cold in Minnesota, but our hearts are warm. Others celebrate the Festival of Lights, Kwanzaa, Hogmanay, Las Posadas, Hanukkah, and any number of other things.

All of that is just fine. It may even be finer this year. We add in Christmas trees, eggnog, mistletoe, brightly wrapped gifts, Santa Claus and his eight reindeer, family celebrations, parties of the season, Christmas Eve candlelight services and the children's pageant at our churches.

Then there's the lefse, the candy, the turkey and/or ham, the cookies either from your own oven or from one of the numerous and various Cookie Walks around town, cards to buy and send, and music to listen

to. It is easy to get swept up with the trappings and the trimmings of the season.

But Christmas is more.

*A child of hope in a world of strife;*

*A child of hope who can bring new life;*

*A child of hope in a world of hate;*

*A child of hope who can elevate*

*The dreams of men to heights unknown.*

*Such is this child, this Babe, this son of God.*

Christmas, as we celebrate it, is a mixture of tales and beliefs, traditions and times that have been developed in various countries from various times, many of which have little or nothing to do with Christ or Christianity.

The date is conjecture. There's no historical evidence that Jesus was born on Dec. 25. The date was officially adopted in 354 by Bishop Liberius of Rome. It's not a universal date for all Christians even now. Members of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Catholic Church celebrate 13 days later.

Some historians believe the date was chosen to help smooth the transition from paganism. There had often been festivals celebrating the winter solstice. These pagan ceremonies included the Yule, an old Norse word for a 12-day celebration. The 12 days of Christmas are also a carry-over from Roman times, but I bet they didn't sing about five golden rings and a partridge in a pear tree.

The Christmas tree is also from pagan times. The primitive Scandinavians worshipped trees. Later, much later, a decorated tree came into the English tradition when Queen Victoria married Prince Albert, who brought the idea with him from his native Germany in about 1840.

Santa Claus, a corruption of the Dutch *Sint Nikolaas*, received his now traditional appearance from cartoonist Thomas Nash in 1863. According to people who study such things, there really was a Santa Claus. He was a fourth-century Bishop

of Myra in Asia Minor. And the reindeer that pull his sleigh come from a legend developed by Scandinavians in the United States.

But Christmas is more.

*A child of hope in a world of grief;*

*A child of hope for our unbelief;*

*A child of hope in a world of fear;*

*A child of hope who can bring us near;*

*The source of life upon the throne.*

*Such is this child, this Babe, this son of God.*

The lyrics to "A Child of Hope" composed by Lani Smith and published by Heritage Press, describe what Christmas is all about. I wish you could hum along, but print newspapers don't have sound.

So, dear readers three: Jolly eggnog, merry mistletoe, and happy Christmas. Goodwill to all. Peace.

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