

“ Ely Echo Editorial

Censored speech isn't free

A free, uninhibited exchange of ideas is vital in any democracy.

Indeed, it's been a staple of our country throughout its long, nearly 250-year history.

And it hasn't just worked at the national level, nor purely in government.

Surely the halls of Congress or the Minnesota State Legislature, the council chambers at Ely's City Hall, and grassroots meetings held by local townships have all been better off because of rigorous debate.

Issues rise up, people discuss them, and governing bodies come to decisions that any of us are free to support or oppose.

It works that way in newspapers as well.

Readers often tell us, and we wholeheartedly agree, that letters to the editor and a lively exchange on our editorial page not only make for interesting reading, but get us to think.

And even challenge conventional wisdom or the decrees of government.

Whether it's copper-nickel mining, permit allotments in the BWCWA, the merits of tax levy proposals, the actions of law enforcement, or any of an assortment of issues, we're better off when the issues are discussed and debated freely and without limitations.

Dare we say, it's what makes America great.

The freedom to address our grievances, to speak without fear of retaliation, to offer ideas void of censorship cuts to the very heart of what we are all about.

In these times, these rights need to be embraced, not rejected.

A couple weeks back this newspaper covered and reported on a presentation made by a longtime Ely physician relative to Covid-19.

The physician, now retired, offered insight and

opinion that differed in a lot of respects to what has been espoused by many in the public health realm, as well as Ely's active health care providers.

The presentation, attended by dozens of local residents, was clearly newsworthy, and the physician has a long history in Ely, even serving a term on the local school board.

In the wake of our coverage, we heard from readers who appreciated the differing perspective and others who were clearly outraged that the event was covered at all.

Some suggested that the physician's remarks be censored or banned from the public domain.

That's more than just troubling. It's dangerous, and something we're seeing far too often over the course of the last 18 months.

When only "approved" opinion is allowed, be it in the local newspaper or a vast social media network, it impacts all of us.

Who decides what is approved or not?

What's the next issue that comes up against the censorship of Big Brother - who could take on the form of government or corporate conglomerate?

The current divide in our country over Covid-19 is obvious and clearly not one size fits all.

Approaches differ by state, by county, even by community. Ely and Babbitt are 15 miles apart, yet in one school students and staff are required to wear masks, while in another they are not.

These differences merit reporting and are certain to involve continued community debate, as they should, and just as with any of many contentious issues that have risen to the forefront over the decades.

Suppression and censorship have never been part of the solution, and that's as true today as it ever has been.

...if so, you own weaponizing government agencies against US citizens

Letter to the editor:

Dear Biden supporters:

Biden is weaponizing OSHA to penalize companies that do not toe the democrat party line on CoVID mandates. Fortune 500 companies, state governments, federal organizations, professional sports, hospital organizations, and others are already firing or suspending people for mandate deadlines at the behest of the Biden administration to force people to get CoVID vaccine shots with absolutely no consideration for 100 million people who have acquired natural immunity.

Even as President Biden shrugged his shoulders over progressives' criminal harassment and intimidation of a sitting United States senator of his own party, Biden's Justice Department was running roughshod over the First Amendment, threatening to investigate

and prosecute parents for protesting against school boards and teachers who insist on indoctrinating children with the cultural Marxism beloved by Democrats. Biden's pick for Attorney General, Merritt Garland, has shown his true colors and why Obama's selection for the Supreme Court was a draconian choice when he plans to weaponized the FBI, and ask state and local law enforcement to intimidate parents who protest the actions of leftist school boards, justified by calling ordinary citizens domestic terrorists. There is no standing up for parent's rights by the Democrat political class when former Democrat Governor and candidate Terry McAuliffe (D) said parents should have no rights and have no say about what is taught to their children in school. Gender fluidity, critical race theory, white privilege, and

political bias are just the current examples of what is being taught in school while also subjecting students to men in girl's locker rooms and biological men competing in women's sports.

Biden's Secretary of Treasury pick Janet Yellen wants the IRS to spy on ordinary citizens by forcing banks to send reports to the federal government of anyone who does any financial transactions over \$600. For what purpose? In the Obama era, the IRS was weaponized against conservatives in multiple ways.

The democrat political class was voted into office by liberal democrats, progressive democrats, democrat socialists, the far left, and extremists. Also, moderate democrats and libertarian democrats along with a cadre of fringe groups that voted in The Squad, socialist Sanders, and the likes

of the Minneapolis mayor and city council, also voted Biden and his administration into office. Are you one of those? If so, you own weaponizing government agencies against US citizens, you own the Afghan debacle and US humiliation at the hands of the Taliban, you own the border crisis, you own spiraling inflation at a new 30 year high, you own horrific increasing crime and homicides, you own the failed foreign policies, and you own the failed CoVID management efforts among many issues created by Biden and his administration lackeys. Every one of you knew Biden was a plagiarizing dimwit who had habitually made wrong decisions on virtually every subject matter in his 45-year political career, yet you voted this mental midget into office!

Mike Banovetz
Ely, MN

...For all of these experiences I give the greatest thanks

To the Editor:

As I write this I am 86 1/2 years old and without doubt in my twilight years, with all the burdens that includes. Cyn and I live in a lovely retirement apartment and both have significant health issues that sorely limit our activity. I stopped driving about two months ago which is a major factor.

Fortunately two of our kids live reasonably close by and are an infinite blessing and great help to us.

But, this is not to complain and list our woes but rather acknowledge that I have had an especially wonderful life. I write this to acknowledge my good fortune and remind myself how lucky I have been.

Here is a recap of 86 years. Not boasting - sort of rejoicing! (Some may disagree). Most of my life experiences are (like most people's) pretty much the normal. I'll just relate the special stuff that gave me joy and pride - in no particular order.

The greatest blessing occurred about 30 years after day one when Cyn, the most noble woman I have ever known, accepted my offer to share our lives together.

I have been very fortunate to have been given - not earn - an IQ high enough to qualify for membership in Mensa which I joined around age 30. That gift has opened many doors for me and made life easier and fuller. Not boasting - grateful. Ashamed to admit, however, that I never attended a single Mensa meeting.

I have spent a day as a guest on a submerged U.S.

submarine out of Pearl Harbor in an anti-sub war game exercise, under attack by a U.S. destroyer - complete with practice harmless depth charges hitting our boat.

At age 23 I qualified as aircraft commander of a Lockheed Super Constellation radar patrol plane (WV-2) in the cold war Airborne Early Warning system out of Barber's Point NAS on Oahu. Never had my own crew though.

On one mission we foolishly flew through a vicious thunderstorm at night over the North Pacific. We debated on whether we should go through it or around and decided to forge ahead because of our fuel status. Hailstones like golf balls hit the windshield and the Connie was glowing with St. Elmo's fire. Immense up-drifts and turbulence. We all had large laundry bills when we got back to Midway!

Was privileged to write columns for two different papers - the Riverside Landmark and the Ely Echo.

Also did a weekly radio commentary on station WELY for a while before my views and the station's new owners differed the bit over the tone of the content. The segment was called Just About Anything!

I had the thrill of watching my younger son catch and boat a 629# blue marlin out of Kona (matching a previous world record!).

Also was with my older boy as he caught a huge 52# Mahi Mahi, also out Kona. A monster fish.

Once flew a Twin Beech aircraft down into (and out

of!) a huge extinct volcanic crater (Haleakula) on Maui. Probably not wise but sorta fun.

Years ago Cyn and I stood about 30 or 40 feet from a glowing red river of lava pouring out of Kilauea into the ocean (on the big island.)

Scored a direct hit on a two foot circle target on a practice dive bombing run during flight training. Also trained in air-to-air gunnery. Great fun. Learned formation flying in training - great fun. Did not make the Blue Angeles though!

We had the good fortune to live and raise our family in Riverside, IL, a lovely village just outside of Chicago. The village was designed by Frederick Olmsted who designed Central Park. There are no straight streets in the town - all curved and creating little green spaces where three intersected. It's on the national registry of historic place. Also has a wide variety of various styles and age of homes. A unique village.

In late 1955 I made five arrested landings and take-offs from the USS Saipan, a WWII era light aircraft carrier long since scrapped Over the years many thousands of men (and more recently women) have experienced this. But many, many, many more have not! I would call it a stimulating experience!

Had the rare privilege in 1977 to go on a hunting Safari in Zambia. Shot, among a lot of other beasts, two in the record book - one a 49" sable antelope. Also shot a bull elephant. My son has the ivory - a bit over 50# each. It was legal and totally ethical

at the time. Some may be troubled over this - I'm not. Plus, it fed a huge number of locals.

Also had the rare privilege of seeing and hearing Cyn sing in Prince Albert Hall in London with the Chicago Symphony Chorus.

In preflight I learned celestial navigation. Actually used it (at night only!) over the North Pacific. Having used both I would judge GPS as superior.

In Chicago we had a beautiful 31' Wellcraft cruiser well outfitted for salmon fishing which we did a lot. Moored in Burnham harbor. Many good times with family and friends aboard the My Cyn.

Speaking of watercraft, a long time ago for about an hour I steered the USS Worcester, CL 144 a 17,000 ton light cruiser on a transatlantic training cruise. She was decommissioned and scrapped a long time ago. Also manned a 3"-50 anti-aircraft gun (in training, of course!)

Years ago we had a dreadful experience that turned out well. Son Joe, at age 2 1/2 developed an H. Influenza meningitis. He was dreadfully ill and in a coma for about two days. Amazingly and gloriously happily, he recovered completely with NO residual damage. We were lucky beyond words.

For all of these experiences I give the greatest thanks!

Joe Just

P.S. This is not to say there were no bad times or bad things, but they are far out-weighted by the stuff above!



Letters to the Editor

...The sanctity of one's body is a vestige of personal choice and value.

Dear Editor:

For Mr. Anderson in Bloomington...

If you're vaccinated, why do you care that there are those who won't have COVID protocol forced on them?

"It's a little 'medical mutiny'" against tyranny.

The sanctity of one's body is a vestige of personal choice and value. Likening it to sacrifice of comfort is a stretch.

"You'll be fine."

Justin W.Doering
Hutchinson, MN

...the overwhelming majority of patients hospitalized...are unvaccinated

Dear Editor:

As medical professionals, we were dismayed to read the story titled "Park says masks don't work, urges healthy eating" that recently appeared in the Echo.

Nearly 3,000 words were dedicated to Dr. Park's opinions, few of which are rooted in medicine, science or even logic. This reporting amplifies misinformation and threatens to undermine important messages from credible and trusted health care providers. Worse, it imperils those same providers and other health care workers, as well as our entire community.

We can do better. If we want to move beyond this Covid-19 pandemic, we must do better. That includes embracing preventive measures like masking, social distancing and getting vaccinated.

"Community mask wearing substantially reduces transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 in two ways," according to a February 2021 report in the Journal of the American Medical Association. It prevents Covid-positive people from exposing others by blocking "exhalation of virus-containing droplets into the air," and it protects uninfected mask-wearers by acting as a barrier to contaminated droplets. Numerous studies show a significant reduction in the transmission of Covid among people wearing masks.

Getting vaccinated is even more effective. The science is irrefutable. And that's why, as of June, 96% of practicing physicians in the U.S. had been fully vaccinated against Covid, according to the American Medical Association. And it's why 88% of almost 5,000 nurses surveyed in August by the American Nurses Association were vaccinated. It's also why the overwhelming majority of patients hospitalized with Covid-19 are unvaccinated.

Vaccines work, and they represent our best hope of putting this pandemic behind us. Our safest hope, too. mRNA vaccines, such as those from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, have been researched and in development for decades; that is why they were available so quickly. They did not come about solely due to Covid.

Dr. Park is right - most people, especially those who are healthy, will be OK following a Covid diagnosis; though it's worth noting that

about 25% of Covid patients experience long-haul symptoms like fatigue, shortness of breath or depression for months afterwards. While you might survive relatively unscathed, you could unknowingly pass the virus to someone who is more vulnerable, someone with a compromised immune system who ends up in the hospital, the ICU or on a vent.

Or worse.

You also may infect a child who is more susceptible to Covid because he or she is not yet eligible for vaccination.

Dr. Park says the pandemic is over. However, in St. Louis County, we're seeing more positive cases than we did at the same time last year. That's largely because the delta variant is so contagious, which is why it's imperative we do things to slow the spread so that Covid runs out of places to live. Wearing a mask, practicing social distancing and getting vaccinated are the best ways to do that. Are they foolproof? No, they are not. mRNA vaccines are about 70% successful in preventing infections, though we're seeing some waning immunity as time passes - hence the recommendation for booster shots from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They also are between 78-93% successful in preventing hospitalizations, depending on time lapsed from vaccination. Similarly, masking doesn't completely block droplets from traveling amongst people.

But the science shows them to be very effective, especially when done collectively.

Dr. Jon Pryor, President of Essentia Health's East Market

Dr. Brock Urie, Chief Medical Officer, Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital

Dr. Joe Bianco, Family Practice, Essentia Health-Ely Clinic

Dr. Mary Bianco, Primary Care Float Pool, Essentia Health-Ely Clinic

Dr. Nick Cooley, Family Practice, Essentia Health-Ely Clinic

Dr. Brielle Loe, Family Practice, Essentia Health-Ely Clinic

Dr. Jim Montana, Internal Medicine, Essentia Health-Ely Clinic

Dr. Joe Schwinghamer, Family Practice, Essentia Health-Ely Clinic

Dr. Jeff Wilt, Family Practice, Essentia Health-Ely Clinic

Write a letter to the editor and sign your name, phone #. Send it to: Ely Echo, 15 East Chapman St., Ely MN 55731 or email to: elyecho@aol.com.

The Echo reserves the right to edit.