

EDITORIAL

Ugly duckling

I know this isn't going to be popular. I know I'm in the minority on this subject. But I feel it has to be said.

I don't get the whole Susan Boyle thing.

Susan Boyle, as you probably know, is the English woman who has become something of an Internet sensation after her appearance on a British TV talent show, something much like "American Idol."

When she first walked onto the stage, some in the audience laughed. To be honest, she looked a little frumpy, with an ill-fitting dress, a less-than-perfect hairdo and eyebrows in desperate need of a plucking.

Of course, when she opened her mouth and began to sing, people were stunned. She has a magnificent voice, which seemed to shock most people.

The next thing you know, Susan Boyle is everywhere. A video of her on YouTube has been viewed more than 20 million times. The "Today" show dug up "exclusive" video of her singing at an event 20 years ago. Fan sites have popped up all over the Internet.

And here's where my problem comes in. The only reason anyone cares about Susan Boyle, the only reason we've even heard of Susan Boyle is because she is not considered an attractive woman. For quite a few people, there's this sense of surprise that someone who doesn't look like they just stepped off the cover of "Cosmo" could possess such a talented singing voice.

Apparently, you have to be beautiful to be able to do anything else well.

If Susan Boyle had stepped out on that stage looking like Faith Hill and then sang like she did, no one would have given her a second thought. You don't believe me? Fine. Then please name for me one other contestant from that British TV show.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm a lifelong admirer of beautiful women. I enjoy watching Sandra Bullock as much as the next red-blooded American man. In fact, I probably enjoy it more so.

I've seen all her movies, and I'd probably pay eight bucks to watch her sit in a Barcalounger for two hours.

But while I'm certain Sandra is a naturally beautiful woman helped by good genetics,

Other Voices

Mitch Clarke



she also has professional hair and makeup people, professional lighting and the ability for her photographs to be touched up using PhotoShop to hide the few imperfections she may have.

I, on the other hand, do not have professional makeup people, professional lighting or the ability to touch up my photos to hide my imperfections. PhotoShop is not that good.

If you check out the picture that accompanies this column, you'll see that I ain't exactly George Clooney, and I'm certain no one who reads this will confuse the two of us.

"Gladys, did you see what George Clooney wrote in the newspaper this morning?"

"LeRoy, I've told you a hundred times that ain't George Clooney. That's that idiot Mitch Clarke, who's always writing about his dog."

"Well, whoever he is, he's a handsome devil."

It's sad to me that our society has made physical beauty — which simply requires good genes and no discernable talent — a prerequisite to be able to do or accomplish anything else. It's sad that so many people looked at Susan Boyle and thought there's no way she can sing because of the way she looks, as if looks and talent are somehow linked.

If we take anything away from this, it's the story of the ugly duckling who grew into the beautiful swan. We should stop putting physical looks ahead of everything else. It's important to remember that plenty of people who aren't beautiful are talented singers, dancers, doctors, lawyers — and even writers.

I know this little effort each week isn't going to win a Pulitzer Prize. I do strive to make it as entertaining as possible, but frankly it wouldn't be any better if I looked like a movie star.

And I don't think George Clooney could do it any better, either.

Mitch Clarke is executive editor of The Times in Gainesville, Ga. He can be reached at mclarke@gainesvilletimes.com.

the SOVEREIGN STATE OF AFFAIRS

CAN WE RELY ON THE MEDIA TO ACCURATELY GAUAGE OBAMA'S FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE...?



David Boyd Jr. & Sr.

THE ONE THING WE CAN RELY ON IS THAT IT WILL BE REPORTED THAT IT IS THE BEST 100 DAYS OF ANY PRESIDENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE.



Was that on my list?

Recreational shoppers are easy to spot. They touch things. They pull clothes off racks and hold them up in front of them. They know what everything costs and what is in stock at most any store in a given shopping district.

These shoppers don't necessarily buy anything, but they have done their homework in the event they need to buy something. They know where to go, what selection awaits them and how much it will cost, including tax.

Then there are people like me. I am a destination shopper. I have a list of things I need to purchase. I go to stores most likely to stock the things on the list. Sometimes I get lucky, more often not.

Before I leave home, I plan a route. I know which store is my first stop. I plan so I don't have to make daring traffic maneuvers. I hate multi-lane turns and no traffic light. I drive like an old lady and did long before I became one.

At my first stop, I discover the list is missing. It is home on the coffee

All That's Fit to Print



Brenda Wall

table, where I wish my feet were (connected, of course, to the rest of me). I try to recreate the list. I get four out of eight things in a general way.

I need light bulbs. I can't remember the sizes. I can remember the light bulbs were number six on the list. I can't remember what five or seven was.

Once I've managed to make a new list, I head for the store, grab a buggy and start to work on the list. It's usually in the car. I start mentally rebuilding the second list and remember what five and seven were on the first list.

I walk by lamps and remember light bulbs. The light bulbs, of course, are not stocked near the lamps. I don't have a pencil or paper, so I put a lamp in my buggy to help me remember.

Following my new

method, I soon have a lamp to remember light bulbs, towels to remember soap and a bag of potting soil to remember a broom. When I finally find the soap and light bulbs and brooms, I have to balance them on top of the buggy while I make my way through the store to put all the other stuff back on the shelf.

I could just leave everything on the first available space I see. Shoppers do it all the time, leaving eggs they don't want in the toilet tissue aisle or a dress over in housewares. I might not put my own shoes in the closet, but I won't leave a retailer's in linens.

I'm whooped. I never make it to store number two. I can't even remember what store number two was. I do discover that I somehow managed to purchase one out of four things on the second list. I won't know about the first until I get home.

I make it home and unload my purchases, head to the coffee table and pick up my list — towels, potting soil, lamp. Hmmm.

Amen, brother, and pass the tea

Alex McRae



Alex McRae

the beverage than any member of the board of directors of Lipton or Luzianne. My tastes are simpler. I like it cold and sweet. It's the way I was raised.

Aside from diabetics and moonshiners, you'd be hard-pressed to find a Southerner who didn't grow up drinking sweet iced tea and loving it. No matter whose door you knocked on, a pitcher of sweet tea was always on hand to refresh family members or unexpected guests.

These days you're as likely to find Snapple, soda or energy drinks in the fridge, but it's good to know that at least a few Southern women still cling to the old tradition of offering tea to guests.

One of them is a 47-year-old Mississippi woman, Tammy Sexton, who is now my leading candidate for Southern Belle of the Year. What

else can you say about a woman so dedicated to Southern hospitality she offered a deputy sheriff a glass of tea right after she'd been shot in the head?

According to press reports, Tammy Sexton is not kin to Tammy Wynette, who sang "Stand by Your Man" (and is the namesake of my girl cat). In fact, when Tammy Sexton's husband, Donald Ray Sexton, started slapping her around, Tammy not only refused to stand by him, she got a court order requiring Donald Ray to stay away.

Unfortunately, he didn't. Instead, he defied the court order and, on April 12, showed up at Tammy's house, pulled a pistol and shot her in the middle of the head. Then, Donald Ray walked to the porch, where he shot and killed himself. Instead of dead, the bullet only left Tammy disoriented. But not enough to throw her completely off her game. After the shooting she didn't go to the hospital. She went to the kitchen and made some tea.

When a deputy sheriff

Pass the cusp if you will

Mumbles



Billy Fleming

A "cusp" is a point of transition, a turning point, being on the edge or the verge... and we are on one!

Jay Gardner of Competitive Strategies Group told the members of the 2012 task force Monday night that Early County is on the cusp.

"You can't stay there, you have got to move on. You have got to change!"

He made everyone in the room understand that the future of Early County hinges on change.

And it was obvious who was going to be responsible for making the needed changes uncovered by the study he presented.

It reminded me of a recent email message...

Apparently, a self important college freshman attending a recent football game took it upon himself to explain to a senior citizen sitting next to him, why it was impossible for the older generation to understand his generation.

"You grew up in a different world, actually an almost 'primitive' one" said the student, loud enough for many nearby to hear. "We young people grew up with television, jet planes, space travel and man walking on the moon. Our space probes have visited Mars; we have nuclear energy, ships, electric and hydrogen cars, cell phones and computers with light speed processing...and more."

After a brief silence, the senior citizen responded...

"You're right, son. We didn't have those things when we were young... so we invented them. Now, you arrogant little cuss, what are you doing for the next generation?"

arrived expecting to find a dead woman, Tammy greeted him at the door holding a bloody rag over the bullet wound. Tammy told him to have a seat and offered him a glass of tea. "You just don't hear of something like this," said Sheriff Mike Byrd of Jackson County, Miss. "Somebody gets shot in the head and they're dead."

But she wasn't. Tammy was rushed to a Birmingham hospital and is expected to recover fully. Dr. Patrick Pritchard, an assistant professor of surgery at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, said, "There is a space in the brain where a missile could pass without doing any major damage. Is it possible? Yes. It would be rare."

Maybe so, but Sheriff Byrd's explanation made a little more sense to those who believe in the grace of God and the power of Southern sweet tea. "There's no way she should be alive other than a miracle from God," Byrd said.

All I can say is, "Amen, brother. And pass the tea."

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W. Hoyle Fleming, Publisher Emeritus

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