

# EDITORIAL

## A nation of slobs

My grandmother used to always laugh when we went to a restaurant that had one of those signs on the door that said, "No shirt, no shoes, no service."

"One of these days," she always threatened, "I'm going to come in here without my pants."

To my knowledge, she never did it. But my grandmother was quite a character, so I wouldn't swear to it in a court of law.

To her, the message of that sign was that as long as you had on your shirt and your shoes, you could come in sans slacks and they'd still serve you a bacon double cheeseburger.

Of course, that's not really what the business intended with the sign. They were just trying to establish a little decorum and ensure that people that visit their restaurant are dressed appropriately, which is really not such a bad idea, if you think about it.

I generally agree with dress codes. We have one at the newspaper, but it's fairly lax because journalists will never make anyone's best dressed list. But I believe people need to dress appropriately for their environment.

I don't expect you to wear a coat and tie to the beach. On the other hand, you can put a little effort into what you wear to a nice restaurant. It's not really appetizing to sit across from someone wearing a stretched-out tank top and flip-flops while you're trying to choke down dinner.

On the other hand, I don't like snooty restaurants that require men to wear a sports coat in order to be served. I don't mind wearing sports coats, but it's hard to eat while you wearing one. I'll invariably brush my sleeve in the Thousand Island dressing while trying to pass the bread to one of my dinner companions.

Sadly, we've become a nation of slobs. We don't care what we wear or how we look. As long as we are comfortable, it doesn't matter to us whether we are dressed appropriately or not.

As a result of this growing epidemic of people going out in public looking like they just rolled out of bed, a lot of places are becoming stricter about their

### Other Voices

Mitch Clarke



dress codes.

But as much of a stickler as I am for dressing appropriately, some places go too far.

This brings us to United Airlines, which last week kicked a business executive out of first class on a flight to Hartford, Conn., for wearing a track suit.

Track suits were originally only worn by athletes, but later became popular with regular folks, as well. In the picture I saw, the businessman who got kicked off the United flight didn't look much like an athlete.

But no matter, the businessman probably felt it wasn't necessary to wear a coat and tie to sit on an airplane for a couple of hours.

Still, the airline has its rules, and they bumped him back to coach. In this case, I'm on the side of the businessman. Airplanes are crowded and cramped, and the bag of peanuts they give you only has about six nuts in it, so at least we ought to be comfortable.

I admit openly and without shame that I am guilty of similar behavior myself. I've been known to get up on Saturday morning, throw on a pair of sweatpants, an old T-shirt and a baseball cap to head to the grocery store.

Invariably, when I look my worst is when someone will come up to me in the store.

"Aren't you that Mitch Clarke who writes for the paper?" they'll ask.

Such is God's way of telling me I could have at least showered, shaved and put on a clean pair of jeans before going out in public.

I'm going to try to do better. So if you see a guy in a pair of sweatpants, an old T-shirt and a baseball cap at the grocery store and think, "Is that Mitch Clarke?" just relax.

It's not me. It's someone who looks like me.

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"Looks Like The Obama Cool Aid Doesn't Taste As Sweet As It Used To... At Least Not In New Jersey and Virginia."

## Jiminey cricket, I'm lucky

I happened in to Charles English's hardware store Monday morning to get a key made and he was looking after his crickets. I never knew crickets needed so much tending, which may be why all my pet crickets either died or ran away.

Of course my crickets were just plain yard crickets, not fancy fishing crickets.

Fancy fishing crickets need lights to keep them warm when the temperature dips down and fans to keep them cool when the weather warms up. Keep them happy and you get more crickets.

Crickets reproduce with ease. Give them a wad of wet paper towels and you've got your very own little cricket nursery happening. The crickets lay their eggs in the mushy paper and they hatch out into baby fancy fishing crickets.

I'm not sure how long that takes. I should look that up.

Their little cricket house has to be swept out and they'll drown in about a half inch of water. That surprised me.

It shouldn't, since

### All That's Fit to Print



Brenda Wall

crickets are used for fish bait and you wouldn't want to fish with something that was going to swim off with your hook.

Of course, it might be hard for anything to swim off once they have a hook crammed in their abdomen.

Since I once kept pet crickets, I find it hard to stab any today. In fact, I would have trouble putting a hook into most anything that doesn't try to bite me and things that try to bite, well, I'm guessing they aren't good fish bait.

Eons ago, I chose entomology as a 4-H project. I liked bugs, had a few crickets and it seemed like a good idea. Then I found out I was supposed to kill bugs and display them. Whoa, Nellie.

I made the killing jar, which sounds like something out of a World War II concentration camp. It was a jar

with a cotton ball soaked in carbon tetrachloride or something like that. I didn't have any, so I put water in a plain bottle and put a piece of adhesive tape with the chemical name written on it and used that in my display.

I figured no one would take a whiff just in case it was as deadly to people as it was supposed to be to beetles. I was right.

My collection consisted of dead bugs I found in the yard. Most had been gutted by ants, so I had a crumbly assortment of bugs, many missing legs or wings or antenna.

I didn't win anything for my amateurish and odd display or my speech which glossed over the use of the killing jar. I didn't show how it worked, which was probably smart since it didn't.

I still don't kill many bugs. The more obnoxious ones like silver fish and roaches and anything that bites or stings are fair game.

Crickets are supposed to be good luck. I guess they are, because happening up on a boxful at the hardware store gave me a column. Lucky me.

## Never to old to learn a new lesson

Michelangelo didn't sell used cars. Mozart didn't drive a dung cart. Babe Ruth didn't sell peanuts at the ball park.

The greats knew what they were destined to do.

Unfortunately, some of us spend a lifetime trying to figure it out. Count me in that crowd. It wasn't that I never had any career ambitions. My problem was backing off whenever I lost interest. And even when I thought I had found my perfect spot, I flopped again.

When I was growing up, the man who influenced me more than anyone else was my high school and college band director, Dr. Johnny Long. There was no one I admired more or who made such a big difference in young people's lives. Plus, he had a ball doing it.

Because of him, I became a band director, hoping to inspire young people the way he had inspired me.

I loved it. Being surrounded by music all day was wonderful, and the teaching was (usually) a blast. But even-

### Alex McRae



Alex McRae

ually I realized I'd never be as good as I wanted to be. Or as good as the students deserved.

I had a teacher's heart, but never managed to get the whole crowd pointed in the right direction. I gave it up.

Looking back, I should have realized early on I wasn't blessed with the teaching gene. The evidence was clear when I attempted to teach my first pet, a mutt named Pickles, how to do ... well, anything.

I guess I thought I'd be better at music. I wasn't. My teaching skills were clearly lousy.

Or at least that's what I thought. But a recent news story suggests that maybe I didn't use the right technique.

Long after I gave up teaching music, my son decided to become a

drummer. He became a great one, and loved it so much he now teaches music for a living. He's as good a music teacher as you ever saw. Just ask his students.

Or ask the crowd at his sister's wedding reception, who jumped for joy when my boy did a guest appearance with the band and delivered a rousing rendition of that wedding day classic, "Wipeout."

My son is probably so good because he never asked me for a single bit of musical advice.

Credit for my son's musical success goes to Dr. Doug Moore, who is now principal of Newnan High School, where he once taught my son to play.

Obviously, Dr. Moore knew the right technique and got the desired results. But things would doubtless have turned out differently if Dr. Moore had followed the teaching technique used by a San Antonio, Texas, man who recently made musical headlines for all the wrong reasons.

It's pretty clear that dad wasn't fond of his son's drumming. It's

## Unlikely solution, but...

### Mumbles

Billy Fleming



*If you can read this, thank a teacher. If you are reading it in English, thank a soldier.*

During the memorial service Tuesday honoring those who were needlessly slain last week at Fort Hood by a berserk fellow soldier, President Barack Obama stated, "This generation of fighting men and women is just as great as the generation before them."

He's right. But, the same can't be said about this generation in general. As the saying goes, "If the shoe fits, wear it," but the generation responsible for the future of our country has grown apathetic and lazy.

In doing so, we have allowed the morals and the principles upon which this nation was founded to be chipped away and trashed.

And due to our own folly we are on the verge of losing our great country. We've allowed an element to seize control and the power to tear down everything the generation before us fought for and worked so long and hard for.

Today being Veterans Day, our hearts and minds reaching out to honor all our veterans, I had a thought, an unlikely solution, if you will, which would go a long way toward pointing our country back in the right direction.

It involves finding that elusive fountain of youth. But, if we could find it and restore the youth and vigor to that "Greatest Generation," I don't think they would stand idly by and watch as the principals and freedoms for which they fought and gave their lives were stolen away.

even more clear that the situation wasn't new, since dad was 83 years old and his son—who still lived and drummed at home—was in his 50s when the two finally had the ultimate musical disagreement.

Maybe disagreement is too mild a word. In fact, cops used the term "aggravated assault" when they discovered that dear old dad had tried to improve his son's drumming skills by firing a bullet through the son's door during a late night practice session. Now that's a teaching technique that will get anybody's attention.

The aging drummer boy was wounded by bullet fragments. The dad was sent to jail, where poor drumming will be the least of his worries.

No one knows whether the father will be more musically tolerant when he leaves the pokey. Let's hope so.

But while this tale ended on a sour note, it left me with a smile. For years, I have wondered if I might have been the world's worst music teacher. Not anymore.

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