

Sunday's

Editorials, Columns & Letters

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Making a Difference

By Gina Kelly Ellis

Did you see the absolutely beautiful sunset yesterday? It was just an unbelievable mix of colors and light! Certainly one of the prettiest I have seen in a while. One of the things that is interesting to me about sunsets is that for the sunset to be really pretty, there has to be clouds in the sky. Last year, in our horrible drought year, there were no clouds, so there were no pretty sunsets. While we were suffering so in the drought, we prayed so desperately for clouds to bring rain. Rain did not come, yet the sun rose and set day after day and we survived. It wasn't very pretty, but we made it. The sun came up and the sun went down each day as God let us know that He was aware of where we were and He was watching over us. We don't understand why He did not send the rains when we needed them, but for those who trust God, we knew there was a reason and His ways are so much higher than our ways. No pretty sunsets, but still a God

who showed us His presence each day and showed us He was carrying us through what seemed about to break us.

There are times though, that the clouds are so thick, you can't even see the sun. So does that mean, it is not there? Of course not! Just like our Savior, the sun is always there rising and setting, even when it can't be seen. There are days when our burdens are like clouds in front of us that block our sight. We lose sight of the One who carries us and loves us. But He is always there waiting with open arms to comfort us.

Then there is the sky like we had last night. The sky had been a bit cloudy. We had awakened to a thick fog. But, last night as the sun began to set it was like God was showing off! The sky turned redder and redder and then as you looked to the west, the clouds were just drenched in color as our Savior said, "Look how much I love

you!" And that is what those pretty sunsets are all about. It is about a God who loves us so much that He chose to give us pretty. He didn't have to make anything bright and colorful for us. He could have made it all utilitarian, but instead He said, "Let's give the kids something to look forward to in the evenings. Let's give them something no one on earth can duplicate." And He blessed us with the dazzling sky that just amazes us!

The most amazing thing in all this to me is that the same God who creates the clouds and the stars and the sun and the rain and the rainbow and everything else, takes the time each day to listen to what I have to say to Him. As if I were the only one on earth, He listens to me! Next time you are amazed by the brilliance of the sky, be thankful for a Father who loves you enough to show His presence in both subtle and amazing ways. His love for YOU makes the difference!

Amazing How Important Weather Can Be
Texas Journalist...by Willis Webb

It's amazing how important tomorrow's weather is.

Mothers want to know what's likely so they can have the proper clothing ready for their children come morning and it's time to get ready for school.

Farmers and ranchers need to know about tomorrow's weather because it affects so many things they do (or can't do).

Schools like knowing tomorrow's forecast as well as long range since it dictates preparations for operations in every department in a public education system.

That's why several times a day, every day, most of us are glued to a radio or TV to get the latest weather update.

Newspapers, particularly dailies and other multiple days of publication in a week, carry fairly extensive forecasts. Radio and TV stations devote a significant segment of their news programming to weathercasts, TV complete with maps, charts and other data.

Television, of course, changed how we get the weather report.

With TV, picking the right person to do the weather became significant. It has to be

someone believable, who handles the techno-scientific aspects of our climate and who has the type of personality needed to attract viewers. Many stations use trained meteorologists.

In the blossoming of TV news and weather reporting in the 1960s-70s, there wasn't an abundance of specifically trained individuals to do that. There was some quick-study training, but a good on-screen persona was as important then as it is today.

My all-time favorite TV weatherman was from those early times. Sid Lasher was Houston's original friendly, chatty rain-or-shine man.

While, it was easy to like Sid in his on-air job, it was even easier to care about such a nice, warm, considerate human being in person. He was immensely popular and in demand for public appearances at civic and charitable events.

And, Sid couldn't say no. He worked a grueling schedule.

He was at the station before noon each day because, in those days, many weathermen performed a number of other functions, usually "hosting" some time slots with movies or other canned entertainment as well as being responsible for

some technical control. Then, there were the 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. weather reports to prepare as well as bulletins as needed.

Sid averaged a half-dozen or so public appearances a week on top of a 50-60 hour work schedule.

As an officer in a few civic and social organizations within my community as well as publishing a weekly newspaper, I often had need for not only programs for those groups, but also a "celebrity" to be the host or master of ceremonies. I asked Sid to host perhaps 4-5 events a year. He rarely declined...my group or any other public service organization.

Then, one day came word that Sid had suffered a mild heart attack. He would be away from his television job for at least a couple of months.

He was missed both on TV and in his many stints as headliner for public service/fundraising events.

When Sid returned, the clamor for his presence at such functions did not let up. But, under doctor's orders, the affable TV weatherman had to say a word he'd had trouble with before — no.

Those of us who'd used him

to draw crowds to our fundraisers and functions, had to find other ways to fill the house.

However, there weren't many with his drawing power available without some notice and some preparation. Of course, Sid worked for free, for the good will it created for his employer, KHOU-TV, the Houston CBS affiliate. And, people with any drawing power for such events were beginning to command fees.

Within weeks after his return to the air, one night in the 10 p.m. news opener, anchor Ron Stone came on screen and announced that Sid had suffered another heart attack and died just minutes before air time. KHOU's news team somehow managed through tear-blurred eyes to deliver the news that evening.

The original friendly, chatty TV weatherman went to meet his maker. It was a sad day for me, and I'm quite sure, for anyone who was drawn to his weathercast.

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Paper 'n Ink:

first date...next date...

By Lynn Brisendine

Fifty years of 007.

I remember Dr. No, the first of 23 movies, of the super spy James Bond, who was also licensed to kill.

It was my first date. Her name was Martha. We were both sophomores in high school. I was nervous, I was wondering who was watching us make our way into the Star Theater. The date went okay, I think it was our first and last. But, it wasn't the last time I had a date to a James Bond movie.

I can't remember all that much about Martha, other than she was a nice girl. I sat in the dark theater mesmerized with the action on the screen. In 1962, the special effects were amazing. In today's movie unreality, those scenes of nuclear reactors, computers, and of course the steel hands of Dr. No covered with black plastic are probably laughable in these days of Harry Potter or Star Trek or any number of other movies filled with special effects.

The music, too, was thrilling at the time. The large speakers in the Star, perhaps two, maybe even four, I'm not sure, were turned up and the theme song blared. In today's theaters, the auditoriums are fitted with multiple speakers, many dedicated to tracks and specialties in moving sound in all directions.

I can remember the second movie as well. From Russia with Love had the famous train battle where Bond fought the seemingly invincible and totally brain washed villain. It was hard to hand and the bad guy had a special wrist watch with a pull out strand of wire meant to strangle his victim. This movie came out in 1963 and I can't even remember my date at this one. But the movie resonates.

I was sitting on pins and needles in the second film. In the book of the same title, Ian Fleming, its author, had killed Bond off. He had written several stories by this time and he was tired of the character, so like one of his earlier counterparts Conan Doyle who killed off his famous Sherlock Holmes, he did away with James Bond.

In both cases, separated by more than a half century, the reading public was outraged and demanded that they bring back the heros, and both contrived special stories to do just that. Holmes returned from the fatal scene as did Bond so many years later.

By 1964 the Bond movies took another leap with Goldfinger. That one, seen again at the now gone Star, was a memorable movie with its opening song. I continue to think this was the premier Bond movie of all that I have seen. That opening song set the tone for a great movie. I believe the Star had some new speakers, and the movie had new techniques, plus a great story featuring a couple of super villains, Odd Job is still one of the best Bond foes of all time.

Later on in Diamonds are Forever, the Bond character, played by the original, and I am convinced the best, Sean Connery meets another memorable foe Blofeld who constantly strokes his pet cat, also made out to be a pretty evil creature. This one sees Bond travel into space and back to foil the diabolical plot using a diamond studded space satellite to destroy the world's capital cities.

It was interesting for a couple of other characters in the film, one a supposed Texas millionaire, played well by Jimmy Dean. This one also had two specialized female gymnasts who come close to doing in Bond. But he defeats them, recovers the kidnapped millionaire and stops the rouge satellite from destroying Washington, D.C., London, Paris, Rome, Moscow and so many other places being threatened to pay huge money to be spared.

Of course some other features in the movies made them a little more special. The mysterious Q would arm Bond with the latest spy gadgets. All of which come in handy. I still remember the ejection seat which whooshed a bad guy away with a strange look on his face as the rockets fire. Generally, Bond will destroy a great looking automobile in one spectacular chase after another.

I can recall a few others with new faces playing the roles of not only the ill fated villains but the hero James Bond. None seem to have made impressions on my mind. The new guy, Daniel Craig, is a good one.

All of this spy mania was created when the first book Dr. No appeared in 1953. So this phenomenon has really been ongoing for 60 years. Fleming wrote around a dozen of the stories. Still, all these years later, the gadgets get fancier and stunts more fantastic with the music blaring and the fun ongoing.

Fifty years of fun, that's what James Bond has really been.

I think I'll take a special date to the next one. Someone who will definitely be remembered after the show is over.

Letter to the Editor

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Good Debt versus Bad Debt Rules Changed?

By Jason Alderman

Before the Great Recession of 2008 overturned many long-held financial beliefs, it wasn't uncommon for people to differentiate between "good debt" and "bad debt." The thinking was that certain kinds of debt were worth taking on because you come out ahead in the long run. Buying a home and financing a college education were two notable examples.

But when home values plummeted and the cost of a bachelor's degree soared into five or six digits, those once-safe investments in your future suddenly seemed risky or unattainable.

Now's a good time to step back and examine the concept of good debt vs. bad debt and why, in certain cases, acquiring debt may still make sense — provided you plan carefully and don't exceed what you can reasonably expect to repay.

This simple distinction still applies: Taking on so-called good debt can help boost your credit rating or allow you to buy something that will increase in value over time, whereas bad debt often fuels the purchase of items that are disposable, unnecessary or rapidly depreciable.

One of the best ways to build strong credit history is to show lenders you can pay off

debt responsibly. You're more apt to qualify for a mortgage, car loan, or other large debt if you've demonstrated sound repayment behavior. Just remember: Carrying multiple loans or high-limit credit cards could harm your rating, since lenders might worry you're taking on more debt than you can repay.

Student loans. The average college graduate earns \$47,422 a year, compared to \$26,349 for high school graduates — a difference of \$21,073. Using simple math, some calculate the difference in total earnings over a 40-year work life as more than \$800,000.

However, such estimates

don't factor in the crippling student loan debt many graduates face or their inability to find work in a chosen field during difficult times. But still, the unemployment rate among college grads is roughly half that of high school grads — 4.5 percent vs. 8.4 percent. College is still a worthwhile investment for many people if they don't go overboard on loans and choose a degree with good earnings and employment potential.

Mortgages. Before the real estate crash, homeownership was considered good debt because historically, when someone finally paid off their mortgage, their home was usu-

ally worth much more than the purchase price. For many, this probably still will be true, unless they bought during the market upswing or are forced to sell before prices can recover. After all, mortgage interest rates are historically low and interest and mortgage points are still tax-deductible.

Just don't buy more house than you can afford. Factor in expenses like property tax, primary mortgage insurance, homeowners dues, utilities and repairs — and if you get an adjustable rate mortgage, calculate how high rates could climb.

Bad debt. What qualifies

as bad debt hasn't changed since the recession, but budget-conscious consumers are paying more attention now. Meals out, excessive vacations, and unnecessary clothing or electronics — wants vs. needs — all qualify if you're spending beyond your means. Basically, if you can't pay the bill in full within a month or two, reexamine whether it's a worthwhile expense, particularly if you don't have at least six to nine month's pay stashed in an emergency fund or you're trying to save for a car or home.

Jason Alderman directs Visa's financial education programs. To Follow Jason Alderman on Twitter: www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney.