

Wednesday's

Editorials, Columns & Letters

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Paper 'n Ink... a gain and a loss...

by Lynn Brisendine

It has been reported that Tommy Tuberville looked into Texas Tech Athletic Director Kirby Hocutt's eyes Friday morning and told him he was committed to Texas Tech.

The next day, Saturday, he accepted the Head Football Coaching job at Cincinnati.

Some of the hype that was immediately streamed in a multitude of formats said Tuberville wanted to see Lubbock in his rearview mirror. West Texas was just not his cup of tea.

It's a shame. Some of what makes West Texas a great place is its people who are bound by their word. Apparently, Tuberville had not learned that important trait, that of being capable of keeping a promise.

Suddenly, we are told, good ol' Tommy never really fit in. And some telling moments in this last season showed a coach who was under a lot of pressure. Remember his swipe at an assistant coach, which saw headphones fly and brought about a lame excuse, you know, the heat of the battle and all of that...

Linda and I took the weekend to use a birthday gift from our kids, a two night stay in Santa Fe. We had fun making the rounds of the many art galleries and enjoyed the time in a warm and dry place which is usually cold and snowy at this time of year.

My phone beeped a text message and a friend from down-state typed in "bring back the Pirate." We were taking a break in a restaurant with televisions turned to the Army vs. Navy game. But nothing was said about ongoing sports news. Still, when I saw this text I knew ol' Tommy was gone.

I tapped in a Google app on my phone and brought up a Tech sports site. And it told the tale. Sure enough, Tubs and Tech were history.

Over the next couple of hours, my texting friend, a dyed-in-the-wool TCU alum and fan, had some fun as several short messages flew my way. It was funny.

Reading the few items we could that evening told of Tuberville's apparent escape from a place he was never comfortable in or felt at home over his three season tenure.

The coach was under a lot of pressure. He was implicated in some kind of Ponzi scheme in one of his former haunts. Most stories about this event portrayed Tuberville as an unwitting investor. Still, the hint of impropriety hung around to some extent.

Then his wife was involved in a bad car wreck and this had to take a toll on his comfort level.

Added to all of that was the bitterness he faced when he first moved to Lubbock. A lot of fans were unhappy about the way his predecessor Mike Leach had been fired and basically run out of town.

A lot can be said about that situation, a happening that can still draw heated debate. Leach, though, had never actually fit in either. He made

attempts nearly every off season to find another coaching position. It seems like every January or February over his tenure saw headlines of him visiting one place or another, and every time a head coaching position opened up Leach's name was thrown about.

With every job interview, the media types in Lubbock questioned Leach's loyalty.

The Pirate, a nickname which gave Leach national attention, won a lot of fans. But when we think about it and look back at his tenure at Tech, he never really fit into West Texas. You never saw him appear at a Tech event. He seemed to be uninterested in participating in any type of public relations for the school.

This after he followed one of the best people I have ever seen when it came to promoting his employer. Spike Dykes could entertain, and did all across the area. He was a West Texan and he thrived on his ability to schmooze with fans in a multitude of events. Tuberville was often seen attending public relations events in Lubbock, but to my knowledge not many other towns on the South Plains.

Comparing records is interesting as Dykes coached the Raiders to 82 victories while suffering 67 defeats over 14 years. Leach, who coached the team for 11 years, had 84 victories and saw his team fall 43 times.

Tommy Tuberville completed his head coaching tenure at Texas Tech with a 20-17 overall record and 9-17 mark in Big 12 play following the 2012 season.

All of that, however, paled in most Tech football fans' eyes. In three attempts, Tuberville's charges never beat Texas.

Still, only a few stories were written telling of Tuberville toying with going elsewhere, until he did.

I don't have anything against Tuberville as a coach. He took over a team which was designed to be 'basketball on grass,' a team built to score, usually through the air while defense was just an afterthought. Who needed a defense if you could just outscore your opponent?

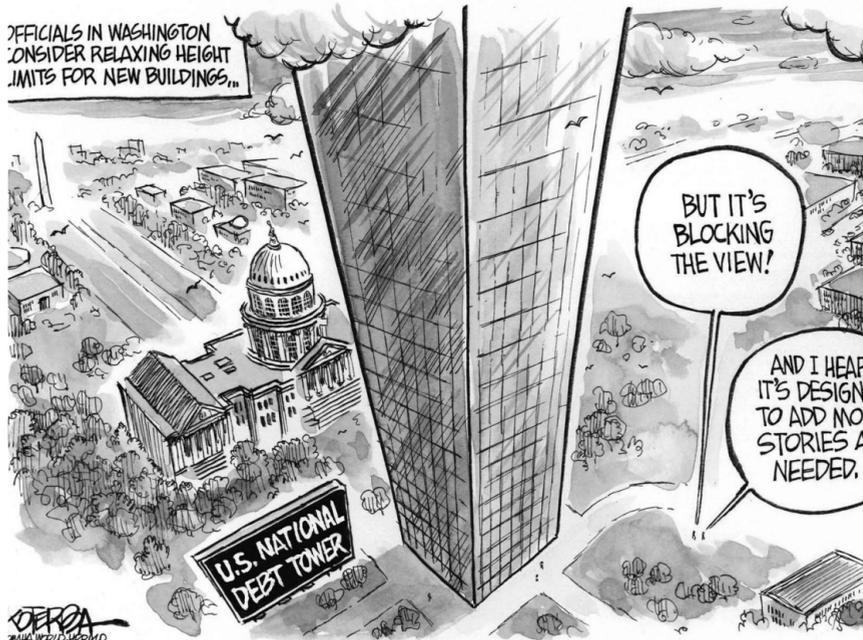
The rebuilding problem worked the first couple of years, and a bowl game this year made things a little better, but Tuberville could see the wave of the future and took the first out that came along.

I suppose it was the knowledge that he had broken a pledge, he failed to keep his word, and that disturbed me. After all, we West Texans are known for keeping to what we say we will do.

Thinking a little more about it though, I'm pretty sure that being a man of your word is just as important in say eastern Florida, northern Alaska, or even southern Ohio.

Cincinnati, your loss is our gain... wait a minute, that didn't come out exactly right, did it?

Yep, on a second thought, it's just exactly what I meant.



Thinking in Type:

By Brian Brisendine

I came across a story over the weekend about Christmas memories and the holidays and how our interaction with friends and family during the busy season actually affect the brain and mold who we are as individuals.

The writer referenced scientific research that shows holiday-related memories hold more significance in a person's mind than others created during the remainder of the year.

He wrote about witnessing young love firsthand on Christmas Eve last year as he watched a couple agree to spend the rest of their lives together.

The young man, according to the author, administered an impressive plan to pop the question and it was a neat story I'm sure everyone present will never forget.

The story got me to thinking about my own proposal several years ago.

My plan, too, will not soon be forgotten by those who were in the room when I popped the question.

Partly, because my loving, caring family will never let me live it down, but mostly because I never actually popped the question.

Like the gentleman in the tale, I also chose Christmas Eve for the all-important proposal, but I wasn't quite as smooth.

When I finally had the guts to admit to myself what I already knew -- she's the one -- the process began.

I'm big on surprises, so I had to figure out how to make the event happen without her knowledge. Not an easy task, where the missus is concerned.

She knows me better than I know me and can always tell when I'm up to something.

We were in college in Canyon at the time, but I knew the jewelry store where I'd find the perfect rock was in my hometown.

So I hightailed it to Brownfield on a Monday, when she was busy with school and student-teaching.

I was here and back again

without her ever catching on.

While here, I went to Bayless Jewelers -- parents in tow for moral support (Dad) and fashion advice (Mom), but unfortunately, not a loan (Dad, again).

I picked out the ring I knew she had to have. The ring that, by some cosmic force, was made just for her.

I put a down payment on that perfect ring and made a mental note to sell a kidney to settle the balance.

The next part of my scheme was to convince her that she was getting what every girl wants for Christmas -- golf clubs.

A tall, skinny box was put on display under the tree to foster the deception.

So the big day finally arrived -- Christmas Eve. It was one of the longest days of my life.

I fidgeted and glanced at the clock every half nanosecond, starting to believe that time had frozen.

Eventually all the family trickled in and the presents were handed out and opened.

My special someone acted enthused as she opened her new golf bag. When all the presents had been opened and viewed, one more surfaced -- a small round box tied with gold ribbon.

This is when I started my first out-of-body experience. I was watching my cute, sexy, cool girlfriend open a box that contained the rest of my life

inside.

My heart started beating so hard my earlobes were throbbing. The only sound I could hear was my own pulse.

She removed the lid to find a pretty little porcelain box with an angel on top. I heard someone (I still don't know who) ask if there was anything in it.

Then she opened it and froze. Her lips parted with a huge smile and her eyes filled with tears.

Now, I had intended to wax poetic about how my life wouldn't be complete without her.

What came out was exactly this: "So... You wanna?"

Come on now, don't those words just roll off your tongue? Don't they just ooze romance?

Well, they didn't that day either.

I guess it all worked out though. Everybody hugged her and rolled their eyes at me.

Come to think of it, that still happens every time we're all together.

Anyway, a lot of time and a lot of miles have passed since that first of many marital flubs on my behalf, but thirteen years later, when it's time to ask my sweetie if she'll still be mine, I just lean in and whisper in her ear those all-important, three little words.

"So... You wanna?"

State Capital Highlights

Compiled by Ed Sterling, Texas Press Association



Lawmaker asks to use rainy day fund for drought needs..

AUSTIN — Texas should spend some of its "rainy day fund" on water issues, state Sen. Bob Deuell, R-Greenville, suggested in a letter to Gov. Rick Perry last week.

Deuell pointed to U.S. Drought Monitor data that says 94 percent of Texas is classified as abnormally dry, adding that the state climatologist called the months of October and November the driest in Texas history.

In his Dec. 6 letter, Deuell asked for the State Water Plan to be funded. He did not mention a dollar amount, but noted the existence of a "growing consensus that action needs to be taken now to ensure the future water needs of our state."

The state's economic stimulus fund — widely referred to as the rainy day fund — totals somewhere between \$8 billion and \$10 billion. The governor has called the rainy day fund "critical to our ability to respond to and recover from disasters and emergencies, whether they're natural or man-made."

The State Water Plan, written by the Texas Water Development Board, is supposed to be a blueprint to secure Texas' water needs 50 years into the future. But to finance projects that conserve, capture, channel and move water supplies, it takes money that the Legislature has been reluctant to appropriate and spend and last session was averse to selling general obligation bonds as a way to fund the water plan.

Texas' water planning process is based on a bottom-up, consensus-driven approach that integrates the efforts of 16 Regional Water Planning Groups made up of members representing agriculture, industry, environment, public, municipalities, business, water districts, river authorities, water utilities, counties and power

generation.

As referenced above, exceptional drought continues to grip Texas.

Gov. Perry on Nov. 30 renewed the July 5, 2011, drought disaster proclamation for another 30 days for 180 of Texas' 254 counties.

The proclamation directs that all necessary measures, as expressed in state law, both public and private, be implemented to meet the threat prolonged drought poses to public health, property and the economy.

Regents say yes to med school

State Rep. Eddie Lucio III, D-San Benito, on Dec. 6 announced the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System passed a measure that paves a path to create a medical school in the Rio Grande Valley.

While the board of regents passed the measure, the Texas Legislature, which convenes Jan. 8, must give approval for the progress to continue.

The idea is to merge UT Brownsville and UT Pan American in Edinburg into one new UT system that will house the new medical school. Regents also approved the \$100 million over the next 10 years needed to accelerate the transitioning of the Regional Academic Health Center in Harlingen to a free-standing school of medicine.

"This is a very important issue, which is very dear to my community. ... The Rio Grande Valley, as well as the rest of the State, will greatly benefit from the creation of a new medical school in South Texas," Lucio commented. "Moving forward on this will be one of our top priorities this session."

Rail commissioner resigns

Buddy Garcia, one of three members of the Texas Railroad Commission, resigned effective Dec. 7.

A former member of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Garcia was appointed to the commission -- the state agency that regulates the oil and gas industries -- by Gov. Perry on April 12, 2012.

Stepping into the spot vacated by Garcia is newly elected Railroad Commissioner Christi Craddock.

DPS: Program is effective
Interdiction for the Protection of Children, a program administered by the Texas Department of Public Safety is working, the agency reported on Dec. 6.

The program trains state troopers and officers to "identify, recognize, intervene and remove endangered children without obvious signs of abuse being present."

As a result of this training, DPS said, officers have made 20 criminal arrests and recovered 62 missing or exploited children since 2010. Some 2,600 officers in Texas and approximately 1,900 officers nationally and internationally outside of Texas have received the training.

Unemployment rate is down

Total nonfarm payroll employment nationwide increased by 146,000 jobs in November, the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics reported on Dec. 7. The increase in jobs nationally reduced the unemployment rate to 7.7 percent, the lowest in four years.

Texas Workforce Commission November employment statistics are expected to be released soon.

Fort Hood has big impact
Fort Hood, the U.S. Army post in the central Texas counties of Bell and Coryell, had an economic impact of \$25.3 billion in the state during fiscal 2011, according to a new analysis released last week by state Comptroller Susan Combs.

