

# Sunday's

# Editorials, Columns & Letters

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"JUST BECAUSE ONE GUY DOES SOMETHING CRAZY, WHAT MAKES YOU THINK IT'S OK TO CHANGE THE RULES FOR EVERYONE?"

## Making a Difference

By Gina Kelly Ellis

Have you ever sat and looked at a blank screen before you and tried to think up something to write? Those who have a weekly column know this feeling. You have all this space before you just waiting to be filled with not just words, but words that will motivate, inspire, change, enlighten, and make a difference in the reader's life. Okay, maybe the words you read don't always do all that. But, nevertheless, sometimes it is a bit overwhelming to sit and try to listen to what God is saying and get it down on paper. Sometimes, it is really difficult to get out of the way and let God write.

God has lots of things He wants to say to us. However, we have to be ready to listen to what He has for us, even if it is difficult. There is a verse in the Bible that talks about people just wanting to hear

messages that don't hurt their feelings in any way. In 2 Timothy 4:3, Paul writes, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires." What Paul is saying is that much of the time, what we want to hear is a message that feels good. A message that makes us feel okay about whatever it is we are doing. That is not always God's message. Sometimes God's message makes our hearts hurt. And it should. We, as Christians, should have our hearts broken at times by God's Word. We should not want to just have our ears tickled. We should want to have our hearts broken by what breaks God's heart. As you go through life, there are many times that the messages you get

from people are not at all what you want to hear. It is the same with God. Sometimes His message is uncomfortable and difficult to hear. But, maybe these messages are the ones we most need to hear. We are living in a world, a country, a town that is desperate for a message of God and His love for us all. Are we are too busy with the "busyness" of our lives to take the time to share God's Word with the lost world around us?

Get your Bible out and look through it at the messages that were very difficult for the people to hear at that time and difficult for us even now. Then ask God what it is He wants you to hear in these messages and ask God to, as the words of the song say, "Break my heart for what breaks Yours." You have the opportunity to make a difference if you will just listen to His message. And then obey. It will make a difference.

## Tastes: From Sugar Can to Coconut to...

Texas Journalist...by Willis Webb

Okay. I admit it. I have a severe sweet tooth.

Growing up, my super-cook mother filled her four boys' little growing bodies with all kinds of good things to eat. The meals she cooked were large and varied, but she always had that "reward" that came after you consumed sufficient portions of the healthy food on the table. That reward was something sweet.

While I never saw my mother eat a large amount of sweets, she cooked plenty of them and on a normal day you were just about guaranteed to find at least two desserts on her dining table (more often than not it would be a cake and a pie).

As for snacks, I suppose the Webb menu ran the range of normalcy for most households, but often there were unusual treats such as a piece of sugar cane stalk. In my early years, we lived on a farm-ranch and so some things were more readily available than if we'd been city folks. When I was eight, we

moved into "town," Teague (population 3,300).

The four Webb boys might be seen walking around with said sugar cane in hand as we chewed on it to get the sweet juice. I admit the idea's a bit repugnant now after going through sequences of a skinny-150-pound- young-adult to a 275-pound-porker then back to a more reasonable 190-pound-mature-adult.

An occasional special treat involved her buying a coconut. First, Mother would puncture the "eyes" of the coconut and drain the "milk" (juice) from it and we'd get a couple of swallows of that before she got the hard shell broken up and the "meat" excited so we could eat it.

When we reached school age, Mother was always seeking ways to keep us gaining a little weight (or at least not losing), which meant dessert IF we ate a reasonable meal. She packed school lunches that contained those marvelous candy bars by Peter Paul.

"Willis, you get an Almond Joy since you like almonds, coconut and chocolate and Kerry (Bro. #2), you like dark chocolate and coconut, so a Mounds goes in your lunch," she'd explain.

"Aw, gee, Mother, do we hafta?"

Later, she decided that maybe the school cafeteria ladies could cook reasonably well (which meant just barely to her standards but no match). So, we occasionally sampled the cafeteria food. However, living just four blocks from the schools, walking home for lunch was no big deal except for the socialization with school pals. Sometimes that was a toss-up, but often Mother's menu won out.

After school, our house was a regular gathering place for boys. Mother didn't mind since it meant she knew where we were most of the time. A lot of boys loved coming there if for no other reason than Mother's cookie jars. That's right, plural. Normally, one would con-

tain her outstanding "teacakes" (vanilla cookies about three-and-a-half to four inches in diameter). A second jar would hold her world famous fudge, which was to die for. Often, I hid it because I didn't like sharing that fudge. Vanilla cookies, yeah, but not Mother's fudge. You'd better be a pretty good buddy for me to tip you off to the chocolate delight. If we were real lucky, there might be a third jar with a different batch of cookies.

Now, you're beginning to get the drift of why I pretty regularly fight the Battle of the Bulge.

Life Partner manages to monitor our caloric intake, particularly desserts, so it's not as difficult as it once was to watch the waistline.

Mom's gone now, last May at age 95.

But, LP still has to keep an eye on me. If I find a fudge close to Mom's it might mean a new wardrobe.

Willis Webb is a retired community newspaper editor-publisher of more than 50 years experience. He can be reached by email at wwebb1937@att.net.

## Paper 'n Ink:

Old questions...new deceptions

By Lynn Brisendine

"Say it ain't so, Joe." It is a statement made nearly a century ago concerning athletes and their transgressions. The young baseball fan was heard to make the comment concerning Shoeless Joe Jackson's being expelled from professional baseball.

Jackson hadn't been taking steroids, at least not that anyone was aware of, but he was implicated in a gambling scandal which saw his baseball career terminated, and his name forever associated with cheating to win an illegal payoff.

Today's sports world has been shaken, not just the last week, but over the last month due to premium athletes cheating by doping.

Well, another story which doesn't include dope, unless it is a term given to a player whose actions over the last few months are showing him to be a dope.

The main story, or it at least it was in the first of last week concerned a man who used dope to excel. It was supplanted by the one who proved to be a dope.

Anyway, all of the talk mostly has been about Lance Armstrong and his confession on a talk show. In case you have been unable to see or hear a news cast of late, Armstrong has been under the bright lights of suspicion for years concerning his usage of banned substances during his epic cycling career.

He, over those years, has adamantly denied any use taking illicit drugs, or doing illegal procedures to enhance his ability to ride a bicycle at top speed for hundreds of miles, some almost straight up the sides of mountains.

I could go on for this entire article rehashing a story which has been ongoing for far too long.

Suffice it to say Armstrong is a confirmed and confessed liar, cheater, bully and not a nice guy to boot.

His use of artificial strength is nothing new in the sporting world. It is interesting that just a week ago the big story was about this year's crop of candidates for the Baseball Hall of Fame. The list of eligible candidates held several names of ball players who have not only been tainted by gossip, but for the most part proven to have used steroids in their careers. In simpler terms, as did Armstrong, they cheated, and lied, and were caught.

The sport's writers who vote on a selected group of candidates each year opted to vote no and not a single former "great" player on the list made it into the Hall. I thought that Craig Biggio, the former infielder for the Houston Astros, and a great baseball player who hasn't been implicated in the doping scandal, should have received the high honor. The remainder on the list: Barry Bonds, Roger Clemmons, and Mark McGuire, should never be included in the place of honor.

Not only should they be excluded from the HOF, I think their records listed in many baseball books with asterisks, should be expunged and considered void.

Tough, huh, well, they cheated and then lied about it. They put substances in their bodies to give them the extra to be incredible. The sad thing about most of this is they were pretty darn good without the artificial help. Still, millions of dollars were at stake and the desire to continue to compete on the highest level saw them shoot up and bulk up and speed up and continue being super men.

All of these subterfuges have hit the headlines again bringing up the drama and distaste of stories unwelcome.

And this brings up the dope in the headlines of late. "Manti Te'o and Notre Dame announced Wednesday that the linebacker was a victim of a hoax and that the girlfriend he thought had died in ..." and the story will not abate.

It is a strange tale of a young man, a football star in every sense of the title, being involved in a confusing mess. He is either a part of the extensive fraudulent scheme or the dupe. While I have been otherwise occupied and haven't given this story my full attention it confuses me as to just what anyone involved with a make believe girl friend stood to gain from such a convoluted and long running scam.

Whatever, and at this writing it doesn't appear he was entirely without blame in the emotional trauma he embroiled too many team mates and fans over the death of an imaginary girl friend. He will have this incident hanging around his neck like the proverbial albatross of the Ancient Mariner...

All in all, it appears that super men, in many cases, aren't.

## Letter to the Editor

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## Keeping Funeral Costs Affordable... A List of Tips

By Jason Alderman

Anyone who's put a loved one to rest knows that death is not cheap. According to the National Funeral Directors Association, the average adult funeral cost \$6,560 in 2009 (their most current data). That doesn't include such common add-ons as a cemetery plot, headstone, flowers, obituaries and limousine, which can add thousands to the bill.

Because death is a frequently avoided topic, many people aren't armed with information about the many variables – and costs – involved in planning a funeral. Thus, just when survivors are grieving and most vulnerable, they're bombarded

by decisions that must be made quickly, often without even knowing what their loved one would have wanted.

The key message for the living is to decide on preferred funeral arrangements ahead of time and to convey those wishes to your family – ideally in your will.

Another important lesson: Know your legal rights and what funeral-related goods and services cost so you – or your survivors – don't feel pressured into buying things you don't want or need. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) oversees "The Funeral Rule," which regulates how funeral providers must deal with consumers. Among its

provisions:

- Upon request, funeral homes must provide an itemized price list of all their goods and services, whether you call (even anonymously) or visit in person.

- You have the right to choose among their offerings (with certain state-mandated exceptions) and are not required to purchase package deals containing unwanted items.

- Prior to purchasing a casket or outer burial container from a funeral home, they must share descriptions and prices before showing you stock on hand.

- Providers that offer cremations must make alternative containers (besides caskets) available.

Note: The Funeral Rule does not apply to third-party sellers such as casket and monument dealers, or to cemeteries that lack an on-site funeral home.

If your beliefs don't require following specific funeral protocols, here are a few ways to reduce costs while still honoring the deceased and their survivors:

- Veterans, immediate family members, members of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service and certain civilians who've provided military-related service may be entitled to burial at a national cemetery with a grave marker. Burial is free, but families are responsible for funeral home

expenses and transportation to the cemetery.

- A \$255 lump-sum death benefit is available to surviving spouses or minor children of eligible workers who paid into Social Security.

- For many, cremation is a viable, less expensive option to burial. If you plan to hold a viewing first before the cremation, ask whether you can rent an attractive casket for the ceremony.

- Some families prefer not to hold a public viewing. For them, "direct cremation" or "immediate burial" may make sense. Because the body is promptly cremated or interred, embalming and cosmetology services are not necessary, which saves

hundreds of dollars. Also, with direct cremation you can opt for an unfinished wood coffin or heavy cardboard enclosure for the journey to the crematorium.

- You can purchase a casket or cremation urn from a source other than your funeral home. The funeral home cannot assess handling fees or require you to be there to take delivery.

The death of a loved one is always upsetting, but you may be able to ease your family's emotional and financial burdens by planning ahead.

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