

Sunday's

Editorials, Columns & Letters

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Paper 'n Ink:

Late changes...

by Lynn Brisendine

I'm in the generation that grew up along with television. I depend on this appliance to keep up with so much. In today's world, we can watch news take place before our eyes. And this can be done 24 hours a day, seven days a week from big cities to the remotest parts of the earth.

So many of us sat on couches, breathlessly watching as Neal Armstrong stepped on the Moon.

We marveled at the ability to watch Austrian downhill-skiing star Franz Klammer win the gold in the Winter Olympics. He flew down the marked trail, at times seeming out of control, but he made it to the finish line. It was a thrilling performance and it happened in our living rooms.

Within the last two decades, most of us watched as some riveting happenings took place, live, in color and, too many times, the sights and sounds provided were hard to watch.

Live coverage had all that watched seeing the tanks attack the Waco compound of a religious nut. Some government agents were seen taking fire and the camera would pan out to show the fire destroying the cult's compound.

The Oklahoma City bombing of the federal building saw television cameras focus in on the smoking ruins of a multi-story building. We were told later that this killing of innocents was in retribution for the incident two years prior in Waco. It was an American terrorist, which made it even harder to comprehend.

Too soon we witnessed another terrible event transpire in front of our faces as the Twin Towers fell to terrorists. This time it was foreign zealots who carried out the suicide missions that destroyed the huge buildings and took the lives of nearly 3,000 people, whose only transgression had been that they showed up for work. Of course that was the 9/11 attack of 2001.

Many of us can recall so many things we have witnessed due to the flickering pictures shot across space.

And thankfully, most of what we have been allowed to watch has been enjoyable. Among some of the good memories are the late night talk show hosts who have offered comedy at the end of tough days, allowing us to laugh a little before sleeping.

Some of these guys have been legendary in their ability to entertain. Johnny Carson comes quickly to mind. He was a natural and, while his monologues were funny, it was his wit and banter all through the show that added to his fame.

When he retired, a battle raged, off camera, for his coveted time slot. David Letterman was the late-night night host and he along with a lot of others thought he was a shoe-in for the job.

It didn't happen. Another stand-up comedian took over and for many years held sway, and continued to boost the ratings. This action saw Letterman bolt to another network. The rivalry has continued for all of these years.

In the mid 2000s, Leno was given a different format and time slot and Conan O'Brien took over the Tonight Show. Ratings plunged. Conan's humor was geared to the younger generation. My son thinks he is the funniest guy going. I don't. I just don't get his humor.

When all of this went down, and when I actually took the time to watch the late night stuff, I began watching Letterman, and I continue to think his brand of comedy is more to my liking.

Now the big story breaking about late night television is that Leno will soon be gone. Not only that, but the show will leave Los Angeles and return to New York City after a 40 year time span.

A news article found on the Zite site had this... "Jimmy Fallon is on track to replace Jay Leno as host of The Tonight Show on NBC in 2014, according to unnamed sources in The New York Times and The Hollywood Reporter.

"Fallon, currently host of NBC's Late Night, will likely move The Tonight Show back to the network's 30 Rockefeller Plaza headquarters in New York City, according to The Times. Tonight started there with Steve Allen as host in 1954. The show moved to California in 1972 with host Johnny Carson."

Things change. I know that a lot of things going on these tense days take precedence over what seems so trivial. But, think about it a minute, many of us have grown up watching these guys, laughing at their inanity, taking in their attempts at commentary which all too often strikes a chord of common sense.

I really haven't seen that much of Fallon. Several other comedians ply the trade, and I am also unfamiliar with their styles. I have enjoyed Leno at times and watch the changes occur in my living room.

Where Our Money Goes... A Former Congressman Issues His Opinion

By Lee H. Hamilton

Over the last few weeks, as the deadline for the congressionally mandated budget cuts known as the "sequester" came and went, we got a taste of how difficult cutting federal spending actually turns out to be. The news is disconcerting: thousands fewer food safety inspections, some 70,000 fewer kids in early education programs, people with mental illness losing access to treatment, civilian employees of the military furloughed, ships and aircraft going without maintenance... It's a long and dispiriting list.

Yet as painful as the sequester might be, most policymakers know that it is not the main event when it comes to our fiscal challenges. Discretionary spending, the kind getting cut in the sequester, amounts to less than a third of federal spending.

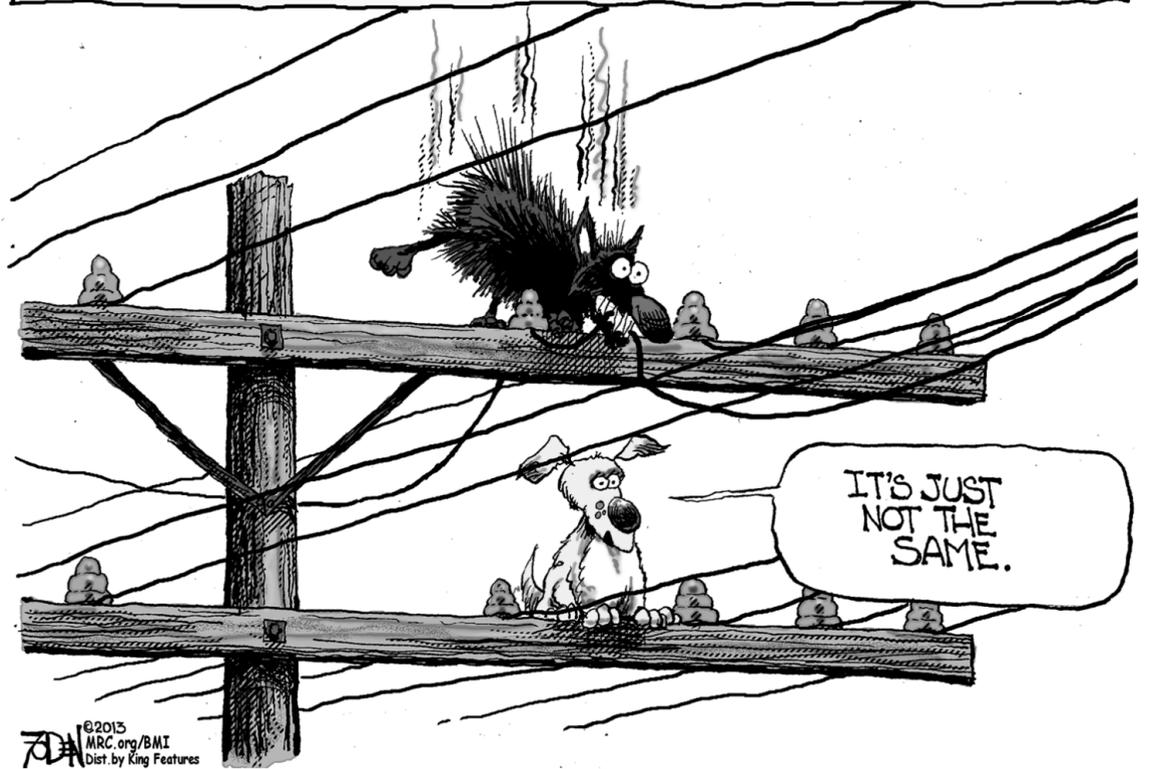
That's not what many people believe, of course. Whenever I give talks about the federal budget I'm taken aback by where my listeners think most of our money gets spent. At two meetings recently, members of the audience stood up to complain that if we just cut what we give away to other countries in

foreign aid, we could resolve our budget issues. This isn't even close to the truth: altogether, we spend well less than 1 percent of the federal budget on foreign aid.

If you think of federal spending as a pie, by far the biggest slices go to Social Security and unemployment support, Medicare, Medicaid, and other health programs, which altogether make up well over half. Military spending accounts for about another quarter, while the next biggest slice, about 7 percent, is for interest on the federal debt — a figure that will explode in upcoming years. Everything else we think of as the federal government — spending on highways and the aviation system, money for student loans and other education programs, housing, food stamps, medical research and, yes, foreign aid — comes in at under one-fifth of the total.

The biggest driver of growth in federal spending, as Nate Silver of The New York Times pointed out in a thoughtful analysis in January, is entitlements: Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and other social insurance programs. This is especially true

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays the E-Mailman from the swift completion of his appointed rounds.



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Of Ants, Rocks and Sound Waves...

Texas Journalist...by Willis Webb

At one time I worked for a newspaper owned by a group deeply involved in covering the U.S. space program. That news company division owned the only still photo lab at Cape Canaveral. The lab was a pool for all still photo coverage. News agencies could pick and choose from the best pictures.

Current events often prompt me to dredge up long ago memories. The recent death of long-time newspaper friend Bert West prompted me to recollect my one and only experience "covering" a space launch by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

In his early experience, Bert was the Houston Chronicle's man covering space shots as he managed the paper's news bureau across the highway from the NASA facility at Clear Lake between Houston and Galveston. Upon retiring from the Chronicle, Bert became the editor of the Palacios Beacon, published by his son, Nick, a fine newsman in the mold of his father.

My space launch experience was actually sort of a "treat trip." Our group had regular people, long involved in space coverage, who did the "heavy lifting" of reporting the event. I'd been a "good boy" at work so I got to just

watch from a so-labeled "VIP site" across the Banana River, three miles from the launch pad.

There were bleachers set up for "VIPs" but at this particular launch, that of the final moon shot, Apollo 17, there seem to be an over-abundance of VIPs, so a quartet of us found a spot on the "grass" with a good view of the giant rocket. Although a great distance from the pad, it seemed as if we could reach out and touch the giant gleaming white rocket.

We were able to have an early dinner, then via the VIP passes, arrive at 8 p.m. for the 10 p.m. launch, easing past slow-moving "regular" tourists who came for the event. Except for my freebie passes, I was about as gawking-a-tourist as anyone there.

Since there was an overflow crowd at the VIP site, I surrendered to my mother's teaching of giving up my bleacher seat for "the ladies" and found a spot on the ground that seemed to have just enough vegetation to provide some comfort. Wrong.

First, the "grass" was something very tough that certainly didn't feel like the San Augustine or Bermuda varieties I'd comfortably parked my posterior on all my life. Secondly, it seemed for every blade of grass there were six small rocks that had a tendency to

gouge you in a most uncomfortable way.

Then, to exacerbate the discomfort, the launch was delayed again and again and again. Technical problems of the sort that were difficult to understand for someone like me who told you all he knows about such things when he says "technical."

At some point early in the interminable wait, we were joined on our "grassy knoll" by a group of nuns, who proceeded to spread a blanket and to break out fried chicken that looked and smelled like you could die for it. Then, the sisters rubbed it in by popping the corks on bottle after bottle of wine. When they weren't thoughtful enough to share with us, we began to snidely refer to them as "Friends of Zorro."

We had, unwisely, neglected to bring liquid refreshment or food, having come from a sumptuous dinner at one of the Cape's finer dining establishments and believing that we would be finished early enough to seek libation and comfort food on the way back to the hotel. And, the launch site's

concession stands sold out of everything very early. To add misery to woe, you could never find a toilet facility without a record line extending from it.

Finally, after so many announced delays that I lost count, the actual countdown to lift-off began. As the count neared 10, the rocket's fuel ignited. At 10, the rocket shuddered and slowly began to rise. And, three miles away the sound waves reached us and rippled our clothes just about the time Apollo 17 inched up off the pad.

At this point, everyone forgot thirst and hunger and a mighty roar went up from the crowd as national pride and awe at the sight overwhelmed us all.

Afterward, we happily and somewhat deliriously wound our way back toward the hotel, finally finding an eating establishment that wasn't overrun and sated our needs in every way.

I can still think about it and feel those sound waves. 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

Making a Difference

By Gina Kelly Ellis

I've had a great morning! I have to make a confession to write this column so here goes. I love the Cinnabons at Burger King. I know who to blame for this and this person knows who he or she is. I get up every morning trying to convince myself that the madness must stop. I work on this project all the way to Burger King. Today as I pulled up to the window to pay, the young lady working there asked me if I was addicted to Cinnabons. I said that apparently I was and I felt really bad about it as the word "sin" was built right into the name of the offending food! She said "Well, I'm addicted to your column so I guess we are even." I thanked her and told her that I certainly hoped my column was a little better for her than the Cinnabon was for me. Her reply was that it probably was but she also knew that I would walk off the Cinnabon. And here is where my point comes.

She was right. It is possible for me to walk off all the calories consumed in the Cinnabon in order to make it less of a problem for my body. I can do this. I don't always. But it is possible. However, if we have sin in our lives, we can't walk it off. We can't lift enough weights or run enough miles to get rid of the sin we have in our hearts. There is only one way to do this. And that is through God. We must first ask God to forgive us and then we must ask His help in resisting this temptation we have. We will all sin. I don't care who you are, you have sin in your life. It is just who we are. But the great thing is that we have a God who loves and forgives. He wants to help us do better. He wants us to try each day to be more like Him. In Psalm 86:5, David writes these words, "Thou, oh Lord are good and ready to forgive." And its true! He is good and ready to forgive.

The problem with trying to exercise to work off all the calories that I am consuming is that it takes time and you have to really stay after it. But with sin, our God can forgive us those things we do wrong immediately. We don't have to keep working and trying hard to earn His forgiveness. It is just done when we ask. Because He is good and He loves us.

So, do you have a sin problem in your life? Have you asked God's forgiveness. He is faithful to forgive. Always. Just ask Him. It will make the difference.

Lee Hamilton is Director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

Americans as a whole do, too: a recent Pew Center poll