

perspective

CONGRESS shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

(First Amendment to The U.S. Constitution)



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LETTERS POLICY

1. Each letter submitted must be an original — no photocopies. E-mails are also accepted if a name and phone number is included: editor@gaffneyledger.com
2. Letters should include the writer's name, address and day and evening telephone numbers.
3. Letters should be submitted exclusively to this newspaper.
4. Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.
5. Letters submitted in all-italic or all-capital letters will not be accepted.

We will not print letters:
— That are unsigned;
— That contain questionable or undocumented facts;
— That contain inappropriate attacks on a person or persons;
— Regarding disputes between the writer and other parties;
— Endorsing a business.

Our mailing address is: P.O. Box 670, Gaffney, S.C. 29342.

IF YOU MISS YOUR PAPER

Here at The Gaffney Ledger, since 1894, our newspaper delivery goal has always been the complete satisfaction of our readers.
Despite our taking exhaustive measures to prevent it, a newspaper delivery will occasionally be missed. Papers are sometimes picked up by the wrong person or by a dog, or they are missed due to some other unavoidable occurrence.
With this in mind, we have developed the following standard policy for late delivery of your Gaffney Ledger.
— We guarantee same-day delivery of your Gaffney Ledger if the problem is reported to us by 5 p.m.
— You can call at any time after 5 p.m. to report a missing paper via our answering machine and your paper will be delivered the next day by noon.
— We will deliver your Gaffney Ledger on the following business day by 11 a.m. if the missing paper is reported by 9 a.m. on that day.
After that, you have the choice of:
— Having the paper delivered with the next day's paper, or
— Crediting your account for the cost of the missing paper.
If you have any questions about this policy or if you have any problems with the delivery of your newspaper, please let us know. We are here to serve our readers.

CORRECTIONS

The Gaffney Ledger makes every effort to ensure all information in this publication is accurate and thorough. However, in the event an error is made, it is this newspaper's policy to correct the error as soon as possible.
If you find a mistake, please notify the editor by calling 864 489-1131. Please be ready to tell us the page number and story in which the error appears.

ATTENTION POSTMASTER

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HAVE YOU CONSIDERED ...

How to respond to a 'bummer gift'

Another Christmas has passed. The proverbial "Fat Lady" has sung the closing song. I have never figured out who she is, but she must attend football and baseball games. Folks there talk about her a lot.

It has been a joyous time celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. The gathering of family and friends makes it more meaningful. Precious memories are added to our memory bank. The house is quieter and lonelier, but the memories will last a lifetime. Hopefully the added weight and waist size are temporary.

As wonderful as Christmas is, it can present some dilemmas resulting in some potentially embarrassing moments. For instance, if at your family Christmas gathering there comes a moment when the entire group gathers beside the tree, a child distributes the gifts and each person publicly opens them one at a time.

Frantic tearing of paper and massive opening of gifts is not allowed. Turns are taken around the circle, each person opening one gift at a time while everyone watches. This prolongs the pleasure and increases the enjoyment as everyone gets to see each gift and learn the name of the giver as well.

At least this is how we have done it for years at our family Christmas gatherings. Are all 25 of our immediate family approving? Are you kidding me? Of course not! What family of 25 ever agrees one hundred percent on anything? Since, however, I am the patriarch, meaning the father, grandfather and great-grandfather, they do humor me and grant me dictatorial privileges. After all, old age should have some privileges. The list is short but there are definitely some.

I must admit this public opening of individual gifts can possibly cause a problem. Though my family members give nice useful gifts, if you experience enough Christmases, a time will occur when you are going to get one of those gifts. You know the kind, a real bummer. The kind that causes you to wonder what in the world was the giver thinking.

Everyone is seated on the edge of their chair eagerly waiting to see your gift and hear your comment. Now as you gaze at this "special gift" you have got a problem. Especially true if lying is not a customary part of your lifestyle. Unless you are good at pretending a faint, or dashing out of the room faking a sudden bathroom urge, you have got to say something. But what? Words are slow to come.

My friends at the Dutch Oven in Abbeville



Dr. French O'Shields

can serve up great food. They also send out a newsletter containing good practical advice. A recent one offered some interesting suggestions as to things you may say about a "bummer gift."

1. Hey! There's a gift!
2. Well, well, well.
3. Boy, if I had not recently shot up four sizes that would fit me.
4. This will be perfect for wearing around the basement.
5. Gosh! I hope this never catches fire! It is the fire season though and there are a lot of unexplained fires these days.
6. If my dog buries this, I will be furious!
7. I love it — but I am concerned about the jealousy it may inspire.
8. Sadly, tomorrow I enter the Federal Witness Protection Program.
9. Oh no! This is the year I vowed to give all my gifts to charity.
10. I really don't deserve this.

Maybe you have some suggestions of your own. For me, following the example of Jesus, who often answered a question by asking a question, this is my favorite comment: "Is this a great gift or not? Wow, I am speechless!" Often times answering a question by asking one will get you out of a real tight situation. But unlike Jesus, just be sure YOU do not ever answer your own question. Leave the answer to others. After all, people do need to learn to think for themselves, right?

If you do make a judgmental comment on the gift, just be careful what you say. The same person may get your name next year and be challenged by your less-than-nice comment. Then just think what an even stranger gift you may get next year.

Just use kind and thoughtful words and be grateful that the giver cares enough to express their love to you in a gift. Do not succumb to thinking you really deserve something better. Actually none of us were deserving of a valuable gift, yet to show His love, our Heavenly Father gave us His most valuable gift, His only begotten Son.

Worst of all, don't dare forget where you got that bummer gift, rewrap it and give it to another next year at the family public gift unwrapping. Then you will be embarrassed.

It is said silence is golden. If true at no time will it shine brighter than at a moment like this. If all else fails, don't dare say a word. Just fake a faint and pray silently that someone will carry you out of the room. The driveway next to your car would be nice.

(Dr. French O'Shields is a Gaffney native and a retired Presbyterian minister.)

Hello ... hello; Elvis? Is that you Elvis?

When you call a tech support or customer service telephone number, how come they sometimes say "this call may be monitored for quality control purposes?" What does that mean exactly?

When they answer the phone, does a secret spy-type agent listen in and run the call through some type of fancy digital analysis device?

Why would they do something that goofy? Are they hoping somebody who has been missing for a long time will call and they'll be able to recognize them? Do they have "voice prints" of, say, Jimmy Hoffa, and they try to match up the caller to the voice print? And if they're not doing that, then why would they be so concerned about the quality of telephone conversations? Are their phone lines notoriously poor? Is there a lot of static or does the audio sometimes fade out? Is there a quality control supervisor whose job it is at the



Klonie JORDAN

end of the day to listen to all of these conversations and if so, how desperate is this person for a job?

I don't think customer service representatives give a flip about telephone conversation quality control. You know what I think? I think somebody somewhere is hoping Elvis eventually calls up and they can match him up with his "voice print" and prove he is still alive. Or they're hoping the aliens bring Amelia Earhart back and she calls up to report being UFO-napped.

Or maybe they've already found Elvis. Goodness knows what's been happening with this whole voice monitoring conspiracy system.

ELVIS: "Hello. Is this customer service?"
CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY: "Yes sir, may I have your first name and where you're calling from?"

ELVIS: "Uh, uh. My name is Eugene. I'm Eugene and I'm calling from Grace ..., I mean Grayson Heights, Michigan. Yeah, that's it."

CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY: "And what can I do for you sir?"

ELVIS: "Well, I just bought a pair of your blue suede shoes and I got to thinking about how easy it would be to get them scratched up if, say, somebody accidentally stepped on them. Can I return them or exchange them?"

CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY: "Well, what makes you think they would be easily damaged sir?"

ELVIS: "I don't know really. I just got to thinking about it. It was always on my mind. I worry about stuff like that. I'm compulsive that way. I worry about my pet like that too. I know he ain't nothing but a hound dog, but still I want to make sure he's taken care of. You know, don't be cruel or anything like that."

CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY: "Yes sir, I understand. But I assure you those shoes are made of the highest quality material and manufactured professionally."

ELVIS: "Are you sure? Will they stand up under, say, adverse weather conditions? For example, if I was walking in 'em through some Kentucky rain, would they be all right?"

CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY: "Yes sir. They should do just fine. Is there anything else I can do for you? I want to get home and see my girlfriend. It's been a long day."

ELVIS: "No sir. Just wanted to make sure these shoes will work out for me. So you're headed home to see your gal, huh? Are you lonesome tonight cause you sound kinda blue?"

CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY: "Yeah, maybe a little. I was going to propose to her tonight because it's the one-year anniversary of when we met but the ring I ordered hasn't come in yet so I guess I'll wait. I want to be able to look back and say I did it my way."

ELVIS: "I don't blame you son. OK, I'll let you go then. Thank you. Thank you very much."

Klonie Jordan (editor@gaffneyledger.com) is executive editor of The Gaffney Ledger.

INSIDE REPORT

WOMEN VS. OPRAH

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The absence of Oprah Winfrey from the frantic four last days of the New Hampshire primary campaign after her heavy schedule in Iowa backing Sen. Barack Obama may be traced to heavy, unaccustomed post-Iowa abuse of the popular entertainment superstar by women.

Winfrey did not publicize it, but her Website was swamped with complaints after she went to Iowa. The principal complaint was that she betrayed women by not supporting Sen. Hillary Clinton. The criticism was described as personal.

Several of these critics identified themselves as African-Americans, indicating that gender is more important than race for many people.

OBAMA'S UNION

The politically potent presidential endorsement of Sen. Barack Obama by 60,000-member Local 226 of the Culinary Workers in Nevada, announced just after his defeat in the New Hampshire primary, was vigorously opposed by union members supporting Sen. Hillary Clinton.

Obama had lagged behind Clinton and John Edwards in winning labor support, but the Culinary Workers may be the biggest union plum. This endorsement could swing the Nevada Democratic caucuses Jan. 19 to Obama, though the state's party establishment supports Clinton. Backing for her by Rep. Shelley Berkley, who previously said she would stay neutral, was

unveiled immediately after the Culinary Workers acted. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is officially uncommitted but is regarded as a Clinton supporter, with his son, Clark County Commission Chairman Rory Reid, heading Clinton's state campaign.

A footnote: Sen. John Kerry announced his support of Obama Thursday, waiting until his friends — Sens. Joseph Biden and Christopher Dodd — had abandoned their candidacies. He did not worry about endorsing against Edwards, his 2004 running mate on the national ticket.

NO JOE FOR MCCAIN

Close advisers of Sen. John McCain say there is no possibility that Independent Democratic Sen. Joseph Lieberman would be McCain's vice presidential running mate on the Republican ticket.

McCain credits Lieberman's endorsement for presidential last month as triggering his turnaround in New Hampshire, leading to victory in that state's primary last Tuesday. In addition, McCain and Lieberman are friends who admire

each other personally. Nevertheless, Lieberman still votes the straight Democratic line in the Senate on nearly all issues except Iraq, and McCain's advisers feel Lieberman never would be accepted by the Republican Party.

A footnote: When Lieberman endorsed McCain, Democratic friends called his office seeking reassurance that he was endorsing McCain only for the Republican nomination and not actually the office of president. No, they were told, this was a real presidential endorsement.

POOR HUCK

Although Mike Huckabee is first in the polls for the Jan. 19 South Carolina Republican primary, the latest Federal Election Commission (FEC) figures show him not even among the top four Republican presidential candidates for fund-raising in South Carolina.

Rudy Giuliani leads the South Carolina Republican money game, followed by Sen. John McCain, Mitt Romney and Fred Thompson.

Huckabee is also not among the top four Republican presidential candidate fund-raisers in two other impending primary states: Michigan (Jan. 15) and Florida (Jan. 29). FEC numbers put Romney in the money lead in Michigan and Giuliani ahead in Florida.

To find out more about Robert D. Novak and read his past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com.

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