

It's important to know why we believe what we do

We want to thank the most recent letter to the editor regarding the need for us to open "the door to a bit of discussion and debate."

The purpose of such action is to make us think. It is far more important to us that we know why we believe something than what we believe.

People's beliefs come from a myriad of sources and not always legitimate ones.

Just look on the Internet and see the variety of people claiming to have the "truth". There is a graduate level course with the sole purpose to teach methods of discerning the legitimacy of Internet sources.

Some people read one account of a situation or read accounts from only one side of the issue and decide it is valid. It is imperative to read each account from as neutral a stance as possible. Otherwise the studying is in vain, because it is not critical thinking at that point, but rather gathering ammunition.

Many of our beliefs are founded in family systems i.e. the belief, "it was good enough for our folks, so it's good enough for us." If our children accepted everything we taught them without questioning, we would know we had failed.

Questioning is what strengthens our belief and gives us the power to defend it. Many times we return to what our upbringing taught us; after careful study we not only know why we believe a certain way, but why our parents did also.

We are a product of our upbringing and our beliefs reflect that.

Most of us would quickly recognize we are Christian in large part because of where we were born. The odds are had we been born in Israel of Israeli parents we would be Jewish not Christian. Even the most well known person of the Middle East was born Jewish, albeit Christianity was not an option at the time.

When we form our beliefs we must examine the validity of our sources.

If we note the content of a certain law, it is imperative to have the article, book or Internet site available for others to investigate. Not only does it allow others to come to their own decisions, it adds validity to ours.

For instance if one wants to review the content of Florida law regarding dogs and euthanasia it can be found at the website from the Florida senate office: www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=Ch0828/ch0828.htm.

Definition of words is another obstacle we must examine.

For instance the root of the word euthanasia as defined by Webster's Online Dictionary is Greek from euthanatos meaning easy death. (www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=euthanasia&x=18&y=20).

We define euthanasia as the active means of facilitating death or an assisted suicide. Some would define the decision to remove life support as a fundamental freedom. Others define it differently based on their experiences, knowledge and belief system.

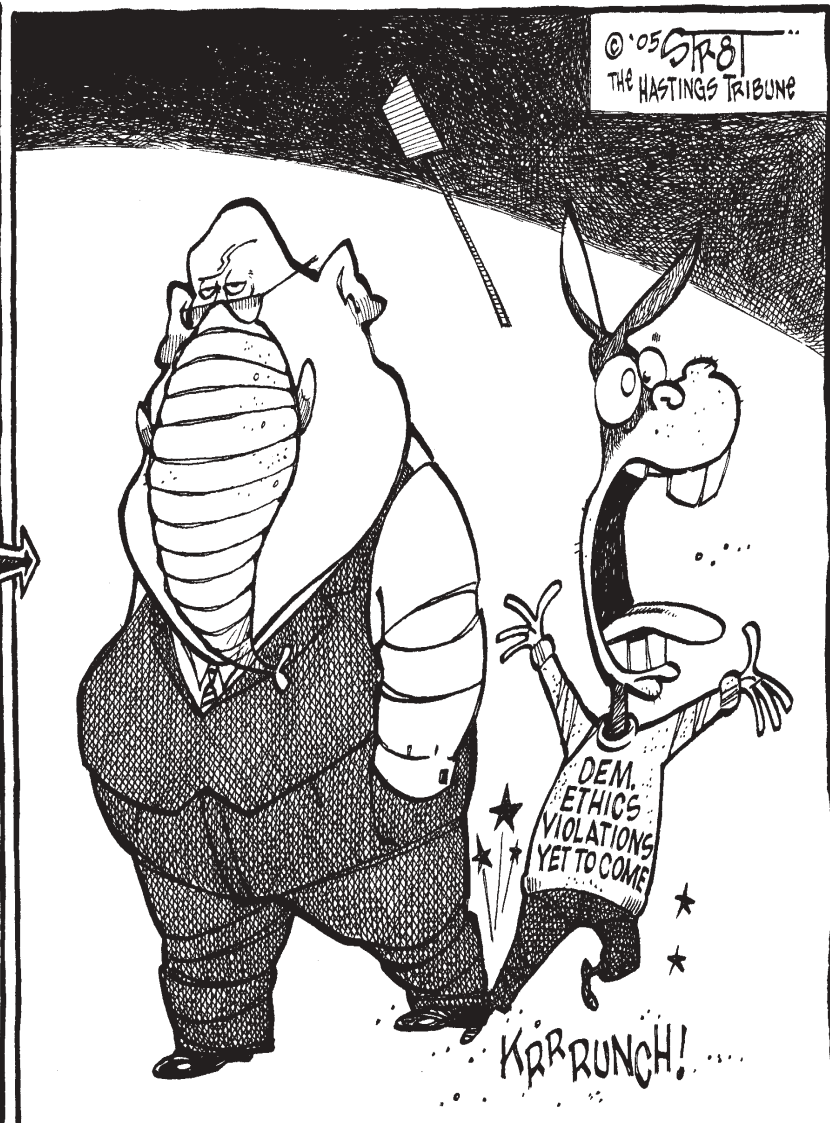
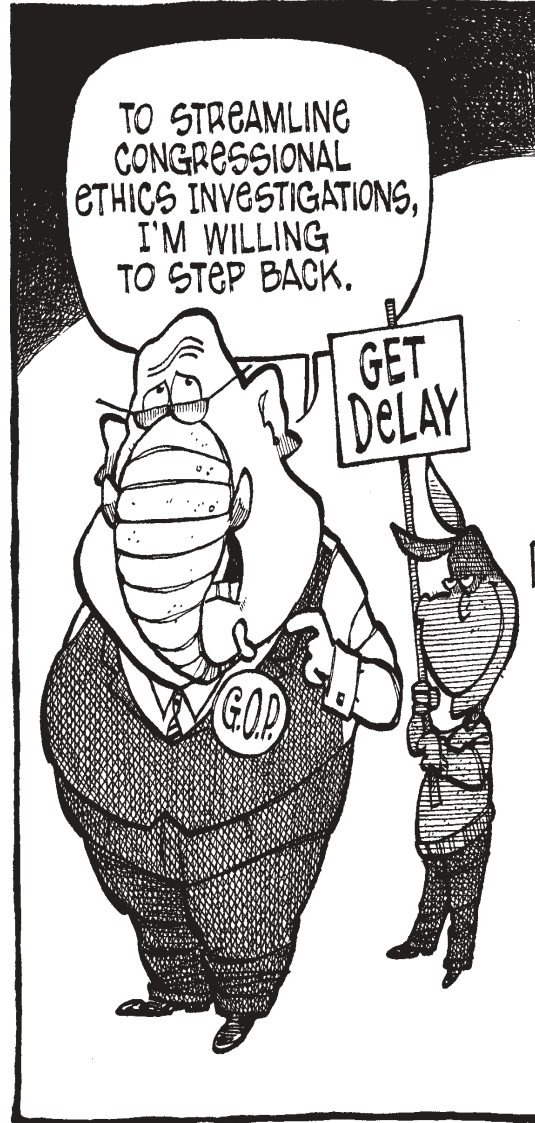
The government offers a website for accessing government documents and being able to attribute the right idea with the correct source. It is online at: www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/charters/charters.html.

Whatever our differences and our similarities, it is our promotion of the First Amendment that allows us to contemplate and compromise to form a workable society.

Democracy requires an informed citizenry. The real challenge comes in our empathetic interaction and respect for each other. As Lincoln said in his Gettysburg address, "that this government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." (www.loc.gov/exhibits/gadd/gatr2.html)

Our government is not to be a sole entity of kingship, but a melting pot of beliefs. Therefore may "we the people" reign supreme and keep open the doors of discussion and contemplation.

— Mary Kay Woodyard



Coach inspired memories, loyalty

Working at *The Norton Telegram* has several rewards, one of which is meeting people.

People come in who live in the Norton area, and I enjoy visiting with friends and meeting new friends. Other people come in the office from time to time who lived in Norton at one time or some of their family lived here at some time and I really enjoy visiting with them as if they were old friends.

Recently, at nearly closing time, a fellow walked in the office and said "I was born in the Norton Hospital and left Norton when I was ten years old and my name is Rex Burns".

I said to him that his father was my chemistry teacher besides being one of the top basketball coaches Norton has ever had the opportunity to have. Rex's wife Judy joined him; she may have wondered why he was staying in the office so long. They now live in Michigan and have been traveling since February. We discussed the 1951 championship team reunion and various other events. That evening my memory really kicked in and I thought of so many things about Mr. Oran Burns, how he was a great motivator and coach.

I learned as much about basketball as chemistry that year and maybe that's why I still have a great love for basketball. There were no girls' basketball teams at that time.

Rex and Judy had given me their cell phone number — they were staying at Sebelius Lake — so the next morning I called them and we decided to meet at a local restaurant to talk again about Rex's father. I called a few people that would have remembered him, Lyman Rowh and Joe Ballinger were able to meet with us as well. Warren Bullock filled Rex in on many other memories later in the day.

Lyman was the seventh and eighth grade coach of the basketball team, which were some of the same boys who were on the 1951 high school team and he advised us that the seventh grade team he coached went on to win 48 straight ball games in their career. Lyman said he had a great deal of respect for Coach Burns.

It was so interesting to learn more about Oran Burns. I learned that he had married his wife, Marie, who had taught school at Selden but resigned after her marriage because the school would not hire a married teacher.

Oran's father, Frank Burns, had been one of the orphans that came to Topeka on the orphan train and lived with a Jones family.

Memories Sonya Montgomery



Oran taught school in Norton in 1941 and 1942 before being called back to the service during World War II. He returned to Norton from 1947 through 1951, and was then called back into the Army during the Korean War.

He was in Topeka from 1951 through 1954. He was sent to Germany from 1954 to 1957, then was head of Reserved Officers Training Corp at Central Michigan University from 1957 to 1960, Korea 1960 to 1961, at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo. from 1961 to 1964 then off to France from 1964 to 1966. He retired with a rank of Colonel and returned to Central Michigan to work as a civilian in the admissions department until he died Feb. 12, 1975 of cancer.

His life left a legacy of motivated people — I am sure the scope of which we have no idea. His wife, Marie, died January 2000 after a lengthy illness.

Rex had a brother, Frank, who also retired from the United States Army with a rank of Lieutenant Colonel and died Dec. 4, 2003, also of cancer.

Their sister Nancy taught school and now lives in Phoenix, Ariz. Many in Norton will remember Nancy as the cute little blonde in the cheerleader uniform along with Pam Van Pelt at age 4 or 5. I hope Nancy stops by sometime too; I had the opportunity to visit with her on the telephone for a short while.

Other memories mentioned were that Coach Burns always left his shoes untied at basketball games, wore the same socks and kept his fingers crossed even when writing plays on the chalk board for his players. I know people who knew him could tell many more stories, but I write this for those who knew Coach to start their memories again.

Rex said his father was "his basketball coach in High School", even though he sat high in the bleachers so as not to bother the hired coach on the bench. However, he kept statistics on everything in the game. Rex said his Dad always made sure there was a basketball goal at every home they had.

Rex also was in ROTC, taught school and coached Junior Varsity teams, was in the Army Reserve and retired a Lieutenant

Colonel. Rex and Judy met in college in Michigan.

Judy was a middle school principal and is a heart transplant survivor, having had the heart transplant in October 2002. They are traveling and now heading back to Michigan for the summer months.

They advised they will be returning sometime in the near future to Norton and there are many of us who will welcome them and hope to visit with them again.

All of our lives touch people when we may not be aware. May we live our lives in such a way that we too will be remembered for helping someone succeed along the way.

There's no place like home and it's fun to meet those who called Norton "home" at one time.

In an e-mail I just received from Rex and Judy, they said they returned to Michigan the day after the area received 10 inches of snow. His other comments included "thanks for taking the time to talk to us and help us with meeting some of the wonderful people who knew and worked with my dad. I, of course, had heard many stories from Mom and Dad of their experiences of living in Norton and his great joy of coaching these fine young men. They always had smiles on their faces when they talked about Norton and their love for the area. I also know that my dad kept the memory of taking that high school team to the state finals, and winning, with him the rest of his life. Sure, I think he was the greatest, but I just never knew that he left such an impression on so many...and a legacy!"

"The whole time we spent in Norton and talking to you, Lyman, Joe and Warren sure brought to me more than a few tears. I just never knew! I was born in Norton in 1941 and left with the family when I was ten, (do I remember correctly that my mom would give my brother and I a quarter each to walk down to the theater on a Saturday afternoon to catch a movie).

"Though I had some memories of the town and of the stories from Mom and Dad, after our visit this spring I now know why they had such a love for the area. I sure wish they had taken the time to come back for a visit while they were alive. It would have meant so much for them to talk to you and others.

"Thanks to you, Lyman, Joe and Warren, Judy and I now know what my Dad meant to so many. Good Lord willing and the creek don't rise, Judy and I will be back!"

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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

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