

Mid-life crisis seen in man and beast

So, if your husband decides all of the sudden to buy a little red sports car and cruise around with the top down, scientists says, it's not really his fault. It's just biology.

And not the kind that might prompt him to seek a younger blonde to ride around with him. That's just poor taste.

No, the authors of a recent study say maybe that's just the way we are. Others have shown that people tend to show a low ebb in emotional well-being at midlife. And now at least one study shows the same it true for apes.

It's not that apes start leaving their mates for younger females or go out and buy a red Ferrari. In fact, one of the authors hastened to add that there was no proof an ape ever bought a red sports car.

I say it could have happened. Several chimps made it to start status in Hollywood in decades past. Today, of course, it's frowned upon to use chimps in entertainment. And the SPCA would mostly likely give the producer a ticket if anyone allowed an ape to be filmed smoking a cigarette, and that used to happen in Hollywood, too.

But we know the midlife crisis is staple in Hollywood, and who's to say that one of those chimps making the big bananas years ago didn't go out and buy a flashy car. Heck, he might have had a blonde or two to run around with him for all we know.

It could have happened.

But back to the study at hand, which shows that the great apes are just as susceptible as the rest of us to midlife depression. Captive chimps and orangutans show a remarkably human tendency to midlife decline that could have been passed down through evolution.

So in scientific terms, you might not be "a monkey's uncle" – technically, as the forebear on the evolutionary tree, wouldn't the monkey be your uncle, anyway? – maybe you and the monkey are depressed for the same reason.

Your old car's a clunker. Younger females no longer turn and watch you walk by. Midlife is just no fun without a sports car.

None of this scientific malarkey is going to help you, however, when the wife finds out how much that car really did cost, however, and I'm supposing for most of us, it won't be a Ferrari. Maybe an old, used MG or a nice little Mustang.

"You paid what for that? We could have had the bathroom redone and new curtains in the drawing room."

Whatever a drawing room is.

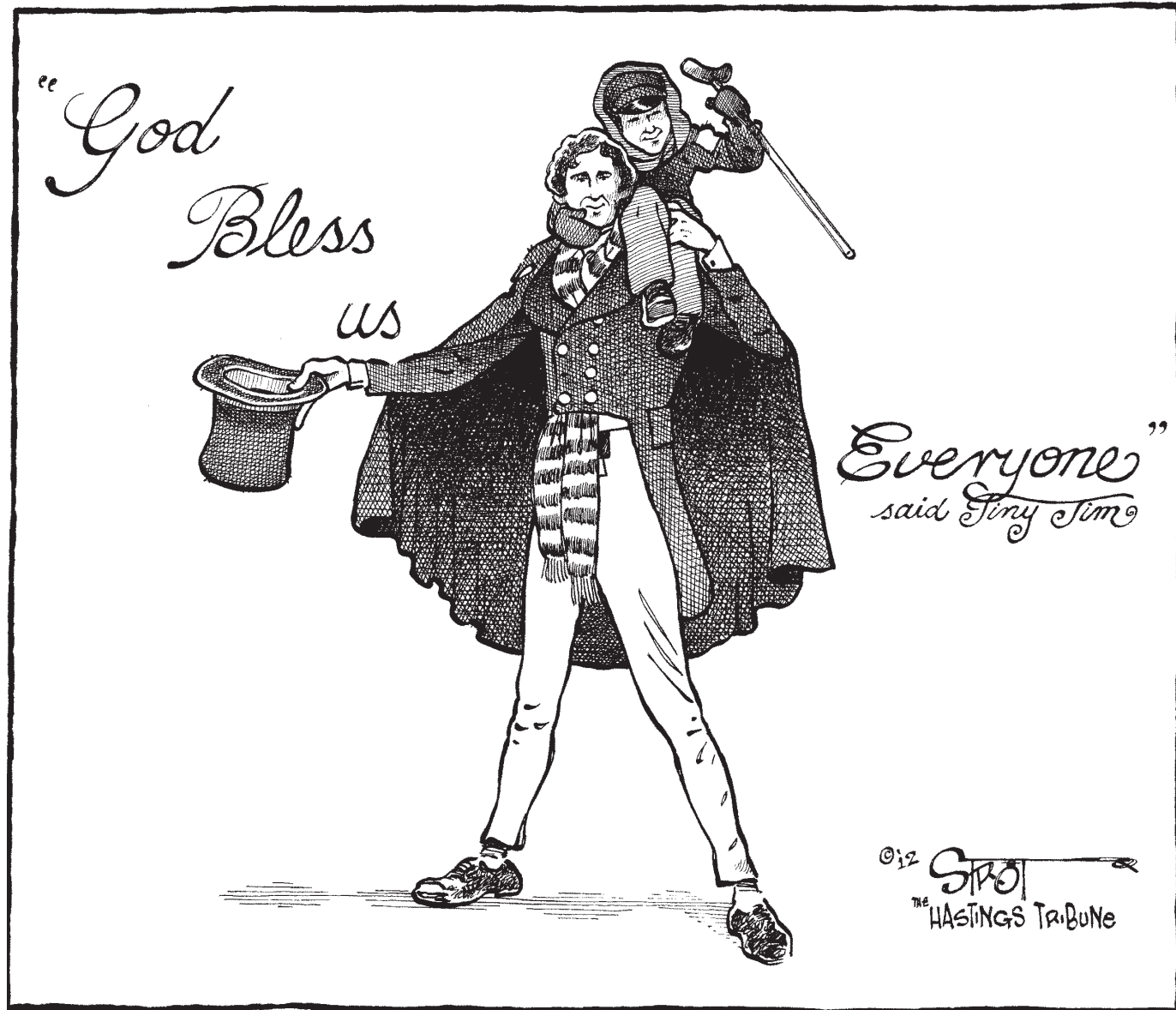
And if there's a blonde involved, well just forget about scientific explanations. She's not going to want to hear about evolution or biology, let along nature and nurture.

You might as well hired the lawyer first.

Come to think of it, the depression that precedes your midlife crisis might pale beside the headaches you'll have after you get the car and the blonde.

My suggestion is just leave the whole thing to the apes. Take up gardening or golf, and consider yourself lucky. Let them chase the younger females.

A midlife crisis is just going to be too much trouble.



There is no safe time or place in real life

When I was newly married, and then when our children were small, I was known to play Christmas carols in July and decorate my tree the earliest of all my friends. Then I would keep it up until Epiphany. As I put the ornaments on the tree, just after Thanksgiving, I would think of all that had taken place throughout the past year. Births, deaths, but even more, I thought of the things I had learned, discovered or perhaps better understood. Then, on Epiphany, I would take it down and ponder what the new year would hold. I think I secretly thought of it as the safe time, a place of peace. Nothing was going to happen between when I looked back and when I looked forward. That was time on hold. My tree was sort of an armor against bad things.

Parents are forever teachers and although my mother was the professional teacher, my dad didn't miss many teachable moments. He died on December 14th, 1984, while my

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



tree was up. Just in case I missed the message, my mother died on December 14th, 2004, twenty years to the day after my dad died. I thought I understood the message after Daddy died, but Mother cinched the deal. It doesn't matter that she was 100, she was my mother and she died while my tree was up.

I still look to the year past and to the year to come, but the time in between isn't 'safe time' anymore. It is life time. This year the message was driven home even more by the tragedy in Connecticut. I have listened and watched as twenty sets of parents joined a club no parent ever wants to be

admitted to. When you lose a child, it must feel like there will never be a safe time, a safe place, a safe feeling.

The loss of a child always seems senseless, whether it is because of an illness, an accident or a calculated killing. It is not supposed to be.

Our 'safe time' was violated last week. Some will blame the parents for being divorced; some will blame the mother for homeschooling; still others will blame the gun and they will all be right. Because these things are bad or wrong? No, but rather because they all are a part of life and because what occurred was a breakdown of life at its very core. Some call the shooter crazy, or schizo or a myriad of other labels, but one thing is for sure, he was troubled and our system failed him, his mother, five educators and twenty children. May God grant them all peace. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

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Thumbs Up to Ms. Cochran and the junior and senior high school chorus. Their concert last Thursday night was excellent. Job well done. Called in.

Thumbs Up to the Jay Singers and Miss Tamra Cochran for their fabulous performance Monday morning at Whispering Pines. Called in.

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Making sense of senseless acts

In the movie, "Out of Africa" Karen Blixen continually negotiates with the chief of a local tribe over labor and land issues. At one point her interpreter, aghast at her demands, politely admonishes her, "He is a Chief. You are not a chief!"

Later when she asks permission for the native children to attend the school she plans to build, the interpreter translates the contemptuous reply, "This Chief say, 'British can read and what good has it done them?'"

"This Chief" commanded respect. Is his relationship with his people perhaps what ours should be with God?

A "Letter from Jesus about Christmas" came to my internet inbox. It begins:

"It has come to my attention that many of you are upset that folks are taking My name out of the season. How I personally feel about this celebration can probably be most easily understood by those of you who have been blessed with children of your own. I don't care what you call the day. If you want to celebrate My birth, just GET ALONG AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER."

It goes on with a list of gifts for Jesus this season and ends thus:

"Don't forget; I am God and can take care of Myself. Just love Me and do what I have told you to do. I'll take care of all the rest. Check out the list above and get to work; time is short. I'll help you, but the ball is now in your

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



court. And do have a most blessed Christmas with all those whom you love and remember:

I LOVE YOU, JESUS"

The Chief in "Out of Africa" was mortal. His concern with teaching children to read centered on his own inability to read. It was not good children know more than the Chief so only short children were taught---at first. "When these children grow tall, this Chief be dead!"

When he anticipated his death; he came to Blixen. The interpreter related, "This Chief say, 'Tall children can read now!'"

"This Chief" wanted good things for his followers. Though he was illiterate he recognized the danger of knowledge without understanding, "British can read and what good has it done them?"

As I struggle with making the Christmas season a perfect one or making sense of senseless acts, like the school shooting in Connecticut, it is easy to forget who is Chief among us.

God is God. He can take care of Himself. He knows what He knows.

He will take care of all the rest.

We were out and about on the Friday the Connecticut school shootings occurred. We heard bits and pieces. Many things reported with certainty on Friday were wrong. The more the story unfolds the less we realize we know or will ever know, for certain.

Friday evening there was a little shower of rain. It's the first time we have had more than half an inch of rain in months and months.

The lyrics to a song resounded in my head:

"---who sends the rain when the earth is dry?

Somebody bigger than you and I."

I sang the song with joy.

It ends:

"When I am weary, filled with despair,

Who gives me courage to go on from there,

And who gives me faith that will never die?

Somebody bigger than you and I."

The rain did not break the drought. We accept in faith there will be more in God's time.

We do not know why bad things happen. If we knew what good would it do?

Somebody bigger knows; He will give us courage.

MERRY CHRISTMAS! GET ALONG AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER!

Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up:

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