

Let's simmer down about this toilet paper crisis we've created

Come on ya'll, it's toilet paper. At this point about everyone has made light of or bemoaned the lack of the product on store shelves, so I don't need to detail that point. For the MTV generation, we all know Cornhulio has no TP for his bung-hole. But it's the why that's important here, because it applies more than that lovely, super-soft, two-ply eight-pack apparently beloved of cartoon bears in television land. Take Resolute Forest Products just down the road from us in Calhoun. They used to be a paper plant but now they produce, among other things, toilet paper. According to Debbie Johnston, the director of U.S. public affairs for Resolute, they are gearing to increase production to meet customer demand.

What she can't say, and thus I will, is that Resolute and other TP makers aren't idiots and don't intend to be as stupid about this as some of us are acting. They could go all out, begin hiring in earnest to add shifts and produce a whole lot more — once they've had time to hire and train those folks and ordered equipment and had it delivered, installed, tested and gotten it ready to run. But why should they spend all that money? Even if training people and adding equipment wasn't a time inten-

sive process and could be done tomorrow, the bottom line is the demand is only temporary. What's more, it's very likely demand will actually decrease in several weeks. So gearing up would be counter to their interest. That's not greed, it's common sense. Their customers aren't using more toilet paper. They're simply buying more to keep a bigger supply in their homes. Let's use your somewhat crazy Uncle Eddie as an example. He's over 70 and got spooked by the run on the two-ply. He's also concerned about going into the store to shop for the next few weeks. He may have a theory about the vast Chinese conspiracy that started the virus as a way to open the world to alien invasion, but we'll put that and its anal probe component to the side for the moment. Your Uncle Eddie went and bought three cases of toilet paper 10 days ago, so in his spare bedroom there's 180 rolls of toilet paper. That doesn't mean he's going to use 180 rolls this week. It means that at his two-person household's normal rate of use, he now has 60-week supply. Think about that in Resolute's terms, this customer made a big purchase but he's not going to buy again until May 2021. So they've effectively lost this customer for a year. Multiply that buy all those who are buying in bulk in panic rather than prudence.

That's a measurable chunk of folks who won't be buying product the rest of 2020. So Resolute is looking at a downturn in demand long term because of the present high demand created by panic hoarders creating a low supply. All those Facebook posts of empty store shelves just multiplied the impact. It doesn't make any sense for them to take on expense to meet a short-lived artificial demand now, when we all know full well that toilet paper sales will be measurably lower the rest of the year because so many folks will have more than they need at home for months. The simple fact is we aren't using more toilet paper now than we were a month ago. The same applies to bread, meat, frozen food and paper towels. If we tone down the buy-it-all panic shopping, the shelves will refill and we'll all feel a bit better. The only folks who face an actual increase in demand are the makers of hand sanitizer and they're getting a grip on it. Where's that line between prudent and panic? Prudence is buying two week's worth rather than your normal one-week's worth of groceries. Panic is filling the bed of the truck and stacking the wife's car so she can't see out the back window and turning the living room into a pantry. If we're prudent, we can all get what we need for just-in-case. If folks keep up this blind panic, we're creating a problem where none should exist in the world's largest economy and most prosperous nation. Don't be Uncle Eddie.

MARCUS FITZSIMMONS is the editorial production manager at The Daily Times.

TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE

SUBMITTED BY CALLIE CUNNINGHAM, MARYVILLE

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

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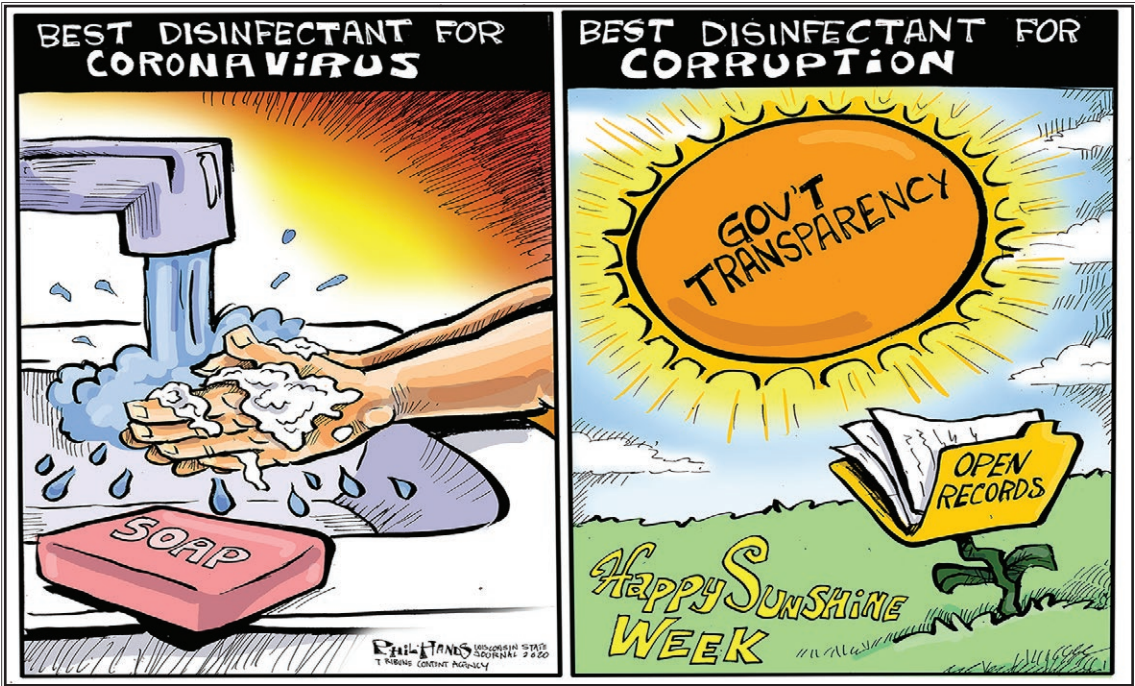
Letters to the Editor reflect the opinions of the writers and are not necessarily those of The Daily Times.

We should be listening and not talking

Dear Editor:
I cannot believe the hate that is spewed by some of your readers. On March 17, you printed a letter that was a perfect example. The writer thinks it was wrong that Nancy Pelosi smiled when she was greeting people before she spoke. Perhaps she should have been very somber, as was our president, while he misled and confused the country about the

seriousness of the outbreak: (He said it "will go away" when the weather warms up; denied WHO's coronavirus death rate based on a "hunch;" called coronavirus "corona flu;" suggested it's fine for people with COVID-19 to go to work; compared coronavirus to "the regular flu;" said a vaccine will be available soon; and claimed the U.S. is the most prepared country in the world). All these statements were made while the health care experts contradicted almost everything Trump told us.

Without apologizing for anything he said, he finally is listening instead of talking. Now maybe we will know what is actually happening to our world. Tuesday's letter writer wants us to believe that the Democrats are "dancing for joy" because of the outbreak, and that the liberal media are blowing it all out of proportion, and our president has everything under control. Maybe all of us should be listening instead of talking.
Russ Docteur
Morganton Boulevard
Greenback



THEIR VOICE

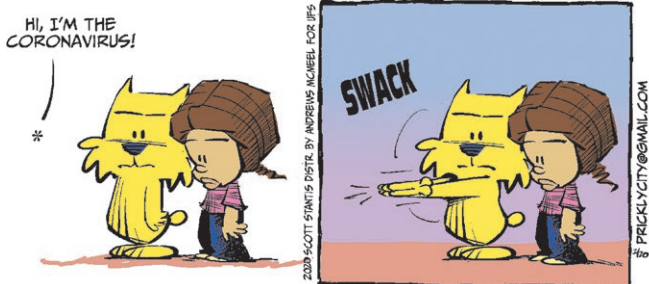
Mend the frayed cords that bind us

How do we make America nice again? I'm sitting at the breakfast table reading a letter to the editor (March 17) that says House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is "dancing with joy" over the distress and pain America is suffering because of the coronavirus. Presumably because it happened on Donald Trump's watch. The letter's author bases his opinion on the fact that Speaker Pelosi was smiling as she prepared to announce the bipartisan coronavirus relief bill passed by the House of Representatives. He ends his letter by asserting that Satan is at work in America through the Democratic Party. I am speechless. First, because Speaker Pelosi probably was gleeful that Democrats and Republicans had finally worked together to produce something constructive for America. Who wouldn't smile about that? Second, because I cannot believe that Southerners are talking this way about one another. We know better. There are bad eggs in both political parties. Maybe Donald Trump and Nancy Pelosi are two of them. But there are also great eggs. On both sides of the aisle. Most of America's teachers and many of its preachers are Democrats. Most farmers and many more preachers are probably Republicans. We can disagree about tax policy, defense spending, entitlements and a host of other issues, but nobody should be accusing the other side of being Satanic. It is beyond the pale. Words matter. And what we call one another REALLY matters. If, for example, a married couple has an argument and get so heated up that one spouse calls the other a drunk, loser, whore or worse, chances are the wounded person will never forget it. Even if the person is forgiving, it leaves a bone in the throat that is not easily dislodged. To quote Willie Nelson, "Forgiving you was easy, but forgetting seems to take the longest time." Say enough hurtful things to one another, and you can put a tombstone over the marriage. Our common life together — as members of this town, state and nation — works much the same way. Say enough hateful things about one another, and things unravel. As a boy growing up in the '50s and '60s, I don't recall our parents talking about one another the way people do today. My father was a Democrat, but his closest friends were Republicans. I don't recall him ever questioning their sincerity or their motives for their political views, but if he did it would have been done respectfully and, most likely, privately. I'm confident his friends would have done the

same. It was more than good manners. It was a matter of honor. Honor is the gift a person gives to himself. It's what motivates us to do the right thing even when there's a cost attached. It's also what allows us to respect the person we see in the mirror each morning. And most importantly, it's something we afford to every other human being on the planet. They have inherent dignity and are deserving of our respect. In the words of the Hebrew scriptures, they are "made in the image of God." Let's be fair to the man who wrote the offending letter. He is not alone. The coarseness of contemporary society is ubiquitous. F bombs, pole dancing at the Super Bowl halftime show, shouting at one another on talk radio and cable news.

The lid is off. And we can't say it caught us off guard. Poet William Butler Yeats warned us about it more than a century ago. Things fall apart. The center cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned. The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity. But we cannot acquiesce. We must not. We dare not allow ourselves or our fellow citizens to succumb to the downward spiral, to the apocalypse of "ignorant armies clashing at night." Donald Trump is not the AntiChrist. Neither is Nancy Pelosi. And my Democrat — or Republican — neighbors are not Satanists. We are Americans. Even more, we are humans, united in our desire for a decent job, a safe place to live and a good education for our children and our grandchildren. One human family on this little life boat we call Earth. So, join the knitting club. Help us mend the frayed cords that bind us. Invite someone over for dinner. Mentor a Tennessee Achieves student. Volunteer. Share a beer or a cup of coffee with someone of a different religion, race or political party. And please, please, please! Remember your manners. Remember your honor. And don't call anyone ugly names. **BUZZ THOMAS** is a retired Baptist minister, attorney, school superintendent and longtime Blount County resident.

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