

Battleship blockade?

Are city leaders on board or not?

Two-and-a-half years ago when the local effort to bring the USS Texas to Baytown was launched, Baytown's city manager, mayor and council members were all on board, agreeing what a tremendous thing it would be for the city. The city's top brass attended meetings with local organizers and Battleship Foundation members.

Two-and-a-half years later, Baytown is still in the running and local organizers say we are the favorite to land the battleship.

Nowadays, however, it seems city leaders have jumped ship on the effort without explanation.

Jay Eshbach, widely known for his myriad philanthropic endeavors in Baytown, has led the charge for the battleship. His frustration over the city's lack of interest of late is running high.

Lately, Eshbach has been asking for a non-binding resolution announcing the city's support to be placed on the agenda and voted on by council. Again, it is a non-binding statement, meaning no financial commitment.

The resolution has been emailed to the mayor, city manager and council members with a request to be placed on the agenda. The mayor could put it on the agenda himself, but has not. Council members are hemming and hawing.

The city manager says through a spokesman that he has no recollection of information being provided to him by Eshbach with the request of presenting it to council.

We have a copies of emails that say otherwise.

Furthermore, the councilwoman appointed to represent the City Council on the Bring the Battleship to Baytown Committee in January 2020 seems to know very little about the project. We surmise that comes with only attending one meeting in two years.

When asked about their support, the city manager, mayor and some council members respond that "we just need more information" but do little to nothing to get that information. It's like they want the issue to go away.

If that's the case, just say so.

Granted, not all the information can be known at this time. We don't know what it will cost to get the battleship here, the cost of dredging, the cost to build any of the other accommodations that need to be build, and we do not know if the Foundation is even going to award the battleship to Baytown.

None of those vital questions, however, precludes council from considering the non-binding resolution.

Right now, all the leadership on the battleship to Baytown front is coming from private citizens. Does the city and/or council want to land the battleship?

If so, the next step is a non-binding resolution. And to be clear, the resolution does not force city to spend money. It is just a show of support

So let's place it on the agenda, discuss it and vote.

If it fails, then so be it.

It's clear Baytown will not be awarded the battleship unless council and administration is on board.

Eshbach and his committee, and the rest of us for that matter can handle the truth. City leaders should not be afraid to tell it. All aboard or not? — David Bloom

Try not to get feelings hurt at work

My first job at The Baytown Sun was operating the switchboard after school and on Saturdays.

It was there -- at the old building on West Pearce -- and then, during my senior year in high school, that I learned the importance of being thick-skinned. No matter how rude the caller might be, there was no time to feel hurt or angry. The work goes on.

My first difficult caller was a subscriber upset about the way the carrier threw the paper. It never landed where he wanted in spite of his frequent requests to target a certain part of the yard. During our one-way conversation, his voice kept getting louder and louder.

Coincidentally, I knew his daughter in school, and she knew I worked The Sun switchboard after school. Overhearing her father's tantrum on the phone, she suspected he was talking to -- or rather, yelling at -- me. The next day at school, she asked me about it. When I confirmed her suspicion, she apologized and said he really was a nice person. "His bark is worse than his bite," she said. It's a familiar old saying but the



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"bark/bite" theory can apply to most complainers.

But not to all. There was the caller wanting to speak to our publisher, Fred Hartman. When I told him that Mr. Hartman was not in the building, the caller demanded, "Well, where did he go?"

I said I didn't know. And his response was: "You don't know much, do you?"

I never knew whether his bark was worse than his bite, but figured they probably matched.

And I got to where I laughed about it. Through the years, I recapped the "don't know much" comment so often that it became a household expression in my family. Whenever I said I didn't know something, someone would say, "You don't know much, do you!" And we just laughed.

Now, for my "no good deed ever goes unpunished" story: On a Saturday afternoon when ev-

eryone else in the building had gone home, I was still working. By then, I was a reporter and was busy writing a story. An unhappy subscriber called. Her neighbors had their papers; she didn't have hers. I told her if she'd drop by the office I would give her a paper. She couldn't. She didn't have a car.

"OK, where do you live?"

Finished with my work, I decided to take her a paper on my way home.

As I drove up to her house, she came out, dressed in midriff and tight shorts, hair in big curlers and a cigarette dangling from her mouth. Plus, a frown on her face.

When I handed her the paper, she didn't thank me. But she did say: "I don't know why I bothered about not getting the paper. There's never anything in it worth reading anyway."

Driving away, I didn't feel hurt or angry. Yes ma'am, it's good to have a sense of humor.

Wanda Orton is a retired managing editor of The Sun. She can be reached at viewpoints@baytownsun.com, Attention: Wanda Orton.



Proposed battleship resolution

"The Battleship Texas Foundation is seeking a Joint Venture partner to accomplish the following two major goals:

- Create a new permanent home for the Historic Battleship Texas. This location needs to attract visitors from all over the world and also serve as a location for special events for the greater Houston area.
- Partner with The Battleship Texas Foundation in the relocation, restoration of the ship and the enhancement of the visitor experience, to create an experience that allows for greater understanding of Naval history and serve as a source of pride to all Texans."

TODAY IN HISTORY

On this date:
In 1973, President Richard Nixon's attorney, J. Fred Buzhardt, revealed the existence of an 18.5-minute gap in one of the White House tape recordings related to Watergate.

One year ago: A federal judge in Pennsylvania tossed out a Trump campaign lawsuit seeking to prevent certification of Joe Biden's victory.

Thankful for small, fun things

(DISCERNING READER ALERT: This column was first published on Nov. 24, 2008.)

Yes, I did do a Christmas column before writing today's story on Thanksgiving. But it wasn't my fault.

The holiday season -- what with Christmas being "merchandised" earlier and earlier each year -- has become like a football game. There's the first half, or Early Christmas. Then comes halftime, or Thanksgiving. And finally the second half, or the run-up to the Real Christmas.

Touchdown, Santa Claus! You lose, turkey!

Don't blame me, though, that all this celebrating is so disjointed. I'm only reporting the news as it happens. (I know, I know. This is unusual in the news biz.)

But know this. I love Thanksgiving. It's probably my favorite holiday.

So, I'm looking forward to Thursday when family members gather under our roof (we're always the "home field" for Thanksgiving). I can hardly wait.

There are a number of reasons I dig this holiday so much. Good food (we've bought our Eddy Cajun Turkey and I can't wait to bite that bird), beloved family, and watching the Cowboys. I pull for Dallas with all due respect to the Texans, who are dull, have unattractive uniforms, and generally lose.

Being in a Thanksgiving mood, I thought I'd use this space to throw out a few things I'm awfully grate-



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ful for, but in a little different way. I thought I'd mention some fun stuff. Feel free to try this at home.

Sure we're all thankful for our families, our health, those valiant men and women represent-

ing us on foreign battlefields, and most especially those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our great nation and their families. Important things like that, which will be mentioned in a million-jillion Thanksgiving prayers, and rightfully so.

But what I'm looking for are the little things we sometimes take for granted. Not Miss America-type responses. Like this:

HOST: Miss Massachusetts, if I gave you \$1 million, how would you spend it?

MISS MASSACHUSETTS: I would donate 89.4 percent to the poor and less fortunate, after taking a few thousand off the top to give to the Peace Movement. I'd also give a portion to my favorite environmental group, "The Green Lipstick Girls," who want all cars powered by raw sewage by 2014. I'd give it all away even though my mother is blind, wheelchair-bound, lives in a shack, and has a bad case of the hives. That's the true me.

(The crowd goes wild with that stupid answer.)

Here are mine:

First, the sucking up. I'm thankful

that High Sun Management is either extremely tolerant or doesn't read the junk I write (probably the latter). Editors let me do dumb things like capitalizing words that shouldn't be. Stuff like that. Just in case they haven't noticed, let's not tell them.

Speaking of which, I'm thankful I've spent most of my career in the newspaper business. Otherwise, I would've had to work for a living all these years.

I'm thankful I live in Texas. What if I lived in New York? AAARRGH-HH! In New York, they tax everything that moves, and it's getting worse. Soon they'll be taxing people every time they change underwear, which for New York state legislators is about every four days.

I'm thankful for the Arkansas Razorbacks. They either make me incredibly happy or exceedingly sad. But what the hey?

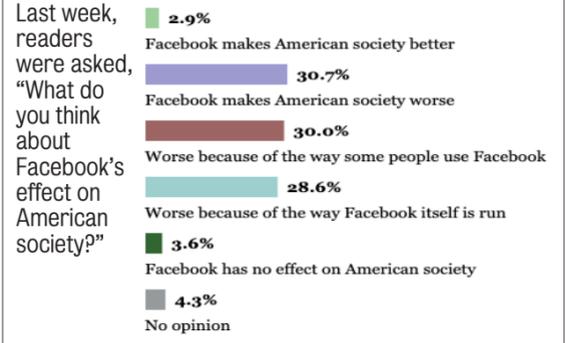
I'm thankful I grew up in the 1950s. Sure, I would've been a Stud Muffin and a fine athlete in any era, but I grew up with Elvis, Fats Domino, and Dean Martin, and I still see many of my wonderful high school friends often.

I'm thankful I was around long enough to see Herb Minyard's Rangers in the state playoffs after a 23-year absence.

Now you play.
Happy Thanksgiving!

Jim Finley is a retired managing editor of The Sun. He can be reached at viewpoints@baytownsun.com, Attention: Jim Finley.

Baytown Sun Weekly Survey



This week's question: "What traditional holiday dish would you rather not see on your Thanksgiving table?" Respond at www.baytownsun.com If you have a suggestion for a future question, please send it to david.bloom@baytownsun.com.

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