

Remember them Sultana victims deserve museum

JOHN N. FOGLEMAN
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Henry Nickerson, A.C. Brown, William Fies, Nathaniel Foglesong, J. Walter Elliott and Chester Berry. Who are these men? Or W.P. Madden, Daniel Garber, A.W. King, Robert Rule?

It is not surprising that you have never heard of any of them. These men, along with over 1,900 others, were all soldiers who had survived the deadliest war in American history and two enemy prison camps, and were finally going home. They had the bad luck of being sent north for home on the Sultana.

On April 27, 1865, the deadliest maritime disaster in American history occurred just north of Memphis when the steamboat Sultana exploded, yet the story is largely unknown. In April of 1865, the Civil War was ending, and the Southern prison camps were beginning to parole their prisoners. Thousands of Union prisoners from Andersonville and Cahaba were sent to Camp Fisk outside Vicksburg, Miss. Through a combination of greed and corruption, about 2,000 of these soldiers were loaded onto the Sultana, which was only licensed to carry 376 passengers.

These soldiers did not seem to care that they had no bed in which to sleep and were herded onto the Sultana like cattle. They had made it out of the war alive and had survived horrific conditions in the prison camps. They were at long last going home. Most never made it. Approximately 1,200 died in the Mississippi River on the morning of April 27, 1865, about five miles from Marion, Ark. Many of those that did survive suffered life-altering injuries from the scalding steam.

The men on the Sultana deserve to be remembered by a country they fought to preserve. Our project will establish a permanent museum to honor and remember these men and preserve the memory of the Sultana. All Americans, but especially our youth, need the opportunity to be educated on this important event in American history.

Our country talks of honoring its veterans, but in many ways we have failed. Beginning in 1889, a group of survivors of the Sultana began to petition Congress for a monument somewhere along the Mississippi River to remember the Sultana. These efforts continued for every session of Con-

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Guest writer

gress from 1889 to 1914, and every effort failed.

All these brave soldiers wanted was a monument to remember this horrible tragedy and to honor and remember the soldiers. Some of these men became understandably bitter when it did not happen.

Sgt. James H. Kimberlin of the 124th Indiana Infantry expressed this frustration best when not long before he died in 1924 wrote: "The men who had endured the torments of a hell on earth, starved, famished from thirst, eaten with vermin, having endured all the indignities, insults, and abuses possible for an armed bully to bestow upon them, to be so soon forgotten does not speak well for our government or the American people."

Sergeant Kimberlin, the people of Marion and the state of Arkansas have not forgotten. These survivors and the families of those who died deserved better, and we have the opportunity to do better. In Marion, we are on the cusp of completing the fundraising necessary to build a first-class museum and to provide state-of-the-art exhibits so that these soldiers and their comrades are never forgotten.

To build this museum, the cost is projected to be \$10 million to renovate the old Marion High School Auditorium and Gymnasium, to build an entry addition, and to fabricate exhibits. In a matter of weeks this phase of the fundraising may be complete.

We have an unbelievable opportunity! FedEx has issued a \$1 million Challenge Grant. To meet this challenge, the Sultana Historical Preservation Society Inc. must have donations and pledges totaling \$9 million no later than May 31. To date we have donations and pledges totaling \$8,566,729. With the help of the people of the state of Arkansas, we will meet the challenge.

Donations may be made online at sultanadisastermuseum.com or by check made payable to SHPS and mailed to P.O. Box 211, Marion, AR 72364.

John N. Fogleman is president of the Sultana Historical Preservation Society Inc., based in Marion.

It's not so easy

Teachers often need second jobs

KRISTINA EISENHOWER
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Educators have always heard that they have it "easy." They get summers and all holidays off. I always tell my colleagues to have an elevator conversation ready for when someone references "summers off." In Arkansas, teachers are paid on a salary basis. This often means teachers are working after school, before school, and attending mandated professional development in the summer weeks.

Teachers are required to have their classrooms organized and prepared for all students to arrive on the first day of school. You will find educators in their school building working on their classrooms and planning for the coming year at all hours of the day during the summer weeks. These educators are spending their own money on decorations, aesthetic pieces, and gifts for their children. They use these summer months writing curriculum, attending workshops to help them better educate their students, and catching up on professional readings and training.

Although the teacher minimum pay has been raised to \$50,000, you'll find many single-parent educators picking up second jobs after school and during the summer months to make ends meet. Many districts have had to cut veteran teachers' pay to adequately fund the new \$50,000 minimum for all educators. These pay cuts will affect educators throughout the state in smaller school districts.

Roughly 22 percent of current educators hold second jobs. These jobs range from marketing, multilevel-marketing representatives, sales, to the restaurant industry. Of course, with the economy causing prices to continue to rise on everyday essentials, you will see many more educators taking on second jobs to make ends meet.

This is disheartening when many of these educators have master's or specialist degrees in the education field.

We are still seeing the effects of

pandemic-related inflation and a plummeting economy. This, in turn, has forced many educators to re-evaluate their career and reimagine what their future may look like. Some are mapping out leaving the field altogether, hoping that their second career or job can fill the current lack of funds that teaching has left them with; others have already left.

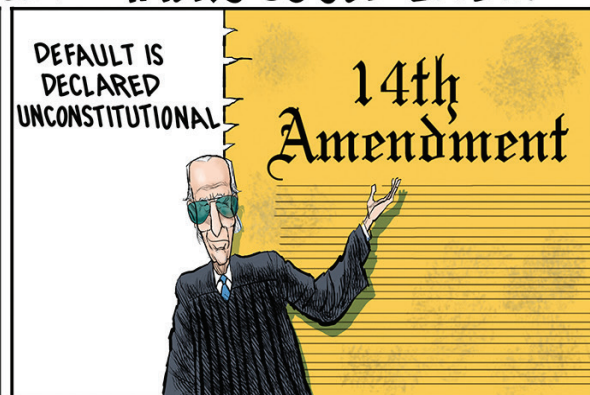
Education has my heart and I thoroughly enjoy working with colleagues and pushing our students to new heights, yet I have also held a second job for more than 15 years. As a successful photographer who has been published in magazines throughout the country, the topic of teachers taking on a second job hits home. My second job has allowed me to provide some of the "extras" that so many teachers are seeking with a second job.

I am excited for the new opportunities for new teachers coming into a field with a higher starting pay, yet I am also disheartened for many Arkansas educators who have had to take a pay cut or who are not receiving adequate pay for the degrees they hold.

During this Teacher Appreciation Week (May 8-May 12), I encourage parents, community members, and legislators to reach out to teachers and extend their gratitude for all the dedication and hard work each and every educator puts forth in their career. Educators are the foundation of our future, and they deserve many thanks for all that they do.

Kristina Eisenhower of Cabot was born and raised in central Arkansas. She is a 15-year veteran teacher, small-business owner, and mother to three. Kristina earned her bachelor of science in elementary education, master's of theory and practice, and Ed.S. in educational leadership from Arkansas State University, and is a National Board Certified Teacher.

FOUR WAYS THE DEBT LIMIT TALKS COULD END...



Teachers, here's your essay

OPINION

John Brummett



The state Education Department, now in service to the nationally obsessed political ambition of Gov. Sarah Sanders, is requiring this year that nominees for Teacher of the Year submit competitive essays extolling Sanders' law giving vouchers to parents to take their kids out of public schools and put them in private, religious or home schools.

For that matter, the law gives subsidies to parents formerly paying fully on their own for their kids in private or church schools.

The point seems to be that public schools are failing by teaching about race problems and maybe even mentioning gay people, so let's stomp the heathens flat.

What we're getting from Sanders is a political movement that abhors woke California, where I suspect some inappropriate left-wing indoctrination may be occurring, and punishes the decidedly un-woke Arkansas for the sins of California.

Because students at Stanford wouldn't let that conservative speak that time, Arkansas school teachers must snap-to if they want an award.

In service to Sarah, the state Education Department specifically requires this year that award-nominated teachers must relate in these essays how they intend to incorporate the so-called LEARNS Act in the classroom and in the "platform" they will adopt as a messaging theme for their award year.

It's unfortunate that some will pre-judge the new Teacher of the Year as merely the smartiest gubernatorial sycophant. We should keep open minds to the possibility that the honoree is also an outstanding teacher. The local nomination would indicate excellent teaching, just as the state award would signal acceptable levels of Sarah devotion. Perhaps gymnastics teachers should apply.

The application form allows 750 words for this essay. That happens to be close to the number of words

left in this usual column allocation. So, I thought I'd offer in the remaining space a cut-and-paste essay for applicant use. No one should worry about getting caught for plagiarism because no one in state government reads or cares about this column.

Consider, then, these words, and use them with my permission—to, in fact, my utter delight:

"I plan to relate the LEARNS Act to future classrooms by telling students whose parents haven't moved them to a private, religious or home school that they're the lucky ones. They're getting a smaller class permitting a teacher of the year to give them more individual attention.

"I plan to challenge my students to respond to me as the teacher of the year by being, as a group, students of the year. If they work hard and show academic success, I'll give out plaques at the end of the year that I'd pay for myself. I've always had to pay for such things myself. Now my school will be even more budget-constrained owing to all the money going with children relocated to places where they won't be taught by any teacher of the year, or even necessarily a certified one.

"I plan to respond responsibly to the LEARNS Act's ban on indoctrination of children in my charge by directing the kids on the first day of school to tell their parents we would learn in class about race problems in America. If any parents had a problem with that, they could come see me or send me an email to arrange to excuse

their children to a private study hall during these times while the other students get real educations.

"I will be positive about the LEARNS Act by telling the kids to congratulate the first-year teachers on the faculty for the big raise in starting salary. I probably will choose not to mention that I, a teacher of the year, got only \$2,000 and lost the assurances of the career-ladder salary schedule rewarding experience and professional development.

"I will urge the kids to study hard and get all the learning they can as quickly as they can because the LEARNS Act's repeal of fair-dismissal procedures means that I could get fired at any time, subject now only to a hearing before the school board.

"I will urge these kids to keep on keeping on in pursuit of being students of the year even if suddenly I am no longer their teacher.

"Be assured that, if I am not chosen for the Teacher of the Year recognition, I will work just as hard in the way outlined above.

"While I reject the idea that I should be made to extol a policy I disagree with in order to be recognized for my work, just

as the National Teacher of the Year should not be made to write hosannas to forgiveness of student debt, I accept the consequence of failing to adhere closely to the application requirements.

"Formally honored or not, I will remain among legions of proud professional educators who strive to be teachers of the year every year for whatever students the politicians choose to place in our trust."

John Brummett, whose column appears regularly in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, is a member of the Arkansas Writers' Hall of Fame. Email him at jbrummett@arkansasonline.com. Read his @johnbrummett Twitter feed.

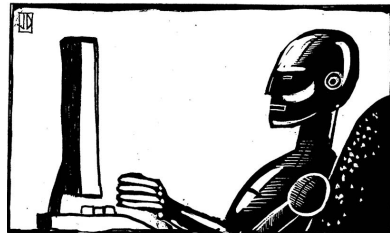
LETTERS

Machines taking over

Recently a friend of mine and I ran three of my most enigmatic poems through an artificial intelligence app. The resulting reviews were astonishingly in-depth and on point in comprehension, as well done as any high-level degree in creative writing I know. I was flabbergasted and stunned.

For now, the immediate present, we will assume that the review is being done by a human, but soon we will learn that it's being done by AI, then gradually we will accept this.

An eerie something is going to happen to the human mind and soul when we realize that we are no longer interacting with, being evaluated by, and taken care of by human beings



with hearts and souls but rather unfeeling, uncaring, soulless machines.

We have all heard that AI could soon be evaluating us medically, giving us legal or personal advice, teaching us and our children, chatting with elders in nursing homes.

I personally never worried about machines taking over ... until now. It's here.

MARIANNE BEASLEY
Fayetteville

Shouldn't print that

The stated policy for letters says personal attacks and libelous or defamatory statements will not be published. How, then, can you publish Richard Sanders' letter of May 6? He calls Democrat supporters degenerates, pedophiles, sickos, rapists, etc. and includes the statement, "they are the brethren of swindlers, outlaws, lunatics, cheats, liars, haters, creeps, perverts, and freaks, which, not surprisingly, are today's woke Democrats."

Based on his current legal troubles, you could substitute "Donald Trump" for "woke Democrats" and then read

the statement. Fits like a glove.

FYI, I am a registered independent; Trump will never get our vote.

GARY HAYES
Bella Vista

Editor's note: The guidelines on letters refer to attacks/statements on specific individuals, not general groups of people.

A further correction

The correction in Sunday's paper about the late Gordon Lightfoot's song "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" didn't go far enough.

The ship was not coming back from some sawmill in Wisconsin, it was carrying a load of iron ore, not lumber. It was coming back from "some mill in Wisconsin."

One of my all-time favorite songs!

TOM ROUSEY
Fayetteville

Actually very simple

It's not complicated: More guns, more killings!

JOHN DUPREE
Fayetteville

Express yourself

The Democrat-Gazette welcomes your opinions. Not all letters received can be published or acknowledged. Clarity, brevity and originality are particularly valued, and letters must be suitable for publication in a family newspaper. Handwritten letters must be legible. Statements of fact are checked for accuracy; letters will be edited and may be republished in all media.

Letters and guest columns become the property of the Democrat-Gazette and cannot be returned. Letters from nonresidents, copyrighted material, poetry, form letters, and anonymous letters cannot be used.

Submit letters of fewer than 300 words to Voices, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, P.O. Box 2221, Little Rock, Ark., 72203; by fax at (501) 372-4765; by email at voices@arkansasonline.com; or via our website, www.arkansasonline.com/contact/voicesform. Please sign your letter and include your home address and daytime telephone number for verification. Writers are limited to one letter per 30 days.

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