

From the Mailbag: Ann Coulter is a Christian?

To the Editor,
And it's okay to ask.
I've read a few of Ann Coulter's editorials, and heard her on Fox News recently. I must admit, I can only stomach her for so long, so I've not read most of her works. What prompted this letter was hearing her in an interview with Sean Hannity several weeks ago. She called herself a Christian and that everything she does stems from her Christianity. A lot of people claim to be Christians but that doesn't make it so. So I question her claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ. In the final analysis however, the Judge will part the sheep from the goats.

In the meantime, we are told that we can tell a tree by its fruit. I understand we all have a bad day, even a prolonged bad spell where we're not exactly acting Christlike. That's all a part of growing up as a Christian. I know this from personal experience. However, Miss Coulter's mean-spirited and unloving words are a way of life for her, not an occasional slip-up. She thrives on her witty, hard-hitting verbatim aimed at her opponents, the liberal left. The enemy isn't the liberal left for whom Jesus died for, the enemy is the Devil. (And, that coming from a conservative Christian Republican, me!). We're not to do battle with a sharp tongue, but to battle on our knees in prayer and live a life of loving our enemies.

Yes, she does speak much 'truth' (although not entirely). And the truth can be painful. But it seems to me that perhaps she doesn't quite have the right heart about it. We are to speak the truth because we love those to whom we speak it to, not because we're in a battle of wits and of being right.

It's a free country, with freedom of expression. So go for it Ann. Personally, I have a difficult time believing that you're doing this out of your Christianity. The Apostles and Jesus Christ himself did not speak with such arrogance, pride and enjoyment at belittling enemies as you have. Jesus' harshest words were aimed at religious hypocrites, not the unbelievers. You give Christians a bad name.

Another proponent of the Christian Right who also claims to be a Christian and who better acts and speaks like one is Mr. Cal Thomas. Miss Coulter, may I suggest you read Cal's book, "Blinded by Might; Why the Religious Right Can't Save America".

Robin Somers
Norton

Farming ranks high in stress

To the Editor,
Farming is considered to be one of the top ten most stressful occupations in the United States. Many stressors in farming are obvious: financial pressures, dependence on good weather and markets, working in extreme weather conditions and fatigue. In addition, farm family members often do not have enough personal time for each other, time to talk together and relax.

Stress is a necessary part of life, a helpful motivator. However, too much stress can damage one's physical health, compromise personal safety on the farm and ruin relationships with others. Unrelieved stress is a known risk factor in many of the leading causes of premature death among adults including heart disease and stroke. Stress is also a risk factor for depression and suicide. It is not possible to totally eliminate all stress in our lives, but effective management can help reduce stress and build "hope". Here are a few suggestions:

- Eat right. Most farmers would not head out to the field in a high-cost tractor with a tank of low-grade quality fuel. Yet when busy, will often skip meals or load up on fast food.
- Exercise. Especially during the "off-season" physical activity helps eliminate stress-induced chemicals that build up in the body. A brisk walk or simple exercises can help relieve stress and leave a person feeling less worn out at the end of the day.
- Talk, talk, talk. Rural folk tend to keep problems to themselves. However, openly discussing and venting problems, concerns, fears and frustrations can be helpful and healthy. Families and farm couples who handle stress well seem to have the ability to communicate freely.
- Plan ahead. Keep good records, examine current resources and determine future goals. Good planning helps reduce confusion and makes the future less unclear, all of which help reduce stress.
- Plan for personal time. Planting, harvesting and general work around the farm often result in missing out on special times with family and friends. Personal time is necessary to build and maintain relationships, as well as time for relaxation, friendship and laughter.

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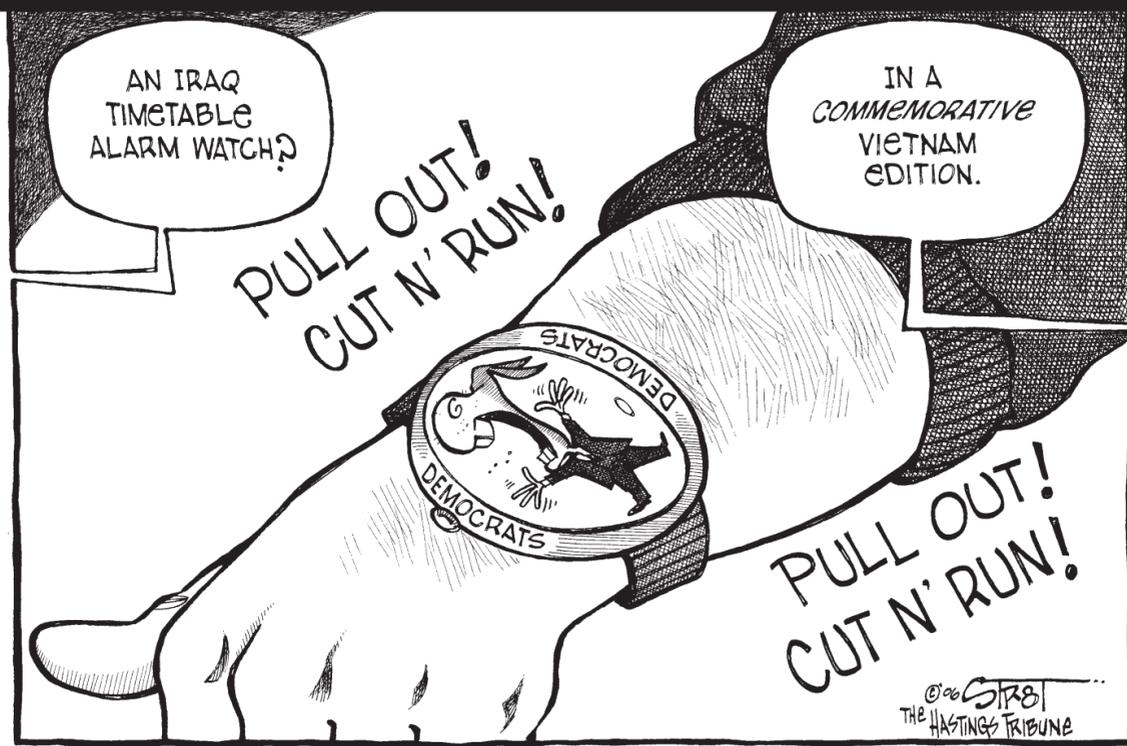
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Bad weather can bring bad decisions

As my mother used to say about a heavy rain, it was raining "pitch forks and hammer handles." I work late Thursday evenings. It was about 10:30 p.m. when I was driving home last Thursday in the pouring rain. The lightning was so sharp, so close and so frequent that I was almost blinded by the light.

Coupled with the heavy rain, I could not see the road. Even on high speed, the windshield wipers couldn't keep up. I was driving by watching the white line on the opposite side of the road. In a situation like that, you can't stop on the highway. You're in worse danger of being rear-ended.

As I crept along the highway something didn't look quite right. I saw the dim glow of a light on the left side of the highway. I knew that from the railroad tracks east of our town to the turn-off into our

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



little village there are no farmsteads on the left side. I had over-shot the road into town.

There's only one thing dumber than stopping on the highway and that's backing up on the highway. What's that old saying? Something about God protecting children and fools. Anyway, that's what I counted on as I put the car in reverse.

I found the road and slid to a stop in front of our house. By the time I ran the distance from the car to the house, I was

completely soaked. My husband looked up from the television and said, "Glad you're home. I was just about ready to come looking for you."

Well, he wouldn't have found me. Because, I wasn't where I was supposed to be.

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For the most part, my entire family is disgustingly healthy. But, when something does show up, it's a doozy. In the span of one week, a brother and a nephew were both diagnosed with cancer. This is my brother Don's third go-round and my nephew Kevin's first experience. We pray that it will be the last for both.

However, if anyone needs a lesson in "Positive Attitude" they should sign up for a class with these two. They both have put all their confidence in their medical treatment and all their faith in God.

The death of baseball in rural America

Growing up in Smalltown USA, baseball was a given. When summer rolled around, you could count on one of the Norton teams advancing to state playoffs. Those times have come and gone due to kids being given an ultimatum. After being away for many years from the town I grew up in, returning home felt really good. Norton has excellent schools and teachers who care about the kids they teach, churches, very friendly neighbors, a winning sports team in most all sports, and best of all, no gangs and very little drug use.

Norton used to have a baseball team that the kids had to try out to make the team. They usually were competing at the end of the season for state championships. Now you have to beat the bushes to get enough kids to play.

Before I returned to Norton in 2004, a group of concerned parents went to the school board and tried to get baseball and softball into the system. From what I understand, some coaches were vehemently against it, saying it would hurt the other sports. This year I went in front of the school board with high hopes of getting a vote on the issue of having a boy's baseball team. Not only was I disappointed by the lack of support by the school board, but I was shocked by the total control one man can have over a board. The board tabled the proposal till the next month, so that they could get some facts for the next meeting.

Returning to the next meeting I was prepared with letters from parents and supporters who would have supported the team. Boy was I in for a rude awakening. The proposal was never even given a chance to be heard, as it was never proposed and died. Ninety-five percent of the people I talked to were all for having a team, especially when they learned that a smaller school such as Plainville started a high school team.

The obstacles and the road blocks that were put up to keep a team from being here were enormous. We have boys and girls tennis; we don't need another sport, was one of the replies I heard. Researching the past couple of years, there had not been a boy's tennis team in years. In looking back over the last two years, you will see that the Norton Community High School

Building on the Past Joe Durham

golf team has as many, if not more participants than the track team. In talking with Activities Director Mills, Mr. Mills would have no problem if those sports were introduced here. One holdup he mentioned is that all the other schools in the district are waiting for one of the other schools to make the first move, and the scheduling of the schools that do have baseball.

The problem in waiting for someone to take the ball and run with it is that the young men and women are lacking the playing time and the skills to compete with the schools that have the sports in their system. These powerhouses such as Colby, Goodland, McCook and Hays would be a tough opponent for Norton kids now. Soon you can add Plainville to that list.

In case people have forgotten, there are some really talented people in this area who could help these young men and women achieve some lofty goals. Norton has one of the better Little League programs in the area. The Norton Recreation Association holds a small baseball camp in the mornings for the younger kids, starting them on the road to loving and understanding the game of baseball.

However, a large percentage of these men and women don't progress past junior high because of so many summer activities. I understand the need for summer camps for all sports, but to say a kid must participate in summer drills, camps, and playing summer ball is a little much. How many young men and women have gone on to play in a Division I college in the sport that they gave up their summers for? I know that some will say that Norton is not as big a town as what it was as I grew up in. That is true as you look at the graduating class of 2006. The numbers are down but the talent pool is as rich if not richer as when I grew up here.

Area towns have lost their teams and no longer have a K-18 or Legion team. These kids from other towns lose interest in a sport they once loved because there is no team. Norton, with the talent pool that is available from the area towns, and locally, could be a dominating force in these sports. Trying to recruit and put together an American Legion team for the summer, I have heard more excuses than you can shake a stick at. The one that I have no control over is the most damaging. Last year I coached the Norton American Legion team. Since I was not familiar with who had played baseball before, I had to ask some other folks for help. One thing that really affected me was how hard it was to field a team.

Young men who had played for years were no longer interested in a sport they once loved. The older young men who were on the verge of being too old to play were very hurt, bitter, and angry. After much prodding the story came out. To a man, they all said the same thing. "Coach, why should I come out when the school, and the town doesn't care. We won state in K-18 and the school didn't care." The inaction taken by the school board at that time had affected these young men's lives, and it still does to this date.

Maybe times have changed and I am old fashioned, but summer was time for kids to unwind and have a little fun. After they graduate from high school, they will have their whole life to work and find a job, but for some reason some parents think that work is all there is.

Writing this letter will upset some people in town, most noticeably coaches who give their players ultimatums that they must attend their camps and play their sport all summer or they won't be starting on their team next year. As my father taught me "cooperation is the key to success."

You see, the athletes from football go on to be state champions in wrestling, men's basketball, golf and track. You see, the young ladies go on to be super stars in volleyball, basketball, cross country, and track.

If we all worked within the system, could Norton be the next state champion in baseball and softball?

Joe Durham is a Norton resident.

Don't forget Friday is 'Thumbs Up...' day