



**Carmage Walls**  
**Commentary Prize**

**2018 Entry Form**

**Author's Title:** Managing editor

**Newspaper:** The Baytown Sun

**Address:** 1301 Memorial Drive

**City:** Baytown

**State:** Texas

**ZIP:** 77521

**Phone:** 281-425-8016

**Email:**

david.bloom@baytownsun.com

**Submitted by:** David Bloom

**Title of Person Submitting:** Managing editor

**Phone Number:** 281-425-8016

**E-mail Address:** david.bloom@baytownsun.com

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**Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation?** Under

**Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)**

Goose Creek CISD is easily the most important institution in Baytown, directly impacting the taxes we pay, the children we love and the community we live in.

Every school day Goose Creek is responsible for educating, supervising, feeding and transporting thousands of students, not to mention countless other services and duties.

Recently, the district's school board has made a series of far-reaching decisions, and The Sun editorials weighed in on issues that are important to readers and vital to the community discourse.

The editorials serve as the conscience of the community whether it's ending lunch-shaming (which they did), voting on bond issues or oversight of PTO groups (which has been increased).

The editorials show that impactful journalism can be accomplished in small-town newspapers.

## OUR VIEW

# Absence of oversight

*"As a result of the allegations against the former PTO board member, the GCCISD Board of Trustees was forced to vote to dissociate ... Essentially this means that there is not, at this time, an active PTO. However, a new PTO can be formed by parent volunteers. Until that is done, and the PTO is reinstated by a majority vote of the GCCISD Board of Trustees, meetings cannot be held on campus and no fundraising may occur."*

*"This incident has been difficult for our families to understand, particularly since it is incomprehensible that a person would steal from our children. My hope is that we can move forward together with the best interest of our students at heart."*

— Letter from principal to elementary school parents

- 2013 – a high school cheerleaders booster club president charged with theft charge for inappropriately using the nonprofit organization money for personal needs.
- 2015 – a high school band booster club president resigns over misuse of the club's debit card. Booster club takes her to court for restitution.
- 2016 – a high school head football coach resigns over misused and missing funds from the football booster club. The district did not investigate how much money was missing.
- 2017 – an elementary PTO president is charged with theft of \$100,000 from the organization. (While the case is pending, what we do know does not look good for the PTO or the district.)

It is frustrating these episodes continue to occur. As much as the district pushes the view that these crimes occurred outside their authority, we disagree. These parent-volunteer groups, while legally separate from the district, are undeniably a part of the district — and a vitally important ones to boot — funding playground equipment, field trips, parties and more.

We, and likely many parents and taxpayers, consider the district liable to varying degrees in each of these cases.

Goose Creek administrators, teachers, aides, nurses, cafeteria cooks and all district staff as well as students (brothers and sisters), parents and taxpayers — are all one big Goose Creek family.

We ask for better oversight of the family business. The district must tighten controls to protect students and parents from theft of money donated trying to help schools.

We don't mean calling the shots on what kinds of activities groups want to pursue or finance. But regular oversight that keeps financial accounts in the public eye to ensure errors are small and not criminal.

In the latest case, apparently one PTO officer had sole control over the group's bank account. This is not a sound policy. The PTO also did not provide documentation related to their operations and fundraisers as requested by the principal. Major red flag.

Finally, the case did not get the attention of the district until a credit union called to report the account overdrawn. Now, police say \$100,000 is missing?

This cannot continue. There are many ways to prevent theft from these volunteer-parent organizations.

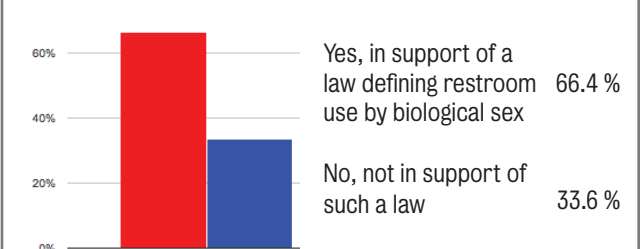
The easiest way, experts say is to double the personnel responsible for any group's finances: Two people to count the money, two people to sign every check and two people to reconcile the books.

For Goose Creek CISD, this should be step one. The family will thank you.

*Editorial written by David Bloom, managing editor of The Baytown Sun, on behalf of the editorial board.*

## Baytown Sun Survey

Baytown Sun readers who responded to this week's survey mostly supported a proposed law that would designate that the restrooms, shower rooms and such at public facilities must be used according to a person's sex at birth.



This week's question: Who are you rooting for to win the Super Bowl? Respond at [www.baytownsun.com](http://www.baytownsun.com)

### TODAY IN HISTORY

**On this date:**  
In 1845, Edgar Allan Poe's poem "The Raven" was first published in the New York Evening Mirror.  
In 1919, the ratification of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which launched Prohibition, was certified.  
In 1936, the first inductees of baseball's Hall of Fame, including Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth, were named in Cooperstown, New York.

**Thought for Today:** "And were an epitaph to be my story I'd have a short one ready for my own. I would have written of me on my stone: 'I had a lover's quarrel with the world.'"  
— Robert Frost  
*American poet (born 1874, died this date in 1963)*

# What's in your pop-quiz wallet?

Local fans of actress Jennifer Garner enjoy seeing her on the "what's in your wallet?" commercials for Capitol One credit cards, but do they know her Baytown connection?

If they do, they're off to a good start, quick to answer the first question on our pop quiz today.

1. What is Jennifer Garner's connection with Baytown?
2. What is Lyle Lovett's connection with Highlands?
3. Who was the first band director at Robert E. Lee High School?
4. Two former Baytonians at one time worked at the same time at the Washington Post. Name them.
5. Who was the first superintendent of the Goose Creek School District?
6. A famous writer taught at Robert E. Lee High School before the start of World War 2. His name, please.
7. An infamous co-conspirator in a sensational murder case lived out his last years in Pelly, known mostly as a frequent visitor at the Pelly City Hall and as a regular customer in a café on West Main. Few, if any, knew anything about his background. Who was this man?
8. Who's the successful Hollywood makeup artist from Baytown?

Let's open our wallets now and pull out the answers:

1. Movie star Jennifer Garner is the daughter of Billy Garner, who graduated from REL in 1956. Jennifer attended the funeral of her grandmother Exie Garner in 2008 in Baytown and dined afterward at



**WANDA ORTON**

Jennifer told this story: "When I first started working with Capital One, my dad called them up and asked for the Jennifer Garner Card, which is such a dad thing to do. When the phone operator asked if he was related to Garner, he said, 'As a matter of fact she is my middle daughter.'" After filming the commercial and asking about "your wallet," his middle daughter exclaimed, "That was good, dad!"

2. William Pearce "Sonny" Lovett, from Highlands, was the father of Lyle Lovett. (Via Google, you can find Lyle Lovett's nostalgic song "Wallisville Road")

3. School trustees hired A.A. Davis as the first full-time director of the REL Band. He also played in the Houston Symphony Orchestra, and his background ranged from directing the Army Band in World War I to playing in a circus band.

4. Molly Bowers Sinclair and Patrick Tyler were at the Washington Post, same time, different news beats. Molly (a former Sun reporter) graduated from REL and Patrick, from Ross S. Sterling.

El Toro Restaurant. She still has relatives in Baytown.

By the way, Jennifer's dad may be the next star in the family, having shared the spotlight with his famous daughter in a "what's in your wallet" commercial.

5. J.F. Crawford served as the first superintendent of Goose Creek schools after the district split from Cedar Bayou. A special act of the Texas Legislature made the separation official in 1921. Interestingly, Goose Creek and Cedar Bayou districts consolidated in 1954. (Together again, after all those years, as the Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District.)

6. Author William A. Owens once taught at REL. In his book "Three Friends," he wrote about his good friends J. Frank Dobie, Roy Bedicek and Walter Prescott Webb.

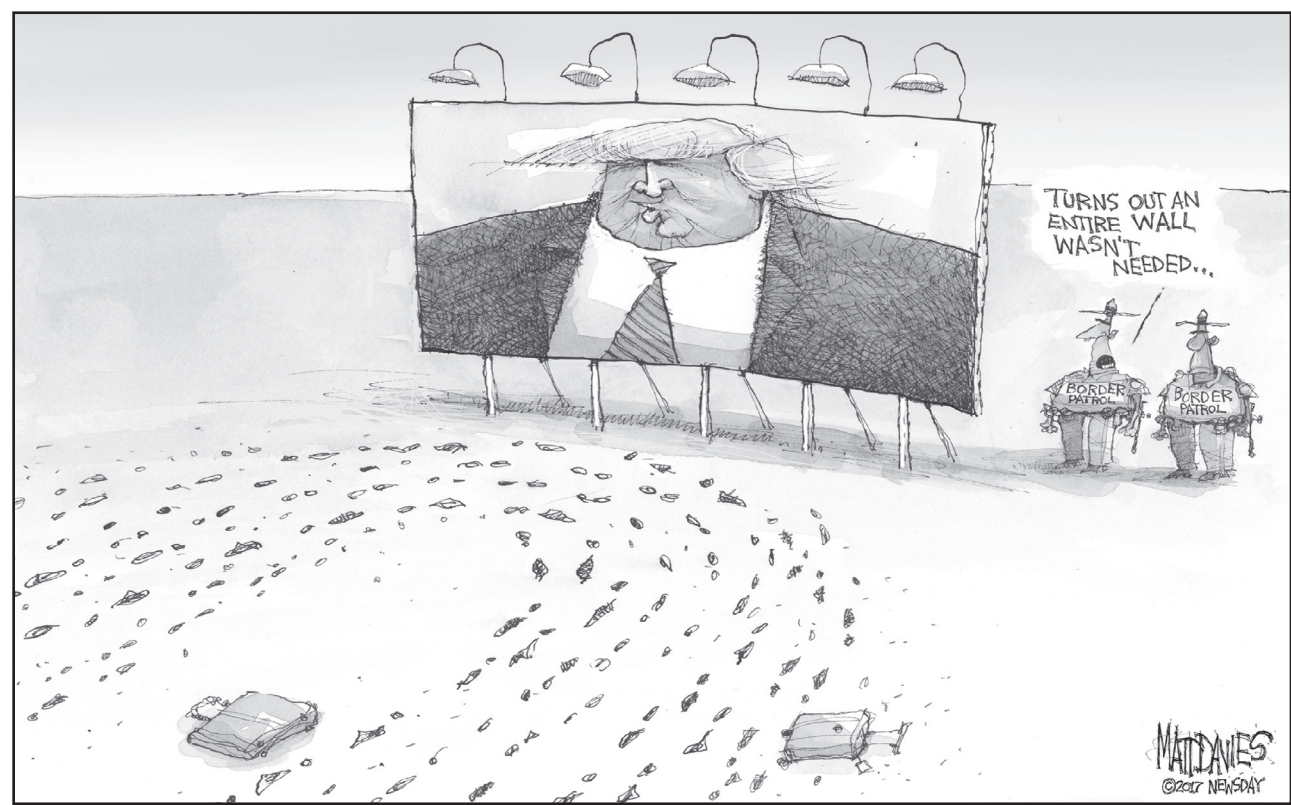
7. Native Baytonian Charles F. Jones, along with attorney Albert Patrick, was convicted in the murder of Rice University benefactor William Marsh Rice in 1900. At the time of the crime, Jones worked as Rice's valet in New York City. Jones committed suicide in 1954 at his home in Pelly.

8. Tina Roesler Kerwin, 1979 graduate of REL, is an award-winning, sought-after makeup artist for movies and TV.

That's all, folks — all of the questions to pop today. To borrow an old TV series title, "Eight is Enough."

However, if we did ask one more question, it would be: What's in your wallet?

*Wanda Orton is a retired managing editor of The Sun. She can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com), Attention: Wanda Orton.*



# Sudden urge for chicken fried steak

If I didn't know better, I'd think I was going through some kind of metamorphosis. Not that I know what metamorphosis means exactly.

I'm thinking, did some space alien — or possibly Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren — zap me with some kind of Ray Gun? (If it was Ms. Lizzie, I hope she has a right-to-carry permit.)

This is getting so bad I may need some kind of medical help soon. Here's my problem:

All of a sudden, I just can't get enough CHICKEN FRIED STEAK. (COLUMN PAUSE: In all my years as a leading columnist — and they're piling up quicker than I'd like — I've never before used the word "metamorphosis.")

As a medical expert myself, I know that being addicted to chicken fried steak is better than being a slave to, say, tobacco or alcohol. At least I think so.

But it's getting so bad I must confess in public print that I simply cannot help myself. I have to have chicken fried steak, sometimes more than once a week.

I don't know what's going on, and I'm frightened.

(NON-EDITOR'S NOTE: I would make an appointment to see a physician, but in the last six-plus years, I've seen 20 — YES 20 — doctors, and I don't know which one to turn to now in my time of need. Probably my main guy, Dr. Greg Terry. Or maybe my urologist, Dr. Roger Le. I just don't know.)

Here's the crazy thing, before this chicken fried steak craving hit me



**JIM FINLEY**

dropped into Rooster's for foodstuff. I had no idea what I wanted when I sat down and Super Star Waitress Tracie Locklear handed me a menu.

For the heck of it, I decided since I hadn't had chicken fried steak since possibly the Clinton Administration, I'd try one.

I shouldn't have.

It was a euphoric experience — whatever that means — and tasted so good I couldn't believe it. I wanted more, more, more.

Shortly thereafter, Wife Margie wanted to know what I was hungry for. Chicken fried steak, I replied joyfully.

"You just had a chicken fried steak two days ago," she reminded me. "Sure you don't want something different?"

I did not. But since she had something else in mind, I agreed. I always do what Wife Margie tells me.

Thusly, we went to another local café where her taste fantasies were satisfied.

Fortunately for myself personally, this same eating establishment also had chicken fried steak on the menu.

about two months ago, I hadn't had this style of meat in years. It was so long ago I can't remember when.

No more. Now I'm an addict.

This dramatic story began back in November when Wife Margie and I

With all the grace and table manners of Prince Charles, I ordered one.

As a renowned food critic, I can report that it wasn't as good as the one I had at Rooster's. My taste buds, too, thought they had been shortchanged, and let me know it in no uncertain terms. (What, your taste buds never exchange Flavor Views with you?)

This pattern has continued over the past 8 or 10 weeks. I've become an expert on Chicken Fried Steak Establishments. I've even put into place a mental chicken fried steak rating system. (This is similar to the AP Top 25 College Football Poll, only far more important.)

Now make no mistake, being the sweet, adoring, and obedient husband/father I am, I'm subservient to Wife Margie and other family entities when they want to dine elsewhere. I'm a sweetie pie, they all agree.

But whenever possible, I return to Rooster's (No. 1). There I get no argument from my sometimes-stubborn taste buds.

I suppose in the future, this Chicken Fried Steak Phenomenon will pass and I'll break my addiction. The way I feel now, I hope it's far into the future.

Meanwhile, I've added to my resume and written an entire column on chicken fried steak.

Take that, Edgar Allan Poe!

*Jim Finley is a retired managing editor of The Sun. He can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com), Attention: Jim Finley.*

## The Baytown Sun

**Main office:**  
281-422-8302 • Fax: 281-427-6283  
1301 Memorial Drive, Baytown

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**OUR VIEW**

# 'Game' over

For the first time since the LBJ administration, Robert E. Lee and Ross S. Sterling high school won't be playing a football game this fall.

Citing concerns over enrollment disparity and a lack of competitiveness, the two schools' coaches and the district reached a mutual agreement to end the 50-game football rivalry known citywide as "The Game."

That's disappointing news for Baytown-area high school football fans. Nobody wins with this decision.

The Lee-Sterling football rivalry not only fosters solidarity among the students and community, it ties students to past Gander and Ranger alumni through the common thread of shared experience.

The event celebrates a natural sports rivalry between the city's two oldest high schools and it's the one football game of the year most local fans attend.

To alter that experience is to alter commonality among alumni.

All that, apparently, matters not. Now, 6A Goose Creek Memorial will play 5A Lee, and 6A Sterling will play GCM's opponent, 5A Port Neches-Groves, on the road.

The district says its aim is more equitable and competitive contests.

We fail to see the rationale for replacing one 6A school with another on REL's schedule and replacing one 5A opponent with another 5A school on RSS' schedule? How is RSS-REL not a viable option but GCM v. REL is?

And what kind of message is the district sending to the Ganders with this move?

This change just does not make sense to many. Lee can no longer handle a game against the Rangers. Really? Lee coaches, players and fans should be insulted.

The 50th contest was celebrated with nearly 16,000 in attendance at Stallworth Stadium in September. Sterling won 30-8. However, REL leads the overall series 28-20-2.

With this decision, the players lose the experience of playing in this storied rivalry. The fans lose what has been an exciting and meaningful rivalry game.

This is one of those rare instances in sports where everyone involved loses.

Editorial by David Bloom, managing editor of The Baytown Sun, on behalf of the editorial board.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

## Trump's lies and character

One bit of advice I gave to my children/grandchildren regarding relationships is that if their romantic interest lies to them ... run. Break up with that person. I think most of us know that the basis for a solid relationship is trust, and you can't trust a person who lies to you. Extrapolating that observation to our president, here is an analysis of his statements as scored by PolitiFact, a Pulitzer Prize winning organization. Sixty-nine percent of Trump's statements were categorized as either mostly false, false, or pants on fire. (4 percent of his statements were rated as "true" and 12 percent as "mostly true.") My point is that it would be impossible to stay married to a spouse who only told you the truth 4 percent of the time. Sometimes people marry a liar because they believe love overcomes all, but almost always such marriages fail. I think America's marriage to Trump will eventually head to divorce court.

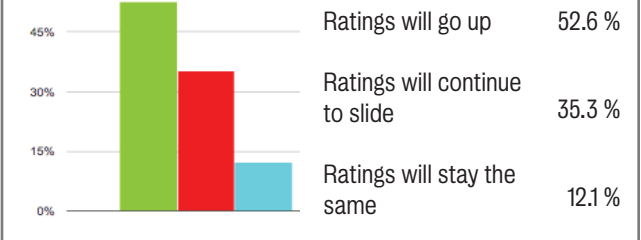
I expect some readers to rationalize their acceptance of Trump's lies by saying "all politicians lie." That may be true, but I doubt that if your child lies to you, you would accept an excuse like "everybody does it."

A lot of people think Trump's excrement smells like roses. My question to such people is: "Would you want your sons or grandsons to have the same moral character as Donald Trump?"

**Frank Butcher  
Lynchburg**

## Baytown Sun Survey

Readers who responded to this week's Sun Survey were divided, but the largest number think the president's approval ratings will increase during his first 100 days in office.



**This week's question:** Do you agree with the Goose Creek CISD decision to cancel the annual Lee-Sterling football game? Respond at [www.baytownsun.com](http://www.baytownsun.com)

**TODAY IN HISTORY**

**On this date:**  
In 1809, Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, was born in a log cabin in Hardin (now LaRue) County, Kentucky.

In 1959, the redesigned Lincoln penny — with an image of the Lincoln Memorial replacing two ears of wheat on the reverse side — went into circulation.

**Thought for Today:** "Quarrel not at all. No man resolved to make the most of himself can spare time for personal contention. Still less can he afford to take all the consequences, including the vitiating of his temper and loss of self-control."  
— President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

# Package of paper-doll memories



**WANDA ORTON**

Two of my favorite things in childhood: Playing paper dolls and going to the picture show.

Memories of both emerged this past week via a package from Norma Dickey, who's my age and also grew up cutting out paper dolls and watching movies.

So, Norma knew what I liked when she sent me a book of Betty Grable paper dolls plus a paper-doll book of WWII pinup girls like Grable, Rita Hayworth and other stars whose poster-size images went to war with servicemen all over the world.

Believe it not, I recognized many costumes from movies I'd seen at the Bay and Arcadia theaters in old Baytown. Well, why not. Back then I saw the movies over and over and still, to this day, enjoy an occasional look-see on the classic movie channel.

Former fashion illustrator Tom Tierney created the paper-doll books that Norma sent. The undisputed kind of the paper-doll industry often said he aimed "to contribute to the visual literature of costume history."

Born in Beaumont in 1928, died in Smithville in 2014, Tierney spent most of his career in New York. In the 1970s, in the midst of the Bar-

bie Doll revolution, he entered the paper-doll business, reviving a lost art that goes back at least two centuries. Tierney sold some 400 books of paper dolls, and not all of them aimed at the children's market. He reproduced historical figures and current newsmakers, researching and writing about them as well.

Tierney's characters are not the same paper dolls I knew as a child. His subjects are made of stronger stuff — of sturdy card, rather than thin paper -- and the faces don't always closely resemble those from the bygone Hollywood era. However, their features are close enough, and the wardrobes are awesome, spot on.

Among my souvenirs are a few vestiges from paper dolls that Marilyn Padgett and I collected. I still have Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara from "Gone with the Wind," along with some paper dolls of WWII vintage, men and women in uniform. Marilyn and I moved those little paper people around like puppets, and with our out-of-control

imaginations, we conjured some wild scenarios.

Mostly, our paper dolls came from the counters at Wainscott's in old Baytown and Woolworth's in Goose Creek.

I never will forget a tremendous loss suffered when I was 7 years old. Never mind that the world was on fire in 1941 with millions in combat, plus civilians, being wounded or killed. The problem was, I couldn't find my Betty Grable paper dolls.

Frantically I searched every corner of our house, plus the homes of playmates and relatives. It's a wonder I didn't knock on the doors of strangers to ask to look around.

Of course, I got over it. Life goes on, Mother kept telling me. "There are more important matters to worry about."

And I really didn't have to worry about my loss because — 76 years later in February 2017 -- a set of Betty Grable paper dolls, bigger and better than ever, arrived in the mail. Thank you, Norma Dickey!

Wanda Orton is a retired managing editor of The Sun. She can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com). Attention: Wanda Orton.



## 59 years ago, cute boy meets beautiful girl

Since Valentine's Day is Tuesday, I thought I'd offer today a touching yet romantic love story. Get your hankies and tissues out.

This involves myself personally and Wife Margie, the love of my life (and I hope likewise). It's the spell-binding tale of our first date 59 years ago this month.

You're probably thinking a love story of this magnitude would be better on like the 60th anniversary. You're probably right.

However, I got to thinking: What if I'm not here this time next year?

No, no. Not that I would be in heaven.

No, what if between now and this time in 2018 I am unceremoniously dismissed as a leading columnist by High Sun Management?

Not wanting to take that risk, here is our emotional (for me, anyway) first date story.

First, some background.

Back then, the game plan was simple. Find GIRLS.

Girls ranked ahead of sports (even football) and cars.

Thusly, we Sweeney heartthrobs would occasionally make our way to Bay City, which was 20 miles away, in search of female companionship. Not that there weren't some real babes in Sweeny.

Once there we'd prowl Seventh Street, which on weekends was like a scene from the picture show "American Graffiti." Cars, many of them containing girls, were everywhere, driving up and down Seventh.

We'd also visit Slim's Drive-In, THE PLACE for teens in that long ago era.

"Hey, look," Melton Crosson



**JIM FINLEY**

would say, "there were girls in that white Studebaker we just passed."

"Three of them," Jimmy Wheeler would add.

"But there are four of us," Robert Dixon, whose nickname was "Dirty Dan" for reason I can't explain here, would proclaim in a worried tone.

Sometimes our exploration efforts, which would've made Balboa proud, paid off in an actual date.

As an ultra-mature scholastic leader, however, I felt unsatisfied. I found myself looking for love in all the wrong places. ("Looking For Love In All The Wrong Places" would make a terrific song. For Garth Brooks, maybe?)

Then I found my thrill, not on Blueberry Hill (a la Fats Domino), but through Devine Intervention. It involved gasoline.

Gas was being pumped into my papa J.P.'s Ford — few of us had our own cars back then — at Eddie's Gulf filling station, when in drove the ugliest car I'd ever seen. It was a '56 Chevy that had a two-tone paint job featuring putrid colors I can only describe as "strained peas and diseased squash."

I didn't know it at the time, naturally, but inside that awful looking car sat my future wife. But she and her friends drove away before I could get her name, although we made sizzling eye contact. At least that was my impression.

I had to find her. I was desperate

to find her.

I searched Seventh. I looked at Slim's. No luck.

Then by working the Teenage Underground Grapevine — using the color of that ghastly looking car as my best clue — a few days later I struck gold.

Her name was Margie Holub. She lived at 3010 Eighth Street. Her phone number was CI5-2151. She lived with her widowed mom, Annie, and sister Lolly. She was 15 (I was 19).

Soon thereafter I phoned her. My heart was pounding.

"I'm T-Bone Finley [my real name]," I told her. "I'd like to take you to the picture show."

"Your name's familiar," she answered.

"Well, I'm pretty famous in Sweeny. I finished a rock solid 56th in my graduating class last May. I was once Sweeny's Sensational Substitute Second Baseman."

"Have we actually met, T-Bone?" she wondered.

"We exchanged glances the other night at Eddie's Gulf filling station," I said.

"By the way, that was some good-looking car you were driving."

Finally, we came to an agreement. I took her to the picture show.

That was No. 1. The rest is history. So happy Valentine's, Sweet Wife Margie. I Love you more than the whole wide peanut (the ultimate expression of love in our family).

Jim Finley is a retired managing editor of The Sun. He can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com). Attention: Jim Finley.

**The Baytown Sun**

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## OUR VIEW

# Board eyes high school start times

Goose Creek's school board is weighing bell schedule options that include later start times for high school — which currently begins at 7:15 a.m.

That's the same as Crosby, but 10 minutes earlier than Barbers Hill, 35 minutes earlier than Anahuac ISD and 45 minutes earlier for those lucky students enrolled at Goose Creek's IMPACT Early College High School.

Nationally about 15 percent of U.S. high schools start after 8:30 a.m.; 40 percent start before 8 a.m.

At this time, the board is simply exploring the issue. (See all the options at [www.baytownsun.com](http://www.baytownsun.com))

We urge the board to keep studying and then act to let all high-schoolers sleep in more.

There is plenty of research supporting the notion that older students can be more successful if they sleep later.

Teens' body clocks are wired to stay up late and sleep late. Schools that start too early do a disservice to the teens they are trying to educate.

Furthermore, studies show that adolescents who don't get enough sleep often suffer physical and mental health problems, an increased risk of automobile accidents and a decline in academic performance.

In 2014, the Academy issued a policy statement recommending that middle and high schools delay the start of class to 8:30 a.m. or later. The National Sleep Foundation also supports a later school start time for teens.

Reluctance to change the bell schedule is understandable.

Community life revolves around public school hours, and any change in schedule inevitably stirs up opposition. Parents will be wary of how later hours will affect daycare, sports and other extracurricular activities, jobs, and even traffic patterns.

One of the trickier parts of changing the high school start time is athletics and extracurricular activities like band, dance teams, cheerleaders and more. Practices and games often start not long after the current school day ends. For away games and matches, athletes are dismissed about an hour before the final bell rings.

A bad idea would be to start school later but keep the current sports schedule.

This would mean that students would need to miss an additional hour of academics on game days. Student-athletes are already trying to cope with the demands of balancing school, sports and extracurricular activities. Let's not make it any harder for them by making them miss more class time.

Nevertheless, the Goose Creek school board and administration should revise its high school start times.

With a later start time, teens would be more alert and might achieve more. And that's what it's all about.

*Editorial written by David Bloom, managing editor of The Baytown Sun, on behalf of the editorial board.*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# What's that spell?

D is for dishonest. O is for obnoxious. N-nasty, A-abnormal, L-liar, D-deplorable.

T is for truth, R-rejected, U-undermined, M-manipulated, P-poisoned.

What's that spell? Four more years of lies from Dictator Donald Trump.

Alan Hudgins  
Baytown

## TODAY IN HISTORY

### On this date:

In 1775, Patrick Henry delivered an address to the Virginia Provincial Convention in which he is said to have declared, "Give me liberty, or give me death!"

In 1806, explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, having reached the Pacific coast, began their journey back east.

In 1965, America's first two-person space mission took place as Gemini 3 blasted off with astronauts Virgil Grisson and John Young aboard for a nearly 5-hour flight.

In 1973, before sentencing a group of Watergate break-in defendants, Chief U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica read aloud a letter he'd received from James W. McCord Jr. which said there was "political pressure" to "plead guilty and remain silent."

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan first proposed developing technology to intercept incoming enemy missiles — known as the Strategic Defense Initiative.

In 2011, Academy Award-winning actress Elizabeth Taylor died in Los Angeles at age 79.

Five years ago: Urging Americans to "do some soul searching," President Barack Obama injected himself into the emotional debate over the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin in Florida, saying, "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon."

**Thought for Today:** "In anger, you look 10 years older."  
— Hedda Hopper, American gossip columnist

# One more visit to the birds

Sometime in the next couple of weeks I will take time to go to High Island to see the nesting shore birds one last time.

Well, truthfully, it probably won't be the last time, because I love to go there, but it is the last time that it will be a quick, easy trip. I might well make the trip from the Hill Country, where we are moving in just a matter of weeks, to visit that very special place again.

Houston Audubon manages several bird sanctuaries in and around the tiny seaside community of High Island. All of them are great places to see and photograph both migrating and native birds, but the rookery's magic happens for just a few months each year and attracts visitors from around the globe.

The Rookery at Claybottom Pond in the Smith Oaks sanctuary is a magnet for colonial waterbirds. It is the premiere place in Texas where visitors can closely observe thousands of those beautiful birds — herons, egrets, spoonbills, ibis and cormorants — as they flirt and find a mate, build their nests, lay eggs and raise their young. It all happens on a tiny island that lies across a narrow span of water from viewing platforms



JANE HOWARD LEE

where birdwatchers, photographers and curious people can get a great view.

It is just amazing.

The commotion of all those birds in one place at one time can be deafening, especially when the young birds get old enough to express themselves

with gargling, clucking, snapping, oinking and squeaking.

It's crazy.

You can see the beautiful pinks and yellows of roseate spoonbills up close, see the graceful moves of the ivory egrets and ibis of several colors, pick out the colors of a little blue and tricolored herons.

For many years now I've made the trek to High Island to photograph the birds of the Rookery, but often find myself just sitting, watching and listening.

It is truly a magical place.

On any given day during the nesting season, which is pretty much from March through May, you might run into people who have come from Great Britain, Europe, the Far East

or just numerous parts of this country to visit High Island during nesting season.

I've taken a number of my photographer friends out there and now they are as addicted to it as I have been.

To get to High Island and The Rookery in Smith Oaks Sanctuary, take Interstate 10 east to the town of Winnie, then take State Highway 124 south about 18 miles to High Island.

You can get directions to all of the High Island sanctuaries online at Houston Audubon's website or just drive to High Island and visit the easily found visitor's center at 2088 Fifth Street for directions and to pay the small fee.

A day pass costs \$8 or you can buy a \$30 patch that gives you unlimited visits to all the High Island sanctuaries for a year. Children 17 and younger get in free.

Like I said, I plan to get in one more visit to the Rookery before we move. If you haven't been there before, I hope you'll check it out.

*Jane Howard Lee is a contributing writer at The Sun. She can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com).*



# The soul of our country

Donald Trump made this promise on the campaign trail: "I'm not going to cut Social Security like every other Republican, and I'm not going to cut Medicare or Medicaid."

All politicians make promises they cannot keep, but this one is a particularly devastating deception. The health care bill now being drafted by the House, and enthusiastically endorsed by the president, makes major cuts in Medicaid, the joint federal/state program that protects the most vulnerable Americans.

Like so many of Trump's proposals — on immigration and refugees, for example — this one is not just bad public policy. It's also immoral, violating the most basic obligation of Christianity, described in the New Testament as caring for "the least of these brothers and sisters."

As John Kasich, the Republican governor of Ohio, said: "We're talking about lives. ... We better be careful we're not losing the soul of our country because we're playing politics."

The health care debate has focused primarily on proposed alterations to the insurance system established by the Affordable Care Act, but the Medicaid issue is equally important. Under Obamacare, states could utilize federal funds to expand Medicaid eligibility to families earning up to 138 percent of the federal poverty line. Thirty-one states took advantage of the option, adding about 11 million Americans to the Medicaid rolls.

Under the House bill (call it Ryan/Trumpcare), that expansion would be phased out in 2020. According to the Congressional Budget Office, about 5 million people would be forced off Medicaid in the first year, and 15 million would lose coverage by 2026.

Speaker Paul Ryan defends his plan by saying, "We're going to



COKIE AND STEVE ROBERTS

have a free market and you buy what you want to buy." Nice words, which totally ignore the fact that most of those covered by Medicaid cannot afford any health insurance at any price.

But that's not the whole story. Ryan has spent his whole career plotting to do exactly what Trump said he would not do: reduce entitlements. By ardently abandoning his promise, Trump has reinforced the impression that he doesn't really care about policy at all.

What he cares about is winning. So he's bought into Ryan/Trumpcare because he thinks it's the only health plan with a chance of passing.

Fortunately, a number of Republicans are appalled, especially governors who actually have to solve real problems in their states. They cannot afford Ryan's theological crusade against government spending or Trump's refusal to recognize the human misery this proposal would entail.

Many of those governors agree with Kasich, who notes that 700,000 Ohioans have gained insurance coverage under Medicaid expansion. "If they don't get coverage, they end up in the emergency room, they end up sicker, more expensive," he told state business leaders. "I mean, we pay one way or another. And so this has been a good thing for Ohio."

It's been a good thing for Massachusetts, too, says Republican Gov. Charlie Baker, where about 300,000 have been added to the Medicaid rolls. "Medicaid is an important safety net for a significant portion of our state's population," Baker told CNN.

Four Republican senators — Rob

Portman of Ohio, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Cory Gardner of Colorado and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska — wrote a letter to Majority Leader Mitch McConnell saying that while "structural reforms" could improve Medicaid, those changes "should not come at the cost of disruption in access to health care for our country's most vulnerable and sickest individuals."

Attacks on Medicaid often echo the old debate about welfare, implying that beneficiaries are able-bodied slackers who don't want to work. Of course some people game the system, but they're far from a majority. Many suffer from a range of disabling conditions: physical handicaps, mental illness and substance abuse, for example.

Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval of Nevada says Medicaid expansion has "allowed thousands of Nevadans needing mental health treatment to receive care." Kasich says a "big chunk" of those covered in Ohio "are mentally ill and drug-addicted and have chronic diseases."

Impoverished seniors who cannot afford nursing care are also major Medicaid recipients. Under Ryan/Trumpcare, says Tom Wolf, the Democratic governor of Pennsylvania, "You're either basically consigning the seniors to less care or the commonwealth of Pennsylvania to spend more, or a combination of both. That's a real problem."

Those real problems are not limited to governors who would have to administer Medicaid under Ryan/Trumpcare. The Republicans who vote for it also stand to pay a large price: Their souls, as well as their seats, could well be at stake.

*Steve and Cokie Roberts can be contacted by email at [stevecokie@gmail.com](mailto:stevecokie@gmail.com).*

## The Baytown Sun

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## OUR VIEW

# Goose Creek rezoning ...

## Decision must be based on what's best for entire district

Whenever school districts redraw attendance boundary lines, there is widespread upheaval. Parents decry disruption to their children's education, property owners fret that a different school could affect home values and school officials know there is no way to please everyone.

Buckle up Baytown, Goose Creek is knee deep in the rezoning zone again.

At issue is the balance of enrollment among the district's three comprehensive high schools caused by the booming population growth on the north side of town.

Ross S. Sterling and Goose Creek Memorial high schools are each at 95 percent capacity — with more students pouring into their zones — while Robert E. Lee High School is at 65 percent capacity with a declining population.

Basically, the district must move students from the packed schools to the one that has more room.

But nothing about rezoning is simple. What's best for the entire community might not be best for individual students and parents affected by those changes.

Today, there are three rezoning options on the table.

Option 1 is sure to get some hackles up. Neighborhoods such as Country Club Oaks, Country Club Estates, Craigmont Place, The Village, Decker Terrace, Ponderosa, Glen Arbor, Pringle and Goose Creek neighborhood, which are currently zoned for Ross S. Sterling would now attend Robert E. Lee. This option also has Sterling-zoned neighborhoods such as Quail Hollow, Country Club Cove, Country Club Manor, and the Place at Goose Creek rezoned to Goose Creek Memorial.

The zone for Sterling would also move up to Interstate 10 and include Gilbert Manor, Landmark Estates and neighborhoods just under Needlepoint Road off Highway 146. These areas are currently zoned for Goose Creek Memorial.

Read Matt Hollis' Page 1A story for details on the other options that are slight modifications of Option 1.

Coming meetings to discuss rezoning options will attract angry crowds of parents ready for battle.

Students don't want to be moved from their friends, their teachers and schools that are familiar to them. Parents, many of whom have made expensive decisions to live near specific schools, worry about whether the other schools will offer the same educational experience for their children.

A number of factors are at play here, and there is no easy, one-size-fits-all way to make schools more or equally diverse. But doing so is to everyone's advantage. Not only are there better outcomes for economically disadvantaged students, but studies have also shown benefits to upper-income students when they learn alongside those of different experiences and backgrounds.

That is something parents need to keep in mind when school boundaries are redrawn.

As it stands, new high school boundaries are coming May 7. We hope the board's vote is based simply on what's best for the entire school district.

— David Bloom

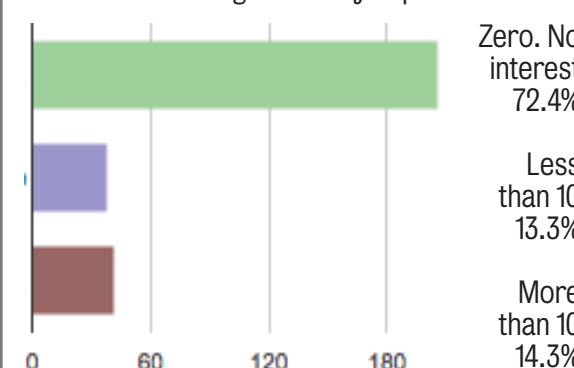
## AP-NORC Poll: Support soars for stricter gun control laws

NEW YORK (AP) — Support for tougher gun control laws is soaring in the United States, according to a new poll that found a majority of gun owners and half of Republicans favor new laws to address gun violence in the weeks after a Florida school shooting left 17 dead and sparked nationwide protests.

The poll, conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, found that nearly 7 in 10 adults now favor stricter gun control measures. That's the strongest level of support since The Associated Press first asked the question five years ago. The new poll also found that nearly half of Americans do not expect elected officials to take action.

## Baytown Sun Survey

Last week, readers were asked how many "March Madness" games do you plan to watch?



This week's question: Is Russia a friend or foe of United States? Respond at [www.baytownsun.com](http://www.baytownsun.com)

# Regular visitors brightened days at The Sun

Reporting old news — that is, creating a history column "From Sun Files" from long-ago issues of this newspaper — was just one of the many reasons I enjoyed working at The Sun.

Since writing most recently about the joy of "From Sun Files," I started thinking about other favorite memories, and topping the list are Sun Regulars, people who paid frequent visits to newsroom.

When I started to work at The Sun, Nelson McElroy managed the Baytown Chamber of Commerce, first headquartered on North Ashbel, later relocated to Texas Avenue at North Main. When Nelson entered the newsroom every morning at 8 a.m. sharp, we didn't have to check the clock. We knew it was Nelson O'Clock, the time for his eight o'clock coffee break with Preston Pendergrass.

Dave Moore succeeded Nelson, and he was an afternoon coffee drinker. While we couldn't set our clock by Dave's arrival in the newsroom, we knew he would have something to tell us. Invariably he offered a news tip regarding the Chamber of Commerce or Baytown in general. A University of Missouri journalism major and former newsman, Dave understood what news hounds wanted-- fresh news.

(Footnote to Nelson O'Clock: The newsroom also had a Slick O'Clock, meaning 3 p.m. when James "Slick" Ellis would arrive daily for a coffee break with Jim Finley.)

We had fun talking with Eddie Huron, who invented the batter recipe for frying oysters at the Bayshore Rod, Reel and Gun Club. Eddie had a wide



WANDA ORTON

range of interests, including his collection of historical barbed wire. His most favorite subject, though, was his pet poodle that traveled with him far and wide, and yes, right into our newsroom.

Another Sun regular was the witty, articulate architect Lowell Lammers. Once, when he arrived on a late Saturday afternoon, he found the door front locked and everyone gone. He later commented, "A newspaper should be open all the time -- like the Catholic Church!"

Recurrent visitor State Rep. Joe Allen always made us laugh with his gift for telling funny stories. However, when it came to pushing important legislation through the House, Joe was all business. A shining accomplishment was his bill creating the Harris-Galveston Subsidence District.

A number of politicians visited The Sun, most of them showing up around election time. One of the exceptions was U.S. Rep. Albert Thomas, publisher Fred Hartman's good friend who would show up at any time of the year. Before he left the building, he aimed to shake hands with every employee in every department. I recall one visit, however, when the congressman was not his jovial self — a short time after President Kennedy was assassinated. Tears welled in his eyes when he tried to talk to me about it.

We enjoyed talking shop with Humble Bee magazine staffers Nor-

man D'Olive and O.B. Lee, from the Baytown Refinery. O.B. already knew Sun staffer Johnella Boynton before she came to Baytown, because she sponsored the campus newspaper that he edited at Sam Houston State University.

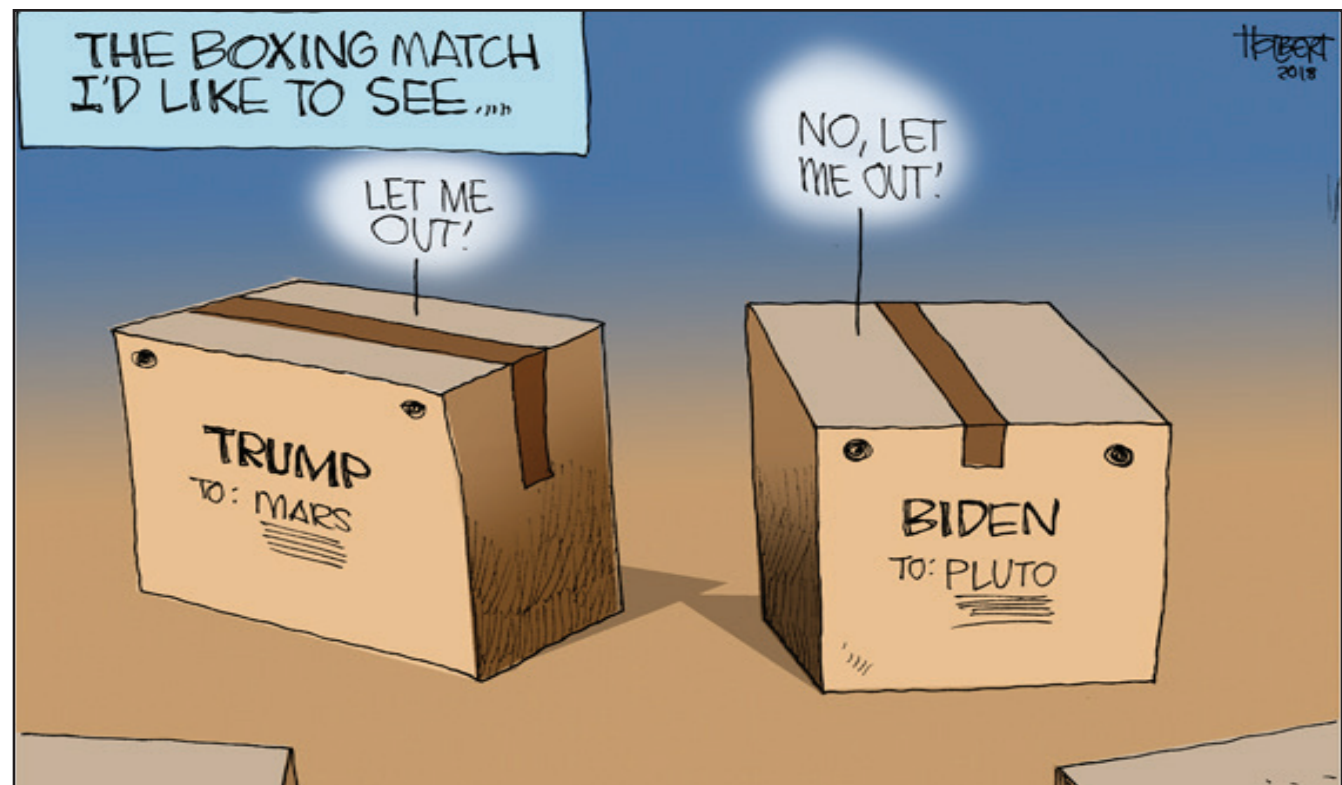
Other visitors with printer's ink in their veins included Jim Holley, Houston Post; Chester Rogers and Morris Frank, Houston Chronicle; and John Lumpkin and Mike Graczyk, Associated Press.

I understand that Mike is still with the AP. I remember him sitting at a desk in our newsroom, pulling an unidentified object from his briefcase and typing a story on it to send to the AP Houston bureau. This was the first laptop I ever saw. (Golleeeee...)

James "Slick" Ellis, Sam Alford, Deacon Jones, Rufus Honeycutt, B.B. Williams, Bob Chase, Al Melinger, W.F. Muller, Grover Edge, Dr. Karl Opryshek, Louis Van Meldert, W.L. "Dub" Ward, Jim Nelson, Hobart Enoch, Ernestine Bright, Lester Alford, Harry Levine, Jean Shepherd, Bernard Olive, Anna Battarbee, Martha O'Brien, the Rev. P. Walter Henc-kell, Lodie Edwards, Peggy Power ... the list goes on of people who stopped by the newsroom often during my working days from the early 1950s to the mid-1990s.

More than Sun Regulars, they became real friends.

Wanda Orton is a retired managing editor of The Sun. She can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com). Attention: Wanda Orton.



## Recovering for Relay for Life Survivors Lap

With the 21st annual Bay Area Relay for Life set for Friday week, which I have every reason to believe is April 6, I can't help but recall that a few years ago I unabashedly wrote that J.J. Watt and I have a lot in common when it comes to "training and physical fitness."

As this year's Relay approaches, that statement is even more true. (Would I dare distort the written word?)

See, the great Texans lineman has suffered through injuries that have shortened his last two seasons. Boy, has he been missed.

But I, too, am in recovery mode. I've been working out to overcome a knee replacement done by Dr. Kevin Horn of the Fondren Orthopedic Group just a few weeks after the 2017 Relay.

Why is this so important? Easy. I wouldn't dare miss the Survivors Lap at this year's Relay. No way, no how.

I did see J.J. and Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson working out the other day. Saw it on TV. Looks like they are good to go.

For some reason they didn't invite me to join them. They must've lost my number. Yeah, that's it.

As a precaution, I would ask Dr. Horn to join me at Royal Purple Raceway, where the event is held annually, but I'm not sure Medicare would cover his bill.

Whatever, I shan't be stopped from participating in my eighth Survivors Lap with hundreds of others who have fought The Cancer.

I'm so thankful to Tri-Chairs Rick Merling, Denise Martinez, and Kim-



JIM FINLEY

berly Dillard — and their wonderful and dedicated volunteers — for giving me and many others a chance to be a part of one of the top Relays in the U.S.A.

What a magnificent job they do.

I sit back in awe each year when I read that our Relay is ranked among the best in American, plus a few foreign entities. Yep, right here in Channel City we stand tall.

All because of the aforementioned team and a giving, caring city and area in love with this event.

How about we ranked 15th in all of America in 2017 when our Relay goal was \$450,000, and because of great community support, \$484,000 was raised?

Not to brag, but those collections, all of which go to the American Cancer Society, left our Relay No. 2 in Texas. Last time I looked Texas claimed more than 3,300 towns and cities within its borders. Not bad, huh?

And while I'm not bragging (haha) on the work the great Bay Area team does, the Relay here also ranked No. 3 in the South Region, now comprised of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. (I have no idea where former division members Guam and Hawaii went. Utah, maybe?)

No matter our Relay is a star. A major star.

Pat Thomas, my lifelong friend and fellow Sweeny Bulldog, got me involved in the Relay even before I Caught The Cancer. I'm glad she did.

My little Hole-In-A-Doughnut role is helping Wife Margie judge the many booths that line the Relay site. Of course, Wife Margie tells me which ones are best. I always listen to her.

Word is that Amparo Martinez, whose title is Sponsor Picture Coordinator, wants us to judge again. How could I say no? (Wife Margie wouldn't let me.)

Because of unbelievably dire circumstances brought on by Hurricane Harvey, our Relay lowered its goal this year to \$350,000. So far, almost half of that has already been raised. No surprise there.

The Beat Cancer Celebration is open to the public. It features good food, activities for the kids, and a superb family atmosphere.

It begins at 6 p.m.

Besides the Survivors Lap, you'll also be moved by the Luminaria lighting ceremony. Hundreds of Luminarias honor those, living and deceased, touched by cancer.

One final thought. Over the years, Bay Area has raised right at \$10 million.

Take that, jerkwad cancer! Now if I could only have Dr. Horn standing by. Just in case.

Jim Finley is a retired managing editor of The Sun. He can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com). Attention: Jim Finley.

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OUR VIEW

## End lunch shaming

Lunch shaming should be eliminated from school cafeterias.

Lunch shaming happens when a student's account gets so far in behind in paying for school lunch that students are denied the one they selected in the line and instead given a different, scaled-back meal.

In Goose Creek CISD, students get a two-week grace period after the lunch money runs out and then they are handed a sandwich and juice.

Other districts in our area have similar policies.

The student receives a meal, albeit, it is not the same meal — even less nutritious — as other students. This leads to embarrassment for the student and thus, shaming.

It's a practice that must end.

New Mexico recently outlawed the practice of lunch shaming.

But do we really need a law to convince school board members and district administrators that making kids feel embarrassed (or feeding them less than other students) is the wrong path to get their parents or guardians to replenish lunch money accounts.

Whatever the reason a Goose Creek CISD student can't afford to pay for lunch, shouldn't we all agree that the child shouldn't be singled out, especially considering how much food is thrown away on a daily basis in school cafeterias.

But that is the easy part.

More complicated is why parents and guardians can't pay and what school districts should do about it.

We understand that Goose Creek and other districts try their best to deal with a problem that hits their bottom lines. If the parents can't pay, who does? The taxpayers do by way of the district's general fund.

First, school districts should be doing all they can to ensure that students who are eligible for reduced or free lunch are taking it.

This is a predicament for school districts. They cannot overlook the debt at taxpayer expense.

And the potential reasons and family dynamics that lead to a child not having enough money for meals might be very complicated.

While there is no perfect solution, we should resolve to at least let our students eat food that is already prepared for them and eliminate the shaming.

The real shame here is that districts have been allowed to get away with this practice for so long.

— David Bloom

## Ex-Sun staffer co-authored 'War Machine'

Puzzling, that warning in President Dwight D. Eisenhower's farewell speech regarding the military/industrial complex and its vested interests.

Covering the speech for the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain, Jim McCartney didn't know what to make of those words spoken by a retired Army general. Ike had commanded U.S. forces in Europe in World War 2 and had served in both World Wars, 1 and 2. What were those vested interests connected with the military establishment, and why was Ike so concerned?

Jim began to look into it.

By the time he and wife Molly were retired in Florida, he had acquired so much knowledge about the subject that friends urged him to write a book. He started it and picked the title: "America's War Machine: Vested Interests, Endless Conflicts."

Death from cancer claimed Jim's life in 2011 when he was mid-way into the writing project, but Molly took up where he left off.

After obtaining a grant to work on the book at the Wilson Institute in Washington and spending many months researching, documenting and interviewing Jim's contacts, Molly wrote the rest of his book. Since then, she's been on book tours and has discussed the book at universities and book festivals. Sev-



WANDA ORTON

eral times she has appeared on PBS and C-Span TV programs to explain what "America's War Machine" is all about. Military and industry were two of the vested interests noted by President Eisenhower in his speech. Over the years, Molly said, Jim added three more elements: Congress, the intelligence community and the think-tank community. Jim made the argument that those vested interests have led the U.S. to conflicts around the world.

Molly would like to see the book used it as a resource. "It offers an overview of the last 50 years of our defense establishment and the actions of our military, both our covert as well as overt actions. I would like it to be a look at history so that going forward we know what mistakes we made and perhaps avoid them in the future."

Bob McCartney, Jim's son who also is a journalist, was thrilled that Molly was able to finish the book. He said, "I'm only sorry that Dad wasn't here to see it."

For interested readers, articles about the book and its co-authors can be found on the internet, and the book, published by St. Martin's



Molly and Jim McCartney in front of the White House.

Press, can be ordered on Amazon.

Many Baytonians remember Molly, a 1960 graduate of Robert E. Lee High School and the daughter of the late Mike and Phama Bowers. Molly was still in high school when she embarked on her journalism career at The Baytown Sun. Newspaper work followed at the Houston Post, Atlanta Journal, Miami Herald and finally at the Washington Post.

Taking a year off during her newspaper work, Molly was awarded a Nieman Fellowship to study at Harvard University. At the end of the program, she went on a three-month tour around the world.

While at the Washington Post, she earned her bachelor's degree at Georgetown University.

SEE ORTON • PAGE 6A



TODAY IN HISTORY

On this date:

In 1846, the American flag was raised for the first time in Los Angeles.

In 1934, the satirical comic strip "Li'l Abner," created by Al Capp, made its debut.

In 1942, Walt Disney's animated feature "Bambi" had its U.S. premiere at Radio City Music Hall in New York.

In 1961, East Germany sealed off the border between Berlin's eastern and western sectors before building a wall that would divide the city for the next 28 years.

In 1979, Lou Brock of the St. Louis Cardinals became the 14th player in major league baseball history to reach the 3,000th career hit plateau as his team defeated the Chicago Cubs, 3-2.

In 1981, in a ceremony at his California ranch, President Ronald Reagan signed a historic package of tax and budget reductions.

In 1997, the animated comedy series "South Park" began airing on Comedy Central.

Five years ago: A routine serving of an eviction notice to a man living near the Texas A&M University campus turned deadly when the resident opened fire, leading to the death of a law enforcement officer and another man before the gunman was killed.

**Thought for Today:** "It is always too late, or too little, or both. And that is the road to disaster."

— David Lloyd George, English statesman (1863-1945)

## When it rains it pours ... or does it?

When we left our gorgeous yet modest home in the highly religious neighborhood just northward of St. Andrews Drive, the sun was shining ever so brightly. A perfect day.

All was right with the world.

Our plans were simple. We'd make our way across Baytown and come to a screeching halt at Rooster's.

At Rooster's, talented waitstaff personage Tracie Locklear would take our order. Wife Margie and I would split a chicken fried steak and a baked potato. Everything on the side, please.

Enroute we turned right on Rollingbrook and headed west. We knew we'd have to stop at the stupid traffic light at Rollingbrook and the Spur 330 feeder road. (The chances of winning a million bucks are better than catching a green light at that intersection.)

Sure enough, we stopped, and we sat there for what seemed like 14 minutes.

When the stupid light finally went green, I stepped on the gas and roared away like a drag racer at Royal Purple Raceway, because you only have four seconds (estimated) to move forward before the light turns red again. Pity the fourth car in line.

We finally made it under Spur 330, turned southward, and blended into Decker Drive.

Driving cautiously, we came to Defee and started to bend our motorcar left towards Rooster's. And lo and behold, Defee was covered with gallons and gallons of water.

A water leak? A MAJOR water leak?



JIM FINLEY

No. It was remnants from a heavy rainfall.

How could that be? We'd just left home under perfect conditions only minutes earlier (most of those minutes STOPPED at the stupid traffic light at Rollingbrook and Spur 330).

Yes, Tracie informed us, there had been a pretty good rainstorm.

As an intellectual thinker, two things popped into my brain. I've mentioned both before.

First was the Houston TV weatherman who used to drive me crazy by saying — just before a commercial — "When we come back, I tell you when it's going to rain in your neighborhood."

How could he do that? How many neighborhoods are there in the station's viewing area?

Hundreds of thousands? Millions?

If he really could tell you when it was going to rain in YOUR neighborhood, that would take weeks, maybe months, maybe years. No way.

It was fake news.

Finally, rather than be checked into a mental facility somewhere, I QUIT watching that channel. I couldn't take it anymore. I couldn't take it anymore. I couldn't ...

I feel better now, and am well on the road to recovery.

The other rain-related memory that came rushing back occurred

when, as a child, I learned that when it rained at our house, it wasn't raining everywhere else.

You kidding me? You sure?

I was probably 6 or 7, and we were driving to Kilgore to see my much-beloved grandparents, Mama and Papa Finley. Back then, Kilgore was adorned with hundreds of oil derricks within the city limits. It was my favorite place on Earth.

Anyway, my papa, J.P., and my mama, Gigi, were in the front seat when we ran into this heavy rainstorm. It was so bad you could barely see.

But J.P. kept a steady hand on the wheel, and we came to the city limits of a small East Texas town. I think it was Crockett.

Now inside the city, all of a sudden we drove out of the rainstorm and into a perfect, dry, sunlit day. It was as if we had driven through a giant curtain — like one that hangs in a Broadway theater. Or at Lee College.

It was wet on one side and dry on the other.

Despite being smart for a six-year-old (but of course), I was baffled and crestfallen. How could this be?

That's when my parents explained to me the Facts of Rain (the Facts of Life would come later). What a surprise (regarding both).

I remember it like it was 1944.

By the way, our Rooster's chicken fried steak was excellent.

Jim Finley is a retired managing editor of The Sun. He can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com). Attention: Jim Finley.

## Baytown Sun Survey

North Korea was firmly in mind as a threat among the readers who responded to this week's question, "Which country is the greatest enemy of the United States?"



This week's question: What is the best thing about fall? Respond at [www.baytownsun.com](http://www.baytownsun.com)

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**OUR VIEW**

# Goose Creek propositions

## Baytown and Highlands students deserve yes vote on school bonds

Some 23,500 children and youth are counting on your vote. Don't let them down.

We're talking about the May 5 referendum that will allow the Goose Creek school district to float a \$437.4 million bond issue.

The two-pronged ballot measure is essential to providing worthy facilities for our children to learn. Moreover, the long-term gains of this bond issue are immeasurable, giving Goose Creek students the tools to excel far beyond the time they spend in school here.

Early voting begins Monday.

Yes, \$437.4 million is a lot of money. Yes, the bond proposals would increase the amount of money taxpayers pay. But here's a case in which voters would be well advised to shake off the sticker shock.

Today, Goose Creek's population is increasing faster than the district can add desks and classrooms. Projections show that 3,000 additional students will move into the district over the next decade.

Now, in terms of problems facing school districts, increasing enrollment isn't a bad one to have — but it does put pressure on a district's facilities and schools. Passing the bond measures would ease some of that pressure.

It would do more than that, of course: Passing the measure would prove again that voters in Baytown and Highlands understand that investing in education, while it carries a price tag, always pays off in the long run.

All in all, it's a small investment for such a huge benefit to the education of our students for a generation to come.

There is no doubt about the need for the projects that would be financed if voters approved the measure:

**Prop 1 (\$376.9 million)**

- Construct a junior school and two elementary schools, replace San Jacinto Elementary, construct a Special Education/Curriculum and Instruction Center, renovate the Robert E. Lee auditorium, continue construction at Stuart Career Tech High School, upgrade technology districtwide, build a robotics practice arena, renovate Stallworth Stadium, add athletic running tracks to the junior schools, upgrade campus security measures, add an athletic field house to Stallworth Stadium, as well as complete mechanical, electrical and plumbing projects throughout the district, and more.

**Prop 2 (\$60.5 million)**

- Construct a multipurpose center for district offices, student competitions, graduation, convocation, prom, band, choir and orchestra concerts and competitions and rental facilities.

See a complete breakdown of projects at [gccisd.net](http://gccisd.net)

Those homeowners who are not swayed by idealistic thoughts about our duty to provide a proper education for our children might reason that a properly funded school system enhances the value of their property. They might view the school tax as an insurance premium designed to keep up the value of their own property.

The estimate is that both propositions will cost \$1.55 per \$1,000 of assessed value, as compared to a current rate of \$1.43. Here's the math: If you own a house with an assessed value of \$100,000, this will cost you an additional \$120 a year.

A yes vote would allow the school district to go into debt to carry out construction projects. Like any loan, the borrower has to pay off the principal and the interest. By voting yes, voters are saying that the school district can take property taxes to pay it off.

The school district, though, cannot guarantee a rate. The county assessor will set the rate based on the debt service owed divided by the taxable value of property in the district. So if the taxable value of property in Goose Creek CISD goes up, the rate people pay might be lower. And if the taxable value goes down, people might pay more.

Voters in Goose Creek CISD have a long track record of support when asked to approve the school levies that supplement what the state provides in the classroom.

The Baytown Sun encourages voters to support both Goose Creek props on their ballots, recognizing the investment a yes vote makes in their community's children and its economy and quality of life.

— David Bloom

# Raccoons are not very cuddly

In the column about talking baby talk to dogs, I mentioned the hilarious Geico commercial regarding that subject.

Another funny commercial connected with our fondness for animals is the one in which the owner mistakes a raccoon for her cat. As the lady steps outside to call, "Here, kitty, kitty," a raccoon follows her inside the house. Sears Optical, the sponsor that introduced the commercial in 2009, brings this message: The lady needs glasses.

I'm wondering where her real cat was during this case of mistaken identity. Hiding from the raccoon, maybe?

Anyway, it's a comical commercial in the same league with Aflac's sassy duck and an award winner from years ago about "herding cats." Add the "baby talks with dogs" to the funny-bone list.

It's understandable how a raccoon can be mistaken for a cat.

I didn't even need glasses the time I thought a raccoon was a cat. Returning home from a meeting at about 11 p.m., I spotted the furry intruder on a garage shelf. Whose cat is that? Not my cat. As I got out of the car, a few feet from the alleged cat, I realized that ... oh my gosh ...



**WANDA ORTON**

My husband, who already had gone to sleep, soon was awakened by my nervous announcement. "Houston, we have a problem. A raccoon is in our garage, and although I've been asking him to leave,

he won't."

Finally, we managed to get rid of him, but the process required a lot of loud noise, banging pots and pans. I hate to think the racket startled nearby neighbors at that late hour, but we did what we had to do.

I'll tell you one thing we didn't do. We didn't talk baby talk. They may look cute and cuddly, but raccoons are not baby-talk material. Those little rascals with the bandit-masked faces can be vicious.

A seasoned, old cowboy from a ranch near Fredericksburg once told me how bad raccoons can be. I had voiced concern about my cat being attacked by a bobcat, and the cowboy said an attack by a raccoon would be worse. Much worse. After hearing the graphic details of "what if," I longed for our outdoor cat to stay inside, behind locked doors.

In 2014 two elderly ladies in separate incidents were attacked by raccoons, and in both cases, they mistook the raccoons for cats.

In February that year a raccoon attacked a 73-year-old woman in Massachusetts. She had a door flap for her cat, and a raccoon came right on in. The woman suffered severe cuts on her face and arms.

The following August, an 88-year-old woman in Connecticut mistook a raccoon for her cat when she opened a sliding door. She reached down to pet it, and that horrible animal bit her on the face and arms.

Are all raccoons bad news? Guess not, because some people have raccoon pets. For example, in Baytown long ago, Jack Heard's pet raccoon was a popular attraction in his junk store.

And I read that President Calvin Coolidge back in the 1920s kept a pet raccoon in the White House.

Hmmm ... Wonder if the Secret Service guarded a flap door for the presidential raccoon to go in and out.

Wanda Orton is a retired managing editor of *The Sun*. She can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com). Attention: Wanda Orton.



# Surprise reunion guest defies all odds

**SWEENEY** – What, I dare ask, were the odds?

This happenstance was all wrapped in nostalgic blue and white (go, Bulldogs!), if odds can be wrapped in anything.

It took place here in my precious old homeplace last weekend at what was billed as "The Sweeny SHS 50+ Reunion." Wife Margie and I were present and accounted for, and enjoyed every second of it.

Here's what defied the odds.

Two weeks ago I did a piece on the death of former DPS Trooper Roy Wilkerson. In it, I mentioned several law enforcement officers I worked with more than 50 years ago when I served as sports editor/police reporter at *The Bay City Daily Tribune*. A half century ago, mind you.

Moreover, one of those DPS officers I had daily newspaper contact with was also my neighbor – a good guy named Dale Wilson. But like Roy, I hadn't seen or heard from Dale since the 1960s.

That was about to change.

A former Bulldog named Billie Joe Sanders, who played on the school's first state basketball championship in 1954, had the good sense to read that column and sent me an astounding email. "T-Bone [that's me]," he said, "Dale Wilson will be at the reunion and is sitting at my table."

Get out of here, or something like that, I answered. Dale wasn't a Sweeny graduate.

"It's true," Billie Joe replied. "See you there."

(NON-EDITOR'S NOTE: I'm not a braggart, as you know, but



**JIM FINLEY**

the Bulldogs have won eight other state titles since 1954 in six different sports. Just saying ...)

Come to find out, Dale had since married a Sweeny girl I'd known as Janice Woodward some three score and a few plus years ago. Janice was a Sweeny grad and would be bringing Dale to the reunion.

Funny how life surprises us sometimes and offers sweet treats along the way.

Sure enough, Dale was there, dressed much nicer than me, and we had a great visit. I wouldn't take anything for the time we spent together.

Now retired, among other things, Dale told me he spent several years in Austin training new DPS troopers-to-be. I wasn't surprised.

And by the way, Dale and Janice live here in Sweeny, or what many call "The Paris, France, of Texas." Or something.

What were the odds?

Dale was just one of the highlights of the elegant reunion soirée put together by Jim Balkum and Peggy Ellis. They really know how to throw a party.

I can't name them all because I'd surely leave someone out, but there were roughly 270 old coots there. Most looked, uh, fairly well.

The room was filled with high-achieving academicians (like me), former great athletes (like me),

and Sweeny High legends (like me).

Because this is *The Baytown Sun*, I'm allowed to say that our area was well-represented at the elaborate gathering. My oldest brother Michael E. and wife Judy and Gary and Pat Thomas, she of Bay Area Relay for Life fame, strode among the crowd, giving the event an even more high-brow feel.

Besides talking to scores of old friends (I looked at name tags for the identification of some), I enjoyed a visit with SISD Superintendent Dr. Tory Hill, with whom I was extremely impressed. (Hopefully Dr. Hill felt likewise.)

I told the super my greatest claim to fame, other than being a Sweeny grad, was that I was the uncle of the school's athletic director and football coach Randy Lynch. He seemed wowed by that. Perhaps it may even lead to Randy getting a raise.

All in all, it was a sensational event, and I can't wait until next year.

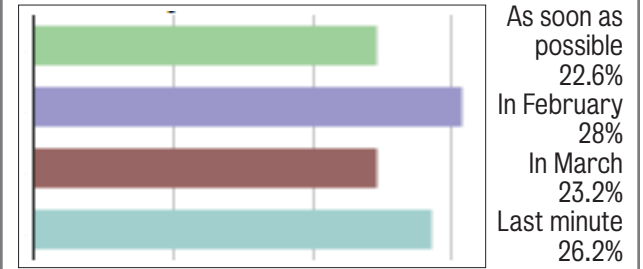
I do have one small complaint. Wife Margie is a graduate of Bay City High, and yet ... and yet ... the Bulldog people seem to like her more than they do me, one of their own.

Oh well. And as for seeing Dale Wilson for the first time in 50 years a week after I wrote about him, what were the odds?

Jim Finley is a retired managing editor of *The Sun*. He can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com). Attention: Jim Finley.

## Baytown Sun Survey

Last week, readers were asked "When did you file your income taxes this year?"



This week's question: "Do you plan to support Goose Creek CISD's \$437.4 million bond issue?" Respond at [www.baytownsun.com](http://www.baytownsun.com)

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