

LETTERS

Don't dump bridge column

A recent letter suggests that "noooooobodyyy" reads the bridge column. Well, I've enjoyed the column for years and hope it continues. It's educational and interesting. I'm sure other features in The Spectator have their own followers. The request for a chess column is also a good idea. But let's not make a change at another's expense.
Andy Kellner, Stoney Creek

We all read bridge

To the narrow-minded chess player, we welcome a chess article for you, but want you and The Spectator to know that I always read the bridge feature as do the dozen or so members of my bridge group.
Carolyn Vanhoevelaak, Hamilton

Avoid alcohol during pregnancy

Professor Dan Malleck states in his column, "Alcohol guidelines misleading" (Dec. 6) that the CCSA suggests women who are pregnant or in the pre-conception period should abstain from alcohol entirely. Malleck states this is a false assertion and that small amounts of alcohol during pregnancy are OK based on credible research. I have seen enough evidence of children with fetal alcohol syndrome that if I were a woman, I wouldn't take a chance. In my opinion, if you can't abstain from alcohol for nine months then you have an issue.
Ralph Corning, Stoney Creek

Why seniors can't ride a bus

Many seniors today are on medications that mean you need to be close to a washroom. If I had an accident, now what? Bus drivers don't want you boarding, taxi drivers won't pick you up even if you could afford a cab. My doctor wants an office visit, but how do we get there without the bus and there are still no washrooms readily available. A cab is not affordable, a luxury at best. DARTS is a long hurry-up-and-wait ordeal and still no washrooms available in many places. Seniors' diapers are not a comfortable option and still no ride if you smell that bad. So we seniors stay at home where we are safe and have groceries and pharmaceuticals delivered or we are close to our washroom.
Ron Wilkinson, Hamilton

Mayor's excuses not legitimate

Our new mayor is off to a great start spending \$38,000 on the new council's inauguration. During a time when people are having trouble paying bills and buying food, this was out of line. Her excuses were not legitimate. I just see someone who gave excuses for putting on a splashy do for herself by calling the election "historic" because we now have a woman mayor. During a time of economic struggles, failing infrastructure and other issues this was the last thing she should have done.
Diana MacKenzie, Hamilton

We need a clearer picture

Interestingly, the citizens of Hamilton elected a council of change to be responsible with public money, yet we spent \$38,000 for a party for the victors. I think the public would like a clearer picture of the actual expenses. For example, we paid \$1,500 for the opening and closing ceremonies. What exactly was that for? There is a separate listing for a piper (\$200). I assume the national anthem (\$300) went to the Hamilton Children's Choir. I am hoping that the almost \$6,000 for the audio-video equipment was an actual purchase and can be used by the city in the years to come and not some one-time-use rental agreement. Cameron Kroetsch deserves credit for the transparency in tweeting the expenses last week. I hope he and the rest of the council continue to be as transparent in the 47 months to come.
Brian Lewis, Hamilton

Mail-in ballots didn't arrive

We are pleased to learn that Mayor Andrea Horwath plans to request a review of inefficiencies in the city's administration of the recent municipal elections. My wife and I submitted applications for mail-in ballots during the first week of October, but did not receive them in the mail until late in the week before the Oct. 24 election. When they weren't delivered in a timely manner, we decided to vote in person at an early poll. We were disappointed by this delay, which was an inconvenient and unexpected turn of events.
Kim Grzybziel, Hamilton

Sorry state of downtown

The story about Jackson Square's history left me shaking my head at the sorry state of affairs of Hamilton's current downtown core. Back then, the visionary leadership of Vic Capps transformed the city's downtown into a vibrant example of "urban renewal." Jackson Square was truly a "city within a city." I recall the excitement of attending Saturday afternoon concerts on the upper level square. The stores filled with people. Today, Jackson Square reflects the decline of Hamilton's downtown. Hopefully, the new mayor and city council will rediscover the spirit of the Capps era and give us a downtown that excites again.
Ralph D'Angelo, Hamilton

Contemplating the power of a single photograph

Could a historic photo of the war in Ukraine alter its course?

DAVE DAVIS

A thousand words they say. Years ago, my nephew applied to medical school. He was required to write a 1,000-word essay responding to the question, "Why do you want to become a physician?" I'm sure he debated what and how much to tell the admissions committee, but in the end, he submitted a picture — a nurse helping a young patient learn to walk again.

In his mind, it was worth a thousand words. Not to the admissions committee, however, deciding in its wisdom that what I thought was at least clever, even brilliant, looked like slacking off to them. My opinion? They missed the point.

They certainly missed out on meeting a fine, bright young man, one who thought outside the box. Don't we need minds like that in health care?

Other photos have had a greater impact; some even stop us cold. There's that iconic picture of the children fleeing a Vietnamese village being attacked with napalm. The children are beyond frightened; you can almost hear their screaming. A naked girl runs toward the camera at the centre of the trauma and my memory; callous soldiers walk casually behind them. Nick Ut's photo stopped others cold, too. It may have even helped stopped the war.

Here's a wish for the universe: that someone will take a picture demonstrating the brutality of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict in the same way the post-napalm picture did. That it will go viral, distributed widely on Russian social media. That it will freeze Russian support for the war. That it will stop Putin cold.

Maybe I'm wishing for too much. On the other hand, perhaps too often, other pictures have started wars, or at least fuelled them. One



NICK UT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

The infamous photo of children fleeing a napalm attack during the Vietnam War arguably changed the way the world looked at that conflict. Dave Davis wonders if a similarly dramatic image might have the same impact on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

of the most famous is that of the USS Maine, sunk in Havana's harbour just before the U.S. declared war on Spain in 1898. The picture of the sunken ship, and the slogan — "Remember the Maine, to hell with Spain!" — probably catapulted Congress into backing the conflict. It was an example of William Randolph Hearst's yellow journalism. The Hearst publishing empire, yesterday's Fox News.

Fast forward from the Spanish-American War to The First World War, and the art of the poorly-remembered Mary Ritter Hamilton, the Canadian painter of war, a solitary, sad and unique figure, one of the very few female battleground artists from Canada or elsewhere.

Her work was covered on Remembrance Day on CBC, fascinating me. The First World War may have been among the first to use mustard gas, but it was not the first war to dismember its combatants. Nor the first war to devastate villages. Nor the first war to kill children, women, the elderly.

Ritter Hamilton's paintings, done months after the battles, captured the horror and emptiness of the battlefield and villages, the bunkers and trenches.

Her paintings, hundreds of them, remind us of the devastation of war, not the heroic pictures with flags

and celebrations of a century before. She may have inspired at least a portion of whatever pacific intent lies in the heart of the average Canadian.

It's not just photos and paintings that capture a moment. Recently, the cover of The New Yorker featured a cartoon of an elephant standing on a red surfboard (red, so that we'd be sure to recognize the elephant as the classic Republican). The poor guy was stranded on the beach, a tiny bit of water pooled by the side of the board. He'd run out of wave, and was looking with perfect, comical chagrin at his predicament — embarrassed, confused, disappointed that the giant "red wave" the Republicans had predicted, fizzled out. So much for the 2022 mid-terms, his look said.

Perhaps, after all, it's not the images that we need to celebrate. Perhaps it's their creator, the lines they draw, the pictures they frame, the colours they capture. Worth way more than a thousand words. In my opinion, at least.

DAVE DAVIS IS A RETIRED FAMILY DOC AND WRITER. HIS AWARD-WINNING FIRST NOVEL, "A POTTER'S TALE," PUBLISHED BY STORY MERCHANT BOOKS, IS AVAILABLE ON AMAZON. SO IS "THE LAST IMMORTAL," HIS SECOND NOVEL. VISIT HIM AT DRDAVEDAVIS.COM.

A season of wishing for peace in the world and ourselves



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

Today is a good day to talk about peace, starting with Alfred Nobel.

As the story goes, when Alfred's rich brother Ludvig died, Europe's newspapers mistakenly thought it was Alfred.

So the Swedish scientist who'd invented, among other things, dynamite, awoke one day in 1888 to read his own obituary.

He looked into the proverbial mirror, examined his life and grieved that he'd always be known as an inventor of destruction as much as anything.

So he changed, and later bequeathed his fortune for what we now know as the Nobel Prizes. Given annually since 1901, every Dec. 10, Alfred Nobel's death day, the prizes recognize valuable contributions to humankind in fields of physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, and, naturally, peace.

Better-known recipients include Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

Today, the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize will be presented in Stockholm, shared between the jailed-Belarusian human rights activist Ales Bialiatski, the Russian human rights organization Memorial, and the Ukrainian Center for Civil Liberties.

This bleak winter in Ukraine, you'd do well to stay alive. You'd

crave the type of peace that is the absence of war, when countries lay down their swords and differences to live with a measure of what was sung in that old Coca-Cola ad, a world in perfect harmony.

Humans, by and large, are strangers to this type of peace. Last century was the world's bloodiest. It's estimated about 150 million people died in wars. And in 3,400 years of recorded history, we've seen a full absence of war on Earth for less than 300 years.

Worthy peace prizes aside, a gambling person wouldn't bet the family farm that tomorrow will be different.

If you're even near a war zone, the best you might do is make peace with your maker, then take precautions. Living in Yemen during Gulf War 2, I'd wear appropriate cultural garb when leaving the house. After a terrorist murdered our friends, American medics working in a Yemeni hospital, as a safeguard I also adopted the Arab pen name "Jamal Abdul Karim," or "Beautiful Servant of the Most Gracious One." When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Inner peace, on the other hand, is different than the absence of war. Consider the Arabic greeting "As-salamu alayhim," or "Peace be on you." This is a hallowed greeting unlike the ancient Hebrew "Shalom," which means "Be whole and happy."

Not happy-clappy, but more in a way where you're filled with grace and all that you need to be fully yourself, complete. This is inner peace. It's not about

the absence of the storm, but, rather, peace inside it. It's like resting in a watertight ship. You'll be tossed around, but you won't sink as long as the ship keeps its end of the bargain.

So choose your ship, so to speak, wisely. I tell my kids this. Test the spirits, even the spirit of the times, the so-called Zeitgeist.

The Germans have another helpful word, "Gemeinschaft." This refers to togetherness and well-being for the larger community. People with inner peace tend to create Gemeinschaft.

Then there's the Prince of Peace. Despite our human frailties and failures, or maybe because of them, there are his promises. "Don't be afraid. I've got this." This is how Christ put it in different ways, over and over, when he came to heal us and show us the way. His words ring through the centuries. "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I will overcome the world." Peace.

This too is good to know while the season of Advent, which refers to expectation and arrival, is now observed in much of the world. Self-reflection.

Expectation. Arrival. But a forever peace in some future kingdom, some new heaven and earth coming down the pipe? This too is Advent's promise.

Some days, it's impossible to fathom. Other days, it's hard to imagine how anyone could trust anything less.

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