

VIEWPOINTS

Allow Me To Introduce Myself

By Shauna Marlette
shauna.marlette@plaintalk.net

Change. It is a simple word that can encompass a huge spectrum of ideas.

For me this week, the big change was a huge opportunity.

My name is Shauna Marlette and I am the new editor of the Vermillion Plain Talk.

When I was approached by publisher Gary Wood this week with the opportunity to take over as editor, it was not a hard decision to make. But, it did mean a lot of change: for you as a loyal reader, for the paper and for me and my family.

I have worked for the Press and Dakotan in Yankton since 2005 in a variety of roles. I began covering sports part-time for Sports Editor James Cimburek. Honestly, it was my first introduction to journalism and I loved it. For the next two years or so, I learned a lot from James, from how to cover a sporting event, what questions to ask, to how to write a sports story and how to do page design.

Due to family obligations, I ended my employment with the Press and Dakotan in 2007. The following summer when a full-time reporter position opened up covering local education, I took a chance and applied. Thankfully, Gary and Press and Dakotan managing editor, Kelly Hertz, took a chance on me and trusted me with the position.

I say thankfully, because I honestly feel I found my calling. I love working with the community covering local stories, the schools and people that make a community work. I have enjoyed building and growing relationships in the Yankton community and take pride in the fact that I consider the people who have shared their stories with me, and the readers of the Press and Dakotan, friends.

I have been honored to win several state-wide and regional writing awards through the years, and I credit that to the people who have shared their stories with me.

My philosophy with reporting is let the people

tell their story. Cover it in a fair, honest manner, and never let myself or my beliefs influence the outcome of what is printed.

I jokingly tell people I interview, "I promise I will not do anything to hurt you." But honestly, it is not a joke. I promise to be honest, fair, courteous, prompt, respectful and polite. I will research a story idea, so I can ask appropriate questions and I will accurately quote you and be respectful of what you are saying. You are sharing your story with me and our readers. It is my job to make sure that it is an experience you would choose to repeat. If an issue is controversial, I will equally cover both sides and let you as the reader decide where you stand by presenting you with unbiased, accurate information.

I take pride in the fact that I have a well-rounded background: I am a musician, a photographer, a writer, an avid reader, at one point in my life an athlete, my college choice was Biology for Education, and when it comes to politics, I am about as middle of the ground as you can be.

I am South Dakota to the core. I have lived in South Dakota my entire life. I have raised my daughter here. I believe that there are limitless opportunities, if you are willing to work for them. I am thrilled to say that the staff of the Plain Talk are all people that I respect. I know Jackie, Penny, Melissa, Elyse and I are excited to represent the next phase of this historic paper that has been covering Vermillion since 1884.

Please feel free to stop into the Plain Talk office to visit with me. If you have a story idea, please send it my way.

I am just getting to know Vermillion and, honestly, I am going to need your help to learn what you want to see in the paper. My phone number at the Plain Talk is 605-624-4429. The email address to contact me is shauna.marlette@plaintalk.net.

Vermillion is a vibrant, beautiful community and I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,
Shauna Marlette



Do you hear what I hear?

By Paula Bosco Damon

"Have you heard the robins?" I ask Lila, an elderly acquaintance at church. Her perfectly placed comb lines are like crop rows neatly plowed from the crown of her forehead to the crook of her neck.

"No," she replies, her jaws move in a continuum of motion to the rhythm of her chewing gum. A noticeable dusting of light facial powder and a touch of rose on her cheeks and lips add to her wispy appearance.

"You haven't?" I challenge her. How can that be? Robins have been making a commotion for some weeks now. "They're carrying on out there," I needle the notion. In fact, there are robins everywhere.

"Well, Honey," I always like how Lila calls everyone younger than she "Honey." It's friendly and comforting.

"I don't get out much," she quips, gently trying to set me straight. "Oh, every once in a while I have to go get groceries. Like yesterday – I hadn't left the house all week. But I was out of food and just had to go to Wal-Mart. What a chore that was!"

Now that winter has left us in the dust, I wonder how anyone could miss this – one of the first signs of spring.

Shuddering at the thought of Lila's stasis – cooped up inside – self-imposed or medically restricted – with limited time outdoors, I can't imagine.

Not being able to bear the thought of it, I quickly come up with another way to help her experience this right of spring.

"You may be able to see robins from your windows," I try rescuing her with slightly overdone enthusiasm as a balm of hope.

Looking directly at me over the top of her glasses, which have come to rest just above the end of her nose, she corrects me again. "Well, Honey, you see, I live in an old trailer. With the windows situated up so high on the walls, I don't see much out there."

Stiffly leaning forward on her walker, she lets out a deep sigh. And then scrunching and straightening her nose, she inches her glasses higher and higher in one synchronized movement, remarkably without using her hands.

"Oh, I see," I nod matter-of-factly. She has not heard or seen robins yet, nor does it seem important to her.

"I understand," trying to sound empathetic, as I look down and then away. In the company of Lila, who has only left the house once this week, I contain my exuberance over the sight of robins.

Behold, those dark gray-winged,

brick-bellied songsters who have broken through the icy cover of the last five months.

Here in the presence of Lila, who can't see out her windows to catch a glimpse of these red-breasted beauties, I hold back my relief over winter's grip now released to their resounding lyrical chirping: Cheer up, cheerily, cheer up, cheerily.

Such joyous chaos can only signal the slowly but surely warming of earth and sky and with it the sweeping away of dreariness.

With Lila standing right here, I press down my dancing spirit, now in full step with the melodic tune of rebirth.

The church organist begins the prelude.

Reaching for a hymnal and thumbing pages to the opening song, I selfishly petition God: No matter what, please let me always notice and relish the return of robins.

Then, surrounded by other churchgoers lifting their voices high to the tune of "Onward Christian Soldiers," I silently beckon robins from all parts.

Come hither from wherever you have been.

Come hither and surround me with the rising and falling pitch of your hymn.

Come hither and sing me a new song.

Taxed If You Do, Taxed If You Don't

By Rep. Kristi Noem

When Benjamin Franklin said "In this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes," I don't know if even he knew the extent to which that would become true in America

After the President's health care law was enacted, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the mandates were in fact taxes on hardworking Americans

The most notable tax included was a tax on those who don't have health insurance, but over the next few years, another tax will come into play: a tax on those who do have insurance.

It's called the health insurance tax – or HIT

The President's health care law included an annual multi-billion-dollar "fee" on health insurance companies, the costs of which will largely be passed directly on to consumers to the tune of \$350 and \$400 per year for a family plan.

Earlier this month, I met with local small businesses – many of whom helped pay for their employees' health coverage long before the President's mandates went into place

Now, they're wondering how they can afford to continue providing it

Then again, they can't afford not to either

One employer told me: "We can't afford the insurance

We can't afford the fine [if we don't provide insurance]

And so, if we have to cut them to 30 hours, for them that means what? A third job?" He didn't see that as a good option either.

These taxes have real-world implications on small businesses, on families, on folks' financial independence. That's something the administration doesn't seem to understand

Over the last few years, Congress has passed and the President has signed nearly a dozen reforms to the health care law that give people some relief

I want to do all I can to continue offering that relief, keeping in mind that my ultimate goal is to replace the President's health care law with a patient-centered approach.

Currently, much of the focus centers on an ongoing Supreme Court case, King v. Burwell

As written, the law only provides subsidies to those who purchase insurance through state-run exchanges

But only 14 states opened their own exchanges

The other 36 states, including South Dakota, use the federally run exchange

Through regulations, the IRS made the subsidies available to everyone

who purchased health insurance on an exchange – regardless of whether it was a state- or federal-run exchange

The question before the Court now is whether the IRS broke the law in doing that

If the Court rules that they did, millions could lose the financial assistance they've been getting from the federal government to help pay for health insurance

The loss of that subsidy could undermine the President's health care law, requiring that it be replaced

A final decision will be issued by the Supreme Court in June, but Republicans in Congress are working on an alternative now

I'm hopeful this will allow us to move quickly and purposefully if the Court rules against the President.

Regardless of what happens in King v. Burwell, this debate is not over

I will remain committed to protecting hardworking taxpayers from the President's health care law, which taxes you if you do and taxes you if you don't.

Retiring Boomers: Benefit Or Burden?

By Richard P. Holm, MD

Baby boomers are coming-of-age, retirement age, that is, and many are wondering what's going to happen.

Starting about nine months after soldiers returned home from WWII, there was a birth rate boom coming almost as celebration of soldier survival, and this has profoundly affected our culture. Baby boomers, and I'm one of them, are those born from 1946 to 1964 during a successful post-war economy. This very large group of kids were the most privileged of all time.

Often raised with a soldier-disciplined father and a not-always-happy work-at-home mother, we grew up watching too much TV, listening on transistor radios to Beach Boys and Beatles, and facing a new and real threat of atomic warfare. Still, life was quite idyllic for boomers during those first 18 years.

But after graduating from Easy-&Perfect-Boomer High, we were slapped into reality by the draft, Vietnam, and a newly realized inequality happening between sexes and races. This generation often labeled as one of sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll, grew into an angry government-distrusting counter-culture that fought for social justice, for causes like feminism, civil rights, and the Vietnam War. These all reflect the boomer ethic: the right of self-direction.

It is no surprise this group has also achieved the

most wealth. Accounting for 24% of the total US population, boomers hold onto something like 80% of our country's wealth, account for 80% of all leisure travel, and dole out 50% of consumer spending. 76 million boomers in the US are a huge cultural demographic.

Like a pig swallowed by a python, the big bump is moving through the snake and is now coming to retirement age. As we become very elderly, sick, and disabled, there will be a smaller cadre of youth to care for us. Will we become a huge societal burden?

First of all, the elderly are usually not that burdensome. Research finds 75% of those aged 85 or older still drive, 70% are not depressed, 60% do not experience significant memory loss, and on average the elderly are as happy as any age group. When boomers turn 85, although potentially a demanding group, I predict we will find the resources to care for those who need it, and some might still be active enough to even physically help.

More importantly, most boomers will have an advanced directive, bypassing futile efforts and reducing the risk for a prolonged, expensive, and painful death.

And, oh, in these next years as boomers have more time on their hands, expect intolerance to social injustice, and an increasing demand for the privilege of self-direction.

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Vermillion
PLAIN TALK

Since 1884 • Official County, City and School District Newspaper

201 W. Cherry, Vermillion, SD 57069 • Publication No. USPS 657-720

Publisher: Gary Wood • General Manager/Managing Editor: Shauna Marlette
Published weekly by YANKTON MEDIA, Inc. • Periodicals postage paid at Vermillion, SD 57069.

Subscription rates for the Plain Talk by mail are \$27.56 a year in the city of Vermillion. Subscriptions in Clay, Turner, Union and Yankton counties are \$41.34 per year. Elsewhere in South Dakota, subscriptions are \$44.52, and out-of-state subscriptions are \$42. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Plain Talk, 201 West Cherry Street, Vermillion, SD 57069.

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