

VIEWPOINTS

Great Genes
Although
Recessive

BY PAULA DAMON

"I have all these great genes, but they're recessive. That's the problem here."
BILL WATTERSON, AUTHOR AND CARTOONIST

Our grandson Cecil's first day of preschool brought back memories of times gone by....

It was my first day of kindergarten – some 58 years ago. I decided I'd rather stay home. Didn't want to be in a strange place with strange people. Besides, I was terrified of public bathrooms.

I put up the fight of my life – albeit only four years in the making.

Mom was beside herself. With Dad working on the road, she had no back up or recourse. Not even a car to drive me to school. She was stuck and I knew it – or so I thought.

The very next day, much to my surprise, who did I see high stepping it up our front steps? Miss Kapatch, my would-be kindergarten teacher, looking quite agitated to say the least.



PAULA
DAMON

Still in my pajamas, I figured I could make myself invisible, racing to the nearest hiding place, under the stairwell of our mid-century craftsman.

All I got was a scolding from Miss Kapatch – who stood there, towering over me, bristling, furrowed brows and as she lectured me on the academic and social benefits of a formal education.

It immediately became apparent that no amount of resistance would ever change the tide that had voraciously turned against me.

Thus was the traumatic beginning of my school life – one that had so many ups and downs. [Not the least of which was wetting my pants while riding home in the velvety plush backseat of Miss Kapatch's sleek black 1956 Chevy Impala. All because I refused to use the school bathroom and simply could not hold it any longer.]

This genetic trait of being a "home body" [refusing to go to school] continued with our second child – a drop out. [It's not what you think. He graduated from both high school and college.]

Actually, it all started much earlier than that. Getting him to attend preschool was a constant battle.

That was until one day when we were on our way, and he was having another one of his fits. I finally gave in and headed back home – never to return.

His first day of kindergarten was much worse – terrible to be exact. Here's how our oldest, Vanessa, in middle school at the time, recounts that day....

"The bus was waiting and honking. You asked me to grab Joel. I flung him over my shoulder with him kicking me and pounding my back. He cried hysterically the whole journey to the school."

[Meanwhile, I was rendered useless, standing there in the doorway crying my eyes out. Post trauma, I suppose. Probably still dealing with Miss Kapatch.]

Vanessa continues, "Joel was supposed to get off of the bus and go onto the playground, but he wouldn't let go of me. The bus driver gave me permission, or ordered me, to walk him to his classroom. Screaming, Joel grabbed my leg and wouldn't let go, as I limped down the hall. Teachers peered out of their rooms in a domino effect as we slowly worked our way toward the Kindergarten. His screaming was torturous, as tears streamed down my face. I, too, mourned his beginning. Someone in the Kindergarten classroom pried him off my leg."

Given our rocky starts, the anticipation of my grandson Cecil's first day of preschool was a bit shaky.

Knowing full well the genetics of resistance at play here, I was convinced he'd put up a fight.

Cecil arrived that first day of preschool proudly flanked by Mom and Dad and settled in just like a pro. In fact, he wanted his picture taken with his teacher before his parents left.

I was so proud. Never expected it to be that easy.

"You're quickly being replaced," I jabbed, as his parents recounted the ease by which their son [My grandson!] adjusted to his new surroundings.

From all accounts, his second day went equally as well.

Hmmm...I'm still waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Paula Bosco Damon is a national award-winning writer whose columns appear weekly in regional newspapers of the Upper Midwest. For more information, email boscodamon.paula@gmail.com.



Hateful Halitosis: The Bad Breath Of It

BY RICHARD P. HOLM MD

Halitosis is the medical word that stands for bad breath, coming from the Latin halitus meaning exhalation. In college I heard it put this way: "The Polish Army must have marched through my mouth last night." Not only is it socially offensive, a foul odor coming from between the lips can also reflect a serious underlying dental or medical problem.

Halitosis is the third most common reason people seek out dental care, but studies find different answers reporting that 10 to 75% of those who worry they have

bad breath, actually don't have it. When patients really do exude bad odor, probably the most significant cause for this malodorous condition is dry mouth and coated tongue, often resulting from medicines like decongestants for stuffy nose or pills for urinary incontinence, and a resulting growth of bacteria. Dry mouth can also be due to mouth breathing, advanced aging, or to an immune disease, which affects the salivary glands. No matter the cause, running low on saliva not only will turn the breath foul, but the teeth will then too easily become infected and fall out.

Periodontal disease with

plaque, and gingivitis causes bacterial infection below the gum line, and can certainly cause the odor of rotting, but so can a bacterial infection in sinuses, lung, pharynx, esophagus, or stomach. It almost goes without saying that smoking or smokeless tobacco also causes doggy breath. Of course garlic and onion give their odor after absorption into your bloodstream, which is carried to the lungs, and then transferred to the breath.

Treating halitosis starts by avoiding tobacco habits, avoiding mouth-drying medicines when possible, and stimulating saliva by sucking on sugar-free cough or lemon-drops or gum. Some

experts advise that brushing the tongue to remove the "coat" will go a long way to improve one's breath. Certainly prevention of periodontal disease with flossing, water-picking or special tooth picking is important to reduce odor and tooth decay. Mouthwash or mints will only cover-up garlic and onion breath until time resolves the odor by breaking the chemical down that is being carried in the blood stream.

You can escape the plodding Polish Army... Remember that bad breath makes a compelling case for good brushing, good flossing, and when there is that hateful halitosis, for seeking dental and medical care.

Science, Religion And Telling The Creation Story

BY DR. STEVEN MATZNER

From reductions in child vaccination rates to antibiotic resistance, we are facing problems that are directly related to a misunderstanding or rejection of science by certain elements of the public and political system. In addition, we appear to lack the political will to address these problems.

The health of our children, economy, and environment is being degraded by ignoring scientific laws and warnings of scientists. Organizations like the South Dakota Academy of Sciences (celebrating its 100th anniversary) have long advocated the importance of teaching science in public schools.

The Academy was formed with the goals of promoting scientific research to solve the "bread and butter problems" of the state, teaching science to tomorrow's citizens, and advising the governor and legislature on scientific matters.

Unfortunately, the Academy's offers to be a resource to the governor and legislature within South Dakota on scientific matters have largely been ignored. At the national level there is also a trend to not only ignore scientific resources, but to limit the influence of science.

Some of this comes from political or economic interests attempting to limit regulatory agencies by such means as The Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny bill sponsored by Senator Rounds which would shift power from regulatory agencies to Congress for rules with large economic impact and would likely limit regulation and scientific input.

Others appear to be trying to control

the scientific message like the House version of the 2016 NASA Authorization Bill which would reduce funding for earth science (think climate change research) and transfer it to space exploration.

While these attempts to curtail contentious scientific issues may have economic or political motives, the distrust of science for many has religious roots.

Despite science and religion both having deep concerns for the stewardship of creation, many perceive science and religion as incompatible. In a state where many object to the teaching of evolution largely on religious grounds, it is ironic that people listen to scientists about as much as people listened to Old Testament prophets.

The prophets warned of breaking God's laws, but no one listened to them either. St. Augustine wrote that "People, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Note it. Read it." I

ndeed, if you believe in a creator God as I do, then scientific laws are God's laws too. The creation story is told several different ways in the opening chapters of Genesis. In the same way, we may tell the story of God's creation scientifically without undermining other ways of telling the story. For those that bristle at the comparison of scientists to Biblical prophets, are scientists really less likely instruments than Sarah, Moses, Ruth, David, Mary, a bunch of fishermen, Paul?

As the president of the South Dakota Academy of Science, a life-long member of the Lutheran Church, and a native South Dakota farm boy, I would like to

promote conversations about the roles of science, government and religion in caring for creation.

If we are to address problems like water quality, antibiotic resistance, and climate change, there needs to be a public dialog about these issues as well as an awareness that we cannot ignore scientific laws.

Our world is increasingly being driven by new technologies and we accept most of this technology without much thought. But the same science that brought us smartphones and GPS is also warning of the dangers of climate change and not vaccinating our children.

Just as Christians can't arbitrarily select which of the Ten Commandments to follow, we can't select which scientific laws we choose to accept.

Mistrust of science by parts of society, encouraged by special interest groups, enables some political leaders and media outlets to misrepresent science for political and short-term economic gain.

Many scientists are frustrated that their warnings go unheeded (Old Testament prophets could relate!) however, scientists still have an obligation to engage the public and speak the truth about important scientific matters.

By encouraging dialog, I hope we can begin to address these threats to creation and leave the world a better place for our children and grandchildren.

Dr. Steven Matzner is a Professor in the Augustana College Biology Department. He is currently the President of the South Dakota Academy of Sciences.

LETTER TO EDITOR POLICY

The *Plain Talk* encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the *Plain Talk* will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Specific individuals or

entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters to the Editor, 201 W. Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069, drop off at 201 W. Cherry in Vermillion, fax to 624-4696 or e-mail to shauna.marlette@plaintalk.net.

COMBATING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Congress is scheduled to debate the reauthorization of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act in the coming weeks, so this year's National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month couldn't be better timed. I applaud school districts across South Dakota for doing their part to combat childhood obesity, which is a major contributor to our state's No. 1 killer: heart disease. By stepping up to the plate to meet the nutrition standards under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, our schools are not only reducing the incidence of childhood obesity, but are helping children to perform better in school.

Given that many children get 50 percent or more of their calories at school, making sure these foods are healthy is critical to their health and well-being,

now and in the future. That is why I was so pleased that for the first time in a generation, nutrition standards for foods served in our schools were updated in 2010 to reflect the latest nutrition science. These standards for healthier school meals were based on recommendations from physicians and school nutrition experts. It came as no surprise when they recommended that kids should eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and less salt, sugar and fat. It's a great start, but we have more work to do in this area.

I understand serving healthy food has had its challenges, however, the majority of schools support the new standards. A recent survey by the Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project found that 70 percent of food service staff and

school administrators at the elementary and middle school levels say that kids like the healthier meals. Currently 100 percent of participating schools in South Dakota are successfully meeting these requirements: South Dakota should be proud of this accomplishment and this tremendous work should be celebrated, especially during this month of heightened awareness.

During the reauthorization debate, I encourage Congress to protect the progress already made and to remember that this is ultimately about the health of our children. Our kids are depending upon them!

PAUL AMUNDSON, M.D.
4917 S SUNFLOWER TRAIL
SIOUX FALLS, SD 57108-2841
(605) 351-1125
PAMUNDSON@DAKOTACARE.COM