

A tribute to teachers

With school back in full swing, I'd like to say a few words about teachers, without whom none of us would know what in the heck to do with the word "whom."

I come from a long-ish line of teachers myself. My mother taught elementary and middle school for over thirty years, and my grandmother also had a brief stint practicing the pedagogical arts. I guess you could say teaching is in my blood - like a serious infection. In fact, "pedagogy" kind of sounds like the name of a disease. "I'm sorry, sir, you have an acute case of pedagogy, and I'm afraid we don't have an ointment for that."



Jason Graves
National Columnist

Some folks may labor under the delusion that teaching is a relatively easy career - with short workdays, summers off, loads of holidays, and late nights praying fervently for catastrophic levels of precipitation when snow is in the forecast. (Ok, maybe that's just me.) Sure, teachers may get a little more time off than some professionals, but they need these precious moments of psychological rehab to keep from setting their hair on fire and running naked through the streets - especially when snow is in the forecast.

Just think about all of the irritating behaviors and disgusting bodily functions that your children have inflicted upon you over the years. I can assure you that these outrages have been visited upon your children's teachers, as well. Only, instead of dealing with two or three

human larvae breaking wind and finding creative ways to refer to each other as the nether regions of various farm animals, teachers are saddled with up to thirty at a time - all while trying to teach them long division. And I would know.

My own olfactory nerves were permanently damaged during my short tenure teaching junior high. In fact, back when I was in seventh grade, amid diagramming sentences, my friends and I used to see how often we could prompt our English teacher to pull out the Lysol within a 60-minute class period. By the time the bell rang, the room could've been mistaken for an overcrowded feed lot -

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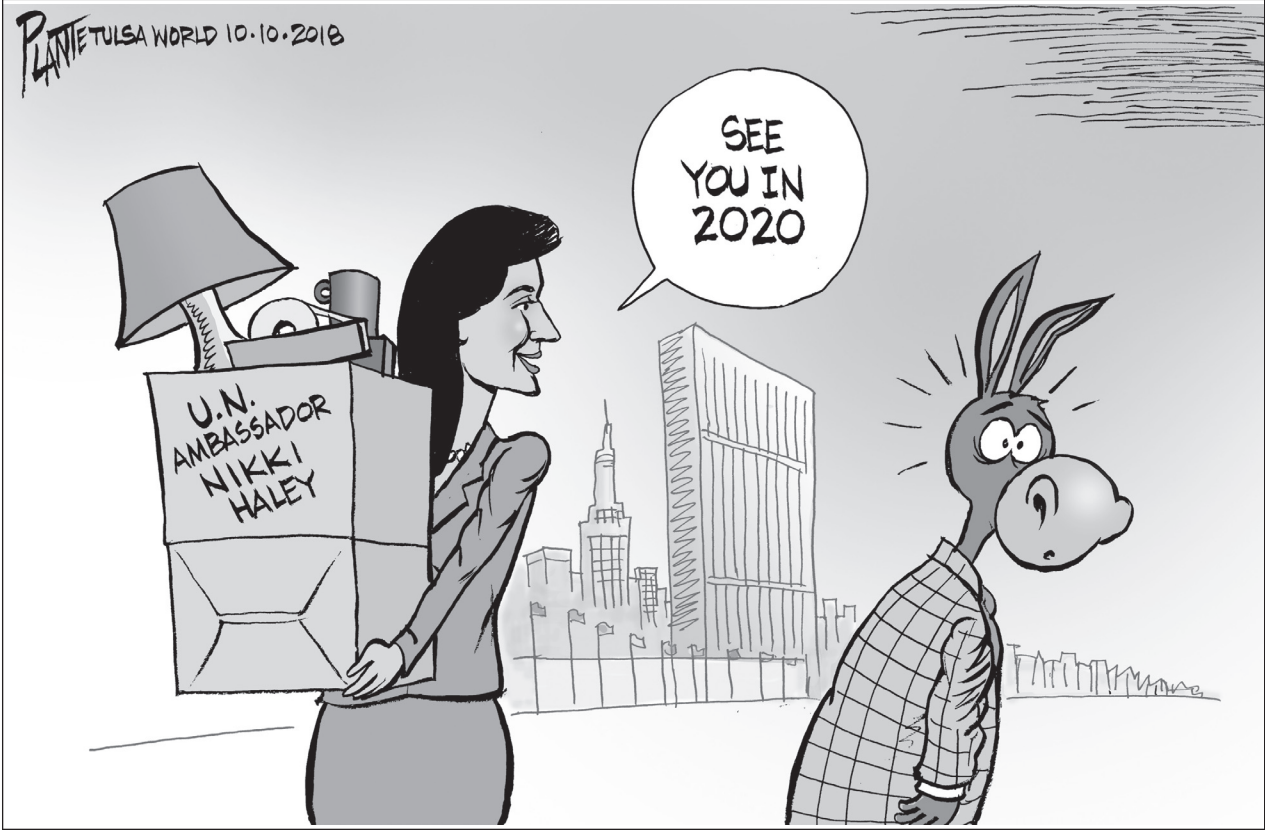
with a hint of linen freshness.

Besides actually managing students within the fragrant confines of the classroom, teachers are also subjected to various other "duties as assigned," including hall duty, bus duty, lunch duty, recess duty, carpool duty, and many other great big piles of duty. Have you ever spent some quality time monitoring a junior high school cafeteria? It's a great way to lose weight (and your hearing). I call it the Food-Fight, Boisterous-Belch, Milk-Spew, Jell-o-Slurp, Giggle-Snort, School Cafeteria Diet. Once you've seen an eighth-grader hork down a cafeteria style French dip - asandwich made out of a roll and everything else on his sectioned tray (dunked in chocolate milk), you may never bring yourself to eat again.

Now don't get me wrong. Teaching does have its rewards. There is nothing quite like the joy of watching a child learn. Teachers have the privilege of introducing their beloved students to such important concepts as dangling participles (not to be confused with other offensive dangling things - like prepositions), the Shakespearean origin of the word "puking," and algebra.

Teachers really are the unsung heroes in America. Sure, we all pay lip service to honoring teachers by force-feeding them enough desserts to send them into a carbohydrate freak-out on Teacher Appreciation Days, and we bring them tacky Christmas gifts like mugs, candles, and apple-shaped bath bombs that make them smell like they underwent a prolonged hot-cider baptism. (I'll bet if my mom had lit all of her teacher-gift candles at once, they could've easily be seen from the Death Star.) But couldn't a society that wastes \$9.8 billion a year on gastrointestinal discomfort at Taco Bell do more to show our thanks?

While I don't want to get into the debate about teacher pay, I can promise you this: Teachers aren't paid too much, their insurance isn't overly generous, and their retirement plans aren't excessively lucrative. And if you need to see for yourself that teachers earn every cent of their salaries (and beyond), volunteer at your child's school sometime. I'll bet they could use you in the cafeteria.



COMMUNITY VIEW

Celebrating Recovery: One fight at a time

According to a recent survey by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 21.5 million American adults aged 12 and older battle a substance-use disorder. I am one of them.

Today, I'm a 28-year-old father of two amazing kids. I am in a healthy relationship, am close with my parents and own my own business. If you met me eight years ago, you wouldn't believe that I'm the same person. But the wonderful part is that change is possible and recovery can happen.

I was like a lot of young people. I had opportunities and a life full of promise ahead of me. At age 15 I was training to become a MMA fighter. By 17, I took my first professional fight. But then life got in the way. I was 18-years-old when I tried heroin for the first time. I was immediately hooked and within months I was a full-blown addict. It's amazing how far and how fast one can fall.

I tried to turn my life around by joining the military, but an injury put me on the sidelines. I found heroin again and life was a repeat of arrests, trouble and living in drug houses. Then my daughter was born. I became clean again and this time it lasted two years. My son soon followed but, unfortunately, so did my addiction. I relapsed and was again in a pattern of arrests and

trouble. By age 26, I was homeless and living on the streets. I couldn't even feed myself. Since the mother of my children is also an addict, my parents took the kids.

Prison followed. When I was released, I moved back in with the mother of my children and the kids joined us. But ... I relapsed again.

By 27, I was in prison. When I was released, I was homeless and living under a bridge. I used a dirty needle and found myself in a hospital fighting for my life. At the time I welcomed death. At least I wouldn't have to suffer anymore. But ... I recovered. I checked myself out of the hospital and ended up in jail again because I couldn't avoid trouble. But lucky for me and with the help of my family, I was sentenced to rehab. After two months of being incarcerated in solitary confinement, I was sent to Southwest Behavioral & Health Services' Marina Pointe Residential Substance Abuse Program in Bullhead City. That's when my whole life changed.

What began as a 28-day rehab stint turned into an extended commitment. The day I turned 28, I went to trial and lost my kids again. They were perma-



D.J. Visant
Recovering Addict

nently placed with my parents. As I result, I decided to extend my treatment at Marina Pointe and worked hard to turn my life around. Maybe this time would be different.

I fell in love with the people that were committed to my care and recovery. They taught me about mindfulness and changing your mindset. I became convinced I could do it and started helping other clients. Soon, I began speaking to groups and at local events. My words had an effect on the people around me. I decided to use my experience to help others. It was time to return to my roots.

Today, I'm the proud owner of Fight 4 Recovery AZ. I decided to use my experience as a pro MMA fighter to reach others who are struggling. I no longer want to die. I have my kids and family back. This is just the beginning of a very long journey for me. I know that before anything else my sobriety must come first. With each day that passes, I'm slowly becoming the man and father I want to be. I have a lot on my plate but know I will be OK. It just takes one day at a time.

For more information about the Marina Pointe Residential Substance Abuse Program and Southwest Behavioral & Health Services, visit www.sbhservices.org or call 928-763-7776.

RANTS & RAVES

Got something on your mind? Tell us about in 40 words or less. If your rant or rave is about a specific story, please mention the headline.

What do we have in common by Ben Shapiro: If you call yourself a Christian, start acting like one. Christ embraced ALL people, not just the rich and influential. We are too tribal.

Pat Hartup Obituary: RIP Pat ... you were a hoot back in the days when you worked for the City ... enjoyed seeing you at Valley National Bank and visiting with you.

Tom Johnson Obituary: RIP Tom ... enjoyed working with you back in the days of Valley National Bank.

Pride in ownership: We know what effect mixing manufactured homes, and stick homes can have. When you have NO code enforcement, it can surely be a mess. "Pride in ownership" does not apply to everyone. Perhaps THAT is where rules should apply.

UN experts agree climate change is the real deal: It's so unreal that Trump fails to accept the findings of this panel of climate experts. He refuses to believe any scientific data and is only interested in creating MORE climate disrupting pollution!

Legislative candidates agreed on water divided on education: Does it really matter what causes climate change? Isn't it way more important to deal with the effects it will create now so we are not

blindsided by it? Mr. Borrelli is out of touch. Oh, and science is real.

Legislative candidates divided on education: We have many private schools in Arizona siphoning off money from public schools right now. Let the private schools pay their own way.

'Self made' Trump was a millionaire: I feel for our country has "elected" a fifth grader to be president of our country, and there are a lot of other fifth graders out there who would do a better job.

Something we all agree on: I enjoyed reading about the get-together for peace in the park. It is nice when we can still find something we all agree on. We seem to be divided on nearly everything, these days.

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