



The Choctaw Sun
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Opinions

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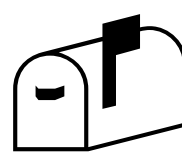
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Letters



Dear Tommy,
After eight **LONG** years with school uniforms, you tell me ... have uniforms improved our schools? I say **NO!** The popular argument for uniforms is that they make our schools safe. Let's get real! Our campuses are wide open. Who doesn't own khaki pants and white shirts? In fact, if school officials really believed this argument, wouldn't teachers have to wear uniforms, too? After all, reasonable people would be more concerned about unidentified adults on school campuses than with unidentified 3rd graders.

The greatest threat school children face is violence from other students. An overwhelming majority of school shootings involves students shooting other students/teachers. Why? The shooters felt ostracized, unfairly targeted, or bullied. Implementing **REAL** security measures and addressing **REAL** issues like these will do more to prevent school violence than worrying about the color of clothing.

School uniform policies have increased disruptions in schools. Teachers are concerned with the color of socks, belts, or jackets. Students are

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The hidden treasure in an old book

The look on his face was tender, and his eyes were shining when he walked into the bedroom on Saturday night. But his face was not the only thing I noticed.

Tucked underneath a few other books he was carrying was a thick book, much larger than the others. I recognized that book immediately.

The book of poems had long been a favorite of mine. Given to me by a special friend before she passed away several years ago, the book held tender poems filled with emotion and writings filled with sentimental messages of love and devotion.

The book held hundreds of well-read pages, yellowed by time and tattered by repeated use.

But the large number of pages was not the only reason for the thickness of that book, and the sentimental poems were not the only reason I loved that book so. It was made even thicker, even more special, by a treasure that was hidden between its



Looking Up

By Dee Ann Campbell

I had hidden that treasure in that book over 15 years ago, choosing that precious book to hide something even more precious to me. I seemed just the right place to keep it, just the right sentiment to hold it, and just the right atmosphere to ensure that the feelings that came along with that treasure would never be forgotten.

The treasure had been given to me by someone I loved dearly, at a moment that I would hold in my memory for the rest of my life. Although I knew it would become ragged with time and faded with age, I

knew when I placed it in that book that the love behind that treasure would never fade.

It was that treasure that Tommy had discovered on Saturday night. It was that treasure beneath the pages that had made his eyes shine and his face look so tender.

Putting down the other books, he looked at me with warm smiling eyes, slowly removed my treasure from the book, and held it up for both of us to see -- and we cried.

Once filled with bright colors, the treasure had faded with time. Once full and vibrant, it had been flattened by the

pressure from the thick book.

But that didn't matter. As we looked at the treasure, it seemed just as beautiful, just as sentimental, just as filled with emotion as it had been on the day I had received it.

For just a moment, it was as if 15 years had faded into nothing, and we were standing on that beach again, holding hands and saying our vows. It seemed as if our faces were no longer lined with age, and we were young again, smiling at each other on our wedding day.

For just a moment, we simply sat there and looked at the treasure in the book, our eyes filled with tears and our hearts filled with memories.

Then Tommy simply closed the book again, pressing between its pages the still-beautiful flowers of my wedding bouquet.

(Happy Valentines Day, Tommy. I still do.)

Trash, trash and more trash .. it's everywhere

In case you haven't noticed (and who could miss it?), Choctaw County is filthy. And that's putting it mildly.

The rights-of-way look like a herd of pigs moved in, trashed the place, then moved on.

Fast food boxes, beer cans, bottles, fast food sacks, mattresses, couches, TV sets, refrigerators, air conditioners, abandoned vehicles.

You name it and you can find it on the sides of our roads.

It's an embarrassing mess.

Someone is responsible for this mess ... a **lot** of someones, apparently. Are you one of them? If you are, you should be ashamed of yourself. Over and above that, you should be held financially and legally responsible for making this mess.

Over the past few months, a lot of people have called this newspaper to ask what can they do to help.

Unfortunately, litter



The way I see it ...

By Tommy Campbell
Publisher

is a multi-headed snake that is gonna take a lot of people with guts, determination, and big sticks to kill.

First of all, we can all resolve to **NOT LITTER**. Keep that trash until we get to a trash can. Parents, set a good example, don't let your children see you strewing paper and cans on the roadsides. Keep those fast-food sacks until you get home and can put them in garbage cans.

Next, we can be responsible citizens by keeping a watchful eye out for anyone else who litters. If you see trash thrown from a vehicle, get

the tag number, call 911 and turn in that lawbreaker. If you know of someone who is dumping garbage in the woods or on roadsides, call Bart Robinson at the Health Department (205-459-4026) and turn them in, too.

Third, we can organize community cleanup days. We can get a bunch of our friends and neighbors together and clean up the stretch of road near our homes or businesses.

Fourth, we can encourage schools to promote anti-littering courses beginning in kindergarten and contin-

uing through the 12th grade.

And, last but certainly not least, we can learn more about recycling and how it could benefit Choctaw County in more than just the obvious way.

We have been talking with Terry Kelley, who manages the Choctaw Co. Regional Landfill, and Terry tells us that the landfill already accepts yard debris (limbs, leaves, straw, etc.) and also household appliances and scrap steel at no cost.

But what is badly needed -- and what Terry is willing to help set up -- is a countywide recycling program for paper, glass, plastics, and other items.

A recycling program could also do more than just get trash off the sides of the road -- it could put dollars into the accounts of non-profit groups, such as churches, fire departments, Boy and Girl Scouts, and others that

See **TOMMY**, page 7A

SoundOff

Thank you, Dee Ann, for covering Pastor Mason's first Radio Appreciation Day at St. Mary's. Pastor Mason is a real blessing to us here at Willow Trace Nursing Home and we thank the **Sun** for supporting his ministry so that his program can be heard on WPRN.

There are convenience store clerks in this county who are still selling cigarettes to minors. I see this with my own eyes. I think the ABC people need to work a "sting" operation here and put a stop to this. The kid I saw bought two packs. He is only **14 YEARS OLD!!** The clerk never asked for his ID but she shouldn't have had to ... he looks like he is 12.

I wanted to say **THANK YOU, Choctaw Sun**, for a job well done covering ALL schools in Choctaw County.

I appreciate the big color picture of the county's spelling bee winners that you put on your front page. I'm glad to know there is one paper that puts more priority on recognizing children's academic feats than in printing their picture in black and white and smaller than pictures of dead deer. Thank you again for all that you do for this county. You guys mean a lot to us and we love your paper.

This is to the people who constantly complain about the uniform policy. Before the policy was invoked, you were the same people who showed up at the schools, raising heck because your child came home upset because he/she was getting picked on for what they were wearing. The policy was supposed to help end the problem with poorer children getting picked on because their parents could not afford the nicer clothes. With everyone wearing the same kind of uniforms, no one gets picked on cause your child does not have the latest shoe that just came out over the weekend or they are wearing "dollar store" outfits because mom and dad cannot afford Aeropostale, Gap, or Abercrombie and Fitch. If you think that kids don't pick on one another for what they are wearing, you are a truly delusional parent. I used to get picked on everyday because we couldn't afford the clothes other kids had.

AMEN to the woman who is fed up with uniforms. **SO AM I, HONEY, SO AM I!!** I wonder how the schools would like it if we fed-up parents get

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