

Other Views

Resurrecting Easter

Holidays are a big deal at my house. While raising our three daughters, my wife and I have thoroughly enjoyed Halloween costumes, visits from the Easter Bunny and Valentine's Day parties — and we even let the kids join in most of the time. Seriously, though, now that our girls are teenagers, some of the holiday magic might be slightly diminished, but we still try our best to get them excited about celebrating, usually by involving cash.

I think I inherited my enthusiasm for holidays from my parents. Some of the best times of my childhood were the grand Easter celebrations with my mom, dad and big brother — when he wasn't sitting on my head. There were always Easter baskets full of candy and small toys that we managed to destroy by noon. Then we attended church together in our chocolate-soiled finery, followed by an Easter lunch featuring a delicious baked ham — since turkey is apparently on the cancel culture hit list every spring. And I still can't catch a whiff of vinegar without reminiscing about dyeing boiled eggs (and our fingers) with those little PAAS tablets that look like miniature Sweet-TARTS. (Warning! They don't taste so good!)

One year, Easter fell on my birthday, and my mom threw me a huge bunny-themed party complete with jelly bean cupcakes and rabbit ears for everyone to wear. I can't remember whether I turned 4 or 14 that year, but Mom has threatened to post the photos on Facebook if I don't behave.

I've always tried to carry on these traditions with my own children, but maintaining a festive atmosphere was especially difficult at last year's Easter celebration that came shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic started raging. The girls were so grouchy about missing their friends and extended family that I seriously considered swapping out their Easter baskets with brand-new laundry bins full of their unwashed bras and underwear. But I was determined to have fun, so the Easter Bunny came after all, followed by a homebound egg hunt, a worship service livestreamed over YouTube, and an Easter brunch — all while we were sporting pajamas and acute cases of bed head.

Despite our best efforts, though, the pall of the pandemic was tangible as we missed out on dinner with grandparents (and the ham), egg hunts with cousins, and fellowship with our church congregation. We still had Easter, and we celebrated the Resurrection, but it just wasn't the same.

Of course, I realize that I've been spoiled throughout my life by parents who wanted to make all major holidays special and fun. And I know I'm guilty of the same with my own children. Easter is, after all, primarily a religious observance, and believers like us should keep the Resurrection at the forefront of our celebrating — even if we have a mouthful of Whoppers Robin Eggs while doing it.

We're not sure what Easter will hold this year. The pandemic seems to be waning, but like that licorice jelly bean my big brother spit up on his new, baby blue Easter suit when we were toddlers, the virus still lingers, threatening to tarnish it — if we let it.

Regardless of what happens, I choose to focus on the hope that Easter brings. Hope for the vaccines. Hope for reunited families. Hope for a new beginning. And if I play my cards right, hope for a massive baked ham at Easter lunch.

Jase Graves is an award-winning humor columnist from East Texas. His columns have been featured in Texas Escapes magazine, The Shreveport Times, The Longview News Journal, and The Kilgore News Herald. Contact Graves at susanjase@sbcglobal.net.



JASE GRAVES
HUMOR COLUMNIST



Other Views

Women DAs protest Measure 11 repeal

Most people don't want to see the things we've seen. Most people don't want to hear the stories that we've heard. And most people don't want to talk about the things that we talk about. Not to 12 strangers in a jury box and certainly not with a terrified kindergartner or the bruised and broken mother of three who must steel themselves to finally face their abuser in an intimidating courtroom.

But we are prosecutors. And this is our job. It's our job to meet people on their worst days, listen to their worst stories and be their champion as they seek justice. And while we can't fix what happened to these victims of crime, we have committed our careers to not making it worse. We have committed our lives to walking beside them in an attempt to hold their abusers accountable and then allow them to walk away from us as survivors.

We are elected district attorneys. In fact, we are eight of the only nine female district attorneys from across our state. Together, we have personally handled innumerable cases of unspeakable violence against some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. Together we have over 120 years of prosecutorial experience, meeting often with women and children who bear both the visible and the invisible scars of horrific domestic violence and appalling physical and sexual child abuse. Together we have held countless hands and reassured countless victims that they were believed, they were not at fault and

they deserved justice. And together we understand the important role the voter-passed mandatory minimum sentencing law Measure 11 plays in giving these victims safety, security, certainty and trust in our criminal justice system. By providing minimum sentencing for the most physically and sexually violent felony crimes, we know Measure 11 provides survivors with the time and space they need to move on from their victimization without the threat of their abuser in their lives.

As our Legislature contemplates the full repeal of this crucial safeguard for victims, we feel it is important the public understands that such actions would make our communities less safe. Repealing Measure 11 will result in significantly shorter sentences for those who prey upon our children and assault our neighbors. Repealing Measure 11 promises less certainty in those sentences as they can be further cut by more than 40%, undermining any faith or confidence victims may have placed in the system. Repealing Measure 11 will only encourage less reporting by victims of intimate and family violence. The rigors of navigating the criminal legal process is deterrent enough. Victims who have no guarantee of fairness and no hope for a reliable sentence will only have increased reasons to continue to suffer in silence. Our criminal justice system can always get better. And while we support smart, responsible policies that can make the process more equitable and fair for all, repealing Measure 11 does not do that.

And the victims we serve deserve better.

While the Legislature debates this issue, we ask our communities who care about their public safety, and especially that of women and children, to weigh in with your opinion. We should not return to the days when a rapist would merely receive a probationary slap on the wrist or the man who nearly killed his wife would be simply admonished to "walk away next time she pushes your buttons." Call your legislator. Send an email. Write a letter. Check in with them on social media.

In the meantime, we will continue to hear the stories nobody wants to hear and fight for justice for victims of these crimes. We will continue to be there on the worst days of people's lives. Because we are women who are built for this work. We are prosecutors. And it's our job.

- Sincerely,
 Paige Clarkson, Marion County district attorney and Oregon District Attorney's Association president
 Lane Danforth, Lincoln County district attorney
 Rebecca Frolander, Wallowa County district attorney
 Beth Heckert, Jackson County district attorney
 Gretchen Ladd, Wheeler County district attorney
 Kelsie McDaniel, Union County district attorney
 Patty Perlow, Lane County district attorney
 Carrie Rasmussen, Hood River County district attorney

Letter to the editor

County commissioners aren't qualified to make life and death health decisions

Union County Commissioners feel better qualified to make critical health decisions than the governor ("Union County seeks local control for managing COVID-19," The Observer, March 20, 2021.) Popularity is virtually the only qualification for being a commissioner. They certainly are not elected nor qualified to make life and death health decisions.

If commissioners were health care professionals they would be fighting COVID-19 in

our communities, not playing health czar. State COVID-19 behaviors are determined by statistics to benefit the majority. I've felt comfortable shopping in stores that require masking. I suspect our commissioners would have allowed stores to operate without masking. Even more Union County citizens would have died. Others would have restricted their activities further to avoid the greater risk.

My letter to Gov. Kate Brown supports her adherence to health experts' advice.

This is a time to respect and support one another in health.

Mary McCracken
Island City

Write to us

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Phone: 541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-781-3214

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

POSTMASTER
 Send address changes to:
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