

Wardrobe maleficence

It was my birthday. The husband and I took the train to Vancouver, B.C., some years ago to celebrate. Besides having great meals and visiting some sites, I planned shopping in department stores I had not visited in what seemed like years.

My husband waited patiently while I wandered through racks of clothing. I began to pick out items I liked and checked prices before ... sticker shock! Either serious inflation or an affluent Vancouver clientele resulted in enormous prices for what seemed like nice but not exceptional clothing items. I was seeing prices well over \$500, more than I would comfortably spend even on my birthday.

I quickly searched for and found the sales racks. Even there a T-shirt with a fringe on the bottom was \$150 on sale! Then I spotted a green hooded jacket trimmed in a design that reminded me of my Nordic tribal roots. Less than \$100!

The jacket had the fashionable look of being worn to rags except I thought tastefully so in that the ragged tears revealed more Nordic trim. The bottom edge was unfinished.

Excited about my find, I rushed it over to my husband who looked at it at me as if one of us didn't belong. The only words that passed the lips of my normally doting husband were, "You want to buy this — it's ripped?!"

Realizing this was not a debate to try to win, I said yes, it was my birthday.

I told the story to the young store clerk who was very understanding. She told me when she wore a pair of jeans with holes in it, her grandmother said, "I thought you had a good job. Can't you afford new clothes?"

Now a few years later I am still wearing my fashionable torn hoodie even though I had a friend ask me if one of our cats clawed my jacket.

FLOTUS flop

The attractive and fashionable first lady Melania Trump was photographed wearing a long green hooded jacket with the message "I really don't care, do u?" on the back. Her fashion choice caused quite a stir in all circles of Melania watch.

The fact that she wore it on her way to our southern border to observe the conditions under which refugee seekers were living made it all the weirder given the struggles of both the refugee seekers and the homeland security staff that was trying to manage a difficult problem.

Considerable hope was being invested in the first lady by the families, individuals and humanitarian groups trying to stop the separation of children from one or both parents.

Theories abounded about the meaning of the message, mostly around who was meant to receive the message — refugee seekers, border guards, Democrats, Republicans, fashion magazines?

My theory was that she was resolving a spat between her and her husband, sort of a "This is really not a big deal, so let's move on."

I heard or read that she was really poking the media which doesn't make any sense either. Whatever the first lady was trying to do, it fell flat and she may take first place in wardrobe maleficence given her extensive background in the fashion industry.

Wardrobe maleficence goes local

Surprisingly enough, we have a local contender for first place in wardrobe maleficence. The mayor of Sequim was recently the subject of a similar fashion photo, except the message on the back of his T-shirt was starkly clear. Though, like the first lady's message, it wasn't clear whom was intended to receive the message.

The message read "this is the USA, we eat meat, we drink beer, we own guns, we speak English, we love freedom. If you do not like that, GET THE F***** OUT. The message was festooned with revolvers, flags and a skeleton head with stars and stripes.

The photo was taken by a shopper at Costco who happened to see the mayor shopping and posted it on Facebook. The photo had at least a mini-viral moment and is reported to have received supportive and critical comments about the T-shirt moment.

The mayor was unhappy with the coverage which he blamed on "paparazzi" or those that would "spy on you during your personal time." He might rethink that view given he wore the shirt in Costco frequented by most people who live on the Peninsula. He must admit he was easily spotted. Besides, while mayor, there is no personal time at Costco.

Not to miss that Costco is a family store. I don't think I've seen an R-rated T-shirt in any of our large stores. His T-shirt stood out just as the first lady's jacket did.

In retrospect, the mayor wishes he hadn't worn it and says he did not intentionally wear it. He explains that he wore it to an earlier AA meeting as a way to find common ground and share an experience of dealing with addiction; that the skull on his shirt is affiliated with Harley Davidson Motorcycles.

I believe the mayor regrets the public display of profanely inviting others to leave the country. I also think he may be "deeply sorry" for offending some.

However, underneath this, I believe he thinks his right to say and wear whatever he wants overrides his responsibility as the mayor of his community. I believe he thinks he is being picked on despite his missteps that raised the concerns of many in the community. The mayor is failing to understand that he is the one setting the stage for an unhealthy focus on his intentions.

Most would not be bothered if, while mayor, he wears it to AA meetings, Harley Davidson rallies, working in the yard and other private settings. When he's not mayor, it won't matter where he wears the T-shirt.

The mayor's T-shirt is wardrobe maleficence at its worst for a mayor which makes it much more than a crude expression of freedom of speech on his personal time at Costco. The mayor can't possibly believe that most Sequim residents want their city represented by a mayor who wears a message "get the f***** out."

Bertha Cooper, a featured columnist in the Sequim Gazette, spent her career years in health care administration, program development and consultation. Cooper and her husband have lived in Sequim more than 20 years. Reach her at columnists@sequimgazette.com.



THINK ABOUT IT ...

Bertha Cooper

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OPINION

SEQUIM GAZETTE



Bad juju



FROM THE BACK NINE

Linda B. Myers

I had the good fortune to spend time at the Chito Beach Resort, which is on the far side of Sekiu. This is not a resort that soothes your body with spas and massages. It is a resort that soothes your sad and depleted spirit from the bad juju all around us.

Its trick is to use luxurious cabins in the quiet of the woods and water. Nature is a well-known elixir, of course. Its curative power surrounds you with time to reflect and restore. It allows you to stare happily at the tide rolling in, rolling out. It delights you with nothing more than a crab in a tidepool. It's an eagle sunbathing on the beach or a tiny calliope hummingbird with a bad attitude about your presence.

For the great many of us who have moved to the Olympic Peninsula, nature

is the balm that brought us here.

As there are only six cabins at Chito Beach, the handful of guests could hardly annoy each other. In fact, for a couple days we skulked around, not seeing anyone much closer than the gray whales that pass

this way.

By the third day, we admitted that humans are most comfortable in packs or herds. We were there on the first days we could gather, in small numbers, outdoors without masks. The hosts built a bonfire, and we all sat to chat with our faces on view; it felt darn near as revealing as a nude beach.

We were all out of practice with small talk. After the initial "hellos" and "where you headed?" conversation lulled. Digging any deeper was painful. Nobody wanted to talk

politics, and nobody wanted to talk Covid. We are such a weary population. Soon, people stared into the fire, and I suspect we all paid silent homage to those who've lost their livelihoods and, worst, their lives in the last year.

In time, and with the help of wine, the chatter flowed. But it was subdued, without the shouts and belly laughs from the Time Before the Masks. That kind of celebration may still be down the road, after each of us has a lot more campfires under our belts again.

I've come home with a little more hope that bad juju hasn't been permanently embedded into our land. We cannot lose this earth on our watch.

Linda B. Myers is a founding member of Olympic Peninsula Authors. Her newest historical novel, "Dr. Emma's Improbable Happenings," is available at Port Book and News, One of a Kind Gallery, and on Amazon.com. Contact her at myerslindab@gmail.com.

Living, driving in the moment

BY JOSH LEY

Washington Traffic Safety Commission

As Washingtonians, we are a strong and resilient culture encompassed in constant change, such as the weather. With respect to constant change, one of the most dynamic occurrences that most of us encounter on a daily basis is the act of driving, which brings us to one of the leading causes of death in our community: traffic collisions.

We call them "accidents" because they do not originate as intentional events. However, by definition, an accident happens by chance or without apparent cause. We all know that the vast majority of collisions are caused by human error. Sequences of events are set into motion by choices and decisions. This is not to detract from the exceptional tragedies caused by vehicle and environmental failures; but our purpose here is to focus on what we can change with our resilience.

Over the last 10 years, our Olympic Peninsula community (Clallam and Jefferson

Counties combined) lost 99 people to crashes. That's an average of 10 people per year.

The most common factors in fatal crashes throughout our State, with frequent overlap, include:

- impairment
- speed
- lane departure
- distraction

Distraction is becoming an increasing factor as people multitask while on the road. It increases the time it takes for people to react to the constant changes around them.

For perspective, at 55 miles per hour, a car travels 80 feet per second. A non-distracted driver typically perceives and reacts to a hazard in around 1.5 seconds, which is 120 feet of travel. That is before evasive action starts!

Now ask yourself, how long does it take to open and read a text while driving? Studies indicate that reading a text takes your eyes off the road for about 5 seconds, and then doubles reaction time. At highway speed for five seconds, a car drives 1.3 football fields, but when you're driving, you're not looking for a tackle

or a foul.

So, what can we do? Well, we have to acknowledge that collisions are not accidents; they are a result of error. But with acknowledgment comes empowerment! As individuals, take control and own your drive. When you hit the road, ask yourself:

- Is my vehicle road ready (seat belts, car seats, tire pressure, clean windshield, etc.)?
- Am I present in the moment?
- Is my phone out of reach and temptation, or entrusted with a passenger?
- Is my navigation system pre-programmed?
- Am I aware of my surroundings and have escape routes if the other guy makes an error?
- Can I stop at my current speed if there's a surprise at the intersection or around the corner?

Accidents don't just happen. Give yourself credit for the control you have. Be in the moment and take the wheel!

Inspector Josh Ley is Target Zero Manager for the Washington Traffic Safety Commission-Region 1.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Patriotism

I have always thought of patriotism as a motivation that would cause a person to put the interests of country, community and neighbor ahead of narrow self-interest. We now have a situation where many reject wearing masks or getting vaccinated. They see it as a patriotic duty and

in the interests of freedom without regard to the impact on country, community or neighbor.

It is interesting to note that a majority of people in that camp seem to be the acolytes of one individual, who will remain nameless. The end result may be that in future gatherings the only ones

carrying the virus, and the only ones catching it, will be members of that group. That would seem the likely result since most others, having been vaccinated, will neither pass the virus or catch it.

I hope the CDC or someone is keeping score on this count.

**Paul Wessel
Sequim**



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- Letters are welcome. Letters exceeding 250 words may be shortened. We strive to publish all letters.

- Letters are subject to editing for spelling and grammar; we contact the writer when substantial changes are required, sending the letter back to the writer for revisions. Personal attacks and unsubstantiated allegations are not printed.

- All letters must have a valid signature, with a printed name, address and phone number for verification. Only the name and town/community are printed.

- **Deadline for letters to appear in the next publication is noon Friday.** Because of the volume of letters, not all letters are published the week they are submitted. Time-sensitive letters have a priority.

- Letters are published subject to legal limitations relating to defamation and factual representation.

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