

## My first Father's Day

*Editor's note: This column was published in an incomplete form in the June 23 edition. Whoops.*

Just in case I haven't shared with you the good news yet - I'm officially a Dad!

His name is Brendan Ray Miller-Still (Ray, or Raymond, is a family name going back to my great-grandfather, Raymond Benjamin Robbins). He was born June 16 at 7:36 p.m., weighing 7-and-a-half pounds at 20 inches. Right now, he's blissed out in his swing, but I'm sure he'll turn into a fuss monster before I finish writing this column. It seems he's been pooping every five minutes he's awake, so that's been real fun to deal with.

Brendan's birth went well. Very well, in fact - no complaints from me or my wife (I mean, none out of the ordinary, given that she forcibly evicted a human being from inside her). Even though he was two days late, he made up for the inconvenience by only requiring an hour and a half of pushing from his mother before he came into our world (I heard from Kathryn's midwife that three mothers take up to three hours on average. Yikes!).

To be honest, I was a



**RAY MILLER-STILL**  
EDITOR

nervous wreck during the birth (though I tried my darndest not to show it - Kathryn certainly didn't need my anxiety added to hers). Even though Brendan passed all his wellness checks when he was a fetus, I still found myself worried he would come out

some misshapen mass, or something would go south, medically speaking, and he'd have to fight for his life in NICU, or he would spontaneously combust the moment I tried to hold him - you get the idea.

Part of my nervousness came from the fact that neither my birth nor my wife's went exceptionally well. Quite the opposite, really.

I was born with an extremely low Apgar score - I neither had a pulse, nor was I breathing when I came into the world. Scarily enough, this was on purpose, because the doctors were trying to prevent me from being infected with Strep B (this was something doctors didn't routinely test for until shortly after my birth). Unfortunately, they were not successful; I became septic, and spent two weeks in NICU before I was allowed to go home.

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## Understanding Palestine and Israel

This past May, Palestinian Hamas began shooting rockets into Israeli residential areas from the Gaza Strip, eventually totaling over 4,000 rockets. Thirteen Israeli civilians died. Israel retaliated with hundreds of jet fighter sorties that killed over 256 Palestinians civilians, many of whom died because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The 11-day war came because of a dispute over six Palestinian families being evicted from their homes in the West Bank by Israeli police. Palestinians took to the Temple Mount where 600 Palestinians and Israelis were injured in riots. Hamas, the Arab Palestinian organization that controls the Gaza Strip, issued an ultimatum to Israel to either leave the Temple Mount and the Arab suburb where the evictions were to occur or face retaliation.

Israel, of course, ignored the ultimatum and the rocket attacks commenced.

Who is to blame? If you're on the American political/religious left, it was the bullying Israelis' fault; the Palestinians were the victims. If you're on the political/religious right, Hamas and the Palestinians were the aggressors. If you were President Biden, you support Israel's right to protect itself with one hand, and with the other you offer to help rebuild Gaza.

Whom you support depends mainly on how, when, and on what authority you frame your narrative. If you support the Palestinians, the story begins 1,000 years ago when Arabs settled in Palestine. If you favor the Israeli perspective, which began with God's promise to the Patriarch Abraham and his descendants—in about 1880 B.C.E., the Jews have the earlier claim to the land.

Those on the religious left tend to doubt the miracles of the Bible, while those on the right believe in the inerrancy of scripture. Ishmael was Abraham's firstborn son, but Isaac was deemed to be the rightful heir. From Ishmael Arabs and Islam descended, while from Isaac came Judah and Judaism. In other words, the Palestinian/Israeli conflict is really the result of a millennia-long family feud inflamed by competing religious beliefs.

The Jews began to return to Palestine in the late 19th century after their diaspora by the conquering Romans between 66-73 CE. Wealthy European Jews purchased land from wealthy Ottoman Turks who controlled most of it. The Arab Palestinians didn't own very much property. They were considered second-class citizens and were very poor.

The Jews called the movement to return to Palestine Zionism. This movement gained the support of two religiously conservative presidents: Presbyterian Woodrow Wilson and Baptist Harry Truman. These two presidents believed that for Jesus to return, there had to be a state of Israel in Palestine. They were both instrumental in the nation's birth in 1948.

Had the Episcopalian Franklin Roosevelt survived World War II, it is likely that there would be no Jewish state in Palestine today and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict would not be a festering sore.

Why did Hamas unleash 4,000 rockets on Israel over a relatively minor property dispute?

Part of the answer was an attempt to influence the recently elected President Joe Biden. If



**RICH ELFERS**  
IN FOCUS

enough Palestinians died in the conflict, then American sympathies on the political left might shift from Israel to the Palestinians and rouse the rest of the Arab world to support their cause. That's why the rocket launchers were placed in residential areas in Gaza. The more innocent Palestinian dead, the greater the outrage.

Unfortunately for Hamas and the Gaza Palestinians, Catholic Biden is more of a moderate than a left-leaning progressive. Besides that, the Palestinians, the rest of the Sunni Arab world is more concerned about the ambitions and aggressive rise of the Persian/Shia Muslim Iran than they are with the fate of the Palestinians.

The Arabs lost three wars they fought against Israel: in 1947-48, 1967, and 1973. They have lost interest in the Palestinian cause. Israel is now the regional superpower that can keep Iran at bay. That's why Israel was able to ally with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates in the Abraham Accords.

Understanding how and when the political and religious American right and left decided to frame their narrative about the Palestinian/Israeli dispute tells them whom to support. Palestinians are the victims to the left while Jews are God's chosen people who rightly own the land for the right.

Two great thinkers said it best: "I am quite sure now that often, very often, in matters concerning religion and politics a man's reasoning powers are not above the monkey's" (Mark Twain). "Those who believe religion and politics do not mix, understand neither" (Albert Einstein).

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Critical race theory inflames rather than solves racism

I know this will set off a fire or two - but here goes. As an individual and in my opinion, I support fully the concepts of promoting and supporting "Racial, Cultural or Ethnic diversity or inclusiveness." The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, and later sexual orientation.

Every business with 15 or more employees has a sign in their lunchroom reminding people that discrimination will not be tolerated. Banks and financial organizations all have stringent protections in place to make sure it is enforced. Heck, it is downright illegal! America has voted for a Black president for two terms.

And yet, we are told that America is an awful place and is 'systemically racist'. Across America and particularly in Washington state, the racially divisive teachings of "Critical Race Theory" (CRT) are being taught in all our schools, from elementary on up through college, and in our businesses.

We are taught that all members of a group - 'White' - (such as Polish, Italian, German, Irish, French people) are 'oppressors'. Oppressors are all 'bad', and there is nothing you can do to change that.

CRT is not concerned with equality. They always specify equity, which looks at outcomes.

For example, the current makeup of America is approximately 60 percent White, 18 percent Hispanic or Latino, 13 percent Black and almost 6 percent Asian.

Basically, the quota system is being promoted. So blacks (for example) need to make up 14% of doctors, bank CEOs and bakers. I agree that many businesses are full of "white males over age 50" and we need to improve that.

But CRT teaches that it does not matter who the best man or woman for the job is if the ratios are correct.

A quick Google search of the current Seahawks roster (92 members) shows 71 percent of the full team are 'oppressed' - actually, to be woke and politically correct, since only 14 percent of the U.S. is Black, that

means that they need to let 50 members of the team go and hire more Asians and Latinos and old white guys. ('Ageism' is a category). It does not matter that they are the best athletes available.

CRT is an attempt to end racism. But by focusing and emphasizing differences and skin color, that just ends up inflaming the situation.

Why is my president, half of my Congress and others, fueling the fire by emphasising skin color? Setting up disaster relief funds that only go to minorities?

Why are we teaching Americans that if they fail at something, or make the wrong choices, it is not their fault? That it is only because of systemic racism that it is happening?

On what planet is it believed, that by dividing people, and setting people apart, we are actually bringing people together?

In these times, it is important to remember that we are all Americans. We need to pull together, work together, and learn to play well with others.

**David Cannon**  
Enumclaw

### Cannon should back up his arguments

David Cannon seems to be auditioning for Tucker Carlson's job — that is, if he gets too outrageous for even Fox News. "The news says" seems to be his favorite innuendo this time, without quoting which news service or any details whatsoever. Then he follows that up with his chosen facts to refute what "the news says."

"When liberals were asked" about the rate of killings by police is another great one, implying that liberals are so out of touch with reality that they haven't a clue what the information might really be. I could find no poll that asked that question to liberals or anyone else, so please share where you got that gem.

Hunter Biden's laptop contents are "pretty damning." Well, that really nails it down, right? The government is looking at his laptop regarding what may be a tax problem, not child porn.

In general, "The News Says," or reports, what they are told by various sources, including government officials, in which case, most sources were stating that it seemed unlikely that the coronavirus came from a lab. That is getting a harder look now and the news is reporting that fact.

While I have, in the past many weeks, challenged Cannon's opinions on these pages, he has never come back to defend them. He just goes on to more opinions, bundled up in "the news says," with no more specifics than that. I'm not sure where he gets his news but I can make an educated guess.

I'm pretty sure he is spot on in saying that very few of the 14,000+ deaths from guns each year are from AR-15s but that passes right over the fact that there are 14,000+ deaths from guns each year; mostly from suicide, by the way.

I almost forgot: While Black people are 13 percent of the population, 28 percent of people killed by police are black. They are six times more likely to be killed by police than white people and hispanics are three times more likely.

If you're going to keep quoting "The News Says," it would be nice to hear what news. Just sayin'.

**Larry Benson**  
Enumclaw

### Correcting the record on police shootings

I want to correct some misinformation about police shootings. People are dying and this is not a game. David Cannon is wrong when he says that racialized police violence is a liberal media myth.

There were 1,021 fatal police shootings in 2020. That is a fact. Out of those 1,021 shootings, 241 African Americans were killed by the police. This is a fact. African Americans make up 13 percent of the US population and account for 23 percent people fatally shot by the police in 2020. This is not a pandemic anomaly.

In 2019, 999 people were fatally shot by the police and 235 of them were African Americans. African Americans suffer disproportionately. This is a fact, Mr Cannon. It is not my opinion and it is not your opinion. It is reality. It did not come from Tucker Carlson and it did not come from Rachael Maddow.

I would like to quote your June 16th letter: "Saying something repeatedly, without the facts to back it up, does not make it true." I have shown you the facts, Mr. Cannon. Will you continue to say things repeatedly and hope that they become true?

**Paul Butler**  
Enumclaw

### Conspiracy theorists should consider careers in fiction writing

I recently read a potboiler of a conspiracy theory. Worthy of Ludlum or Cussler. It of course involves every one of the usual "liberal suspects" being behind it. It was so detailed and full of pages of so-called truths, I can only paraphrase it here.

It appears the whole COVID thing is supposedly a long double game. It was released so the national and worldwide deep state liberal conspiracy could make sure their dumb sheeple followed orders. Staying home, wearing masks, getting vaccinated etc. Of course the conservatives, the "woke" conservative news media, talking heads and politicians "saw through it" and decided not to play. The twist is, several of the conservative social media and news sources were acting as deep moles or patsies for the deep state pedophiles, continually convincing their followers not to play along. An example of this includes getting vaccinated while telling their followers don't bother. Why?

Because sometime before or around the end of 2021 or around or after the U.S. state primaries, a "new" variant of the COVID virus will magically "appear" somewhere in the world. This one however will be like the 1919 pandemic virus that eventually became highly fatal to those who got it. They made sure the current vaccines are mostly effective against it. Because if it was fully effective, that would look suspicious. The one shot Johnson is supposed to be the least effective. Supposedly because it can be deployed faster.

The infiltrated or conned conservative mouthpieces and media will continue to downplay this fatal version until it has spread to several different countries. Even if the true patriots in the media eventually shut down the traitors and change the message to warn their followers. They hope it will be too late. Because the true believers won't initially buy this sudden, suspicious change

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## THE COURIER-HERALD

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## CHURCH CORNER

# You'll never live this day again, so make it count

Remember Ray Stevens? He was a singer-songwriter of the 1960s into the '90s. He started out writing silly kinds of songs like "Alley Oop" and "The Streak." Maybe you've forgotten. Anyway, while he was first known for nonsense songs, he also penned more meaningful ones. He put Solomon's statement, "everything is beautiful in its own time," to a modern beat and made it popular.

Then Mr. Stevens got real serious and wrote an ode to greed, hyper-ambition, twisted morals and squandered life. He titled it "Mr. Businessman." He was lamenting the wasted time and effort put toward making it big. He wrote:

*"Itemize the things you covet  
As you squander through your life  
Bigger cars, bigger houses  
Term insurance for your wife...  
You better take care of business, Mr. Businessman  
What's your plan?"*

*Get down to business, Mr. Businessman  
If you can  
Before it's too late  
and you throw your life away"*

I prayed today with a lady who will probably not live through the night. This sweet lady lived a long life and, in her own words, "a good and satisfying one." But it is now about over. I don't mean to bum you out, but each of us will have such a day, our last one.

It is not the first time I've prayed with someone at the end of their life and I'm sure it won't be the last. But each time I do, I think about what was gained and what was lost in our days of living.



ROSS  
HOLTZ  
THE  
SUMMIT

Some people live like there is no tomorrow, other people live like they have a never-ending stream of tomorrows. Most of us try not to think about life ending. And that's alright, it'll come without us giving it any thought.

But I don't want to talk about death, I want to talk about life.

Each of us who woke up this morning has a precious gift, another day of life. So, what are you going to do with it? Mr. Stevens asked a great question: "what's your plan?" Remember the old saying, "today is the first day of the rest of your life?" It was never truer than now. We have just come through a pandemic that changed so much of what used to be normal. Everywhere I hear about a new normal.

Ah, but here is the thing: the new normal in your life will be what you make it. Most of my family work in offices, or at least they did. Starting with COVID-19 everyone was moved home to work from there. And, guess what? Most of them will be working from home for a long time to come; new normal.

I'm told that the food delivery business, more or less a luxury before COVID, is now a thriving industry, both for fast-food and groceries. At our house we haven't shopped in a grocery store in months: another new normal.

"Trends" or "trending" are now buzzwords I'm hearing everywhere. A trend is: a general direction in which something is

developing or changing. Politics, culture, fashion, even business, everything is trending in some direction. Some trends are terrific, other trends are destructive.

We are at a unique time in history. You and I have the opportunity to affect the trends and the new "normals" in our lives. Now is not a time for coasting, it is a time to be intentional and purpose driven. What's your plan? Now is time for planning sessions; around the conference tables, the kitchen tables, the coffee tables, wherever you can gather the people most important in your life and talk.

Now is the time to re-evaluate your values, your goals and your desires. Now is the time to make a plan, then, dear reader, then live each day with your aspirations in mind, making the important things the important things. Remember, you will never have the opportunity to live this day again. And only God knows, but this might be your last day. So make today count!

Solomon wrote:  
*"To everything there is a season,  
A time for every purpose under heaven:  
A time to live  
And a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)*

Now is the time to live. Jesus told us to seek the kingdom of heaven first and then all the important things of life will be given to us. Now there is a plan.

See you in church.  
*Dr. Ross Holtz is senior pastor at The Summit in Enumclaw.*

## Letters

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of message from "trusted sources," delaying them from taking precautions. Also, any possible rush by the un-vaccinated to get the shots will be "slowed" considerably by the extra injection sites being closed. Or, maybe, just a "general short term" shortage at a critical time. Again, why?

Apparently, the wild hope of the evil liberal godless commie fascist criminals is that this new variant will "take out" or incapacitate enough of the conservative voters to swing several potentially close state and national midterm elections towards the democrats, solidifying the current democrat leads. In spite of the voting legislation republicans are passing everywhere. Same goes

for the "liberal parties" in several other countries around the world. Thus taking us all closer to the eventual so-called new world order. Or whatever the whacked out conspiracy people are calling "it" this week.

I wanted to post a link to this tale. Sadly after much trying, I can no longer find the page. Of course, that in itself is suspicious and adds to the veracity of this tale according to standard conspiracy philosophy.

Count me as a moderate who is continuously amused by wacky conspiracy theories from both extremes.

Bob Mitchell  
Enumclaw

## Still

From Page 4

Kathryn aspired meconium when she was born. That's a pretty common occurrence in newborns, and not especially fatal. However, her doctor accidentally gave her an adult dose of medication in response, and she was about to receive a second adult dose when a nurse caught the mistake. Luckily, one of the country's leading experts in - get this - treating newborns who were given too much of the medication Kathryn was given was at her hospital giving a lecture, and managed to save her

life. She spent a week in NICU before being sent home (on Mother's Day, of all days).

So, in all bluntness, I feel especially lucky that I get to write this column about the uncomplicated birth of my healthy son. It's not something everybody gets to experience; according to the CDC, the U.S.'s infant mortality rate was 5.7 babies per 1,000 live births in 2018.

Though this is far below the world average of around 26.1 in 2021, according to World Population Review, it is far above countries like Japan (2 per 1,000 live births), France (3.2), Italy (3.3), the U.K. (4.3), and five other countries; some experts blame the higher rate on the lack of accessible healthcare

and a social safety net in this country.

The story is much the same for pregnancy-related deaths of mothers; according to the CDC, 17.3 mothers died due to pregnancy complications every 100,000 live births in 2017. That's far less than the world average, but it's also higher than Italy, Japan, the U.K., and 48 other countries.

(And though it's not the focus of this column, it matters to me to mention that other populations - specifically Black and Indigenous people - bear the brunt of these statistics and suffer higher mortality rates than their white counterparts.)

I know - cheery

thoughts for a first-time parent, right?

But it bears to keep in mind that even in this day and age, of medical marvels not even dreamt of even just a century ago, that life is not guaranteed. Though it is a gift, it is not a given.

I think that, in the routine of our daily lives, we tend to forget that. I know I sure do, but now that I'm just spending three months with my family (and taking a break from the Courier-Herald), I am able to "stop and smell the roses," so to speak.

And so far, every moment has been amazing.

So here's to parenthood, and for cherishing all aspects of life - even

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### Jana Darlene Thomas

Inspired educator, devoted friend and beloved daughter, sister and aunt, Jana Darlene Thomas left this world too soon on June 2, 2021. She will be long remembered for her compassion, generosity, selflessness, and tenacious spirit.

Jana was born on May 8, 1962 at Enumclaw Hospital, the youngest child of Jake and June Thomas, longtime residents of Enumclaw. She graduated from Enumclaw High School and continued her education in God's Country at Washington State University, where she received a bachelor's degree in education. From there, she attended Gonzaga University for her master's in education.

Teaching was Jana's calling — she taught for 37 years in the Auburn School District, starting with kindergarten, and finishing at Auburn Mountainview High School as the ASB advisor for her final years. Through her lessons, Jana empowered her students to pursue their lives and studies with service and kindness front of mind, encouraging each to act mindfully and for each other. She also taught swimming lessons for decades at the famous Thomas Family Pool, starting when she was in high school herself.

Jana loved to travel and was often found in the Caribbean when she was on much-deserved teacher school breaks — usually in the islands of Aguililla with friends at her favorite restaurant, Blanchards. Each year, the day after



Thanksgiving was reserved for the annual making of tunbröd, a Swedish flatbread she grew up making with her mother and sister, and was carried on famously by her niece, Jamie. Her affinity for cooking, catering, and hosting was endless and her meals often featured crab, fondue and recipes from celebrity chef Ina Garten. She loved her dogs, nieces, and nephew above all else, which earned her the moniker of a "kid-up" versus the dry title of "grown-up."

Jana was preceded by her mother, June Thomas, and several of her trusted golden retrievers. She is survived by her father, Jake Thomas; her sister and brother-in-law, Jody and Randy Emerson; her brother, Jeff Thomas; her nieces, Jamie Emerson, Kaytee Johnson and Erin James; and her nephew Kyle Emerson.

The Jana Thomas Memorial Scholarship has been established in her honor in which each year, a selected leadership student from Auburn Mountainview High School will be given a \$1,000 scholarship. For donations, please email Jody Emerson at [jodyemerson@aol.com](mailto:jodyemerson@aol.com).

Jana's celebration of life will be held Saturday, July 10, from 2-6pm at 1901 Florence St. in Enumclaw. Her family encourages friends and loved ones to leave a memory and/or photos of Jana at <https://www.kudoboard.com/boards/LWi5RJki> or on the tribute wall at [www.weeksfuneralhomes.com](http://www.weeksfuneralhomes.com).

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