

MARIETTA DAILY JOURNAL

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COMMENTARY

A SALUTE TO MOTHERS

They've made this conversation possible

Let's face it. We may disagree on any number of things but on one matter there can be no disagreement. If it wasn't for our mommas, we wouldn't be here today arguing about anything. Hooray for Mothers!

Tomorrow is Mother's Day but every day should be. It certainly is in my house. I live with one, am father to one and father-in-law to another. We've got a lot of mommas around our place and I love them all.

I would not make a very good mother. I don't handle pain well and from what I am told, giving birth does involve considerable pain.

A few years back, I was required to have a series of biopsies in a part of my body better left to your imagination. My daughter-in-law, Jackie, mother of two and a nurse in the maternity unit at WellStar, called to check on me following the procedure. Glad to have a sympathetic audience, I described how rough the day had been for me and in my most whiny voice told her, "Jackie, you can't imagine how painful it was." Short pause. "Try having a baby," she said. End of whine.

I was blessed with one of the world's great mothers and her personality shows through today in my words and deeds. My mother believed in getting involved, whether it was her church, my school or a myriad of community organizations, including her beloved Eastern Star. Momma was not a bystander. She got into the arena.

Coming from Bartow County in the years before that area became gentrified, she was denied the opportunity for education beyond the seventh grade. It was the one part of her life she truly regretted and it drove her to educate herself. She read everything she could get her hands on — newspapers, magazines and books — especially books.

My mother not only read, she knew what she was reading and could converse with most any one on most any subject. One of my proudest moments came when I received an award at the University of Georgia and had her in Athens with me for the event. Even though she was getting on in years, she was very much at home with the academics in attendance at the function. One walked up to me later in the evening to tell me how much he had enjoyed his conversation with her and was curious to know from what college she had graduated. My mother's education

was complete.

Momma suffered fools poorly. She wasn't afraid to let her opinions be known when she heard or saw something she didn't like. Once, her church called a meeting to remove the minister because he had earned the enmity of the music director who had turned choir practices into Amway pep rallies. The minister had suggested he focus more on the music and less on shampoo products.

As in many large churches, music directors have a strong constituency and the minister was fighting for his job with angry church members who figured he could be replaced easier than a very talented music director.

The minister told me later that he was as good as gone until my mother stood up and took on the lynch mob. With righteous indignation, she changed the attitude of the crowd and the outcome. The minister stayed; the music director huffed off with his Amway products to another church. Momma wasn't sure where he went and she really didn't care. Right was right and he was wrong. End of story.

She was also tenacious. As she lay dying in the hospital, we were told by the nurse that we should say our last goodbyes. There were a number of machines and wires connected to my mother and she seemed to be comatose.

In a tearful state, my wife and I kissed her and told her we loved her. As we were leaving, Momma made a feeble gesture to the nurse standing nearby who leaned in to hear her whisper and then jump as though she had been shocked.

Out in the hall, I asked, "What was that all about?" The nurse said, "Your mother wanted to know what time the Braves game would be on television tonight!" She did live to see the game and passed away the next day. That was how she lived her life. On her terms.

I think of my mother every day and especially on Mother's Day. I hope I have inherited the best of who she was. I hope you have such remembrances of your own mother and if she is still around, tell her you love her. Remember, mothers went to great pains to bring us here. Without them, we wouldn't be having this conversation.

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Dick Yarborough
COLUMNIST

Lee: Tumlin needs to 'articulate' bond vision, but adds ...

'I'M ALL IN'

COBB COMMISSION Chairman **Tim Lee** is "180 percent" behind Marietta Mayor **Steve Tumlin's** proposal to use \$35 million in bond proceeds to purchase and bulldoze several decrepit apartment complexes along problem-plagued Franklin Road, and then package the land for redevelopment.

"I'm all in" he told Around Town in an interview Friday afternoon at the MDJ office.

Some have criticized the plan as "rewarding slumlords" for letting their once-nice garden apartments deteriorate in recent decades. But that's not how Lee sees it.

"I see it as eliminating (slumlords), not rewarding them," he said. "Letting them exist as they are would be rewarding them."

The Franklin Road corridor is lined with aging complexes, many of them poorly maintained. And many of them have high transience rates, which in turn is reflected in high transience rates in nearby Marietta schools. Tumlin's plan would disperse some of those residents into Section 8 housing and elsewhere and in effect nudge others into the remaining complexes, which in theory would begin to see less transience and become more profitable. Some critics complain that the plan is designed to rid the corridor of "undesirable" low-income residents. But Lee countered the county could easily absorb them, that dispersing them is better for them than leaving them where they are, and that such objections are just a "stone in the road" in the bigger scheme of things.

The city council is considering whether to call a referendum this fall on whether to issue the bonds.

FRANKLIN ROAD roughly parallels I-75 and has interstate access at both ends, meaning it should be highly desirable to developers. Meanwhile, Gov. **Nathan Deal** has green lighted construction of reversible "managed lanes" along the interstate to address congestion.

"And as soon as that's done, (the Franklin area) is golden," Lee predicted.

The chairman described Tumlin's plan as "a road map to success" because it lets the private sector have confidence that local government is serious about redeveloping the area.

"When there is certainty, that is when you get investment from the private sector," he said.

LEE SAYS the majority of feedback he's heard from the public about the plan has been positive. But he still had some words of caution for the city.

"I think people are concerned about the level of the city's commitment to it," he said. "What will be the next step? What comes next if the bond passes?"

"For the city to sell this to the public, they need to say, 'OK, this (purchasing the land) is the first step, and these will be the steps after that.' What's the fourth step?"

"If they're not going to do that, some people are going to say, 'Well why take the first step?' Some people are wondering how this will play out. And it's a legitimate question."

"City leaders need to articulate what they're going to do. It's up to them to provide the vision."



Lee B. Garrett

Joe Kirby

Otis A. Brumby III



Tim Lee



Steve Tumlin



Tricia Pridemore

THE RACE for the 11th District congressional seat being vacated by Rep. **Phil Gingrey** (R-Marietta) is about to get more crowded.

Sources tell Around Town that **Tricia Pridemore** of Cobb will announce her candidacy at a 5:30 p.m. Monday press conference at **Dave Poe's** Barbeque on Whitlock Avenue. Pridemore is former executive director of the Governor's Office of Workforce Development and nearly unseated east Cobb's **Sue Everhart**

as Georgia GOP Chairwoman two years ago.

Already announced for Gingrey's seat are former Republican Congressman **Bob Barr** of Smyrna, Georgia House Majority Whip **Ed Lindsey** (R-Buckhead) and state Sen. **Barry Loudermilk** (R-Bartow/Cartersville). Waiting in the wings as another possible candidate is state Sen. **Judson Hill** (R-east Cobb).

Gingrey plans to run for U.S. Senate.

THE NIGHTMARE CONTINUES for Awtrey Middle School Principal **Jeff Crawford**. The embattled educator no doubt thought he could breathe easy after prosecutors decided last week not to prosecute him further on charges of incompetency, insubordination and willful neglect of duties for failing to report a seventh-grader's allegation she'd been sexually assaulted off-campus by another seventh-grader.

But Crawford was given a negative rating by assistant Area Superintendent **James Carter** in his annual review. And the only items in which he received an "Unsatisfactory" or "Needs Improvement" rating were all tied to the allegations of failure to report and/or the alleged failure to return to the school following his interrogation, according to Crawford's attorney, **Justin O'Dell** of Marietta. The result is he is rated "Needs Improvement" rather than "Satisfactory," the attorney said.

"What we seem to have is a little bait and switch," O'Dell said.

There is no right to a public hearing on the performance review, and the review is appealed through Carter, who on Wednesday declined to change the review — despite the fact that the allegations against Crawford on which the negative review apparently was based had been dropped by then.

"Thus, the district gets to 'win' by affecting Crawford's employment without ever having the true facts of the case come to light and the blatant misrepresentations of law and fact made in the investigation exposed," O'Dell said. "They can use this performance review to effect his promotions or even his job status down the road. They have also referred the matter to the Professional Standards Commission, but declined to inform the PSC that the charges were dismissed."

Continued O'Dell: "I believe that sunshine cures all things. In anticipation of the opportunity for a public hearing, I have refrained from presenting these issues publicly. When the case was dismissed, I hoped that change was sincerely around the corner and that I would be allowed to share our concerns and issues as part of the process. It does not appear so. The District seems bent on obtaining some pound of flesh out of Mr. Crawford."

School Board Chairman **Randy Scamihorn**, asked Thursday about O'Dell's allegations, told Around Town he was not familiar with the details of the review.

But, added Scamihorn, "If (Crawford) feels that way, he needs to approach his school board and the superintendent. We want to be fair."

CONGRATULATIONS to **Inger Eberhart** of Acworth, who was appointed by House Speaker **David Ralston** on Friday to the Georgia Civil War Commission. Eberhart would be the first African-American woman to serve on that body, whose founding members included Cobb Commission Chairman **Dr. Phil Secrist** and late media mogul **Tom Watson Brown** of Marietta. Next, perhaps Ralston can see to refunding the Commission, which saw nearly all of its state funding for its historic-preservation mission stripped away during the recession. Eberhart currently is administrative assistant to east Cobb Commissioner **JoAnn Birrell** and is on the board of advisors of immigration reformer **D.A. King's** Dustin Inman Society. ...

Speaking of King, he'll be speaker at Monday's meeting of the Madison Forum luncheon at the Rib Ranch on Canton Road.

BOMBS AWAY: Tuesday's bomb threats against the Cobb Courthouse — causing its brief evacuation — quickly unraveled after local police arrested Starlight Cafe owner **Jody Wilson** at his Marietta Square eatery as the noon lunch rush was winding down. Wilson's home had been in and out of foreclosure repeatedly since 2010 and Tuesday was the day of the monthly real estate auction on the courthouse steps.

Insurance agent **Steven Norris** happened to go to lunch at the Cafe shortly after the evacuation — but before Wilson's arrest — with Senior Assistant Cobb District Attorney **Ann Harris**. As Norris noted afterward, "(We unknowingly) had lunch there just as all of this was happening, and Ann came in and went up to the counter and said to (Wilson), 'I am sick and tired of all these bomb threats every month on real estate auction day!' — and the police were all over his back parking lot as we ate. We left just after 1 p.m. before they took him away!"

The Marietta Daily Journal encourages letters to the editor on topics of general interest, but reserves the right to edit them for content and length. Letters should be no longer than about 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and daytime telephone number for verification purposes.

THE DRAWING BOARD

