

Opinion

By CLEO ROBERSON

Life is a mystery. Sadly, the only mysteries I like are those with solutions at the end of the story. We never know from moment to moment what will happen to us and we haven't a clue about the ending except there is one coming sooner or later.

So avoiding the ending, I went out to pick up my taxes at the CPA's office here in Tennessee. Being new in the area I don't know many people yet but I'm learning—just like today when I almost got a date right in the office.

As I went in, there was an older, distinguished looking gentleman sitting right in the middle of the couch. I looked around for another place to sit, but there was only a plant-filled windowsill. I opted to share the couch with the stranger. As I sat down he looked at me and turned on the charm. "Well, this is my lucky day, to have such a good-looking lady sit down beside me."

Well, aren't you the silvered tongue devil?" I responded. He just kept smiling at me. I had seen that smile before. It was the same smile Donnie used on me when he hadn't understood a word I said. This nice guy was pretty deaf. I repeated myself receiving the same response. That's when I just poked him with my elbow and smiled. He poked me back with his elbow and smiled. He had all his front teeth. That's always a plus if someone is flirting with you a little.

Then he said in a concerned tone, "The years are really piling up on me."



Cleo Roberson

Off the Leash

Silver Tongue and a Long Hug

"I understand," I answered loudly and sympathetically. He heard that and responded, "You don't know yet ma'am. You're still a young thing and I'm 93." Like I said, he was a silvered tongue devil.

Then he went on. "How old are you anyway? 62?" Again--the silver tongue or maybe afflicted eyes.

I laughed and answered, "No, you need to add about a decade and a half to that." Ahh, so you are still just a young thing?" I started to list all my maladies for him and do a comparison health check, but decided against it. My list was too long and I didn't want to repeat it 20 times, bless his heart.

Then he perked up. "Hey little lady, do you like to dance?" he asked enthusiastically. "Because if you do, I know this nice little place over in Greenbrier with great food and a great dance floor."

At that moment I thought dancing with a stranger I wasn't sure still had a driver's license might be problematic. I was just going to have to tell him the truth, so with complete honesty I answered, "No, I only dance if someone is shooting at my feet."

He laughed at that, not realizing it's the total truth... almost. That's when the receptionist came to get me so I could sign my tax forms. Just as I finished and

headed back to the waiting room, they called for my new friend. He had more checks to write than I did. One was for \$50,000 and the other was for \$60,000. He was looking cuter all the time. He looked up and asked me to wait just a minute. So I stood there while he took out his checkbook and began to write. When he finished, he stuck out his hand to shake mine and introduced himself. I told him my name and he told me how much he liked it. (There was that silver tongue again.) I reached over to hug him bye and found he wouldn't let me go. "Oh no, pretty lady," he said, "You're not getting away from me that fast." And the hug was extended.

If Donnie was watching, he was laughing. He was a long hugger while I always broke first but here I was trapped in a kind hug by a stranger. What could I do but comply? I didn't want to get a reputation for hugging and running. When he finally let go he asked me about dancing one more time and then said, "I have to tell you something important. If someone is shooting at your feet, don't dance, just run in a zig zag pattern." Then he laughed. I liked him. He was smart and had a BS in environmental science that he had received in the 50's and had overseen all of Nashville's Health Departments until he retired. He had even handled the responsibilities of the M.D. that the department could never afford. I could tell he was proud of his accomplishments. I'm sure he was great with the companies he dealt with. He was obviously very smart and had that silver tongue as well.

I left the office smiling. Here was a very special man whose company I had enjoyed, who thought I was pretty, funny and wanted to take me dancing. Sigh. It made me feel good. And I will always treasure his words of wisdom—If someone is shooting at your feet, don't dance-- run in a zigzag pattern!

Due process is not a suggestion

By EMILY BURTON SHERMAN

When our nation's inalienable rights are openly disparaged by a would-be king, it is the duty of every American, regardless of creed or color, to stand together in defense of the least among us, lest we become a willing witness to our Constitution's demise.

Our nation's veterans of the Revolutionary War didn't lay down their lives for an Oval Office dictator to wipe out due process as an inconvenience on his path to personal greatness. Yet the president's recent deportation of more than 200 Central Americans, without an ounce of due process, to a brutal maximum-security prison in El Salvador paints our nation in the same colors as Kim Jong-un and Joseph Stalin.

In their complaint against the King of England, our founding fathers listed tyranny, abuse of power and denial of a fair trial by jury. In how many bloody conflicts since have American men and women stood up to the great evils in the world that would deny humanity these rights? And how dare we now deny the same rights in our own shining nation?

Suddenly, though, some "patriots" care more about a person's accent than the foundational rule of law eroding under our feet. Rushing to deport any unconvicted prisoners from American soil to a dungeon known to relish human rights violations is in no way and will never be just a blue or red issue, but the first swings of the hammer against the foundations of our democracy.

Across the nation in recent years, an average of 30% of felony charges are dropped each year, and about 8% are outright dismissed, according to the Pew Research Center. Apply this figure to the 200 people deported under Trump's vague accusations of gang affiliation, without proof, and it becomes clear that more than 60 of the humans on those flights likely would not be convicted of a crime in a court of law.

Couching this fact behind juvenile Twitter tags like "dangerous alien" or "radical criminal" is to abandon the solemn duty of every citizen to protect our union from all enemies that would dare impune our constitutional rights, including those enemies slithering under the front porch of the People's House in Washington. As we know from experience, career politicians will croak

any lie to save their own skin when sitting in the hot seat. Therefore the repeated accusations against any immigrant recently illegally deported are easily debunked as nothing more than posturing of a feral dog backed into a judicial corner of their own making. Their angry tweets have never and should never be enough to convict a legally protected person in the United States. Indeed, our entire court system refutes this idea.

It should be remembered that, even as police pulled frozen body parts from Jeffrey Dahmer's cannibal hoard, he was still guaranteed due process. Dahmer's legal team was still able to contact him without first being forced to track him down over a period of days across foreign flight paths. He was still held in a prison facility where he was guaranteed to be treated humanely.

To be clear, the man who murdered 17 people was still treated with more judicial respect and afforded more inalienable rights than some of the recent immigrants, students, and parents of U.S. citizens currently being deported as somehow so dangerous to the entire nation that they don't deserve due process. One hopes our nation's Dreamers are afforded at least the same rights as our nation's serial killers.

Otherwise, we have become a two-court nation, in which the color of your skin determines what level of justice you should expect. It is pure folly to imagine traditional U.S. citizens will not be swept into this constitutional failure eventually if they publicly exercise their First Amendment rights to protest their government.

By allowing a single one of the president's imagined enemies to be denied due process, we put ourselves in equal peril. Because it never ends with just one person. Or a dozen. Or a hundred. Any disappearances of protected populations are always the first test of a dictator to see how much bloodletting we, the People, will tolerate.

When due process, judicial orders and Supreme Court rulings become the president's punchlines on social media, it is time to remember the warnings of our nation's patriots 250 years ago.

"There can be no truer principle than this – that every individual of the community at large has an equal right to the protection of government," said Alexander Hamilton during the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

Last week, at the Old North Church in Boston, a message was projected during the 250th anniversary of Paul Revere's ride.

"Let the warning ride forth once more: tyranny is at our door."

And they might be right. More than 200 years ago, our Constitution planted the roots for a nation where all men and women, both guilty and innocent, were provided access to their day in court. But these roots have not grown so deeply as to protect the Constitution's toppling indefinitely.

It is imperative that all true patriots refuse to witness the willful destruction of these basic human rights. We must insist that each human being seized from our city streets and rushed through the night to a foreign detention center are afforded the same due process we offered our best patriots and worst rebels.

A president who insists this isn't true, who insists that the only path to greatness is through the slaughter of constitutional guarantees, is hiding the King's Redcoats in our harbor while promising us we are somehow safer for the invasion.

Emily Sherman is a columnist and educator who resides in Muhlenberg County with her family of miscreants, saints and the odd stray cat.

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