



**Smile Awhile**  
**SARA HOPSON BLAIR**

*Editor's note: Shortly before her passing, it was discovered that Sara Blair had written several columns that had not been published yet in The Paintsville Herald. We will be publishing these in her memory in this and upcoming editions.*

"Honey," Ronnie said as he sauntered into the room,

# It's a bargain

"have you ever heard of the term, 'visual fulcrum?'"

I had to admit that was a combination of two words I'm familiar with, but married together like that, I was sure they represented a different meaning.

"Can't say as I have," I replied, knowing I was about to receive a short (hopefully) lecture about some concept — scientific, political or otherwise, he'd run across in one of his magazines or on YouTube.

"Actually," he said, "Clyde Pack taught us this phenomenon in art class 60 years ago back at dear old Meade Memorial."

"Visual fulcrum?" I intoned.

"Well," he went on, "Clyde didn't call it that; he referred to it as a focal point, and it pertains to the fact that when you look at a picture, painting or otherwise, your eyes are drawn to the left side, usually just upper left of center. After I learned that, I noticed that in most paintings, from the Mona Lisa to The Scream, the area to the upper left somehow drew your attention.

"OK," I acquiesced, "I've learned something here — but why is it important to me?"

"It has to do with your brain on bargains!" He informed me.

"I've been lost since you started this conversation," I blurted.

"That's the name of an article in this month's AARP News Bulletin," he proudly announced. "And it refers to the positioning

of key words and images in the printed advertisements we see everywhere. Clyde used it when teaching the composition of a painting, but as it turns out, advertisers are aware of this visual 'hook' when they want to sell you something — the eye always focuses first to the left."

"Fascinating," I sarcastically exclaimed. "So, the article is about advertising gimmicks?"

"Yep," he continued. "And the color red makes shoppers less price-conscious, according to marketing consultant Nick Kolenda. But he says men are more susceptible to red — they find women are more desirable in red and prefer sports teams in red uniforms!"

"Someday," I informed him, "try standing up in the middle of a UK Wildcats basketball game and telling that to the cheering section!

You'll see RED alright!"

"Sometimes," he explained, "the ad men will use unusual fonts for the words they print, because ugly-looking letters and numbers are harder to read; thus the increased difficulty makes you stop and focus on the bargains they are trying to push on you."

"Ugly font — there's another term that never occurred to me," I mused. "As opposed to what — a pretty font? What about a home-ly font? I didn't realize the shape of words could turn into a beauty contest!"

"Then you'll love the 'WOW' words," he chuckled. "Those are the special ones. Kolenda explained it with: 'a SMALL \$5 fee seemed cheaper than a \$5 fee. Or 'JUST 3 payments of \$29' sounded smaller than 3 payments. And then, 'for a LOW price of \$89.95', sounds low because they say it is."

He was on a roll, so I let him continue. "And getting back to that left eye, visual fulcrum thing, when you see a price of \$3.99, your left eye is drawn to the far-left number, thus, \$3.99 seems cheaper than \$4.00; and it is — by a penny. Whereas you might not buy something for \$4.00, but you might for \$3.99! See how it works?"

"I think so," I responded. "That's why I think it's finally time to invest in the installation of that walk-in shower we've been talking about for years. With a SMALL down payment of ONLY \$499.99, you can purchase for the LOW price of JUST \$7900.00 (in twelve EASY payments) a luxurious home bath system!"

Ronnie disappeared into another part of the house before I got to the word "EASY!"

Have a great week, and don't forget to SMILE AWHILE!

## LETTER

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held communities together, worked hard, led social change and carried burdens that many people will never see. They are some of the most amazing people I have met and gotten to know, but I think we need to start asking ourselves some questions. Why have we expected women to be so strong? Why have we celebrated their ability to endure instead of questioning what they have been forced to endure?

When we talk about domestic violence, we're not talking about something that only happens somewhere else, to others. These are women we work with. Women we are friends with. Women we go to church with. Women standing beside us in the grocery store. Domestic violence doesn't discriminate based on age, gender, race, income, or background.

Here in Eastern Kentucky, we grow up knowing what it means to face challenges. We know what it means to live in communities where resources can be limited, where transportation isn't always available, and where finding affordable housing can be difficult, if not impossible. For many experiencing domestic violence, those challenges can become barriers to safety. People often ask why someone doesn't just leave. But imagine being a woman with children, little to no income, limited transportation and nowhere affordable to live. Imagine that the person hurting you controls the money, the transportation, or the home. Now imagine being told that the solution is simple: Just leave.

Leaving isn't a single decision. It's a complicated process of trying to find safety while protecting your children and preserving what little stability you have. We need to stop asking why she stayed and start asking

what we can do to make safety possible. These women did not suffer abuse because they failed to leave. They suffered because someone chose to cause them harm. That's why having Turning Point as the local domestic violence service program matters. Survivors in Floyd, Johnson, Magoffin, Martin and Pike counties deserve access to safety, advocacy and support without having to leave their entire community behind. At Turning Point Domestic Violence Services, we want all survivors to know that help is available. You don't have to be ready to leave a relationship to reach out. You don't have to know what you want to do next. And you don't have to face everything alone. We are there to listen, support and help survivors understand their options while respecting their choices.

I want to live in an Appalachia where all our daughters and granddaughters inherit our strength, but not our suf-

fering. Being a strong Appalachian woman should mean having choices, opportunities and freedom, not having to survive abuse. Our goal is not only to help a woman survive domestic violence. We want her to have the opportunity to build a life she loves. A life where she can go to work without being afraid. A life where she can raise her children in peace. A life where she can laugh, dream, make plans and decide what comes next. Surviving is important. But every woman deserves the opportunity to thrive. Appalachian women deserve lives defined by their dreams, not by what they have survived. We can be proud of where we come from while still working to change what needs to change.

I hope as a community we honor the women we have lost by changing the conversations we have about domestic violence by believing survivors, supporting the organizations working to keep people safe, teaching

our children what healthy love looks like, refusing to excuse controlling or abusive behavior and by building communities where families will ever have to experience this kind of loss. Because the greatest memorial we can give the women whose lives were taken is to work toward a future where no lives are taken. We cannot change how the stories ended for those we lost, but we can change what those stories inspire us to do next. May the future generations of Appalachian women be known not for how much they endured, but for how safe and free they are able to live.

Turning Point DV Services Kentucky Certified Domestic Violence Advocates are available 24/7 at, 1-800-649-6605, or (606) 886-6025.

**Elizabeth Fitch,**  
**Executive Director**  
**Turning Point Domestic**  
**Violence Services, Inc.**



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