

Pat on the Back

Congratulations to Roberts Middle School sixth-grader **McKenna Petersen** and Wertheimer Middle School sixth-grader **Jinlin Li**, who earned chairs with the Texas Music Educators Association Region 13 Junior High Symphony Orchestra.

Our View

Who's the mayor kidding?

Kendleton Mayor Darryl Humphrey Sr. is out of sorts with others on the city council — and with The Herald.

Three council members on Tuesday wisely voted to set limits on the use of city credit cards.

Humphrey didn't like that.

He said he sees no reason to set limits on how much could be spent on the cards, or seeking prior permission to use them during emergencies.

"In 16 years we've had no problems with credit cards," he groused during the council meeting.

He's talking about the 16 years he's served on the council.

Well, we don't know about all 16 years, but we do know that in a 42-month period — from September 2019 to February 2023 — Humphrey and the former city secretary used the city credit cards to pay for tens of thousands of dollars worth of meals, as well as gassing up and shopping.

Sure, it hasn't been a problem for him to spend tax dollars. It never is with public officials. After all, it's not their money they're spending.

Certainly, Humphrey sees nothing wrong with dining out and shopping with taxpayer money.

Most everyone else does, though.

In an attempt to misdirect citizens, he declares that the credit card with his name on it has never been activated. No doubt he has received a new card with his name on it in the past year.

He announced publicly that the card has yet to be used — without mentioning he had used his old credit card to purchase tens of thousands of dollars worth of meals, trips to the gas station and grocery stores and department

stores.

He says the charges were legitimate business expenses.

Really?

What city official spends \$99 treating potential developers to Dairy Queen or to Subway?

Reasonable people are disgusted with the way he spends taxpayers' money.

They should be.

We are.

And we'll keep reporting on it — no matter how many times he lashes out at The Herald during meetings.

His family attends the meetings, most likely to give him moral support, and they guffaw and snicker when he attacks council members and the newspaper's reporter.

But they're the only ones who believe anything he says.

Well, not the only ones.

Humphrey has two allies on the council who will do his bidding: Lester Aldridge and George Starks, who vote as he wishes.

Fortunately, there are three members of the council — a majority —willing to stand up to Humphrey and do the right thing by the community, the citizens and the taxpayers: Rachel White, Sherrie Shulze and Carolyn Jenkins.

They regularly demand to see records, documents, receipts and other information to ensure tax dollars are being spent correctly and wisely, as well as to ensure the community that the council is acting legally.

Humphrey gets in a huff when they demand records or ask questions.

For good reason: he's never had to answer to anyone before. He's simply done whatever he pleases as mayor.

Those days are over.

The never-ending scramble for 'The Toy of the Year'

Parents who see the movie "Jingle All the Way" can be forgiven if they have a problem with the aesthetic distance intended by the movie's director.

In the film, Arnold Schwarzenegger plays a father who feels guilty about not getting his son the season's hottest toy and spends all Christmas Eve day scouring his city for a TurboMan action figure.

In the process he has to endure the smirks of store clerks, a black-market version of the toy which doesn't work, and physical battles with other parents who are looking for the same popular plaything.

The reason the screen images may strike too close to reality for the parents in the audience is that most likely they have played the Schwarzenegger role in past Christmases.

It seems like every year there is one toy that is so wildly popular that grownups end up getting in fistfights and causing stampedes to buy one.

In 1996, there were two toys in that category, Tickle Me Elmo and the Nintendo-64 video game system.

The new 64-bit Nintendo system had twice the power of the previous system and offered bet-

ter color and 3-D graphics and was that year's product that became so big so fast that the manufacturer couldn't keep up with demand.

Tickle Me Elmo was a plush doll based on the Sesame Street character. The doll giggles when its tummy is pressed. Tyco Toys, Inc. flew the dolls in from China to get them here faster. The company says it shipped a million of the dolls between July and Christmas and still didn't keep up with demand.

There were plenty of Tickle Me Elmo and Nintendo-64 horror stories, including an incident in Chicago in which a 58-year-old woman slugged another shopper who picked up the last of the video systems in a store there.

I can relate, although I never got frustrated enough to slug a fellow shopper.

It was in 1984 when I got involved in the first of these toy crunches.

Daughter Myles was a toddler, so I'm not sure if I was running around everywhere looking for one of the scarce Cabbage Patch Kid dolls for her, or her mother:

I can still remember screeching into the parking lot of more than one toy shop or convenience store based on the rumor that the establishment had received a box of the critters.

A couple of years after that came the talking bear craze.

The bear of choice that year was called Teddy Ruxpin. He could move his eyes and mouth and say a few different phrases. There was a talking bear called Gabby Bear

who had a "sweeter face." The only problem was that the Gabby Bear selected turned out to be a dud a couple of days before Christmas. I was again sent on a last-minute mission and somehow managed to find one of the Teddy Ruxpins in time for Christmas.

Three years ago, the search was for a PlayStation 5 for son James. These games were in such short supply that an extreme black-market with exorbitant prices cropped up. I recall making a decision to get a just-released PlayStation 4 Pro, which was almost as good as the unavailable 5 models.

This year, Barbie products, a toy called Elmo Slide and Squishmallows are expected to be the hard-to-find toys.

I remember a friend was one of those parents on the 1996 Nintendo quest. After several near misses, he finally got his game after an 8 a.m. vigil at a toy store. He says at one point in the search, he was tempted to call the telephone number he saw on a homemade sign stuck in the road median. The message offered one of the new Nintendo systems for "the best offer."

I asked the friend if he felt relieved after dodging the prospect of facing a sad son Christmas morning.

"I felt like a hero," he said, probably expressing it best for the Schwarzenegger character and all of us moms and dads, who have successfully made it through a search for "the toy."

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Clyde King

Outside View



DESPITE THE OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE AGAINST PRES. TRUMP, IMPEACHMENT IS BAD FOR THE COUNTRY



DESPITE ABSOLUTELY NO EVIDENCE AGAINST PRES. BIDEN, IMPEACHMENT IS THE BEST THING FOR THE COUNTRY

Liz Cheney for president?

Why would former Rep. Liz Cheney run for president? Is she trying to sell a book? Why would a Republican whose last election was losing a state primary by 37 points think she should now seek the highest office in the land?



Bryon York

Why would a politician hated by her own party and used by the other party simply to attack her colleagues think she could bring 80 million Americans together behind a Cheney candidacy?

Who knows? Nevertheless, Cheney, in the preferred political style, is not "ruling out" a run in 2024.

It would be a third-party effort, of course, because neither Republicans nor Democrats would have her as a candidate.

And it would be focused entirely, 100%, on stopping former President Donald Trump.

"Several years ago, I would not have contemplated a third-party run," Cheney told the Washington Post. But now, she continued, "I happen to think democracy is at risk at home, obviously, as a result of Donald Trump's continued grip on the Republican Party, and I think democracy is at risk internationally as well."

Cheney told the Post that she will decide whether or not to run "in the next few months."

Whatever her answer, it will be all about Trump.

"We face threats that could be existential to the United States and we need a candidate who is going to be able to deal

with and address and confront all of those challenges. That will all be part of my calculation as we go into the early months of 2024."

Cheney, of course, is a politician without a party.

She broke with Republicans when she agreed to become part of the House Jan. 6 committee's appallingly one-sided investigation of Trump.

The committee was picked by then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Cheney and then-Rep. Adam Kinzinger agreed to march in lockstep with Democrats.

Their presence allowed Pelosi and the media to call the committee "bipartisan" when all the members, in public, literally agreed with each other on everything.

They all played their parts in the Democratic showrunner's production. The Capitol riot is an entirely fitting subject for investigation, but there should never be another committee structured and run like the J6 Committee.

Cheney had no future with the Republican Party after that. But Democrats don't want her, either.

Remember that in the first two years of Trump's presidency, Cheney voted along with the Trump position 95.8% of the time, and in the last two years, she voted with Trump 92.8% of the time, according to analyses by FiveThirtyEight.

No Democrat could ever accept such a record in a candidate for national office.

The fact is, Democrats used Cheney as a Republican who would attack Trump.

In Cheney's new book, there is a story in which she learned that when she was being considered for the J6 committee, some Pelosi staff members showed Pelosi a list of the 10 worst things Cheney had ever

said about Pelosi.

The speaker just handed the paper back to her staff.

"Why are you wasting my time with things that don't matter?" Pelosi said, according to the book.

Isn't that nice!

Pelosi set aside her personal feelings to recruit a Republican willing to savage Trump precisely as Pelosi wished!

It was a very Washington moment, but Cheney appears to have been touched.

Now Democrats are back to eyeing Cheney warily, in no small part because they believe an independent run, even by someone as unpopular as Cheney, would take votes away from President Joe Biden in the general election.

They're right.

A Cheney candidacy would be exclusively anti-Trump, as will Biden's candidacy.

Why give voters a choice in anti-Trump candidates?

By siphoning off even a few anti-Trump votes, Cheney would probably help the former president.

But first, Cheney has a book to sell.

That is why she is popping up on television these days.

The book is "Oath and Honor: A Memoir and a Warning," her story of life opposing Trump.

At the moment this is written (noon on Dec. 5), the book is No. 1 on Amazon.

Good sales and lots of friendly interviews will surely nudge Cheney in the direction of running, at least until she realizes that all those Democrats and Never Trumpers who cheer her attacks on Trump don't necessarily want her to be president of the United States.

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The ghosts in 'A Christmas Carol' are on a mission

On his way to becoming a Hollywood superstar, Bill Murray demonstrated great skill at delivering rants that blurred the line between lunacy and pathos.

In the 1988 flick "Scrooged," he belted out lessons learned from visits with the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future, as well as from occupying his own coffin in a crematorium.

"I'm not crazy. It's Christmas Eve. It's the one night of the year when we ... share a little more. For a couple of hours, we are the people we always hoped we would be. It's really a miracle because it happens every Christmas Eve," proclaimed Murray's character, a greedy, arrogant TV executive.

"If you waste that miracle, you're gonna burn for it. I know. ... There are people that don't have enough to eat ... that are cold. You can go and say hello to these people. You can take an old blanket out of the closet and say, 'Here!' or you can make them a sandwich and say, 'Oh by the way, here!' I get it now. ... I believe in it now."

"Scrooged" is a fascinating Tinseltown take on the Charles Dickens novella "A Christmas Carol," said English literature Professor Dwight Lindley of Hillsdale College in Michigan, because of what the film contains and what it leaves out.

This dark comedy contains miracles, ghosts, angels, sin, judgment, penance, purgatory, damna-

tion, the Grim Reaper and eternal life. What it lacks is any meaningful role for God or a Holy Babe in a manger.

"Scrooged" is as "far as some people in Hollywood can go with Dickens," by "domesticating his message and making it more comfortable," said Lindley, who is currently teaching a six-lecture online course about this 1843 text.

The class, he added, was created for "anyone who loves the story, but doesn't know how to dig deeper into it than what they have seen in the somehow superficial versions that are around. ... Some people have a sense that there is something deeper, something moving underneath the surface."

For many, watching one of the film adaptations of "A Christmas Carol" is a holiday ritual. These movies usually include the basic story while ignoring the narration in which Dickens frames his parable.

At the heart of this drama, stressed Lindley, is "the Incarnation" — the doctrine that the Creator of the universe took flesh, as a baby, at Christmas. Thus, caring for the innocent and the vulnerable is at the heart of "A Christmas Carol."

During the story, the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge is "taken back into the experiences of his own life ... and given a chance to learn the lessons he should have learned," added Lindley. Scrooge is shown why he "needs to help the least of these," especially needy children.

With the Ghost of Christmas Present, Scrooge witnesses a family party, and the narrator explains: "They didn't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its

mighty Founder was a child himself."

During the pivotal visit by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, Scrooge sees the large, poor family of his assistant Bob Cratchit gathered for a humble feast — while hearing the biblical Christmas story.

The narrator says: "Very quiet. ... 'And He took a child and set him in the midst of them.' Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out, as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on?"

This verse is from the Gospel of Mark, and Lindley stressed its context: Jesus "took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but the one who sent me.'"

Another important question raised by "A Christmas Carol" is why Scrooge's old partner, Jacob Marley — wrapped in chains and money boxes — becomes the first ghost who returns with warnings about eternity.

"Marley's own language suggests that someone has sent him, someone has required this of him as part of his penance," said Lindley. "The mysteries in this story — Dickens really does attach them carefully to Christian foundations. The story doesn't make sense without that. Why do we owe it to the least of these, to take care of them? ... If you turn this into mere humanism, it becomes incoherent."

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We invite your opinion

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