

OPINION

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Observations: Disturbing, political, and refreshing ■ Advocate General Manager John Finney

It was interesting to watch what has been happening around the world and middle Tennessee these past few days. Some has been disturbing, some not very surprising, and some that make you feel good, even hopeful.

Let us start with the disturbing. In Argentina, a group of vacationers and beach goers manhandled a Dolphin they pulled out of the ocean to take selfies with and when they were finished, they laid it in the sand and let it die. This is a living breathing mammal that lives in the ocean and belongs in the ocean, not on dry land. The behavior of these people is appalling and any whom are recognized should be humiliated and turned into authorities for prosecution. The whole social media platform has created a new and disturbing culture that is out of hand. The 'look at what I did' is beginning to outweigh morals us old guys learned and practiced in the age before selfies.

Last week Justice Scalia passed away unexpectedly opening up a whole new dialog for our 24 hour news channels to fill their time reporting. President Obama is ready to fill his position and the GOP Senate is ready to block his appointment so the next president can appoint one. All the Republican candidates agree with the Senate and the Democrat candidates agree the President. It is eleven months before our next president is inaugurated, should the president be able to nominate a new justice with so little time left? President Reagan was told it was too close to end of his term, eighteen months, to appoint a new justice to the Supreme Court in 1987, he nominated Robert Bork who was rejected by the senate. He then nominated Anthony Kennedy who was confirmed.

President Obama will bring a nominee to the Senate as is his right. Members of the Senate will grill the poor sap with regard to everything including parking ticket since birth and drag out the process and probably

reject the candidate as is their right. If time allows, the president will nominate another before he leaves office and on it will go as politics and politicians will. As long as the Republicans control the Senate, they can reject each and every nominee the President brings forward until his term has ended. For President Obama to get



Inspiration in the Tennessee countryside

his nominee confirmed, he will have to find someone who is very moderate, that both sides can agree on and even then, it's a long shot.

On a refreshing note from last week, I was driving home Thursday afternoon through Giles County when I spotted a Bald Eagle. I was just south of Milky Way Farm when a large bird flying by caught my attention. It was soaring just above Richland Creek along Highway 31. It had a big white head and white tail and enormous wing span.

On the edge of extinction not that long ago, the Bald Eagle could only be found in a few remote places in the United States. It was determined that DDT, a highly effected insecticide, was causing the shells of the Bald

Eagles and other birds to become soft and brittle. Most eggs did not survive to maturity causing the population of eagles to drastically drop. In 1972, DDT was banned; the eagle population began to grow with the help of conservationists and supportive citizens. The Bald Eagle was reintroduced to Tennessee at Reelfoot Lake and the Great Smoky Mountains. Its population has grown and is now spreading across Tennessee and other parts of the country on its own.

Twenty five years ago, we went to Reelfoot to see the Bald Eagles. It was amazing. In the last few years, I have seen one fly over my house; and they are beginning to populate other parts of state. We have a nest right here in David Crockett Park that is the pride of the community. Go take a look. The drive is a good deal less stressful than going all the way to Reelfoot Lake!

The Bald Eagle, the symbol of America, has been brought back from extinction by the innovation and dedication of citizens committed to that outcome. I like that image a good deal better than a citizenry that would attack wild animals (as if they themselves were the wild animals!) for the sake of their own vanity and agenda (a viral photo).

A political system that works, one that harbors people who disagree on many things, but unites those people with a mutual passion for a better America and the greater good, is also endangered. Our political system has become more divided than ever over the past few years and the thoughtless, entrenched thinking that has gotten us here needs to stop. This country needs to become united for the good of all, not just individual groups or parties.

We worked hard to bring the Bald Eagle back. Let's use some of that American ingenuity and cooperation to see if we can get the country back together and on track for all our sakes.

A justice's death breaks the silence ■ By Emily Weathers Kennedy

The past few months have been a lovely hiatus. Life can be oh so nice when you turn off the television, particularly the news, and focus on immediate, touchable things while allowing few distractions. I honestly believed I would sail all the way through this primary cycle until after November 8. I avoided most of the debates. With all that blustering, my blood pressure appreciated my staying away from the fray. I thought I would jump in there when two candidates remained to duke it out. Until then, I'd lie low and stay quiet.

Then Justice Antonin Scalia died. And, here we go again.

For a party that proclaims to revere and strictly follow the Constitution, especially on the heels of the death of a "dead Constitution" scholar like Scalia, these latest pronouncements by Republicans of blocking any presidential nominee until after the next election are asinine if not downright juvenile. Suggesting to the president to abandon his constitutionally required duty is also outrageous. Both sides are guilty to

some degree of staking their territory when push comes to shove. This behavior, however, goes beyond politics as usual.

Scalia argued that the Constitution is "not a living docu-

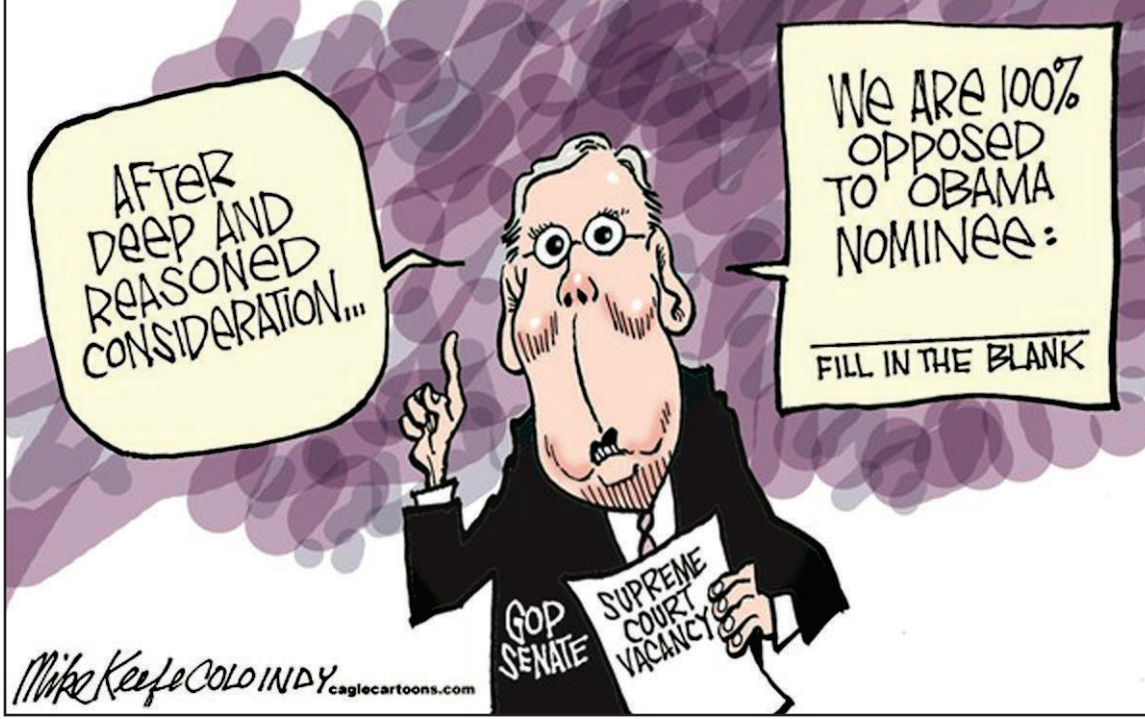
ment." As a "textualist," he believed the law must be taken literally and by the interpretation of the original meaning. So I'm just not sure how re-interpreting the Constitution to suit the Republicans' election schedule can even be

considered, much less suggested,

aloud.

The law is very clear. The Constitution does not say the president *may* nominate Supreme Court justices. It says the president *shall* nominate Supreme Court justices. The law does not say nominees shall be only in a president's first term or that senators have a right to disqualify a nominee if he or she is a second-term nominee. Nor, does the Constitution even hint that the president's nominee's ideology must parallel the justice replaced. Nowhere. No how.

I would only hope President Obama chooses someone from higher courts already vetted and approved by the Senate with no opposition. Then, if blocked, senators would have to explain to the American people about obstruction and not following the



Fantasy Novels: Proceed With Caution



■ Tyrades By Danny Tyree

It's time to do some quality control on elves, goblins and trolls. Although I confine most of my reading to nonfiction, my wife and son are avid readers of various fantasy novel series.

Of course, there are the biggies like the Harry Potter and Narnia books, but they have also been mesmerized by series such as "Ranger's Apprentice," "Septimus Heap" and "Fablehaven."

Many of these books are grouped in the Young Adult genre, which is weird, since a high percentage of the young adults in the books are like 600 years old.

Melissa and Gideon revel in their hobby, even though many people scoff at such escapist fare. ("I don't need no escapism. I'll sit right here with my imagination shackled by rusty chains, wishing it had access to indoor plumbing. Hey, is that a rat gnawing on my imagination's big toe?")

Although sales of fantasy books are booming (they often appear on the New York Times bestsellers list), there are still too many holdouts. Perhaps people are just dipping their toe into the waters with a less than magical fantasy book. As a public service, here are the **Top Signs That You're Reading The Wrong Fantasy Book:**

1. The epic quest of the series involves someone repeatedly asking, "Now which cursed row did we park the oxcart in?"

2. Ominous prophecies by the resident seer invariably come with a fence-straddling "ish" suffix. ("Your fate will be either death-ish or ruling an empire-ish.")

3. The latest reworking of the Arthurian legend drifts a little too far into middle-age anxieties, sporting the title "The Sword In The Kidney Stone."

4. The hordes smashing into the castle drawbridge with a battering ram pause to offer, "We'd like to leave you the latest issue of 'Watchtower' magazine."

5. Instead of talking trees, the book's lowered expectations give us talking tongue depressors.

6. Being exiled in shame looks an awful lot like doing "time out" in the "naughty corner."

7. "Shapeshifters" don't do anything more impressive than shopping at Kmart for elastic-waistband pants.

8. The elaborate map reveals that all the adventures take place in Middle Management Earth.

9. Instead of a classic battle of "good versus evil," you have to settle for a war of "mauve versus teal."

10. Dialogue includes jarringly out-of-place snippets such as "Don't let the magical portal hit you on the way out."

11. Any magical talismans uncovered by intrepid crusaders must be sold to pay the carbon tax on the dragon.

12. Time travelers ponder whether to warn the people of Atlantis or just photobomb the mayhem. Decisions, decisions.

13. Fine print on the awesome incantations rattles on about "shortness of breath, blurred vision and temporary loss of appetite."

Go out there and read some good fantasy novels. Maybe next time we'll discuss science fiction novels. But don't get the two genres confused.

Fantasy involves magical creatures and fairy tale situations, such as leprechauns and wishing wells and the Land of Restaurant Employees Who Wash Their Hands After Using The Restroom.

Science fiction, on the other hand, involves extrapolations of things that are scientifically plausible, like frying an egg (okay, a whole chicken) on Donald Trump's forehead.

"You're a liar! Chickens don't come from eggs and eggs don't come from chickens! Apologize, stop all these lies and America can be great-ish again!"

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First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

duties of law.

As for me, I'd prefer a moderate with no agenda, someone who would interpret the Constitution fairly and rationally. After all, Sandra Day O'Connor, Ronald Reagan's first appointee, was considered a conservative, then a centrist, then a moderate as she became the swing vote during her tenure on the Supreme Court. She placed her responsibilities to the Court over and above politics. Others like her do exist.

See, people like me vote for a president mindful of his or her philosophies for Supreme Court nominees. For us, this very duty of the president is paramount—the primary qualification for the office. To take away this duty flies in the face of our right to choose our president. And, since we chose Barack Obama twice by over five million votes, I'd say we gave him a pretty clear mandate.

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