

OPINION

- Columnists
- Letters to the Editor

A New Year's Eve to remember ■ Advocate General Manager John Finney

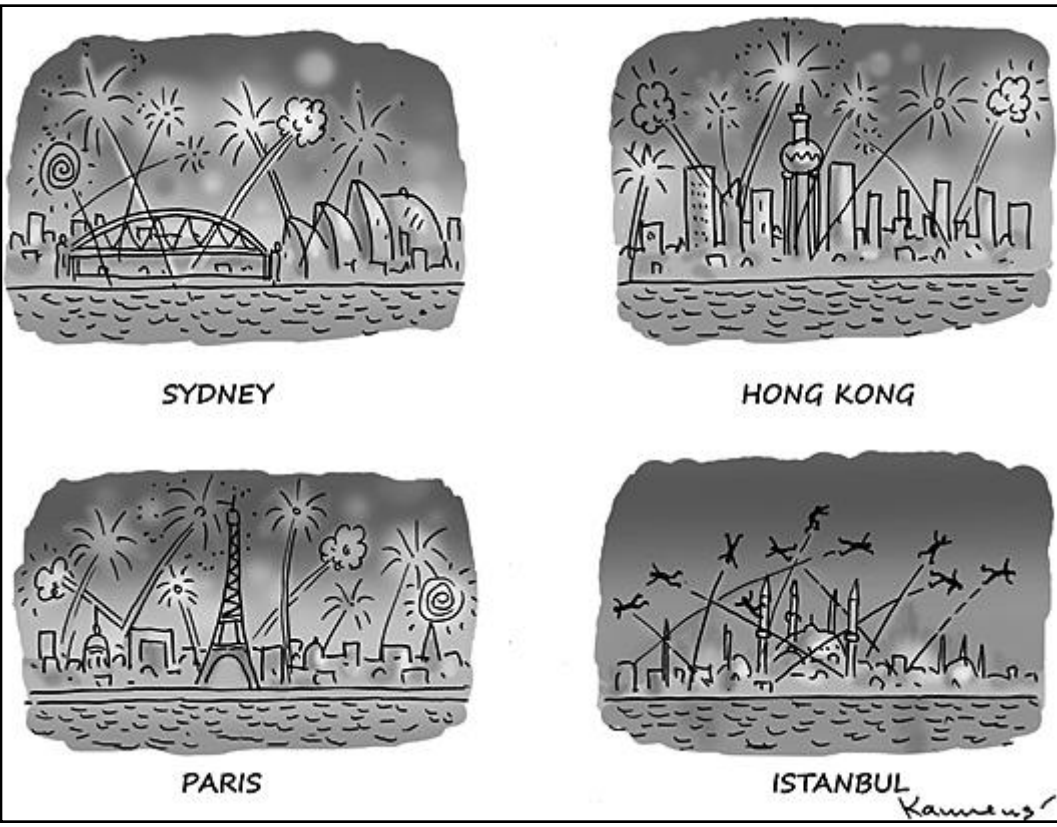


My oldest daughter just returned home from a school trip to London and Paris over Christmas break. Her group left on December 26 and returned on January 2. She spent New Year's Eve in Paris, France. How cool is that?

With all the terrorist attacks lately, it is hard not to worry when your child is away on their own, especially half-way around the world. You watch the news and look at the internet and see how dangerous the world has become; especially abroad. London and Paris are two high profile cities and packed with tourists from around the world. They have become targets by terrorists just as other large cities have. On July 14, 2016 in Nice, France, 84 people were killed when a truck plowed through a crowd of spectators after celebrating Bastille Day. On November 28, 2016, a car plowed through a crowd of students on the Ohio State campus sending 11 to the hospital after being hit by the car or stabbed after the driver got out with a butcher knife. On December 19, 2016, another truck plowed through a crowd of Christmas shoppers in Berlin, Germany killing 12

and injuring dozens. This year on New Year's Eve a gunman entered a night club in Istanbul, Turkey and shot and killed 39 people and injured 70 more. This attack is very similar to the one in Orlando, Florida on June 12, 2016 that killed 49 people and wounded 53 others. These are just a few of the most recent attacks by Islamist terrorist around the world. ISIS has claimed responsibility for all of these attacks or the attackers have pledged allegiance to ISIS. These styles of at-

tacks are the kind ISIS is promoting to its followers to pursue around the world. After hearing about the attack in Istanbul on New Year's Eve, I thought about my daughter who was about to celebrate in Paris. As a parent hope and pray nothing will happen. Various news reports on the internet and TV claimed that for New Year's Eve, the French had over 100,000 police and military personnel in Paris for protection. Cities around the world are acknowledging the dangers and are stepping up their security measures. My daughter and her group went to the Arc De Triomphe to ring in the New Year with another estimate 500,000 revelers joining them in Paris. They were dazzled with light shows, music and fireworks. She said there was a lot of energy and it was incredible. I am glad she made it home safe and had an incredible experience in London and Paris. This is something she will remember for the rest of her life. As for me, my wife and I spent New Year's Eve in Kingsport, Tennessee with some close friends. After the Alabama vs. Ohio State game was over, we watched Ryan Seacrest in New York and Mariah Carey's nightmare of a performance. I am not sure whose performance was worst, Ohio State's or Mariah's. The latest report claims Mariah's sound system may have been also hacked by the Russians.



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Inspiration worth sharing and a theme for 2017 ■ By LaShawn Baxter, Advocate Editor

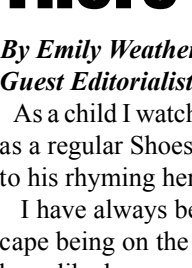


May the force be with us. I saw this on Facebook after the passing of Carrie Fisher and couldn't have said it better myself: The Importance of General Organa - Everyone is sharing pictures of Fisher when she was young but let me show you the Leia that was most important to me: General Organa. She's not young. Not wearing a gold bikini or a robe. She's dressed to do what she's been training her whole life to do: lead the rebellion. This is the Leia that has lost everything: her world, her parents, her son to the dark side, her brother to who knows where, her lover. This is the

Leia that could easily have broken down or given up. But she was stronger than literally every man in her life. She kept going. Because for Leia fighting for what is right and just is more important than her feelings or her personal life. She. Is. A. Fighter. Unlike Luke or Han, Leia keeps fighting when things seem impossible. In spite of all the losses she's suffered, in spite of impossible odds. She's in it for the long haul. She is the real hero in Star Wars. Without Leia, the rebellion would have been quashed long ago. When I see Fisher as General Organa, I see a woman who has put up with so much from so many men and yet keeps showing up for them. In General Organa I see a woman changed by loss

but not destroyed. I see a brilliant commander with good people skills and tactical knowledge. I often think about how Leia was born (well, adopted) into princesshood, but she earned the rank of general through hard work. You get so many montages of Luke training, but Leia worked so much harder than him with half the recognition. And in the end it wasn't Jedi who did the bulk of the work in the rebellion, it was regular people who hadn't received any special training. General Organa taught me that we don't have to be special or chosen to be a leader. You just have to show up and learn and do the work. Princess Leia was great, but General Organa was Fisher's real gift to us. And she's who I'm going to be looking to in dark times. May we all be able to get up every day and, in spite of our pain and loss and fear, put on our boots and vest and plan to destroy the empire. - By Anne Theriault

There's no need to fear Underdog is here!



and keep us safe. I saw candidate Trump being reluctantly touted by the GOP but scoffed at his chances of convincing women and minorities of his worth. I honestly did not take him very seriously because of his abhorrent and un-presidential behavior. I became like those overconfident SEC fans who poo poo the threat of an underdog team. Then whammo! You get beaten in the last inning or quarter and feel like you were punched right in the gut, sucking the air right out of you. But this is not a game. This is real. That sucker punch landed squarely and surely, and Democrats must now reassess many issues, overconfidence being primary. Donald Trump is the most unpredictable and dangerous person ever elected to office. His propensity for Tweeting could, in fact, lead us into war or a nuclear arms race. With little to no moral compass, there is little to stop him from turning the White House into a hen house guarded by foxes in virtually every cabinet—Energy, Environment, Treasury, Defense, Education, Housing, Attorney General, State, to name the worst. With Obama, I barely paid his cabinet choices a second glance. But with Trump, his picks have gone from bad to downright alarming. Most certainly, Democrats' issues are not as much about losing; having Jeb Bush or John Kasich at the helm would have been disappointing but no cause for fear. But this situation in which we find ourselves is very different. For the underdog, the objective now must be diligence. We must watch and never take our eyes away from the ball. Our pinch hitters now must be independent and investigative journalists who probe and call politicians and elected and appointed officials on literally everything. I'm not too bothered by being the underdog; I'm used to it. I only hope our country is not destroyed this time around.

As a child I watched a cartoon called *Underdog*. Disguised as a regular Shoeshine Boy, the cartoon dog would change to his rhyming hero self, beat the villain, and save the day. I have always been a fan of underdogs. I could never escape being on the losing side, no matter how hard I would have liked. At Catholic school, our basketball teams didn't stand a chance against the public school kids. We usually got clobbered, but we had fun playing anyway. Our high school had some girls' basketball teams that did well, but with our AA ranking, we were usually outplayed by the talent drawn to other sports from the larger student bodies of neighboring high schools. Not much changed with Vanderbilt (my alma mater) or Ole Miss (my husband, Kerry's). I suppose if I had ever cared that much for college sports, I might have been offended by the constant ribbing from Alabama, Tennessee, or Auburn fans. As it were, I didn't give two hoots how our teams did. Thank goodness, because caring would've been a lesson in humiliation and dashed hopes. But, for eight solid years, I have had the comfort and the satisfaction of being on top. It has been an eye-opening experience as folks from the other side have downplayed every accomplishment of President Barack Obama's administration. Yet, those who read economic indicators, people who have enjoyed health insurance when they had none, service men and women who have come home rather than being sent to more Middle Eastern conflicts, and folks who well remember 9/11 and the "weapons of mass destruction" know. We have gone to bed at night confident that whatever might befall our country would be met by a pragmatic, thoughtful, warm-hearted president who would think before he acted

Note: A similar article was published about Carrie Fisher's mother, legendary actress Debbie Reynolds, who passed away just a day after she lost her daughter. The article reminded us that Reynolds, as an 18-year-old female, was cast alongside 40-year-old veteran dancer Gene Kelly in the classic "Singing in the Rain." She had no experience but through hard work and sheer determination, held her own with her seasoned partner. I hope today she is dancing with her daughter.

Medical Marijuana makes sense

LaShawn Baxter, Advocate Editor

According to a recent article in *The Tennessean*, two Republican Tennessee legislators have outlined a bill that would allow the use of medical marijuana for specific medical conditions including cancer, Lou Gehrig's Disease, and Alzheimer's. The state departments of agriculture, safety and health would issue licenses. The bill allows for 50 grow operations statewide. Doctors would have to obtain a special license to prescribe it and patients a special medical card to purchase it. Revenues would be distributed to various



Continued on Page A-5



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