

Facebook and the challenge to Americans' integrity



By Emily Weathers Kennedy

Recently a friend posted a picture of a newly published children's book on Facebook, highly recommending it to others. Coincidentally, the book was written by Michael Morpurgo whose father, Jack, was my English professor/mentor at Vanderbilt. Jack Morpurgo was the person to tell me once upon a time that I was a writer. I spent a summer during college working for Jack and his wife, Catherine, in Leeds and London as he retired his Chair of American Literature and moved his multi-thousand Penguin book library. (Jack was also an editor at Penguin.) I was their chauffeur, cook, and librarian; and I read examinations for Jack, who was legally blind, at Leeds University.

Long before the Internet, long before the era of social media, I kept in touch with loved ones via the old-fashioned way—letter writing. Jack's daughter, Kay, and the Morpurgo family have stayed in my life because we wrote letters. Imagine my joy when we found each other on Facebook and could share pictures and events in real time! Suddenly my overseas family was as close as my American neighbors, virtually anyway.

Facebook has been my outlet to connect with my English family as well as hundreds of other people around the world. It keeps me in day-to-day contact with writer friends who publish in magazines, newspapers, and blogs and who re-post vital, up-to-date articles about issues that affect the world at large. I admit it—I use Facebook!

So, imagine my horror when hearing that Facebook was compromised by

Vladimir Putin's operatives before the election, a fact founder Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook played down until recently. An investigation by the New York Times and cybersecurity firm FireEye revealed that Russian hackers used Facebook and Twitter to spread anti-Clinton, racist, and anti-immigrant messages and organize rallies in the United States using fake accounts. And, they paid for at least some of these in rubles (the currency of the Russian Federation). Sadly, many Americans fell for the lies, shared the false information, and even attended the fist-pumping, screaming events.

Social media administrators should not have been caught unawares and certainly should have come clean when the breach was discovered. It was highly publicized that U.S.

spies intercepted a high ranking Russian intelligence officer bragging about Putin's manipulation in the election. Even I was suspicious of many posts on Facebook during the election. I wondered who in the world could have written such outrageous dribble much less how it could have been allowed on Facebook, free speech notwithstanding.

With 1.79 billion users, Zuckerberg and Facebook might be a little too smug because their platform is too ingrained in people's lives to be able to protest by boycotting. Maybe another Mark Zuckerberg will come up with new social media forum to allow Facebook users like me to stay connected. Until then, all we can do is to become more vigilant with information that is shared on Facebook and social media by CHECKING SOURCES.

According to NPR.org, "Pay attention to the domain and URL. Established news organizations usually own their domains and they have a standard look that you are probably familiar with. Sites with such endings like .com.co should make you raise your eyebrows and tip you off that you need to dig around more to see if they can be trusted. This is true even when the site looks professional and has semi-recognizable logos. For example, abcnews.com is a legitimate news source, but abcnews.com.co is not, despite its similar appearance."

We must become more American than Democrat or Republican and always believe that no election, no candidate is as important as the sanctity of our elections. I suspect Americans on both sides would agree that integrity and truth beat winning by cheating any day, especially when a foreign adversary is involved.



Community Foundation: Give to the Hurricane Irma Response Fund

From the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee Exhaustion.

Those that survived Hurricane Harvey remain exhausted. Those fleeing from Hurricane Irma are exhausted. The news professionals and the state authorities are exhausted. Those nonprofits and others trying to help are exhausted.

And you, our donors and prospective donors are exhausted. ...

But like the woman we spoke to the other day who was still in a Harvey shelter and was glued to the television praying Irma wasn't heading their way, too, we have to keep putting one foot in front of the other. We have to keep going.

So on the heels of our Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund, The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee has now established the Hurricane Irma Response Fund.

In both cases, 100% of the money will go to the affected areas. Period.

We, too, are exhausted, but with the memories of our work in 2010 to respond to our Flood still fresh, we are forging ahead to do what we can to help others ... remembering how people across the globe helped us.

Please do as we are doing: dig deep and know that "but for the Grace of God go we."

Now is the time to give. To donate to the Hurricane Irma Response Fund as well as the Hurricane Harvey Recovery Fund, go to <https://www.cfmt.org> About The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee: The Community Foundation exists to promote and facilitate giving in the 40 counties of Middle Tennessee and beyond. It does this by accepting gifts of any size from anyone at any time and by empowering individuals, families, companies, nonprofits, and communities to respond to needs and opportunities that matter. For more information, call 615-321-4939 or visit www.cfmt.org.

Florida Keys -Would you have evacuated?



By Dr. Glenn Mollette

Multitudes of people are suffering through the aftermath of Hurricane Irma in Florida. The Keys and the Caribbean Islands are devastated. Other parts of Florida are suffering from damage and no electricity as well. Food and clean water has run out for some.

Hundreds of thousands of people fled Florida being warned well in advance that disaster was coming. I was on Interstate 75 and Interstate 24 and can attest that the highways headed north were bumper to bumper with many of the license plates saying Florida. Lots of Florida people got out of state. Obviously a lot of people stayed in Florida and rode the Hurricane out. Television crews have interviewed more than one person declaring they wished they had evacuated. People throughout the Florida Keys and other parts of Florida have wished they had hit the road north.

Of course not everyone feels this way as many stayed with his or her homes.

Everyone didn't have the option to leave. Eight people in a Hollywood, Florida nursing home recently reported dead probably didn't have too many options. Some may not have had close relatives who could have transported them north. Most likely relatives of the recently deceased thought that the nursing home was a safe place for their loved ones to be. Sickly people need dialysis, oxygen and medication. Traveling is a major ordeal.

Millions of Florida people may have felt like they couldn't leave. Travel is expensive. Everyone does not have relatives or close enough friends to move in with for a week or so. Hotels north of Florida have been crammed with guests.

Many Floridians simply wanted to stay with their homes and ride it out and many did - some regrettably.

Of course there are thousands of people who now cannot get back to their homes in the Keys. National media has been broadcasting the angry people trying to get past police barricades to return to whatever is left of their homes.

People should have a right to stay in their homes but people must realize the consequences. The consequences of those who do stay become an ordeal for everyone else. Police, The National Guard and all others involved in rescue efforts often have to risk their lives to try to save those who would not heed the plea for evacuation.

People were warned about Hurricane Irma. While the Caribbean was walloped it could have been much worse for Naples, Miami and many other cities in Florida.

The story is told of a man standing on the roof of his house surrounded by raging floodwaters. A rescue boat pulled up and said climb aboard. The man said, "No, I'm staying here because God will save me." A few minutes later another boat pulled up and the rescue crew called out climb in or you will drown. The man yelled back, "I am staying here because God will save me." Soon the man was holding onto the only visible part of his house and that was his chimney. A helicopter crew spotted him and they lowered the cage for him to climb into. He waved them off yelling to them, "I'm staying here because God will save me!" The man finally was covered up in water and drowned. He stood before God and asked, "God why didn't you save me?" God replied, "I sent two boats and a helicopter."

People were warned and warned about Hurricane Irma. Many boarded up and left town. Others boarded up and hung on for their lives. Many tried to prepare. Those who stayed were grossly underprepared for what they are facing. Sadly the numbers of death and missing people are climbing. Millions of people are suffering with their lives reeling from the kind of chaos and loss that no one wants to experience.

Would you have evacuated? At this point it doesn't matter. Millions formed that opinion and made that decision before the storm hit. Like most of life's decisions we make them and live with them.

Our prayers are with each one and they are not alone. We will do everything we can to help them.

Glenn Mollette is a syndicated columnist and author of twelve books.

He is read in all fifty states. Read his new book - Uncommon Sense . Contact him at GMollette@aol.com.

UT restores 'Lady Vols' title to all women's teams

Published September 14, 2017 | By Tom Humphrey

University of Tennessee Athletic Director John Currie announced Thursday the return of the Lady Vols name, logo and brand for all women's sports, reports the News Sentinel.

"We will not allow for the Lady Vol brand to disappear from our athletic department or the university," Currie said during a press conference at the Ray & Lucy Hand Digital Studio.

Former UT Chancellor Jimmy Cheek and former AD Dave Hart announced in 2014 a decision to drop the long-used Lady Vols nickname for all women's sports except basketball.

Student-athletes and teams other than basketball will have the freedom to refer to themselves and their teams as Lady Vols while competing under the university's official mark, the Power T.

Lady Vols branding and signage will be restored at athletic facilities such as softball's Sherri Parker Lee Stadium and soccer's Regal Stadium. Apparel options involving Lady Vols branding and color scheme also will be provided.



Gay or straight? The computer (thinks it) knows!



Tyrades! by Danny Tyree

According to "Newsweek" and MS-NBC, Stanford University researchers have reported startling accuracy in predicting sexual orientation by using artificial intelligence (AI) analysis of facial features in photographs.

(I wonder if this also works on PAINTINGS? Could the Mona Lisa's enigmatic smile have involved thinking, "Only 500 more years until Ellen gets a talk show"?)

The researchers feel that some members of the LGBT community have been "shooting the messenger" in their reactions to the study. They say they were merely exploring the biological influences on human sexual orientation, while offering a cautionary tale about potential misuse of technology. Nonetheless, algorithms that could reveal whether someone (a suitor, an employee, a stranger) is gay or straight are creating a firestorm.

A broad cross-section of Americans is concerned that such technology could fall into "the wrong hands," but who exactly constitutes "the right hands"? Homeland Security? Are they expecting an invasion of show tunes and lumberjack shirts? ("A stereotype just crashed into the Empire State Building!")

Whatever became of good old-fashioned methods of determining sexual orientation? ("She didn't like my hairy back or the 48 payments I owe on my '72 Ford

Pinto. Gotta be a lesbian!")

What a strange, contradictory world we've carved out for ourselves in the 21st century! We want antibiotic-free meat, pesticide-free vegetables and all-natural remedies - but we let artificial INTELLIGENCE pick who gets bullied, blackmailed and fired.

But don't kid yourself into thinking this is just about sexuality. Computers can also make educated guesses about IQ, political leanings, weaknesses, your real opinion of your boss and more.

People who are not breaking the law or carrying a contagious disease are entitled to their own timetable for divulging (or not divulging) their secrets. Who came up with the notion that we must create a real-life version of Wonder Woman's golden lasso of Truth? What's next? ("Cool! You just genetically engineered a giant seahorse like the ones Aquaman rides!")

There's no good scenario here. I would fear Orwellian technology that is 100 percent accurate in analyzing sexual orientation and other traits. But it will be almost as bad if people become desensitized to the disclaimers ("Nine percent chance the analysis is WRONG? Sure, sure, whatever") and start making life-changing ASSUMPTIONS about other people.

The homily used to be "When you assume, you make an ass out of you and me." Now it's "When you assume, you make a jailer out of you and a prisoner out of me."

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Published each Wednesday and Sunday at
 121 North Military Ave., P. O. Box 308, Lawrenceburg, TN 38464
 Phone # (931) 762-1726, FAX # (931) 762-7874
www.lawrencecountyadvocate.net