

OPINION

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THE CARY NEWS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2006

What's your opinion?

The Cary News encourages letters and opinion columns from readers. Please follow these guidelines:

■ **The shorter the better.** We suggest no more than 300 words for letters or 600 words for columns.
 ■ **Don't forget:** Every submission must include the writer's name, street address and phone number. We publish the writer's name and town of residence. We don't withhold names or

print anonymous letters.

■ **Get it in on time.** Submissions should be received by 9 a.m. Monday.
 ■ **Note:** We reserve the right to edit or reject all submissions. By submitting material, the author is granting The Cary News an unlimited copyright use. Opinions expressed by columnists and

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Don't get tense over tacky tinsel — just light up your life

Ever seen that episode of "Roseanne" in which the domestic goddess and her TV hubby get a note from the neighborhood watchdogs about keeping the block's Christmas decorations tasteful?

IN MY OPINION



BETH HATCHER

It's one of my favorites, especially since the "keep it tasteful" note only drives the sitcom couple to find the tackiest decorations they can — a neon "Feliz Navidad" sign, a three-legged reindeer and dueling Baby Jesuses.

I laugh out loud every time the episode rolls around in syndication, partly because it's funny, but mostly because it brings to mind some of my own family's yuletide fes-

tiveness.

Now, my mother would have never considered herself tacky, but those who drove by the life-size plastic Santa that adorned the front porch of my childhood home from Thanksgiving until Dec. 31 might have held a different opinion.

Oh, and did I mention that the Santa twirled around on a spinning platform, with sounds of a tinny Christmas carol emanating from it?

I loved the thing, though — loved watching it go up each year, along with scores of outside lights and our beloved fake tree, which grew slightly lopsided from years of use and adornment with an ever-growing eclectic set of ornaments.

My mother probably didn't think the clay-ball wreath I made in kindergarten was the prettiest thing she had ever seen, but she put it on the tree anyway, along with my brother's first-grade felt

wise men and a light-up Elvis head of unknown origins.

By the time the tree was finished, wrapped with both fake popcorn (for me) and tinsel (for my brother), lit with lights and topped with a scary Wal-Mart angel, it probably wasn't what someone would call tasteful, but it was fun and each decoration told a story.

Half the fun (sometimes) was listening to my mother recount just how each ornament came into the family as she placed it on the tree.

These days, the holidays mean different things to different people in this multicultural society we've got going on, but for most people one of the special parts about this time of year is having more family time and being a little lighter of a heart in a world often frenetic and stressful.

So here's my advice: Don't stress about your decorations. Don't try to

outdo your neighbors and don't knock yourself out trying to light up a small city — unless you want to, of course.

"Keep up with the Joneses" the rest of the year. During the holidays, just be yourself and try not to worry about the word "tasteful" once.

Because trust me, tasteful at Christmas isn't all it's cracked up to be.

I took a Christmas tour of Savannah, Ga., once, and as I sat wedged between a couple from New Jersey and my picture-taking friend, the tour guide pointed out that the stately old homes even had historically accurate decorations, simple garlands and fruits.

Boring.

They just didn't know about neon in the antebellum world — if they had, they would have loved it.

So, I say wrap as many trees as you want with blinking multicolored lights this year, blow up life-sized snow globes without shame and, even if you

always wanted one of those singing bass things on your wall, well, I won't judge you.

Half the fun of decorations is putting them up, and if you have kids helping you (which is even more fun), I doubt they'll be worried about the word "tasteful" either.

So go for it and maybe, just maybe, the covenant cops in some of Cary's stricter neighborhoods could turn a blind eye when their neighbors put up more than just simple white lights for decorations.

Just a thought.

Oh, and by the way, if anybody spots an electronic chicken that sings "Feliz Navidad" when you punch its button, let me know. I had seen one at my local drug store, but now they're sold out and I'm in the market.

Contact Beth Hatcher at 460-2608 or bhatcher@nando.com.

YOUR LETTERS

Why oppose TAC pool?

As a longtime resident of Cary and involved parent, I would love to see the Town of Cary overcome any obstacles to supporting the private, nonprofit group Triangle Aquatic Center that is currently building the aquatic facility behind Cary Towne Center.

I really don't understand why the town would oppose such a grassroots effort, when we have never had any public pool facilities. Both my children had to go to neighboring Raleigh and Morrisville to get swimming lessons. For me, as for many citizens, private pool membership is just too costly and all children should have the opportunity to learn swimming at a local public facility. Please reconsider investing your time and money in this wonderful facility which is already being built. We don't need more multisport (ice and fitness) venues. We need a public pool for our kids! It can only enhance the strong draw the town already has as a safe, family-friendly environment.

Charla Thomas
Cary

Summerwinds III situation is totally befuddling

Our town engineers may have the best intentions in turning Cary into one sprawling Crossroads, but Summerwinds III residents sorrowfully view them as misguided.

Our (?) engineers are blindly creating a commercial traffic problem in our residential neighborhood where no problem has existed before. To add insult to injury, they have the audacity to claim they are doing it for us, despite a signed petition from the entire neighborhood requesting they halt.

Summerwinds III is a small neighborhood resting quietly between two major roads, Tryon Road and Cary Parkway. In the last two years, Cary forcibly annexed us and the N.C. Department of Transportation shaved our backside to build the U.S. 1 cloverleaf. Now the town engineers want to use our neighborhood to connect Tryon Road to Cary Parkway and funnel commercial traffic to an adjoining mega office park.

Summerwinds III took measures almost two decades ago to prevent this by agreeing to have the neighboring residential property along Cary Parkway zoned for commercial use in exchange for having the zoning specify no connection between Summerwinds and any future commercial development. The town engineers misinterpreted the zoning and rationalized their poor judgment by applying a connectivity ordinance that was written for neighborhoods twice our size.

The residents are totally befuddled by the town engineers because they could have easily not over-engineered a solution to a nonexistent problem. The only plausible explanation is that they never read the zoning restrictions before over zealously approving the commercial building permit.

The residents of Summerwinds III are now relying on our Town Council members to serve as a system of checks and balances by upholding zoning restrictions and protecting us from safety problems caused by making our neighborhood a rear entrance to an office park and a connector between two of the busiest roads in Cary.

Mike Wright Colopy
Cary

Town staff bending rules

On Dec. 14, the Town of Cary's engineering staff will present a proposal asking that Frostwood Drive be changed from its current status as a dead-end street to one that will connect to Cary Parkway. This proposal is being brought about by the development of Parkway Professional Center

along Cary Parkway. The impact of this proposal will be the creation of a road that connects Tryon Road with Cary Parkway. It will also cause our subdivision, Summerwinds III, to move from a self-contained subdivision to a subdivision that will handle considerably greater volumes of vehicular traffic and adversely impact the quality of life we currently enjoy in our neighborhood.

The staff is making this recommendation against the wishes of the residents of Summerwinds III, who have petitioned the town to stop this action. Our council representative, Jack Smith, has also indicated that he will work with us to resolve this issue. There exists specific and definitive language in historical Town Council minutes regarding the rezoning of the land where the Parkway Center is being developed. The minutes make it very clear that Frostwood Drive was not to be extended. The staff, using the town's connectivity ordinance, made a very liberal interpretation of what the council intended at that time and they have drawn conclusions to fit their needs and desires.

Besides invoking a connectivity ordinance that in no way enhances the areas affected by extending Frostwood Drive, the staff erred by not conducting interviews with those council members who voted for the rezoning back in the late 1980s (most of whom are still in Cary) to gain a clear understanding of the intent of the rezoning language as it was written.

This petition by the residents of Summerwinds III should be honored by the Town Council since it is obvious that the town staff has in this case bent the rules to push through their agenda.

Steve Eubanks
Cary

Frostwood Drive extension would endanger residents

I reside in the Summerwinds III community. We would like to express our dissatisfaction with how the town engineers have handled approvals for the extension of Frostwood Drive, specifically as it relates current development adjacent to our neighborhood and the approval of a connecting road currently a dead-end being connected to a parcel zoned Office & Industrial.

We have neighbors who are made up of a wide range of individuals, from retirees to families with preschool and teenage children. Some have lived in the community for 20 years and some just one year. The common thread that galvanizes this neighborhood is that we do not want Frostwood Drive connected in any way to adjacent O&I property or Cary Parkway. Current zoning restrictions prohibit O&I areas from being accessed or traversed by streets passing through residential areas (the Cary Parkway being excluded), specifically, but not limited to Frostwood Drive.

The extension of Frostwood Drive is not permitted by the zoning restrictions for the O&I property known as tax parcel 600-194 and we expect the Town Council to uphold the established restrictions accordingly. We would like the character and safety of our neighborhood to be preserved as it is today and has been for 20 years.

All the residents have voluntarily signed a petition expressing our concerns and desires related to Frostwood Drive and are extremely concerned that individuals coming off Tryon Road will start using this as a short cut back to Cary Parkway. Not only that, employees and patients will definitely use this as a thoroughfare. It endangers the residents of our quiet and peaceful neighborhood and we are not happy!

The residents of Summerwinds III express their sincere thanks to the council in advance for allowing us this opportunity to express our concerns and taking the right action to resolve this matter.

Larry D. Snead Sr.
Cary

The other shoe drops

Not surprisingly, reality has hit many families from the recent Wake County school reassignments. Those who felt they were "safe" from mandatory year-round conversions and chose to vote for the bond in hopes they too would not be affected have now been reassigned out of their traditional-calendar schools into year-round schools. The most unexpected change was for families with middle-schoolers who have been reassigned from a traditional-calendar school to a year-round middle school. Without current or rising elementary-age children, many felt the conversions were an insignificant change and supported this bond, including the conversions, without acceptance of its true implications. Now, as expected, many more families are facing two different school calendars and have become unwilling participants in the mandatory year-round "solution."

The reassignment is truly the other shoe that we have been waiting for to drop. The Board of Education has blindly led many citizens down this horrible path. They have even managed to con our county commissioners into believing that they are doing everything possible to provide choices for us. (Where are those choices, by the way?) During the bond campaign, many families were persuaded by various Wake County leaders and "friends" that a vote for the bond would be a vote for our children. Apparently, that only applies if you live in the inner beltline.

Allison Backhouse
Apex

Moral intelligence?

Cary Town Council member Nels Roseland opposed the Town of Cary building a regional aquatic facility at multiple council aquatic workshops. He initially voted against the motion to build the regional aquatic facility and then changed his mind at the last minute to vote for the regional aquatic facility because three other council members agreed to build it just 1.3 miles from his home. What is he thinking?

At the July 9 aquatic workshop, Roseland stated a strong opposition to building a regional aquatic facility by stating, "If we build another separate facility, we run a higher risk of not meeting our business model and having our tax dollars subsidize a two-separate-pool approach."

At the Oct. 12 aquatic workshop, he stated, "If we move forward with a community [aquatic] center venue, to me that would compliment and not conflict with TAC [Triangle Aquatic Center]." He then authored the motion to build a community aquatic center instead of a regional aquatic facility, but it was not supported by the other council members.

At the Nov. 8 aquatic workshop, Roseland initially voted against the motion to build a regional aquatic center that would compete with TAC. When council member Marla Dorrel asked, "What can we do to get a motion passed tonight?" in order to build the regional aquatic facility, Roseland responded, "I would support the motion if we focused on the North Cary [Park] site" that just happens to be a three-minute drive from his home.

So the question that Cary citizens have, Mr. Roseland, is what kind of moral intelligence does it take to oppose a regional aquatic facility for months because it would compete with what TAC is already building without tax funding, run a high risk of needing a tax subsidy, initially vote against it and then change your mind at the last minute and vote for the regional aquatic facility as long as it was built just 1.3 miles from your home? A \$30 million tax decision on behalf of Cary citizens so you can have aquatic facilities just 1.3 miles from your home? You have got to be kidding!

Mike Curran
President, Triangle Aquatic Center
Cary

My best role yet

As the Christmas season approaches, I'm feeling more schizophrenic than ever. Work is driving me bonkers, my thesis is creeping along at an unbearably slow pace and motherhood continues to present challenges.

I don't feel I'm 100 percent anything, just existing in a play as one-third of three really big roles — mother, writer and student, not to mention a few co-starring roles, sometimes bit parts, as wife, daughter, cook and errand girl. When I'm switching between personalities — say, driving from school to home — I have to remind myself to make the switch. "You're Mom now. Quit thinking about school."

That said, I'm enjoying motherhood more than ever, which just goes to show you that chaos doesn't necessarily equal misery. My 3-year-old son, Tyler, is making great progress with his speech, which is amazing to witness. Most parents begin enjoying communicating verbally with their kids at 2-and-a-half or so, but we're just experiencing that with Tyler nearly a year later. Speech truly is the gateway to expressing one's personality.

We've discovered Tyler is pretty darn funny, and he's definitely learning how to use his words to evoke sympathy and to manipulate. I'm sure he was trying to do it all along, but now that we can finally understand him, he has an audience, not to mention a little power.

When my husband, Jerry, or I raise our voice to him, as we invariably do, he asks, "Is Mama (or Dada) mad at me?" Usually, I say something like, "No Tyler, we're not mad at you, but you've got to be a good listener."

"Might be," he says, in a sad, tinny voice, clearly meaning to have his way with us. "Mama might be mad."

The first time he did it, I started laughing, and he broke into a grin and joined in. Now, it's "might be" for everything. He'll ask if a car on the road is a Batman car and, when we say no, he responds with, "Might be." He's started saying "Oh my gawd!" when he sees something he thinks is amazing — including the dozens of blow-up Christmas decorations in our neighborhood.

And he wants to know if we can do the stuff he does — including somersaults, drawing "Batman" on the Magna Doodle, twisting our fingers one on top of the other and making weird faces. I'm embarrassed to admit Jerry and I actually did somersaults on the bed one night and rolled off, hitting the floor with a thud. Tyler laughed so hard I thought he was going to pee in his pants.

We've gotten lots of tedious stuff out of the way, like potty-training and repetitive time-outs. Tyler gets himself dressed, goes to bed on time (although he is the best procrastinator) and plays down in the cul-de-sac with his buddies in the neighborhood. Life is good.

Tyler's speech therapy with the county is helping tremendously, and I am so grateful for the service, because it is helping my baby become the boy I knew he could be. I'm determined to do my part, too. And perhaps that role is my biggest and most important yet. Tyler starts school in a year and a half, and I want the other kids to be able to understand him because he is such a neat kid. He is empathetic, funny and daring all at the same time.

This goal is a work in progress, however. On the way to daycare one Monday, I asked Tyler if he was going to tell his buddies what we did that weekend.

"Mama, they no hear me," he said.

I understood. What he meant was, they couldn't understand him, so he didn't feel heard. I went in and explained what we'd done that weekend, and Tyler got some high-fives and cheers from the teachers and kids alike. That's the part of the speech process — making sure Tyler knows that others want to hear what he has to say.

My strategy for getting Tyler to practice works. Let's just say they know me pretty well at The Dollar Store. Each time Tyler practices with me, he gets a little prize. I know he thinks he's pulling one over on me. But I'm getting a prize, too — he just doesn't realize it.

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THE CARY NEWS

(USPS 949-000)

Volume XLIV, No. 49,

Wednesday, December 13, 2006

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Published weekly on Wednesday by The Cary News
212 E. Chatham St., Cary, NC 27511
carynews@nando.com (919) 460-2600
Periodicals postage paid at Cary, N.C.
Mail subscription rates: in-county, \$24 per year; out-of-county, \$35 per year
A publication of The News and Observer Publishing Company and The McClatchy Company
Postmaster: Send address changes to:
The Cary News, 212 E. Chatham St., Cary, NC 27511. All advertising copy is subject to acceptance by the publisher, who reserves the right to revise, edit or reject.