

Viewpoint

Ron's Rants
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Staff Writer

Space Tourist and other rambling

Sunday marked an historic occasion with Dennis Tito safely returning to Earth after spending six days at the international space station. And he didn't break anything.

When I've spent the past week keeping constant tabs on his progress...

I even had the theme from "Star Trek" coo in every CD player in the house just in case someone on TV would mention what he was doing so I could just hit the play button and set the right mood.

Heck, I even wore my Cap'n Kirk uniform around the house because I was so excited for him.

It's just too bad that NASA let the Russians beat us to the punch... again.

And then again, who wouldn't want to spend upwards of \$20 million just to cook for astronauts for a week?

Could you imagine the look on their faces when Tito came with that offer?

"Can I give you, oh, I don't know, \$20 million to take me into space? I'll even cook dinner for everyone."

"Uh, okay."

Just wish they could have come up with a better way to describe him than "Space Tourist." I think "Man With Way Too Much Money" would have worked for me a little better.

Every time they would say that, I would have a vision of some old guy in a Hawaiian shirt unbuttoned way out (heart) Space T-shirt underneath, baggy shorts, black knee-high socks with those little garter things, and sandals.

Oh, and don't forget the camera and strap that. He could have had a camera made to go over his spaceman helmet.

I guess that would explain why that Russian Soyuz capsule was fitted with a hood pointing and a luggage rack.

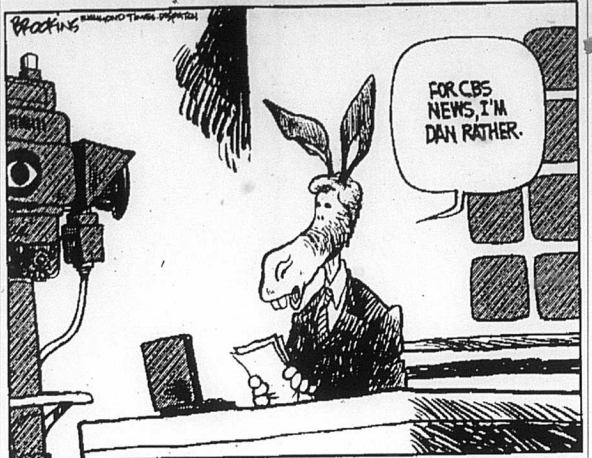
And speaking of way too much money...

Why are gas prices going up if one of the major oil companies is reporting a \$6 BILLION profit for last year?

I think President Twigg should be trying to solve this problem instead of hosting Teeball on the south lawn of the White House.

I wonder how much that tea from Memphis cost for gas to get to Washington.

I have a solution, they could set up something like Frequent Flyer Miles in an effort to avoid inflation. Every dollar spent on gas would be noted and when you



Commentary

McCconnell pushes legislation to protect America's teachers

Amendment would protect teachers and school officials from baseless lawsuits.

U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell recently introduced an amendment to the Senate education bill which would protect teachers, principals, administrators, school board members and other education professionals from baseless lawsuits. McConnell's amendment is entitled "The Teacher Protection Act."

"Our teachers deserve praise and protection, not harassment and lawsuits," said McConnell. "America's dedicated teachers face a hard-edged task teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic without having to worry about baseless lawsuits. My legislation protects the people who protect America's children every day in our public schools."

A 1999 survey of secondary school principals found that 25 percent of the respondents were involved in lawsuits or out-of-court settlements amounting to 270 percent increase from only 10 years earlier. In the same survey, 20 percent of respondents spent five to 10 hours each week in meetings or documenting events in an effort to avoid litigation. McConnell's legislation would allow education professionals to spend more time on child and lesson plans, and

less time documenting potential legal concerns.

In his speech on the Senate floor, McConnell cited several examples of baseless lawsuits filed against teachers and principals.

McConnell's amendment does not preempt those states that have already taken strong action to address this problem, and it allows any state legislature that disagrees with these protections to opt out at any time. The bill does not preclude schools or local law enforcement agencies from taking criminal, civil or administrative actions against a teacher who acts improperly.

"The Teacher Liability Protection Act builds upon the good work Congress began in 1997 when it enacted the Volunteer Protection Act. As you may recall, the Volunteer Protection Act provides liability protection to individuals serving in their communities as volunteers. After bringing several amendments to the floor throughout the 1990s and introducing the Volunteer Protection Act during the 104th Congress, I was honored when Senator Paul Coverdell joined me in helping to steer this measure through the 105th Congress and have it enacted in 1997.

"Now, we need to extend similar liability protection to our nation's teachers, principals, and education professionals who are responsible for ensuring the safety of our children at school.

"Today's teachers will tell you that the threat of litigation is in the back of their minds and forces them at times to act in a manner which might not be the best interest of their students. A 1999 survey of secondary school principals found that 25 percent of the respondents were involved in lawsuits or out-of-court settlements in the previous two years - an amazing 270 percent increase from only 10 years earlier. The same survey found that 20 percent of principals spent

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TEACHERS FROM 4

wouldn't provide recommendations."

"Imagine that, the teachers at Nitchmann Middle School didn't want to write a letter of recommendation for this kid who had compared a fellow teacher to Hitler and threatened to have her killed. What laws and counterattacks drug out in the courts for more than two and a half years? During this time, good reputations were besmirched, distinguished careers were ruined, and each party accumulated what we can only estimate to be thousands of dollars in legal bills.

"These lawsuits and counterattacks drug out in the courts for more than two and a half years? During this time, good reputations were besmirched, distinguished careers were ruined, and each party accumulated what we can only estimate to be thousands of dollars in legal bills.

"After all of this litigation, who finally won here?"

"The student didn't win. His expulsion was upheld and worse yet, he learned from his parents that the appropriate way to defend indefensible behavior is to file a lawsuit."

"The teacher didn't win. Upon returning to teaching, she found that her credibility in the classroom was damaged and she was forced to leave her chosen profession."

"The principal didn't win. He found himself so thoroughly frustrated and saddened by the toll he



Kim Hamilton photo
Derby companions
Close comrades Jerry Calvert and Nicholas Tiedeman were on hand with Tiedeman's mother, Kristin, to witness the 127th Kentucky Derby at Molly and Tim Ramsey's annual derby party Saturday.

SPACE FROM 4

reach \$15 million, they send you to space for a week. I should be there by July. Random thought

Only in America would people buy \$300 worth of merchandise for two \$7 movie tickets.

That's just my opinion. Actual user opinion may vary.

Have a story idea? Call the newsroom at 784-4116



Do You Have High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure is a leading contributor to heart disease and stroke. Central Kentucky Research Associates and a local physician are conducting a research study of an investigational medication that may help alleviate hypertension, and hopefully lessen its serious risks.

We need patients to participate in a 16-week clinical research study to evaluate the safety and efficacy of an investigational medication for high blood pressure.

You may be eligible to participate if you are male or female, age 18 and over with moderate or severe hypertension.

If you are eligible to participate, you will receive a net cost:

- Study Medication
- Physical Exam and Other Study-related Exams
- Lab Tests
- Compensation for time and travel

To participate in or learn more about this study, please call Clinical Research Coordinator Yvonne Tull, RN at (859) 497-0160 or 1-800-896-1966.

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"10" ANNUAL WOODCARS DAY

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The crowds will come to Washington on June 10 to admire the carvings and go home at the end of the day with a special purchase that will always remind them of a certain carver and a unique village. Carvings will be able to stop back in time as they tour the museums, shops, and restaurants of old Washington and stroll the scenic sidewalks of yesterday. The annual event will begin at 10:00 a.m. and end at 5:00 p.m. Carvers will compete for ribbons in the following divisions: Best, Aquatics, Power, Water, Pool, Carcasses, Animal, Christmas, Ship, Carving, Glassworking, Sign, Human Figure, Unusual/Unusual, Best Display, and Best of Show. Wood will be provided for artists to have people interested in participating in the Santa Head Carving contest at 1:30 p.m. Drawing for door prizes donated by wood carvers and Washington shoppers will be held at 4:30 p.m. Washington is easily found on U.S. 60, 4 miles south of the Ohio River, 1/2 mile south of the Mt. Vernon Bridge. It is 60 miles south of Lexington, KY, 60 miles south of Cincinnati, OH and 100 miles west of Huntington, W.Va. and 125 miles south of Columbus, Ga. For information call (606) 364-3539 or (606) 759-7074 or e-mail:tom@wcd.org.

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