

Editorials

Casting the first stone

In John 8:7, Jesus says, "Let him who is without blame cast the first stone."

Surely you are not so self-righteous you find it acceptable to publish in great detail the personal difficulties being borne by one such as Dr. Morris K. Patteson Jr.

Dr. Patteson is a wonderful physician. He has selflessly given of himself and his time to minister to the needs of the citizens of the Lampasas area. His contributions as a physician and as a decent man are immeasurable.

How can you justify the damage you have rendered to him personally and professionally? Do you not realize or even care many reading your newspaper will have little or no understanding of the personal nature of what Dr. Patteson is experiencing? Your article will cause condemnation without all the facts. Sir, no family goes through life without difficulties or personal problems. Dr. Patteson being a physician does not give you license to cast such aspersions on him.

You should be ashamed for your written assault of Dr. Patteson in his hour of need. You shame the memory and integrity of your own parents. I was especially acquainted with your mother. I firmly believe Joyce would never have stooped to your level of journalism.

While some may not share my opinions, I feel confident there are more who feel at least a modicum of the outrage and sorrow, too, at your blatant myopia.

Doris W. Jones-Erdman
San Antonio

Unwarranted coverage on doctor

I was shocked and appalled by the article in the paper about Dr. Patteson. I don't know what purpose the article served. It read like the National Enquirer, trying to ruin his career and his life.

Did his picture have to make the front page? Did he deserve part of the front-page coverage and about all of page 10A?

Dr. Patteson has been my doctor for years. He is a good doctor. He is a good man. He deserves better than this. Shame on this paper. Doctors are human just like the rest of us.

The Bible says "Ye without sin cast the first stone." May I speak for a lot of people in this community when I say God bless and keep you and your family, Dr. Pat.

Lanell Jordan

Judge not

What is right, and what is wrong? I asked myself this question after reading your article on Dr. Morris Patteson. I'm not condoning anything Morris did or has done in the past, and I'm sure the Dispatch Record felt compelled to report the news as they saw fit. And I think Jim Lowe is a very honorable man in every sense of the word.

But I believe the Bible says it best. "He who is without sin cast the first stone" and "Judge not lest ye be judged." People with drinking problems. Want to see my list? People with drug problems, same thing. They all need help and prayers. But let's see if these folks have contributed as much to Lampasas as Morris has.

How would you like this job? Up at 5:30 or 6 a.m. each day talking to nothing but sick people all day long, fixing problems, listening to all the aches and pains, then off to the hospital, then you get home around 7 or 8 each night. My hat goes off to Dr. Patteson and all the doctors here in Lampasas.

So even though you felt it was necessary to print this story, I feel you have taken a good man's livelihood into your hands. I hope that it all works out for the best, but I believe the damage has been done. My prayers go out to Morris and Nancy, and I know that God will see you through this hard time. By the way, did you know they raised three fine sons right here in Lampasas?

Even though Dr. Lane is my doctor, I would not hesitate to put my life in the hands of Dr. Morris Patteson.

Kenny Null

Community should rally around doctor

I am 54 years old and through my lifetime, I have met many people with addictions: smoking, eating disorders, alcohol and drugs. Most of these folks at some time in their life have tried to quit. Almost all have been successful, but it was a painful process. I don't think anyone was successful their first try.

I do know what was important to their success was faith, family, friends and their community. I hope the Lampasas community can rally around Dr. Patteson and give him their support and understanding. He has given a lot to this community, and I feel it is time to give back.

Janice Roseberry

Devoted to others

Dr. Morris K. Patteson Jr. is my family physician. In my opinion, he has demonstrated loyalty to the citizens of Lampasas County for the past 30 years while he has devoted his life to caring for others through his medical practice. I sincerely thank him for his dedication, and I pledge my support to him and his family.

Ruthie Martin

Letters

Professionals not immune to problems

I have some thoughts I'd like to share regarding last week's front-page article about Dr. Morris Patteson or "Dr. Morris" as he's known at our house.

My first emotional thought was "Why did Jim Lowe have to print that story?" I've known Jim a long time and believe him to be a fair man. After thinking about it, my thoughts evolved to: "If the story had to be written, I'm glad Jim wrote the story and didn't let one of his staff writers take the heat for this article." This is a newspaper, and obviously not all news is good. Some of this information was a matter of public record, so other sources likely will carry the story.

If you've lived here very long, you know the rumor mill in Lampasas is rampant and not always accurate. After reading the article, I think Jim tried to give the readers a more complete story than some papers may give. He made certain the readers understood that Dr. Morris voluntarily sought help and entered a treatment program. He also clearly stated that only one test showed traces of anything, and that even part of that was being contested.

In our society, people often expect doctors, preachers, lawyers and teachers to be immune to the problems the rest of society faces. When Dr. Morris sought help, I'm certain he and his family knew the potential for this to become public information. It's unfortunate that such a private matter has to be aired in such a public forum.

When someone is asking for help and trying to make something better, they certainly don't need our judgment or condemnation. Dr. Morris and his family need our love and support. My family and I want to go on record that we plan to continue to use Dr. Morris. He's taken good care of us for 30 years, and I know he will continue to do so. The problem now is getting in to see him since he has to cut back on his hours.

Jani Edwards

Election in 2008

America will be in trouble if it doesn't act quickly on the crucial issues before us: the economy, education, energy dependence, the environment, health care, immigration, terrorism and more. I am a member of a movement called Unity 08 that will bring our politics back to common ground and elect leadership to the White House that actually will lead.

Politics as we know it -- politics as usual -- is over. Unity 08 will provide access to information, discussion and decision-making tools that will change politics forever. And, just in time. Eight of every 10 Americans think Washington is so polarized that it is paralyzed. The 2008 election is a moment of truth.

Unity 08's new approach will:

1. enable Americans to rank our most crucial issues.
2. force the candidates to address those crucial issues.
3. in June, empower all Americans to choose a bipartisan ticket in a secure vote online.
4. in November, elect the Unity 08 ticket to our nation's highest office.

Unity 08 combines our oldest values and our newest technology to reactivate the American community. And then, America can be a proud country again, worthy of inspiring both our children and the world.

As a member of Unity 08, I invite you to learn more about our movement at Unity08.com. Please feel free to direct any questions to me or to info@unity08.com.

W.A. Glenn
Irving

Letters Policy

The *Lampasas Dispatch Record* encourages letters from its readers. Letters should be to the point, typed if at all possible, and signed. Address and telephone numbers also should be included for verification purposes. Only one letter per writer will be considered in a 60-day period.

Letters will be printed on a space-available basis. Letters should stick with issues, and not simply be personal attacks. Letters endorsing a particular position on issues of local interest will be accepted, however letters endorsing a candidate for political office will not be accepted.

We reserve the right to edit for length, content and potentially libelous statements. Correspondence should be mailed to: Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 631, Lampasas, TX 76550. Or send an opinion to letters@lampasasdispatchrecord.com.



Private ownership should protect Christmas Mountains

William Shakespeare wasn't thinking of West Texas when he wrote "Much Ado About Nothing," but that title might apply to criticism of the state's impending land sale in the Christmas Mountains.

Some conservationists and hunting advocates worry the Texas General Land Office's plans to sell 9,270 acres near Big Bend National Park to a private owner will shut off the public's access to the property. Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson's proposed sale, however, not only may allow more Texans on the land, but also will enable better stewardship than the state can provide.

Patterson told the Houston Chronicle that deed restrictions enforced by the Washington-based Conservation Fund, a non-profit group which donated the Christmas Mountains acreage to the state in 1991, have blocked public access to the highland desert property. Under private ownership, however, citizens would be able to tour the property -- although the land commissioner did not offer details of private owners' potential terms with the state.

Patterson's explanation makes sense, because free enterprise would dictate the use of the land. If a private owner seeks a profit, he will welcome every traveler who pays to hunt or hike as a source of income. A shrewd private manager of the land would have strong incentives to allow members of the public on the property.

Game enthusiasts have little reason to fear loss of hunting land after the sale, which could come as early as today's 10 a.m. Land Board meeting. First, although private ownership will allow greater freedom of action than is offered under state ownership, significant restrictions will remain.

Livestock grazing is prohibited, as are all-terrain vehicles. Although a private owner could update primitive roads and maintain a manager's cabin, the buyer cannot install telephone, electric, gas, water or sewer lines. Satellite dishes are out, too.

Don't look for a massive factory or a shopping center any time soon. Although critics decry the loss of "natural heritage," the Christmas Mountains will remain just as rugged -- and isolated -- under private ownership as they appear now.

Moreover, the quality of the property as hunting land will not decrease. Private ownership, on the contrary, probably will enhance the natural value of the land. Every native species -- which area landowners say include mule deer, blue scaled quail, mountain lions and black bear -- reintroduced on the property will translate to cash for the owner as hunters or nature lovers pay to see the wildlife. As a result, the incentive of greenbacks likely will produce "green" land and game management.

As in the Hill Country, private landowners in West

David
Lowe



Texas long have accommodated -- and profited from -- hunters. Many hunters have grown used to seeking deer leases. They accept the free-market exchanges that allow them on others' property in search of game. Why fear that the Christmas Mountains will be any different, any less receptive to outdoor enthusiasts than other West Texas lands hunters already visit?

For all the work Texas Parks and Wildlife officials do to preserve the state's hunting heritage, they acknowledge the department is not equipped to manage the Christmas Mountains. Patterson offered TPWD the land two years ago, but parks officials said their department -- like the National Park Service -- lacks the funds to purchase the land. TPWD already has 400,000 excess acres of wildlife management area in West Texas, department officials said.

The proposed land sale benefits both the state and the private sector. The buyer will get the satisfaction of owning ruggedly beautiful land -- and possibly trying to make its management profitable. Texas can concentrate funds in the state parks most in need -- and where TPWD officials can do the most effective service to Texans seeking to enjoy the outdoors.

Patterson is right to believe private landowners can protect Texas' unique heritage. Some of my favorite stops across the state are privately owned, or at least benefitted from private stewardship in the past.

The Catholic church in Goliad runs Presidio La Bahia, an excellent monument to the brave men slain near Goliad during the Texas Revolution. Krause Springs near Spicewood maintains immaculate grounds, a spring-fed pool and a beautiful swimming hole. And decades of private management preserved the idyllic charm of what is now Colorado Bend State Park.

Private enterprise has proven itself worthy of preserving Texas' natural and historic heritage. The buyer of the Christmas Mountains property likely will continue that tradition of wise, and civic-minded, stewardship.

With apologies to the Bard, critics of the sale doth protest too much.

David Lowe is a staff writer for the *Dispatch Record*.

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Let your voice be heard on important issues by contacting your elected officials regularly.

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