

Your Views

Southington says

Are you ready for spring?



"Yes, maybe the weather forecasts will be more predictable."



"I will finally get outside to run instead of on a treadmill."



"Yes, I am sick of this weather."



"Not really. I am a winter and fall guy, so I like the winter days."



"Yeah. I miss the green and the trees."

Photos by
Tammi Knapik

Wendy Ronitz-Baker
Southington

Greg Ronitz-Baker
Southington

Kara Crandall
Prospect

Justin Pinette
Simsbury

Marissa Mancini
Plainville

Letters

Column elicits researched response

To the Editor,

I am writing in response to Bill Dunn's February 19 Laugh or Death column, "O Say Can You see this song is Lousy."

Having enjoyed his column in the past, as well as his website, I think there is no question that he is a patriotic citizen. Expressing his opinion of our national anthem is freedom of speech and press in action. However, it is my opinion that his arguments against The Star Spangled Banner being our national Anthem are lukewarm at best.

At first read, I thought it was another fine example of Dunn's tongue-in-cheek perspective, but returned to one line, "No, we survived for over 150 years without it, so we can learn to live without it, again."

I do think he's serious about wanting to replace our national anthem! I wish to address his "negative points" with reasons to review, rethink and revere the song that has become a musical symbol of patriotism of the United States of America.

Although not everyone is capable of one-and-a-half octaves, somehow, the pride that comes from singing from the heart makes it all right, and does remind us that "it signifies something important." Singing with passion and respect for our country supersedes vocal abilities.

"No one knows what it actually means" is a good reason to research and learn about the origin, hence, its meaning. Endless resources are available to refresh one's memo-

ry or learn the origins of a piece of our nation's history.

From my own internet reading, I found that the poem that was set to music by John Stafford Smith was "To Anacreon in Heaven", by Ralph Tomlinson, president of the Anacreontic Society [social club] in London in 1770. And, "Though British composer John Stafford Smith is credited for composing "The Star Spangled Banner" in 1780, the tune is actually based on music composed by the great Irish blind harper Turlough O'Carolan, who died over 35 years before the American Revolution."

From WikiAnswers: "It was Francis Scott Key's brother-in-law, Judge Joseph H. Nicholson, who married Key's poem's to the tune of the popular English drinking song to produce "The Star Spangled Banner". Fittingly, it was the US Navy that was the first arm of the United States to adopt the song as its own, in 1869. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson began to use it for official government business, and in 1931 President Herbert Hoover signed into law the resolution by which "The Star Spangled Banner" became the national anthem of the United States."

For more detail and history, read further into the Wikipedia website.

Dunn dismisses Key's passionate historical account of a significant battle for our freedom from the British with flippant comments about Key, his status as an amateur poet, what he witnessed during the Battle of Baltimore and

how our anthem came to be.

The Star Spangled Banner evolved from different cultural backgrounds, enhancing the concept that many nationalities came together to create our great nation. How many of us knew there are four stanzas in Key's lyrics?! And, our national anthem "ends in a question mark" (as adopted in 1931, and sung since) because it includes only the first stanza. The completeness of the piece can be fully appreciated when reading all four stanzas. (And, I would agree that singing all four would challenge anyone's singing abilities.)

I am not qualified to analyze the significance of ending a song with a question, but venture to say that it asks us if the star-spangled banner will continue to wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave. Hopefully, this open-ended song represents that there will never be an end to our USA as we know it, as set forth by our founding documents.

Also, a review of the lyrics can help prevent the mistake of singing "for the land of the free", instead of "o'er". It's not that hard, especially for those of us that grew up singing it often and with pride. Even though USA is not mentioned, or that it became our anthem as late as 1931, or that we "survived for over 150 years without it"... it doesn't mean it should be replaced. "America the Beautiful" is another patriotic song, and has its place among America's inspiring repertoire.

But, to suggest replacing The Star Spangled

Banner with Ray Charles' version (only) of America the Beautiful is not, in my opinion, an example of patriotism at its best.

Our 'American flag', the 'star-spangled banner', this 'visual piece of our nation's history' reminds us of what we have and what we stand to lose. Let our national anthem continue to be tribute to the flag and a reminder of what it represents... the country whose people fought and died for liberty and freedom, and who continue to do so.

With our hands over our hearts, we sing for our country and salute our flag, which is a symbol of our freedom in the United States of America. No, the anthem is not "enshrined in the Constitution", but reminds us of the basic principles of freedom and liberty. Our Founding Fathers stood for a free, civil society, as written in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. At a time in our nation where our fundamental principles and values are being challenged, it is critical to make ourselves aware from whence we came and where we are going.

Thank you, Bill Dunn, for your thought-provoking column. It gave me the opportunity to read and question your writing, research and learn for myself, present my opinion and offer more information and insight by my response. Hopefully, fellow Americans will do the same.

Maryann Vanasse
Comtois
Southington

Column wasn't funny

To the Editor,

I was very disturbed to read Bill Dunn's column of Feb. 19, in which he was highly critical of our National Anthem and in his words, "A lousy song." What a sick choice of words from a man who has written hundred of columns and claims to be a writer.

If there was his attempt to get the National Anthem changed, it should have been done with more respect, regardless of his personal feelings. If this was his attempt at being funny, it is even more ridiculous.

Dunn claims to be patriotic, but again, in his own words, "The anthem signifies something important like winning a gold medal or starting a ball game or a news talk radio show signing on in the morning and that he has to get up to go to work, but that's the only good thing about the song."

I don't know him, but to me it represents a lot more than that and until someone tells me otherwise, I will continue to honor it

and what it means to our country.

Mr. Dunn didn't mention the hundreds of thousands of men and women who died for the right to sing, play or just listen to that song under the freedom that the Star Spangled Banner represents. How about our men and women in our military today who continue to fight so other may have the same freedoms that we have?

Does he think that any of these people ever questioned the content of that song, its origins or how hard it is to perform? I don't think so.

Do I think Mr. Dunn is unpatriotic? No, I don't. Do I think Mr. Dunn has the right to criticize our national anthem? Yes, I do. Do I think Mr. Dunn is a lousy writer? You bet I do.

If any of you haven't read his column of Feb. 19, I urge you to do so, so that you can judge for yourself. I just hope that The Observer does not print any more of his junk.

Joe LaPorte
Southington

Strangers provide comfort

To the Editor,

On Tuesday, Feb. 15, my husband was seen in his car experiencing a health problem in the parking lot of Stop & Shop. A kind gentleman went to see if he could help him.

As he was talking to him, a customer ran into the store to get Brian, a manager, who performed CPR until the paramedics arrived. That gentleman that was talking to my husband waited in the parking

lot until my son-in-law was able to pick up his car, just to ask how he was.

With much sorrow in my heart, he did pass away, but he was not alone, and that gave me some comfort. I want to thank the kind gentleman and Brian for their thoughtfulness and compassion during such a difficult time for them.

With gratitude to all that helped.

Barbara Jaskiewicz
Southington