

Venable: Let us howl, loud and proud

By Sam Venable

Sunday, January 24, 2010

It is 3 o'clock Friday afternoon as I type these words.

Outside is perhaps the grayest, dreariest, foggiest, rainiest winter day ever invented. If I didn't know better, I'd swear Congress just passed a law permanently banning the sun from shining.

Inside, my wife is ill. We spent five hours in the emergency room two days earlier. She was writhing in pain. Tests revealed a severe kidney infection, possibly a kidney stone that passed.

Thankfully, Mary Ann's pain is gone, but the high-powered antibiotic attacking the infection has made her sick as a dog.

I have just written checks for a variety of unexpected bills - including our heat pump and combination microwave and oven, all of which abruptly bought the farm within days of each other.

And I'm about to scribble another sizeable draft for repairs to my pickup truck, which suffered a previously reported liquid cow manure incident on New Year's Day.

But I am not wallowing in self-pity. Seriously.

All of these are temporary setbacks. In the grand scheme of things - the Haitian earthquake comes immediately to mind - our collective woes don't make so much as a tiny blip on the radar screen of life.

In fact, what I'm going to do is tilt my head back and laugh 'til I nearly pass out.

I'm not talking a petite tee-hee. Nor a jovial ho-ho.

I mean one of those long-lasting, side-splitting, tear-inducing, breath-gasping guffaws audible for three country miles.

You should, too.

Today - Sunday, Jan. 24, 2010 - is Belly Laugh Day, and I swear on a stack of comic books I'm not making this up. If you don't believe me, consult "Chase's Calendar of Events," the bible of holidays. Or you can go online at www.bellylaughday.com

This event is the brainchild of Elaine Helle, a self-described "laughter yoga teacher" from Lake Oswego, Ore. Five years ago, she decided we humanoids needed an antidote for the midwinter blues.

She settled on laughter, which if not the best medicine certainly is the cheapest. In a 2007 interview with the Portland (Ore.) Tribune, Helle touted these benefits from a blue-ribbon belly laugh: "All your muscles are incredibly relaxed. It relieves tensions, boosts the immune system, oxygenates the brain. It's great for the cardiovascular system. Research shows people who laugh tend to recover faster from cardiac surgery." Helle has even decreed the exact moment when people all over the world should belly laugh their way to nirvana.

It's 1:24 p.m., local time. (1/24, as in Jan. 24 - get it?)

So altogether now!

Let us take in a deep breath and blow it out forcefully! May unbridled hee-haws ring off the rafters from K-town to Kingston, Murrvul to Midtown, Oak Ridge to Oakdale!

Let's do it with vigor!

With enthusiasm!

With Big Orange pride! (Uh, like maybe the NCAA was going to slap Southern Cal and new coach What's-His-Name with a litany of serious penalties.)

WHEEEE-DOGGIES! I feel better already!

Sam Venable's column appears on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. He may be reached at 865-342-6272 [begin_of_the_skype_highlighting](#) 865-342-6272 [FREE end_of_the_skype_highlighting](#) or VenableS@knoxnews.com. His latest book, "Someday I May Find Honest Work: A Newspaper Humorist's Life," is available at bookstores, the University of Tennessee Press and online from the News Sentinel.

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