



Jim Cook
Eagle columnist

Why not Obesity Day?

Unless you're a government worker, you might not be aware there's a holiday tomorrow, and considering the amount of work a lot of government workers get done even on their days on, a couple of them might not realize it either.

I speak, of course, of Confederate Memorial Day, and considering how I am not a government worker, I'm left in a bit of a quandary about what I should do to celebrate this holiday. Should I go kidnap some of my neighbors and force them to do yard work? Should I go out and pick a fight with a numerically and technologically superior opponent, or should I find something I'm sure to fail miserably at, such as mixed martial arts or male modeling? (I have the body of a god, unfortunately, it's Buddha.)

Before I start getting flooded with e-mails calling me a Yankee and letting me know that Delta's ready whenever I am (but only as long as it's not an ASA connector flight), let me just say I grew up in the South. My first vehicle was a full size GMC pickup. I've eaten so much fried chicken it's given me a kidney stone. And despite the fact Valdosta State University reluctantly conferred a bachelor's degree in English on me a few years ago, I still say things like "ain't" and "fixin' to" on a regular basis.

I've just never understood why folks would want to celebrate a war they lost. I mean, I'd be all for bringing back VJ or VE day or perhaps even busting a pinata to celebrate our victory in the Spanish-American War, but why commemorate a tail-whoopin'? That would be like the French throwing a party on Trafalgar Day (go ahead, Wikipedia it if you don't get the joke), Wall Street erecting a statue to AIG or me waxing nostalgic about 10th grade.

I understand that many folks had forebears that fought in the war, but does that mean that because my heritage is English, I should start celebrating Hastings Day to commemorate when my ancestors got their butts handed to them by those dastardly Norman invaders in 1066? Should French people wear T-shirts that read "Napoleon surrendered but I didn't?" At some point you have to let history stop being a living, breathing thing and be allowed to become just words on a page.

Besides, I would think that losing a war is something you want to hush up, sort of like catching mono or picking up a she-male. Instead of having a day celebrating getting defeated in a war we deserved to lose, why not celebrate something we're good at down here? We could have a Low Tax Rate Recognition Day or perhaps a memorial day for all the pigs that have died to supply us with high quality barbecue.

And if we feel we must, in the tradition of Confederate Memorial Day, celebrate something embarrassing, I suppose we could always have an Obesity, Ain't it Great Day or High Illiteracy: At Least We're Not Killing Trees Day.

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Photos by Max Oden / moden@dothaneagle.com

Dirk and Tara Lindsey talk about the death of three of their children in 2004, as their daughters play in the background.

Faith and hope

Impact of drunken driving lingers long after a crash

Peggy Ussery

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The painted portrait of their five children hangs on the wall in Dirk and Tara Lindsey's living room. Six-year-old Madelyn holds her baby brother, Yates, with 10-year-old Rachel beside her in the center. Their 3-year-old twins, Faith and Hope, sit on each side of the sisters and brother they never had a chance to meet.

"It just looks like all five of the kids," Dirk Lindsey said.

But it's a portrait created from photographs pieced together by a South Carolina artist and given to the Lindseys when they shared their own story of faith and hope last year with the "Today" show — how a night out for a family dinner ended in heartbreak.

It was Aug. 28, 2004. The Lindseys lived in Seminole, a small west Texas town of 6,500 residents. They had recently moved into a new house on a farm where they planned to raise sheep. The family picked up a small flock that same day. A new addition had joined the family — 5-week-old Yates, born on July 23.

Rachel with her long blonde hair was always the prim and proper one — everything had to be perfect. She was a momma's girl who liked to show sheep. Madelyn was the entertainer and comedian of the family. She had a head full of red curls and was a true daddy's girl. Both girls were into cheerleading and just adored their baby brother.

That evening the family drove through downtown Seminole on their way to have supper at a local restaurant. The children were secured in the back seat of the family's full-sized Chevrolet pickup truck — Rachel strapped in the middle, Madelyn behind the front passenger side and baby Yates in his car seat on the driver's side.

Dirk and Tara Lindsey don't remember what happened next. And it's not a memory many people would even want.

A 39-year-old woman with a blood alcohol level of 0.22 percent drove a pickup truck through a stop sign at a high rate of speed — the Lindseys heard as fast as 80 mph — and struck the family's truck on the driver's side. Rachel was killed instantly. Madelyn and Yates died shortly after arriving at a local hospital. Dirk and Tara were seriously injured.

It was a nightmare most people can't imagine surviving.

Dirk's injuries included a ruptured kidney, collapsed lung, broken ribs and a torn ligament in one



Kelly Narowski speaks to students at Northside Methodist Academy last week about the effect that alcohol has on the brain.

Did you know?

- In 2007, an estimated 12,998 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes in the United States. That was a drop from the 13,491 alcohol-related traffic fatalities in 2006.
- The highest number of fatal crashes involving drivers with a blood alcohol concentration equal to the legal limit of 0.08 percent occurred between the hours of midnight to 3 a.m. in 2006 and 2007.
- Of the 12,068 alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2007, there were 911 who previously had one or more convictions for driving while intoxicated.
- Fifty percent of drivers and motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes in 2007 had a blood alcohol concentration of .16 percent or higher.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's National Center for Statistics and Analysis

knee. Tara had a ruptured spleen and a neck injury. They kept asking about their children, but nobody would tell them anything. But they knew — visitors arrived crying at the Lubbock hospital. Finally, Dirk's brother arrived and gave him the horrible news.

Not even a week later, their children were buried in one casket. The funeral service was held in Lubbock so the couple could attend, but their injuries were too serious for them to travel to Seminole for the burial.

"We didn't die that day, and we should have if you look at the pickup," Dirk said. "I think God had a plan."

'You're not invincible'

Kelly Narowski had big plans. She was 25 years old and had recently graduated from college with a degree in exercise

physiology.

She moved to Santa Barbara, Calif., after college in Kansas City, Mo. Everything seemed bright.

On a Sunday afternoon, she went over to a friend's house. The two planned to go to a jazz festival on the beach. But Kelly's friend had already had six to eight martinis before Kelly arrived. Kelly joined her for two martinis. Then, they hopped into the friend's Jeep Wrangler and headed for the festival. Kelly's friend was driving.

As they traveled down Highway 1, a curvy road that runs along California's coast, Kelly's friend pulled over onto the side of the road. She couldn't drive, she told Kelly. So the two switched places. Kelly walked around the Jeep and got behind the wheel.

"It was the last time I ever

walked," she said.

Her friend put her seat belt on; Kelly did not. Kelly was driving about 75 mph when she took a curve, lost control of the Jeep and hit a guardrail twice. Kelly was tossed around the Jeep with enough impact to break the T6 vertebra in the middle of her spine. Her lungs collapsed and filled with blood. Her body was in shock.

She remembers the paramedics. She remembers the nurses at the hospital cutting one of her favorite sun dresses off of her and the doctors wanting a phone number for a family member. She remembers thinking she wasn't hurt that bad and nobody should be making such a fuss over her. She remembers trying to move her legs.

When she woke up in the intensive care unit, she remembers her father standing over her. "I'd never seen my dad cry before," Kelly said.

She spent a month in ICU, had eight surgeries and two back fusions. She was paralyzed from her lower chest down. The athletic young woman had to relearn the simplest things like how to get dressed.

"I could run seven miles, and here I am learning to get pee out of my body," Kelly said.

The first year after her wreck was traumatic.

"Then you realize you can't lay in bed for the rest of your life," she said.

See IMPACT, 7E

Impact

continued from 1E

That was 10 years ago. She started doing more, bought a car and got a job as a travel agent. She began dating a young man and won Miss Wheelchair Missouri. She went to Paris by herself. She went skydiving. She eventually met and married her husband and became a soldier's wife in December 2006. She's moved from Missouri to North Carolina to Richmond, Va.

But Kelly, now 35, also wanted to serve as an example to youth — not how you overcome adversity, but how a bad decision can cost so much. She wants them to take responsibility for their own safety.

While still living in Missouri, she began speaking for the ThinkFirst Foundation, which works to prevent brain and spinal cord injuries by reaching out to young people. Since leaving Missouri, she speaks on her own when requested.

Last week, she came to Dothan from Virginia to talk to students at Northside Methodist Academy.

"I talk about invincibility," Kelly said. "Obviously, I'm an example of it. You're not invincible."

Life goes on

Five months after the wreck, the woman who hit the Lindseys' truck pleaded guilty to three counts of murder and two counts of intoxicated assault. The mother of four children, Eloisa Ramirez Quintanilla received three life sentences and is eligible for parole in 2035.

It gave the Lindseys little solace.

"You want things to make the pain go away and it doesn't," Dirk said.

The hardest times were when they were alone. The house was empty and silent. The only thing that kept the couple going was the flock of sheep they had bought the day of the crash. The sheep gave them something to take care of and get up for in the mornings.

"That whole first year was just a numb feeling," Tara said. "Now when I look back, I don't even remember it."

The grace of God, the Lindseys said, got them through the loss.

Six months after their children were killed, Dirk Lindsey was at a conference

"That whole first year was just a numb feeling. Now when I look back, I don't even remember it."

Tara Lindsey

on the death of her three children in a drunk driving wreck

in Georgia with his employer Golden Peanut Co. There, he was talking to a co-worker who had adopted a child. It got Dirk to thinking. He and Tara had so much love to give. They decided to adopt.

On Aug. 28, 2006 — two years to the date of the wreck — the couple got the news that they would become the parents of twin girls from China. Dirk and Tara named the 22-month-old fraternal twins Faith and Hope. The girls are now 4 years old. Their names seem to fit.

"They gave us hope and strengthened our faith," Dirk said.

The Lindseys share their story whenever asked and donated the wreckage of their pickup truck to Mothers Against Drunk Driving. The Lubbock chapter built

a special \$50,000 enclosed trailer to carry the truck to schools and community events to show the impact of driving under the influence. Video and audio equipment shows footage of the family's life before the wreck and images of the crash itself.

In January 2008, the family moved to Dothan after Dirk was transferred to Golden Peanut's Headland facility.

Dirk recently shared their story with students at Northside Methodist Academy. There are good days and bad days for the couple. After all they've been through, they just want people to understand there are consequences to driving under the influence.

"It's usually too late by the time something happens," Dirk said.

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