

**OUR VIEW**

# Sisters' love Shero status

Every now and then a story comes along that gives us pause and pulls at our heartstrings. If you read the story in the Sentinel-Voice last week about Letha Davis, you most certainly must agree.

In the parlance of a movie reviewer, "This is the feel good story of the year." Of old, perhaps, we often used to hear about in others a deep sense of compassion, love and the ethic of "love your neighbor as you love yourself." The expectation here is that it would be an older woman with wisdom of the ages. There are elements of grandparents' love. Looking back, the best time of her young life was the comfort of being raised in her grandparents' home.

Associate Publisher Kathi Overstreet, wearing one of her many hats - this time as reporter-writer - expands the language by calling Letha Davis a "shero." For sure, an extraordinary occurrence gives reason for etymological license. And we sure like taking ownership of the language.

At 29, Davies, a former gang-banger and high school basketball player of promise, is struggling to raise nine siblings. Davies' basketball skills were so good she attended camp at Stanford University for three consecutive summers and several university recruiters came calling with scholarship offers. Fate, however, had a different plan.

Davies' everyday reality goes the distance of unselfish love, which described any other way, is the human quality of self-sacrifice. In human terms, only a mother's love is unconditional and only a mother can give all.

At 12, she was the primary caregiver to three younger brothers. Then the streets called with its allure of gangs and dealing drugs. After things fell apart with her mother and her mother's common-law husband, to be sure, a sister became mother to all those children. There are ten children, including Letha, who was presented with the challenge of saving her brothers and sisters from state authority. The long arm of Child Protective Services was reaching to snatch away her brothers and sisters.

Davies had to grow up in a hurry, while finding redemption from the streets much sooner than most. Her story could have gone off in many directions. However, her mother's heart prevailed. In quiet solicitude, in the morning, we give thanks that she sacrificed for family and not the risks that surely would have landed her in prison, if not premature death.

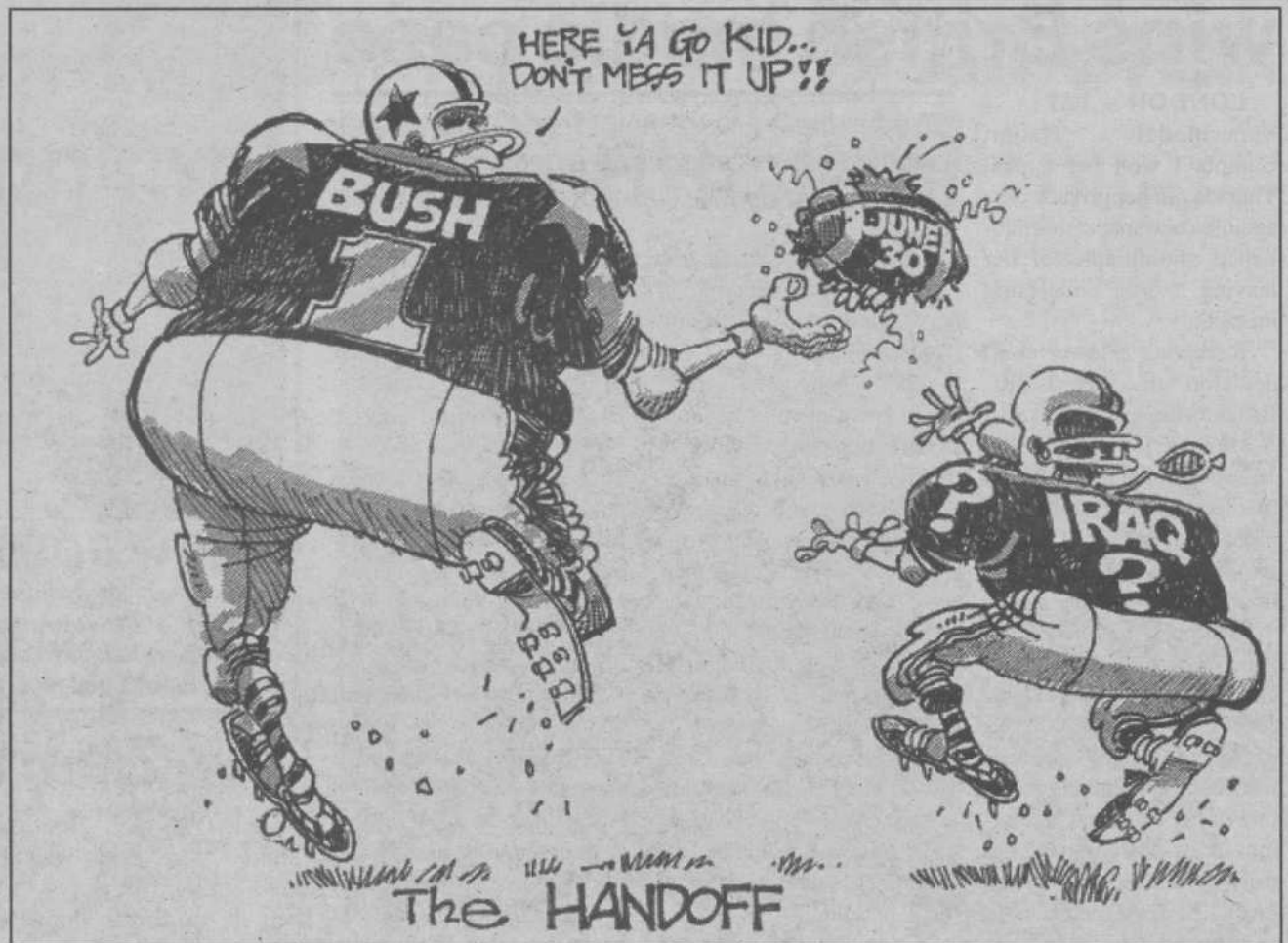
Life goes on, as a third-shift cook at Caesars Palace struggles to provide for her family. Letha Davies is now the "poster mom" for how to keep a family together. Her story would be more difficult to tell if she were out there alone. Sometimes social workers get a bad rap and sometimes deservedly so, especially those who are strict and out of touch.

This is not so with Maryann Hemrick. We have read about Hemrick's goodwill before on the pages of the Sentinel-Voice. "She has had my back and helped us get through some tough times," Davies says of Hemrick.

Others have stepped to the plate to help, including Dr. Nona Carroll, president of the Las Vegas Chapter of Justice Unity Generosity Service International (J.U.G.S.). Mandy Mokae, founder of the Mokae Resource Scholarship Foundation, and her husband, Zakes, have provided guidance. Rebuilding Together (formerly Christmas in April) is planning to make needed repairs to the exterior and interior of a house Davies' purchased, including putting on a new roof and installing plumbing. We ask that Rebuilding Together moves expeditiously on its commitment to help.

Others are not being left out for what they have done. Space here is limited. What's more, if you haven't read the story, find a copy of the May 6 edition of the Sentinel-Voice. Read the story about Letha Davies and you also will feel your heartstrings being tugged.

**P O I N T O F V I E W**



# Our leaders – sheepish double talkers

By Louie Overstreet  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Is it just me or have you observed in today's society an increased willingness of some people to utter words that are not matched by deeds? In the vernacular, it is called having people go for the old "okee dokee."

Appointed and elected officials are the worst offenders of the practice of blowing smoke at people in order to get buy-in on seemingly simple matters or in some unfortunate cases where the cost of buy-in on rhetorical excess is measured in lives and dollars.

Heading the list of appointed grandiloquent prevaricators is the voting bloc on the Board of Trustees of the Clark County School District and its messenger boy, the Superintendent of Schools. Each and every year these incompetents tell the public all they need to do a better job of educating students, is to spend "mo' money."

In case you haven't noticed, their words are not matched by deeds. The budget, even accounting for inflation and an ever-increasing number of students, is at an all-time high and performance is at an all-time low.

A quick glance at the school budget of the current fiscal year, 2003-04, which ends June 30, will reveal why just increasing the annual budget is not going to solve



LOUIE OVERSTREET

the problem of a downward spiral of students' academic performance. The primary reason why the school district will continue its annual decline, beyond failed leadership, is that the money is not being spent in a way to impact the classroom in a positive manner.

In the last two fiscal years (2001-02 and 2003-04) the budget for the district's legal department has gone up 44 percent, while the budget for instruction has gone up only 13 percent. The district's general counsel has received an average annual raise of 8.5 percent for the last two years. During this same period of time, teachers have received an average annual raise of 1.8 percent.

Adding insult to the injury, teachers are receiving at the hands of certain school board trustees, is the fact the head lawyer makes over four times what a new teacher makes. While in the hospital suffering from the injury of low salaries, teachers should take the time to read the bud-

get document. When they do, they will learn that the average salary for secretaries, in the legal department, is \$44,145 a year. This average salary is the same as the salary for a teacher with ten years of experience and a Master's Degree. Going from the ridiculous to the sublime, benefits persons working in the legal department is 30 percent higher than the benefits teachers receive. "Ain't" these facts about how the school district is spending our tax dollars ridiculous?

On to elected officials who lie. This is such an exhaustive list and one, which I might add, is filled with the names of Republicans and Democrats. I cannot but hope to cover the entire list here. However, I will note the recent ones that were told after we got caught with our "hands in the cookie jar."

Paraphrasing the numer-

ous quotes in the newspaper from high-ranking officials in our national government: "The abuses committed by a few low-level enlisted personnel are un-American."

Who in their right minds are going to buy into the proposition that a few deranged privates and corporals would take it upon themselves to "sic" attack dogs on naked prisoners?

News stories have come out within the last week reporting that high-ranking government officials were briefed back in January by the International Red Cross on the fact prisoners were being abused. Thinking back, while he didn't have anything to do with the commission of a crime, didn't Nixon have to resign over his attempts to cover up a crime that came to his attention?

If you believe that top-  
(See Overstreet, Page 12)

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