

GUEST COLUMN

A beautiful impact

When you get right down to it, beauty is a powerful thing. Everyone recognizes it when they experience it, and beauty can have an enormous impact on how people see the world. They can find majesty in an Oklahoma sunset and wonder in a rainbow that follows a summer storm. Natural beauty can soften a mood, change an outlook, and bring people together.



NANCY ANTHONY

That is why the Oklahoma City Community Foundation has embraced beautification in its ongoing effort to benefit the Oklahoma City community.

Through the years, we have planted thousands of trees and flowers at hundreds of neighborhood parks, schools, and other public spaces across the city.

We were hoping to help make our community look nicer, but that was not all we accomplished. Those trees and flowers have also nurtured and inspired the best in our community. Think of every tree and flower as a seed of hope and goodwill planted in the hearts of people living across our city.

Behind every park beautification project is a stronger neighborhood, knit together by shared efforts, shared values and relationships that go beyond living next door or down the street. Improving parks and taking care of parks can strengthen neighborhoods because parks create bonds.

We believe in strong neighborhoods because they are the backbone of our community. By planting trees and flowers, we can cultivate the good in neighborhoods, creating beauty that everyone can enjoy and share.

In Oklahoma City, we are fortunate to have beautiful parks. Most of us know about the new Scissortail Park and the Myriad Gardens. The king and queen of our park system, their flowers, trees, water and color draw thousands of office workers and downtown visitors every month, but the OCCF places most of its focus on Rotary Park, Jasper Park, Crown Heights Park and the dozens of other parks and public spaces that make our neighborhoods special.

Most people appreciate beautification, but they don't realize the secondary benefits. We can sometimes overlook how trees can make a playground more inviting, how the bloom of spring bulbs can make a school feel more like home or how a shovel and water hose can mark the start of a lasting friendship.

Through our Margaret Annis Boys Trust, we began sponsoring beautification projects 30 years ago to help neighborhoods look nicer. As it turned out, we were doing much more than that.

Nancy Anthony is president of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. www.OCCF.org.

CAREER CORNER

What the Great Resignation means to you

In the last few weeks, countless news stories have popped up about the Great Resignation. Millions of American workers are quitting their

jobs. You've probably heard about it (and maybe even considered it). So, what does it mean for your career?



ANGELA COPELAND

If you've thought of quitting your job recently, I don't blame you. If the COVID-19 pandemic has given us anything, it's

given us time to think. We've spent more time at home and alone in the last year than any years past. All of that quiet time has allowed us to reflect on important topics. It's given us the space to consider what is really important in our lives, and what isn't so important after all.

It has also given us a chance to try out a new lifestyle when it comes to work. Suddenly, many people aren't doing a daily commute each way.

Perhaps they're spending more time with immediate family. Many people have learned that working from home really is possible. It's given us a new perspective on the concept of work-life balance.

If you've found yourself unhappy with your current work situation, the good news is this: It's a great time to look for something new. Companies are being more flexible than ever before. And, you likely now have options beyond your local area. This means that there may be more job options available to you than before the pandemic started.

That said, you should take this to heart. Don't assume that the way things are today is the way they'll be tomorrow. For example, the apartment rental market one year ago was amazing. If you wanted to rent a new apartment, you could find a deal on a great place. People were leaving cities in droves. However, in the last few months, the entire situation has changed. People are moving back into cities. And, finding an apartment has become much harder and much more expensive.

What I'm saying is this: Things change. The market is great for job seekers today – right now. But, in a few months, that may no longer be the case. If you aren't happy at your current job, now is the time to look.

But also, don't take your current job for granted. Keep putting in the same effort today that you put in every other day. Don't assume a new job is waiting around the next corner. Looking for a new job takes time. You may need this job. And, even if you find a new job, you'll eventually need references from your current job.

Do your best and doors will open. Nurture your existing job, and you'll be able to wait until a job you really like comes along. The last thing you want is to run from one bad situation to another – or to find yourself stuck in a negative environment. In other words, don't resign today. Keep steady until you find something new.

Angela Copeland, a career expert and founder of Copeland Coaching, can be reached at copelandcoaching.com.

OKLAHOMA JOE

Priceless family members

Just over 35 years ago, I went to the Swiss-chalet-looking house in Oklahoma City for the first time to meet Henry and Mary Louise Bloch.

They were much different than me. I was from a smaller town unacquainted with anything formal. They were from the big city and had been raised in formality. They had a formal living room combined with a formal dining room. I didn't even know what that meant at the time.



JOE HIGHT

With my slicked-back hair and mustache, I fidgeted on a couch in the adjacent living room. They sat like a king and queen in separate chairs in front of me. Between us were their two Boston terriers, Chip and Brandi, slobbering over each other. But the Blochs didn't notice. They were focused on me.

I didn't care that day about whether they were formal or not. I didn't care about the unspeakable things the two dogs were doing. I just knew I was in love with their daughter, Nan, and wanted them to accept me. Nan and I had decided to get married after dating for only three weeks. Lacking formality, I hadn't asked Henry Bloch for his only daughter's hand in marriage. I still regret that today.

Last week, we began cleaning out that house where they lived, laughed, argued and loved for more than 40 years. Where Boston terriers were a point of pride. Where I learned not to wear a ballcap to dinner or any formal occasion. Where many hobbies were accomplished. For my father-in-law, it was anything connected to planes, trains and automobiles, along with photography, carving and woodworking. For my mother-in-law, it was needlepoint, China painting, stained glass work, and collecting anything Christmas or Santa Claus, dolls, plates and photos and clippings featuring family members and friends.

Like many from the Greatest Generation, they kept everything. So, cleaning out the two-story house hasn't been easy.

But it was full of memories.

Mary Louise Bloch died on May 19 at 92. Her husband of 65 years died nearly two years earlier, also at 92. In a way, I think those hobbies had kept them alive for so long. They didn't look back like some do after retirement.

Their age and failing health nearly seven years ago had been a major reason that Nan had persuaded me to move back from Colorado Springs, where I had been editor of *The Gazette*. That journey back to Oklahoma also launched other ventures, such as writing this column called "Oklahoma Joe," my nickname in *The Gazette* newsroom.

As we moved boxes last week, we found special things her mother had kept: a newspaper clipping of a story that I had written for Mother's Day in 1986 after my own mother, Pauline Hight, died unexpectedly in 1985. A stuff blue bulldog named "Bugsie" that she had bought for Nan in 1969. Photos of Nan and me with a young Elena in that colorful Easter dress her grandmother had bought for her oldest granddaughter. A Christmas sack filled with every clipping and program from when Elyse, her youngest granddaughter, had played high school and college sports. Her grandmother had bought a scrapbook, too. We'll have to finish that project.

Soon that house will be sold, probably renovated and hopefully turned into a place where others can build family memories.

But for me it will always be a special place where on that day in 1986 two people began to accept me as their future son-in-law, one who will celebrate his 35th anniversary with the woman he loves in September.

Joe Hight is director and member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame, an editor who led a Pulitzer Prize-winning project, the journalism ethics chair at the University of Central Oklahoma, president/owner of Best of Books, author of "Unnecessary Sorrow" and lead writer/editor of "Our Greatest Journalists."