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Venable: Stay on the lookout for bad things

By **SAM VENABLE**, venob@knews.com
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**SAM
VENABLE**

Flipping back through the pages, recent and otherwise, of your favorite newspaper:

- "People are convinced (the school board) is hiding something, and we're not."

That's Knox County school board Chairwoman Karen Carson in Monday's editions, responding to questions about the termination of Superintendent Charles Lindsey's contract.

The story goes on: "Board members chose to be proactive instead of waiting 'until something bad happens,' although Carson stressed that nothing had occurred."

As they say down at the vet's office, I ain't got no dog in this fight. Every resident of the county has a stake in the education of its youth. Since my kids have long since graduated from public school and my grandson is still in diapers, however, I have no direct connection. Nonetheless, waiting "until something bad happens" has to be the most ridiculous statement in the history of personnel management.

If employers everywhere canned the hired help simply because "something bad might happen," unemployment lines would stretch from San Francisco to Newark and back. Twice.

- Yes, I am going to say I told you so.

On March 10, 2002, I devoted this space to a series of billboards that had popped up in Knoxville. These messages, sponsored by a coalition of government and business interests, showed a red-faced, frustrated driver. If you're tired of being stuck in traffic, they said, throw your support behind the proposed beltway around K-town.

Not truthful, I argued at the time; this is textbook bait and switch. Downtown traffic isn't backed up for lack of a beltway - instead, it's because the Department of Transportation has the existing interstate system clogged with construction zones. Once the work is finished, those hateful snarls will disappear.

Guess what? Work on the stretch of interstate west of town is complete. As a result, traffic flows like silk.

In the meantime, of course, beltway proponents got their mega-jillion-dollar project approved. And the wheels of government and big business happily roll on together.

- No-Elaboration-Necessary Dept.: "I think the citizens of Knox County would be very upset if we took away their right to elect these officeholders."

That's Scott Moore, chairman of Knox County Commission, speaking in Thursday's News Sentinel. Yes, the same Scott Moore who oversaw the commission's legally and ethically troublesome "Black Wednesday" appointments on Jan. 31.

Aw, heck; I will elaborate:

DUUUHHH!

- On Feb. 15, 2005, I wrote for the first time about Ember Days, those quarterly periods purported to be ideal for cutting brush. Little did I know that column would follow me forever.

So jot this down: Ember Days in 2007 are: Feb. 28 (oops, we've already missed one), plus today and tomorrow, as well as May 30, June 1-2, Sept. 19, Sept. 21-22, Dec. 19 and Dec. 21-22.

On second thought, don't trim the shrubs. Something bad might happen.

Sam Venable's column appears on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. He may be reached at 865-342-6272 or venob@knews.com. His latest book, "You Gotta Laugh to Keep from Cryin': A Baby Boomer Contemplates Life Beyond Fifty," is available at most bookstores and online from the News Sentinel.



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