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Tazewell County Board

Continuing a Family Tradition of Community Service

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June Adventure Sports Outdoors Column **Long Live the Underdog**

Many of you may have either already seen or heard about Susan Boyles performance on "Britain's Got Talent", which is Simon Cowell's British version of "American Idol". It has been one of the most viewed videos on youtube since the television show on April 11th. The world media reported on the story for many weeks raising the performance attention to the worldwide audience. For those of you that have not seen it, please look it up with this link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lp0IWv8QZY (For those that have seen it already, go ahead and view it again).

On a television show that is usually ruled by sexy, cool 20 to 30 somethings with the hottest new fashions, here comes a 47 year-old single, unattractive, un-hip, cat lover to show them what an underdog can do. With a voice that was perfect and crisp as she sung, "I Dreamed a Dream" from Les Miserables, Miss Boyles blew away and won over not only the judges but also the entire audience. Truly amazing.

What was even better then her voice was the event itself. The way the crowd changed before the end of the first verse. They went from mocking her and laughing at her homely appearance to being in full awe of this unique individual with this powerful voice. Moments like this do not come around often. Maybe you did not like the song. Okay. Maybe you find her voice annoying. Possible. What you cannot take away from her was her ability to take the audience from complete disbelief in her abilities (mainly because of appearance) and proceed to wipe it all away and emerge victorious.

When you see this type of magical event, it makes you wonder what other possible great moments are passed up, what other talent is cast aside, doomed solely to appearance and/or perception. As one of the judges said *"I am so thrilled because I know that everybody was against you. I honestly think that we where all being very cynical and I think that this is the biggest wake up call ever. And I just want to say that it was a complete privilege listening to that."*

It wasn't that long ago a collection of individuals gathered arms and took on the most powerful empire in the world. They had many reasons for doing this, but one of the main reasons was they came together under the idea that the collective whole could govern themselves better and fairer than one individual could. In another truly magical moment, a great education of governing nations took place in individual homes, restaurants, bars, and other gathering locations across the country. A large percentage young and old became familiar with discussions of democracy, separation of powers, the rights of man, ext..

Imagine walking into a bar today and saying "what do you think about the national legislative authority of appropriating funds to individual state projects?" How do you think this conversation is going to turn out? That was the case back in the 1770's. The writings of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay, Samuel and John Adams, and maybe the most influential of all, Thomas Paine, were openly read, discussed and debated at gatherings.

As I said above, it was a huge education of the public concerning the responsibilities of governing because this was the only way the majority could govern. The majority had to understand and comprehend the positives and negatives of the ancient Greek democracies so they could build a better democracy that could withstand the test of time. It is easier to have an individual lead than to have all lead. You teach that one person all the hard political philosophy stuff and the rest just follow along. It's easy. It's harder to have everyone involved in the system.

And that brings us to today's issues. Too many of our fellow citizens have decided to walk away from learning about the issues the group needs to be discussing. Too many are selecting a group of individuals and letting them do the hard research and decide what to do. Too many are taking the easy road of following along, of relaxfully blaming the government for the problems, of deciding that watching another episode of reality television is more important than getting educated on the pressing political issues of today. Too many of us are out of the system and are not getting involved in governing. Remember, the challenge of the Constitution, and really the challenge of a successful democracy, is "We The People", not "We the vast majority that have decided to elect a select few to take the blame for all our problems."

We live in the world's strongest superpower, and we do have more advantages and opportunities to succeed than any other individuals, but we are still the underdogs in the world. We are the underdogs because our system of governing is the most demanding since it requires the majority to participate and actively become involved in the governing of the country. The great thing is we have had moments like Susan Boyles, when everyone is laughing and counting us out, and yet we have come together and overcome just as she did with our voices harmoniously blended together. This type of magical moment is not just a part of our past; it can and must be apart of our future once again.

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