

2/03/07

**“Shades of the Past”**

by  
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Watching the President’s State of the Union Address the other evening was both inspiring, thought provoking, sad and comical. It brought back memories of my Jaycee days in Hampton Roads, VA, back in the early 60s. We were a group made up primarily of aggressive, young Turks, movers and shakers who were mostly all in positions of management or ownership of local businesses. There were over 350 members when I joined in 1961, immediately after my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, and we ultimately grew to over 500 members, many of whom went on to become local and federal judges, presidents and owners of local banks, state legislators and national Congressmen. I’m sure there were one or two who could now be residents of the Virginia state penitentiary, but that’s another story.

We all served the Hampton/Newport News/Peninsula area with vim, vigor and vitality, with the underlying purpose of making our community, state and country the best they could be. Our annual election of officers and board members was exciting to participate in and fun to watch because we took positions of leadership very seriously and, as in any organization, everyone was never on the same wave length at the same time. The elections were hard fought and caucuses formed to get a candidate’s views out to the membership. During the campaign period one would think that two different clubs were being heard from since the campaign goals of each “party” were so diverse.

When the votes were counted, however, the winners were congratulated and our club got back to business as usual. Campaign rhetoric was forgotten and we all worked toward our one, now united goal, to make our club viable and valuable in the community. Our elected officers and board members were allowed to appoint committee chairmen, project heads, and were given great leeway in arriving at their announced agenda and administration goals. There was no attempt to strike down appointments of the leadership or block methods of accomplishing the projected tasks. In other words, the election was over, those elected were in charge, and they now had the privilege and the power to prove their strategies successful. Allowed to operate unfettered, 98% of them accomplished their goals because we all were united as one.

On viewing the national scene and our leaders who have been elected up there, one must ask why, oh why, can’t those in policy making positions ever accomplish the goals they’ve established? I think I’ve figured it out, or at least part of the difficulty. Our national Congress has evolved to the point that we are constantly participating in a perpetual, ongoing election campaign. Immediately

upon one presidential campaign being completed, our political parties, Republican and Democrat have chosen the avenue of beginning, immediately, another campaign. Rather than put the campaign behind and begin a period of united front against all things wrong with our country, the losing party now chooses to participate in all the infighting, stifling, blocking, backstabbing and interfering with the elected leaders normally associated with election year campaign. It is, seemingly, the desire of the defeated party to now engage the opposition with new attacks, innuendoes, and outright lies with only one goal in mind... do everything in their power to prevent the winning team from achieving their goals. Unfortunately, both sides of the political aisle participate in this sophomoric, juvenile, divisive activity and it is our country and its citizens who suffer. NOTHING will ever be accomplished.

If my count is correct, with two years to go before another major election, eight individuals have already declared their candidacy for the Democratic champion and a couple Republicans have as well. Those five or six more hanging out in the wings of both sides of the stage who haven't declared might as well because it's common knowledge they will. With two years to go in the Bush administration's term rather than everyone pulling together to solve any major challenges facing the country we've now got eight new wannabe leaders not only sniping at everything the administration puts before the congress but back biting each other... trying to prove to the American people they are the TRUE ANOINTED ONE sent from heaven on high to rescue the perishing.

The news media, always eager to cover a fight, feeds on the frenzy created by these presidential hopefuls and, when possible, helps push doors open when ever there is even a hint of a skeleton hiding behind them. Nothing sells papers, magazines or TV news programs better than a juicy scandal... real or manufactured.

Why can't all these "candidates" go back into their offices to which they were elected and do the job for which they were elected... make proper laws that will protect and represent their constituents back home? Hey guys don't throw your hats into the campaign ring until at least six months before the actual election. And in the meantime, to quote the much maligned Rodney King, "Why can't we all just get along?"

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