

Specials

Signs Of The Time!

As the year 1993 draws to a close, we can reflect on some events of the past 12 months and ask ourselves, are these signs of the times? The question is valid because increasingly, historians tell us, events of the present and the future are often a mirror reflection of the past. As Italian Renaissance author Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) wrote, "...whoever wishes to foresee the future must consult the past; for human events ever resemble those of preceding times." World War I was mirrored in World War II and the Korean War was mirrored in the Vietnam War.

History demonstrates also that current and future events are often in stark contrast to the past. For example, after years and years of deficit spending at the national level, the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings balanced-budget bill was signed into law by President Reagan. Annual reductions in the deficit are expected to occur until fiscal year 1991 when the first balanced budget is expected.

In the area of civil rights, the Commerce, Georgia, town council had continuously denied the Ku Klux Klan a parade permit in recent years. However, when the KKK applied for a permit to march in the 1985 Christmas parade and said their float sign would read "Merry Christmas from the Klan" and with a printed theme, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," there was no valid reason to deny them a permit. With this action, the council was flooded with protests that the Klan's participation would bring a "vulgar and hateful spirit." Reluctantly, the council cancelled the Christmas parade for the first time in the history of the town because of the "great security risk" and some sensitivity to blacks and others who have historically been abused by the Klan.

Solid Awareness

In the mirror reflection of the pre-civil rights era of the 1960s, Commerce, Ga., and most other Southern cities and towns would have not hesitated to grant the Klan or other race-baiting groups a parade permit. This was true because of the more widely overt hostility toward blacks in those years. However, with today's greater concern, sympathy and understanding of the rights of people to be different and yet be respected, attitudes have changed to be more like what America truly represents. The cancellation of the Commerce, Ga., parade was a solid awareness of and an example of a new found respect for all people.

A third mirror of America's past reflects both the sameness and difference from what is occurring today. This is most evident in the Rocky and Rambo twin movie series of Sylvester Stallone that has returned hero worship to the front of the pack in American mythology.

As in the historic past, the violence in the Rocky and Rambo films has led reviewers and critics to call the films meaningless, primitive, hollow, and redundant. The Baltimore Sun newspaper probably

summed it up well in saying that Rocky is "loud, stupid, nasty, brutish and short." Women's groups blasted the films' machoism. Vietnam War veterans oppose Rambo because of his war psychosis. Psychologists and other behavioral scientists have expressed concern about the romanticizing of violence in both film series and the assumption that war is fun and the "good guy" never gets hurt or killed and never loses.

The flip side of this historic mirror is that the masses of people are hungry for a new American hero, even fictional, to offset some of their perceived tarnished image that somehow we Americans are not the best in everything now. This is most evident by the fact that Rambo II and Rocky IV had record ticket sales for their initial six-day viewings by moviegoers. Behind this is the fact that Stallone's films appeal to the frustrated typical American who, for whatever reason, feels left out of the system, has a poor self-image, is considered a loser by his or her own standards and needs something real or unreal to bolster his or her ego.

Blot Out Our Guilt

For many years, big John Wayne, like Stallone, little acting skill and few good movie story plots, but nevertheless rugged and unconventional in getting justice for the little guy. Wayne's hero image was heightened when he announced in an almost superman fashion that he was going to out-draw and beat the big C - cancer - which eventually took his life. Then came police detective "Dirty Harry," Clint Eastwood, the unconventional cop who broke any law or procedure in the pursuit of criminals. Eastwood even had President Reagan telling foes, "go ahead, make my day."

No one, however, has probably projected the hero image as well as Sylvester Stallone, again because of the mirrors of the past. The fact of having lost the Korean War without ever really admitting it and the fact of having lost the Vietnam War and nursing a continuing bruised ego about it, has enabled many Americans to replace the fantasy of Rambo for reality and thus to blot out our guilt feelings as unnecessary as they may be. Chuck Norris' Missions to find MIAs (missing in action) American GIs in Vietnam and Arnold Schwarzenegger's movie Commando modeled after Rambo both appeal to the same macho audiences.

Rocky IV, cloaked in American patriotism, is for many Americans World War II. As Stallone, as Rocky, witnesses his friend and former sparring partner being killed in the boxing ring by a big Russian fighter, Rocky then prepares to do battle with this physically much bigger foe. In the boxing ring, Rocky is beaten badly before he regroups and emerges as the winner. This, too, was the pattern of America's war in the Pacific Ocean against Japanese in World War II, America initially lost many battles, while building a massive military machine that was used to help America win the war.

SUBJECT CRIME



Let's Work Together For A Safe Community

World Peace Takes Priority Position?

The Christmas season is one of the most popular times of the year when people think about their fellow human beings. It is a time when men and women reassess the meanings of peace, goodwill and friendship.

Peace on earth, peace of mind and soul and peace in being begin to take top-priority positions. The earth is tormented with the constant threat of war and with war in certain areas. Men question each other's right to inhabit or have a country to call his own. Basic human rights that have been denied for hundreds of years continue to resurface and cause tension. The peace that exists in the mind and soul is not solid due to the external unrest. It, too, takes a much needed temporary rest. Unfortunately, it is only temporary.

Somehow once again man has disturbed and thrown out the basic values or rules for existence and living. He is not only in a state of flux, but on a road to destruction. Shall this earth see another fall of the human empire?

Goodwill, the temporary peace within and without, manifests itself in giving. Helping the homeless, hungry, and needy. Man's level of compassion greatly increases and he feels compelled to open his arms to embrace and aid those in need. Charities, neighborhood organizations, church-



Sabrina Johnson

es, and civic organizations begin in November to raise food, money, clothing and toys or gifts for those in need. The forgotten population suddenly becomes important for a brief moment.

Utility companies, merchants, private citizens and the like who have said no in the past, suddenly realize that the Christmas season carries a goodwill message. So as not to deprive themselves they practice temporary goodwill. The media thrives on the events in an attempt to raise the consciousness of others into participation. Goodwill is something that is supposed to be done during Christmas but is it not important for goodwill to be part of the entire year?

People not only need help to make their Christmas be, but need help in continuing their existence throughout

the year. Man cannot live 365 days on 14 days of goodwill. To offset the fall of Rome, the rule and value of goodwill may well need to become part of living in existing together on this earth.

Friendship, a most peculiar situation to man. It seems no other animal has such an ability to form friendship to a meaning somewhat definable than man. Friendship in man or for man finds root in his basic needs and are somehow intertwined in the need for acceptance.

Today's sophisticated man has friends for different reasons. He has friends because of their positions, prominent positions, in the community, the profession or industry. Friends because the friends know the right people. Friends who share few or many common interests. And friends of mutual respect and compassion. The first two types are really not friends. Their relationships are on a superficial level and melt away as the immediate objective is achieved.

The third type of friendship may last a lifetime or just a few happy years until something happens to upset the balance. This friendship oftentimes cannot go the extra mile or exist through hardship.

Friendship of mutual respect and compassion has the "stuff that lasts." The respect and compassion grow to unending bounds. This friendship rarely takes more than it gives. It only wants to manifest itself into a special loving relationship that can incorporate everything from quiet simple moments to public praise. This relationship makes it through time of profit and loss, wellness and illness, happy and sad. It questions not why but how: How can help be given or how can I be of help to you?

The friendship of mutual respect and compassion most difficult to develop because man has become a suspicious lot and trust few. Rome fell because of lack of trust. The state of affairs, peace, goodwill and friendship are not in such bleak states. However, if they continue to slide down, will not man experience a great demise of himself and his society?

These affairs are enhanced during the 14 to 21 days of Christmas. Why cannot they continue the remainder of the year? Too many are hungry, cold, and lonely. Not only now must man reach out but always. Reaching out is what made this nation so great, shall not man continue to reach out to attribute to its greatness? No one is holding him back accept himself.

Happy New Year!

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Miller Says:

Pardon: The Ticket To Re-Enfranchisement

By Sherman N. Miller
Special To The Post

When I think about former President Richard Nixon being granted a pardon, I ask myself, "Was there a very important symbolism buried under all of the emotionalism surrounding this historic event?"

Several months ago a middle-aged chap revealed to me his plight in trying to get a job of trust. He had committed a felony approximately 17 years ago. This chap did finally get the job but his comments left me hankering to know what options ex-offenders have to re-enfranchise themselves back into the economic mainstream. I called upon Lt. Governor S. B. Woo, Chairman of the Delaware State Pardon Board, to offer me some guidance.

Since Delaware is rapidly evolving into a major banking center, I sought Woo's feelings on how a person with a police record may obtain a job of trust. His response was that these people can ask for a pardon. However, Woo made it clear that there will be no whitewashing of past misdeeds. Woo proclaimed, "A pardon does not constitute innocence, nor does it imply expungement of re-



Sherman N. Miller

cord. The board has decided that person should no longer be penalized by the society. And therefore in no employment situation can he or she continue to be discriminated against."

Nevertheless, this person still has a police record and he or she must respond to questions relating to arrests on job applications. Woo played down the significance of a person's previous police record. He asserted, "I sit on the Board of Pardons and quite often there will be individuals coming in saying 'this employer says if I only get a pardon I will be employed.' That includes banks, security jobs, as well as police jobs, not to mention others."

Woo believes strongly that pardons should not be granted merely because a

person has not been in trouble for a number of years. He declares, "I believe it would be proper for the Board of Pardons to say, 'Look, you come before us asking for mercy. We are sympathetic, but have you also done deeds to show that you have shown mercy to your other fellow beings?'"

I challenged Woo to say whether he was imposing a second penal sentence on the ex-offenders. Woo retorted, "Well, I wouldn't view doing good work for the society as a penal term. That person wants some extra favor from the society and the society says, 'Well, you can have it. How about doing some extra favors for your brothers and sisters?'"

Although one may be granted a pardon, there remains some potential for discrimination because of human fears and prejudices. Therefore, Woo's support was solicited for a change in Delaware law so that job application forms may read, "Have you ever been convicted of a crime for which you have not been pardoned?"

Woo responded, "I'm sympathetic to that suggestion because, basically as I see it, the less fortunate people -

the poor, the less educated people - don't even know that such a thing as the Board of Pardons exists. Oftentimes only the affluent people take advantage of the Board of Pardons. By asking this-a-way, it actually reminds people there is this avenue to which they could resort."

Because recidivism is a key concern, Woo was requested to offer hope to the multiple offenders who wish to reform. Woo proposed, "If the guy has gotten four or five records, we make the pardon of the very first record fairly easy. But it gets harder and harder ... so he can see that if he does well he will receive a reward for it."

As I think about Lt. Governor Woo's public service proposal, I too am in favor of ex-offenders doing public service work to become re-enfranchised in the economic mainstream. However, I think more effort must be made to see that the poor are made fully aware of the pardon process.

Free Blood Check

During the month of January, Community Health Services offers free blood pressure checks on Wednesdays from 12-2 p.m. An appointment is necessary.