

And Now A Word From Pollyanna

As I write, America and its allies have been at war for a week with Iraq. By the time you read these words, that war may be over, tremendously escalated, or somewhere in between.

Whatever the outcome, I suggest there are positive repercussions that can result from what is otherwise a massive tragedy for all involved.

Yes, I know, that sounds like ridiculous optimism, but remember the definition of an optimist: someone who, surrounded by piles of manure, is convinced there's a pony in there somewhere.

Well, if we were ever up to our armpits in manure, we are now in that position. Could we find a pony or two?

One unexpectedly positive result of this desert warfare comes from the collision of our young Americans with the Muslim prohibition on alcohol. While well-wishers back home protest our soldiers being denied this familiar comfort and recreation, doctors on the scene report interesting findings.

There has been to date an absence of detoxification cases and of suicides among troops deployed in Saudi Arabia, in stark contrast to previous wars, when men often came home with a new lifetime drug habit.

In addition, their booze-free condition has enabled our men and women to perform their jobs with far greater proficiency. Get this,

Marjorie Megivern



Hussein: our guys fight better under your religious rules!

An even bigger pony emerges from the manure in the form of a national raised consciousness, due directly to the war. Before the 60s, few Americans could have identified Vietnam. Since then, churches across the country have adopted refugee families from the Asian nation that hosted that memorable conflict. Vietnamese culture is becoming absorbed by our communities.

In the same way, Kuwait and Hussein were just funny words to most of us a year ago. We self-absorbed Americans, who extend our geographic awareness only as far as Europe, have little knowledge of the Arab world, its history, its culture and its religion. This is why our president derided the notion that he should allow Hussein some face-saving device. "Appeasement!" cry the westerners, insensitive to the Arabic passion for dignity.

Well, on that day last August, Saddam began another phase of our

education when he marched into Kuwait. Now we're buying maps and books on Saudi Arabia as if they're going out of style. We stay glued to the tube, drinking in lessons in history, culture and geography that we somehow missed in public school.

Arabs in general are not strangers to our society; they sit in our university classrooms and frequently teach there; they are our healers, lawyers, merchants and neighbors. Nevertheless, the average American probably has no close personal Arabian friends and has not troubled to explore their native culture or the faith of Islam.

Christians, by the way, often fear and denounce this faith without realizing its ties to their own. When I recently arranged for an Islamic speaker to address a Methodist women's group on the subject of Islam, a distressed member of the congregation begged me not to allow such an "insult to Jesus." We should not even hear about this alien religion, he implied.

This, despite the fact that Jesus grew up among the ancestors of the folks we now know as Muslims. They were inextricably linked to the Jewish tradition and I think Jesus would today tell us that Allah is one of God's revered names. An understanding of Islam, therefore, is something else we can achieve from this experience of a Persian Gulf conflict.

When the sand has settled, we will know a lot more about the world and its peoples; our fighting forces will have had an "alcohol break," and who knows? We may find ties that bind us closer to still another branch of the human family.

Now, that's more than just a pony hidden in the manure: it's a regular Arabian steed!

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"Kindred Spirits"

Dear Kindred Spirits...

The South Brunswick Islands are filled with popular attractions, both natural and manmade. But the area's most alluring attraction isn't a specific place so much as it is the intangible feeling of harmony between man and nature exemplified by the Kindred Spirits mailbox on uninhabited Bird Island.

The mailbox, last located on the tiny island west of Sunset Beach, first appeared in 1981. According to local lore, a driftwood bench for weary visitors and the mailbox are guarded by the Great Blue Heron and move from place to place depending upon the forces of man and nature. Still, the mailbox and the journals it houses have weathered even the most devastating occurrences, including 1989's Hurricane Hugo.

Completed in Spring 1990, "Kindred Spirits" by Ocean Isle Beach artist Timberley Adams captures the serenity of the South Brunswick Islands in general and Bird Island in particular. Signed and numbered limited edition prints of the 14-inch by 20-inch watercolor painting are available at select shops or from the artist's studio home on Ocean Isle. To order send \$32 (per print) and \$4 postage & handling to:

Timberley Adams
P.O. Box 2652
Shallotte, NC 28459

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Set of 6 assorted scenes from the Brunswick County coast, from original pen & ink artwork by Timberley Adams. To order send \$6.95 (per set) plus \$1 postage.

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