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Boston: ‘Oh, My God’

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

Soon after the explosions, there appeared on the website of The Boston Globe a video of the moment. Runners in the city’s iconic marathon are jogging across the finish line and everyone is cheering, when there is a clap of thunder and an orange bloom of fire from within a ring of flags honoring the nations represented in the race. It is followed, seconds later, by another blast from just down the street. The cheers become shrieks, falsetto shrills of panic and fear and the videographer carries you forward, to where the smoke is drifting and police, runners and bystanders rip barricades apart trying to reach the epicenter of chaos.

“We need help!” someone cries.

And the videographer whispers three words to himself. “Oh, my God,” he says.

He says it again. “Oh, my God.”

He keeps saying it, probably doesn’t even hear himself, probably doesn’t even realize. “Oh, my God.”



Leonard PITTS

On a day that will be filled with expert analysis and speculation, in a moment of keening, lamentation and loss, on an afternoon that will require a presidential expression of empathy and resolve, no one will say any words more fitting, more viscerally descriptive than those. They are an entreaty of the Almighty, yes. They are also a susurration of helplessness in the face of stark and awesome evil.

Oh, my God because blood sits on the sidewalk in pools.

Oh, my God because pieces of people litter the streets.

Oh, my God because our nightmares now walk in sunshine.

“We can’t do this anymore,” a man named Allan Kaufman tells a reporter. “We can’t have open events anymore. You can’t control it.” It is a measure of the day’s horror that for an instant, his words, spoken in a rawness of anguish, seem to make sense. But they don’t, of course. Not really.

Even if what Kaufman suggests were possible — and it isn’t — it is not something we could choose.

The need to gather is fundamental to the human condition, part of what makes us who we are. So there will always be marathons. There will always be baseball games and Super Bowls. There will always be shopping malls at Christmas. There will always be concerts and movies. There will always be places where people gather to compete, fellowship, laugh, shop, enjoy.

So there will always be opportunities to do to us what somebody did in Boston. “No man is an island,” wrote John Donne, “entire of itself. Each is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.”

Even in grief, this truth proves itself. On street corners, people with glittering eyes and fallen hearts embrace people they do not know. In hospital waiting rooms, strangers lend one another strength. And in churches, synagogues and mosques people gather to seek release from lacerating pain or simply to whisper again and again.

Oh, my God, because nearly 180 people were wounded and maimed.

Oh, my God because three people were killed.

Oh, my God, because an 8-year-old boy will never get to finish the chalk drawing of butterflies and flowers he left in the driveway of his home.

Oh, my God, because sometimes, you just run out of words.

But the 8-year-old Martin Richard knew what to say. There is a picture of him circulating online. Taken at school a year ago, it shows a handsome, gap-toothed little boy holding up a sign. “No more hurting people,” it says. “Peace.”

His death, then, is a bitter irony and visceral reminder that we live fragile lives on a fragile planet. And when you come right down to it, all we really have is each other. That’s our vulnerability — and greatest strength.

We are wounded now, yes, Oh, my God. But we stand together. We stand defiant. And we stand with Boston.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.

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Stating The State’s Case In China

BY GOV. DENNIS DAUGAARD
R-South Dakota

As governor, my job is almost always here in South Dakota. Last week, however, I had the opportunity to lead a delegation of South Dakota business and agricultural leaders on a trade mission to China. It was a small group, but the experience opened our eyes to the significant opportunities for South Dakota companies. Even with our limited experience, our efforts from a year ago led to signed contracts to sell South Dakota goods to Chinese consumers and investors.

Last year, South Dakota received a State Trade and Export Promotion grant from the Small Business Administration for our first trade mission to China. It was a small group, but the experience opened our eyes to the significant opportunities for South Dakota companies. Even with our limited experience, our efforts from a year ago led to signed contracts to sell South Dakota goods to Chinese consumers and investors.

Last week, we returned to China with grounded expectations, better business contacts, and a much larger trade delegation.

Through an application process, eleven export-ready businesses and three agricultural commodity groups were selected to join the trade mission. I couldn’t be more pleased that so many South Dakota companies expressed interest in the trip, and I sincerely wish they all could have joined us.



Daugaard

We started our trade mission in Beijing before traveling to Shanghai and Hong Kong to meet with more business contacts. Those Chinese cities are densely populated, and the atmosphere was far different from South Dakota’s clean, wide-open spaces.

As it was, we had a very a busy week. Our time in China was booked morning to night. We attended meetings for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and had many other meetings outside those periods to maximize the productivity of our time. Members of the South Dakota trade delegation participated in more than 80 business-to-business meetings.

It is difficult to break into a market when you must overcome language, legal, and cultural barriers. We understood that from the outset. Still, the presence of South Dakota government officials helped to provide legitimacy to our businesses and helped them accomplish their goals by meeting with key Chinese officials and business leaders.

While it is still too early to measure success, I am optimistic that the diligent work of our business and agriculture groups in China will develop into very beneficial trade partnerships.

In the meantime, I am glad to be back in South Dakota, my home.

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SEN. TIM JOHNSON: 136 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; Washington Phone: (202) 224-5842; Sioux Falls Phone: (605) 332-8896; email: <http://johnson.senate.gov/emailform.html>

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Boston: ‘Lest There Be Any Doubt ...’

BOSTON HERALD (April 17): The words have now been spoken — and by the president — lest there be any doubt that this attack on Marathon Day could have been anything other than an act of terrorism.

“Anytime bombs are used to target innocent civilians it is an act of terror,” President Obama said yesterday. It was a word he seemed to avoid on Monday — however he chose to define it.

“What we don’t know, however, is who carried out this attack, or why; whether it was planned and executed by a terrorist organization, foreign or domestic, or was it the act of a malevolent individual,” he said.

And yet we do know some things that we did not know 24 hours earlier. We know from the pieces of shrapnel removed from many victims of Monday’s explosion that this was — in the manner of explosives used by terrorists during the intifada — created to maim, to do maximum damage. The explosives, nails and ball bearings were packed into kitchen pressure cookers, then placed in black nylon bags and left on the ground at those two Boylston Street locations. Similar bombs have been used in Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

How diabolically simple — and how deadly ... Young people with their whole lives ahead of them ripped from our community.

And today we also know that even as our hearts ache at the loss — of lives, of futures, of our sense of safety — we have never been stronger as a community.

Saturday Mail Delivery Goes On

THE JOPLIN (Mo.) GLOBE (April 12): Foiled in March by Congress, the U.S. Postal Service admitted it was licked on its plan to end Saturday mail delivery.

The Postal Service, which lost \$16 billion last year, had announced in February it wanted to switch to five-day mail service to save \$2 billion annually. It had planned to switch to five-day-a-week deliveries beginning in August for everything except packages.

Congress traditionally has included a provision in legislation to fund the federal government each year that has prevented the Postal Service from reducing delivery service.

The Postal Service had asked Congress not to include the provision this time around.

Congress held firm, citing the needs of families, businesses and seniors, particularly those living in rural areas.

We might add to that list: newspapers.

We are elated that our mail customers will see no changes in the delivery of their Saturday paper. Especially when you consider that some of the potential cost savings cited by the Postal Service may have been greatly overstated. ...

Saturday mail delivery is still too important to our way of life to go by the wayside.

OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer’s full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, April 18, the 108th day of 2013. There are 257 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On April 18, 1943, during World War II, Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto, commander-in-chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, was killed as his plane was shot down by U.S. fighters while approaching Bougainville in the Solomon Islands.

On this date: In 1775, Paul Revere began his famous ride from Charlestown to Lexington, Mass., warning American colonists that the British were coming.

In 1831, the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa was officially opened.

In 1906, a devastating earthquake struck San Francisco, followed by raging fires; estimates of the final death toll range between 3,000 and 6,000.

In 1910, suffragists showed up at the U.S. Capitol with half a million signatures demanding that women be given the right to vote.

In 1923, the first game was played at the original Yankee Stadium in New York; the Yankees defeated the Boston Red Sox 4-1.

In 1942, an air squadron from the *USS Hornet* led by Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle raided Tokyo and other Japanese cities.

In 1945, famed American war correspondent Ernie Pyle, 44, was killed by Japanese gunfire on the Pacific island of Ie Shima, off Okinawa.

In 1949, the Republic of Ireland was proclaimed.

In 1955, physicist Albert Einstein died in Princeton, N.J., at age 76.

In 1978, the Senate approved the Panama Canal Treaty, providing for the complete turnover of control of the waterway to Panama on the last day of 1999.

In 1983, 63 people, including 17 Americans, were killed at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, by a suicide bomber.

In 1988, an Israeli court convicted John Demjanjuk, a retired auto worker from Cleveland, of committing war crimes at the Treblinka death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. (However, Israel’s Supreme Court later overturned Demjanjuk’s conviction.)

Ten years ago: Iraqi police arrested Saddam Hussein’s former finance minister (Hikmat Mubzan Ibrahim al-Azzawi) and turned him over to the U.S. Marines. Scott Peterson was arrested in San Diego in the death of his wife, Laci, who was eight months pregnant when she vanished on Christmas Eve. (Peterson was later convicted of murder and sentenced to death.)

Five years ago: Addressing the United Nations, Pope Benedict XVI said international cooperation needed to solve urgent problems was “in crisis” because decisions rested in the hands of a few powerful nations. Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin gave birth to her fifth child, a son named Trig Paxson Van Palin.

One year ago: Defense Secretary Leon Panetta apologized for gruesome photographs published in the *Los Angeles Times* that purported to show U.S. soldiers posing with the bloodied remains of dead insurgents in Afghanistan two years earlier. Dick Clark, the ever-youthful television host and producer who helped bring rock ‘n’ roll into the mainstream on “American Bandstand” and rang in the New Year for the masses at Times Square, died in Santa Monica, Calif., at age 82.

Today’s Birthdays: Actress Barbara Hale is 92. Actor Clive Revill is 83. Actor James Drury is 79. Actor Robert Hooks is 76. Actress Hayley Mills is 67. Actor James Woods is 66. Actress-director Dorothy Lyman is 66. Actress Cindy Pickett is 66. Country musician Walt Richmond (The Tractors) is 66. Country musician Jim Scholten (Sawyer Brown) is 61. Actor Rick Moranis is 60. Actress Melody Thomas Scott is 57. Actor Eric Roberts is 57. Actor John James is 57. Rock musician Les Patinson (Echo and the Bunnymen) is 55. Author-journalist Susan Faludi is 54. Actress Jane Leeves is 52. Talk show host Conan O’Brien is 50. Bluegrass singer-musician Terry Eldredge is 50. Actor Eric McCormack is 50. Actress Maria Bello is 46. Actress Mary Birdsong is 45. Rock musician Greg Eklund (The Oolahs) is 43. Actor David Tennant is 42. Country musician Marvin Evatt is 39. Rock musician Mark Tremonti is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Trina (Trina and Tamara) is 39. Actress Melissa Joan Hart is 37. Actor Sean Maguire is 37. Actor Kevin Rankin is 37. Actor Bryce Johnson is 36. Reality TV star Kourtney Kardashian is 34. Actress America Ferrera is 29. Actress Alia Shawkat is 24. Actress Britt Robertson is 23. Rock singer Nathan Sykes (The Wanted) is 20. Actor Moises Arias is 19.

Thought for Today: “Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.” — Albert Einstein (1879-1955).

FROM THE BIBLE

We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

CONTACT US

PHONE:
(605) 665-7811
(800) 743-2968
NEWS FAX:
(605) 665-1721
ADVERTISING FAX:
(605) 665-0288
WEBSITE:
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EMAIL ADDRESS:
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Published Daily Monday-Saturday

Periodicals postage paid at Yankton, South Dakota, under the act of March 3, 1979.

Weekly Dakotian established June 6, 1861. Yankton Daily Press and Dakotian established April 26, 1875.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078.

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The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan is a member of the Associated Press, the Inland Daily Press Association and the South Dakota Newspaper Association. The Associated Press is entitled exclusively to use of all the local news printed in this newspaper.

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