

The Press & Dakotan

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861
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**Published Daily
Monday-Saturday**

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

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

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

MEMBERSHIPS

The Yankton Daily
Press & Dakotan is a
member of the Associ-
ated 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.

**SUBSCRIPTION
RATES***

(Payable in advance)

CARRIER DELIVERY

1-month.....\$12.09

3 months.....\$36.27

6 months.....\$72.53

1-year.....\$133.09

MOTOR ROUTE

(where available)

1 month.....\$14.51

3 months.....\$43.53

6 months.....\$87.05

1 year.....\$139.14

MAIL IN RETAIL

(Trade Zone)

1-month.....\$16.93

3 months.....\$50.79

6 months.....\$101.57

1-year.....\$148.82

**MAIL OUTSIDE
RETAIL TRADE ZONE**

1 month.....\$19.35

3 months.....\$58.05

6 months.....\$116.09

1-year.....\$186.33

* Plus applicable sales tax
for all rates

OPINION OTHER VIEWS

Faith-Based Fairness Needed

LOS ANGELES TIMES (Aug. 23): Religious organizations long have been valuable partners with the federal government in providing services ranging from child care to drug and alcohol rehabilitation to the resettlement of refugees. But organizations that receive grants from Washington rightly must be willing to care not only for their own flock but for all people in need. Even former President George W. Bush, who made federal cooperation with faith-based agencies a priority, acknowledged that.

But when it came to hiring, the Bush administration allowed faith-based agencies to discriminate in favor of members of their own faith, even if the grant program in question required recipients not to do so. That policy is undergirded by a 2007 opinion from the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel that is still in force. It concludes that preferring co-religionists is justified by the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which allows case-by-case challenges to government actions that "substantially burden" the free exercise of religion.

Last week, 130 civil rights and liberal organizations sent a letter to President Obama urging him to reconsider the 2007 memo. The groups make a persuasive case. As Americans United for Separation of Church and State, one of the signatories, puts it, the memo provides a legal rationale for "taxpayer-funded religious discrimination."

Such discrimination is troubling. It also exposes a contradiction that runs through the government subsidization of social services by religious groups. A key rationale for such assistance is that, as Bush put it in a 2002 speech, religious agencies "inspire life-changing faith in a way that government never should." Yet under rules that Bush himself supported, those agencies can't talk about that faith. Thus a Christian group running, say, a drug rehabilitation program may not tell participants that accepting Jesus must be part of their recovery.

If faith-based agencies that receive federal funds must keep explicit religious appeals out of their social services, they also should be required not to discriminate in the hiring of those who engage in that work. Religious groups can fairly insist that their spiritual leaders and boards of directors must subscribe to the faith, but if a church-affiliated soup kitchen can't proselytize, it makes no sense for it to be allowed to use government funds to hire only cooks who are believers.

Some major faith-based groups that receive federal funds have no problem with opening their hiring to all. Catholic Relief Services says it considers job applicants on merit and without regard to religious beliefs. Every religious group receiving federal funds should have to make the same commitment.

CORRECTION

In Wednesday's letter to the editor from Yankton County Commission Chairman Todd Woods, the 7 p.m. start time for the July 13 public meeting on the proposed road and bridge levy was inadvertently deleted. We apologize for the error.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Thursday, August 27, the 239th day of 2015. There are 126 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On August 27, 1975, Haile Selassie, the last emperor of Ethiopia's 3,000-year-old monarchy, died in Addis Ababa at age 83 almost a year after being overthrown.

On this date: In 1776, the Battle of Long Island began during the Revolutionary War as British troops attacked American forces, who ended up being forced to retreat two days later.

In 1883, the island volcano Krakatoa erupted with a series of cataclysmic explosions; the resulting tidal waves in Indonesia's Sunda Strait claimed some 36,000 lives in Java and Sumatra.

In 1908, Lyndon Baines Johnson, the 36th president of the United States, was born near Stonewall, Texas.

In 1928, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed in Paris, outlawing war and providing for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In 1939, the first turbojet-powered aircraft, the Heinkel He 178, went on its first full-fledged test flight over Germany.

In 1949, a violent white mob prevented an outdoor concert headlined by Paul Robeson from taking place near Peekskill, New York. (The concert was held eight days later.)

In 1957, the USS Swordfish, the second Skate Class nuclear submarine, was launched from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine.

In 1962, the United States launched the Mariner 2 space probe, which flew past Venus in December 1962.

In 1965, influential Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier, 77, died in Cap Martin, France.

In 1979, British war hero Lord Louis Mountbatten and three other people, including his 14-year-old grandson Nicholas, were killed off the coast of Ireland in a boat explosion claimed by the Irish Republican Army.

In 1989, the first U.S. commercial satellite rocket was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida — a Delta booster carrying a British communications satellite, the Marcopolo 1.

In 2008, Barack Obama was nominated for president by the Democratic National Convention in Denver.

Ten years ago: Coastal residents jammed freeways and gas stations as they rushed to get out of the way of Hurricane Katrina, which was headed toward New Orleans. President George W. Bush asked Americans in his weekly radio address to be patient with the U.S. military mission in Iraq as thousands of pro-Bush and anti-war demonstrators competed for attention in his tiny hometown of Crawford, Texas.

Five years ago: Aijalon Gomes, an

American held seven months in North Korea for trespassing, stepped off a plane in his hometown of Boston accompanied by former President Jimmy Carter, who had flown to Pyongyang to negotiate his freedom. Cuba issued a pair of surprising free market decrees, allowing foreign investors to lease government land for at least 99 years and loosening state controls on commerce to let citizens grow and sell their own fruits and vegetables.

One year ago: Both Israel's prime minister and Hamas declared victory in the Gaza war, though their competing claims left questions over future terms of their uneasy peace still lingering. The University of Southern California suspended cornerback Josh Shaw for 10 games after he confessed to lying to school officials about how he'd sprained his ankles, retracting his story about jumping off a balcony to save his drowning nephew. (Shaw reportedly jumped from the balcony of an apartment following an argument with his girlfriend; he was reinstated after authorities determined no criminal charges would be filed against him.)

Today's Birthdays: Author Lady Antonia Fraser is 83. Actor Tommy Sands is 78. Bluegrass singer-musician J.D. Crowe is 78. Musician Daryl Dragon is 73. Actress Tuesday Weld is 72. Actor G.W. Bailey is 71. Rock singer-musician Tim Bogert is 71. Actress Marianne Sagebrecht is 70. Country musician Jeff Cook is 66. Actor Paul Reubens is 63. Rock musician Alex Lifeson (Rush) is 62. Actor Peter Stormare is 62. Actress Diana Scarwid is 60. Rock musician Glen Matlock (The Sex Pistols) is 59. Goller Bernhard Langer is 58. Country singer Jeffrey Steele is 54. Gospel singer Yolanda Adams is 54. Country musician Matthew Basford (Yankee Grey) is 53. Writer-producer Dean Devlin is 53. Rock musician Mike Johnson is 50. Rap musician Bobo (Cypress Hill) is 47. Country singer Colt Ford is 46. Actress Chandra Wilson is 46. Rock musician Tony Kanal (No Doubt) is 45. Actress Sarah Chalke is 39. Actor RonReaco (correct) Lee is 39. Rapper Mase is 38. Actress-singer Demetria McKinney is 37. Actor Aaron Paul is 36. Rock musician Jon Siebels (Eve 6) is 36. Actor Shaun Weiss is 36. Contemporary Christian musician Megan Garrett (Casting Crowns) is 35. Actor Kyle Lowder is 35. Actor Patrick J. Adams is 34. Actress Amanda Fuller (T.V. "Last Man Standing") is 31. Singer Mario is 29. Actress Alexa Vega is 27. Actor Ellar Coltrane (Film: "Boyhood") is 21. Actress Savannah Paige Rae is 12.

Thought for Today: "Genuine tragedies in the world are not conflicts between right and wrong. They are conflicts between two rights." — Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, German philosopher (born this date in 1770, died 1831).

FROM THE BIBLE

I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man. Acts 7:56. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'The Cult Of Koch'

Chris Svarstad, Yankton

A couple weekends ago there was something strange and even unusual happening in Southern California, at a resort near a place called Dana Point. The previous night's guests were ushered off the premises by hotel security. A private security team moved into the property, setting up check points at the resorts' entrances. Hotel employees could be seen sweeping the rooms for electronic listening devices. Hundreds of wealthy men and women were led into the resort, registering to attend an event deceptively

entitled "TNR Annual Sales Meeting." It was closed to all spectators, journalists and others not explicitly invited. No official itinerary was available, and details have not been forthcoming, no matter the inquiries.

There were four Republican presidential candidates, including Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, Scott Walker and Carly Fiorina slated to attend, and they did attend; but their offices have refused to comment on their participation. While there, as the *Washington Post* reported on Aug. 2, Charles and David Koch, billionaire oil barons, the poster boys for the top 1 percent invoked their chosen ones



Writer's Block

Batboy Death Stirs Awful Memories

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF

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For me, the recent death of a Kansas batboy was more than a tragic news story — it hit tremendously close to home.

The 9-year-old batboy died after he was hit in the head by a player taking practice swings. The batboy was wearing a helmet at the time of the accident.

My brother, Pat, was also hit in the head as a batboy 35 to 40 years ago — and he wasn't wearing a helmet.

Pat was standing on the sidelines, away from the action on the field, when a batter on deck was taking practice swings and hit my brother in the head.

My parents bolted from the stands to reach Pat. A woman in the crowd had recently completed a first aid course, and she instructed another woman at the game to search for ice.

The second woman returned from a neighboring house with a sack filled with ice. The first woman immediately applied the ice pack to Pat's head. Our town didn't have an ambulance at the time, so my parents drove Pat to one of the nearest hospitals 25 miles away.

The woman offering first aid at the baseball game went along on the ride. She kept the ice pack in place on Pat's head, presumably to help reduce any swelling of his brain.

After observation, the hospital released Pat. But upon returning home, my brother remained eerily still. He was taken back to the same hospital and then transferred to a Sioux Falls hospital for further treatment.

For a week, he remained quiet and motionless in his hospital bed. The staff kept him under observation, occasionally taking him to a room with toys and other items to see if he responded in any way.

A pastor from our hometown stopped to visit

and offered a bedside prayer. Thankfully, Pat emerged from his condition, but he was monitored even after his hospital discharge. Through the years, he has shown no apparent physical effects from the incident.

Rather than stay away from the baseball diamond, he has developed a full umpiring career. He often finds himself in the middle of the action behind the plate.

To this day, he remembers little of his accident as a batboy nearly four decades ago.

My mom, on the other hand, can recall nearly every detail of that swing of the bat and the weeks, months — even years — that followed it.

In fact, she recommended writing a column about Pat's experience after learning of the Kansas batboy's death. Pat also drew an immediate comparison to himself and the batboy who recently suffered the fatal accident.

While Pat doesn't remember many details of his accident and its aftermath, his own batboy incident remains part of his consciousness.

As an umpire, he uses it as a valuable teachable moment for the boys he encounters when working games. He immediately orders a player or batboy to put on a helmet.

The young boys — and even teenagers — often question the need for a helmet, particularly when they are nowhere near the direct action.

Pat doesn't argue with them. To make his point, he just takes off his cap and shows the dent on his head which still remains from his batboy accident.

"I tell (the players), 'I've got the mark to prove it,'" he recently told me. It's a lesson he's willing to share if it spares others the same fate — or, in the recent case of the 9-year-old batboy who died, much worse.

Follow @RDockendorf on Twitter.

Leonard Pitts Jr.

Jimmy Carter And Faith

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

"To want what I have, to take what I'm given with grace ... for this, I pray." — From "For My Wedding," by Don Henley

America is a nation of faith. So it is often said. In faith, a baker refuses to bake a cake for a gay couple's wedding. In faith, a minister prays for the president to die. In faith, terrorists plant bombs at the finish line of a marathon. In faith, mosques are vandalized, shot at and burned. In faith, a televangelist asks his followers to buy him a \$65-million private jet.

And no one is even surprised anymore. In America, what we call faith is often loud, often exclusionary, sometimes violent and too frequently enamored of shiny, expensive things. In faith, ill-tempered people mob the shopping malls every year at Christmas to have fistfights and gunfights over hot toys and high-end electronics.

You did not hear much about faith last week when Jimmy Carter held a press conference to reveal that he has four spots of cancer on his brain. The 39th president made only a few references to it in the nearly 40 minutes he spoke, and they were all in response to reporter's questions. Yet, you would be hard-pressed to find a more compelling statement of belief in things not seen. Unsentimental, poised and lit from within by an amazing grace, Carter discussed the fight now looming ahead of him, the radiation treatments he will undergo, the need to finally cut back on his whirlwind schedule.

He smiled often. "I'm perfectly at ease with whatever comes," he said, in such a way that you believed him without question. And it was impossible to feel sorry for him.

Partially, that's because we all die and if — still only an if — cancer is what takes James Earl Carter Jr. away, well, there are worse things than to go having reached 90 years of age, having been president of the United States, having been married to the love of your life for almost seven decades, having sired a large and sprawling family and having done significant work toward the eradication of disease and the spreading of

democracy in the developing world. But here's the other reason it was impossible to feel sorry for him. Feeling sorry would have felt like an insult, a denial of the virtues he showed and the faith he didn't need to speak because it was just ... there.

For all its loudness, all its exclusion, violence and ubiquity, the faith that is modeled in the public square is often not particularly affecting. It is hard to imagine someone looking on it from outside and musing to herself, "I'd like to have some of that." What Carter showed the world, though, was different. Who would not want to be able to face the unknown with such perfect equanimity?

Carter presented an image of faith we don't see nearly as often as we should. Which is sad, because it is also the image truest to what faith is supposed to be — not a magic lamp you rub in hopes of a private jet, not a license for our worse impulses, but, rather, an act of surrender to a force greater than self, a way of being centered enough to tell whatever bleak thing comes your way, "So be it." Even fearsome death itself: "So be it."

The heat and hubris of human life are such that that state is difficult to conceive, much less to reach. Our lives are defined by wanting and by lack — more money, new car, new love — and by the ceaseless hustle to fill empty spaces within. Media and advertising conspire to make you feel ever incomplete. So it is hard to feel whole within yourself, at peace with what is, whatever that turns out to be.

But who, gazing upon the former president, can doubt the result is worth the effort? In faith, terrorists kill the innocent. In faith, televangelists swindle the gullible. In faith, so many of us hate, exclude, hurt, curse and destroy. And in faith, last week, Jimmy Carter told the world he has cancer in his brain.

And smiled as he spoke.

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and proudly said "Look at the American revolution, the anti-slavery movement, the women's suffrage movement, the civil rights movement. All of these struck a moral chord with the American people. They all sought to overcome an injustice. And we, too, are seeking to right injustices that are holding our country back."

The theme, using shadowy rhetoric, claiming to help the lower class was echoed throughout the weekend conference as network officials laid out their plans to spend \$889 million to purchase the election, by the end of 2016 on issue advocacy, higher-education grants and political activity.

But no matter what calculating and musty words they use, they still promote their brand of self-serving politics for the richest Americans. However, there's a catch. After all, attendees were sworn to secrecy. High levels of security, concealment, deception, and oaths of silence.

That doesn't sound anything like a typical conference. Sounds more like a cult. But rather than being a religious movement or secret sect; this is a cult of money, influence, cronyism and self-serving politics. This is the cult of Koch.