

A Precap Of 2013

BY PETER FUNT
CagleCartoons.com

Should auld acquaintance be forgot? How 'bout the presidential campaign, the 112th Congress and Newsweek magazine? Journalists usually favor year-end recaps of news but as a public service I'm going to focus instead on the glorious months ahead, in this handy precap of 2013:

JAN. 1: At a New Year's breakfast with congressional leaders, President Obama outlines goals for his second term: creating jobs, reducing the deficit and ending war. House Speaker John Boehner tells reporters, "It sounds like the president is still campaigning."

JAN. 31: Congressional Republicans introduce legislation to make Jackie Robinson's birthday a federal holiday.

FEB. 3: Super Bowl XLVII is held in New Orleans and immediately establishes an NFL record for a Roman numeral that fewest fans are able to decipher.

FEB. 8: Hurricane Baby Girl threatens the Florida coast. Meteorologists explain that due to climate change, storms are arriving too prematurely to have proper names.

FEB. 15: Political guru Dick Morris tells Fox News that his analysis of the presidential election is "virtually complete," and shows that low turnout among Mitt Romney's family members hurt him in swing states.

MARCH 1: In an effort to help Canada cope with the theft from its maple syrup stockpile, Mexico offers a donation of 6 million pounds from its national guacamole reserves.

MARCH 19: Chris Christie makes a surprise appearance at the annual Cow Bell Concert in Sioux City, Iowa, declaring, "We must put politics aside." Christie also denies a TMZ report that his fleece jackets contain wool from Chinese yaks.

APRIL 4: On the heels of her break up with Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez announces she is engaged to Ryan Reynolds, freshly divorced from Blake Lively.

APRIL 11: Making good on his election night pledge to work with Mitt Romney, President Obama names Romney U.S. ambassador to the Cayman Islands.

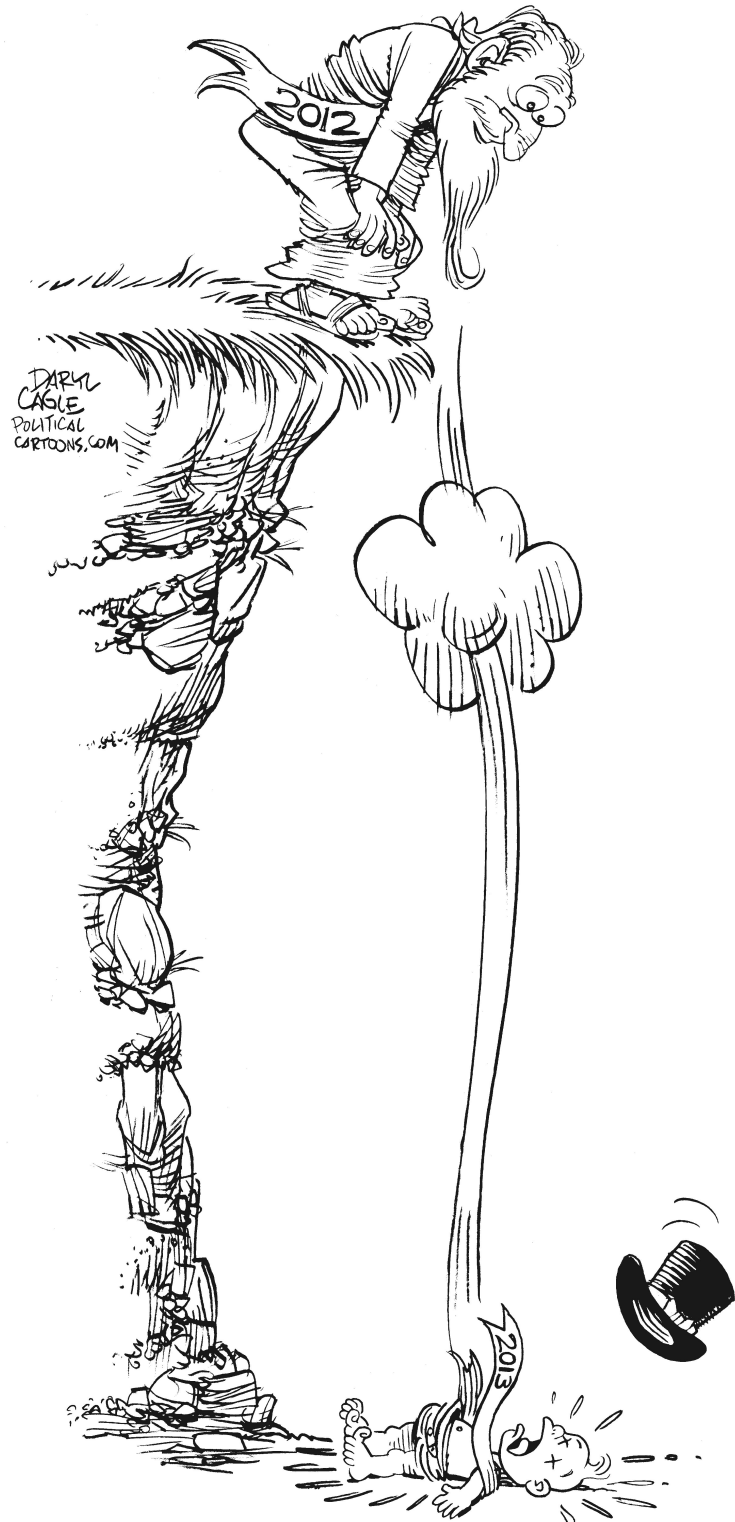
MAY 5: Congressional Republicans introduce legislation to make Cinco de Mayo an official U.S. holiday.

MAY 18: HBO begins production on its adaptation of the book "All In." The film stars Kristen Wiig as Paula Broadwell, Ben Affleck as Gen. David Petraeus, Lindsay Lohan as Jill Kelley, and Jim Carrey as the Internet Guy.

JUNE 4: Eager buyers line up at 4 a.m. to purchase the new iPad Maxi. The device measures 2.5 x 4.8 ft., and has fold-down wheels for easy transport.

JULY 9: The Postal Service issues a \$15 billion stamp. According to a USPS release, "Projections show that if we sell just one of these stamps per year, we're home free."

JULY 20: The Cedar Rapids Gazette reports that Bill and Hillary Clinton have signed a four-year lease on a farmhouse with pool and tennis court. Mrs. Clinton is quoted



as saying, "Iowa is a delightful place to kick back and enjoy retirement."

AUG. 1: Noting that the month is sorely lacking in federal holidays, congressional Republicans propose making the second Monday in August National LGBT Recognition Day.

AUG. 15: Christian Louboutin for Target launches a super-sale, with shoe bargains starting at \$650.

SEPT. 10: Continuing its precipitous decline, NBC's "Today" show is surpassed in morning ratings by PBS's "Dinosaur Train."

SEPT. 14: Congressional Republicans vote to establish federal funding for Univision.

OCT. 8: Data from the College Board show a record number of students have applied for the Semester Abroad Program in Gangnam, South Korea.

Oct. 14: Walmart "honors" Thanksgiving Day in Canada by opening U.S. stores at midnight and keeping them open until Nov. 29.

NOV. 2: Dick Morris concedes that his prediction of total runs scored in the World Series was off by 23. Morris tells the *N.Y. Post*, "I had no idea there were so many Latino players."

NOV. 28: The nation celebrates Thanksgiving unusually late in the month, causing the National Retailers Association to propose that Christmas be delayed by one week.

DEC. 3: Americans line up for the first Plumbing Repair Tuesday, with great "Drain-Buster Deals."

DEC. 4: Americans flock to Win-it-Back Wednesday, featuring a 25 percent bonus at the nation's casinos for those tapped out after Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, Cyber Monday and Plumbing Repair Tuesday.

DEC. 31: At a New Year's Eve tea with Republican leaders, President Obama toasts "good health and prosperity in 2014." John Boehner says he is willing to poll his members, but can't, "in good conscience," make any promises.

Peter Funt is a writer and speaker and can be reached at www.CandidCamera.com.

Semper Fi, Unless It's Inconvenient

BY BILL O'REILLY
Creators Syndicate

Jon Hammar saw combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, but his most brutal foreign experience was in Mexico. Last August, the 27-year-old former Marine corporal was incarcerated by Mexican authorities in Matamoros for trying to register an antique shotgun with customs agents. Foolishly, Cpl. Hammar followed instructions given to him by U.S. Border Patrol agents in Brownsville, Texas. He registered the gun with them and brought the paperwork to the Mexicans to get their stamp of approval in order to carry the gun through the country. Hammar and a friend were driving a Winnebago, hoping to have a nice surfing vacation with some hunting on the side.

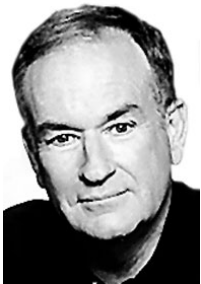
Even though the Mexican authorities clearly saw that Hammar was trying to follow the rules, they seized the Winnebago and locked the corporal up in the notoriously corrupt CEDES prison anyway. There he was threatened by other inmates and told by guards that he could buy his way out of the hellhole by paying money to the "right people."

Hammar's parents, who live in South Florida, immediately contacted the State Department and were told to be patient. And so they were. Three months later, Hammar was still incarcerated and had not even seen a judge, and things were becoming increasingly desperate.

That's when his parents gave up on the State Department and contacted the media.

When the story crossed my desk, I found it hard to believe. Cpl. Hammar had served his country honorably, returned to the USA with post-traumatic stress disorder, been treated for nine months in California and simply wanted a vacation after his ordeal. It was obvious that he was being held on bogus charges, and the State Department seemed impotent. When we asked Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for a comment, she refused to say anything about the case. A few of her deputies visited Hammar in prison, but the official line was that State could do nothing more.

Sen. Bill Nelson and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen raised some hell about the situation, but things con-



Bill O'REILLY

tinued to deteriorate. Mexican authorities actually chained Hammar to his bed. Another inmate sent a picture of that out to the press.

In mid-December, the Fox News White House correspondent asked press secretary Jay Carney about the case. President Barack Obama's spokesman looked perplexed and said he did not know anything about it. As unbelievable as that sounds, I believe that Carney was telling the truth. And by telling one truth, Carney indicated another truth: Neither Obama nor Secretary of State Clinton had come to the aid of an American combat veteran who was being abused by Mexican authorities.

Disgusted by our apathetic government, I took the case directly to the government of Mexico. On national television, I bluntly told the new Mexican presidente, Enrique Pena Nieto, that if he did not release Hammar by Christmas, I would lead a boycott of Mexican tourism and products. The next day, Hammar was released after a Mexican judge ruled there had been no intent to commit a crime.

The ordeal cost the Hammar family tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees and untold emotional damage. Thankfully, the corporal did arrive home to South Florida in time to have a nice Christmas with his family. But this story is a cautionary tale for any American traveling outside the USA. If you get into trouble, you will be essentially on your own, even if you are a combat veteran. Our leaders in Washington are basically bureaucrats with short attention spans. If they couldn't work up the energy to help Jon Hammar, they are not going to help you.

True leadership means helping those who are powerless and sincerely need help. That takes time and energy. President Abraham Lincoln set aside one day a week to answer calls for help from the folks. The current administration would not answer a desperate call for months.

As for Mexico, it remains a corrupt country hostile to the rule of law. Let the buyer beware.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama."

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

How To Keep Guns Away From Bad Guys

OMAHA WORLD-HERALD (Dec. 23): In the wake of the truly awful shootings at the elementary school in Newtown, Conn., there are familiar reactions calling for stricter regulations on gun ownership.

President Barack Obama has asked Vice President Joe Biden to lead a review process of gun control laws and gun violence in the United States. Biden's charge also includes an examination of mental health policies.

The president is wise to include that second part of the Biden task force's mission. The killing spree undertaken by the shooter in Newtown was not the action of anything close to a reasonable, sane person. Clearly, this individual suffered from severe mental health problems, which apparently had either gone untreated or unsuccessfully treated.

The FBI estimates that there are already between 200 million and 300 million firearms owned by residents of the United States. And, of course, that number would grow substantially if all the unknown or illegally owned firearms were included. The total is nearly one gun for every resident of our country.

So one problem we collectively face is that, unfortunately, there already is plenty of firepower available to people who might choose to inflict harm upon others.

We all hope that the work of the Biden task force, and ultimately Congress, proceeds with an eye toward reasonable solutions to this ongoing, maddening, horrible problem of mass shootings of innocent people in public places.

The Second Amendment to the Constitution still matters. There are important reasons why the nation's Founding Fathers saw fit to include it in the Bill of Rights. There are examples of governments that eliminated weapons among their citizenry, only to put too much power in the hands of government. And twice in the past four years, the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the right of Americans to own a firearm for lawful purposes, such as self-defense.

Yet those 2008 and 2010 decisions also said that the high court wasn't casting doubt on many long-standing regulations, such as prohibitions on possession by felons or those suffering mental illness, or laws barring guns from sensitive places and putting conditions on commercial gun sales. The court's 2010 decision, Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. wrote, "does not imperil every law regulating firearms."

Which means there is room for a reasonable discussion about common-sense steps that might be taken. The NRA's idea of putting armed lawmen in all 133,000 public and private K-12 schools fails that test.

The goal of the Biden task force should be to improve our ability to keep guns away from "bad guys" and in the hands of "good guys."

That's a huge oversimplification, but that's really the point. There should be no action toward taking guns away from law-abiding citizens who have positive reasons to own guns and do so without incident.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, Dec. 31, the 366th and final day of 2012.

Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 31, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed an enabling act paving the way for Virginia's western counties to become the state of West Virginia, which took place in June 1863.

On this date: In 1759, Arthur Guinness founded his famous brewery at St. James's Gate in Dublin.

In 1775, during the Revolutionary War, the British repulsed an attack by Continental Army generals Richard Montgomery and Benedict Arnold at Quebec; Montgomery was killed.

In 1879, Thomas Edison first publicly demonstrated his electric incandescent light in Menlo Park, N.J.

In 1909, the Manhattan Bridge, spanning the East River between Manhattan and Brooklyn, was officially opened to vehicular traffic.

In 1946, President Harry S. Truman officially proclaimed the end of hostilities in World War II.

In 1951, the Marshall Plan expired after distributing more than \$12 billion in foreign aid.

In 1969, Joseph A. Yablonski, an unsuccessful candidate for the presidency of the United Mine Workers of America, was shot to death with his wife and daughter in their Clarksville, Pa., home by hitmen acting at the orders of UMWA president Tony Boyle.

In 1972, Major League baseball player Roberto Clemente, 38, was killed when a plane he'd chartered and was traveling on to bring relief supplies to earthquake-devastated Nicaragua crashed shortly after takeoff from Puerto Rico.

In 1985, singer Rick Nelson, 45, and six other people were killed when fire broke out aboard a DC-3 that was taking the group to a New Year's Eve performance in Dallas.

In 1986, 97 people were killed when fire broke out in the Dupont Plaza Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. (Three hotel workers later pleaded guilty in connection with the blaze.)

In 1987, Robert Mugabe, prime minister of Zimbabwe, was sworn in as the country's first executive president.

In 1992, President George H.W. Bush visited Somalia, where he saw firsthand the famine racking the east African nation, and praised U.S. troops who were providing relief to the starving population.

Ten years ago: Emerging from holiday seclusion at his Texas ranch, President George W. Bush told reporters an attack by Saddam Hussein or a terrorist ally "would cripple our economy." North Korea accused the United States of planning an invasion and vowed to fight "to the last man" hours after it expelled two U.N. monitors, leaving its nuclear program shrouded in secrecy. An explosion at a clandestine fireworks factory in the Mexican port city of Veracruz ignited an entire city block, killing 28 people.

Five years ago: President George W. Bush signed legislation to allow states and local governments to cut investment ties with Sudan because of the violence in Darfur. Sara Jane Moore, who took a shot at President Gerald R. Ford in San Francisco in 1975, was paroled after 32 years behind bars.

One year ago: President Barack Obama signed a wide-ranging defense bill into law despite having "serious reservations" about provisions that regulated the detention, interrogation and prosecution of suspected terrorists. A NASA spacecraft fired its engine and slipped into orbit around the moon in the first of two back-to-back arrivals over the New Year's weekend.

Today's Birthdays: TV producer George Schlatter is 83. Actor Sir Anthony Hopkins is 75. Actor Tim Considine ("My Three Sons") is 72. Actress Sarah Miles is 71. Rock musician Andy Summers is 70. Actor Sir Ben Kingsley is 69. Producer-director Taylor Hackford is 68. Fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg is 66. Actor Tim Matheson is 65. Pop singer Burton Cummings is 65. Actor Joe Dallesandro is 64. Rock musician Tom Hamilton (Aerosmith) is 61. Actor James Remar is 59. Actress Bebe Neuwirth is 54. Actor Val Kilmer is 53. Singer Paul Westerberg is 53. Actor Don Diamond is 50. Rock musician Ric Ivanisevich (Oleander) is 50. Rock musician Scott Ian (Anthrax) is 49. Actress Gong Li is 47. Author Nicholas Sparks is 47. Actor Lance Reddick is 43. Pop singer Joe McIntyre is 40. Rock musician Mikko Siren (Apocalyptica) is 37. Rapper PSY (Park Jae-sang) is 35. Rock musician Bob Bryar is 33. Olympic gold medal gymnast Gabby Douglas is 17.

Thought for Today: "In masks outrageous and austere/ The years go by in single file./ But none has merited my fear./ And none has quite escaped my smile." — Elinor Wylie, American author (1885-1928).

FROM THE BIBLE

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

The Bandwagon

Frank Giganti, Yankton
In reference to the article, "Benoit Signs Gun Control Letter" (*Press & Dakotan*, Dec. 22).

No one will argue that the tragic actions of the warped and, fortunately, the late Adam Lanza will haunt many people for many years.

But once again, there is a call to penalize those that had nothing to do with the horror Lanza caused.

I guess most college presidents will jump on the evil gun bandwagon rather than push for some rational mental health reporting when one of these morons start acting out.

President Benoit, let's visit about the failed "assault" weapons ban for a second. To listen to anyone supporting "the ban," it would be illegal to purchase machine guns, and outlaw ownership or use of high-capacity

magazines, therefore saving thousands of lives. The law had nada to do with machine guns and really addressed cosmetic features of the rifle. (Folding stocks, pistol grips bayonet mount, etc.) Individuals could still purchase these rifles during the ban. Much is written about how the ban did nothing to significantly impact violent crime.

As for the dreaded "loophole," the "antis" love throwing that term out there: federal and state law allows private sales between individuals residing in the same state, whether at a gun show, Walmart parking lot or my driveway. You want to change the law, solicit your lawmakers to see if the voters will support it.

Regarding firearms on campus: your house, your rule. But don't jump on a bandwagon that really doesn't address the problem or impact those that abide by the law.

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