

“A hard-fought, well-fought, hairline-close game is as classical in sports as tragedy in theater. A tragedy usually ends with the stage strewn with bodies from both sides of a struggle, and you can’t tell who won and who lost. Victory is contained within defeat, and defeat is contained within victory. That’s the way it is in the best of games. What counts in sports is not the victory but the magnificence of the struggle.”

Joe Paterno
1926-2012



The Death Of Reverence

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

You might call this a requiem for reverence. It seems that one Jeffrey Darnell Paul, a graphic artist from Miami Beach, had been tasked with creating a poster for a strip club’s so-called “I Have a Dream Bash” last week in apparent “honor” of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. So this genius concocts an image of the nation’s greatest human rights leader holding up a fan of \$100 dollar bills like some low-rent “playa” while a scantily clad woman looks on. Paul, let the record show as African-Americans duck their heads in mortification, is black.

But, though he’s the one whose transgression made national news and the one who has been fielding angry phone calls from sea to shining sea, let the record further show that he is not the only individual to use King’s image that way. A Google search reveals that clubs in at least two other cities (Pensacola, Fla., and Baltimore) also thought it a grand idea to pair King with barely dressed hoochie mamas to commemorate what would have been his 83rd birthday had he not been shot in the face and killed while fighting for freedom and economic justice.

Perhaps we ought not be surprised. It is not exactly a secret that America is a nation of illiterates where its history is concealed.

But Paul’s transgression speaks to more than just the shortcomings of the ignorant. It speaks also to an overriding shallowness, an obsession with the superficial and trivial that seems unfortunately characteristic of this era. It was difficult to look on that poster without feeling that, OK, here we are; this is finally it, the moment when reverence died.

But of course, one can hardly get through the day



Leonard
PITTS

anymore without feeling that. Reverence dies repeatedly in a nation where ironic distance and postmodern cynicism are worn like armor to protect against the possibility one might accidentally feel something profound or hear some deep, affecting truth.

What a difference a generation makes.

Maybe you are old enough to remember when “reverence” became passe and its antonym, “irreverence,” became the byword of American culture. Like a blast of cold air into a stifling room, it blew away the tyranny of the excessively earnest and the stiffly proper, refused to bow before cobwebbed notions of propriety, skewered sacred cows with infectious abandon. It was culture as dividing line, the bright Rubicon between Bob Hope and Lenny Bruce, Henry Fonda and Jane Fonda, Bing Crosby and Funkadelic. In a real sense, it represented the liberating of the American mind.

But decades later, it sometimes feels as if irreverence has instituted a tyranny all its own, a ban against holding anything above the fray, or regarding anything as too sacred for too long. Worse, this new tyranny seems to portend less the liberating of the American mind than the calcifying of the American heart against the very notion of sacred things.

So Paul’s poster and the event it advertises suggest not just ignorance, but a profound unseriousness, a sense of emotional retardation unworthy of grown-up people. In this, Paul is not unique. Rather, he is emblematic. For what it’s worth, he says it never crossed his mind people would find his poster offensive.

Actually, that’s the most offensive thing about it.

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Coping With The 1 Percent Blues

BY BILL O'REILLY
Creators Syndicate

Growing up in Levittown out on Long Island, I remember my father buying pants through the mail. This seemed strange to me. There was a Robert Hall clothing store nearby, and it had pants all over the place. But my dad said he could buy two pair for the price of one from some guy in South Dakota. One problem: The pants never fit.

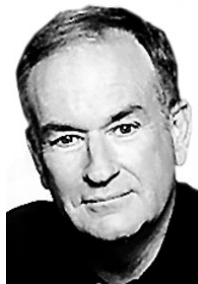
My father didn’t much care. He saved some money, which he put in the bank, affording me an opportunity to go to private schools.

My parents never wanted to be rich and did not resent those who were, although my dad did not like Joseph Kennedy. He called JFK’s father a bootlegger. The truth is, we O’Reillys did not even know any rich people. They lived in Garden City, about five miles away.

Today, I am a rich guy, a 1 percenter. I can buy all the pants I want. My late father could not even fathom how much money I make. I have trouble processing it, as well.

But I never worked for cash. I always wanted to do something interesting and actually walked away from a high-paying TV job back in the 1990s to attend Harvard, where I secured a master’s degree in public administration. There were tons of rich folks at Harvard. I did not resent them.

Today, the Occupy Wall Street crew and many progressive Americans believe that I am a greed head, even though they have no idea what I do with my money. Just



Bill
O'REILLY

the fact that I have it gives them license to brand me a dreadful “1 percenter.”

The reason that I have prospered monetarily is that I put freedom to good use. I worked hard, got a great education, paid my dues in journalism and, finally, hit it big. America gave me the freedom to do all those things. In the past, my achievements might have been celebrated. Not today. Now, more than a few folks say I am not paying my fair share to ensure the security of my fellow citizens.

According to the IRS, the 1.4 million households that comprise the 1 percent (that is taking in about \$350,000 a year) pay 37 percent of the nation’s income tax. That’s a big number, is it not? And The New York Times reports that the 1 percenters contributed about 30 percent of all charitable donations in 2007. Another big number.

So I’ve decided that those demanding more of my money for “social justice” are really attacking freedom. In this country, it is not wrong to prosper. You should not be demeaned for “having.”

President Obama will be doing the nation a huge disservice if he bases his upcoming campaign on class warfare, because that’s really an assault on individual freedom. Yes, we are all Americans, and we should all be in it together. But that doesn’t mean the government can guarantee individual outcomes. In a free society, it can’t.

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.”

YOUR LETTERS

Keep The Trail Clean

Becky Caton, Yankton

I’m wondering why people don’t feel the need to pick up their dog droppings on the Deer Boulevard new bike trail. Granted the trail is out in the country and not in great condition. Still, it is our walking trail. Please take a bag with you when you walk your dogs. Riding our bikes or taking a run would be so much nicer if we didn’t come home with poop on our selves or bikes.

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

S. Dakota Shouldn’t Downplay Graduation

SIOUX FALLS ARGUS LEADER (Jan. 17): One of the most logical ways to get a high school education is to stay in school.

Beginning with the 2009-10 school year, South Dakota made it compulsory to attend school until age 18 instead of the previous requirement of 16. The result was a clear decrease in the dropout rate. That year, the rate for grades 7-12 fell to 1.8 percent, the best in five years.

The state education department seems to be downplaying the importance of graduating from high school with its latest plans to measure school performance. The rate would play a relatively small role in deciding how well a school is performing under the proposed accountability system. Each school’s graduation rate would be 10 percent of its total grade.

Granted, in most South Dakota public schools, the graduation rate is fairly high, often more than 90 percent. Last year’s overall state rate was 83.39 percent. That’s based on students in grades 9-12. But having the graduation rate amount to 10 percent of the school’s total grade doesn’t seem enough.

The Alliance for Excellent Education of Washington, D.C., said that because 50 percent of the overall grade is given to test scores and the graduation rate doesn’t matter much, schools might not encourage a low-performing student to stay in school because if that student left, it could raise the school’s overall grade. What will prevent schools from pushing low-performing students into alternative programs or out the door? That’s a troublesome idea, and one the state should guard against.

We know that many schools have demonstrated compassion for struggling students by offering programs that help them stay in school or get their GED. Schools hopefully wouldn’t turn their backs on those students if test scores trump graduation rates. But there is no guarantee, and a school struggling to do well under the state’s accountability system might look at all ways to improve scores.

While there is no magic number for what percentage of a school’s score should come from graduation rates, the state should increase that rate to be more in line with other states — 14 percent to 33 percent. Unless the state rethinks its plan and gives graduation rates the importance they seem to have under compulsory attendance law, it appears that South Dakota is diminishing the importance of graduating.

Texting Ban: Only A Start

MCCOOK (Neb.) DAILY GAZETTE (Jan. 16): We’ve already been convinced enough of the danger of texting while driving to outlaw the practice in Nebraska, and there is good reason.

According to information gathered by Nationwide insurance:

- Distraction from cellphone use while driving (hand held or hands free) extends a driver’s reaction time as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent.
- The No. 1 source of driver inattention is use of a wireless device.
- Drivers who use cellphones are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves.
- 10 percent of drivers age 16 to 24 years old are on their phone at any one time.
- Driving while distracted is a factor in 25 percent of police reported crashes.
- Driving while using a cellphone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent.

Fortunately, some teens are taking the lead in persuading their peers to shut up, put down the cellphone and pay attention to their driving.

Starla Henderson, Grayce Jorgensen and Cory Merrigan of the Medicine Valley Family Career and Community Leaders of America Chapter brought in Trooper Doug Petty from the Nebraska State Patrol for a special assembly recently to make the point.

The trooper spoke about the dangers of texting while driving, then let them try out their texting skills while negotiating an obstacle course on a tricycle.

Students later viewed an AT&T video, “The Last Text,” and saw posters featuring partial texts sent moments before a crash, and had the opportunity to take an anti-texting pledge.

Of course, texting is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to distracted driving, and adults are certainly not immune. How many of us eat or drink — nonalcoholic beverages — while driving, set or change our GPS, read a map, fix our hair, apply makeup or shave while cruising down the road, surfed the Internet on your smartphone or dragged ourselves into the driver’s seat short on sleep?

This year’s Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas features all sorts of mobile communication and entertainment technology, from cloud-based music and video delivery to smartphone car controls and dashboards that are a videogame in themselves.

Until cars become sophisticated enough to drive themselves — will we ever trust them to do that? — Investors seem intent on providing bigger and better distractions to keep drivers from doing their job.

It will take a concentrated effort and determination to keep our eyes on the road and brain on the task at hand when we get behind the wheel in the years to come.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Jan. 23, the 23rd day of 2012. There are 343 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlights in History: On Jan. 23, 1962, Jackie Robinson was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility. Tony Bennett recorded “I Left My Heart in San Francisco,” by George Cory and Douglass Cross, in New York for Columbia Records.

On this date: In 1789, Georgetown University was established in present-day Washington, D.C.

In 1812, the second New Madrid Earthquake struck, with an estimated magnitude of 7.5, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

In 1845, Congress decided all national elections would be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

In 1932, New York Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In 1937, 17 people went on trial in Moscow during Josef Stalin’s “Great Purge.” (All were convicted; all but four were executed.)

In 1943, critic Alexander Woolcott suffered a fatal heart attack during a live broadcast of the CBS radio program “People’s Platform.”

In 1950, the Israeli Knesset approved a resolution affirming Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

In 1960, the U.S. Navy-operated bathyscaphe Trieste carried two men to the deepest known point in the Pacific Ocean, reaching a depth of more than 35,000 feet.

In 1964, the 24th amendment to the Constitution, eliminating the poll tax in federal elections, was ratified.

In 1968, North Korea seized the Navy intelligence ship USS Pueblo, charging its crew with being on a spying mission. (The crew was released 11 months later.)

In 1973, President Richard Nixon announced an accord had been reached to end the Vietnam War.

In 1981, American composer Samuel Barber died in New York at age 70.

Ten years ago: Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl was abducted in Karachi, Pakistan, by a group demanding the return of prisoners from the Afghan campaign; he was

later murdered. John Walker Lindh, a U.S.-born Taliban fighter, was returned to the United States to face criminal charges that he’d conspired to kill fellow Americans. Kenneth Lay stepped down as chairman and chief executive of Enron Corp.

Five years ago: In his State of the Union address, President George W. Bush implored Congress to give his plan to send more U.S. troops to Iraq a chance to work. A new rule requiring U.S. airline passengers to show a passport upon their return from Mexico, Canada or the Caribbean took effect. E. Howard Hunt, who’d helped organize the Watergate break-in, leading to the downfall of Richard Nixon’s presidency, died in Miami, Fla., at age 88.

One year ago: Allies and adversaries of President Hugo Chavez took to the streets of Caracas by the thousands, staging rival demonstrations to commemorate the 53rd anniversary of Venezuela’s democracy. Fitness guru Jack LaLanne died in Morro Bay, Calif., at age 96. The Pittsburgh Steelers advanced to their third Super Bowl in six years with a 24-19 victory over the New York Jets to win the AFC championship. The Green Bay Packers defeated the Chicago Bears, 21-14, in the NFC championship game.

Today’s Birthdays: Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg, D-N.J., is 88. Actress Jeanne Moreau is 84. Actress Chita Rivera is 79. Actor-director Lou Antonio is 78. Actor Gil Gerard is 69. Actor Rutger Hauer is 68. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jerry Lawson (The Persuasions) is 68. Sen. Thomas R. Carper, D-Del., is 65. Singer Anita Pointer is 64. Actor Richard Dean Anderson is 62. Rock musician Bill Cunningham is 62. Rock singer Robin Zander (Cheap Trick) is 59. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is 59. Princess Caroline of Monaco is 55. Singer Anita Baker is 54. Reggae musician Earl Falconer (UB40) is 53. Actress Gail O’Grady is 49. Actress Mariska Hargitay is 48. Rhythm-and-blues singer Marc Nelson is 41. Actress Tiffani Thiessen is 38. Rock musician Nick Harmer (Death Cab for Cutie) is 37. Christian rock musician Nick DePatie (Kutless) is 27.

Thought for Today: “It’s not what you are, it’s what you don’t become that hurts.” — Oscar Levant, pianist-composer-actor (1906-1972).

FROM THE BIBLE

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these thing and enter into His glory? Luke 24:26. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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