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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Obama's Ratings Tumble To Earth

ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER, Santa Ana, California (July 3): How the mighty have fallen. In a poll last week by Quinnipiac University, a plurality of voters declared President Obama the worst man to hold the highest office in the land since World War II.

That's a decidedly ignominious distinction considering the failings — real or perceived — of several of the presidents that preceded Obama.

George W. Bush steered the nation into two separate wars, producing nearly 5,300 U.S. combat deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq and costing American taxpayers more than \$4 trillion.

Bill Clinton disgraced himself by having an adulterous affair with a White House intern young enough to be his daughter, which contributed to his dishonor of being the second president in U.S. history to be impeached.

Jimmy Carter is remembered for his impotence in securing the release of 52 American diplomats and others held hostage 444 days by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, and for presiding over the worst economy since the Great Depression.

Richard Nixon was brought down by the Watergate scandal, becoming the only president to resign from office.

Yet none of those former presidents is held in as low esteem as the current occupant of the Oval Office.

Indeed, 53 percent of those surveyed disapprove of Obama's job performance; 54 percent say his administration is incompetent in running the government, and a 45 percent plurality said the country would be better off if Mitt Romney was in the White House.

So what explains the precipitous decline in the president's standing? Well, we think it attributable in no small part to Obama's almost complete lack of statesmanship.

Yes, we understand the president's frustration that his second-term agenda hasn't gotten much traction on Capitol Hill, where the House is in the hands of Republicans.

But it's almost as if Obama expected the House GOP to rubber-stamp his proposals as House Democrats during 2009-10, when they passed the so-called American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and so-called Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act with next to no Republican support.

Now Obama finds he needs the support of at least some members of the loyal opposition to get legislation passed — like immigration reform. But the president has not bargained with House Republican leaders.

Instead, he has tried to bend House Republicans to his will by demagoguing those who differ with him on such policies as climate change — as he did during his politicized UC Irvine commencement speech — and by threatening to bypass the duly elected representatives of more than half the electorate by issuing executive orders and directives.

Bush, Clinton, Carter, Nixon and other of Obama's predecessors may have left some presidential traits to be desired. But, arguably, none were less statesmanlike than the nation's current chief executive.

THE VIEWS PAGE

■ The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** Views page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initiated editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the **PRESS & DAKOTAN**. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, July 10, the 191st day of 2014. There are 174 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On July 10, 1999, the United States women's soccer team won the World Cup, beating China 5-4 on penalty kicks after 120 minutes of scoreless play at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California.

On this date: In 1509, theologian John Calvin, a key figure of the Protestant Reformation, was born in Noyon, Picardy, France.

In 1890, Wyoming became the 44th state.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson personally delivered the Treaty of Versailles to the Senate and urged its ratification. (However, the Senate rejected it.)

In 1929, American paper currency was reduced in size as the government began issuing bills that were approximately 25 percent smaller.

In 1940, during World War II, the Battle of Britain began as Nazi forces began attacking southern England by air. (The Royal Air Force was ultimately victorious.)

In 1951, armistice talks aimed at ending the Korean War began at Kaesong.

In 1962, AT&T's Telstar 1 communications satellite, capable of relaying television signals and telephone calls, was launched by NASA from Cape Canaveral.

In 1973, the Bahamas became fully independent after three centuries of British colonial rule. John Paul Getty III, the teenage grandson of the oil tycoon, was abducted in Rome by kidnapers who cut off his ear when his family was slow to meet their ransom demands; young Getty was released in December 1973 for nearly \$3 million.

In 1985, the Greenpeace protest ship Rainbow Warrior was sunk with explosives in Auckland, New Zealand, by French intelligence agents; one activist was killed. Bowing to pressure from irate customers, the Coca-Cola Co. said it would resume selling old-formula Coke, while continuing to sell New Coke.

In 1989, Mel Blanc, the "man of a thousand voices," including such cartoon characters as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Porky Pig, died in Los Angeles at age 81.

In 1991, Boris N. Yeltsin took the oath of office as the first elected president of the Russian republic. President George H.W. Bush lifted economic sanctions against South Africa.

In 1994, in the first meeting of its kind, Russian President Boris N. Yeltsin joined leaders of the Group of Seven nations for political talks following their annual economic summit in Naples, Italy.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush said in his weekly radio address that legalizing gay marriage would redefine the most fundamental institution of civilization, and that a

constitutional amendment was needed to protect traditional marriage.

Five years ago: General Motors completed an unusually quick exit from bankruptcy protection with promises of making money and building cars people would be eager to buy. Pope Benedict XVI stressed the Catholic church's opposition to abortion and embryonic stem-cell research in his first meeting with President Barack Obama at the Vatican. Embattled Illinois Sen. Roland Burris announced he would not run for a full term in 2010. Jonathan Sanchez pitched the majors' first no-hitter of the season in San Francisco's 8-0 win over the San Diego Padres. British conductor Sir Edward Downes, 85, almost blind and growing deaf, and his terminally ill wife, Joan, 74, ended their lives together at an assisted suicide clinic in Zurich, Switzerland.

One year ago: Dzhokhar Tsarnaev pleaded not guilty in the Boston Marathon bombing in a seven-minute proceeding that marked his first appearance in public since his capture in mid-April 2013. In a first, the Navy succeeded in landing a drone the size of a fighter jet aboard an aircraft carrier, the USS George H.W. Bush, off the Virginia coast. David Ortiz doubled in his first at-bat to become baseball's career leader in hits as a designated hitter and hit a two-run homer in an inning later, leading the Boston Red Sox to an 11-4 victory over Seattle.

Today's Birthdays: Former boxer Jake LaMotta is 93. Writer-producer Earl Hamner Jr. is 91. Former New York City Mayor David N. Dinkins is 87. Actor William Smithers is 87. Broadway composer Jerry Herman is 83. Director Ivan Passer is 81. Actor Lawrence Pressman is 75. Singer Mavis Staples is 75. Actor Mills Watson is 74. Actor Robert Pine is 73. Rock musician Jerry Miller (Moby Grape) is 71. International Tennis Hall of Famer Virginia Wade is 69. Actor Ron Glass is 69. Actress Sue Lyon is 68. Folk singer Arlo Guthrie is 67. Rock musician Dave Smalley is 65. Country-folk singer-songwriter Cheryl Wheeler is 63. Rock singer Neil Tennant (Pet Shop Boys) is 60. Banjo player Bela Fleck is 56. Country musician Shaw Wilson (BR549) is 54. Country singer-songwriter Ken Mellons is 49. Rock musician Peter Dinkins (Porno for Pyros) is 49. Actor Gale Harold is 45. Country singer Gary LeVox (Rascal Flatts) is 44. Actor Aaron D. Spears is 43. Actress Sofia Vergara is 42. Rockabilly singer Imelda May is 40. Actor Adrian Grenie is 38. Actor Chiwetel Ejiofor (Film: "12 Years a Slave") is 37. Actress Gwendoline Yeo is 37. Actor Thomas Ian Nicholas is 34. Singer-actress Jessica Simpson is 34. Rock musician John Spiker is 33. Actress Heather Hemmens is 30. Pop singer Perrie Edwards (Little Mix) is 21.

Thought for Today: "One can pay back the loan of gold, but one dies forever in debt to those who are kind." — Malayan proverb.

FROM THE BIBLE

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. James 2:17. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Writer's Block

Sometimes, Stuff Happens In Farming

BY JIM VAN OSDEL

For the Press & Dakotan

Last October, a successful young farmer/businessman asked me what I thought of the early October 2013 blizzard that decimated so many West River cattle herds.

"Stuff happens," I said.

He was incredulous that I could be so nonchalant when it came to such a devastating turn of events for the cattlemen. So I told him our story.

My paternal grandfather died at the young age of 60 at Christmastime of 1946. This was my "grampa" with whom I had spent so much time riding around in his '41 Ford. I learned of his passing when staying with my maternal grandparents at Volin.

"Grampa" Charlie Donovan was peering his evening P&D when he exclaimed, "Jeekers, Lou Van Osdel died." Stuff happens.

Let us just say my paternal grandfather did not leave our father well situated. Dad had left pre-med at North Dakota State in Grand Forks in 1934 when his father begged him to come home and manage the farm. None of Dad's older brothers were interested in working that hard, I guess.

So about 62 years ago, February of 1952, my folks were having a discussion. The question was posed to me — as a courtesy, I suppose, as the oldest of then three children — as to whether we should buy the 1,000-acre family farm or sell out and move to Yankton.

Already having been instilled with a sense of family history at the ripe old age of 13, I quickly replied that if Dad didn't buy the 90-year-old four-generation family homestead, he would always wish he had tried. Sage advice, right? Not.

So, about as well versed with the condition of the Montana snowpack of 1951-1952 as apparently was the Corps of Engineers in 2011, my parents borrowed \$150,000 of 1952 dollars (about \$4 million of today's dollars) and in mid-March bought the family farm. Six weeks later the great Missouri River flood of 1952 engulfed our heavily-mortgaged 1,000 acres.

Trees from three states bore down on the farm and washed away topsoil built up over 90 years of farming, along with all the fences, about five miles of woven and barbed wire fence, as well as weed control (weed walking in those days).

If you thought the Missouri flood of 2011 was bad, you ain't seen nothin' yet. We moved to Yankton as we fully expected our home to be flooded. Our home remained dry but the water was so high it covered Highway 50 from just east of Yankton, about the area of the Chesterman Company warehouse/M-Tron curve, to the James River bridge six miles east of Yankton.

Water crept up to the intersection of Third and Pine. Had you been seated in the top row of the Riverside Park amphitheater concrete bleachers, you would be up to your armpits in cold Missouri flood water.

When the flood waters receded and the

land began to dry out, the farm was covered in debris of every imagination. There was very little help in the way of government financial support. What is now a sprawling Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service facility on north Broadway, was in two small offices on the second floor of First Dakota Bank, Third and Walnut.

Our parents kept it together somehow. Dad bought a semi-truck load of fence posts from Missouri and a flatbed truck load of wire. Fortunately we already owned a post-hole digger mounted on the back of the little Ford tractor. When Dad was through with it, the auger was about half the diameter it was when we began planting posts.

Ask anyone who was farming in the fifties. It was absolutely impossible to make anything grow: too wet or too dry. One year, Dad took our years' production of yearling pigs to a Yankton auction company. There the pigs were quarantined under suspicion of having some strange malady. Dad said that we had vaccinated against that disease every year. "Too bad, you got it this year," said the state veterinarian.

The pigs were sold to an independent livestock dealer who kept the herd on hold for the allotted quarantine, then sold the pigs quickly at full market value, at a much higher price than we had received, without the loss of one dang pig.

Dad told the auction company owner that he did not like to sue but that he would tell everyone he knew what had happened to him at that auction facility. Seeing that things were plenty warm for him in Yankton about then, the state veterinarian in question suddenly developed an affinity for even warmer weather and moved to Florida 48 hours later.

Fast forward 30-35 years. A retirement-age fellow ambles into the auto dealership on Capitol Street where I had been working for the last 15 years. He said he was not in the market for a car. He was just visiting his old hometown. I politely asked his name. When he told me, I looked him square in the face, spoke clearly and distinctly, "I am Lyle Van Osdel's oldest son, Jim."

Silently, he made an about face, went out the door and walked off into the sunset, or back to Florida, I reckon. Then my younger brother Dan, who did not know the story, came running over, wanting to know what had just happened. It was funny now, after all those years, so much heartbreaking work and so many heartbreaking days and nights when the year's production of crops and livestock didn't even produce the \$8,000 that was required to cover just the interest on the note for the year.

After fighting the battle for 10 years, our folks sold the farm in 1962 and every one of their creditors was paid in full. Mom kept the receipts. I have them now.

Yep, stuff happens. Been there. Done that. That's the way it can be in agriculture.

When the flood waters receded and the

YOUR LETTERS

Failed Job!

Fernande Colette Bitsos, Yankton

In regards to the letter, "Well Done, GOP"

(Press & Dakotan, July 2)

Mr. Heubaum, I will suggest that you take some time reflecting on the Nixon years: Watergate "impeachment" replaced by a "pardon" by Vice President Ford ...

Or the "Iran/Contra" arms sale imbroglio perpetrated by President Reagan, Col. North and minions (an impeachment fact)...

Or An Iraq war about so-called "Weapons of Mass Destruction" under President G.W. Bush and his Machiavellian Vice President Richard Cheney and Rumsfeld — a fiasco that resulted in more than 4,000 U.S. deaths ...

Or ignoring some warnings of terrorist

threats (9/11). Osama Bin Laden taking "ref