



Closets And Politics

BY MICHAEL REAGAN
CagleCartoons.com

I've never sought the spotlight. Though I'm coming out to the world, I intend to guard my privacy. I'm making this blanket statement in part to keep rumors and misunderstandings at bay. I'm not just a white, Catholic Republican. I'm not just a Reagan conservative. I'm a heterosexual. Like Jason Collins of the Washington Wizards, I just want everyone in America to know my sexual orientation. And like Collins — the veteran NBA center who became the first major male professional athlete to announce he was gay and got himself plastered on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* — I just want to protect my privacy. I won't go into any more specifics about my personal life or answer any questions at this press conference.



Michael REAGAN

I'll only say that I'm happily married and that my partner is not a man. Let's leave it at that, please, because I deserve my privacy. With all due apologies to Jason Collins, or whoever actually wrote the words I borrowed from his *Sports Illustrated* cover story, this whole gay-sports thing is nuts and about to get nuttier. Collins made headline news by coming out as the first gay NBA player. As I write this, the country's top sports "journalists" are working overtime to break a story on the first openly gay NFL player. Then will come the National Hockey League. Then Major League Baseball. Then Major League Paintball ... Not long ago — OK, 50 years ago — *Sports Illustrated* put athletes on its covers because they did things only Mickey Mantle, Jimmy Brown, Bobby Orr or Wilt Chamberlain could do on the playing field, not in the sack. Now Jason Collins's sexual affiliation is the biggest news in sports? Does anyone know, or care, how many points per game he scores or how many shots he blocks? No. Being gay and his being willing to announce it to the entire sports world is what's important now. So let's get this story straight: Collins is gay — or rather, a gay center. That's wonderful. I couldn't be happier for him. Maybe he'll be able to get a role in a network sitcom when he retires.

So what's the real issue here? It's not about discrimination. Being gay is irrelevant. It didn't hurt or help Collins on or off the court. No bigoted coach ever said to him, "Jason, I don't care how many rebounds or blocked shots you have. You're gay. From now on we're starting the heterosexual." I'm sure most of Collins' family and teammates have known he was gay for years, but because they're decent and good people who cared about his privacy, they kept the big sports "news" to themselves. This isn't about sports at all. It's partly a case of identity politics. That's why Obama was in such a rush to congratulate Collins on his courage to come out and say he was a proud member of the Democrat Party's most loyal sex-based constituency. Collins' coming out is also the latest example of the overhyphenization of America. We're no longer male- or female- or black- or white- or Latino- Americans. Now we're also gay or straight.

"I'm not a center, I'm a gay-center." "I'm not a gay switch-hitting centerfielder, I'm a bisexual-switch-hitting centerfielder." Who will be the first openly gay NFL quarterback or long snapper? The first openly gay left-handed Latino relief pitcher? The first openly gay goalie? The first openly gay goalie from a country other than Canada? I don't care. Gays have been playing pro sports forever. Big deal. No one asked and no one told. Sports should be about winning and teamwork and accomplishment. Owners, coaches and fans don't care what color their star players' skin is, what their ethnicities are or who they sleep with — and neither should the rest of us. Wake me up when this embarrassing gay-pride parade is over, please.

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When Evil Sells: A Tasty Experiment

BY KELLY HERTZ
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Is anyone else even slightly unnerved by the new GE television commercial that features the villain from "The Matrix" movie trilogy? This ad features actor Hugo Weaving reprising his role of Agent Smith, the sentient computer program who's hell-bent on crushing the last vestiges of the human spirit in a dystopian future in which computers rule and most of humanity has been reduced to dreaming battery cells. Agent Smith is a terrifying force — relentless and (mostly) unstoppable — whose every appearance on screen was never, ever a good thing. Now this monster has been reprogrammed into a TV pitchman to promote GE's line of medical hardware and software. Seriously. This is an intriguing choice, given that in the first "Matrix" movie, Agent Smith tells a captured human protagonist in a sinister purr of a voice: "Human beings are a disease, a cancer of this planet. You're a plague and we are the cure." You go, GE!



Kelly HERTZ

Choosing a spokesperson for a product is dreadfully serious business in the marketing world. The working rule is that the messenger is often as vital as the message in delivering your selling points. So, choosing a villain for one is completely devoid of any sense of humanity or any redeeming, admirable qualities is a curious move, to say the least. Long ago in another age and another kind of world, this sort of thing was never done. Companies instead clamored for noble characters, sometimes fictional, to do the job. On radio dramas like "The Shadow," for instance, it was Lamont Cranston (that is, the actors who portrayed the mysterious crime fighter) who would hawk Goodrich automobile tires during the commercial breaks. The goal was to create a bond of trust between the company and the consumer. And what consumer couldn't trust The Shadow, or the Lone Ranger, Superman or Dick Tracy? But the subtext to that goal has always remained the same: Commercials must make an immediate impression with the audience. The fact is, fictional villains are usually more richly developed than their heroic opponents. More times than not, they're also more interesting. So in theory, they're able to intrigue consumers more quickly, not because of what they represent, but because they are simply there. For proof, look at my reaction to the GE commercial. In a way, this isn't completely new. As a kid, I saw a television commercial for A-1 Steak

Sauce featuring Boris Karloff, who was synonymous with Frankenstein's monster, the Mummy, the Grinch and several other nefarious characters he had played throughout his career. In this particular commercial, he was standing in a typical "mad scientist" laboratory, with a hunchback assistant, extolling the many uses of A-1. The ad ended with the elderly Karloff — wearing a nice suit and tie as if he had just strolled in one morning to do the shot — looking at the camera and saying: "A-1 Steak Sauce. Experiment with it!" This commercial employed familiar trappings of horror — and a venerable horror master with an instantly recognizable, sinister voice — to sell food seasoning. I've never forgotten it. Back in 1979 when the very first "Star Trek" movie came out, McDonald's used an actor clad as a Klingon (and speaking Klingon-ese, which had never really existed until this movie) to promote a meal deal tied to the film. At this point in the "Star Trek" arc, Klingons were still primarily bad guys. But since they didn't have a major part in that movie anyway, they became handy pitchmen despite their standing. (It could be argued that McDonald's had gone down this path before, if you count the Hamburglar. Let's not.) Darth Vader, probably one of the most recognized evil characters of the late 20th century, has appeared in commercials pitching everything from Energizer batteries to Disneyland. However, using this evil "Star Wars" character in any ad carries some risks: Seriously, would you buy a used Death Star from this guy? It would be difficult to see how a character such as the cannibalistic Hannibal Lecter of "Silence of the Lambs" could find a place in the advertising world, but oh, just imagine the tasteless possibilities. (A-1 is still in business, right?) It would surely be something that people would notice and respond to in some form, so who's to say that such an ad campaign isn't likely? Ultimately, this notion of using vile characters as salesmen probably says more about us as consumers and what we respond to in this hectic age of sensory overload. We're bombarded with so many images from so many sources now, advertisers can't really be blamed for turning to such instantly identifiable, potent characters, even villainous ones, to make a quick, memorable impression. It sells and we're buying. That's the bottom line. And as any good villain knows, that's all that matters at the end credits.

You can follow Kelly Hertz on Twitter at twitter.com/kelly_hertz

The Press & Dakotan



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OPINION | WE SAY

Saving History



THUMBS UP to Rich Jensen and Paul Lowrie for their efforts to spur usage of the historic Human Services Center campus. Have you visited www.meadcampus.com? If not, you should. It presents an assortment of background information on the various buildings and ideas for their future use. We believe one reason the campus has had a problem finding private investors interested in using it is because, up until recently, the State of South Dakota has been vague about what uses would be allowed on the property and reticent to divulge information about the structures. Commendably, Gov. Dennis Daugaard's administration has made some efforts to market the property in the last six months. However, we believe it would be wise to afford some more time for the campus to be marketed, rather than setting the final deadline for May 31. We are not convinced sufficient efforts have been made to find uses for the historic campus. Visit meadcampus.com, and you'll understand why.

Those Winter Blues, Part 6



Sure, it's May 3, but nevertheless, **THUMBS DOWN** to winter — lingers on and on and on. It popped up again Wednesday, which was the first day of May, when Yankton received 2 inches of snow — the first time we've ever had any snow recorded on that date. After hitting a high temperature of 88 degrees last Sunday, we were hoping that we could stuff away our parkas at last, but that's not to be. To look on the bright side, if you like it when spring arrives, this is probably a great year for year: Spring has arrived four or five times during the last few months. Now, if it would only stay ...

Making Music



THUMBS UP to the successful Christian music concert held at Mount Marty College's Laddie E. Cimpl Arena Monday night. The show featured headliner Matt Maher, along with guests Bellarive and Chris August. While the crowd wasn't as big as last year's Newsboys concert, that was not unexpected and, in fact, the show was designed for a somewhat more intimate audience. The performances scored with the audience, and hopefully it serves as an impetus for MMC to hold a musical concert of this type each spring. It's a nice addition to Yankton's musical menu.

Summer Flicks



THUMBS UP to the kick off of the summer blockbuster movie season. Sure, in four months we'll probably be lamenting how terrible so many of the summer blockbusters turned out to be. But, for now, Hollywood has us sold on what a great movie-going season is ahead of us. By the time you read this, some of our staff will have already indulged in "Iron Man 3," which has gotten good marks since premiering outside the U.S. Other films we are looking forward to in just the next month include "Star Trek: Into Darkness" and "The Great Gatsby." And have you seen those "Man of Steel" (June 14) trailers? That isn't your father's "Superman" movie, kids. It looks to be something much more substantial and awesome.

ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

Do you believe gay marriage will be legalized nationwide in your lifetime?
Yes60%
No34%
Not sure6%
TOTAL VOTES CAST368

The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

CURRENT QUESTION:

Do you approve of the job performance of the Yankton City Commission?
To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Friday, May 3, the 123rd day of 2013. There are 242 days left in the year.
Today's Highlight in History: On May 3, 1973, Chicago's 110-story Sears Tower (now the Willis Tower) was topped out after two years of construction, becoming the world's tallest building for the next 25 years.
On this date: In 1791, Poland adopted a national constitution.
In 1802, Washington, D.C., was incorporated as a city.
In 1913, Clorox had its beginnings as five entrepreneurs agreed to set up a liquid bleach factory in Oakland, Calif. Author-playwright William Inge was born in Independence, Kan.
In 1916, Irish nationalist Padraic Pearse and two others were executed by the British for their roles in the Easter Rising.
In 1933, Nellie T. Ross became the first female director of the U.S. Mint.
In 1943, Pulitzer Prizes were awarded to Thornton Wilder for his play "The Skin of Our Teeth" and Upton Sinclair for "Dragon's Teeth."
In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled that covenants prohibiting the sale of real estate to blacks or members of other racial groups were legally unenforceable.
In 1952, the Kentucky Derby was televised nationally for the first time on CBS; the winner was Hill Gail.
In 1960, the Harvey Schmidt-Tom Jones musical "The Fantasticks" began a nearly 42-year run at New York's Sullivan Street Playhouse.
In 1971, the National Public Radio program "All Things Considered" made its debut.
In 1979, Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher was chosen to become Britain's first female prime minister as the Tories ousted the incumbent Labor government in parliamentary elections.
In 1986, in NASA's first post-Challenger launch, an unmanned Delta rocket lost power in its main engine shortly after liftoff, forcing safety officers to destroy it by remote control.
Ten years ago: President George W.

Bush told a news conference in Crawford, Texas, it was a matter of when — not if — weapons of mass destruction would be found in Iraq. Pope John Paul II urged hundreds of thousands of young people outside Madrid to be "artisans of peace." New Hampshire awoke to find its granite symbol of independence and stubbornness, the "Old Man of the Mountain," had collapsed into rubble. "Funny Cide" rolled to victory in the Kentucky Derby. Model and actress Suzy Parker died in Montecito, Calif.
Five years ago: Barack Obama defeated Hillary Rodham Clinton by seven votes in the Guam Democratic presidential caucuses, meaning the candidates split the pledged delegate votes. Big Brown won the Kentucky Derby by 4 3/4 lengths. (Filly Eight Belles finished second and then broke both front ankles; she was euthanized on the track.)
One year ago: U.S. officials published online a selection of letters from Osama bin Laden's last hideaway; the documents portrayed a network that was weak, inept and under siege — and its leader seemingly near wit's end about the passing of his global jihad's glory days.
Today's Birthdays: Folk singer Pete Seeger is 94. Actress Ann B. Davis is 87. Actor Alex Cord is 80. Singer Frankie Valli is 79. Sports announcer Greg Gumbel is 67. Pop singer Mary Hopkin is 63. Singer Christopher Cross is 62. Country musician Cactus Moser (Highway 101) is 56. Rock musician David Ball (Soft Cell) is 54. Country singer Shane Minor is 45. Actor Bobby Cannavale is 43. Music and film producer-actor Damon Dash is 42. Country musician John Hopkins (Zac Brown Band) is 42. Country-rock musician John Neff (Drive-By Truckers) is 42. Country singer Brad Martin is 40. Actress Christina Hendricks (TV: "Mad Men") is 38. Actor Dule Hill is 38. Country singer Eric Church is 36. Dancer Cheryl Burke (TV: "Dancing with the Stars") is 29. Soul singer Michael Kiwanuka is 26. Actress Jill Berard is 23.
Thought for Today: "Nobody is bored when he is trying to make something that is beautiful, or to discover something that is true." — William Inge (1913-1973).

FROM THE BIBLE

I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide. John 15:16. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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