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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

Revealing Silence On A Gay Nominee

THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER (Sept. 22): Five years ago, Eric Fanning would have been thrown out of the U.S. Army. Now he is poised to lead it.

That's a stunning reversal. What's equally stunning, and heartening, is that it's no big deal.

When President Barack Obama nominated him to be secretary of the Army last week, Fanning became the first openly gay person in line to lead one of America's military services. While that is a milestone for equality, it appears likely that his Senate confirmation will focus more on his credentials than his sexual orientation.

If it does, Fanning should win quick approval. He has served as undersecretary of the Army and chief of staff to Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter. Before that he was acting secretary and undersecretary of the Air Force, as well as deputy undersecretary of the Navy.

Military experts call Fanning highly qualified. The man he would replace, John McHugh (a longtime Republican congressman), praised Fanning's "sound judgment and insight" and added "Our soldiers, civilians and their families will benefit greatly from his leadership." Defense Secretary Carter called Fanning "an excellent choice" and "one of our country's most knowledgeable, dedicated and experienced public servants. I know he will strengthen our Army."

Perhaps what's most notable about Fanning's sexual orientation is how little it has stirred up the typical swirl. The Republican presidential contenders mostly have been quiet. House and Senate members have not made it an issue. The *Army Times* didn't even mention Fanning's sexual orientation until the eighth paragraph of its story about his nomination.

Sure, some conservative commentators have suggested Obama is playing politics by naming a gay Army chief. Mike Huckabee said Obama cares more about appeasing gay-rights groups than maintaining a strong military.

"Homosexuality is not a job qualification," Huckabee said. "The U.S. military is designed to keep Americans safe and complete combat missions, not conduct social experiments."

Overall, though, the response has been notably muted to a move that would have been unthinkable until so recently. Gays were drummed out of the military for all of American history until 2011. In 1993, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law made it harder for the military brass to target gay service members. Still, it referred to homosexuality as "an unacceptable risk to the high standards of morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion that are the essence of military capability." Thousands of armed services members were discharged under that law.

That ended in 2011, after a judge and Congress undid Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Now, just four years later, sexual orientation is far less relevant than Fanning's record and vision for a military in flux.

We have a ways to go. Some folks think they can ignore Supreme Court rulings on gay equality. But the silence around Eric Fanning's nomination comes through loud and clear.

ABOUT THIS PAGE

The View page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed 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 on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at kelly.hertz@yankton.net.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Thursday, September 24, the 267th day of 2015. There are 98 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On September 24, 1890, the president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Wilford Woodruff, wrote a manifesto renouncing the practice of plural marriage, or polygamy.

On this date: In 1789, President George Washington signed a Judiciary Act establishing America's federal court system and creating the post of attorney general.

In 1869, thousands of businessmen were ruined in a Wall Street panic known as "Black Friday" after financiers Jay Gould and James Fisk attempted to corner the gold market.

In 1929, Lt. James H. Doolittle guided a Consolidated NV-2 Biplane over Mitchell Field in New York in the first all-instrument flight.

In 1934, Babe Ruth made his farewell appearance as a player with the New York Yankees in a game against the Boston Red Sox (The Sox won, 5-0.)

In 1948, Mildred Gillars, accused of being Nazi wartime radio propagandist "Axis Sally," pleaded not guilty in Washington D.C. to charges of treason. (Gillars, later convicted, ended up serving 12 years in prison.)

In 1955, President Dwight D. Eisenhower suffered a heart attack while on vacation in Denver.

In 1957, the Los Angeles-bound Brooklyn Dodgers played their last game at Ebbets Field, defeating the Pittsburgh Pirates 2-0.

In 1960, the USS Enterprise, the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, was launched at Newport News, Virginia. "The Howdy Doozy Show" ended a nearly 13-year run with its final telecast on NBC.

In 1976, former hostage Patricia Hearst was sentenced to seven years in prison for her part in a 1974 bank robbery in San Francisco carried out by the Symbionese Liberation Army. (Hearst was released after 22 months after receiving clemency from President Jimmy Carter.)

In 1988, Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson won the men's 100-meter dash at the Seoul Summer Olympics — but he was disqualified three days later for using anabolic steroids. Members of the eastern Massachusetts Episcopal diocese elected Barbara C. Harris the first female bishop in the church's history.

In 1991, kidnappers in Lebanon freed British hostage Jack Mann after holding him captive for more than two years. Children's author Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known as "Dr. Seuss," died in La Jolla, California, at age 87.

In 1995, Israel and the PLO agreed to sign a pact at the White House ending nearly three decades of Israeli occupation of West Bank cities. Eric Borel, a 16-year-old in Cuers, France, shot and killed 12

people before taking his own life, a day after he'd killed three family members.

Ten years ago: Hurricane Rita struck eastern Texas and the Louisiana coast, causing more flooding in New Orleans. Crowds opposed to the war in Iraq surged past the White House, staging the largest anti-war protest in the nation's capital since the U.S. invasion. Vice President Dick Cheney had surgery to repair aneurysms on the back of both knees.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama and Southeast Asian leaders meeting in New York sent China a firm message over territorial disputes between Beijing and its neighbors, calling for freedom of navigation in seas that China claimed as its own. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg pledged \$100 million over the next five years to Newark, New Jersey, schools a week before the release of the biographical movie "The Social Network." Gennady Yanayev, 73, a leader of the abortive 1991 coup who had briefly declared himself Soviet president, died in Moscow.

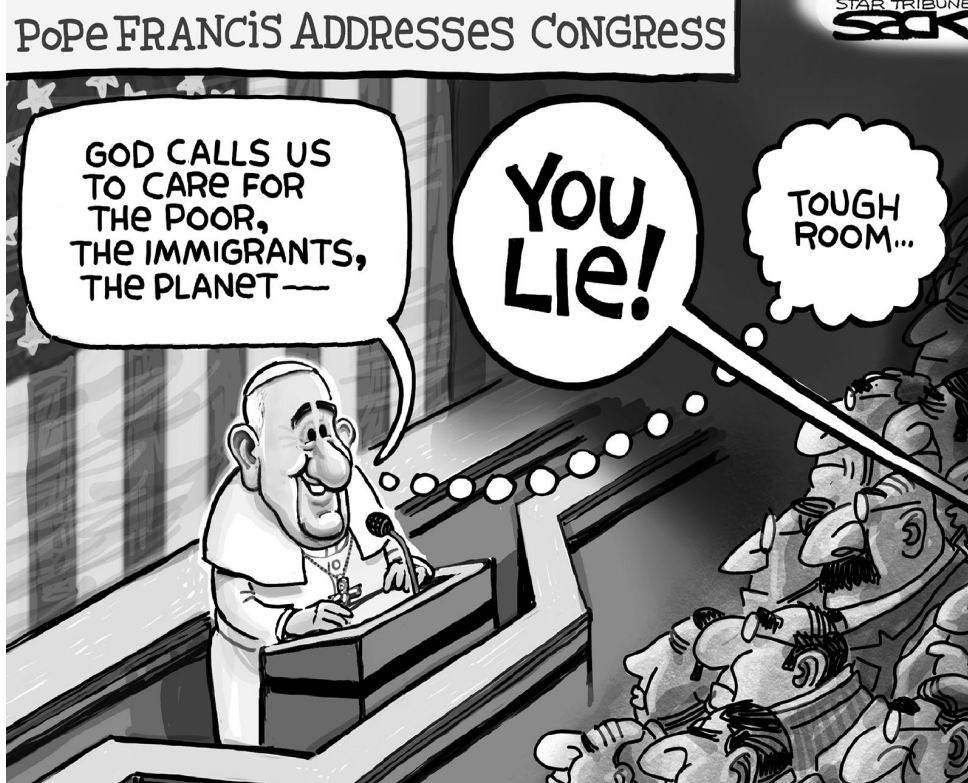
One year ago: At the opening of the U.N. General Assembly's annual ministerial meeting, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for world leaders to join an international campaign to ease the plight of nearly unprecedented numbers of refugees, the displaced and victims of violence in a world wracked by wars and the swift-spreading and deadly Ebola epidemic. President Barack Obama implored the leaders to rally behind his expanded military campaign to stamp out the violent Islamic State group and its "network of death." A visibly upset President Francois Hollande of France announced that an al-Qaida splinter group had beheaded Herve Gourdel, a French mountaineer kidnapped while hiking in Algeria.

Today's Birthdays: Rhythm-and-blues singer Sonny Turner (The Platters) is 76. Singer Barbara Albut Brown (The Angels) is 75. Singer Phyllis "Jiggs" Albut Sirico (The Angels) is 73. Singer Gerry Marsden (Gerry and the Pacemakers) is 73. News anchor Lou Dobbs is 70. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Joe Greene is 69. Actor Gordon Clapp is 67. Songwriter Holly Knight is 59. Former U.S. Rep. Joseph Kennedy II, D-Mass., is 63. Actor Kevin Sorbo is 57. Christian/jazz singer Cedric Dent (Take 6) is 53. Actress-writer Nia Vardalos is 53. Rock musician Shawn Crahan (AKA Clown) (Slipknot) is 46. Country musician Marty Mitchell is 46. Actress Megan Ward is 46. Singer-musician Marty Clintron (No Mercy) is 44. Contemporary Christian musician Juan DeVevo (Casting Crowns) is 40. Actor Ian Bohen is 39. Actor Justin Bruening is 36. Olympic gold medal gymnast Paul Hamm is 33. Actor Erik Stocklin is 33. Actor Kyle Sullivan is 27.

Thought for Today: "Do not weep; do not wax indignant. Understand." — Baruch Spinoza, Dutch philosopher (1632-1677).

FROM THE BIBLE

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? 1 Corinthians 15:55. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.



Writer's Block

My Memories Of Another Papal Visit

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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I won't be in the audience when Pope Francis visits the United States this week. However, I can relate to the experience of seeing a pontiff in person.

While in college, a group of friends and I talked about traveling to Des Moines to see Pope John Paul II during his 1979 visit. Then we made a fatal mistake — we started thinking about our commitments at school and elsewhere.

We didn't make the trip, and I immediately regretted it. Then, I didn't make it to the Vatican during a study tour to Europe in 1980. I figured I had blown the opportunity of a lifetime — twice.

But sometimes, you get a second and even a third chance in life, if you show enough faith.

John Paul II returned to North America, making a 1984 visit to Manitoba, Canada. Not only was his appearance within driving distance, but my father, youngest brother and I signed up for a bus making the trip.

It turned out to be a far better journey than I anticipated.

Our bus contained not only Catholics but also non-Catholics who viewed the trip as a historic event.

In Manitoba, we arrived at what seemed like a massive site. After departing our bus, we hiked the long distance to where pilgrims gathered from around the world. The site provided a beautiful setting for the open-air Mass, but security was also tremendously tight.

John Paul II was known for reaching out to others during his travels. He showed warmth, but his openness also provided a security nightmare.

John Paul II survived an assassination attempt in May 1981 while traveling by car through Vatican Square. The pope later met with and forgave his would-be assassin.

During our 1984 trip, we could see the impact of the assassination attempt. We needed to follow strict security protocols, including the assignment to corrals set up around the open fields. After a certain time, we could no longer leave our "pen."

If the pontiff was the shepherd to his flock, we certainly felt like sheep as we stayed in our corrals. The altar stood far off in the distance, making any chance of seeing him feel extremely remote.

The opposite proved true.

We were told that John Paul II's motorcade would travel through the field, taking a pre-determined path. We heard rumors that he would pass through our area, so my family pressed close to the fence which seemed the most likely spot to see him.



Randy DOCKENDORF

We received far more than a glimpse of the pontiff.

We heard shouts from down the line, figuring the pope was within viewing distance. Instead, we saw his entourage head straight at us.

He was riding in his glass-enclosed "Popemobile" — another reminder of the security measures following the assassination attempt on him — and passed within inches of us. He smiled and waved, then offered a blessing over us. Thankfully, I had the presence of mind to snap off some photos.

John Paul II continued down the path, eventually reaching the massive altar area for the Mass. At that point, he became a distant presence. However, his warmth could still be felt among those who gathered for the event.

In the same manner, the massive crowd reflected a truly "catholic," or universal, gathering of humanity. People of all ages, nationalities, races and faiths — even people of no faith — spent the beautiful day hearing the message of a man headed for sainthood.

Pope Francis' upcoming visit will take place in a different setting than John Paul II, with the current pontiff's visits to Washington D.C., New York City and Philadelphia. However, a papal visit still generates excitement three decades later.

In many ways, Pope Francis has already broken new ground coming from South America and with his words and actions. He has generated a large following not only among Catholics but non-Catholics as well. Even people of no religious faith are following his statements on peace, justice, climate change, income equality and a host of other issues.

The schedule for the upcoming visit calls for a meeting of church and state. Pope Francis will be greeted on his arrival by President Obama, and they meet again at the White House. In addition, the pope will deliver a historic address to a joint session of Congress and to the United Nations.

Unlike the 1984 papal visit, I won't see this Holy Father in person. However, I hope to catch much of his visit in print, on radio and television, online and through social media.

For those fortunate enough to see Pope Francis in person, and even meet him, I know it will remain a tremendous once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Pope Francis' call for compassion and putting our faith into everyday practice transcends all denominational and cultural lines.

It's a message our nation and our world needs more than ever.

Follow @RDockendorf on Twitter.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Obesity Awareness

Paul Amundson, M.D., Sioux Falls
American Heart Association Volunteer

Congress is scheduled to debate the reauthorization of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act in the coming weeks, so this year's National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month couldn't be better timed. I applaud school districts across South Dakota for doing their part to combat childhood obesity, which is a major contributor to our state's No. 1 killer: heart disease. By stepping up to the plate to meet the nutrition standards under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, our schools are not only reducing the incidence of childhood obesity, but are helping children to perform better in school.

Given that many children get 50 percent or more of their calories at school, making sure these foods are healthy is critical to their health and well-being, now and in the future. That is why I was so pleased that for the first time in a generation, nutrition standards for foods served in our schools were updated in 2010 to reflect the latest nutrition science. These standards for healthier school meals were based on recommendations from physicians and school nutrition experts. It came as no surprise when they recommended that kids should eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and less salt, sugar and fat. It's a great start, but we have more work to do in this area.

I understand serving healthy food has had its challenges, however, the majority of schools support the new standards. A recent survey by the Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project found that 70 percent of food service

P&D Letter Policy

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** invites its readers to write letters to the editor. We ask that a few simple guidelines be followed:

- Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.
- In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.
- Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.
- Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at kelly.hertz@yankton.net.

staff and school administrators at the elementary and middle school levels say that kids like the healthier meals. Currently 100 percent of participating schools in South Dakota are successfully meeting these requirements: South Dakota should be proud of this accomplishment and this tremendous work should be celebrated, especially during this month of heightened awareness.

During the reauthorization debate, I encourage Congress to protect the progress already made and to remember that this is ultimately about the health of our children. Our kids are depending upon them!