

Opinion



Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

What pocket is the grenade in?

To the Colby Free Press:

Freedom fighter or terrorist? Aggressor or protector? It depends on who is carrying the grenade and who the target is? Or, does it simply depend on who is reporting the incident?

Angel or Devil? It depends on what the message is? Or, does it simply depend on the spiritual persuasion of the reporter?

The militant radical Muslim is willing to give his or her life to destroy their perceived enemies. They contend they are the true worshippers of God, therefore their enemies are the enemies of God. Questionable thinking, but none the less that's what they think or claim to justify their actions with.

How different is that from our philosophy? We contend we are a Christian nation and therefore we are the true worshippers of God. It only stands to reason then that any enemy of ours is also an enemy of God and we are compelled to destroy the enemy. The fact that we have an administration that professes Christianity seems to give some folks the idea that they are the emissaries of God and can do no wrong.

What neither side seems to grasp is, both our Holy Books stress peace and love and both have extensive history of the results of mankind's relationships when that peace and love are absent.

I can't quote anything from the Muslim's Holy Book, but I am somewhat familiar with ours. What did Jesus tell Peter to do? Wasn't it "Feed my sheep?" In fact he emphasized it three times! No where do I recall reading where Jesus or any of the New Testament writers commanded us to "Stomp out the Goats!" The book of Revelation has a very vivid and terrifying description of things to come (some may have already passed) but nowhere do I recall John telling us we are responsible to 'kill the beast.' He does tell us several times that we will prevail in the end if we remain faithful to Christ.

It isn't indicated that we will prevail because of our wisdom, wealth, or power. Neither does it really say we will prevail because "we" are right. Doesn't it kind of indicate that we prevail by the Grace of God in spite of our goodness or lack thereof.

Health, wealth, and dominance are not 'entitlements' of the Christian. The only entitlement I interpret from the scriptures is 'inner peace' and 'eternity with God,' that is, if we accept his Grace. That Grace has absolutely nothing to do with our ability to be right, it is purely a gift. The indication or evidence of our acceptance of His Grace may well be demonstrated by our righteousness, but our righteousness does not indicate proof of our acceptance, nor does it guarantee any entitlements.

Remember also, man's interpretation of righteousness may well be fallible.

**Ken Poland
Gem
(Letter #1)**

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Thanks to Jim, old wall has new look

ONE of my office walls has taken on a new look. A brother, Jim, has a hobby that results in picture puzzles turning into wall hangings. He gifted me with five such creations. Next time you are at the *Free Press* peek into my office and take a look. Jim, he's a year older than I, lives a mile south of Victoria. He and his wife, Liz, have a beautiful country spread and because he is beset with health problems he is pretty much confined to his home. To pass the time he reads a lot and works on picture puzzles. I don't know how many he has made but I would guess it has to be a couple hundred. When finished, brother-in-law Bob (Schlyer — also retired) frames them. Jim's wife works for Hays Medical Center and her office is in her home. I still don't know how he can do all that puzzle stuff because I can truthfully say I have never ever put a puzzle together. Even when the kids were small and had those puzzles with overly large pieces I had problems figuring out where what went. They usually showed me. Jim likes that kind of challenge, however, much as he did when paint-by-number came out years and years ago. There are homes today that still bear some of those paintings. With the picture puzzles, family and some friends will buy what they would like to see framed and he dives into each and every project as those it was for himself. He has always taken a lot of pride in what he does. And it shows. He's very particular. Again, stop by and have a look at the framed puzzles on my wall.

YEP, I'm back. Taking a week off and doing



Tom Dreiling

- My Turn

next to nothing is the perfect prescription for treating stress. Stress? What's that? When you enjoy your work as much as I do, stress isn't a factor that needs dealing with. But the week away provided me with many opportunities to be with family and friends for meaningful dialogue. Try it sometime, it'll do you good.

NO, this isn't your typical Kansas January weather. Although there is a call for perhaps a little snow by mid-week, the first month of the new year generally brings lingering cold temperatures with just a dusting of the white stuff. We've yet to experience that. Maybe if we can just get something started our dire need for moisture will happen. Keep those fingers crossed...and say a prayer.

TODAY is a big day for Kansas. We have a new governor — Kathleen Sebelius — and all of us will be watching her closely to see how she handles this debt-ridden state. Some of her decisions will be cheered, others will be stoned. Can't

please everybody, but she asked for the challenge and boy has she got it! I decided against issuing a grade card at this time, but will follow her progress and maintain a running card which now and then I will share with you.

OUR 121st District Representative Jim Morrison, and our 40th District Senator Stan Clark will be issuing their periodic reports soon and you will see them in the *Free Press*. We rely on these guys to keep all of us informed on what's going on and how they are voting on the various issues. And of course they want to hear from you — all of you — to help them during the session. Their avenues of contact can be found in the left-hand column on this page.

SENIOR citizen conversation:

Three old guys out walking. First one says, "Windy, isn't it?" Second one says, "No, it's Thursday." Third one chimes in, "So am I, let's get a beer"

I'LL be back on my regular schedule come Wednesday. But I had the above notes for this column in my notebook and thought if I waited too long to use them they would be too dated. Thus today's column.

HAVE a good evening!

Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Wednesdays and Fridays.

Senate leader used money to make friends

By the time incoming Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott relinquished his leadership post recently (following racially insensitive remarks he had made earlier) the contest to succeed him had largely been sewn up by Tennessee Sen. Bill Frist.

Frist, who chaired the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) for the past two years, had spent the last several weeks basking in the glow of a midterm election that saw Republicans regain control of the Senate. The GOP felt so indebted to Frist that President Bush reportedly considered offering him a high-level administration post as a show of appreciation.

The job offer never came, but the White House found another way to thank Frist, with whom it worked closely to engineer the Republicans' victory last month. By publicly distancing itself from the embattled Lott and quietly expressing its support of Frist, the administration is credited with paving the way for the dramatic transfer of power that began when Lott stepped aside.

The Senate's only physician, Frist has won over colleagues with what some have described as a cordial bedside manner. But to master the Senate, Frist will need to build on the loyalty that Republicans have shown him in recent days. In doing so, Frist is likely to rely on his successful stewardship of the NRSC, where he distributed tens of millions of dollars in campaign cash to races across the country, and his generous support of Republican Senate candidates through his leadership committee, the Volunteer PAC.

The NRSC took in more than \$66 million in unlimited "soft" money during the last election cycle, putting it far behind the Democrats' \$95 million, but breaking the NRSC's own soft money record, set in 2000 at \$43 million. As NRSC chair, Frist had the omnipotent authority to decide which candidates would receive the committee's financial help, and Frist certainly hopes that those who won feel they owe him a debt of gratitude in return.

Frist also served in the role of donor in 2002, doling out \$232,000 to Republican candidates

Steven Weiss

- Another Viewpoint

through his Volunteer PAC. Frist gave the maximum \$10,000 to 16 candidates, several of whom were in tight races, including Wayne Allard (Colo.), Saxby Chambliss (Ga.), Norm Coleman (Minn.), John Cornyn (Texas), Elizabeth Dole (N.C.), John Sununu (N.H.), James Talent (Mo.), Suzanne Terrell (La.) and John Thune (S.D.). Thirteen of those 16 candidates won their elections.

Considering Frist's medical background, it is not surprising that he has relied heavily on the health care and pharmaceuticals industries for his fund raising. Doctors and other health professionals top his list of campaign contributors, with nearly \$594,000 in individual and PAC contributions since 1997. Hospitals and nursing homes are fifth on his list, with nearly \$185,000 in contributions.

He has been particularly prolific raising money from pharmaceutical companies. The pharmaceutical and health products industry ranks third on the list of donors to his campaign account, with more than \$205,000 in individual and PAC contributions over the past six years. The industry also topped the list of corporate givers to the NRSC this election cycle, with nearly \$4 million in hard and soft money contributions.

But Frist's ties to the health care industry, both personal and financial, could complicate matters for the GOP. Frist's father and brother founded Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), the nation's largest for-profit hospital chain. HCA has been defending itself against long-standing government allegations of health-care fraud, and

recently agreed to a settlement with the Justice Department reported to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

HCA's political action committee contributed more than \$175,000 to federal candidates in the 2002 election cycle, and Frist has raised nearly \$25,000 since 1997 from the company for his campaign committee. His brother, Thomas, who was CEO of the company until last year and is currently on the HCA board of directors, gave \$40,000 in soft money to Frist's Volunteer PAC in 2001. Thomas' wife, Patricia, matched the contribution, according to filings with the Internal Revenue Service.

Frist also felt the heat when it was discovered that the bill creating the Homeland Security Department contained a mysterious provision protecting the makers of some vaccine additives, including drug giant Eli Lilly, from liability for harm their products may cause.

Eli Lilly manufactures Thimerosal, a vaccine preservative that has been alleged to cause autism in children.

Frist, who included similar language in legislation he introduced earlier this year, defended the provision but did not acknowledge adding it to the homeland security bill. (Fingers were also pointed at Mitch Daniels, President Bush's budget director who once served as an Eli Lilly executive, who denied any involvement.)

Lilly, the top donor among pharmaceutical manufacturers, gave \$1.6 million in individual, PAC and soft money contributions in the 2001 to 2002 election cycle, 79 percent to Republicans. Lilly's PAC has given Frist \$9,000 since 1997.

Steve Weiss is media director for the Center for Responsive Politics, is a non-partisan, non-profit research group based in Washington, D.C., that tracks money in politics and its effect on elections and public policy. The Center conducts computer-based research on campaign finance issues for the news media, academics, activists, and the public at large.

Doonesbury

- Gary Trudeau

