

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint

Stage is being set for 'Slugfest '04'

You probably never heard of him. He served four presidents, including Ronald Reagan, George Herbert Walker Bush, William Jefferson Clinton and George W. Bush.

If it makes any difference, he's a Republican. He's also author of a book that has created one of the most fierce firestorms to ever lap its fiery tongue at the Oval Office.

His name is Richard Clarke, former anti-terrorism adviser, who kept presidents updated on the doings of this evil network. He was always taken seriously, even up to the day — not too far removed — when he retired from government service after nearly 30 years.

His book, just released this week, takes issue with President Bush who, Clarke says, was so pre-occupied with moving into Iraq that he failed to effectively confront threats from the al-Qaida terror network.

Attacks on Clarke from the administration have gone far beyond anything ever before seen in Washington. Vice President Dick Cheney, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and others, have been pressed into service to publicly discredit the former Bush, Clinton, Bush, Reagan employee.

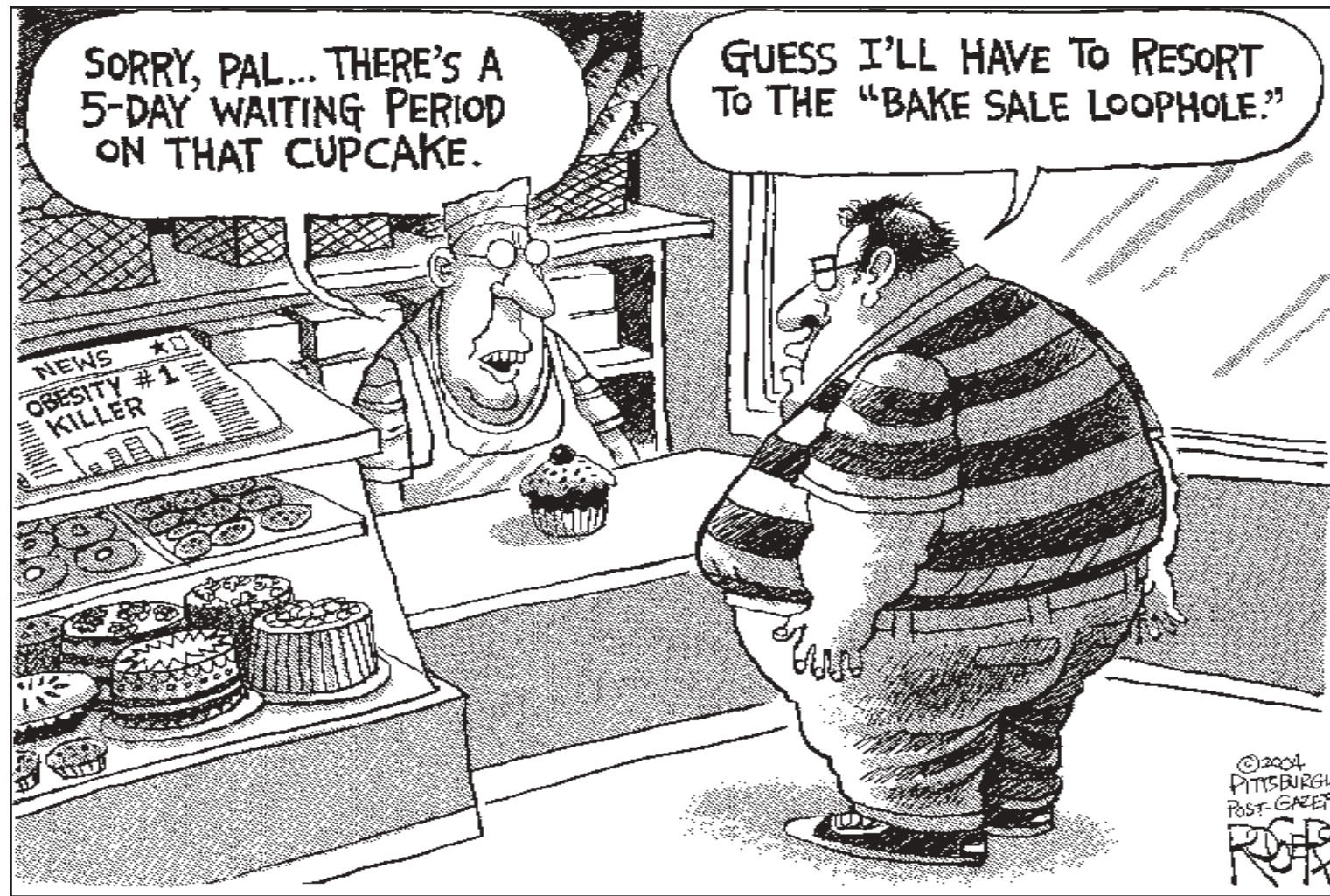
Rice, the administration's 24/7 mouth, flatly said Clarke doesn't know what he's talking about. The others used similar terms. All this brings up one important question: if Clarke doesn't know what he's talking about why in the world are they slugging it out with him?

Makes you wonder. Clarke is expected to appear today before the federal panel assembled to review the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks. President Bush will also appear before that very same panel in the very near future. And Dr. Rice will have someone else sit in for her scheduled appearance. Apparently the administration doesn't want her singing any kind of song — publicly.

Tuesday's hearing wasn't good news for either the Clinton nor Bush administrations. If you watched it — it was rerun late last night on C-Span — the day's message seemed pretty clear: neither the Clinton bunch nor the Bush bunch paid much attention to the signals coming from the terrorist camp.

Who said the eight months between now and election day in November are going to be boring? The thermostat has just been turned up.

Tom (TD) Dreiling
Free Press Publisher



Enjoying a FOX News-free Lent

WHEN I contemplated giving something up for Lent this year, I decided I would kick the habit. A habit I've been wanting to kick and now that I did I don't miss it one bit and I am a happier, more satisfied person. Okay, you know I kicked the smoking habit 30+ years ago. Lord knows I've talked about that achievement enough already.

So this Lent I decided I would give up the FOX News channel. I was watching too much of that stuff — way too much — fair and balanced news. I knew I was watching too much of it when I discovered I couldn't tell the difference between fair and balanced.

FOX News, and really all the other cable news people, get just a bit confused. Their news presentations generally are slanted — FOX, for example, to please the conservatives, MSNBC the liberals and CNN, well, they are still trying to find the crowd that fits their bill.

I make no excuses for disliking the likes of Hannity and Colmes. Greta Van Susteren, whom I liked early on, has become just another pointless talking head. The O'Reilly Factor features the most conceited personality on the air and the nation's #1 spin doctor. Listen closely. You can hear the spin spinning its way into a dizzy state of fuzz.

When Lent is over I won't return to FOX News. Why? I shed a bad habit so why get back into it again? Truthfully, I have discovered a lot of options on my tier 7000 package (I swear to my Creator that I have 7000 channels). Anyway, it seemingly never ends. I have rediscovered some really fine programs on Smoky Hills Public Television (ch. 3). I like very much C-Span and C-Span 2. I have available some fine movie channels, sports channels and other things to entertain me when I think I need to be entertained. I even get a lot of enjoyment out of the music channels.



Tom Dreiling

• My Turn

I like watching television again. When I was pigging around in the cable news mud I wasn't happy. Since the start of Lent, I have picked myself up, cleaned myself off and hey, life is good again!

Try it! ADD Condoleezza Rice to my list of least favorite people. Her mouth runs 24 hours a day, every day, and at a speed that is nearly impossible for the listener to figure out what she's saying. Of course I have come to the conclusion that's her game plan. As President Bush's national security advisor maybe we aren't supposed to know what her mouth is babbling.

NOW they are telling the medical community that people taking those popular antidepressants, Prozac among them, should be watched closely for signs of worsening depression and suicidal behavior. That's chilling. The Food and Drug Administration hopes that makers of these drugs voluntarily update their labels with a stronger caution while the FDA continues to see if there is a possible suicide risk from the drugs. In addition to Prozac, the others mentioned are Paxil, Zoloft, Effexor, Celexa, Remeron, Lexapro, Luvox, Serzone and Wellbutrin. The FDA says that the need now is for better monitoring of patients by physicians, particularly

when they first start taking the drugs or when the dosage is changed.

YOU may find some comfort in the findings of a poll that shows that 52 percent of young people, ages 18-29, would oppose a law in their state allowing same-sex marriages. That is a surprise of sorts, as we've been told in many media reports that young people are more likely to approve of same-sex marriages than disapprove. The poll was conducted by the National Annenberg Election Survey at the University of Pennsylvania. The poll also showed that 61 percent of the 30-44 age group opposed same-sex marriages; 66 percent opposed in the 45-64 age range; and 81 percent in the 65 and older category.

AND I see where the Kansas House passed by only a couple of votes, a measure that would allow the speed limit to be increased to 75 miles per hour on rural stretches of interstates in Kansas — I-70 in our area, among them. One of the sponsors said the increase would bring more tourists into our state. What stupid reasoning is that!? If it does, they will just be contributing to the likely increase in traffic accidents, and fatalities. Using another stupid theory, if we want to bring tourists into our state to spend quality time, lets lower the speed limit to 45 miles per hour. We've got some real bubble heads down there in Topeka.

HAVE a good evening!

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Where does it end?

Although "homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching," a 13-member jury of Methodist clergy ruled Sunday that Rev. Karen T. Dammann had not violated church law by being in a lesbian relationship.

According to press reports, both sides of this issue are getting ready for a battle at a conference of the Methodist Church scheduled in about a month.

No, this isn't about what the Methodists should or shouldn't do. Their debate is merely a symptom of the larger debate going on in this country.

In fact, homosexual rights are simply a symptom of that debate as well. The debate is over the understanding of right and wrong and in the center of that debate is a five-dollar word — intolerance.

Intolerance has become the standard accusation against anyone who stands against the moral decline of our society.

In fact, if tolerance is so important, who can say anything anyone does is wrong? One can justify all sorts of things with that sort of logic.

If, as those who would remove all intolerance say, hate crimes stem from intolerance, should those of us who stand against certain things be afraid? After all, isn't the other side intolerant of intolerance?

If intolerance leads to murders, fire bombings and other heinous crimes, doesn't it logically follow that conservatives are in danger from those same liberals who are intolerant of their views?



Jay Kelley

• Speaking MyMind

Of course not, would be the liberal answer. Those who are trying to remove intolerance are enlightened and they just want to help the rest of us see the light. Sure, and the Patriot Act could never be used for political gain, either.

Those who speak out against the moral wrongs of our society are immediately vilified as right-wing kooks and a militant danger. In fact, the word unpatriotic has been used far more by the left than the right.

Another difference between the two is those who stand against moral decline are usually against behavior. Those who defend the behaviors are usually against people.

What does that say about the morality of their respective positions?

In order to survive, society must be intolerant. We cannot tolerate murder, robbery or any other crime which leads to our citizens not being able to assume they are safe within their persons.

We cannot tolerate theft or cheating, whether it is stealing a few answers on a test or the Enron fiasco. To do otherwise is to destroy any hope

of a level playing field where merit can receive its just reward.

The problem with being intolerant is that it requires discernment. We have to have a moral standard in order to know right and wrong.

Tolerance of everything requires no moral standard, which is exactly where we are heading.

Intolerance can lead to hateful things. William Penn said, "Those who will not be governed by God will be ruled by tyrants."

Make no mistake; that is where we are headed. Sexual perversion, hatred for one another and even the lack of the natural affection in families such as the increase of families abusing one another are all symptoms of the problem.

The violence on our streets and corruption in our halls of power are all symptoms of a great malady. Those who think they can take what they want are really no different than those who demand to do what they want.

To paraphrase the Book of Judges, there is no King in America and everyone does as he sees fit.

The problem is tolerance. There is a country song that goes, "You've got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything"

We're almost ready to fall for anything. Shortly after we get to that point, we'll just fall. Hard.

Jay Kelley is a local minister and writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is jkelly@nwkansan.com.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

