'Sleep with my fathers' takes on new meaning

On turning 60, George Washington wrote in letters to friends: "The time is not far distant when I must sleep with my Fathers." I was a history student reading those words. My professors told me that Washington lacked Thomas Jefferson's "peculiar felicity of expression." Even though I was studying at Mr. Jefferson's university, I found it hard not to feel the beauty of Washington's words.

"Sleeping with my fathers" was Washington's poetic way of describing his own impending death. I read them rather more literally. They reminded me of my own father coming home day after day from his carpenter's job. He would sit with me in our family's TV room and tell me wonderful stories of his seagoing days. He had sailed to 47 countries before, during, and after World War II and he was a fount of knowledge about the wider world.

Sometimes, our story hour would turn into wrestling on the TV room floor. Pop would then tell me about the need to defend myself from neighborhood bullies and teach me some self-defense

Not infrequently, we would fall asleep on that floor. We would only awaken when my mother would come in and yell, "Les, take a bath and come to supper." My father always smelled of sweat and sawdust. It was an honest,

Pop was proud of his work. He could drive nails faster and more accurately than any man I've ever known. And he often worked high atop construction sites, as surefooted as a Mohawk. His hammer would tap out a steady rhythm: "pop, POP, pop." It was rare that a nail required more than three swings of his hammer.

Pop would only intervene in coming-of-age fights if the toughs ganged up on me, or if one of them threatened me with a knife. Then, he would march over to the gang leader's house and tell his old man to come out. Pop would tell that father that if his son used a weapon or ganged up, he would "knock his block off." He never had to back up his words with his fists. In those happy days, even the toughs had fathers in the home.

Other **Opinions**

Robert Morrison Family Research Coun.

It's painful for me to read every weekend the reports of murders in forced that limit. our inner cities. Emergency rooms in our major cities see too much sider when dealing with the sourcof the "rod and gun club" casual- es of violence: religion. In their ties. More than two-thirds of the now classic study, "Who Escapes? teen murderers in our prisons are The Relation of Church-Going fatherless young men.

race, poverty, education or other mance of Black Male Youths indicators, the so-called "root from Inner-City Poverty Tracts," causes" of urban homicides. They Richard B. Freeman and Harry J. want to target more federal pro- Holzer showed how some young grams to those mean streets. As men avoided entrapment in a host

have targets enough.

Rarely do the pols and pundits acknowledge fatherlessness. My blue-collar neighborhood was no garden. I often had to fight. But there was a limit to the violence. Fathers like mine en-

and Other Background Factors Liberal politicians focus on to the Socio-Economic Perfor-

titudes. Church-going was then - when Americans will no longer try's Founding Father. In speaking seen (1985) as a protection for recognize what it means to sleep, vulnerable youth. The work of Family Research Council's Marriage and Religion Research Institute (marri.org) powerfully reinforces the Freeman and Holzer's conclusions.

When I first read those words of George Washington, that sweet reference to sleeping with his There's another factor to con- Fathers, my professors did not point out that those words were taken straight from Scripture. "So David slept with his Fathers and was buried in the City of David" (1 Kings 2:10). Washington's readers would instantly have recognized the reference. For some years, it eluded me. Did that Bible reference also escape my learned

We are coming to the point –

if those streets don't of destructive behaviors and at- and may already have passed it my own father, and for our counor to wake, with our fathers. As was a model father and protecleen Parker acerbically writes, Father may be the new F-word.

The French understand what is at issue in the new laws abolishing mother and father in their legal code. "Everyone needs the love of a mother and a father," said a 10-year-old marcher in one of their recent, massive Paris street demonstrations. As if he had utvideo of the boy's comments has since been removed.

Now that I have passed that called "the grand climacteric," 60 appreciate what it means to sleep with our Fathers. I'm grateful for

thus from Scripture, Washington Washington Post columnist Kath- tor, a good and wise Grounding

Robert Morrison is a senior fellow at the Family Research Council. With bachelor's and master's degrees in government and foreign affairs from the University of Virginia, he has worked as a high school and college history and political science teacher and served tered an obscenity, the YouTube at the U.S. Department of Education under Secretary William Bennett. He led the historical research for Bennett's book, "America: The meridian that George Washington Last Best Hope." He also served in the U.S. Coast Guard, where he years, I can affirm his words. I can took an active role in rescue missions, iceberg patrols and was a Russian language interpreter.

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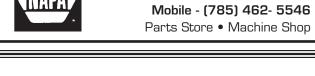
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