

commentary

from other pens...

Octagon turns 200, still national emblem

By Lawrence L. Knutson

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WASHINGTON — The eccentrically shaped red-brick residence that sheltered an American president after the British burned the White House celebrates its 200th anniversary this summer, still an emblem of hospitality and style.

Although it has always been called The Octagon, signifying eight sides, the house has only six sides, posing one of the city's minor mysteries.

The Octagon was a center of society when the capital was still more open fields than city streets. It now houses a gallery of art and design amid the family portraits, cast-stone mantels and basement wine cellar that tell its story.

The Federal-style house was purchased by the American Institute of Architects as its headquarters in 1902 and now is owned and maintained by the American Architectural Foundation.

The Octagon was designed by Dr. William Thornton, the Scottish-educated physician and self-trained architect who won the competition to design the U.S. Capitol.

Its first owner, Col. John Tayloe III, a wealthy Virginia planter and entrepreneur with an active interest in politics, built the house as a winter home at the urging of George Washington, who was eager to attract residents to the new capital.

The Potomac River was in clear view and Thomas Jefferson was in residence two blocks east in the White House when the Tayloes moved into The Octagon in 1801. It would remain the city's finest private home for years.

But in August 1814, when British troops scattered American defenders and occupied the city, the temporary occupant of The Octagon was Louis Serurier, French envoy to the United States.

When Dolley Madison fled the White House after arranging safe conduct for the Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington, her steward toted the first lady's parrot in its cage over to The Octagon, where he left it in care of the diplomat's chef.

The ambassador claimed diplomatic immunity for The Octagon, and it was untouched when President Madison returned to the city to find the White House a blackened shell.

Tayloe offered his house. The Madisons moved in on Sept. 8, 1814, and stayed until the following March as the war news brightened and the nation regained its confidence.

Mrs. Madison resumed official entertaining, welcoming guests in the large rectangular drawing room.

"For New Year's Day 1815, she reserved an ensemble of particular splendor — a robe of rose-colored satin with ermine trim, gold chains around her waist and arms, and as headdress a white satin turban with a tiara of white ostrich plumes," writes George McCue, a chronicler of The Octagon.

On Feb. 17, 1815, the president drew a chair up to the circular table in the second-floor oval room he used as an office and signed the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812.

The Tayloe family occupied the house until 1855. By the time the American Institute of Architects bought it for a headquarters at the beginning of the 20th century it had been used as a girls school and a boarding house.

Over the last decade, the house has been extensively researched and restored, down to the paint colors used between 1817 and 1828 when the Tayloe family lived in it full time. the open service stairway.

In the next few years, Wentworth hopes to complete the decoration of the ground floor, filling in Tayloe family pieces with period antiques. Most of the second floor will be used as state-of-the-art gallery.



Are energy and environment enemies?

We don't have an energy policy. We have an environmental policy.

We don't have a farm policy either for the same reason. For those that think farmers are paid not to grow we would not have another farm-food bill, without the gypsy moth's (northeastern environmentalist) vote.

This, it takes a village Washington, is changing tribes oftener than a black farmer's coup in Sudan. Since the recent change of tribes along the Potomac, we might need a patients bill of rights, too. Health Care you say?

A couple of years ago two dozen environmental groups blocked the building of a road through the Izembek National Wildlife preserve in Alaska. It didn't matter that only seven miles of the road went though a wild life preserve either.

Isn't it amazing how those rich guys like to say how the Joe Six Packs should live.

It wasn't hand out one twenty light bulb and drain their sauna bath, and swimming pools in California, you know. To the little people of a village of 800 people, don't call 911, because the phone doesn't ring. All they wanted was to have access to their nearest health care center.

You know US corporations can't build satellites without a nuclear scientist whose father isn't a Chinese general, but these chicken little envions couldn't find its own derriere with two hands.

What do you do when Californians says no air polluting diesel generators in our back yard. Well what about wind power, once again not in my back yard.

The same would be true for solar power. Then



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• wayne's world

get it from Nevada. Nope can't do that, you better not run transmission lines through the pristine woods under federal control.

These envions couldn't be a dog catcher in Cuba. They say global warming will melt the polar ice cap and flood Capital Hill?

So what would be wrong with that? Not even Charley Brown believes a Chinese spy just happened to find a computer hard drive in the Commerce Department dumpster.

Neither would he believe all the environmental mumbo jumble is science, either. In fact all they have to offer is fear itself.

Even if the envions were right about global warming would it matter? Believe it or not there is research on the subject that has not came from some air conditioned office of chattering fax machines along the beltway.

The way they use energy you would think they were for \$3.00 gas. One such scientific finding came from the U.S. Water Conservation Laboratory in Phoenix Arizona. It found that today's air contains about 360 ppm of carbon dioxide, up from 265 since the days of the horse drawn McCormick reaper.

Wonder if a mule emits greenhouse gases? Yep

so do bears, wolves, and caribou. Bet people do too. Ah ha-thats where the rub, is!

Then on the other hand things may not be as bad as it seems. The Agricultural Research Service along with studies of 50 scientists from 25 different locations in eight countries found there might be a carbon dioxide of 550 ppm in 70 years.

But soil scientist Bruce A Kimball who is head of the Environmental and Plant Dynamics Research Unit in Arizona, assures everyone that there is no reason for humans to be concerned. He points out that the air we breathe contains 78 percent nitrogen and 21 percent oxygen. But the clincher is the mixture of carbon dioxide, argon, neon, and helium, is only 1 percent of the earth's atmosphere. He asserts it is a well known fact that high carbon dioxide is generally good for plants.

Even more so the Arizona tests found that cotton was highly responsive to elevated carbon dioxide and showed a 50 per cent increase in yields. Wheat responded with higher yields too. The key finding was that it was able to make better use of the available water in the soil.

So what does this mean to the envions? Not much. They go after the makers of energy who paid Oregon farmers \$500 an acre not to grow a crop.

Why? Just to send California more power. Wow the price gouging energy companies paid farmers \$500 an acre? Thats better than the 1996 Agricultural Market Transition payments.

Well there is a difference between hookers and lovers. There's no free lunch so price gouges or not, grow more corn!!

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War being waged against the Boy Scouts

On June 28 last year, the United States Supreme Court — in Boy Scouts of America v. Dale — ruled that, under the First Amendment right of free association, the Boy Scouts had a right to remove James Dale from a leadership position. Dale had publicly declared his homosexuality, thereby violating the principles of the Boy Scouts.

Since then, the Scouts have been treated like pariahs around the country. Cities have barred them from schools. In some places, police can no longer sponsor Scouts programs in areas where kids have no other after-school activities. And "public-spirited" private organizations have stopped funding Boy Scout troops.

The American Civil Liberties Union affiliate in San Diego — as George Mason University law professor Peter Ferrara noted in The Weekly Standard — "is suing the city to evict the Scouts from Balboa Park, where they built and have long operated excellent camping and recreational facilities open to the public."

The national ACLU, in one of its excursions into extreme political correctness, opposed the Boy Scouts when Boy Scouts of America v. Dale went before the Supreme Court. In doing so, the ACLU, which was founded to protect the First Amendment, ignored Supreme Court precedents. One such precedent states "The First Amendment guarantees the ... freedom to associate or not to associate." It is the "freedom to identify the people who constitute the association, and to limit the association to those people only." (Democratic Party of U.S. v. Wisconsin, 1981).

Should the NAACP be forced by the courts or by the ACLU to allow adherents of white racist organizations to take leadership positions in the NAACP? Should disability-rights groups be compelled to have disciples of Dr. Jack Kevorkian in leadership roles?

In a significant Florida court decision, the Boy Scouts' First Amendment rights have been upheld after they were evicted from the Broward County public schools. The court said that once school facilities are open to other organizations, they cannot be denied to a group because of its views.

Now, Rep. Van Hilleary of Tennessee has successfully introduced in the House an amendment to the large-scale education bill called the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. His amendment requires schools that receive federal funds to give the Scouts the same access that they provide to other groups.

Says Rep. Hilleary: "Denying the Boy Scouts equal access to schools cuts against court prece-



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dent, the Bill of Rights and common sense. This amendment effectively ensures that schools won't be able to discriminate against the Scouts or force them to go to court to have their rights upheld."

The Hilleary amendment passed the House by voice vote, and a companion amendment by Sen. Jesse Helms is now pending before the Senate. But on the House floor, during debate on the amendment, Lynn Woolsey of California presented a letter opposing the amendment. It was signed by a long list of organizations. Their names reveal how pervasively political correctness has infected Americans who cherish their own right to associate with like-minded people, but would allow local school boards to deny that right to the Boy Scouts. This is a list that exposes how much education in constitutional rights is needed in our schools and school boards. Among those on the list opposing the Boy Scouts are the following organizations:

The American Association of School Administrators; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; AFL-CIO; American Federation of Teachers; Anti-Defamation League; Council of the Great City Schools; Leadership Conference on Civil Rights; National Association of School Psychologists; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Council of Jewish Women; National Council of La Raza; National Education Association; National PTA; Na-

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