

# commentary

from other pens...

## Hattie Caraway fights for 'my place in the sun'

By Lawrence L. Knutson

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Nearly 70 years after she astonished her many male rivals by barnstorming Arkansas and winning a full six-year term in the U.S. Senate, Hattie Caraway is finally getting some respect.

Her portrait was hung in a Senate corridor six years ago, honoring her as the first woman elected to the chamber. This year the U.S. Postal Service featured her on a stamp.

Caraway's increased visibility occurs at a time when women hold 13 of the Senate's 100 seats, more than at any other time. Three states — Maine, California and Washington — each have two female senators.

The numbers, and the odds will increase in future elections, recall the prediction made by the one woman to serve as a senator before Caraway. Rebecca Felton was 87 in 1922 when the governor of Georgia appointed her to the seat of a senator who had died. Although Felton was well known in the state, many said the governor had a hidden motive.

"He did not appoint a woman because he has respect for women in politics, but to smooth his own path to the Senate," one newspaper said. The plan failed; Walter George, a state judge, won the election.

But Felton made the most of her situation. She insisted on being sworn in and seated in the Senate, if just for a day.

She got her wish, taking the oath of office on Nov. 23, 1922.

In a brief speech from her desk, the outspoken woman got to the point. "Let me say, Mr. President, that when the women of the country come in and sit with you, though there may be but very few in the next few years, I pledge you will get ability, you will get integrity of purpose, you will get exalted patriotism, and you will get unstinted usefulness."

Nine years later, the governor of Arkansas appointed Caraway to the Senate seat left vacant by the death of her husband. She won a special election for the year remaining in the term, in part because few men were interested in so short a term.

The new Sen. Caraway felt isolated. She noted she had been allotted the same desk assigned to Felton when she served as senator-for-a-day.

"I guess they wanted as few of them contaminated as possible," she wrote in her diary. She rarely spoke and was soon dubbed "Silent Hattie." She broke her silence in the summer of 1932. She would run for a full six-year term. "I am going to fight for my place in the sun," she said.

Caraway had five male opponents. She was given no chance to win. But she gained an unexpected ally, one who was as colorful and outspoken as she was reserved.

Chatting quietly from their adjoining desks at the rear of the Senate chamber, Caraway and Sen. Huey Long, D-La., forged a bond. A powerful politician known as the "Kingfish," he yearned for a broader stage.

Long mustered a caravan of seven vehicles, two of them powerful sound trucks, and he and Caraway roared into Arkansas for one whirlwind week in August. By one estimate they spoke to more than 200,000 people in 39 appearances throughout the state.

"I'm here to get a group of potbellied politicians off a brave little woman's neck," Long told every audience.

"We brought a three-ring circus to Arkansas and it was well worth the price of admission," Caraway said after claiming victory.

Six years later, she won a second term against an opponent who ran under the slogan, "Arkansas needs another man in the Senate." Her career ended in 1944 when she lost the Democratic primary.

For years afterward, most women entering the Senate did so on the "widow's mandate," appointed to succeed deceased husbands.

Four women joined the Senate after last fall's election, including former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, New York's first female senator.

The list is a short one; since 1923 only 31 women, including Felton and Caraway, have been senators.

But with increase in numbers, the novelty of their presence lessens.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Lawrence L. Knutson has covered the White House, Congress and Washington's history for more than 30 years.



## The continuing white blindness

WASHINGTON — A new poll shows most white people believe that blacks have it as good in this country as they do.

I accept the accuracy of the survey released this week by The Washington Post, the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, and Harvard University.

It's the white people I don't believe.

Seventy-one percent of whites say "African-Americans have more than or about the same opportunities in life as whites have."

Just 20 percent agree "there is a lot of discrimination against African-Americans in our society today."

More than four-in-10 whites believe that the typical black makes as much or more as the typical white.

These answers remind me of surveys showing that black Americans believe O.J. Simpson was innocent of his wife's murder.

In both cases, we are getting exhibitions of attitude masked as statements of fact.

Whites do not want to admit racial discrimination for fear it will be used to justify affirmative action.

Blacks did not want to admit O.J.'s guilt in a media circus artfully choreographed by attorney Johnny Cochran, which pitted an African-American



chris matthews

• commentary

can defendant against a white Los Angeles detective who used the "N-word."

In both cases, the pollsters asked for a thoughtful assessment of the facts. What they got and reported are hundreds of gut reactions to a highly-charged, racially-tinged question.

In both cases, you can forget the dainty wording. What the person being polled heard was, "What side are you on?"

I often wonder how blacks would respond to the O.J. question if the poll were administered along with some sodium pentothal. I now wonder the same about whites when they are asked about race.

Can a white American, with Harlem, Watts, or any of this country's huge racial ghettos in mind, defend his or her claim that blacks have the same "opportunities"?

If it isn't because of outright discrimination, what does consign blacks to live in certain neighborhoods? Is it because they are not wanted in nicer

neighborhoods and would rather not have their families put up with the hassle of living in them? Is it because real estate agents steer black buyers away from the better openings? Or because the black home-buyer simply doesn't have the money to buy the better homes? Whichever answer you choose involves a denial of equal opportunity.

Ever watch an NBA game and notice that the players are black, but that nearly 100 percent of seats within 100 feet of the court are held by whites? Ever go anywhere and not see the whites in the better seats, the better houses, the better jobs?

It reminds us of the Groucho Marx line, "Are you going to believe me, or your lying eyes?"

Are we going to believe the portrait of race relations painted by the polls, or the real world we see around us?

I believe that white people know there's discrimination in this country, but refuse to admit it. I believe they refuse to admit it for the same reason that blacks refuse to admit O.J. killed his wife: because it wouldn't look good.

Chris Matthews, a nationally syndicated columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, is host of "Hardball" on CNBC and MSNBC cable channels. The 1999 edition of "Hardball" was published by Touchstone Books.

## Time, attitude and diligence: Tripod of success

When you analyze the lives of successful people you will always find that time, attitude and diligence play critical roles. These three factors of achievement form the tripod of success.

This is not an "all-you-have-to-do-is" column. I firmly believe if you major in these three areas and minor in a few others, you will be more successful. However, managing time and attitude and applying yourself diligently are more easily discussed than done.

Remember, your success is ultimately the result of the choices you make. So, here are some thoughts on strengthening these three areas of your life.

### The Time Factor

I find it interesting that we have hundreds of time-saving devices, and yet we seem to have less time to do what needs to be done. I went as far back as 1800. In 1800, early settlers in the United States had only 86,400 seconds in every day. We have exactly the same amount today. So the time available to us hasn't changed.

What then is the secret of time? The answer - and the secret of success in this area - is how we use it. There's a little poem I find appropriate to illustrate this.

I only have a minute,  
just 60 seconds in it.  
Forced upon me, can't refuse it,  
didn't seek it, didn't choose it.  
But, it's up to me to use it.  
I'm a sucker if I lose it,  
give account if I abuse it.



don taylor

• minding your own business

Just a tiny minute, but eternity is in it.

Your future is in how you use your time. Watch people. You'll see that they always make time for the things they really want to do. We all do.

It's your choice. Do you want to be a success? Or would you rather play that computer game or watch several hours of television each week? How you use your time is your choice.

### The Attitude Factor

Few people have affected my thinking on attitude as much as Zig Ziglar has. In his book, See You At The Top, Ziglar writes, "Ninety percent of our education is directed at acquiring facts and figures with only ten percent of our education aimed at our "feelings" or "attitude."

Contrast how our educational system functions with how the real world works. Again quoting from Ziglar's book, "A study by Harvard University revealed that 85 percent of the reasons for success, accomplishments, promotions, etc. were because of our attitudes and only 15 percent because of our technical expertise."

William James, the father of American psychology, stated the most important discovery of our

time is that "we can alter our lives by altering our attitudes."

Charles R. Swindoll said, "This may shock you, but I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude. When my attitudes are right, there's no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, no challenge too great for me."

### The Diligence Factor

The dictionary defines diligence as "persevering and careful in work; hardworking." In all success you'll find the ingredient of hard work.

During the last few weeks, I've visited with some of the most successful men and women in West Texas. Diligence - steady, careful labor - is a common thread in their lives.

Proverbs 22:29 says, "Do you see a man diligent and skillful in his business? He will stand before kings..." Of course, the real joy of diligence is not recognition, but rather in the satisfaction of accomplishment.

I believe success brings no more satisfaction than the joy achieved while working toward it. You're better off as a first-rate laborer than a second-rate executive.

Don Taylor is the co-author of *Up Against the Wal-Marts. You may write to him in care of Minding Your Own Business, PO Box 67, Amarillo, TX 79105. Column sponsored by Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce Business Development Committee.*

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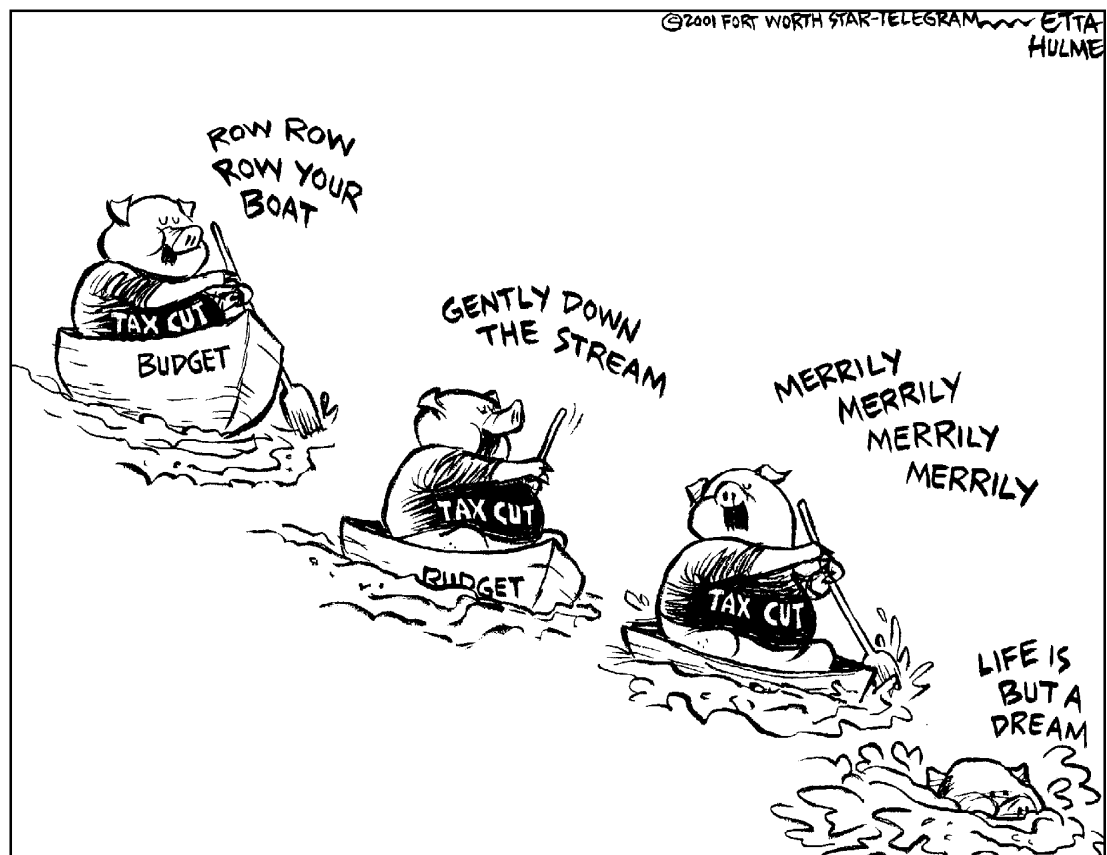
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