

commentary

from other pens...

Presidents need place to look forward to

By Lawrence L. Knutson

Associated Press Writer

CRAWFORD, Texas (AP) — George W. Bush, a self-styled “wind-shield rancher,” is home on the range, seeking the out-of-Washington perspective most presidents have pursued since the presidency began. Some found it in a fish rising in blue waters or in the sight of a small white ball arching over a long green fairway.

Others took their vacation from the Oval Office behind the wheel of a sailboat off a breezy coast. Others found the same thing in the rattle of poker chips and the stories friends tell each other over a card table deep into a long summer night.

Theodore Roosevelt hunted. John Kennedy sailed. Harry Truman played poker. William Howard Taft, Dwight Eisenhower, George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton golfed. Ronald Reagan enjoyed his California ranch so much he rode horses and cut brush there for 335 days of his eight-year presidency.

Some presidents, much like the current one, just return to the comforts of home — homes with names like Mount Vernon, Monticello, Montpelier, Sagamore Hill, Hyde Park and the LBJ Ranch.

The current president’s father galloped through his vacations at Walker’s Point, the Bush family’s oceanside compound at Kennebunkport, Maine. He golfed, fished, threw horseshoes and bounced and rattled over the waves on his high-power speedboat.

His son relaxes at his spread in central Texas, while ignoring the August heat that can push well beyond the 100-degree mark. “The heat doesn’t bother me in the least,” he said last year.

His new ranch house, however, employs two breezeways to make maximum use of whatever cooling wind comes to hand.

The ranch, the president says, is “a place to look forward to.”

“It gives me a lot of balance; I relax out here (and) it does help give you perspective,” Bush said during a break from his 2000 campaign.

Although the place has the horses necessary for a proper Texas ranch, Bush doesn’t necessarily ride them.

“I’m what they call a windshield rancher,” Bush said last year as he slipped behind the wheel of an all-terrain vehicle to lead a convoy of reporters through some of the seven canyons on the property and along a winding tributary of the Middle Bosque River.

But Bush has already discovered, as all chief executives do, “the job seems to follow you around” with briefings and urgent messages and international phone calls. During his month on the ranch he plans four trips around the country to keep his name before the public.

Bill Clinton’s White House vacations generally followed the golf course, with an occasional celebrity sail off the Massachusetts island of Martha’s Vineyard followed by leisurely dinners out and perhaps a walk to an ice cream shop.

And it was to Martha’s Vineyard that Clinton, his wife, Hillary, and their daughter, Chelsea, came after the president’s televised speech acknowledging an inappropriate relationship with a former intern.

Then came an event the president insisted was entirely unplanned. Switching from vacation attire, Clinton appeared before reporters in a dark suit to announce he had just ordered U.S. forces to strike suspected terrorist facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan in retaliation for bombings of American embassies in Africa.

Not all presidential vacations have been that dramatic. But many have produced news, sometimes immediately, sometimes years after the fact.

Calvin Coolidge jolted reporters accompanying him in the Black Hills of South Dakota during the summer of 1927 by handing typed slips of paper reading: “I do not choose to run for president in 1928.”

Grover Cleveland used a vacation getaway in 1893 to give escape from reporters and schedule secret surgery to remove a cancer from his mouth. The presidential operation stayed secret for decades.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Washington’s history and presidential vacations for more than 30 years.



You get further when you try using reason

It’s all in your approach.

When my boss or a co-worker approaches me in a demanding, angry, critical way, they usually get a similar response, and vice versa.

I may do what they ask, but I’m not happy about it and that ultimately affects my work.

I don’t want to act that way and it’s hard to admit I do, but I think it’s only human nature.

On the other hand, when someone approaches me with a calm, understanding demeanor and says, “I realize you’re busy, but...” I tend to be more cooperative.

Again, I think it’s only human nature.

That’s why I can’t see how writing angry, hurtful letters directed at city or county officials is



rachel miscall

● unraveling

going to get anything accomplished in Goodland.

Many people here are angry and frustrated with decisions city officials have made, and have expressed those feelings in letters they send to the newspaper.

They’ve said they’re angry over the road closures that have hurt businesses, the proposed 7.5

percent tax increase for “unnecessary” services, the giant sunflower that “serves no purpose” and other things.

In some ways, their anger and frustration is justifiable, but I think their approach is wrong.

Calling city officials, who I believe generally have residents’ best interests at heart, “rag heads” and “goons” can only make matters worse and create division.

Saying, “I understand you’re working hard and doing what you think is right, but...” would elicit a cooperative response and get more accomplished.

Plus, it’s just a lot nicer.

No one likes dealing with someone who is angry and critical. It’s human nature.

End presidential term limits!

WASHINGTON — Let’s end the two-term limit on presidents, and let’s do it quickly.

With Bill Clinton out-polling George W. Bush, why should the American people be denied their choice of chief executive? Why should a 22nd Amendment passed by Republicans to get even with Franklin Roosevelt stop 21st-century Americans from having the president we want?

Just look at the media jamboree attending Bill Clinton’s return to the spotlight. All he did was open an office in Harlem, and it was like Napoleon just back from Elba, kissing the flag of France.

It’s called democracy. People like leaders who are a) full of optimism and love of country, and b) don’t think they’re better than us.

By that standard, Bill Clinton certainly flunked a couple of second-term exams. He abused the office of the president on any number of occasions, from Mardi Gras-style fundraising in the Lincoln Bedroom to weird transactions with Monica behind the Oval Office. He tried making serfs of the American people by lying to our faces. Then he kissed his contributors with a billion-dollar pardon to Marc Rich.

But no one doubts that this guy loves not just the concept of America, but its nitty-gritty reality. Nobody has ever loved the crowds like this guy. Nobody, not even his worst enemy, can claim that Bill Clinton thinks he’s morally or culturally better than us. This guy is MTV all the way.

That’s why he won twice and why people — I’m not just talking about Harlem — would love to see him back in the saddle.

For Clinton to run again for president, we need to rid the Constitution of that nasty, let’s-get-even



chris matthews

● commentary

amendment the Republicans jammed through after World War II. Just as the British thanked Winston Churchill for winning the war by dumping him as prime minister the first election after V-E Day, the Americans paid tribute to FDR by making sure that no one else got to repeat his 4-0 record in presidential elections.

You might have made a case for the 22nd back in the late 1940s. But that was before TV — a time when a president could hide his paralysis in the beginning and his failing health toward the end. We can certainly agree that the man who met with Stalin at Yalta in February 1945 had the same strength of body as the leader who fought for Lend-Lease or rallied the country after Pearl Harbor.

Does anyone think that kind of cover-up would work in the days of cable television? Thanks to 24-7 TV, we have our presidents on camera continually. That’s if they want to be on camera. If they don’t, we notice that, too.

Ending the two-term ban is a very libertarian idea. “If you want to vote for someone, we shouldn’t have a rule that tells them they can’t.” That’s what Ronald Reagan said about the 22nd: “There are plenty of safeguards against the power of the presidency that would prevent him from becoming a lifetime monarch.”

Negative letters cost us new business

To the Editor:

I cannot resist answering Kathy Miller’s letter to the editor on July 31. If you are that unhappy with Goodland, maybe you should move to Edison.

It is obvious that you are frustrated with everything and everyone. In the fifty years that I have known Jim Petrachich he has always enjoyed writing letters to the editor to see what will happen.

No matter what you think of the City of Goodland’s governing body, it is shallow for you and Jim to call all public servants “goons and rag heads.”

I don’t agree with everything that happens in Goodland and Sherman County. However, every negative letter to the editor that vents one’s anger and bitterness chases away one more prospective business from coming to Goodland. Don’t you ever think that they don’t read the paper. Is that what you hope to accomplish?

It is unfortunate that the Kansas Department of Transportation’s improvements in road construction and the city improvements culminated in a summer of heat and frustration. It will all be finished soon.

Max Alderman
Rural Goodland

To the Editor:

I have lived in Goodland for the last 23 years. I like it here, and that’s why I’m speaking up.

Some of our city dads and leaders, namely the Chamber of Commerce, seem to think it is better to protect the business of a few on Main Street. This comes at the expense of other business in town. We have chased potential business away to keep our



from our readers

● to the editor

“little town” image. I doubt we’ll ever lose that, and if things keep going at this rate we’ll be even smaller.

I attended a meeting in Colby one night about a business interested in coming to the area. Part would be located in Colby and part in Goodland. The comment was made, “Why not have it all in Colby? Why share it with Goodland?”

Because of a freight rate advantage in Goodland, we had to be considered. However, the man said he would rather have the whole business kept in Colby because the Goodland Chamber was uninterested and would not even return their calls.

As a Goodland resident I get awfully tired of going to Colby and seeing companies like Murfin Drilling and others filling their industrial park, and ours is nearly empty. What does Colby have that we don’t? Nothing, except an active Chamber of Commerce.

Last year the taxes for businesses along Highway 24 were doubled. Now they have to endure another hit on taxes. Take a look at the businesses along Hwy. 24 and count how many are for sale. I wonder how many are feeling the pressure of higher taxes? One for sure that I know of.

I applaud the city commissioners who asked for accountability of the \$50,000 that the city gave to the Chamber. Not one member could remember

where it went. Sounds like a page from Bill Clinton’s playbook. I hope the city keeps holding their feet to the fire.

I have no problem paying taxes for things that need to be done. The wye needed to be fixed, but another park for \$500,000 seems too much for me. We have several parks in town that no one uses now, because people are too busy working to pay taxes for the upkeep on the ones we have.

As I said before, I like living in Goodland. We have good people, good schools and a good standard of living. However, it seems that a few leaders have taken leave of their senses, or have different agendas than seeing industry come to our town. I didn’t say it would be easy, but nothing worthwhile is, and I think Goodland and its people are certainly worthwhile.

Terry Redlin
Goodland

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