

commentary

from our viewpoint...

It's the book burners who do Satan's work

It's frightening, really, the idea of good, honest, God-fearing people burning copies of Harry Potter books.

It's them, not author J.K. Rowling, who do Satan's work.

Everyone is entitled to his opinion. Every parent has a right to decide what his or her children will read or view.

If you don't like Harry Potter, then don't let your children read it. Don't let them go to the movie.

But don't burn the books.

Book burning is too close to book banning. And while you have every right to decide what your children will read, you have no say when it comes to others' children. Or the country as a whole.

Most of the world thinks Harry Potter is a harmless fantasy. Most people are not bothered by idle talk of witches or Halloween fantasy. They accept the Harry Potter books for what they purport to be: good stories, nothing more.

A few rigorous Christians don't buy mixing up wizards, witches, evil spirits and the like. It's their right to speak out in the marketplace of ideas.

But book burning, like flag burning, is more than just free speech. It may be legally protected, but it's ugly. It's intended to do more than make a statement.

In Oberlin opponents handed out fliers at the theater when the Harry Potter movie opened. That's fine.

Elsewhere, though, demonstrators pitched copies of the Harry Potter books into a fire in the street. Interestingly enough, there were only a few dozen book burners, but hundreds of counter-protesters across the street defending the freedom to read and write books.

You can burn a book, after all, but you can't burn the ideas it contains. We suspect the Harry Potter books will survive this and future tempests. They are good stories, and they are harmless, at least to children who have been taught the difference between right and wrong, the difference between good and evil, the difference between fact and fiction.

Any parent who is the least bit worried about Harry Potter leading his or her child astray should ask if they have taught their child to deal with this?

Children who have been brought up right and taught to think won't have any trouble distinguishing fact from fantasy — or Satan from the Truth.

Book burners, on the other hand, push us perilously close to the days of Hitler and Stalin. That's not what we need today. — *Steve Haynes*

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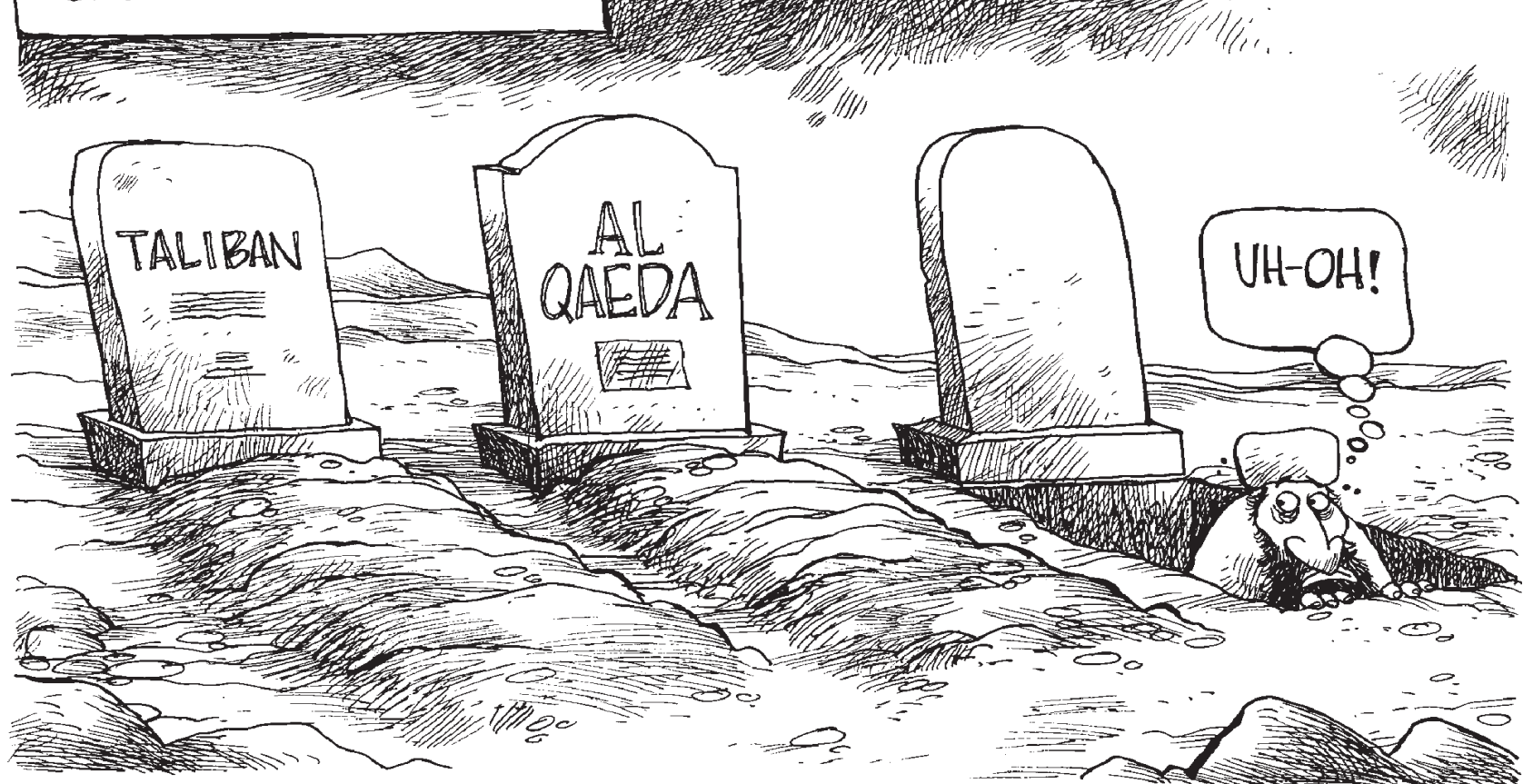
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BIN LADEN GOES UNDERGROUND.....



Unlived possibilities



joan ryan

• commentary

All we could do from 3,000 miles away was sit on our couches and watch.

We didn't breathe the gray ash that blanketed windowsills and sidewalks and cars like an early snow. Our noses didn't fill with the stench of burning wires and human remains.

We sent money and prayed, but there were no bodies for us to dig out of the rubble. No firefighters to feed. No legions of widows to comfort.

Most on the West Coast weren't affected in a palpable way.

Except, of course, we were.

The fallout of the attacks in New York and Washington spread as if on a current of wind, barely noticed. We went to work, bought groceries, folded laundry. But the shock and horror tugged at us, loosening the strings of something inside, like a cloth purse long forgotten in a bottom drawer.

Some discovered that, for all their striving and searching, they had everything of any importance already, everything that really mattered. They slowed down for the first time in a long time, maybe ever. They took walks and cooked waffles. They began holding hands again.

For others, Sept. 11 was an awakening to what was missing.

Mindi Kiernan and her husband, Kevin, had talked for years about what it would be like to quit their jobs and travel the world. They even talked to a financial planner about how they might swing it. But they had great jobs.

Mindi had become general manager of the San Jose Mercury News just two years earlier. You don't walk away from a job like that, especially not

at age 45, when you're reaching the peak of your earning power.

Last month, Mindi and Kevin traveled to New York for a niece's dance recital. On their last day there, they visited Ground Zero to try to grasp what had happened, maybe understand it in some small way.

"It was overwhelming, incredibly sad," Mindi said.

"I thought, 'People went to work that day expecting to return to their families.' It gives me chills just talking to you about it."

They attended a play near Times Square that night. As they strolled back to the hotel, the couple turned a corner and came upon a fire station. It was draped in black bunting.

On the windows were pictures of the dozen or so firefighters from the company who had died. Flowers, cards, little kids' drawings and flags covered the sidewalk in front.

"That was really hard," she said, "harder than visiting Ground Zero. Because we weren't prepared for it."

Between that moment and Thanksgiving, Mindi and her husband decided to step off the work-mortgage-work conveyor belt.

Scared safe



red green

• north of forty

I was driving on the highway yesterday, doing about 20 percent over the speed limit, and I couldn't believe how the other cars were flying around me. I haven't been passed and cut-off that much since my dating years. Drivers consistently go way over the speed limit and try Indy 500 style maneuvers, and I think I know why. It's because they make cars too well now. My first car was a '52 Pontiac. It was a tractor with a back seat. You didn't dare go fast or take a hard corner in that baby. Even standing still it was dangerous, due to the fire hazard. But now the cars are aerodynamically designed with tuned suspension and air bags everywhere. We've made cars so safe that people feel comfortable driving dangerously. That was a mistake. I find that people are at their best when they're a little bit scared. So we need to put an element of danger back into the driving experience to get those crazy drivers under control. It's amazing what a man will try when he thinks his car is safe. Same thing with his marriage.

THE GIFT MESSAGE

There are a few times in the year when a man is expected to come up with a worthy gift for his wife. Her birthday, their anniversary, Christmas, that kind of thing. This is always a difficult time for most men. They suddenly wish they'd paid attention to what she was saying at dinner. So the likelihood of the man coming up with the right gift is excruciatingly remote. And if you have married friends and neighbors, it gets worse, because your gift will be compared with what the other women received. In many cases your offering is not just inappropriate, but also cheap. Well, here's a way to explain the whole situation to your wife. Remind her of how criminals are often sentenced to 100 hours of community service to pay for their crimes. And how countries that initiate wars have to pay for their indiscretion. Well, it's the same thing with wife gifts. The low-end, seemingly thoughtless gifts that you give your wife are straight from the heart and have no other purpose than to remind her that she is cared for. Whereas the big gifts like trips or cars or jewelry that the neighbors give their wives are probably restitution from a husband who strayed and is now paying for his indiscretion. My feeling is that any gift over \$100 dollars is a peace offering. Mind you, the whole theory goes out the window when it's my birthday.

BODY TALK

If you're trying to get the respect and admiration of your co-workers, you have to pay attention to your body language while you're on the job. Even though what you're saying might be force-

fully eloquent, your posture or movements can undermine your credibility. Here are a few habits to avoid:

- Don't tuck your pants into your socks.
- Don't use analogies that involve video games.
- Don't wear a tie with writing on it.
- When discussing the company's future, don't keep rubbing your forehead.
- Management shouldn't wear running shoes.
- Don't overuse the expression "Holy Doodle."

SWAN SONG

I was watching one of the animal channels on television the other day. They were talking about

swans. Apparently swans mate for life. Even without a wedding ceremony or an anticipated inheritance, these birds will pick a mate and stay put for their whole lives. I wondered how swans could keep a relationship going while humans often have difficulty. But then, they don't talk, so you don't have to worry about saying the wrong thing. And the male swans tend to be laid back. With a body like that, you're not going to stick your neck out. And you might as well mate for life, because if that's what all the other swans are doing, there's nobody to cheat with.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "There is nothing more pathetic than a man without a garage." — Red Green
Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

berry's world



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"HOW WAS BUFFALO?"



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"OK! PUT YOUR SHOES BACK ON!"