

commentary

from other pens...

Robert Mills and his Washington monument

By Lawrence L. Knutson

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Roll out Robert Mills' original proposal for the Washington Monument and the distance between the architect's drawing board and final reality becomes clear.

What architect Mills proposed in the 1840s was much more than just a marble shaft dedicated to the nation's first president.

Mills envisioned his obelisk emerging from a 100-foot-tall colonnaded pantheon of patriots. The pantheon itself would serve as the base for a colossal sculpture of Washington riding to glory on a Roman chariot amid clouds of wordy inscriptions.

The Civil War delayed completion. Scarce dollars and compromises stripped the architect's original concept to its majestic bare bones.

When the monument was completed in 1884 — nearly 30 years after Mills' death — pantheon, chariot, inscriptions and much else were gone.

The unadorned shaft was eventually topped off at a few inches more than 555 feet. That made Mills' obelisk a perpetual exclamation point on the capital's earth-bound cityscape.

In a career that began in 1802 and rolled on for a half-century, Mills designed not one but two Washington monuments; one in the city named for the first president, one a much earlier version in Baltimore.

That life is explored in "America's First Architect, Robert Mills." Published by the Princeton Architectural Press of New York, written by John Bryan, an architectural historian at the University of South Carolina.

As a government architect in Washington, Mills reaffirmed the capital's classic-revival style in his work on a post office, the Patent Office and the Treasury, all still standing.

"His surviving work evokes a sense of permanence, utility and the dignity of democratic ideals," Bryan writes. "... He was justly accused of being visionary, for he designed on a grand scale, a scale he felt appropriate for the America he imagined."

Although the Washington Monument was much altered from the proposal Mills first submitted, Bryan notes, it remains "the most widely recognized and revered American monument ..."

Twenty years after his birth in Charleston, S.C., in 1781, Mills traveled to Washington, where President Jefferson recommended him to Benjamin Latrobe, architect of the Capitol. Latrobe made the young man his apprentice, but in a candid letter dryly downgraded his abilities: "He possesses that valuable substitute for genius in a very high degree, and is therefore very useful to me."

Mills rated his talents higher than that. In 1806 he set out on his own.

When architects were invited in 1814 to enter a design competition for a monument to Washington to be erected in Baltimore, American architecture was still in its infancy. Mills appealed to the patriotism of the judges, singling himself out as "the first American who has passed through a regular course of study of architecture in his own country."

Mills prevailed. In 1829, a 16-foot statue of Washington, in a Roman toga, was hoisted in sections atop the 160-foot Ionic column Mills had designed. It was the first monument to Washington ever built.

Ground for the National Washington Monument was broken on July 4, 1848, and construction began. Six years later, with the obelisk a 153-foot stub and the country preoccupied with sectional tensions, money and energy ran out. That's where matters stood when Mills died at his Washington home on March 3, 1855. His obituary in The National Intelligencer noted "he lived long enough to see many of his suggestions adopted, acted upon, and fulfilled by those who originally derided and condemned them."

The newspaper said he had one further satisfaction.

"From the window of his chamber, dying, he could look upon the last and greatest monument of his genius, the stupendous pile climbing toward the skies in honor of the father of his country ..."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Lawrence L. Knutson has covered the White House, Congress, and Washington's history for 34 years.

ARIZONA 2001 THE STATE



Processor subsidy? You decide

Is it time to have some real monetary policy?

If we did we wouldn't need another processor's subsidy farm bill!

What would happen if we didn't have a U.S. dollar higher than an Afghanistan camel's back?

If it wasn't we wouldn't need another Free-Food-Pentagon farm bill!

What would happen if those Islamic nations started buying American grain again?

Yeah right we wouldn't need another processors subsidy farm bill. But since the world wide currency crisis in 1997 their currency is as worthless as 10,000 Enron stocks.

The only thing they could do was to barter their crushed currencies between each other. They had to save their hard currency (U.S. dollar) to buy armaments from China.

What would happen if the Canadian dollar was 85 cents instead of 50 cents, like it used to be?

What would happen if the Mexican peso had not been bailed out with \$50 billion of our own money?

Right again we wouldn't need another free-food-pentagon farm bill.

But what is good monetary policy?

That all depends on who you talk to. Even the Wall Street geeks are saying the dollar is too high. Mr. Greenspan increase the money supply, (start the printing press), they say.

But the Rock counter Chief, (Treasury Secretary) said quit complaining we are not about to abandon a U.S. dollar that's on the moon. If you do the rock counter Indian will go out and join another tribe.

There are three things that put the fear of Allah



wayne gattshall

• wayne's world

into to these new economy geeks. The first one is currency that is pegged to the U.S. dollar. We can't speculate in their world currencies when they do that.

The second is foreign governments who impose capital controls—when hedge funds attack their central banks, (sell their currencies and buy the U.S. dollars). The third is an activist FED that—would not bailout—some crazy derivative (Hedge fund) speculator in world currencies.

But what drives them crazier than a Taliban is for someone to suggest a hedge fund Solvency Fund.

Nope can't do that. It would be a tax. Anyway what we have works just fine. Let those hicks in the sticks foot the bill.

Well there are some who say farm prices lower than a snake's belly is enough of a tax cut, so pay your own taxes for a change.

They think the global village is just fine as long as Joe Six Packs shares their losses. But listen to them whine it would work like the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

Just let anyone suggest that and they scream louder than Bin Laden's wives who had been caught without their burkas.

Well the cyber-boobs complaining about mon-

etary policy began months before the 9-11 attack on the Rockefeller Towers in New York City. They said Alan Greenspan you are a blight, hurry up increase the money supply. Hurry up cut interest rates too. We are in a recession, hurry, hurry, hurry.

It is axiomatic that cutting taxes is sure to make the dollar more valuable. Then what about a near zero interest rate by the FED that had ought to affect the dollar, too. Back in 1980s it took 20% interest rates, to get Japan to invest in our deficits. So does monetary policy matter and if it did what is good monetary policy?

Let history decide. Back in 1997 the value of a dollar helped the nuclear corporations to buy up the assets of the Suharto family in Indonesia. At one time it took 12,000 rupiahs to buy one dollar.

It did something else, we could buy a computer for that funny looking kid, really cheap! That's the good side of a as good a gold U.S. dollar.

The bad side is its the reason for a current accounts deficit (trade deficit) that is \$450 billion. And according to the floor debate during the 2002 farm bill, for every one billion dollars of trade deficits we lose 20,000 jobs. So when we buy flags from China really cheap it affects our Gross Domestic Product. Now that may not have been so bad when our domestic product was 6 percent but now it is less than 1 percent.

But does it make sense to encourage the irrational exuberance cyber-boobs to do something stupid if an activist Federal Reserve bails them out, again and again!

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Oh brothers, where art thou?

Maybe you've cried your last tear over terrorism, but that's only because you never gave a thought to the pitiful plight of Abdullah Mohammed bin Laden (a.k.a. Binladin). Bin Laden is one of Osama bin Laden's 50 siblings — or is that 500 siblings? Anyway, this is a man, according to a rare interview he gave to the London Telegraph, of many siblings, many allergies, and many 50-pound notes (more on that below). He is also a man of many gripes. Or at least one big one: "People have no understanding when it is like to be a bin Laden right now," he says. "To be the brother of Mr. O."

Ah, to be a bin Laden ... now that winter is here in Afghanistan. Frankly, I'm not sure anyone much cares. The uninterrupted silence of the bin Laden family since Sept. 11 has, to say the least, done the clan little credit. Aside from periodic bulletins from Osama bin Laden's dear mama — a Saudi Arabian newspaper most recently quotes Alia Ghanem as having said that she, "like all mothers," is "satisfied and pleased" with her son — nothing. Mum's the word.

Why? Despite battalions of media specialists and public relations pros in London and New York, the bin Ladens haven't put together any sort of public statement because, as the Telegraph puts it, "there is still no agreement among the extended family on how an international press statement should be worded." But how hard can it be? A member of this extremely "extended" family became the most wanted man in the world after murdering thousands of people sitting at their desks equipped with nothing more than their morning coffee. The official silence of the family is, in a word, unconscionable. It is also especially curious given how much is made of the family's act of having "disowned" the Terrorist Brother some years ago.

Even the simplest statement would be better than nothing — "Osama is a reviled cretin" — although they could easily come up with something possessed of a little more flair: "Words cannot describe the enormity of the shame and distress that we, the bin Laden family, feel over the terrible fact that one among us has brought so much suffering and strife into this world ..." But no. "Those in Saudi fear offending Muslims by outright condemnation," the paper reports, and "those in the West fear condemnation by almost everyone." No profiles in courage here.

But back to Abdullah Mohammed bin Laden, he whose life "has changed utterly since September 11." Does he have nightmares? A loss of appetite?



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A sense of helpless guilt? Not exactly. Since Sept. 11, this younger brother of Osama bin Laden doesn't use credit cards anymore, poor chap, lest his notorious name incite the shrieks of sales clerks (so stressful). That means, of course, he must personally tote stacks of 50-pound notes, or the equivalent currency, everywhere he goes. He has also given up his favorite pastime, flying airplanes, since, as the paper notes, "the association with the bin Laden name and flying is, of course, a tense subject." He doesn't go jogging, either, when at his home in Boston.

"We have always shunned the limelight," he explains. "Yet authors writing on Osama pick our lives apart and invent sensational lies. ... Much of it is not true, but what can we do?" Here's what the paper labels "the most extreme example": Newspapers ran a vacation photo of family members posing by a Cadillac in Sweden and misidentified one of the dozens — scores? — of bin Laden brothers as Osama. He wasn't even there, said his brother. Well, well. What is left to say that hasn't been said about man's inhumanity to man? Just imagine the mental anguish of it all — he wasn't even in the snapshot! — and try to answer the one

question that springs to mind: How do you say "big deal" in Arabic?

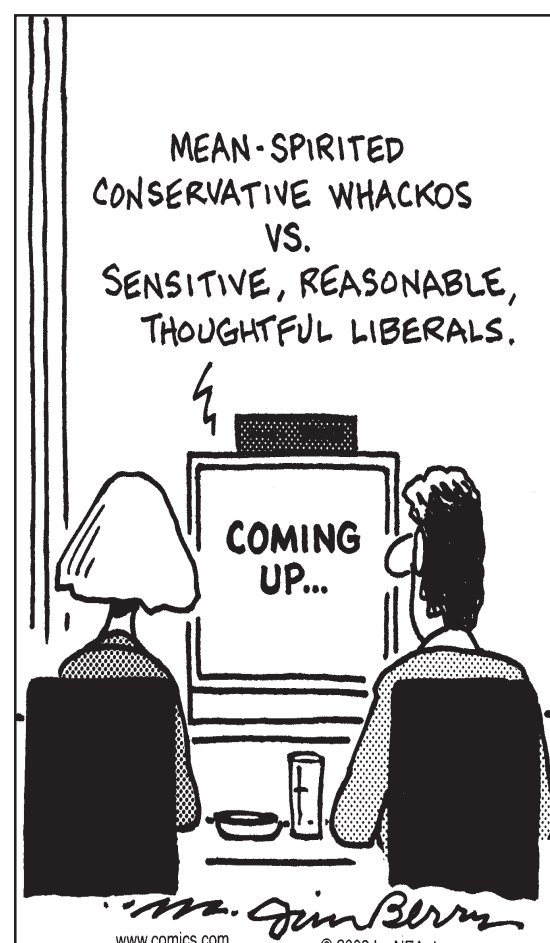
Abdullah Mohammed "sighs heavily" when asked whether he would rather see his brother stand trial or be killed. "I cannot answer that question now. I need more time to think," he replies. "I feel sad, that this (attack) is a tragedy for humanity. And that it is a tragedy for our family. How will people look at our family?"

If it begins to feel as if this interview is veering into the territory of the deeply Gothic, deeply Southern novel (Southern Saudi Arabia, that is), don't be alarmed. Or, rather, be alarmed. The point is, it's not your imagination: Abdullah Mohammed bin Laden's biggest concern, post-Sept. 11, seems to be what people will think of his family.

Answer: not much.

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