

commentary

from other pens...

A world-class garden grows in Georgetown

The garden mingles ancient trees with open spaces. It is a procession of carefully planted and tended outdoor rooms furnished with baroque stonework, fountains, pools and inviting benches.

In a nervous city, the walled-off splendor of Dumbarton Oaks is an island of civilized tranquility. It ranks among the world's great gardens.

The Dumbarton Oaks garden is the outcome of a nearly half-century collaboration between an engaged client, Mildred Bliss, and a remarkable landscape architect, Beatrix Jones Farrand.

Living things had been central to the estate in the capital's Georgetown section long before Mildred and Ambassador Robert Woods Bliss purchased the property in 1920 and began to transform it.

Earlier owners had called it Oakly or The Oaks for the trees that have long shaded the hillside site. At the beginning, when Queen Anne of England granted several hundred surrounding acres to Ninian Beale in 1701 he named it the Rock of Dumbarton after a castle in his native Scotland.

The Blisses combined the earliest with the latest names, calling it Dumbarton Oaks. They preserved the 1805 Orangery and the creeping fig that has clung to its interior walls since at least 1860.

Over the decades that followed their purchase, the couple poured a fortune into Dumbarton Oaks. They added a handsome music room and held musicales that attracted some of the world's most famous musicians. They collected art, hanging a painting by El Greco and one by Degas. Bliss, who served as ambassador to Sweden and Argentina, added impressively to his scholarly collections of Byzantine and pre-Columbian art.

All the while, the gardens grew. Beatrix Farrand drew plans that followed the hilly contours of the property, retaining many original old trees while adding, sometimes exuberantly, to the work of nature.

"The Blisses were of a type that has more or less vanished — the civilized amateur — and represented American patrician culture at its finest," said Denys Sutton, editor of the fine arts journal Apollo, which devoted a recent issue to Dumbarton Oaks.

It took a fortune to finance those patrician tastes, polished as they were during the long years the couple had resided among the upper classes of Europe and such friends as the authors Edith Wharton and Henry James.

Much of the money flowed liberally from an unlikely but shrewd investment made years earlier by Mildred Bliss' father.

The gardens at Dumbarton Oaks were built in large part from the proceeds of sales of Fletcher's Castoria, a vegetable-based laxative sold to parents under the slogan, "Children cry for it."

The story of the Blisses, who had no children of their own, is told in "Dumbarton Oaks: Garden Into Art," written by Susan Tumulevich and published last year by Monacelli Press.

Looking down on the garden from the terrace behind the house is "like taking the lid off a dollhouse" exposing the rooms to view, Tumulevich wrote. Surprises remain for a visitor walking down a flag-paved stair or turning the corner of a hedge "where a flash of color, a fragrance or a glinty pool is waiting."

The result impressed even the owner. "The onrush of spring at Dumbarton Oaks leaves one breathless before the billowing mass of forsythia tumbling down two hillsides turned to gold," Mildred Bliss wrote.

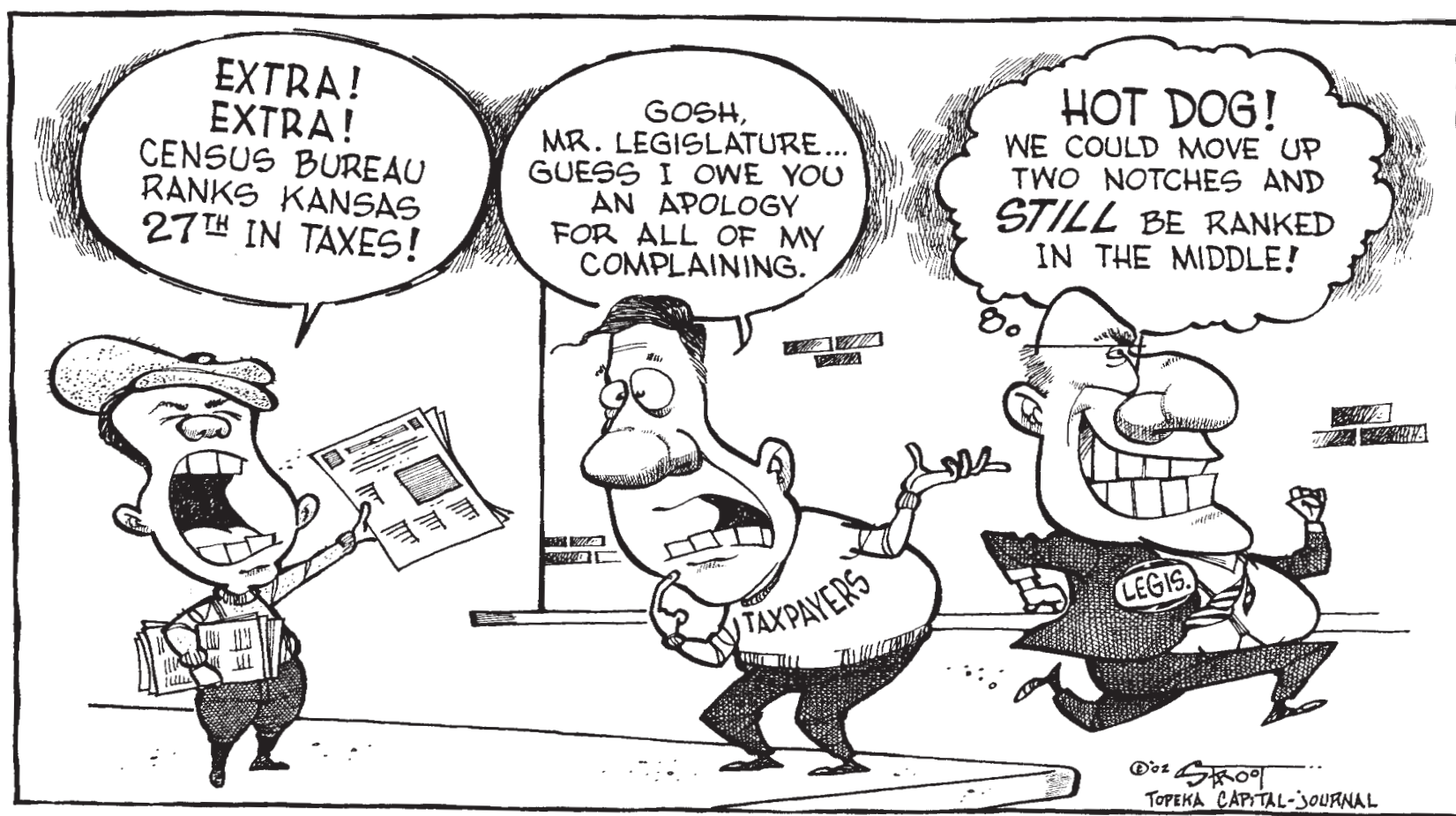
In the fall of 1944 delegates from the United States, the Soviet Union, China and Britain met at the estate for negotiations that helped lay the groundwork for the United Nations.

Commenting as the Dumbarton Oaks Conference began, The Washington Star predicted the setting would influence any discussions aimed at establishing a peaceful future. There is "no more peaceful atmosphere than the walled-in acres of the estate, with its giant oaks, sloping lawns (and) formal gardens," the newspaper said.

Robert and Mildred Bliss are interred in their garden under a Latin inscription of the Bliss family motto: "Quod Severis Metes."

In English that reads: "As You Sow, So Shall You Reap."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Congress, the White House and Washington's history for 34 years for The Associated Press.



Hong Kong hasn't seen much change

In Hong Kong, they'll quickly tell you that not much has changed in the five years since the British gave their former crown colony back to the Chinese.

There are still demonstrations on the street, especially on Sunday. Our tram is blocked by one — half the traffic on Hong Kong Island is blocked, it seems. The march noisily commemorates the martyrs of Tienamen Square, not you'd suppose a popular topic with the mainland government.

Skyscrapers continue to sprout around the harbor. Hong Kong remains the financial and business capital of Asia, its economy existing mostly on trade and finance.

If a new building does not bear the name of a bank, it belongs to one of the world's great trading companies. Each advertises itself in neon, and it's never dark on Hong Kong harbor.

There are new subways, new trains, a new airport. Parts of the bay are being filled in to build more skyscrapers.

Trade is bustling, and business, which many said would flee when the communists took over, is forging ahead.

Hong Kong is prosperous, and the Chinese have no intention of changing that. There are local police on the streets, some of them armed, but none



steve haynes

• along the sappa

of the People's Armed Police you see everywhere on the mainland.

The Peoples Liberation Army took over the old British posts, but you never see them.

"They stay in their barracks," one official says. "They keep to their own affairs."

She adds that they may be better behaved at night than their British predecessors.

The British had no choice but to leave. Their lease was up on most of the colony's land, and though they owned Hong Kong Island outright, it wouldn't have made much sense to keep just that. The Chinese, smarting from a century of foreign domination here, were in no mood to talk about an extension.

The Chinese, though, seem to know better than to upset a good thing. They have taken over, but Hong Kong runs pretty much the same as always.

Steve Lam is the mayor's press secretary. It must

be a unique position in a communist-dominated government.

"I face the same type of tough questions everyday that my predecessor did," he says.

The city is run by a legislature elected partly by the people — 40 percent of the seats — and partly by interest groups, such as teachers, unions, professionals and businesses.

"Human rights are fully guaranteed," Mr. Lam says. "The verdict has been rendered. 'One country, two systems' has been faithfully implemented in Hong Kong."

The main challenges, he adds, have been economic, not political. Hong Kong was hit hard when the Japanese economy went down in the '90s. It's recovered, but Asia has lagged behind the rest of the world.

Nothing has changed?

They keep filling in the bay, and three years ago, the government ran the boat people out, clearing the harbor of the junks which once had been home to thousands, a floating city.

Still, Hong Kong is the jewel of the Pacific, a great city of the world, conscious of its history and building for the future.

And at least on the surface, still free to speak its mind.

Litterbug causes roll over accident

To the Editor:

I am writing to report a crime.

The crime was littering. I don't know who was responsible, but if you are that person or persons, you will know who you are. Now you will find out what your actions have caused.

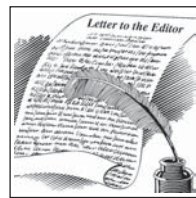
On Friday, June 14, at 9:15 p.m. my son Bobby, 15, and his friend, Tyrell Smith, 13, and I left Smoky Gardens where we have spent part of the day fishing.

A few minutes after we left with Bobby on his new instruction permit license behind the wheel, we saw a beer box by the road, open and apparently empty.

I thought some bad thoughts litterbugs and then saw beer bottles littered on both sides of the road.

Then one appeared in the beam of the headlights. Bobby got around it OK. We were doing 45 miles per hour. Then another beer bottle showed in the headlights.

Bobby swerved to avoid hitting it with the tires. We started fish tailing and went off the road a little. Bobby tried to keep our mini-van under control,



from our readers

• to the editor

but it tipped over and started rolling.

Everything happened so fast, I think we rolled at least two or three times, but it could have been more than that. The van ended up on its side in the road.

We always wear our seat belts, so no body got thrown out, rolled over by the van or killed. This time. We escaped with minor injuries. Tyrell was transported to the hospital and Bobby was checked by them later that same night.

Our van was totaled. We only had liability insurance on it. My injuries are painful, but I knew we couldn't afford a third hospital visit.

So, to the inconsiderate litterbug who caused all this, I'll probably never get the chance to meet you. Never hear you apologize. Never get paid back for

our 86 Dodge Caravan.

I'll never understand why you had to throw your beer bottles all over the road. But if you read this you'll know who you are. Maybe next time you'll think first.

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to everyone who responded to the scene of our accident.

This town really does have some good people in it.

Roy M Schnug
Goodland

To the Editor:

We would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to several members of your community:

Officer Glenn Johnson, Officer Brandon Terry, the Wal-Mart evening manager on May 27th, Steve Evert and a few other police officers.

These folks helped find our dog Renn!

God bless you all.
John and Dana Talbot
Bozeman, Mont.

Blame the murderer, and the messenger

A new study tells American mothers that the safest way to get the kids to school is to put them on the bus. Not so in Israel, where suicide bombers have made Israeli cities and towns limb-littered killing fields. After another Palestinian terrorist incinerated another Israeli bus, a Netanya mother said this to BBC News: "If my kids end up having to get a bus, I will give them a loving speech before they go, in case they never come back."

And Palestinian mothers? They, too, give a loving speech before their children go, sometimes videotaping it, but all too many of them actually hope their youngsters never come back. The sickening fact is, the strongest desire of certain Palestinian parents is for their children to die, killing as many Jews — infants to aged — as possible.

Take Mariam Farhat. When she got word her 19-year-old son Mohammed had been shot dead after murdering five Israeli teens and wounding 23 others, she told the Saudi-owned London daily newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat: "I began to cry, 'Allah is the greatest,' and prayed and thanked Allah for the success of the operation. I began to utter cries of joy and we declared that we were happy. ... I encouraged all my sons to die a martyr's death." (Translation by Middle East Media Research Institute)

The maternal death wish may seem freakish, but Farhat is not alone. "May every bullet hit its target and may God give you martyrdom," Naïma elAbed tells her son, Mahmoud, on a video released by Hamas that records the 23-year-old college student's preparations for a rampage against Israel. "This," she says, "is the best day of my life."

Then came the day of her son's funeral. This came after Naïma elAbed's little terrorist was shot dead attempting to infiltrate a Jewish community, kill-



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ing two Israeli soldiers. Consider the Palestinian scene of bereavement that followed: "All around her were women, clapping and celebrating his death, while his father Hassan quietly received congratulations," the Associated Press reported. "Several of their nine other children handed out candy to visitors. 'I wish all my children would be like him and carry out operations like that,' Naïma elAbed said."

Chances are excellent they will — and not just to please mom. The Palestinian Authority may blindly blame Israel for creating a generation of suicidal maniacs, but it is the PA itself that has helped nurture — if such a word applies — this taboo-breaking evil through its relentless propaganda machine.

With sub-titled clips from Palestinian-controlled television (available through WorldNetDaily.com), MSNBC's Alan Keyes this week gave American viewers a look at the pernicious role the PA plays in teaching young people to kill and be killed. It starts with state-sponsored sing-alongs for the romper-room set — ditties about blood-drenched soil and warriors of jihad. It continues with shows featuring girls in party dresses delivering bloodthirsty harangues: "When I wander into the entrance of Jerusalem, I'll turn into a suicide warrior! I'll turn into a suicide warrior! In battle-dress! In battle-dress! In battle-dress!" And it goes on through the seemingly continuous loop of government-broadcast sermons. One imam (religious leader) preaches, "Bless those

who wired themselves, putting the belt around his waist or his sons, and who enter deeply in the Jewish community and say, 'Allah is great.'" Or: "Whoever you are, kill these Jews and these Americans who are like them and support them."

Mr. Keyes pointed out a young boy in one congregation, asking, Can a child thus indoctrinated ever make peace? This same boy is probably now caught up in the latest Palestinian craze — trading charms, Pokemon-style, that feature the faces of suicide bombers. Maybe he'll go on to Al-Najah University in Nablus, alma mater of this week's bus bomber, Mohammed "How beautiful it is to kill and be killed" al-Ghoul. Al-Najah, it must be noted, was the scene of last fall's commemoration of the Sbarro pizza-parlor attack, complete with fake pizza slices, plastic body parts and play explosions.

That PA sure teaches its children well — to create what Ghazi Al-Qusaibi, the Saudi Ambassador to London (infamous for his verses on suicide-bombing), calls "the culture of martyrdom." As he recently told Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, according to MEMRI, in one of the most chilling statements I have ever read, "When the culture of martyrdom spreads among the Palestinians and the Arabs, the myth of Israel will come to an end." (Not, alas, at the ambassador's own poetry-writing hands. He regrets to say that age and weight disqualify him from personal "martyrdom.")

We hear of the need to reform the PA from its terror-abetting "security" forces, to its corrupt apparatchiks, but the subject of dismantling its poisonous propaganda machine isn't mentioned. As de-Nazification was once required, "de-martyrification" is one of today's most urgent challenges.

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