

# commentary

from other pens...

## Washington's officers form hereditary society

Thomas Jefferson harbored suspicions about the Society of the Cincinnati, deeming it an affront to the proposition that all men are created equal. Benjamin Franklin grumbled that the Continental Army officers who founded the society in 1783 envisioned not equality but "an order of hereditary knights." He proposed the turkey as a fitting emblem for it. Jefferson, Franklin and others fretting about the eggshell fragility of the new government worried that a society of former military officers, many of them unpaid and angry, might march the newly independent nation toward elitist rule, or even monarchy.

Nearly 220 years later, Jay Wayne Jackson, the society's 33rd president general in a line stretching back to George Washington, says history's verdict shows "the concerns were just not warranted and should not have been given serious consideration in the 1780s."

The society survived to become the nation's oldest patriotic organization. Today it actively supports educational, cultural, literary and benevolent activities that promote liberty and constitutional government.

But some things haven't changed. The society's 3,600 members are all direct descendants of Washington's officers, just as its founders intended. Membership is passed on, generally to the oldest surviving son in each generation, according to the dictates of primogeniture.

Jackson, an attorney in Hartford, Conn., owes his membership to his descendant from 1st Lt. Nathaniel Morgan, who served in a Connecticut regiment. "We feel as descendants of those who made it happen that we have an obligation to make sure the flame is kept bright," Jackson said.

That symbolic flame is tended at societies in each of the original 13 states and at national headquarters, a 50-room stone mansion on Washington's Massachusetts Avenue donated in 1937 by the widow of American Ambassador Larz Anderson III, himself a society member. Anderson House displays artifacts and maintains 45,000 books and papers focused on the people and events of the revolutionary era. Among its projects is the distribution of a classroom book, "Why Freedom is Free," that tells the story of the American Revolution.

At his death, Washington believed he had succeeded in eliminating the society's most troubling features, including hereditary membership. Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus was a Roman patriot and landowner who in the 5th century BC happily returned to the plow after leading Roman armies in defending the Republic.

Washington was called a modern Cincinnatus, a general who resigned his commission at the end of the war and returned to his Virginia plantations, refusing to follow in the long line of victorious generals who seized power for themselves.

Yet, the original suspicions were strong, causing Franklin to turn his legendary humor on the eagle insignia designed for the society by military engineer and city planner Pierre L'Enfant.

The eagle "is a bird of bad moral character," prone to stealing the dinners of other birds and exhibiting a streak of cowardice when challenged, Franklin wrote.

"He is therefore by no means a proper emblem for the brave and honest Cincinnati, who have driven all the King-birds from our country."

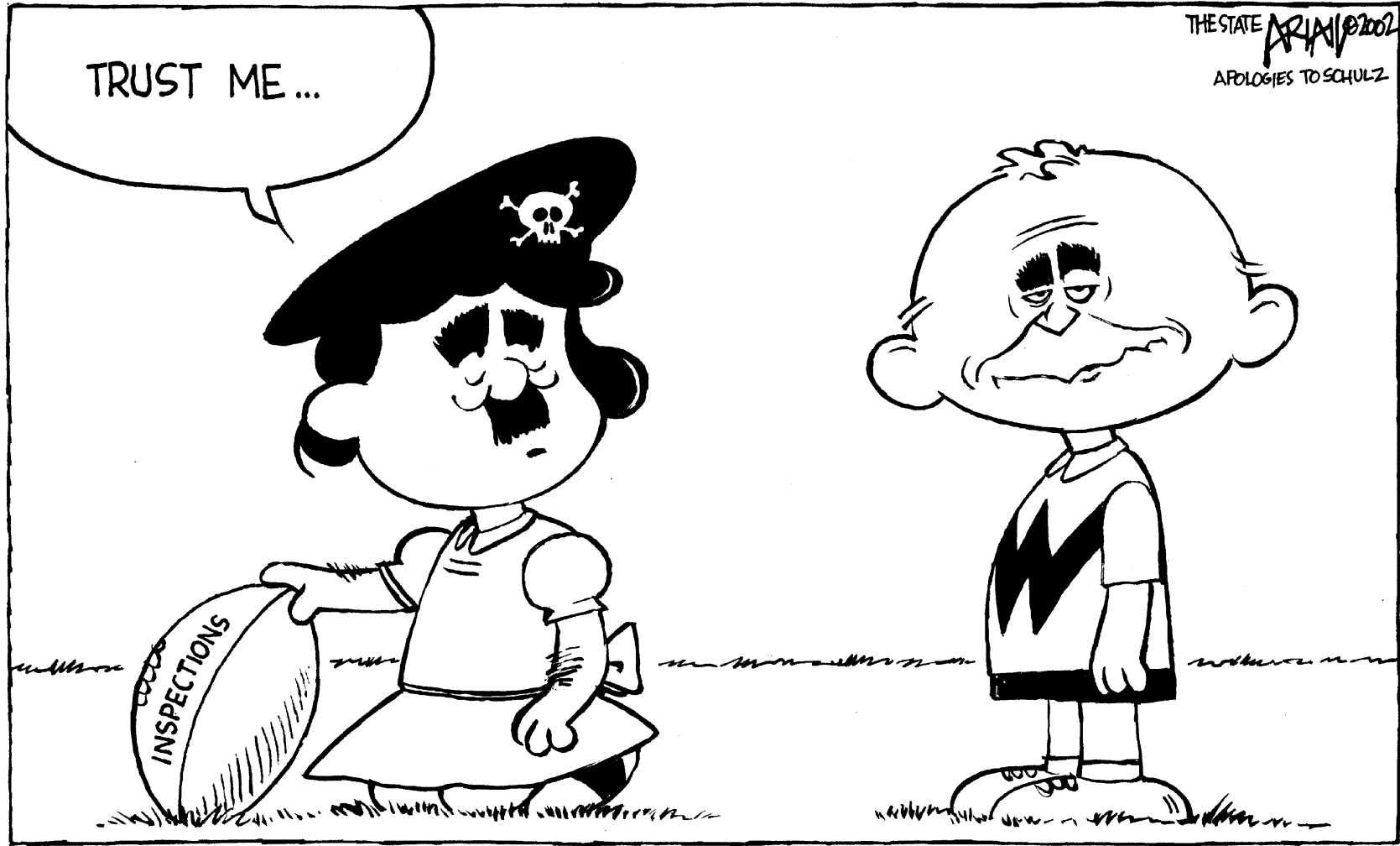
It would be better, Franklin said, if the society cast out the eagle and adopted the turkey as "a more honest bird and a genuine American." While it is true the turkey is "a little vain and silly," it is a courageous bird that would not hesitate to attack an invading British Redcoat, he said.

James Thomas Flexner, in his 1969 biography "George Washington and the American Nation," concluded that for all of the fuss about the society there was relatively little to worry about.

The Society of the Cincinnati never exerted any overwhelming political influence, he said.

"To this day, the society is hereditary, and the country has not been subverted."

*EDITOR'S NOTE—Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Congress, the White House and Washington's history for 35 years.*



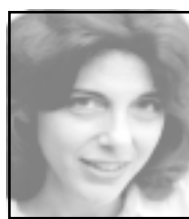
## That one, sturdy, missing word

Unfortunate typo in that letter to the United Nations, wasn't it? You know the letter: the one from Iraq about how "pleased" the ol' fulcrum of the Evil Axis was to open the country to roving teams of U.N. weapons inspectors "without conditions." Too bad letter-writer and minister of foreign affairs Naji Sabri dropped one word from the text. A corrected copy, obviously, should have read that Sabri was pleased to inform the world and other interested parties that his dictator (a.k.a. "the Government of the Republic of Iraq") has decided "to allow the return of United Nations weapons inspectors to Iraq without workable conditions."

That one, sturdy word would have made all the difference, recalling the frustrations of past inspections and guaranteeing the futility of future ones. Even in its absence, though, it's hard to imagine who, besides the Russo-Franco-Arab bloc and Peter Jennings, would allow themselves to be conned into believing a dictator as repressive, secretive and murder-minded as Saddam Hussein would allow anyone, let alone arms experts, to inspect his country "without conditions." Nonetheless, "Without Conditions" — and without irony — has been the headline of the week.

Not that there haven't been valiant efforts to dispel the confusion. Headdresses off to Ali Muhsen Hamid, the London ambassador of the Arab League — the very group that helped get the Iraqi offer onto the Security Council table in the first place — for suggesting that Iraqi civilian sites were already off limits to U.N. inspectors. "We support anywhere, any military site" for inspections, Hamid explained to the London Evening Standard this week, "but not, as some people have suggested, for inspections against hospitals, against schools."

Strange how this little bombshell from a group



diana west

• commentary

in on brokering the Iraqi deal was muffled by most of the media. Of course, letting Hamid pop off in the American press might have too abruptly awakened the world from its inspection fantasy — which was nice while it lasted. But even The New York Times is now gently breaking the news, attributed to administration officials, that Iraqi officials have already stipulated that "some sites would be off limits." So much for the bucolic thought of the United Nation's 63 weapons experts (from 27 countries) hitting Iraq's highways and byways without a condition in the world, knapsacks stuffed with radiation-detection equipment.

Of course, Iraq's no-strings-not position only stands to reason. If you were a brutal dictator with dreams of genocide, and all the nasty toxins you needed to wage biological warfare, say, were being manufactured or secreted or whatever in "hospitals" across the Fertile Crescent, would you throw open the doors to weapons experts who could end it all in a scathing report? Better to keep the eggheads busy inspecting dummy "military" installations.

And so it goes. You don't have to be a rocket scientist, or even an arms inspector, to figure this one out. Everyone — France, even — knows the Iraqi offer "without conditions" will soon prove bogus; the question is, when? The more important question is: Do we have time to wait? Unless the United States and Great Britain can persuade Security Council appeasers to sign off on a new U.N. reso-

lution with a pressing timetable for Iraqi compliance and a trigger for military action for noncompliance, a threadbare curtain will rise once again on the long, drawn-out inspections charade we've all seen before.

So far, there are no signs of a quick performance. A meeting between U.N. inspection chief Hans Blix and Iraqi officials this week resulted only in the decision to meet again — next month. Assuming they agree then on inspection terms ("without conditions," no doubt), inspectors should arrive in Iraq by the end of October, although simply moving in, according to the British newspaper the Independent, is a "process likely to take two months." Without a speedy, new U.N. resolution, inspectors won't have to report back to the Security Council for 60 more days, at which point they would have six months just to reach "preliminary conclusions" — sometime in August 2003.

So, when diplomats tell The New York Times that "Iraq's gesture to receive the weapons inspectors could slow the pace of events even more than Washington has intended," they aren't kidding. But can we afford just to chuckle and wait? While the world was transfixed by the chimera of unfettered access to Iraqi laboratories this week, the London Telegraph was reporting on signs "that Saddam may be embarking on the opposite course of action." These include not only a surge in illicit arms trafficking with former Soviet states, the paper wrote, but also indications that Iraq is bargaining with North Korea over stocks of plutonium. With such material, British nuclear experts believe Iraq could create a nuclear weapon "within months."

Surely, that's nothing worth waiting for. Diana West is a columnist and editorial writer for The Washington Times. She can be contacted via dwest@washingtontimes.com.

## Moderates caught napping in education races

Moderate Republicans were caught napping in the State Board of Education races. Now they're trying to make up for the problems caused by their sleepiness.

Two moderate incumbents, Sonny Rundell, of Syracuse, and Val DeFever, of Independence, lost GOP primary races to conservative challengers.

This month, both kicked off write-in campaigns to prevent the Republican nominees from winning in the Nov. 5 general election.

They're attempting to preserve the 7-3 majority held by a coalition of Democrats and moderates who capitalized on the shame and embarrassment some voters felt after a brouhaha over the teaching of evolution in Kansas classrooms.

Rundell and DeFever acknowledged that winning as a write-in is a daunting challenge, and that the election could leave the board with a 5-5 split and lead to two years of deadlocks on many issues.

Both moderate incumbents cited a low turnout in the Aug. 6 primary, particularly among moderates, as the reason they lost. Only 26 percent of the state's registered voters, a record low, went to the polls.

"They just didn't perceive a threat," DeFever said. "People were very complacent and just didn't vote."

In the 5th District, which covers western and north-central Kansas, Connie Morris, of St. Francis, defeated Rundell. She gave up an elementary school teaching job to run.

She's gained statewide notoriety for proposing the state prohibit the children of illegal immigrants from enrolling in school and giving the children of legal immigrants only a year of English instruction if they are not proficient in the language.

She says the state can't afford to provide such services. She promises to push the issue, despite the anger of Hispanic activists and a 1982 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that said it was unconstitutional to deny children of illegal immigrants access to public schools.

Rundell, a 10-year member of a national council on educating migrant children, acknowledges he didn't speak up enough.

"We just didn't get the vote out," Rundell said. "Maybe we were all just too overconfident."

In the 9th District, the campaign of GOP nominee Iris Van Meter was most notable for the complaints it inspired that she was ducking forums and avoiding reporters.



john hanna

• ap news analysis

Some moderates missed the fact she is the mother of Kris Van Meteren, a longtime activist and former executive director of the Kansas Republican Assembly, a group conservatives formed after the 1998 elections. He changed his last name years ago, to reflect its original Dutch spelling.

He said he advised his mother to run a low-key campaign, sensing it would lull DeFever's supporters into believing the incumbent didn't face a serious challenge.

"(DeFever's) friends were telling her she didn't even have to campaign, she was so popular with education leaders," he said. "They weren't vigilant."

The seeds of Rundell's and DeFever's defeats this year may have been planted by moderate victories two years ago.

In 2000, evolution was the issue. A 6-4 conservative majority had imposed new science testing standards that de-emphasized evolution. Widely perceived as attacking the teaching of the theory, the board made Kansas the punchline of jokes around the world.

Moderates unseated two conservative incumbents in the GOP primary and won an open seat previously held by a conservative. Afterward, they said the results showed how few Kansans agreed with the conservatives' agenda.

As moderates relaxed, conservatives, who represented how some state and national commentators portrayed them as fanatical flat-earthers, prepared for a new fight.

Van Meteren said conservatives saw two races as close. One conservative, Mary Douglass Brown, of Wichita, lost her primary race but received 48 percent of the vote. A Democrat, Bill Wagon, of Topeka, retained his seat with only a 51 percent majority in the general election.

The strongest repudiation of the board came in Johnson County, where conservative incumbent Linda Holloway lost her GOP primary to moderate Sue Gamble, who won 60 percent of the vote.

"You get west of K-7, and I don't think people got that worked up," he said.

And even if moderates far outnumber conservatives in the Kansas Republican Party, as moderates insist, the advantage doesn't automatically translate into political victory.

Passionate about a whole range of fiscal and social issues, conservatives get to the polls for the primary, while many moderates don't bother to vote. It's happened repeatedly during the past decade.

"It's very hard for moderates to win Republican primaries," said GOP State Chairman Mark Parkinson. "Conservatives have a built-in base of votes in the primary."

That built-in base translated into victories for Morris and Van Meter. Having slept through the primary, moderates are now hoping to undo the results.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Political writer John Hanna has covered Kansas politics and government for the Associated Press since 1987.*

## berry's world



### The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association  
The Associated Press

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Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [daily@nwkansas.com](mailto:daily@nwkansas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [gdnadv@nwkansas.com](mailto:gdnadv@nwkansas.com)

The Goodland Daily News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$25; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$79. Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. By mail daily in Kansas, Colorado: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:

The Sherman County Herald  
Founded by Thomas McCants  
1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR  
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey  
1994-2001

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Haynes Publishing Company