

Sunday, April 18, 2010

New religious podcast

I have joined a new venture with some friends. It is strictly a religious endeavor. As most who read this blog will know the church I attend is made of members that have their own callings or responsibilities in the congregations in which they attend. My friend Jon Madsen has such a responsibility that precludes him from being able to come to any Sunday School class. So he thought that he would like to be able to have a weekly discussion of Gospel principles and other points of LDS doctrine.

It is called The Iron Rodcast. The typical format for the show will be an expanded discussion of that weeks Sunday School lesson and then a random topic. That random topic could really end up being anything (hence the word random). Our first podcast was recorded last week and is now available for direct MP3 download [here](#). I am not completely certain why we called the podcast Genesis considering that we are starting in Exodus, but whatever. I imagine eventually it will be available on itunes. I won't be posting regularly here on this blog about it but I did want to let all of you know that it is now out there and that you should go and take a listen.

Posted by Radar in News at 08:52

Thursday, March 25, 2010

Positive? Inconclusive? Pessimistic?

Well I am reporting on the children. Yesterday I gave all three of them (you can't exclude a four-year-old without serious consequences) a mini Hershey bar, and explained that if they still had it tomorrow morning they could trade it for a bigger one, but they had to keep it with them all day. I did this to present more temptation during the long school day.

E, age 9, instantly declared she was saving hers. This created an avalanche effect of mimicry. I'm not sure how the boys would have reacted without her to emulate. Not so much conclusive. She handed her mini bar back this morning matter-of-factly and is now hoarding the bigger version. I don't think she's going to eat that anytime soon either.

Preston, age 4, kept his with him all day and often lovingly took it out and looked at it, but it degenerated over the course of the day from a perfectly respectable mini candy bar to a completely liquid form, sloshing around inside its skin of wrapper, and then a tiny, crumpled, hardened wad of chocolate and wrapper that probably was only appealing to the dogs. He presented it to me this morning with almost relief.

Skyler, now 7 (!) was extremely excited (in fact he met me outside the bathroom door this morning) to have not eaten his candy; it was, however, cracked in half, which he was worried would ruin the deal. I would feel more positive about this response except again, he is a copycat, and he got the idea from E.

Maybe the study went perfectly fine and I'm just too much of a pessimist to believe any of my children have self-control. Because the alternative is believing they all do.

Posted by Daboo in News at 07:49

Monday, March 22, 2010

Your Kids Are What You Eat

Just kidding, I wouldn't eat my children. They're too stringy.

I came across a fascinating article today that talks about Epigenetics: the study of the chemicals that cause your genes to turn on and off. The idea is that although changing your DNA is impossible, changing the behavior of your genes is simple. So much so, in fact, that we all do it. And more crucially, once we've changed the behavior of our genes, the behavior of our children's genes also change. So, for example, if you overeat for a year in your childhood, your children and THEIR children will have altered DNA, practically speaking. In fact, you will have shortened their lives by up to 32 years. (This study was done on children from an area of Sweden called Overkalix.)

Another example: what if you smoke? A lot? What if you started before you hit puberty? Turns out you not only put yourself at risk for cancer, etc -- you also put your children and grandchildren at risk for various health problems, and a significantly shortened lifespan.

When Pembrey, Bygren and Golding looked at the sons of those 166 early smokers, it turned out that the boys had significantly higher body mass indexes than other boys by age 9. That means the sons of men who smoke in prepuberty will be at higher risk for obesity and other health problems well into adulthood. It's very likely these boys will also have shorter life spans, just as the children of the Overkalix overeaters did. "The coherence between the ALSPAC and Overkalix results in terms of the exposure-sensitive periods and sex specificity supports the hypothesis that there is a general mechanism for transmitting information about the ancestral environment down the male line," Pembrey, Bygren, Golding and their colleagues concluded in the European Journal of Human Genetics paper. In other words, you can change your epigenetics even when you make a dumb decision at 10 years old. If you start smoking then, you may have made not only a medical mistake but a catastrophic genetic mistake.

Is anyone else horrified by the implication that we can ruin the lives of the generations to come by our stress levels, bad health, etc?

Posted by Daboo in News at 13:11

Monday, March 15, 2010

Don't Eat The Marshmallow

It seems a simple challenge: take a four-year-old, give him a marshmallow, and leave the room. Will he scarf that marshmallow right away? What if you tell him that if it's still there when you get back in 15 minutes, he'll get a second marshmallow? Will he resist temptation?

The answer depends on the four-year-old, and surprisingly much depends on whether he has that sort of self-control or not. If he does succeed in resisting the marshmallow, he's much more likely to succeed in school and then in life as he grows to adulthood. If he stuffs it in his mouth as soon as you leave the room, he's much more likely to be impulsive, have behavioral problems, and fail at school as he matures.

Read the article for the full, very interesting, report on this unique test of will, especially if you are or plan on ever being responsible for the success of a child. Delaying gratification is a skill nobody really talks about, but one which can determine whether your child grows to be a failure or a success.

I tried this test on Preston, who (as we all know) has his share of behavioral problems, severe enough that the State classifies him as "special needs." With great ceremony and solemnity I presented him with a marshmallow. I placed it on the shelf in his room right at eye level and within reach. I explained that it was his, and he could eat it--BUT--if it was still on that shelf when I came back, I would give him a second marshmallow also, and he could eat both.

Then I left for 15 minutes. I waited with mild anxiety. Would he fail? Was he eating it RIGHT NOW? When I went back into the room he was sitting on his bed, hands clasped together between his knees, staring straight in front of him into space. This is his "time out" pose, oddly enough. And there was the marshmallow, sitting right where I'd left it, a foot away from him. When I came in, he leapt to his feet with a grin on his face, completely pleased with himself. And he scarfed those two marshmallows at the same time, stuffing them into his face with total satisfaction.

After reading the article I think I'll try it on my older kids, too--it's important information to know, whether your kid has impulse control or not. For one thing, you can teach them tricks to help them control their impulses if you know that they failed the test. I am going to buy mini candy bars, and big candy bars. I'll tell Skyler and E (6 and 9) that they can have the little one now, and it's theirs--BUT--if they bring it to me tomorrow morning uneaten, they get the bigger version of the candy bar also. We'll see how they do. Care to place bets?

Posted by Daboo in News at 09:44

Wednesday, January 6, 2010

Welcome to the Homestarmy - The Fox

It is clear some of us aren't as diligent about posting things to the blog as we used to be. With consult from AoD, Ladies & Gentlemen of The Homestarmy, it is my privilege to introduce a *new feature writer to our auspicious blog. For some time Listener Jim has been a weekly contributor to mine and AoD's podcast, Trek West 5. He has shown himself to be intelligent, articulate, and funny. He will be a nice addition to our team.

So with much fanfare and adulation, please welcome to our ranks: The Fox.

*Joey still needs to set a few things up for him in the database to give him author rights, but very soon he will be able to start writing.

Posted by Radar in News at 13:37

Thursday, August 13. 2009

In Case You Didn't Know

Paramore - New Music - More Music Videos

Paramore has a new song and video. Unfortunately, they're not stopping in the SLC anytime soon.

Dates for Paramore's Brand New Eyes Tour, according to Fueled by Ramen/ Atlantic Records:

- Â» 9/29 - Pomona, CA @ Fox Theater
- Â» 10/1 - Los Angeles @ Hollywood Palladium
- Â» 10/2 - San Francisco @ Warfield Theatre
- Â» 10/4 - Denver @ The Fillmore
- Â» 10/6 - Kansas City @ Uptown Theater
- Â» 10/7 - St. Louis @ The Pageant
- Â» 10/9 - Maplewood, MN @ Myth
- Â» 10/10 - Chicago @ House of Blues
- Â» 10/11 - Detroit @ The Fillmore
- Â» 10/15 - Toronto @ Kool Haus
- Â» 10/16 - Montclair, NJ @ The Wellmont Theatre
- Â» 10/17 - Philadelphia @ Electric Factory
- Â» 10/19 - Boston @ House of Blues
- Â» 10/21 - New York @ Hammerstein Ballroom
- Â» 10/24 - Norfolk, VA @ The NorVa
- Â» 10/26 - Orlando, FL @ House of Blues
- Â» 10/27 - Atlanta @ The Tabernacle
- Â» 11/1 - Nashville, TN @ Ryman Auditorium

Posted by The Mad Giggler in News at 09:56

Wednesday, March 25, 2009

Maintenance

Posted on behalf of AoD.

Our ISP has announced that our server will be running from emergency/UPS power from 10:00 PM tonight (March 25) until tomorrow at 10:00 AM.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in News at 19:17

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Corporal Punishment is BACK!

In this NYTimes article, well, I'll just re-post it here.

Europeans Debate Castration of Sex Offenders
By DAN BILEFSKY

PRAGUE — Pavel remembers the violent night sweats two days before the murder. He went to see a family doctor, who said they would go away. But after viewing a Bruce Lee martial arts film, he said, he felt uncontrollable sexual desires. He invited a 12-year-old neighbor home. Then he stabbed the boy repeatedly.

His psychiatrist says Pavel derived his sexual pleasure from the violence.

More than 20 years have passed. Pavel, then 18, spent seven years in prison and five years in a psychiatric institution. During his last year in prison, he asked to be surgically castrated. Having his testicles removed, he said, was like draining the gasoline from a car hard-wired to crash. A large, dough-faced man, he is sterile and has forsaken marriage, romantic relationships and sex, he said. His life revolves around a Catholic charity, where he is a gardener.

"I can finally live knowing that I am no harm to anybody," he said during an interview at a McDonald's here, as children played loudly nearby. "I am living a productive life. I want to tell people that there is help."

He refused to give his last name for fear of being hounded.

Whether castration can help rehabilitate violent sex offenders has come under new scrutiny after the Council of Europe's anti-torture committee last month called surgical castration "invasive, irreversible and mutilating" and demanded that the Czech Republic stop offering the procedure to violent sex offenders. Other critics said that castration threatened to lead society down a dangerous road toward eugenics. The Czech Republic has allowed at least 94 prisoners over the past decade to be surgically castrated. It is the only country in Europe that uses the procedure for sex offenders. Czech psychiatrists supervising the treatment — a one-hour operation that involves removal of the tissue that produces testosterone — insist that it is the most foolproof way to tame sexual urges in dangerous predators suffering from extreme sexual disorders.

Surgical castration has been a means of social control for centuries. In ancient China, eunuchs were trusted to serve the imperial family inside the palace grounds; in Italy several centuries ago, youthful male choir members were castrated to preserve their high singing voices.

These days it can be used to treat testicular cancer and some advanced cases of prostate cancer.

Now, more countries in Europe are considering requiring or allowing chemical castration for violent sex offenders. There is intense debate over whose rights take precedence: those of sex offenders, who could be subjected to a punishment that many consider cruel, or those of society, which expects protection from sexual predators.

Poland is expected to become the first nation of the European Union to give judges the right to impose chemical castration on at least some convicted pedophiles, using hormonal drugs to curb sexual appetite; the impetus for the change was the arrest of a 45-year-old man in September who had fathered two children by his young daughter. Spain, after a convicted pedophile killed a child, is considering plans to offer chemical castration.

Last year, the governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, signed legislation requiring courts to order chemical castration for offenders convicted of certain sex crimes a second time.

In the Czech Republic, the issue was brought home last month when Antonin Novak, 43, was sentenced to life in prison after raping and killing Jakub Simanek, a 9-year-old boy who disappeared last May. Mr. Novak, who had served four and a half years in prison for sexual offenses in Slovakia, had been ordered to undergo outpatient treatment, but had failed to show up several months before the murder. Advocates of surgical castration argued that had he been castrated, the tragedy could have been prevented.

Hynek Blasko, Jakub's father, expressed indignation that human rights groups were putting the rights of criminals ahead of those of victims. "My personal tragedy is that my son is in heaven and he is never coming back, and all I have left of him is 1.5 kilograms of ashes," he said in an interview. "No one wants to touch the rights of the pedophiles, but what about the rights of a 9-year-old boy with his life ahead of him?"

Ales Butala, a Slovenian human rights lawyer who led the Council of Europe's delegation to the Czech Republic, argued that surgical castration was unethical, because it was not medically necessary and deprived castrated men of the right to reproduce. He also challenged its effectiveness, saying that the council's committee had discovered three cases of castrated Czech sex offenders who had gone on to commit violent crimes, including pedophilia and attempted murder.

Although the procedure is voluntary, Mr. Butala said that he believed some offenders felt they had no choice.

"Sex offenders are requesting castration in hope of getting released from a life of incarceration," he said. "Does that really free and informed consent?"

But government health officials here and some Czech psychiatrists counter that castration can be effective and argue that by seeking to outlaw the practice, the council is putting potential victims at risk.

Dr. Martin Holly, a leading sexologist and psychiatrist who is director of the Psychiatric Hospital Bohnice in Prague, said none of the nearly 100 sex offenders who had been physically castrated had committed further offenses.

A Danish study of 900 castrated sex offenders in the 1960s suggested the rate of repeat offenses dropped after surgical castration to 2.3 percent from 80 percent.

But human rights groups say that such studies are inconclusive because they rely on self-reporting by sex offenders. Other psychiatric experts argue that sexual pathology is in the brain and cannot be cured by surgery.

Dr. Holly, who has counseled convicted sex offenders for four decades, stressed that the procedure was being allowed only for repeat violent offenders who suffered from severe sexual disorders. Moreover, he said, the procedure is undertaken only with the informed consent of the patient and with the approval of an independent committee of psychiatric and legal experts.

Jaroslav Novak, chief of urology at the Faculty Hospital Na Bulovce in Prague, said: "This is not a very common procedure. We carry it out maybe once every one to two years at most."

Several states, including Texas, Florida and California, now allow or mandate chemical castration for certain convicted sex offenders.

Dr. Fred S. Berlin, founder of the Sexual Disorders Clinic at Johns Hopkins University, argued that chemical castration was less physically harmful than surgery and that it provided a safeguard, because a psychiatrist could inform the courts or police if the patient ordered to undergo treatment failed to show up. A surgically castrated patient, Dr. Berlin said, can order testosterone over the Internet.

For Hynek Blasko, the father of Jakub Simanek, neither form of castration is the answer. "These people must be under permanent detention where they can be monitored," he said. "There has to be a difference between the rights of the victim and the perpetrator."

Posted by The Mad Giggler in News at 08:32

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

An Announcement

Ahem, ahem, ahem, ahem.

I have an announcement to make. As part of our continuing effort to improve the earth, Mrs. Johnny Elbows and I have started a blog. Our blog is a food blog. We will be posting recipes on it. Some of them will be old favorites, some will be new inventions, and some might be chronicles of our disastrous attempts to create something new.

You can find our blog here.

Feel free to let us know what you think.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in News at 09:28

Friday, December 5, 2008

Hospitals Now a Theater in Mexico's Drug War

I'm reposting this from the New York Times for two reasons. 1) Tijuana is like home to me and it rips me up that this stuff is going on there. I've been to some of these hospitals. 2) If I don't repost it here, I know none of you will actually click on the link to read it.

By MARC LACEY

Published: December 4, 2008

TIJUANA, Mexico — The sedated patient, his bullet wounds still fresh from a shootout the night before, was lying on a gurney in the intensive care unit of a prestigious private hospital here late last month with intravenous fluids dripping into his arm. Suddenly, steel-faced gunmen barged in and filled him with even more bullets. This time, he was dead for sure.

Hit men pursuing rivals into intensive care units and emergency rooms. Shootouts in lobbies and corridors. Doctors kidnapped and held for ransom, or threatened with death if a wounded gunman dies under their care. With alarming speed, Mexico's violent drug war is finding its way into the seeming sanctuary of the nation's hospitals, shaking the health care system and leaving workers fearing for their lives while trying to save the lives of others.

“Remember that hospital scene from ‘The Godfather?’” asked Dr. Hector Rico, an otolaryngologist here, speaking about the part in which Michael Corleone saves his hospitalized father from a hit squad. “That’s how we live.”

An explosion of violence connected with Mexico's powerful drug cartels has left more than 5,000 people dead so far this year, nearly twice the figure from the year before, according to unofficial tallies by Mexican newspapers. The border region of the United States and Mexico, critical to the cartels' trafficking operation, has been the most violent turf of all, with 60 percent of all killings in the country last month occurring in the states of Chihuahua and Baja California, the government says. And it has raised fears that violence could spill across the border, because dozens of victims of drug violence have been treated at an El Paso hospital in the last year.

The federal government argues that the rising death toll reflects President Felipe Calderón's aggressive stance toward the cartels, which has forced traffickers into a bitter war over the dwindling turf that remains.

In fact, most of the deaths do appear to be the result of infighting among traffickers. But plenty of innocent people are dying too, and the spate of horrifying killings — bodies are routinely decapitated or otherwise mutilated and left in public places with handwritten notes propped up nearby — has left people from all walks of life worried that they might be next.

“If a patient is in the E.R. bleeding, we should be focused on the wounds,” said Dr. Rico, who has led doctors in street demonstrations to protest the rising violence in and around Tijuana, where 170 bodies were discovered in November alone, the bloodiest month on record. “Now we have to watch our backs and worry about someone barging in with a gun.”

Doctors feel particularly vulnerable. When they leave their offices, they say they face the risk of being kidnapped and held for ransom, as about two dozen local physicians have been in the last few years. Doctors also complain about receiving blunt threats from patients or patients' relatives. “‘¡vame o te mato,’ save me or I will kill you, is what one orthopedic surgeon said he was told by a patient, who evidently did not grasp the contradiction.

Adding to the anxiety, hospitals and health care workers have to notify the authorities when a patient comes in with a gunshot or knife wound, a legal requirement that the traffickers know well. That leads to further threats.

Then, there is the risk of shootouts.

Authorities suspect that the killers and the victim in the intensive care unit at the private hospital, Hospital del Prado, had links to the drug cartels that are wreaking so much havoc across Mexico. Nowhere to be found were the police, who received a call from the hospital authorities when the shooting victim, who was in his 20s, first arrived, as is required by law. The police did not show up until after the gunmen had come and gone and bullet casings littered the hospital floor.

Hospital General de Tijuana, the city's main public hospital, has twice been ringed by police officers and soldiers in the past 20 months. The first time, in April 2007, gunmen stormed the building either to rescue a fellow cartel member who was being treated in the emergency room or to kill a rival, said the police, who were not certain which scenario it was. Two police officers were killed, and all but one of the gunmen got away.

A video taken by a hospital worker revealed a terrifying scene, with two state police officers firing inside the emergency room to protect patients while doctors, nurses and others cowered in closets, under gurneys and wherever else they could find cover.

An elderly woman in a wheelchair is seen hiding under a blanket, while a patient in a hospital gown is sprawled on the floor near his hospital bed.

Meanwhile, panicked patients were escorted out of the building, some with IVs in their arms, to a nearby sports field.

The second time was this past April, when soldiers in camouflage ringed Hospital General de Tijuana, shutting it down while doctors treated eight traffickers who were wounded in various shootouts in the city. The Mexican Army was apparently trying to prevent a repeat of the 2007 shootout. In a recent third episode, soldiers were sent to the hospital for a bomb scare.

"Fear has become part of our lives," said one of the doctors at Hospital General de Tijuana, speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals from organized-crime figures. "There's panic. We don't know when the shooting is going to break out again."

The violence is already affecting service, as hospitals armor themselves with more police officers and guards. To protest the spate of killings, some doctors closed their offices for a day in November. And Tijuana clinics are closing earlier on a regular basis, with more and more doctors shunning late-night medical care as too risky.

In Ciudad Juárez, which abuts El Paso, the local Red Cross hospital called a halt to 24-hour emergency service earlier in the year after gunmen killed four people who were being treated for gunshot wounds. Emergency service now ends at 10 p.m.

Paramedics in Ciudad Juárez temporarily stopped treating gunshot victims one day in August after receiving death threats over their emergency radios. They resumed ambulance service later the same day, but only after they were provided armed police escorts.

An episode that took place in the early morning hours of Oct. 5 in Tijuana shows the complicated new environment in which health care workers find themselves. After a major shootout, two wounded men were carried to Clínica Londres, a private health clinic that was closed for the night. There was a lone nurse inside the locked facility, tending to the patients there, and she initially did not open up to the small group of anxious people outside.

The nurse was not qualified to treat gunshot victims, and the clinic did not offer emergency care. But the crowd outside included two men dressed in law enforcement uniforms, who banged menacingly on the door.

Frightened of the men in uniform "criminals routinely wear police uniforms in Mexico" she eventually relented, she told authorities. What happened next is shrouded in confusion.

Tipped off, the army and the police arrived at the clinic and asked the nurse and two other employees who had since arrived if they were treating gunshot victims, and they were told no. Then, hearing a groan from another room, the authorities discovered the two wounded men "the men in uniform had already fled" and accused the health care workers and the group of people who arrived with the patients of having links to the drug traffickers.

The clinic workers, who have been detained for two months while authorities decide whether to charge them, deny that they did anything wrong. "It is not true that this is a narco-clinic," said their lawyer, Rafael Flores Esquerro.

Another Tijuana doctor, Fernando Guzmán Cordero, has also found himself denying connections to traffickers. Dr. Guzmán, a prominent general surgeon, was kidnapped in April and suffered a bullet wound to his leg. But the kidnappers released him 36 hours later, even giving him cab fare home.

Then two weeks later, after another Tijuana shootout, a group of gunshot victims were taken to his clinic for treatment. In radio call-in shows and on Internet chat sites, local residents wondered whether the traffickers were now in cahoots with

Dr. Guzmán, something he vehemently denied.

“People can say whatever they want,” he said. “They say I kidnapped myself or made a pact with them. They say a million things. I know who I am. Why would I get involved with criminals?”

The problem everyone in Tijuana faces, no matter their line of work, is that they might be associating with traffickers without even knowing it. Doctors say they now screen their patients carefully. Traffickers pay well and in cash, but they are not worth the trouble they bring, doctors say.

But hospitals do not have that luxury. “We’re not judges,” said Carolina Aubanel Riedel, whose family owns Hospital del Prado. “We treat those who arrive.”

Posted by The Mad Giggler in News at 08:24

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

Ancient of Days for President

This cartoon inspired quite a conversation between AoD and I. Someone once told me that discussing politics is the best way to offend friends. If you're willing to be my friend even if I offend you with my political views, please keep reading.

AoD: Too bad there's not an elite running.

Johnny Elbows: Which elite would you recommend?

AoD: I always felt Ross Perot would have been a good President

Johnny Elbows: I think you're right, but he's a little bit old now.

AoD: I don't know, I always liked Pres. Hinckley's comment when Mike Wallace accused him of running and perpetuating a gerontocracy - as I recall, it went something along the lines of "Isn't it wonderful, having the voice of experience?"

Ah, here we go:

Mike Wallace: There are those who say, this is a gerontocracy, this is a church run by old men.

Gordon B. Hinckley: Isn't it wonderful? To have a man of maturity at the head, a man of judgment, who isn't blown about by every wind of doctrine?

Johnny Elbows: What about this? "Studies based on census data show that by age 79, one in six Americans is suffering from cognitive decline, and that each year 12 percent of that group progress to full-blown dementia." Perot is 78 right now.

AoD: Wow

Who performed the study?

Johnny Elbows: Dr. Thomas Perls.

AoD: I still think Perot might be a better President than McCain - there's only, what, 6 years between them?

Johnny Elbows: Yeah, I think you may be right. I'm not much of a fan of McCain or Obama.

AoD: I think it's time to give a chance someone who has successfully built a business at some point in the late 1970's through the 1990's - and I don't count people who sold their business right before the tech bubble burst. :) It would not assure, but perhaps at least indicate a likelihood that they're intelligent, a good leader, and can change with events

Johnny Elbows: So, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs . . .

AoD: I think there's a strong possibility that Bill or Steve would make a better President than either of the two primary candidates

It's a bit like me voting for Matheson

I consider myself fairly Republican on most issues, but when I spoke to Matheson at one of his events back when he first ran, we disagreed on nearly every conclusion, but I voted for him then (and continue to do so) because I respect the thinking process as well as his ability to elucidate it.

Contrary to the popular belief that "I have to be right", I can respectfully disagree, as long as there's something worthy of my respect behind the disagreement. :)

Johnny Elbows: Steve Jobs as President--The country goes from being heavily indebted to having a multi-trillion dollar budget surplus over the course of two terms. Every citizen is required to wear one of five approved uniforms. Those who do not are derided as inferior and aren't granted access to many government services. The flag is changed from the

stars and stripes to a white banner with an off-white circle in the middle of it.

Bill Gates as President--The vast majority of the federal budget is diverted to military spending. The US goes on an expansion binge, taking over every country that has a healthy economy. If a country manages to put up a good resistance, specially trained "culture operatives" infiltrate the country, convincing the general population to ally themselves with the US, whereupon the country is annexed as a new state and is promptly given a new name that has nothing to do with its previous history or culture. After two terms, the US is the only country left in the world.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in News at 15:01

Monday, September 29, 2008

Politics and Pointing Fingers.

Earlier today, Sideshow shared an article from CNN with me. His comment on the article was, "If lawmakers spent half as much time trying to get things done, as they do blaming one another, we'd be a lot better off."

Sideshow, I'm going to have to respectfully disagree with you. I believe that the men who wrote the Constitution not only knew that things like this would happen; I believe that they expected it and wanted it to happen this way. I believe that the men who wrote the Constitution believed, like I believe, that hasty decisions are, generally speaking, poorly thought out and poorly implemented.

Our government isn't designed to get things done quickly. In history class, we learn about the checks and balances that are built into the Constitution, but as our history teachers praise these checks and balances, they often fail to point out what their real purpose is. The checks and balances help to preserve freedom by making it hard to pass laws. They make it so that our government can't get anything done. They encourage politicians to sit around pointing fingers instead of accomplishing things.

I don't know about you, but I'd rather have them pointing fingers--at least then their hands aren't reaching into my wallet.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in News at 15:21

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Patriotism and Wiretaps

A new domestic wiretap law is looking like it will soon pass the House of Representatives (see this article for more information).

Among other things, this law will, for all intents and purposes, grant retroactive immunity to the telecommunications providers who, illegally, cooperated with past wiretap requests. Why are our representatives issuing a "Get Out of Jail Free" card to these organizations who deserve punishment for their criminal actions? This quote from the above-referenced article is very revealing:

Rep. Pete Hoekstra, the ranking Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, said the intelligence community depends on "the backing of patriotic private companies."

In other words, according to Representative Hoekstra, these organizations deserve to be let off the hook because they were patriotic. Perhaps, according to Hoekstra's definition of patriotism, they were patriotic. I have to say though, that I have a different definition of patriotism. Let's take a moment and look at the roots of the word patriot. The main root of the word is the greek word patrios, which means "of one's fathers." Building a definition from this root, I conclude that a patriot is someone who loves the land of his fathers.

I personally do not believe that this refers to a certain piece of ground; I think that the issue of patriotism is a larger issue than a simple matter of property rights. To me, the land of my fathers refers to a land where certain ideals were upheld. One of these ideals is that

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized

I believe that there are cases where a wiretap is necessary and good. They are an important part of many criminal investigations, but if this is really still the land of my fathers, then they should not be granted without probable cause "supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the [line to be tapped], and the [conversations to be overheard]."

Allowing companies to breach this protection, and then abrogating the just punishment of the law upon them because their actions were supposedly "patriotic" makes a mockery of true patriots. According to my definition of patriotism, a true patriot would uphold the ideals of the land of his fathers instead of trading them off for a mess of pottage. What's your definition?

Posted by Johnny Elbows in News at 14:07

Sunday, October 28, 2007

Bush Presidency = French Revolution?

I read this fascinating comparison of the French Revolution with the Bush Presidency today. Agree or disagree with how Bush has run the country since 9/11, the parallels are quite interesting.

Here's an example:

If the French [Revolution] had a slogan, it was that attributed to the great orator Louis de Saint-Just: "No liberty for the enemies of liberty." Saint-Just's pithy phrase (like President Bush's variant, "We must not let foreign enemies use the forums of liberty to destroy liberty itself"). . .

Here's the link for those who want to read it: [Bush's Dangerous Liaisons](#)

Posted by The Mad Giggler in News at 08:54

Tuesday, October 16. 2007

I take it all back!

Well, not really. TimeSelect was a really stupid and shortsighted idea, but I'm happy to have access to the op-eds again. For instance, this piece from Stephen Colbert via Maureen Dowd(y).

A Mock Columnist Run Amok

So, I'll try to add something with more content next time, AoD. Stop yer whinin'!

Posted by The Mad Giggler in News at 14:04

Tuesday, March 27. 2007

AoD is a no good, lousy...

Sure enough as soon as I bother to post something on the Homestarmy, who comes along and posts something, nay I say several things. Which in turn manages to push my post down below the fold.

Shame on you AoD!

Posted by Radar in News at 12:58

Wednesday, March 14, 2007

Allow me to fill the void left by AoD

Did you know that there was something special about today at both 1:59am and pm?

That is correct! You can write out the date and time as this: 3/14 1:59. A slight modification/variation of 3.14159; also known as pi! I thought I would share that with you my greek friends.

Don't worry everyone, I am prepared to fill the void that Joey's love has left.

Posted by Radar in News at 17:16

Friday, January 26. 2007

Politics

Click Me!

This article caught my attention this morning, particularly after a conversation I had Tuesday night at Ming's. I know there's not much to be done at this point, but I still wish more of the public had listened to people like those six professors.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in News at 10:42

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

This just shows you can find humor in anything!

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT THE THEMES DISCUSSED HERE ARE NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART. READ AT YOUR OWN DISCRETION.
(THAT MEANS YOU WREN)

While at work the other day, one of my co-workers started laughing when I walked into the room. Concerned that I might, one more time, be the butt of some unknown joke, I inquired as to his laughter. He told me that he had been reading an article about the hanging of of Saddam Husseins' half brother Barzan Ibrahim. It talked about how his hanging was different from others in that his head came off when his body dropped in the gallows. Many were outraged that the governement had mutilated his body and did not believe that it was an "accident."

But the film showed that his head had indeed come off during the hanging. Turns out this kind of thing is possible. The article states: "Egyptian forensics expert Fakhri Mohammed Saleh told Al-Jazeera that decapitations sometimes occur during hangings if the rope used is of the wrong quality or the people carrying out the executions are inexperienced."

But that is not the truely funny thing. This point in the article is the funny part: "Al-Dabbagh said the gallows were built to international standards and in accordance with human rights organizations.

But Param-Preet Singh, counsel for the international justice program at Human Rights Watch, said she was not aware of any internationally recognized standards for hanging.

"Under no circumstances can an execution be in accordance with human rights standards," she said."

Posted by Radar in News at 07:20

Tuesday, January 16. 2007

So while not a direct prediction....

AoD was somewhere around the mark!

Posted by Sideshow in News at 11:05