

Adieu Judy

Over the weekend, Vermont lost a rare and eloquent voice in local media with the death of Judy Gorman. She penned many colorful stories for a variety of publications such as the *Brattleboro Reformer*, *The Commons* (a Windham County newspaper), and the *Vermont Guardian*. A commentary she wrote for the *Guardian* in 2004 Gorman, ever so witty, cut through the crap and made you laugh. Here is a portion of that column:

Of all the pressing concerns riveting the electorate over this protracted presidential campaign season — who has the best hair; how much blood must be shed to qualify for a Purple Heart, and whether Dick Cheney literally speaks out of the side of his mouth — one question stands out: Why do so many people consistently vote against their own best interest?

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see why the wealthiest in the U.S. support the Republican Party, since a vote for Bush-Cheney '04 is a vote for themselves. But why would one single working man or woman cast a vote for George W. Bush? It's a conundrum.

One possibility is the likeability factor, which once upon a time was called character, and is now reduced to the absurdity of whether or not you would drink a beer with the candidate. Well, get over it. The only time those guys would drink a beer with you is on St. Patrick's Day in Boston — in an election year.

How about that common man touch? Could it be that deep in our hearts we long for a guy who chokes on a pretzel during NFL halftime, has trouble getting on the "internets," and refuses to ask for directions when he's lost his way? Surely we require more from a potential president than ineptitude, intransigence, and the snack food habits of the average Joe. There's got to be something else going on here.

That something else is wedge issues — the very antithesis of George W. Bush's self-identification as "a uniter, not a divider." The Bush strategy cynically exploits insularity, ignorance, and paranoia for political gain.

The president uses the most personal of convictions as tools to set neighbor against neighbor; parent against child, gays against straights, those who were born once against those who do it all over again, whites against people of color, the left and right coasts against the heartland, and U.S. citizens against everyone else in the world. Fear of "the other" is tearing this country apart.

Previous wedge issues include the Pledge of Allegiance, public display of the Ten Commandments, flag burning, and gun control (or lack thereof). This year, however, polarization derives from the most apolitical of activities — sex and its consequences, both intentional and inadvertent. Not so very long ago, a popular governor of New York was considered unfit for the presidency because he was divorced, and then subsequently re-married, to the hyper-ebullient Happy Rockefeller. Interracial marriage was illegal in many states, as was cohabitation between unmarried men and women.

Now, of course, the hot topic is gay marriage, the 21st-century touchstone for neo-Puritan rage. Sex is OK, but only within the bonds of matrimony, only between opposite genders, and only for the purpose of producing new life. Or, in TV commercials for "erectile dysfunction."

According to Bush, utilizing sophisticated advances in reproductive technology is perfectly fine, but only if the unused blastocysts are left in frozen equilibrium for the foreseeable future. Or, thrown in a dumpster. The use of embryonic stem cells to improve the lives of men and women suffering from incurable diseases is anathema to the religious right, which gives rise to an unconscionable distinction between protecting the life of the unborn and ignoring the lives of the already born.

Using religious tenets as weapons in the political wars is exactly what the framers of the Constitution sought to avoid when they made a clear separation between the interests of the Church and the interests of the State. It is the cornerstone of the Bill of Rights: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The wedge issues so cunningly employed by the Republican right for its own ends are, in fact, not delegated to the federal government, but reserved to the people, as stated in the 10th Amendment. Such matters are neither liberal nor conservative, nor, in fact, the domain of any political party whatsoever. They are nobody's business but your own.

Keep it that way.

Our hearts and prayers are with the Gorman family and her many friends. Hers was a unique voice in today's pre-packaged punditry, and will be sorely missed by many.



letters • • • • •

CORRECTION: The name of the planner at the Northwest Regional Planning Commission is Bill Rose. His name was incorrect in an article posted on March 29. Also, the NRPC position does not preclude necessary all-terrain vehicles (ATV) crossings (in situations where there are no other opportunities to cross the LVRT), but the NRPC is opposed to complete access of the trail by ATVs.

The taxman in Montpelier

Will taxes be going up in Vermont this year? Cue up the old tune, "Taxman," by The Beatles.

With the solid Democrat majority in the legislature, they say their focus is on creating jobs but, they need more revenue to fulfill their agenda. Pres. Pro Tem Peter Shumlin and House Speaker Gaye Symington vow not to increase taxes but their past actions speak louder than words.

From heating fuel taxes to pay for contractors to insulate homes and gas guzzlers' tax to pay for someone else's transportation, to increased taxes on commercial real estate transactions to subsidize our dairy farmers, there's never enough money for redistribution.

The Democrats are in charge and control purse strings. They increased the minimum wage and eliminated secret ballots for workers on union representation. They introduced a "rich" couple's income tax for those earning more than \$100,000 and another tax to pay for Canadian-style "universal coverage" health care.

Medicaid is still under funded by \$60 million. This hidden tax is paid by high health insurance rates that are two times the national average. Democrat leaders are now asking for \$500,000 to create a health care rationing board in the event there's a tax shortfall. We'll pay with our lives through rationing.

Gov. Jim Douglas campaigned on an affordability agenda and the Democrats echoed the same concern to win votes. After the election Democrat veterans indicated our tax burden isn't bad and the rich still have the capacity to pay higher taxes for the greater good. Then, ignoring the voters' mandate for a major property tax reduction, they proposed spending millions to expand education to pre-kindergarten children.

Art Woolf's Off the Rail's data showed that if we don't start controlling spending, "virtually all state revenues in 2030 will be needed to pay for just for educa-

tion and human services." What state government needs should be in balance with what Vermonters can afford.

Mr. Taxman, spare me a dime or your victims will vote with their feet.

Frank Mazur
South Burlington

You get what you vote for

To all the folks who voted for the Democrats to end the war: You've all been Sanjia'd.

Louie "The Cowman" Beaudin
Burlington

Douglas: Is he aware of climate change?

Gov. Jim Douglas' latest comment about climate change reveals either his profound lack of knowledge or a fool's denial.

Offering his observation that "February was a below normal month for temperature" as a noteworthy event that could balance the overwhelming scientific evidence demonstrating climate change is a severe disconnect from reality usually suffered by the likes of Pres. George W. Bush or Sen. James Inofe, R-OK.

Maybe the governor should

continued on next page

CROW BOOKSHOP

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—John Harington (1561-1612)

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

A SECRET MEETING IN THE DARKEST HEART OF BLUE AMERICA... NOW THAT OUR PUPPETS CONTROL CONGRESS, WE CAN UNDERMINE THE MORALE OF THE TROOPS-- BY UNDERMINING THE CREDIBILITY OF THEIR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF!

IT IS TRULY A BRILLIANT PLAN, COMRADE MOORE!

GET PELOSI ON THE PHONE IMMEDIATELY!

QUICKLY! WE MUSTN'T WASTE A MOMENT!

THEIR MOST FLEETING WISH IS OUR URGENT COMMAND!

DEMOCRATS RECEIVE THEIR ORDERS! OUR SECRET MASTERS HAVE SPOKEN! WE ARE TO PURSUE INVESTIGATION RATHER THAN LEGISLATION!

STAFFERS SEARCH FOR ANY FEEBLE EXCUSE TO ISSUE SUBPEONAS! KARL ROVE ONCE THREW RECYCLABLES IN THE GARBAGE!

GOT ANYTHING ELSE?

JUST THE COMPLETELY JUSTIFIED FIRINGS OF EIGHT INCOMPETENT U.S. ATTORNEYS WHO SERVED AT THE PLEASURE OF THE PRESIDENT.

THAT'S IT!

THE BELEAGUERED ADMINISTRATION TRIES TO STAND ITS GROUND! DAMMIT--WE CAN'T GIVE IN! IT'S NOT US I'M WORRIED ABOUT-- IT'S THE TROOPS!

SOROS AND MOORE ARE BEHIND THIS-- I JUST KNOW IT!

IS THERE NO END TO THEIR MACHIAVELLIAN ANTI-TROOP SCHEMING?

SENSIBLE CENTRISTS PREDICT DIRE CONSEQUENCES--FOR THE DEMOCRATS! THERE'S GOING TO BE A REAL BACKLASH IF THESE POLITICIANS CONTINUE TO POLITICIZE THE POLITICAL PROCESS!

STRANGELY, THE PUBLIC DOES NOT SEEM TO AGREE. ACCORDING TO A USA TODAY POLL, 73% OF AMERICANS SUPPORT THE INVESTIGATIONS!

MY GOD! YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS, DON'T YOU?

SOROS GOT TO THEM, TOO!!

THERE'S NOTHING THE PUBLIC HATES MORE THAN THAT!

LET'S APPOINT OSAMA BIN LADEN AS SPECIAL COUNSEL!

GET ME PELOSI!

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continued from previous page

speak to the Canadians, Russians, and Danes who are at this moment struggling with each other over the potential resources exposed by the melting of the Arctic ice caps — an event not witnessed in thousands of years.

It is tragic that Vermonters in trying to bring political balance to their state continue to rely on a man who is truly “out of touch” with the major challenges we face as a people. Issues such as the war, energy use, climate change, and job creation need explicit leadership and solutions not the politically expedient slogans, “accountability and affordability.”

My advice Jim, “Wake up, lead or get out of the way!”

*Mark Furnari
South Burlington*

Omer is not objective

Mohammed Omer’s talk at the Centre Congregational Church (broadcast with several repeats on BCTV) last year was reported in a front page *Brattleboro Reformer* story “Gaza reporter tells violent story” and in the *Vermont Guardian*.

It was followed the next day by an editorial titled “Courage under fire” based on an interview with him at the *Reformer* office. And although Omer as-

sured the *Reformer* staff that “he tries to be evenhanded,” there is little evidence of his objectivity, and even less of his truthfulness.

According to the *Reformer* editorial, Omer said that his brother Hussam “was killed by an Israeli sniper while walking to school.” But on his website, Omer claimed that his brother was killed while “sitting at home when he was shot in the face, chest, back, legs.” Then, on the next page of the website, Omer stated that his brother was killed in the street, fleeing the demolition of his family home. These are three very contradictory stories.

But there is more, much more. Omer just can’t get his story straight. His inconsistency is a sign of untruthfulness. Contradicting his claim that “Hussam ... had nothing to do with any violent or even political movement,” the newspaper *Haaretz* reported that on Oct. 18, “Tariq Abu Hussein, 39, a well-known field commander of the Hamas military wing, and another Hamas militant, Hassam Mughier ...” (were killed when) “troops fired on a group of armed Hamas militants laying explosives along paths used by IDF tanks in the Salam neighborhood of the Rafah Refugee Camp, the IDF and Hamas said.”

A search of the Palestinian Authority’s “Names of Al Aqsa Martyrs,” which lists on a daily basis every single Palestinian killed leads one to believe that Omer’s brother (#2764) was the Hamas militant killed in “Rafah, 18/10/03.”

Omer’s lack of credibility is no surprise when you consider that he is the paid Gaza correspondent for the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (WRMEA) that sponsored and paid for his U.S. whirlwind 14-day, 14-city cross-country trip.

The sympathetic reporting in the *Reformer*, the *Guardian* and *iBrattleboro.com* neglected to mention that the publisher of *WRMEA* is the American Educational Trust, whose president is heavily involved in Holocaust denial organizations, and that *WRMEA* itself is virulently anti-Israel, a constant source of distortions and lies about Israel, as well as of anti-Semitic stories.

If we can’t rely on Omer’s truthfulness about the death of his brother, is there reason to believe his gruesome stories of “heartless” Israelis slaughtering innocent men, women and children in Rafah?

*Bob Grossbaum
Whitingham*