

Dartmouth Class of 1960
Newsletter
September 16, 2004

Hi Denny!

I can't remember the last time, if ever, that I contributed to the class newsletter – seriously doubting that I had anything of interest to say. That might still be true, but I found the July and September editions sufficiently interesting and thought-provoking to inspire this missive.

I can relate to the “kayaking two miles uphill into a stiff wind”, but I usually go four to six miles downhill in whitewater. Much more fun! My roommate of 42 plus years says her IQ is too high to engage in whitewater kayaking.

I have tried on numerous occasions, unsuccessfully, to track down Bob Messner, aka “Wraparound”. Now that I know he is alive and well, I will redouble my efforts. I find the college website most unhelpful for these searches, but I might be technically challenged.

I will withhold comment on Bob Caulfield's presidential preferences, but found some of his other comments interesting. While I might share some of his views on the US “go-it-alone” approach to Iraq, I do not share his optimism about any valuable assistance the UN might provide. I believe that the UN is a toothless, paper tiger with zero common sense, zero resolve, and zero decision-making ability, completely bogged down in Euro-politico babble. Witness, for example, its failure to do anything about Sadaam(sp.?) Hussein despite 17 resolutions and empty threats of action and its subsequent refusal to support the US efforts in Iraq, its failure to do take any meaningful action in the Sudan concerning the Darfur(sp.?) refugee genocide, its failure to take any action at all in the North Korean human rights crisis, aided and abetted by the Chinese government and countless other instances of complete ineffectiveness.

In 2003, two major world institutions, the United Nations and the Vatican, rendered themselves completely irrelevant – the UN for all (and more) of the reasons cited above, and the Vatican for its failure to respond to the widespread problem of pedophilia among the clergy and the cover-up of the problem by the Church hierarchy. The Vatican dismissed the entire scandal as a peculiarly “American problem” attributable to our “corrupt society”. I have no interest or confidence in any of the pronouncements either of these once , allegedly, august institutions.

Concerning our “so called friends” France, Germany, Spain and (Bob forgot) Russia: Germany precipitated two world wars within fifty years and produced one of history's most ruthlessly brutal lunatics / tyrants in Adolph Hitler, and Russia brought us another of history's most ruthless brutal tyrants in Joseph Stalin and precipitated the “Cold War”. Both were responsible for outrageous atrocities against humanity. While I do not

excuse their refusal to support our efforts in Iraq, I understand their national propensity for tolerating and appeasing ruthless tyrants. Spain has a very long history of governmental instability, but at least the people voted to change the government leadership in response – at least partially - to the terrorist attacks in Madrid. That will encourage the terrorists to use that successful tactic to try to influence other free elections around the world!

France, on the other hand, having been twice rescued from the German invaders by the U.S., Canada and Great Britain at enormous cost in American lives and national treasure, declined to support our efforts in Iraq – not based on any high moral or ethical principle, but because it had valuable investments in, and obligations due from, Iraq and because Jacques Chirac wanted to enhance his personal image as a prominent and “independent” European and world leader. France’s response was inexcusable and unforgivable. We have traveled in France often and I speak reasonable French, but it will be a very long time before we travel there again or purchase any product produced there. I have zero confidence that any of these so called allies will shoulder any responsibility in fighting terrorism.

Having said that, we do, indeed, currently have a quagmire in Iraq and the outlook is not great. No one in the administration or in Congress from either party has been willing to identify the real enemy and to address the problem aggressively.

While we’re on Iraq, there have undoubtedly been terrible mistakes made at all levels in the planning and prosecution of the war. Similar mistakes were, also undoubtedly, made in the planning and execution of the Civil War, WWI and WW II. I wonder, if those wars had been subjected to the same hour-to-hour micro-analysis and critique of our modern news media, whether we ever would have succeeded in prosecuting any of them and whether, today, we might have a divided United States and a Europe completely dominated by Germany. Of course, Jacques Chirac would love that since Germany is his new best friend and our news media would be very proud of their accomplishments!

On a lighter note, the Canon A80 is a great multi-function digital camera with many of the manual and automatic features of a full function SLR digital camera. I have one of those and a Canon D30 (now obsolete) to pursue my new found photography hobby.

I like Andy Paul’s assessment of the likely result of a change in administration. I also agree that I cannot recall having ever seen or heard such bitter partisan vitriol and polarization in any previous political campaign. It’s nauseating.

Alan Danson and I enjoyed a very nice hike on Vail Mountain and a delightful lunch with Hap Dunning and his significant other several weeks ago. Hap was in town for a convention of lawyers concerned with environmental / water issues. For those who believe that the Western US water wars are a thing of the past (see China Beach), disputes over water rights are as much a part of the history of the American West as cowboys and Indians. The water wars are heating up again as arcane and antiquated laws developed in the late 1800s are being challenged in court. For example, when

Denver contracted for rights to water West of the Continental Divide and Los Angeles contracted for rights to water in the Colorado River, no one envisioned the burgeoning growth of the mountain resort areas and their enormous demand for water for both human sustenance and recreational use. Hap and his associates are on the cutting edge of this important issue.

One year ago, we organized the Dartmouth Club of the Vail Region, so named to include the area from Breckenridge and Keystone on the East end to Glenwood Springs and even Carbondale and Aspen on the West end. It has been a great success (53 at our initial event in August, '03, 63 at our final ski day and cocktail party in March, '04). We have not even scratched the surface of the huge number of graduates of Dartmouth and its affiliated schools in our extended Colorado valley. We've even had inquiries from Princeton and U. of Michigan types asking if we might consider them to be "affiliated".

Clearly, I can't keep up with the likes of Bruce Clark and his biking exploits, but I do ride to Glenwood Springs (68 miles) and to Copper Mountain (32 miles round trip and about 2,600 feet of vertical). By the way Bruce, I would not trust anything produced by Senator Robert C. Byrd, an old school, Southern slime-bag and ardent supporter of the Ku Klux Klan before it became politically incorrect!

In the film department, I strongly urge everyone to see a documentary produced by Jim Butterworth, class of ??, entitled "Seoul Train". It is a riveting account of the abuses of the North Korean population by their government (led by another ruthless, lunatic tyrant), their efforts to escape, and the Chinese government's heartless and illegal practice of returning the escapees to certain imprisonment, torture and death. It reveals another case of the complete failure of the UN to do anything to stop the abuses or the repatriation. Jim and his co-producer, Lisa Sleeth, took serious risks themselves in making the film. Jim is another stalwart member of our DCVR.

I am probably incoherent about the topic of academia and its politically correct, dumbed-down academic standards. I will withhold further comment in this already lengthy treatise, except to agree with "arch conservative curmudgeon" Needham's observations.

Lastly, it sounds like John Mitchell has identified the enemy!

Peace,

Joe McHugh '60