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The Behrend Beacon

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Wrong turn for the right wing

by Daniel J. Stasiewski
a&e editor

Rush Limbaugh and I are as far apart on the political spectrum as John Ashcroft and the ACLU, but I don't think it is appropriate to harshly lampoon the talk show host based on his recent admission of narcotics abuse.

Some of my friends have gleefully welcomed the news of Limbaugh's drug addiction, allowing their political motives to overshadow a true tragedy.

If politics is to be applied to the situation at all, it's more appropriate to look at the big-picture hypocrisy of the moral right.

Limbaugh has long been the advocate of the good and pure American existence, promoting personal responsibility above all else. Between the liberal bashing and the corporate advocacy, Limbaugh has always put himself on a pedestal above regular folks, proclaiming on his radio show, "The views on this program are right."

He has portrayed himself as an all-American, while relying on his status as a super-human moral leader to propagate his own political views.

The problem is an eight-year \$250 million dollar contract (making him the

highest paid radio personality in U.S. history) gives Limbaugh an affluent life-style that puts him at odds with the middle-class American attitudes he still promotes. It's not that he doesn't deserve the money, but his verbal and monetary powers allow him to construct a moral monopoly that goes unquestioned.

When Bill Bennet, author of "The Book of Virtues" and a self-proclaimed guardian of traditional values, was caught in a scandal surrounding his multi-million dollar gambling habit, Bennet quietly admitted to the charge and took a leave from public life. Still, his supporters made the claim that gambling doesn't harm anyone, and it didn't put his family finances at risk. Was it hypocrisy? Yes. Does anyone care? Not really.

Conservative Georgia Congressman and family advocate Bob Barr has been married three times after not one, but two divorces. South Dakota Congressman Bill Janklow is silently dealing with a second-degree manslaughter charge. And, of course, George W. Bush has in the past had his own substance abuse problems.

Like his conservative brethren, Limbaugh will eventually be forgiven

for his faults and retain his status of the right wing king. He'll get the reprieve he and other conservative commentators don't offer the opposition.

Why are their offenses are forgivable, when Bill Clinton's sex life is still used as a jab at his presidency and his wife's current position in the Senate? Senator Edward Kennedy, too, is still attacked first as a drunk before his political beliefs are scrutinized.

Conservatives paint the left in this country as a group of perverts and potheads, when the right-wingers try to hide their pasts as frat boys and philanderers. The holier-than-thou attitude of conservative talk show hosts and moral leaders in American is set up for implosion, and their do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do justification is a ridiculous and unacceptable attempt at redemption.

For the sake of Limbaugh as a fellow human being, I hope he makes it through his rehabilitation. But with crime like drug abuse on his record, Limbaugh needs to swallow his pride and attack Democrats and liberals for policy, not partying. It may be the only way he can take his talk show to another, more moral level.

The truth must get to youth about STDs

by Shepherd Smith
Institute for Youth Development

Evaluating risk is often difficult, especially when there seems to be conflicting data. Ralph Nader convinced us that Pintos were unsafe. We've pretty much concluded that cigarettes are harmful. And as a country, we're beginning to rethink how often we should hang out at fast food restaurants.

But what about condoms, something we thought were pretty good?

UNAIDS is issuing a report on condoms, just as our government did a few years ago.

Two little words at the front of our government's report are putting America's teens at great risk. Fortunately, more and more data are debunking this government mistake. But getting the accurate information to young people is another matter. Researchers concluded condoms offered 85 percent protective value. Put another way, they have a failure rate of 15 percent over time. That's roughly one out of six.

The report that was issued was a National Institutes of Health examination of the effectiveness of condoms at preventing HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. The words in question are "highly effective." That's what the NIH said about condoms when it comes to keeping people safe from HIV/AIDS. And it's been used to support the traditional approach to teens and sex, which is promoting "safe sex" -- or "safer sex" -- by using condoms. Many trumpeted the NIH report as proof that "condoms are the best method for sexually active

people to prevent sexually transmitted infections."

Trouble is, looking a bit deeper into the NIH report reveals that there's nothing "highly effective" about condoms when it comes to protecting young people, especially teenagers, from STDs. Indeed, really reading the report and looking at all of the research conducted since reveals that condoms do not eliminate the risk for any STD and only reduce the risk for two (and that's out of approximately 25 that plague young people today).

It's not even accurate to say, as many in the AIDS activist community have for years, that condoms will, at least, keep people safe from HIV/AIDS. Here's what the Boston Globe recently reported: "A draft report for the (United Nations) AIDS agency has found that even when people use condoms consistently, the failure rate for protection against HIV is an estimated 10%, making them at larger risk than portrayed by many advocacy groups." Not to mention that sexually active teenagers hardly ever use condoms 100 percent of the time-teens (and many adults) are notoriously bad condom users.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 65 million Americans live with an incurable STD and 15 million new infections occur every year. Two-thirds of these 15 million are between the ages of 15 and 24. The most common STD is Human Papillomavirus, which causes more than 90 percent of all cervical cancers. Yet there is no evidence that condoms prevent or even reduce the spread of

HPV. And condoms do not eliminate the risk for chlamydia, another common STD that is directly linked to female infertility.

Much was made in the media recently about a study concluding that distributing condoms in schools does not increase sexual activity among young people. But what's being missed is that distributing those condoms isn't keeping young people safe from diseases that can change their lives forever. This doesn't mean condoms should play no role in the battle against HIV and STDs, they just shouldn't play the central role -- especially for kids.

The only way to keep young people safe is to tell them the truth -- about STDs and condoms. And tell them we know they are capable of, and we expect them to, avoid sexual activity. Most people don't realize it, but today a majority of high school students do not have sex and the numbers are growing.

We want young people to make fully informed decisions based on the best information. Terms like "use protection" or "unprotected sex" infer condom use is safe but is both misleading and false. The biggest predictor of acquiring an STD is the number of lifetime partners, with or without condom usage. Fewer partners, less risk -- one lifetime partner in a faithful relationship, virtually no risk.

The government did a dangerous disservice to America's teens when it incorrectly called condoms "highly effective." Research shows that the only way young people can be safe from a STD epidemic is to wait.

Fortunately, more and more teens are making just that choice.



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Woe is a Chicago
Cubbies fanby Ryan Russell
advertising manager

At around 10 p.m. on Tuesday night, I thought I was in heaven. The Cubs, my Chicago Cubs, were a mere five outs away from going to their first World Series since before most people in the United States had a car. Five outs. That's all. And then, Cubs fans everywhere would get to celebrate, finally shaking off over 100 years of being called "Loveable Losers," and facing "The Billy Goat Curse," or whatever other crap Yankee fans invent. Five more outs, then the heavens would part, beer would flow all over Chicago, and Harry Caray could finally crack open that Budweiser in heaven with The Biggest Cubs Fan of All.

And if you watched the game, you saw what happened next. In the course of 30 seconds, all of the country's, nay, the world's, hopes and dreams were shattered by a 26-year-old Cubs "fan" named Steve Bartman. Bartman inter-

fered with left fielder Moises Alou's attempt to catch a fly ball in the eighth inning that had drifted one row into the stands. Other fans moved out of the way, trying to give Alou the chance to catch the ball; only Bartman stayed put. His hand hit the ball right before it dropped into Alou's glove. No out was made. The Marlins' Luis Castillo then walked, and the wheels came off for the beloved Cubbies. The Marlins scored eight runs in the inning, taking the lead, and the win, from the Cubs by five, in an 8-3 final score.

Now, on the eve of game seven, which will be decided by the time anyone reads this, I have no idea what I will do if the Cubs lose, or even if the Cubs win. I may go insane, I may do bodily harm to the closest Yankee fan, I'm not sure. I do know that there is only one way I can try to explain what Cubs fans across the world will feel by approximately 11 p.m. Wednesday night, so with apologies to Ernest Thayer, I offer you my version of Casey at the Bat.

Cubs at the Bat

by Ryan Russell

It's looking pretty good for Cubbies fans today, the Cubs are in the Series, the hated Yankees they will play.

After Steve Bartman dropped the foul ball, and Alou did the same, the Marlins scored eight runs, and went on to win the game.

All Cubs fans left the park, in deep, deep despair. But they all clung to the hope which springs eternal from the bar's tap. They thought "Wait till tomorrow, when Wood starts to pitch. We'd put up even money now, and then watch Marlins' fans bitch."

And day turned to night at Wrigley, and fans did file in; because with Wood on the mound, they knew the Cubs would win.

So when he started pitching, the Marlins, they were doomed; and they stood no chance, especially when Sammy's bat went BOOM.

Wood pitched the whole game, striking out 14 in all. And the Cubs were in the World Series, overcoming the dropped foul ball.

And now part two of *Cubbies at the Bat*, only to be read if the impossible happens, i.e. George Steinbrenner and Bud Selig conspire to keep Cubs fans waiting 'till next year.

And when the ball had dropped, and fans saw what had occurred, there was the ball on the ground, Alou screaming at the fan, loud enough to be heard.

Then from thirty five thousand throats there rose a mighty yell; it rumbled off of Waveland, and through all the bars as well; it raced through the highway, and up to the apartment seats; for Steve, Steve Bartman, had made Cubs' fans' lives a living hell.

Everyone knows the rest of the story; everyone was there; when Steve Bartman's damn fool hand went grasping in the air.

Oh somewhere in the USA, the sun is shining bright. Harry Caray is somewhere, enjoying a Bud that's tall, cold, and just right. And somewhere Yankees fans are laughing, and somewhere Cubs fans shout - "Why in the hell did that idiot Bartman have to stick his damn hand out?"