

EDITORIALS

Another year older, and what has Bill done?

"Another year older and what have you done" goes the lyric to the Christmas song written and sung by John Lennon. The question is a good one to pose to President Clinton, on the eve of either a trial in the Senate, a deal for punishment less than impeachment or an unequivocal admission of perjury.

It's ironic that the nation's first baby boom generation President is in this spot, or perhaps it was predictable. This is a man who very clearly holds no principle higher than his own political survival; who twists words to fit the meaning he prefers; who can be trusted by no one, yet who supposedly cares about his "legacy." None of us, of course, can predict the future with any accuracy, so guessing how Bill Clinton will be regarded by historians is risky business. But we can safely list some things he will not be credited for.

The first is standing up for any bold plan that proves unpopular with big campaign donors. This President, who has the ability to mesmerize any audience and convince them he stands for something they believe in, has spent precious little political capital on ideas that could have long-lasting effects on our society. One example: Mr. Clinton claims to support environmental causes, so he signs little bits of legislation that save a few acres here and clean up a little pollution there. Where is the big vision that would move him to propose a 25¢ per gallon increase in the tax on gasoline, and require the money be spent on mass transit? Gasoline prices are at their lowest of all time compared to incomes, yet you won't hear a peep from this President about striking this issue while the iron is hot.

Mr. Clinton won't be recalled as a leader who stuck by his nominees for high office. The streets of Washington are littered with the reputations of so-called "Friends of Bill" who would have been better off never having met the charming confidence man from Arkansas.

And he certainly won't be thought of as someone who worked to strengthen the social fabric of the nation. Just the opposite is true; whether by design or accident, this President has consigned honor and true respect for others to the rubbish heap, helped all the way by supporters and opponents, and a mindless news media that also holds the mantra of "it's not my fault" dear to heart.

Here's one projection of what will be said about Bill Clinton; he was the least effective two-term President in our nation's history. That is, if he serves out two full terms.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



I don't go to the theater often, or watch a lot of television dramas or "made for TV" movies, but many of the ones I have seen contain a common element. Fathers, if they are present at all, aren't very swift. I call them DWADS, which is suitable either for Dads Who Are Dead, or Dads Who Are Dorks.

It's amazing how many young family men die in auto accidents, plane crashes and other assorted tragedies each year. Judging by the shows I've seen, the mortality rate is above 50 percent. Most of the survivors have headed for the Tropics with a new cutie, leaving the family adrift, sort of. You see, in nearly every case, there's a loving, considerate Supermom around to keep the family on an even keel. And she must have gotten quite an insurance settlement, since the families, which always include at least one sibling and an adorable pet, live in homes we certainly can't afford. Even animated characters suffer from this oh-so-slightly-maladjusted family life. Remember *Toy Story*?

And the kids! They become outstanding citizens, and even better they get the winning basket or touchdown in the Big Game, which comes at the end of the show, accompanied by an uplifting score and a neat resolution to every problem.

I'm not bitter or anything. It's just that I have kids, and I like to think they're better off having me around, even if I'm not the idealized off-screen, Dad of the movies. You know, I try to show my kids what's important in life, but still have some fun, cheer for them at games and otherwise do the things I've heard a father should do. And I think my kids are doing just fine, thank you, even if I am still alive, and seldom make a complete fool of myself in front of their friends. (At least, I don't think I do.)

On the other hand, if I have to head for Mexico with a sweet young thing on my arm to meet the standards for a cinematic Dad... well, sometimes you just have to make sacrifices.

Do you agree? Disagree?

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A light dusting gives a pond the look of winter. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

A Case for conservation



Alene N. Case

1998 has been the International Year of the Ocean. Conferences have been held; special displays and activities have taken place in schools and at the World Expo in Lisbon; an Ocean Charter has been circulated requesting signatories to agree that the oceans "are a necessary element of life on this planet" and that we should all work together to protect them; and,

I'll wager that you did not know about any of this until this very moment.

It seems to me that there are two important reasons why the designation of a Year of the Ocean has resulted in so little public acclamation or governmental commitment. Other international years have focused on children or women or coral reefs - ideas which are already of great significance to most humans and about which it might be logical to initiate new programs of research and/or assistance. The United Nations has

Probing questions of the Deep

done a great deal of good in our world through such designations.

But, the Ocean is such a large concept that it seems to me impossible to deal with even a fraction of it in a "Year." When at least two-thirds of the earth is covered by the topic, how does a nation or an organization or even a student get any sort of handle on the issues involved? I took an introductory oceanography course in college. We learned many things about the oceans - geology, physics, and botany mainly. Ecology, beach erosion, whale behavior, and oil spills were never even mentioned. These more specific ideas and problems are only understandable after one has learned the basics.

Therefore, the first problem of the International Year of the Ocean was the old problem drilled into us by our high school English composition teachers - "the topic was too broad." Either that or the UN would have had to offer intensive graduate credit courses to all 5-plus billion of us so that we could begin to engage in intelligent dialog about oceanography.

The second problem with this International Year of the Ocean has less to do with our capabilities and more to do with human psychology. No major expeditions were launched. NASA learned a

long time ago that in order to get the support of ordinary citizens they couldn't just say that they wanted to learn as much as possible about the universe. They had to plan to build an international space station, or send people to the moon, or photograph Saturn's rings, or some other specific project. The same is true of the oceans.

I am sure that we would have all been involved throughout the year if there had been another large *Challenger* expedition similar to the one that launched the science of oceanography back in the mid-1800s. As historian Henry Charnock pointed out however, such a "huge undertaking...was perhaps only possible in the prosperity of Victorian England." Perhaps never again will there be a scientific endeavor that would yield 50 volumes of reports and which would change the course (pun intended) of science for the next century at least.

No, I'm sure 1998 held no such lasting or coordinated research expeditions. We had no single ship or person or organization to rally around. Even The Cousteau Society, having so recently lost both its leader and the original *Calypso*, only managed a small cruise around the Caspian Sea. Their most profound question was

how this body of water might be managed and its resources shared depending upon whether it is classified as a "lake" or as a "sea." Rather esoteric political questions - not the stuff of high adventure or intellectual stimulation.

When you consider that less than one percent of the deep sea has been explored and that every expedition that takes camera or dredge into those depths finds as yet unidentified creatures, you can appreciate the illogical nature of declaring one year in which the world would come to some understanding of and deal with the intricacies of the huge oceans. I can only hope that the nations will take seriously the words of the Ocean Charter which calls for "understanding the marine environment and its living community" in order to "make decisions to protect and husband its resources." This will be a long-term quest.

Meanwhile, let us commit to learn as much as possible about sea horses, giant squid, mangroves, beach grasses, reefs and atolls, oil drilling, cod fisheries, volcanic eruptions, currents, kelp, and all the other wonderful and important details and concepts that make the ocean world fascinating and challenging. 1998 was just the beginning.

Library news



Nancy Kozemchak

The Back Mountain Memorial Library has celebrated another wonderful year with many worthwhile projects which benefit the library and so many terrific people who willingly work on these projects.

A very worthwhile group is the library Book Club with 225 active

Thanks to all the library volunteers

members who pay membership dues that generates \$2,500 for the purchase of book club books, which remain on the special book club shelf for six months and then become part of the library collection.

The Ham 'n Yegg Club is an auction seed money membership which contributes \$25 a year realizing \$3,500 in funds to add to the auction proceeds.

The Friends of the Library members sponsor the annual Friends financial campaign, netting approximately \$12,500 each year; the fresh citrus sale #7 in 1998 should make a profit for the library of \$2,500; they sponsor the

sale of the Entertainment Books; and the annual Luncheon with a Special Author in the spring.

The permanent book store in the basement of the library is manned by volunteers and open at least two days a week.

The store has been well received by library patrons and is generating some profit for the library each week. The annual library auction each year in July involves a great many volunteers and produced a net profit in 1998 of \$58,727.33.

All the volunteers who contribute to these many worthwhile projects help to make this library the great institution it is today.

The profit from each of these endeavors contributes financially to the operation of the library.

As we reach the end of the year 1998, the staff, board members and volunteers thank the public for their willingness to share of their time and talent to the health and wealth of the Back Mountain Memorial Library.

The staff members of the library: Martha, Nancy, Marilyn, Margaret, Anna, Mary, Debbie, Jane, Millie, Bonnie, Suzanne and John want to wish a Happy New Year to our friends and patrons with an earnest plea for peace and happiness in the world, as we look forward to the year 1999.

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