

Carmage Walls
Commentary Prize

2019 Entry Form

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Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation or above 50,000 circulation? under 50,000

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)

This piece focused on the retirement of a long-time local barber. After the editorial, the city's mayor and council wanted to organize a farewell party for him, but he declined.

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.
Psalm 16:11

OUR OPINION

A quiet end of an era

The man who has worked downtown probably longer than any one quietly closed his shop recently, ending his 64-year business.

For generations, Larry Horstdaniel cut the hair of everyone from lawmakers and lobbyists to children and downtown workers. By the time he retired in August, he was cutting the hair of the grandchildren of some of his original customers.

In some ways, Horstdaniel's retirement symbolizes the end of an era. Barber shops, along with their iconic striped poles, once were a classic piece of Americana. Norman Rockwell immortalized such a scene in his painting "Barber and Boy."

I've known Horstdaniel for more than a decade. He cut my hair for years when I had enough to cut, and he cut my father-in-law's hair before that. He's cut my eldest son's hair for the past decade.

Like any good barber, Horstdaniel did more than give good haircuts. He was a good conversationalist — always ready with a witty comment or willing to opine on the day's news. He was an easy-to-relate-to everyday man, often frustrated by the asinine things politicians and other people of power sometimes do.

He was constantly irritated by the closing of High or Madison streets for fairs/festivals or other events. Bad for business, he'd say.

Horstdaniel also was a good listener, eager to learn about his customers' lives.

He moved to Jefferson City and set up shop in September 1954. He remembers it well — it was the week that made national news, and history, when deadly riots occurred at the old Missouri State Penitentiary.

Over the years, our paper has written about him on occasion. He's always been a reluctant source, never eager to be in the lime-light.

In 2010, I wrote a story about how he was surprised to be featured in the travelogue, "Long Way Home: On the Trail of Steinbeck's America." The author got a haircut and chatted with him, but didn't let on he was writing a book.

Among the passages was this: "The only barber on duty wore a blue nylon jacket and crisp trousers. His shoes were polished to a high gloss, and some combs stuck out of a pocket. He looked to be seventy for certain and possibly seventy-five, but he stood solidly on his own two feet like Jeff City and gave me a practiced, professional smile to put me at ease, as a doctor might."

In 2014, we wrote about Horstdaniel when then-Gov. Jay Nixon presented him with a medal for his service in the Korean War.

In recent years, when someone would ask Horstdaniel if he had plans to retire, he'd say "no," adding: "I don't know what else to do but cut grass and cut hair."

However, at the age of 91, Horstdaniel's body couldn't keep up any more. Over the summer, he started having more trouble walking and he realized he needed to call it quits. When my 13-year-old son went for a haircut in July, Horstdaniel told him matter-of-factly: "This is the last time I'll be cutting your hair."

One day in August, the pole at Larry's Barber Shop was off and the blinds were closed. A small, one-word sign was posted on the door: "retired."

No retirement party, no reception. Horstdaniel was never much for fanfare. He was happy to earn a living doing what he does best, while keeping up with the lives of his customers. Many, including myself, consider him a friend.

Thank you, Larry, for your friendship, your service to our community and your service to our country.

GAT/News Tribune



The college campus's cult of fragility

WASHINGTON — The beginning of another academic year brings the certainty of campus episodes illustrating what Daniel Patrick Moynihan, distinguished professor and venerated politician, called "the leakage of reality from American life." Colleges and universities are increasingly susceptible to intellectual fads and political hysteria, partly because the institutions employ so many people whose talents, such as they are, are extraneous to the institutions' core mission: scholarship.

Writing last April in the Chronicle of Higher Education, Lyell Asher, professor of English at Lewis & Clark College, noted that "the kudzu-like growth of the administrative bureaucracy in higher education" is partly a response to two principles now widely accepted on campuses: Anything that can be construed as bigotry and hatred should be so construed, and anything construed as such should be considered evidence of an epidemic. Often, Asher noted, a majority of the academic bureaucrats directly involved with students, from dorms to "bias response teams" to freshman "orientation" (which often means political indoctrination), have graduate degrees not in academic disciplines but from education schools with "two mutually reinforcing characteristics": ideological orthodoxy and low academic standards for degrees in vapid subjects like "educational leadership" or "higher-education management."

The problem is not anti-intellectualism but the "un-intellectualism" of a growing cohort of persons who, lacking talents for or training in scholarship, find vocations in micromanaging student behavior in order to combat imagined threats to "social justice." Can anyone on a campus say anything sensible about how the adjective modifies the noun? Never mind. As Asher said, groupthink and political intimidation inevitably result from this ever-thickening

layer of people with status anxieties because they are parasitic off institutions with scholarly purposes.

The Manhattan Institute's Heather Mac Donald said between the 1997-98 academic year and the Great Recession year of 2008-09, while the University of California student population grew 33 percent and tenure-track faculty grew 25 percent, senior administrators grew 125 percent. "The ratio of senior managers to professors climbed from 1 to 2.1 to near-parity of 1 to 1.1."

In her just-published book "The Diversity Delusion: How Race and Gender Pandering Corrupt the University and Undermine Our Culture," Mac Donald writes that many students have become what tort law practitioners call "eggshell plaintiffs," people who make a cult of fragility — being "triggered" (i.e., traumatized) by this or that idea of speech. Asher correctly noted that the language of triggering "converts students into objects for the sake of rendering their reactions 'objective,' and by extension valid: A student's triggered response is no more to be questioned than an apple's falling downward or a spark's flying upward." So the number of things not to be questioned on campuses multiplies.

Students encouraged to feel fragile will learn to recoil from "microaggressions" so micro that few can discern them. A University of California guide to microaggressions gave these examples of insensitive speech: "I believe the most qualified person should get the job" and "Everyone can succeed in this society if they work hard enough." Fragile students are encouraged in "narcissistic victimhood" by administrators whose vocation is to tend to the injured. These



George Will

administrators are, Mac Donald argues, "determined to preserve in many of their students the thin skin and solipsism of adolescence."

Nowadays, radical intellectuals who are eager to be "transgressive" have difficulty finding remaining social rules and boundaries to transgress: When all icons have been smashed, the iconoclast's lot is not a happy one. Similarly, academic administrators whose mission is the elimination of racism have difficulty finding any in colleges

and universities whose student admissions and faculty hiring practices are shaped by the relentless pursuit of diversity.

Explicit racism having been substantially reduced in American society, a multi-billion-dollar industry for consultants (and corporate diversity officers, academic deans, etc.: UCLA's vice chancellor for equity, diversity and inclusion earns more than \$400,000) has developed around testing to detect "implicit bias." It is assumed to be ubiquitous until proven otherwise, so detecting it is steady work: Undetectable without arcane tests and expensive experts, you never know when it has been expunged, and government supervision of everything must be minute and unending.

And always there is a trickle of peculiar language. The associate vice chancellor and dean of students at the University of California, Berkeley — where the Division of Equity and Inclusion has a staff of 150 — urges students to "listen with integrity." If you do not understand the peculiar patois spoken by the academy's administrators, try listening with more integrity.

George Will's email address is george-will@washpost.com.

COMMENTARY



YOUR OPINION

Issue-oriented letters to the editor are welcome. All letters should be limited to 400 words in length; longer letters may be edited to conform to the specified length. The author's name must appear with the letter, and the name, address and phone number provided for verification. Letters that cannot be verified by telephone will not be published.

De Simone was passionate advocate for the poor

Rev. John Bennett
Jefferson City

Dear editor:
I was saddened in reading the notice of the death of Peter De Simone. His obituary (9-2-18) reveals the breadth and depth of his unique life: the son of Sicilian immigrants; among the first Peace Corps volunteers in 1961; using his civil engineering skills in on a major road-building project in Tanganyika (now Tanzania); serving as a foreign service officer in Uganda and Sierra Leone; serving as a manager for VISTA Volunteers and concluding his long years of social justice advocacy as executive director of the Missouri Association of Social Welfare (now Empower Missouri), a position he held for 25 years until his retirement in 2002. It was in that position that I observed his passionate and articulate advocacy for the poor and vulnerable citizens of Missouri. His legislative

advocacy at the Capitol was outstanding and recognized by colleagues as exemplary. Thousands of Missourians are indebted to him and many of us remember him as a dear friend.

Fiscal insanity

Bert Dirschell
Centertown

Dear Editor:
My mother lives on the small family farm where she grew up in Michigan. My brother and I are listed as co-owners with rights of survivorship. She rents the tillable ground to a local farmer. I regularly get information/questionnaires from an increasingly intrusive government, I guess because I am listed as a co-owner.

If you have any doubt about the fiscal insanity in D.C. let me squelch the doubt. I recently received a form from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. It urged me to enroll in a federally funded program to take farm ground out of production and convert it into habitat for pheasants and monarch butterflies. Enrollment was limited to 40,000 acres in southern Michigan. The infosheet offered a "one-time signing incentive payment" of \$75/acre, plus 90 percent cost-share to pay for turning farm ground into "eligible habitat."

This is another example of the big spenders in D.C. running amok with offers of free money for programs funded by piling more debt on all future generations.

It is fine if a landowner wants to grow pheas-

ants and butterflies on his/her land, but more debt should not be piled on my great-grandchildren to fund the program. (It will be 11-16 years before they can vote to protect themselves from the power mad purveyors of free stuff in D.C.) If county/state taxpayers value such a program they can vote to have their county/state taxes raised to fund it. I vehemently oppose a bunch of grandstanding, hand out more "free stuff" federal politicians piling more debt on my great-grandchildren to fund such programs.

The next time you hear a politician tell you that the federal budget can't be cut dramatically ask him/her how many billions are being borrowed and spent on federal programs similar to this one, programs that state and local taxpayers apparently don't think are worth funding.

PS. My brother, who also lives on the farm, is an outdoorsman. A significant percentage of the farm has been kept as woods or pasture for his two mules. In addition, he maintains a 10- to 12-foot-wide corridor around the farm's tillable acres for wildlife habitat. When I was there a few weeks ago he had recently finished reseeding a significant portion of the corridor, without being subsidized by the federal government.

Value of Medicare for all

Tim O'Mara
Jefferson City

To the Editor:
To Ms. Schnieders, the Fox poll referenced asked about Medicare — not, as you put it, "free

healthcare." I'm well aware that Medicare is a government program that most recipients have been paying into for years. What is being suggested is to allow Americans to start paying for and receiving the benefits now, the so-called "single-payer option." Too many Americans do not have decent health insurance though their jobs. When these folks get sick, they are faced with catastrophic financial burdens that, among other results, cause them to declare bankruptcy and lose their homes. Ask around Mid-Missouri. I'm sure you may know someone — or someone who knows someone — who had to face this crisis.

Also, a large number of Americans without adequate healthcare — through no fault of their own — end up using the hospital and ER for their primary care. Taxpayers pay for those services. We'd pay a lot less if everyone had access to Medicare. Many Americans go without healthcare and medications due to lack of adequate insurance. They literally feel they "can't afford to get sick." They end up getting sicker and their conditions grow worse until they finally get the now-emergency help they need, and taxpayers end up paying for those services.

Yes, Medicare for all would be pricey, but not nearly as costly as Americans getting sicker and sicker. I believe the healthcare system in this country should be treated the same way we treat the public education system: Everyone is entitled to an appropriate public education. Those who want pay more, can go private, but everyone gets an education. That's the great America I believe in. We take care of our own at all times, including when they're at their most vulnerable.