

Integrity not an option for presidential office

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The last four months of campaign promises culminated Tuesday night with President William Jefferson Clinton once again being elected to serve our country. This choice illustrates the downward spiral that politics has taken. Now, Capitol Hill and corruption have become synonymous, and apparently everyone accepts this.

While I liked Bob Dole as a candidate for more than his integrity, the main reason it pains me to see Clinton re-elected is the message that it sends: that it is alright to cheat and break the law because that's what politicians do.

The office of the President of the United States of America should be one that garners the utmost respect from citizens, as well as its holder. As much as Clinton proclaims to respect this position, his actions say otherwise.

In the past four years, he has been involved in more scandals and controversies than any president in my lifetime, and certainly farther back. The obvious reply is to recall the fiasco of the Nixon administration. While these crimes were extremely less than the current administration's, I agree that Nixon did break the law. However, he was aptly punished for his crimes; the same cannot be said for Clinton.

Not only has the Clinton administration done exactly what Nixon's did by looking at these confidential files, but it broke this law on an infinitely more extreme level. Nixon's sin occurred with a handful of files, Clinton's was with a wheelbarrow in excess of 900. And yet, nobody seems to mind.

Ironically, it seems that Clinton's lack of character has almost become an asset. USA Today/CNN polls taken

throughout the campaign reported time and again that "integrity" was not necessary to be president. That people now feel this way is deplorable and should be rectified immediately.

It amazes me that the situation has gotten this bad. How can people justify electing someone who has proven to be untrustworthy to his family as well as his country?

Voter News Service conducted exit polls in Ohio after Tuesday's election. To the statement, "He cares about people like me," 67 percent marked Clinton. To the statement, "He is honest and trustworthy," a paltry nine percent still said Clinton. Nine percent! The number is so small that it is written out instead of being put in numeral form.

For some reason, people do not see any distinction between these two issues. Ponder this, though. If Clinton is a lying snake, how can people be so sure that he "cares" about them? I guess it never occurred to anyone that this empathy might also be a facade.

The U.S. is too great of a country for this kind of travesty to continue. Electing politicians, Republican or Democrat, who have little or no morals and less respect for the citizens of this country is an action that will come back to haunt everyone. Someone who is chosen by peers to represent them, should be honored and humbled by this gesture, not in words, but literally. All of the riches and successes of a lifetime are meaningless if they are gained without honor. Hopefully, people will once again realize this.



Joys of being a parent greater than anticipated

ROBERT KELLER

GUEST COLUMNIST

That's how I'm recognized these days. "Aren't you the one whose little girl ran onto the field to get the kicking tee the other week?" or, "Doesn't your little girl cheer at the football games?" and maybe, "Was that your little girl I saw in the lab the other day?" It appears that I've lost my individual identity and I've changed my name. I've become "Casey's Dad."

Being a "Dad" for me was like Jethro Bodine becoming a neurosurgeon. It somehow just did not fit. Take care of a child ... I could barely take care of a goldfish, much less a child. I was in the military and all of my worldly belongings I could pack in a seabag and toss across my shoulder.

I was kind of fond of that lifestyle. I was gone constantly, wrote home occasionally, stayed out of the brig occasionally, and had a few cocktails with my friends. OK, I did that more than just occasionally. The only "have to" I had was the laundry, and I wasn't really good at doing that.

What a life. I was so busy being a child that I never saw adulthood coming. It ambushed me. Not with bullets and bayonets but with a bouncing bundle of joy.

My life changed for good on Jan. 13, 1989. It just so happened that it was Friday the 13th. That should have given me a warning right off the bat. I entered the ring the reigning Champion of the World. I was undefeated. I was big and brave and scared of nothing. I rushed to the arena to defend my title against the "new" kid. Tripler Army Hospital in Honolulu, Hawaii. What a place for a bout.

It was over in the first round, knockout. She took my championship belt without lifting a finger. I took one look at the "kid" and I was forever hers. Her name was Casey. I knew right then that there was a new "sheriff" in town and that my erroneous ways were going to change.

But how? I knew no other way of life. I carried a weapon for a living, not a diaper bag. What did I know about children other than how to be one? To find the answer to this question, as to most all of the questions I have, I turned to the most reliable source of information that I know — my mother. Guess what she told me? "Oh, you'll figure it out." Mom was always good at times like this.

So I set about figuring it out. I got out of the military, enrolled in school and said good-bye to all of my drinking buddies. I wanted to be a "Dad." I figured that this was what I should do.

This was my "fork in the road." For the most part, the changes I made along this road were good ones. Some were not so good. Somewhere along the way, I also said good-bye to Casey's mother. Not only was I a "Dad" now, I was a "Single Dad." My entire life became my child and all of my accomplishments became tandem ones.

In 1993, I made the Deans' List and got Casey potty trained. I got my bachelor's degree and Casey learned

how to swim in 1994 and in 1995, I got my Ph. D prospectus approved and Casey mastered the art of bicycle riding. And to tell you the truth, I don't believe that I could have gotten this far without her. My life has semblance to it. I have a life now, and she gave it to me.

We go to all of the home football games. Casey heads directly for the cheerleaders' podium. I see her down there with all of the other little girls, mimicking all of the big girls' moves, and I wonder how I ever survived without her. It is kind of scary to realize that your life's accomplishments and dreams are personified in a freckle-faced bundle of exuberance.

My mother used to tell me that her greatest accomplishment in life was having children. I used to think that this was just something my mother said to make me and my brothers feel better. I now know that she was telling the truth, because I know that the best thing I have ever done is to be "Casey's Dad."

At the ballgame the other day, one of my students introduced me to her parents. They were up for Parent's Weekend and were obviously enjoying themselves. During the conversation, my student walked away to say hello to a classmate's parents. I watched her mother and father's eyes follow her progress across the concession area. For the first time in my life, I became clairvoyant.

I knew exactly what they were thinking. They turned back to me and smiled almost in unison. They too had been the recipient of a knockout blow delivered for them about 18 years ago. I see that same smile and that same look every time I walk in Groves Stadium. Different faces but same thoughts. Parents living for their children and, in many cases, because of their children.

The scene remains fresh to me. As I stand in line to purchase cotton candy and a pack of Skittles, a student taps me on the shoulder and says, "Isn't that your little girl down there with the cheerleaders?" I give him an affirmative answer, and show him the goodies that I have been sent to procure. I elbow my way out of the concession line and make my way back down to the student section.

As I start my descent down the steps, I see her. She's doing high leg kicks with her hands on her hips. She sees me and waves. Then she goes back to her leg kicks. Little does she know that on her small shoulders my entire life rests.

I take my seat and contemplate the sugary mess before me. She runs up to claim her sustenance, gives me a quick kiss and heads back to the podium. A woman down the aisle, with her son at her side, gives me a knowing smile. She too is clairvoyant. I guess that comes when you give up your individuality and become someone's "Mom" or "Dad."



Take a second glance at life

ELIZABETH D. FISHER

STUDENT COLUMNIST

The other morning, while making my way around the Quad, I suddenly realized that the trees which, at last inspection had been dotted with rusty-colored leaves, were bare. This observation surprised me, not because I had never experienced the annual phenomenon we affectionately call "Fall," but because it had gone totally unnoticed to my eyes.

I asked some friends when they had noticed the dramatic reduction in leaf-to-branch ratio. To my chagrin, I discovered that I had been in the dark for nearly two days. How was it that I managed to walk across the Quad and through piles of leaves for 48 hours without realizing that the ash trees, once bursting with green flora, were now empty skeletons?

My failure to recognize this rather dramatic and obvious natural transformation highlights a general cluelessness that has characterized my year thus far. Time and time again, things seem to happen without my noting their occurrence. As a general pattern, I wake up out of my obliviousness only after others have already discovered and discussed the event for days.

Take November for example. It should be easy enough to remember that October is over and November has started. After all, the calendar fairy was nice enough to mark October's end and November's arrival with Halloween. Logically, if I remember celebrating Halloween (which I do), I should remember November.

Yet sometimes the mind just doesn't connect and I find myself scribbling "October" in the heading of my assignments. Then I am stuck in the awkward position of trying to figure out the October date.

This is a rather perplexing and frustrating problem since it is impossible to resolve. As habit would have it, it takes me several seconds (and maybe a furtive glance over to my classmate's notebook), to realize that the reason I don't know

the October date is because it is (surprise, surprise), November.

Months are not the only things that escape my observation. I seem to have a knack for not noticing large construction sites, either. Until yesterday, I managed to miss the numerous feet of bright orange construction fencing

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and the deep gaping hole in the earth behind the Benson University Center. Estimating that I travel the route between the Pizza Hut exit of Benson and the library an average of five times a day, and I was informed it has been about a week since work started. I calculate that I have walked by the hole about 35 times without remarking the change.

This delayed "Ah-ha" reflex is not manifest only in exterior events. I sometimes fail to fully comprehend a situation with which I am personally involved until after the fact.

Like many seniors, I am beginning the job search, a process which entails a litany of meetings, information sessions, and interviews. During one of the group meetings last week, I suddenly looked down at myself in my navy blue suit and heels, and had a mini-epiphany.

For one, I discovered that I looked just like every other girl in the room. Someone might as well have lined us up and started a kickline — we were about as similar as the Rockettes. But my epiphany included a second, and more profound aspect. It was the realization that I have to get a job.

All of us were sitting there in our identical suits, spiffed up and showered, not for some grand game of

"dress-up," but because we were en route to the "adult" world. No more real money or key cards; next year it's the real thing. Although I had acquired this tidbit of knowledge as far back as last year, when I packed up my room and my junior year, it took several months of sinking in to hit me with full force.

In trying to justify my cluelessness, I have come up with some viable excuses. As a student I can always say that I was too busy with schoolwork to take notice of other things. At a university of scholastic overachievers, the "I was buried in a book" excuse works like a charm.

Another excuse involves the skillful redefinition of my obliviousness. I learned this technique while interning in Washington, D.C. Some call it lying; politicians call it "spin." Instead of apologizing for my lack of observatory faculties, I rename the situation.

In this case, I'll call my condition, "delayed learning" or "hindsight." Framed in that language, my cluelessness sounds like a positive trait. Rather than jump to immediate conclusions, my delayed reaction allows me to let an event linger just outside the boundaries of my brain, hibernating there until it has reached fruition. My retroactive realizations, therefore, appear to be the result of calculated caution rather than unawareness.

But this ostensive inattention is not a wholly negative trait to possess. It has, ironically, taught me a valuable lesson. As elementary as it sounds, I have learned to look around again. I have been persuaded that, sometime during my B-line from Benson to the library, it is beneficial, and even educational, to look to my left.

In short, I learned that living requires more than just functioning within the world. It demands participating in the world by observing and scrutinizing events. It means being sensitive and critical to change, and maybe being proactive enough to precipitate some change of my own. Living means being aware, if only for the sole purpose of realizing that the leaves have fallen, winter is coming and I need to wear my warm jacket.

