

Letter
to the editor

Changing the world

To Editor:
I would like to say a big, public, thank you to World Changers, the First Baptist Church and its Pastor Jay McCollum and its Youth Pastor, Robert Tavares; as well as to the business, individual community members, and other churches in the are who made the visit of over two hundred youth and their leaders possible. I have never won a lottery or won a raffle ticket, but I was blessed greatly by one of the World Changers' teams of eleven individuals that came to work on the exterior of my house. The team that was at my house painted, stained trim, and replaced a patio door, gutters and a gate. They also laid gravel, pulled weeds, and worked on the many other details that left me with a "new" house. They started their day with a prayer and merely worked to show God's love in action. It was a joy to see these young people willing to work during their summer vacation to help someone else. The generosity of all involved with the recent visit of World Changers to Gallup was overwhelming, I am extremely grateful to all.

I do hope the community will continue to support World Changers, as they hope to return again next year.

Charlotte Balchunas,
Gallup

Obama, Reagan and
the Iranian protests

By Tom Teepen
Cox Newspapers

Republicans are comparing President Obama's measured response to the post-election protests in Iran unfavorably to President Ronald Reagan's famous speech at the Berlin Wall in 1987. As the GOP script has it, Obama has been wimpy and temporizing where Reagan was bold and challenging.

Reagan called out, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." We are supposed to remember then that, sure enough, two years later East Germans tore down the wall. Two years after that the Soviet Union failed.

Obama repeatedly expressed his sympathy for the Iranian protesters and hopes for real democracy in place of the current sham and issued cautions against repression. He has done so with rising intensity as matters in Tehran have become clearer. His shortfall, apparently, is in his failure to do so in quite the terms Republicans are pleased to believe they would have used in his place.

As a grand moral construct, this amounts to nothing more than quibbling your way into high dudgeon but the exercise suits two long-running GOP projects. One is to beatify Reagan as the conqueror of communism in the Cold War and the other is to cast Democrats as sissies.

Reagan and, after him, President Bush the First did play the end of the Cold War skillfully. Credit to them. But they had an endgame to play thanks to steady U.S. opposition to Soviet power and purposes after World War II by Republican and Democratic presidents alike -- and, yes, that includes Jimmy Carter, a joke president to the armchair generals of conservative machismo.

(Carter initiated deployment of the MIRVed MX intercontinental missiles and against the rising unpopularity of the idea with West European electorates he supported deployment in Europe of intermediate range Pershing II missiles. He developed the Stealth B-2 bomber and cruise missiles, and when Russia invaded Afghanistan, he armed the Mujahideen guerrillas, who so bloodied Soviet forces that in time the Kremlin had to withdraw in defeat, discredited at home and abroad in ways the bore directly on its subsequent collapse.)

Even Reagan's appearance at the Berlin Wall had a Democratic precedent. President John Kennedy in 1963 went to the wall, too, and -- movingly and to huge cheers -- declared his and America's solidarity with the beleaguered people of West Berlin. Reagan's challenge to Gorbachev was theatrical and apt, but bold? Kennedy had been there, done that.

Obama's statement about the Iranian situation at his press conference Tuesday was his strongest yet. No matter. As seemed likely to become the case all along, Iran's clerical Guardian Council and its Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei were having no part of any revolution, even a peaceful one of very modest goals. Once again, the Islamic revolution has gone to its default position, violence.

The suppression seems bound to succeed, probably with a hardening crackdown and for a long time. The prospects that Iran might be persuaded to forgo nuclear weaponry, never bright, are dimmer yet. Pre-emption? Deterrence? That debate intensifies.

The dissidents may not have carried the day, but disproportionately young and now thoroughly disillusioned and frustrated they still carry Iran's future. The aytollahs have prevailed but even they must know they have not won.

Letters to the Editor policy

GALLUP — The Independent encourages letters to the editor, which are published twice weekly — Wednesdays and Saturdays. Letters must include writer's name, address and phone number although only the name and community of residence will be published. Letters may not exceed 500 words. Letters will be edited for space and clarity. The Independent may choose not to print any letter for any reason. Anyone may submit a letter, and there is no charge for publication. Letters may be mailed, delivered in person, faxed or e-mailed to: Editor, The Independent, P.O. Box 1210, Gallup, New Mexico 87305, (505) 722-5750 (fax); editorialgallup@yahoo.com (e-mail).

Independent opinion

Deputy Bob

The more we learn about Bob Weekes, the more we have to wonder: Just where did the city of Gallup get this guy?

As reported in today's paper, Weekes, who is now in his third year as greens superintendent at Gallup's golf course, hides a gun on him. How often he carries it is still unanswered but we know he recently carried it into the county courthouse where he was to attend a hearing in district court. He brought the gun with him and nonchalantly laid it down at the security desk, asking security guards to hold it for him until the hearing was over.

Does that sound like the action of someone who has any understanding of how to operate in this world?

He has a concealed weapons carrying permit — evidentially New Mexico will give one to anyone who agrees to take a course. But there are certain places where you can't bring a gun: on an airplane; to the jail; and to the courthouse. It says this on the permit.

Some people are really dumb — which is why you have stickers on ladders that tell you to make sure the ladder is stable or you will fall

and injure yourself. The gun permit has a similar warning — and the county courthouse has a sign saying guns are not permitted — for those who don't have the common sense to realize that there are some places that it would really be a bad idea to carry a gun.

But there is nothing anyone can do for those people who cannot follow the warnings on ladders or gun permits. Weekes, however, is a city employee and we have to wonder if he brings his gun to work — maybe to take target practice against those vicious prairie dogs or to protect himself against frustrated golfers or imaginary foes.

City officials don't care that they may someday have another million-dollar liability suit if something happens at the golf course and Weekes decides to take action by firing his gun.

City officials have decided it's not their concern as to why Weekes would think it was necessary to take a gun into the courthouse or City Hall. The city doesn't have any policy on taking a gun to work or into city council meetings but Gallup City Manager Gerald Herrera said he will not look into Weeke's action,

and will make a decision in a couple of weeks as to whether guns should be banned from the workplace. Weekes was at the courthouse for a hearing on a restraining order sought by the city.

In the meantime, Deputy Bob rides the range at Fox Run and one has to wonder if Weekes thinks about the hidden gun in his holster and is itching he would get a chance to use it. Does he spend time each day in front of a mirror practicing his quick draw?

This is not an issue that needs a lot of time to get both sides. This is an issue that needs to be addressed immediately by someone in the city government with more common sense than Herrera or Weekes. Guns should not be allowed in the workplace unless the worker is a police officer who has had the months of training necessary to know when and how to use it properly.

As it stands now, Gallup may be the only public golf course in the county with a sheriff (agronomist) who packs heat to protect himself against those who complain about his services. All we can say is God help us but we don't have faith that our elected officials will.



The voice claims another victim

The first thing that should be acknowledged about South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford's admission to an extramarital affair is that it could happen to any of us. That is not an excuse (and no, it has not happened to me, or to my wife). Every married person has heard the voice; the one that says you deserve something "better."

seducing humanity a long time ago. It told our first parents that they needed more than the perfection of Eden. The voice told them that God knew that if they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they would be like God. But they already were like God, because they were made in His image.

Stick with me you secularists and non-literalists, because there is a point to be made for you, too.

Psychiatrists explain that married people tire of one another after 10 or 20 years (it used to be seven years, as in that Marilyn Monroe/Tom Ewell film "The Seven Year Itch." Must be inflation.). Good marriages are the result of hard work. Forsaking all others is more than a wedding promise. It is a daily denial of one's lower instincts. Temptation is everywhere. The key to overcoming it is to realize you are fighting an adversarial force that wants to destroy you, embarrass you and cause ridicule to be heaped on the God you claim to worship.

One can make excuses about power and loneliness and starting out as a friendship that develops into something else, as Gov. Sanford rambled on about, but one can't explain adultery. It is what it is and the person who commits it should be calling on God for mercy, not the voters for understanding.



Cal Thomas

I once asked evangelist Billy Graham if he experienced temptations of the flesh when he was young. He said, "of course." How did he deal with them? With passion he responded, "I asked God to strike me dead before He ever allowed me to dishonor Him in that way." That is the kind of seriousness one needs to overcome the temptations of a corrupt culture in which shameful behavior is too often paraded in the streets.

There was a time when a divorce would disqualify someone from public office. Now people admit affairs and expect to stay in office. "It's just sex," said defenders of Bill Clinton. One might as well say, "it was just a gun" that killed my spouse. Adultery wounds in ways a bullet cannot. One can potentially heal from a bullet

wound, but a shot to the soul and to the trust that must be central to any marriage is nearly impossible to repair. The wounded spouse always wonders, "Will he/she do it again?"

A relationship most promise to venerate "until death us do part" is damaged by adultery, whether it's a TV evangelist, a politician or a regular Joe who violates the marriage bed. In fact, we rarely even use the word "adultery" anymore because it sounds so, uh, biblical, and those teachings and commands long ago fell out of fashion, though they work for those who embrace them.

Any man who claims never to have had thoughts of straying is a liar. Any man who has sought the help of God and other men in helping him to honor his marriage promises to his wife and children is a hero, especially in today's morally exhausted culture.

I miss Paul Harvey and his acknowledgement of those who had been married 50, 60, even 70 years. Those people are my role models. I'm sure they heard the voice, too, but they told it to get lost and it did. Pushing against weights builds up the body, pushing against the voice builds up the soul and improves a marriage. You can never take a marriage -- or the voice -- for granted; it's always on the prowl looking for new people to destroy.

One more threat to clean water

The New York Times said in an editorial Friday: Thanks to the Bush administration's industry-friendly rulings and a Supreme Court determined to ignore the plain language of the Clean Water Act, America's waterways are at risk of becoming industrial dumps.

The latest indignity was a 6-3 decision on Monday that will allow an American gold mining company to discharge 210,000 gallons a day of potentially toxic mining waste into a 23-acre lake near Juneau, Alaska. A joyous Sarah Palin, Alaska's governor, called the ruling a "great victory" for Alaska and, astonishingly, "a green light for responsible resource development."

What it is, rather, is a green light for the extinction of every fish in the lake. The mining company says it will pretreat the waste and restore the lake's vegetation down the road, but we're not betting on it.

The decision was based in part on a 2002 Bush rule that cleared the way for the dumping of mining waste in previously protected waters. Until that rule, the Clean Water Act had stipulated that the Army Corps of Engineers could place "fill material" in waters when it was building bridges and levees.

The Bush administration enlarged the definition of fill material to include contaminated mining waste, in clear violation of the law's intent. This is the same regulatory trick the corps relies on to allow coal mining companies in Appalachia to dump the waste from mountaintop mining into the valleys below — a practice that has obliterated 1,200 miles of streams.

Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy argued that the court had little choice but to "accord deference" to the corps' reading of the law. To which Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg replied, in effect, what about paying deference to the Clean Water Act?

The act, she rightly argued, states plainly that waterways cannot be used for waste disposal. The court's job, she suggested, is not to take refuge in ambiguities but to reaffirm the clear purpose of the law.

Fortunately, the ruling does not have to be the last word. The Obama administration can save that Alaskan lake — and other threatened water bodies — simply by reversing the Bush "fill" rule. Congress could also step in; a House bill that would reverse the rule already has 151 co-sponsors.

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 The desert shall rejoice and blossom to the north. - Isaiah 35:1