

Ah-pa, how did America survive those years?

The Danville News

Robert John Andrews

January 4, 2024

“Empty Pockets”

Word Count: 750

Pity what seminary never teaches you. We’re taught Greek and Hebrew so we can accurately interpret Scripture’s original meaning. We read theology. We study church history. Experts teach about delivering three-point sermons. But it took an old-time pastor to warn about a couch in the office. Another old-timer advised this rookie to shut up and listen for a year. I wish our pastoral counseling professors had warned how a handful of needy parishioners will consume most of your attention. This ratio probably applies to anyone who serves the public. Okay, you do what’s needed. Nevertheless, despite investing energy, patience, and attention, you can often sense there’s been little progress. You can resent how their neediness cheats you from an effective use of time.

Beginning May 20, 2016, I’ve compiled columns into a chronicle that’s now 313 pages long, 11 font. It’s titled, “The Donald Years.” More pages, sadly, will be added. I’d rather put it to bed. I realized I composed it for our granddaughter born in 2019 -- “Loving you, always yours.” The prologue is my letter to her. I envision her finding this manuscript left by her dead grandfather (her ‘Ah-Pa’). Perhaps she’ll use it for a history class when they discuss these weird years. Ah-pa, how did America survive those years?

Think of the positive things we could have accomplished if we didn’t have to deal with eight years of him? We’re tired of dealing with this sick, scared, and weak old man. What a waste of opportunity, time, energy, focus. Maybe we can rationalize some benefit from our nation exposing its cruel, ugly, and nasty side. It’s tough for a drunk to get sober without admitting there’s a problem. Consider the Law of Conservation of Misery: “Misery is never created or destroyed, just transferred.” Why do we invite his misery to be transferred to us? Still, I’ve learnt how those of you who supported him thought it was a good idea. I congratulate those friends with cojones who voted for Donald but now regret it, now that it’s blatant how poisonous and bankrupting to America he is. Vultures don’t care, don’t share.

We give thanks we today have muscular leadership where principles matter and where constitutional power is deployed to benefit the people’s well-being. Make America great? I’m glad to list how, because greatness sure isn’t happening from those deconstructionists, obstructionists formerly called Republicans. Who wants America made in their image?

First, give us citizens requiring facts. Hear the wisdom of Dr. Who: “You know, the very powerful and the very stupid have one thing in common. They don't alter their views to fit the facts. They alter the facts to fit their views, which can be uncomfortable if you happen to be one of the facts that needs altering.”

Greatness? Gun reform, no mass murders, renouncing Christian Nationalism as neither Christian nor patriotic. Let’s arbitrate plans advanced by Democrats for immigration legislation rather than exploiting the border mess for political insults. Blue ribbon panels fixing homelessness. Expand health care, especially among Red states getting sicker. Decrease the national debt. Protect civil rights and voting rights. Renew commitment toward personal moral responsibility. Support Ukraine and NATO. Stop licking Putin’s boots. Continue improving our economy. Fact: authoritarianism breeds poverty.

Let's talk inflation. Since 1953, it's gone up every year except 1955 and 2009. Given the inflation adjusted price, the price of bread in 1980 was more than we pay today. Gas cost 29 cents a gallon in 1953. Adjusting the price for inflation, 29 cents in today's dollars would be \$3.28 per gallon. Part of today's adverse economic stresses and woes stem from the wealth gap and hindrances to wealth accumulation, plus the cost of iPhones, tuition, cable subscriptions, fees and premiums, football tickets, high-tech cars, this global transition into new industry and business. Mortgage rates? US News and World Report argues how "housing affordability is fairly similar to what it was in the '80s..."

A book, "Born to Kvetch," tells about a Yiddish custom of turning your pockets inside-out on Rosh Hashanah, their New Year. It represents removing sins, ridding ourselves of annoying lint and bits of trash. I like it. Some Jews, heeding Micah 7:19, gather near bodies of water, empty their pockets, and cast their sins into the water: "Thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

Shall we gather at the river? Let's start 2024 fresh, emptying ourselves of who and what holds us back and weighs us down.