

The Miami Herald

50 CENTS
109TH YEAR, NO. 86 ©2011

MiamiHerald.com



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2011
FINAL EDITION



LETTERS FROM A GRUMPY OLD MAN



From a Grumpy Old Man ...

This *'Letters to the Editor'* is a collection of more than 120 letters from the same writer, which have been published by the *Miami Herald* over the past quarter century.

Just as the Herald's front-page headlines trace the history of major world events over the past one-hundred years, these letters chronicle not only major world events such as the attacks of 9/11, but also minor local events, such as the indiscretions of various South Florida public officials.

These letters were written by an ordinary Miami resident with no public reputation, no political connections, and no privileged standing. As a 'grumpy old man' he has been able to sound-off on all sorts of subjects, freely expressing his feelings in public. This validates not only the real and practical freedoms guaranteed by a true democracy but, more importantly, it also demonstrates the ongoing value and importance of a free and unfettered press – *the people's voice*.

Because many of the letters refer to minor and long forgotten local issues, background information has sometimes been included on the page facing the letter.

Although the letter writer, Patrick Alexander, works at the Coral Gables Museum, the views expressed in the letters are entirely his own. They do not, in any way, represent the opinions of the Museum, its board of directors, its management, his fellow employees, nor even his wife or any of his so-called friends.

These letters were collected together for a five-month exhibit held in 2020 at the Coral Gables Museum celebrating 117 years of history at the Miami Herald:

<https://coralgablesmuseum.org/portfolio-item/13840/>

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May 15, 1999

The Miami Herald

MAY 15, 1999 23A

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FANTASY AND REALITY

Memories of a teen's reaction to violence

As a teenager living in England during the 1960s I remember watching a film, *Billy Liar*, starring Tom Courtenay.

It was the story of Billy, an ordinary young man living a boring life in a bleak provincial town stifled by the gray values of his parents and their conventional society. The film was unusual because it mixed Billy's fantasy life with the real world around him. Like the viewer, Billy often confused the two.

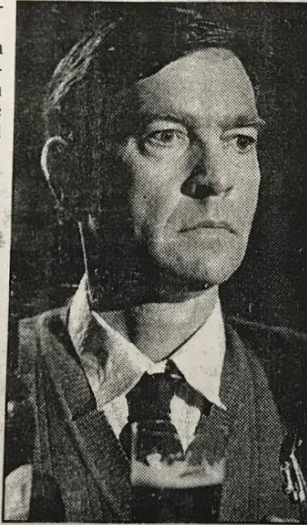
The film was filled with powerful visual images and 30 years later I can still remember Billy's first sight of a young Julie Christie walking through the drab streets of his town. Her golden hair was bouncing, the short skirt flouncing and her defiant, free-spirited smile brought color and sunshine to a gray world. She represented all the unexpressed yearnings and longings of a generation whose fantasies were expressed by Billy.

But there were other, darker images. A recurring theme portrayed Billy in frustrating situations in which he turned to violence — for example, Sunday afternoon tea in the front parlor with all the family gathered together and the expressionless Billy politely behaving "as he should."

The scene would suddenly switch to Billy's fantasy in which, dressed in a Nazi storm-trooper uniform, he would snarlingly mow down everybody in the room with a machine gun. Spinster aunts would topple off the paisley sofa in a bloodied mess, dropping their tea cups and staining the carpet. The vicar would shudder to death against the mock Regency wallpaper, twitching in a hail of bullets while Billy's parents, aghast at the social improprieties, would collapse under the rain of steel from Billy's machine gun.

The theme was repeated throughout the film — at work in the dreary office with the bullying boss and Billy's sycophantic colleagues; in the schoolroom with his sniggering class mates and the patronizing teachers, with the jocks and the cheerleaders.

I loved it. It visually expressed a widely felt fantasy for all my generation that has never left me. Even 30 years later, any of the frustrations of modern adult life will remind me of that fantastic image. Whether strug-



Tom Courtenay

gling with snarled traffic or government agencies or frustrated by bureaucracy or the service industry, I often relish the memories of Billy with his machine gun.

But I never did any of those things, and neither did any of my school mates. The main reason, of course, is that we were able to tell the difference between fantasy and reality — between movies and real life. In the same way, the vast majority of today's teenagers can also tell the difference between song lyrics or movie images and real life. In any generation and in any culture it is only a small, sick percentage that can't tell the difference.

But the real reason that those English teenagers emerging from the cinema did not vent all their frustration in a hail of machine-gun bullets is that the idea of buying a machine gun was beyond their realm of fantasy.

Even 30 years later, neither *Billy Liar* nor his father could get their hands on a machine gun in England or anywhere else in the civilized world. Only in America is it not only possible but legal for ordinary citizens to possess semi-automatic weapons that armed troops elsewhere in the world can only yearn for.

If President Clinton really wants to aspire to be more than an embarrassing footnote in America's great history, he needs an historic cause. Does he really want to devote what remains of his final term to persuading Americans they can't buy a such a weapon until they are 21 — and then no more than 12 per year? Or does he want to be remembered as the leader who finally faced down the powerful gun industry and had the courage to halt America's destructive addiction to powerful weaponry in the hands of its citizens and their children?

Movies don't kill people. Guns do.

PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

Saturday, October 29, 2000

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2000 www.herald.com 7B

The Miami Herald

TREES

Time is running out for backyard paradise

I first visited Miami in October 1985 and stayed for a week. Two months later I returned with my wife and two children, and we have never left.

After 15 years I still remember the sensation of walking from the airport terminal into a solid wall of perfume. The air was so alive with scents that you could taste them. I've been savoring it ever since.

We found our home the first week that we arrived — partly because our youngest daughter found a swing.

The house was small and needed work. The yard was a huge tropical wilderness, and the swing was just the right size for an 8-year-old to climb on and share with her older sister. It hung from the bough of a beautiful tree laden with large yellow grapefruit with pink flesh.

"Taste it," said the owner of the house.

It was good. As my daughters watched from their swing, my wife and I sucked the sweetest and most delicious juices we ever had tasted until our chins were wet and sticky.

We bought the house that afternoon and were installed in

10 days. Fifteen years later the house still is small, and it still needs work. But the garden is a paradise and our daily delight.

We planted mangos and lemons, oranges and bananas, coconuts and papaya — but our favorite fruit are still the large pink grapefruit, which seduced us so long ago.

In 1992 Hurricane Andrew ripped out most of the vegetation. Many of our trees simply vanished, never to be seen again.

But the grapefruit tree never moved, and most of the fruit stayed on, ready for us to eat at Thanksgiving.

The swing, though, did not survive. My daughters are too old for a swing anyway. The eldest has left home and lives in Paris, and the youngest graduated from the University of Miami last year and is too busy with her new career.

My wife suggests hanging a new swing for when there are grandchildren, but I always tell her to wait for the grandchildren first, that there will be time to hang the swing later.

Unfortunately that is no longer true. Each evening now as I stand under the tree I won-



der if this will be my last night before the men from the state come with their chain saws

and grind the stump to dust.
PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

This letter was written at a time when the State of Florida was cutting down citrus trees in private residential properties across Dade County. This letter was published in the Herald on Saturday morning. Later that same day, State employees armed with chainsaws entered my property, cut down the tree, removed the fruit and ground the stump to dust.

February 27, 2001

Do Clintons deserve such scrutiny?

By giving us all the facts about the recent election undervotes on the front page of the Feb. 26 Herald, the newspaper has answered our questions about the legitimacy of the Bush administration. It has finally allowed us to move forward. Thank you.

Now it should turn its attention to "Pardongate." It is obvious that there have been some sleazy activities.

But we know that Ronald Reagan was given a million-dollar home. Did he "sell" any pardons? What about George Bush — what, if anything, did he remove from the White House? Whom did he pardon?

Everybody knows that the Clintons are sleazy. The question is, are they more sleazy than their predecessors or merely less discreet?

PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

Re the Feb. 22 letter *The ugly pursuit of Clinton*, in which the writer says that Republicans are willing to go

to any length to discredit the former president:

What lengths do they have to go to when this man so blatantly and constantly discredits himself?

I am a life-long Democrat and a former Clinton supporter. Yet, it isn't hard for me to admit that this man showed some incredible lapses in judgment and behavior, lapses that were unworthy of his office.

I applaud media efforts to bring this conduct to light. The public rightly expects its officials to have high standards. Clinton's shenanigans deserve to be condemned; not excused by those who blindly support their party's leaders — even when they are as wrong as wrong can be.

ROBERT MITCHELL
North Miami

It must be nice for the Republicans to be able to accuse the Clintons of many "crimes." It lets them keep the Clintons on the front page while the ineptitude of Presi-

dent George W. Bush is ignored.

LEONARD WEISS
Hollywood

Clinton's popularity as president seemed to grow with each scandal, as did the number of his victims. Some stay devoted to him in spite of the scandals that continue even after he has left office.

Given the blind support that so many people have given Clinton, the question regarding his last acts as president should not be "why?" — rather, it should be "Why not?"

AROL C. LORA
Hialeah

Remember that the Clintons promised, as they assumed office, that theirs would be the most ethical administration ever?

We had no way to know that they'd be the most entrepreneurial, too.

CREIGH SHANK
Miami

FEB 27* 2001

MIAMI HERALD

Police gear spells trouble

Schools executive was 'playing cop'

BY TOM DUBOCQ
tdubocq@herald.com

Henry Fraind, a deputy school superintendent known for his tailored suits, was dressed-down by his boss for outfitting himself with combat-style boots, a police belt with matching gun holster and a custom-made badge that identified him as "Director Miami-Dade Schools Police" — a title that he never had.



FRAIND

Fraind also had his school-issue sport utility vehicle equipped with a siren, a powerful public address system and blue police lights both under the grill and on the sun visor.

Total cost to taxpayers: \$2,136.55
School auditors called the purchases "questionable."

A schools attorney described Fraind as "playing cop."

His boss said it was over the top. "I was never so mad at Henry," Superintendent Roger Cuevas said. "He went overboard."

Fraind, a \$181,000-a-year educator with 32 years on the job, said he fig-

River will yield mound of gunk

MIAMI RIVER MUCK

A parking lot near Miami Jai-Alai may be used as a dump site for muck dredged from the Miami River.



BY CURTIS MORGAN
cmorgan@herald.com

After decades of study and politicking, the Miami-Dade County Commission finally signed off Tuesday on deepening the Miami River.

The only hurdle is what to do with the gargantuan mound of foul gunk that will be scraped from 5.5 miles of river bottom.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' plan doesn't spell out exactly how and where the muck will be treated, but one possibility is pumping it into an old parking lot adjacent to the Miami Jai-Alai Fronton, where it would bake in the sun like a giant sludge brownie until it was dry enough to haul away.

Several commissioners were dubious, fearing the muck would draw bird flocks, threatening flights from nearby Miami International Airport,

'Why can't we just dump it someplace in the Everglades?'

— JAVIER SOUTO, about Miami River sludge

and raise foul odors, offending neighbors and tourists.

"It's going to stink something bad. It's going to be marine in nature. There's going to be gases coming out of there, all kinds of methane, that stinks, really stinks," said Commissioner Javier Souto, the most adamant of several commission critics. "Our airport is one of the jewels of the community. Why can't we just dump it someplace in the Everglades?"

PLEASE SEE MUCK, 2B

Background to my May 26, 2001 letter about the deputy school superintendent, Henry Fraind, and the dumping of toxic gunk in The Everglades

May 26, 2001

OPINION



W. S. KNIGHT (1894-1981)

The Miami Herald

JAMES L. KNIGHT (1909-1991)

TOM FIEDLER EDITORIAL PAGES EDITOR ▶ MARK SEIBEL & ELISSA VANAUER MANAGING EDITORS ▶ MARTHA MUSGROVE & JOE OGLESBY ASSOCIATE EDITORS

THE READERS' FORUM

Don't dump river gunk in the Everglades

Let me clarify a statement I made during Tuesday's Miami-Dade Commission meeting that was taken out of context in your May 23 article *River will yield mound of gunk*.

The statement "Why can't we just dump it someplace in the Everglades?" was just a remark connected to my previous remark that "Our airport is one of the jewels of the community."

I was pointing out how ridiculous it would be to dump sludge next to our airport, as ridiculous as it would be to dump it in the Everglades. You don't want to hurt nature, people or tourism, which is the best interests of our community.

It would be a mistake to dump tons of decomposing sludge in the heart of our community, where the odor, rats and scavenging birds would be a health hazard and a nuisance. There is also the grave danger

of flocks of birds flying where hundreds of airplanes are taking off and landing. I didn't mean that we should dump anything into one of our community's most treasured jewels, the Everglades.

If you heard the entire debate, you would realize that I prefer that the sludge be transported in barges out of the state. I stand by my environmental record as a state legislator, state senator and county commissioner.

JAVIER SOUTO
Miami-Dade County
Commissioner
Miami

The suggestion by Commissioner Souto that the toxic gunk from the Miami River dredging project could be "dumped someplace in the Everglades" confirms my fear that some of our politicians don't understand the impor-

tance of preserving the Everglades as a viable ecosystem.

He is concerned that the alternative dumping site, adjacent to the Miami Jai-Alai Fronton, could threaten Miami International Airport because of bird flocks that could be attracted to the gunk and the foul smell. Souto refers to MIA as one of the "jewels" of our community while failing to understand the real value of the Everglades as a national treasure.

ROGER DOMINGUEZ
Miami

Here's a possible solution to the problem: Proceed with the existing plan to purchase the waste site on Northwest 35th Avenue for \$6 million and pump the gunk onto the land where it can "bake in the sun like a giant sludge brownie."

The county can then sell the dump site at a reasonable

profit to the Miami-Dade School Board for \$8 million and can hire Deputy School Superintendent Henry Fraind to guard the brownie while it bakes.

Fraind is well qualified for this post. He already possesses the uniform, including the pants and combat boots needed for wading through the sludge. He has demonstrated an impressive ability to live with and ignore "foul odors and stink."

Best of all, he already has his own badge.

PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

Re Souto's question "Why can't we just dump it someplace in the Everglades?":

Because, honey, that's where our drinking water comes from.

JILLEN LIPPINCOTT
Miami

Detective tried earlier to free Townsend

I was a police officer for 25 years in Fort Lauderdale, and I am as proud of Doug Evans today as I was back then when he did the right thing [insisting Jerry Frank Townsend was wrongly convicted of murder]. If the press had been interested back then, maybe Doug's courage and sense of justice would have been recognized, and Townsend would not have spent all this time in jail.

You are right that the system failed Townsend. The truth was known years ago, it was testified to in open court and given to the press (who did nothing with it). The old axiom is true. When you point a finger at someone, three point back at you.

DOUGLAS K. HAAS
Fort Lauderdale

No even a ride home

How sad that, after depriving him of 22 years of his life, the state could not even give Townsend a ride home. While our public servants are flown around in helicopters, and many have their own parking spaces at the airport, poor Townsend had to sit for hours in a prison hallway and wait for a relative to collect him and drive him to Polk County.

How sad and how shameful.
PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

Prove guilt

For Katherine Fernández Rundle to say that she believes Townsend guilty but can't prove it is an insult. Doesn't that mean, he's innocent? What happened to the presumption of innocence? I guess it doesn't exist in Miami-Dade County.

I pray that this is an incidence of incompetence instead of an attempt at lynching an innocent black man. If we are to assume that we are all equal, then we are all in danger of the same fate.

JAMES CARBALLO
Hollywood

No right to retract

Re Det. James Boone's stand on Townsend's guilt:

It's very ironic to me that Boone has the luxury of sitting in his home, removed from the center of controversy and stress and carefully composing a 600-word letter to The Miami Herald. He then agreed to an interview in which every single word he spoke was read back to him, and he had the right to retract, which he did.

I wonder if he offered the same consideration to Townsend? I suspect not.

DENNIS FITZSIMMONS
Winter Haven

What next?

What happens to a guy like Townsend now? We put him in a place that he arguably never should have been, and now we release him into a society that he is not fit to live in. Who

does he turn to? Where does he go after walking through the gates of the prison where he was held for all these years? Do we take care of him? How can no one be held responsible for this travesty? Are there any answers?

RICK MACHUCA
Davie

Facts fed to him

The interrogation of Frank Townsend seemed like something out of the Al Capone era. It is a travesty of justice for two detectives to deliberately coach a suspect, feeding him facts. Townsend has an apparently low IQ and was in a frightened state of mind.

To think those detectives received commendations is the cherry on the cake. I should think they both should spend some time in jail.

We sometimes tell ourselves, "This must be stopped." I am saying it can be stopped. Israel did when it jailed the architects, contractors and engineers of the building that collapsed, ending and injuring lives at a wedding reception.

We must start holding persons accountable.

BRUCE CLAPP
Miami

LETTERS GUIDE

The Herald welcomes readers' communications. Please include name, full address and daytime phone number. Write to:
The Readers' Forum
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September 12, 2001

MIAMI HERALD SEPT 12, 2001

of terrorism, awful loss of lives

nology developed with federal funds.
Stop making enemies, and we won't have to worry about terrorism.

BILL HOLMES
Carlsbad, Calif.

When life imitates art, it sometimes can turn into something very beautiful — or ghastly and horrible.

About three years ago Tom Clancy wrote *Executive Orders*, which forecast the very same incident, almost to the letter, of how terrorists can infiltrate U.S. airspace over sensitive and strategic targets by feigning engine or other flight problems.

The book seems to have been used as a template on how to destroy sensitive U.S. targets.

Either the CIA was asleep at the wheel or this was one highly coordinated attempt to cripple America. What a sad day.

RICKEY G. DEMERRITTE
Miami

After the attacks in New York City and Washington I wonder what Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has to say about his buddies such as Moammar Gadhafi.

I wonder if he's going to justify this attack the same way he justifies the actions taken by all the terrorists in the world.

RAUL MENDEZ
Honolulu, Hawaii

I hope our government will take a hard look at defense cutting.

WAYNE MAY
Clewiston

We must put aside all political differences and stand firmly behind President Bush, our government and the U.S. military and support whatever response they decide is appropriate.

We have seen the face of modern war, and it is not delivered by an intercontinental missile. It is waged by stealthy groups of fanatical and dedicated terrorists. A neutron bomb in a briefcase, a canister of germs in a satchel, a hijacked 757 never will be defeated by an expensive missile-defense shield.

If this lesson is learned, then maybe something good can be salvaged from today's horror.

PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

President George Bush says democracy will prevail. I hope he is speaking for Israel as well.

JULIE WEINGRAD
Miami

This horrific series of terrorist disasters was well-planned, well-financed and well-executed. These terrorists have haven and support in several nations. Whether or not these nations pulled the trigger yesterday, they equally are responsible.

It's time to stop rhetoric. Appropriate action should be taken against Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and any others that harbor or train terrorists.

DORY AUERBACH
Coral Gables

Regardless of race, color, creed or party affiliation, we all became a united America yesterday.

BILL LINDSLEY
Miami

Good foreign policy makes good neighbors. America's arrogance breeds arrogance.

We deserve, as an arrogant nation, all the attacks that have been launched against the United States — and more.

I'm surprised that no nukes have

While people were dancing in the streets of lower Manhattan, thousands of innocent lives were lost in the West Bank and Gaza.

Now we know on what should be on.

JOSEPH B

As an American Muslim in the strongest possible terms, I condemn the acts of destruction in New York City.

As a citizen, I abhor the fact that innocent civilian lives were lost.

I ask the media to exercise judgment with great care. We have firm, confirmed evidence of the nature of the act. Please do not judge any group, ethnic group or people. The damage is irreparable.

SYR

Do the relatives of the people who died in the collapse of the World Trade Center have a right to capital punishment for the terrorists?

PI

The world has changed. The sheer barbarism of the attacks will force the governments of the world to act with what will seem heavy-handed to some people.

Of course, these actions will not appease the leaders of the world who have fostered and supported terrorism throughout the world.

They continue to deny the responsibility of countries such as Iran, China, Cuba and the Soviet Union.

They were intent on attacking America and Israel at the time of the September 11 attacks.

November 8, 2001

MIAMI HERALD

THE READERS' FORUM

8 NOVEMBER 2001

Distribute funds for families of Sept. 11 victims

I don't envy Tom Ridge in his new position as Homeland Security Director. His job is to protect our safety and defend our morale.

But America's morale declines daily with each new case of anthrax reported in the media. When I see Ridge at press conferences without answers, I ask: Why doesn't he do something? What's he good for? These are unfair questions. This is a dangerous new world and, as we enter uncharted territory, nobody can be expected to have the answers.

Unfortunately, the inarticulate helplessness of Ridge speaks for us all. But he could do one thing that would both give his job a purpose and help the nation to recover: take charge of this awful charity mess. Millions of dollars have been raised to help the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks, but meanwhile the victims continue to suffer and the money sits unused.

The problem has nothing to do with threats of terrorism or a new world order. The problem is all about incompetence and bureaucracy. The

president has given Ridge the authority to cut through the red tape to solve problems. He should use this power with the charities.

Ridge should make it his priority to see that all the monies are accounted for and immediately passed on to those who need it.

It is heart-breaking to read stories about widows struggling to survive these difficult times, knowing we have donated so much on their behalf.

PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

November 12, 2001

Superficial values

Re the Nov. 8 article *U.S. to launch ads to influence Muslims*: The idea that Michael Jordan, Madonna or even Oprah Winfrey will be regarded as role models and respected in Afghanistan is ridiculous. Why would somebody who does not know where the next meal is coming from admire a person who gets millions of dollars for throwing a ball in a basket?

This only serves to emphasize the American arrogance, which is one of the reasons we are regarded as insensitive bullies in most of the Third World.

The ad campaign needs to go back to a more-modest approach and awake in poor Afghans the desire to accomplish more doable improvements of life. Our empty, superfluous "heroes" are about as far from their thinking as a trip to the moon. On the contrary, it only convinces them that their fight is justified because our values are so superficial.

ISABELLA STEVENSON
Plantation

The Madison Avenue-style campaign to counter the al Qaeda lies and propaganda is an excellent idea. Unfortunately, having U.S. sports celebrities talking about liberty and democracy, while making us all feel good, avoids the core issue.

The fundamental lie that must be addressed is that the World Trade Center attack was the work of Israel, and that Jews stayed away from the office on Sept. 11. Much of the propaganda and emotional response in the Muslim world is based upon this canard.

We need to broadcast internationally recognized and respected Muslim leaders, standing next to a New York rabbi, holding lists of names of Jews and Muslims who were killed in the attacks. Both religious leaders need to publicly confirm that they have examined and validated the lists and interviewed families of the victims. Though wrenching for the families, it might help to see some of the faces of the Jewish victims — again confirmed and validated by the respected Muslim spokesmen.

The only way to counter emotional rumors and to assert the truth is by presenting the facts, in Arabic.

PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

NOVEMBER 12 2001

Excerpts of Regier's views in family-life essay

When Jerry Regier was president of the Family Research Council in the late 1980s, he and Dr. George Rekers coauthored an essay entitled *The Christian World View of the Family*.

The essay was published by the Coalition on Revival, a coalition of evangelical leaders, as one of 17 "World View Documents" detailing what it called "comprehensive biblical principles of how to apply the truth of the Bible to all spheres of life and ministry."

It can be found on the organization's website at www.reformation.net/gor/cordocs.htm#worldview

Here are excerpts:

"We deny that the Bible countenances any other definition of the family, such as the sharing of a household by homosexual partners, and that society's laws should be modified in any way to broaden the definition of family or marriage beyond the Biblically understood definition of hetero-

sexual marriage, blood relations and adoption."

▶▶▶
"We deny that premarital and extramarital sexual relationships, promiscuity, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, exhibitionism, pornography, adult-child sexual relations, prostitution, sex-act entertainment, masturbation and other sexual deviations should be sanctioned or accepted as 'normal' or legal, even if done alone or by consenting partners . . ."

▶▶▶
"We affirm that a man's authority as head of his wife is delegated to him by God; that this means that his legitimate authority over his wife is limited by what God's Word allows him; and that all authority is established by God and no one and no social institution has the right to exert any authority contrary to God's laws or the bounds God has set for the man's office in the family . . ."

▶▶▶
"We affirm that an able-bodied man must take every reasonable effort to support his family continuously . . . that the wife may augment the family's income through effective management of resources or, with the husband's consent, by home business . . . and that in cases of family financial crisis, the wife may, with her husband's approval, accept temporary outside employment, but that the family should view this as bondage . . ."

▶▶▶
"We deny that the state has a right to undermine or remove authority of parents, or to claim authority of parents, or to usurp — from parents who have not been convicted of physical child abuse or neglect — the role of primary educator of, provider for, or protector of children."

▶▶▶
"We deny that the family should be a democracy; that lovingly enforced obedience harms a

child; and that civil government has a right to define wisely-administered corporal punishment as 'child abuse' or to allow children to 'divorce' their parents."

▶▶▶
"We deny that either the mother, the father, the civil government, or any other person or institution has a moral right to decree the death by abortion of any child for any reason . . ."

▶▶▶
"We deny that the state has a right to undermine or remove the righteous authority of parents in a family or to claim the role of educator, provider, or protector for children or other family members, except in cases of judicially proven abuse, neglect, or abandonment, or upon the family's request."

▶▶▶
"We deny that the state has a right to impose unrealistic standards on families; that the so-called offenses of 'emotional

neglect,' 'emotional abuse,' 'educational neglect,' etc., which form the bulk of substantiated reports of 'child abuse and neglect,' are in fact crimes against children; that the state has any right to administer criminal penalties or usurp custody in neglect cases except when a child's life or physical health is obviously endangered; and that the state should ever administer criminal penalties or usurp custody in cases where the only accusation concerns mental health, since the state should not mandate what particular beliefs and attitudes are healthy or acceptable. . . ."

▶▶▶
"We affirm that Biblical spanking may cause temporary and superficial bruises or welts that do not constitute child abuse, but that proven brutality to a child resulting in permanent disfigurement or serious injury should be punished by law . . ."

August 21, 2002

Regier 'oblivious'

Either Jerry Regier wasn't truthful to his colleagues at the Coalition for Revival about his beliefs in the late 1980s, or the Florida Department of Children & Families is going to be managed by a man who wrote that parents should be allowed to spank their children even if it leaves "bruises or welts" and that the state shouldn't interfere with the "righteous, biblically mandated authority of parents."

The leadership of the DCF shouldn't be given to a man so indifferent to his reputation and oblivious to detail that he allows his name to be placed on a controversial document as a co-author.

PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

(See opposite)

April 24, 2003

THE READERS' FORUM

Regier, García criticized for fired workers

On the same day that the story *Second child beaten to death* appeared (April 19, Metro section) I was appalled to see a letter from Department of Children & Families Secretary Jerry Regier defending the firing of six workers. They were dismissed for blatantly political reasons.

In the past month, three innocent children in DCF care have been savagely beaten to death. But this dysfunctional bureaucracy has focused its energies on firing six otherwise blameless workers for not giving preferential treatment to state Sen. Rudy García's grandmother.

That is why Regier's letter is so appalling. Its self-satisfied tone reflects the "father-knows-best" attitude of a man who has stated elsewhere that "a man's authority as head of his wife is delegated to him by God."

Regier refers smugly to "the quality of customer care" but nowhere refers to the brutal deaths of the children entrusted to DCF care. Could this oversight result from his belief that parents can discipline their children even if it leaves "bruises or welts" and that the state shouldn't interfere with the "righteous, biblically-mandated authority of parents"?

We need to change the leadership at DCF before more children are "disciplined" with ruptured spleens and bleeding brains.

PATRICK ALEXANDER
Coral Gables

The firing of several state employees because of alleged rudeness could establish a precedent. If all rude government employees suddenly were discharged, unemployment rates would soar.

TED C. SLACK
Miami

The firings of honest and hard-working people is always sad. When the firings are a direct result of inflated egos, then it's a shameful tragedy.

Francis Aleman, it appears, bullied DCF employees for privileged treatment for state Sen. Rudy García's grandmother. It also appears that Regier pandered to García to get support for his confirmation.

Shame on all of them. I wonder if a more-equitable solution might not be for Regier, García and Aleman to lose their jobs and the six DCF workers to be rehired.

ARACELI WRIGHT
Miami

Kudos to The Herald for reporting the real reason six DCF workers were fired. I hope Gov. Jeb Bush has the courage to investigate this matter.

How can long-time state employees be dismissed without cause or a fair hearing? Either I missed something or somebody is really stretching the truth.

CHUCK ZANTI
Princeton

I suppose Regier and García have nothing better to do than make sure that the senator's grandmother gets to the head of the line.

Of course, they deny any wrongdoing until e-mails proved otherwise. The fired DCF workers have my sympathy. They are scapegoats for public officials and their staff who think that they are above the rest of us.

Maybe García and Regier should do some real work instead of trading favors.

SARA SHAPIRO
Miami

I don't know which is more sad, that García would use his political power to get six people fired or the fact that his grandmother needs food stamps.

PETER MEYERHOEFER
Miami Beach

García's grandmother is on food stamps. How does this square with García's being in the Republican Party? The GOP supposedly stands for individual responsibility and taking care of one's own. Or is that kind of talk just to fool ordinary folks such as myself?

JOHN THEODORE
Plantation

It's sad that García can't cough up \$30 a month to give to his grandmother. Where is his pride and dignity?

R. JOHNSON
Opa-locka

We already know what the response will be. The Republican-led government will cut DCF funding and give tax breaks to their millionaire backers in exchange for campaign contributions.

In the meantime, I will pray that there will be no more "isolated incidents" that will go without help while our leaders try to wash the blood stains from their hands.

HOWARD P. ARMEL
Key Largo

How many more dead children will it take for Gov. Bush to take responsibility for his failure to protect the most innocent among us?

MICHAEL HAYLE
Miami

HT (1894-1981)

The Miami Herald

JAMES L. KNIGHT (1909-1991)

FIEDLER EXECUTIVE EDITOR ▶ JOE OGLESBY EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR ▶ MARK SEIBEL MANAGING EDITOR



June 7, 2003

Am I the only person disgusted by Jerry Regier's passionate concern for unborn fetuses when he expresses such callous indifference after they are born and entrusted to his care?

I refer to the employees at the Department of Children & Families and the unfortunate and abused children that Regier is paid to protect.

PATRICK ALEXANDER

Coral Gables

IMMIGRATION

America no longer white, united, English-speaking

BY PATRICK J. BUCHANAN
www.creators.com

In 1960, when JFK defeated Nixon, America was a nation of 160 million, 90 percent white and 10 percent black, with a few million Hispanics and Asians sprinkled among us.

We were one nation, one people. We worshipped the same God, spoke the same English language, studied American history and English literature, honored the same heroes, read the same books, watched the same TV shows, went to the same movies and saw ourselves as defenders of Western civilization against the godless communism of the Soviet Empire.

We were confident and proud of who we were. That was yesterday. But due to the Immigration Act of 1965 and the cultural revolution of the '60s, that America is now gone forever. And as one studies the latest projections of the Census Bureau, the America of our grandchildren will be another country altogether, a nation unrecognizable to our parents, a giant Brazil of the North.

In 2050, there will be three times as many people living here as in 1960 — 420 million. White Americans will be a minority, 49 percent, and falling. Hispanics in the United States, more than 100 million, will be equal to the population of today's Mexico. Our Asian population will be almost as large as our African-American population today.

By countries of origin, America will be a Third World nation. Our cities will look like Los Angeles today. Los Angeles and the cities of Texas, Arizona and California will look like Mexico City.

Writing in *Foreign Policy*, Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington, author of *Who We Are*, raises an alarm about the huge infusion of Hispanics into the Southwest, and for many reasons.

Much of this mass immigration is illegal. Vast numbers are coming here only to work. They are not assimilating. They do not want to become Americans. They are concentrating in states bordering Mexico, which is their country and a nation with a his-

toric grievance against us. They are holding on to their language and culture, creating a Hispanic nation within our nation. By 2050, there will be scores of millions of people living here whose loyalty is to a foreign country.

Moreover, as multiculturalism has captured our schools and colleges, immigrant children will have prejudices and grievances against America and the West reinforced as they learn. The academic elite that controls these schools already paints America as a nation with a rancid history of genocide, slavery, racism, oppression and imperialism.

Is the Census Bureau future the future that Americans wish? No. Are they willing to risk it for their grandchildren? No.

Why, then, does that future appear inevitable?

Answer: Though a majority of Americans wish to preserve the land they grew up in for their children, our elites — political, academic, cultural and corporate — are either unwilling to conserve that America or indifferent to its disappearance.

Most Americans want immigration cut back and all illegal aliens sent back. Why is the will of the majority, expressed in polls and referenda, not reflected in law or policy? Because we no longer live in a democratic republic; we are ruled by a managerial elite.

America's corporate elites want an endless supply of cheap labor. Our judges throw out popularly enacted laws to which they object. Our academic elites work to see "white, racist America" disappear. Our neo-Marxist cultural elites wish to be the gravediggers of the West and of Christian culture. And America's conservative party, the Republican Party, believes that Hispanics hold the key to retention of presidential power and is anxious not to offend Mexican President Vicente Fox.

If, by 2050, the America we grew up in has become a Tower of Babel of squabbling minorities that is falling apart, it will be because of the treason of the elites, and our lack of will to overthrow them.

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BUCHANAN

April 5, 2004

PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICA'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Re Pat Buchanan's April 2 column: *America no longer white, united, English-speaking*: Like Pat Buchanan, I am a white, middle-aged grumpy old male and have fond memories of the world we both knew in 1960.

When John F. Kennedy was running for president, I had a full head of hair, a flat stomach and a muscular body. Each morning I jumped out of bed full of energy and optimism. My mother stayed home all day to give the family delicious, freshly cooked meals, including apple pie.

My father had a secure job and a solid pension. I called him Sir, and his word was law. We were just ordinary middle-class folk, but we lived in a nice house with a large yard and never locked our doors. Children were never abused, homosexuals didn't exist and Jews were not allowed to join golf clubs. I didn't know about blacks, because we didn't have a maid.

It was a wonderful time to be alive, if you were white. However, life moves on, and the world changes. We must learn to change with it.

The world where we all ate the same food has been replaced by one where I have my choice of Italian or Japanese restaurants. I can watch French movies and read South American literature. I

still like Elvis, the Stones and Mozart but now I've learned to love the music of Cuba, India and Brazil. I live in a more-challenging world than the one I grew up in, but it's richer and more stimulating.

Buchanan's diatribe is the same desperate cry we hear from Osama bin Laden, the Taliban and all the other frightened, bitter men who find themselves in a world that they no longer understand. Unable to adapt to modernization, they lash out in a frenzy of hate. One would feel pity for them if only their views did not lead to so much bloodshed and suffering.

-PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

Buchanan is a realist. He dares to say what other politicians are afraid to say for fear of being labeled as politically incorrect.

The unwillingness of legal immigrants to assimilate, speak English and embrace our culture is shameful and disrespectful. The unwillingness of our leaders and judges to return all illegal immigrants is cowardly, unlawful and contrary to majority opinion.

I regret that my children and grandchildren will have the chaos and expense of dealing with this situation in a once-proud nation that is well on its

Responses to Patrick Buchanan's column opposite

September 2005

Reaction to Muslim violence over Danish cartoons

As an American Muslim, I am saddened and troubled by the escalating violence in parts of the Middle East and Asia due to the defamatory cartoons of Prophet Mohammed published in some European newspapers. The violence is unwarranted and goes against the teachings of Islam.

The issue goes beyond the insensitivity of showing an image of the Holy Prophet. Muslims are offended at the slanderous depiction of Prophet Mohammed as a terrorist. This outrageous cartoon and the blatant disregard for the sanctity and holiness of Mohammad are a slap to 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide.

If a newspaper published malicious and defamatory depictions of Jesus, Mary, Moses, Gandhi, Mother Teresa or Pope John Paul II, there would be worldwide outrage. People need to understand that this goes beyond the right to free speech and a free press.

We live in a world where little is sacred and holy. In the name of secularism, respect for religion is thrown out the window. President Bush and the Vatican condemned these malicious cartoons, and now the rest of the world should join in standing against these irresponsible European papers.

We are all brothers in the human family and must show respect for each other's faith and convictions. Our ability to live in peace depends upon it.

-SEHMINA JAFFER CHOPRA, Islamic counselor, Salisbury University Muslim Student Association, Salisbury, Md.

New York, Sept. 11, 2001; Madrid, March 11, 2004; London, July 7, 2005. Members of the Dutch parliament live under police protection for criticizing Islam. Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh was murdered for producing a film about the mistreatment of women under Islam.

Now there are attacks on individuals and assaults on diplomatic missions. Protesters in London, of all places, hold placards referring to Europe as a "cancer," calling for the deaths of those who offend Islam.

How much longer are we supposed to believe that this is a religion of peace?

-RICHARD D. RODRIGUEZ, Hialeah

Those of us lacking a strong faith are always beset by doubts and uncertainties; vulnerable to the criticisms and mockery of others. But people within an organized religion are not so vulnerable. They have the certainty and comfort of their beliefs and should not care, let alone feel threatened by, what others think or say. Their faith is their rock.

So why then this outcry from the Muslim world concerning a few cartoons? Can their sense of faith be so fragile that it is threatened by the casual acts of distant heathens?

There are plenty of cartoons depicting popes and rabbis unflatteringly. Christ himself, on a crucifix immersed in a flask of urine, was on exhibit in an art gallery — and yet the Christian and Jewish faiths continue to thrive.

The photographs of Muslims protesting the Danish cartoons were shocking in their expression of raw violence

and hatred for the West. In the name of this religion we have had murders and decapitations on video, suicide bombs on trains and buses and the horror of 9/11. All these atrocities are committed proudly in the name of Islam. And yet we are supposed to feel outrage because of some cartoons depicting the Prophet of Islam?

-PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

Anyone who reads Arab newspapers sees cartoons depicting Jews and other groups in the most grotesque

ways. Rabbis are depicted as people with blood dripping off fangs. No one seems too upset about those depictions, and no one has been killed over these offensive cartoons. Democracy in the Middle East? Please.

-JAY GROSSMAN, Miami



Palestinian militants threaten EU offices in Gaza City.

AP

Association, which thinks it has its own constitutional amendment?

-SAM FIELDS, Plantation

It's obvious that the protesters' goal is to silence any criticism of them or their religion so that they can continue to use our freedoms and sensitivities in their war against the West and its civilized ways.

-AIMEE STEIN, Miami Beach

Print the cartoons. Do it now while fatwa departments everywhere are overloaded. Or do it because it's fundamentally important to a free society and a free press not to be censored. Or do it because it's most definitely news, and your readers want to see what all the fuss is about.

Print the cartoons. It's important.

-DAN MCCREA, South Miami

I can't help but be puzzled as to what message the Islamic world is sending. That the caricatures of Mohammed could possibly offend some followers of Islam is a given. But civilized persons must make allowances even within the scope of religious worship and belief.

The basic freedom to have different, maybe provocative, views is the bedrock of a free and just society. The problem starts when, on one hand, leaders of Islam proclaim on religious grounds that a sovereign country and its people should be destroyed. However, when they encourage deaths of people of other faiths this contradicts the proclamations of peace and tolerance espoused by Islam's apologists and practitioners.

Those who carry out violent repudiation against those of other religions or defend such behavior disgrace themselves in the eyes of God — no matter the God to whom you genuflect.

-RICARDO I. GONZALEZ, Miami Lakes

Miami Herald SEPTEMBER 2005

Reaction to Muslim violence over Danish cartoons

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-PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

(Enlargement of the September 2005 letter opposite)

TUESDAY, JULY 12, 2005 | 5B

H FLORIDA EXTRA

COURTS

Party pooper or party king?

■ A profitable defense contractor is suing a Miami events coordinator — for allegedly ruining a posh party aboard a luxury yacht.

BY DAVID OVALLE
dovalle@herald.com

The nation's wars have been such a boon to body armor supplier DHB Industries that it planned a bash aboard a luxury yacht in Fort Lauderdale.

It never left the dock — but the party has ended up in court.

DHB claims glitzy Miami party planner Barton G. tried a "shakedown" by unexpectedly demanding the \$91,345.90 event be moved from Tikki Beach, a barge that features tiki huts, a sand-swept dance floor, cabana beds and a jacuzzi.

The new party spot: Casa Casuarina, the Ocean Drive mansion once owned by the late designer Gianni Versace. The move would have cost an extra \$25,000, DHB says.

In a lawsuit filed last week in Miami-Dade Circuit Court, DHB accuses Barton G. Catering of price gouging by inflating the rental price of the boat, then the cost of Casa Casuarina.

The party still went on — only arranged by a different company and thrown at the Star Island mansion of billionaire developer Thomas Kramer. That price tag: \$207,000.

Frivolous lawsuit, says Barton G. himself, real name Barton Weiss.

The restaurateur says his company only suggested moving the party to Casa Casuarina, now a private club where Barton G. provides in-house catering.

"It didn't have to be there. Tikki Beach wasn't up to DHB's standards," Weiss said. "This was a better option. It was not canceled."

Weiss says DHB canceled the deal 48 hours before the event, so he returned the \$45,000 deposit. DHB says Barton G. refused to throw the party unless it was at the Casa Casuarina.

HISTORY TOGETHER

The companies have parted together before.

In 2003, the events company says it arranged a last-minute employee appreciation event at Fifteen O One Barton G., a special-events complex also in South Beach.

Barton G. is known for organizing dazzling parties for everybody from P. Diddy to the Miami City Ballet to the Super Bowl.

His namesake restaurant opening featured two giraffes

and a mascot named Sabrina the Chimp.

Weiss admits DHB is one of his company's more unique clients.

New York-based DHB, which produces body armor for the military and law enforcement, boasts as its president a retired four-star U.S. Army general.

One of its subsidiaries, Point Blank Body Armor, runs plants in Oakland Park, Pompano Beach and Deerfield Beach — employing about 800 people in Broward County.

The company's employees "made an extraordinary commitment over the past two years in an effort to supply the United States Military with life-saving body armor and protective apparel to the present conflicts in Iraq," the suit says.

"It was a party to recognize the exceptional work effort and commitment made by the employees and plant managers of DHB Industries Inc.," said Guy Spiegelman, an attorney representing DHB.

CONTRACTS SIGNED

More recently, the company announced in May that it had received a \$5.2 million contract to supply the U.S. Army with body suits for engineers who clear land mines. A month earlier, the company inked a three-year, \$10 million contract to supply the Army with armored vests.

DHB turned to Barton G. to organize its Dec. 10 party — which according to the invoice was for 50 guests.

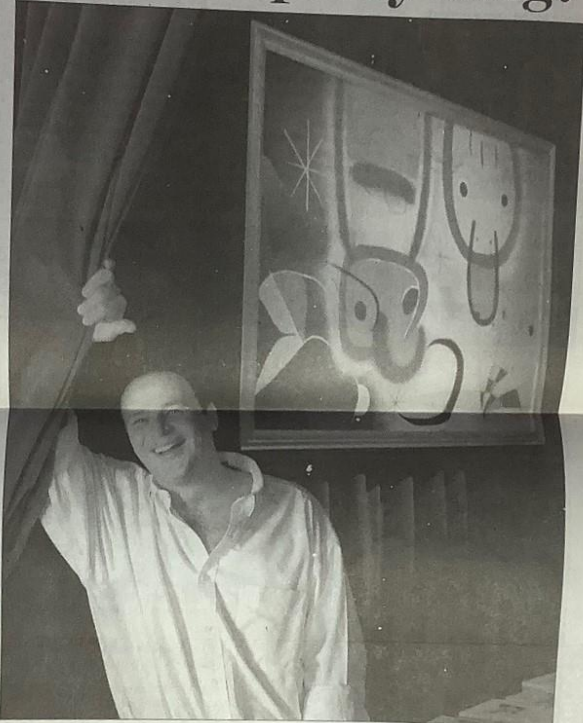
Among the amenities the guests of the Tikki Beach party would have enjoyed: six hours of a DJ (\$300); decor (\$5,000); three female models (\$3,000) and three male models (\$1,600).

Two days before the party, according to the suit, Barton G. demanded the party be moved.

The body armor supplier also claims Barton G. overcharged the original price of the Tikki Beach party by \$33,000 — a claim Weiss says is wrong because DHB is not taking into account, among other costs, the price of renting limo buses.

With guests flying in from as far away as New York, DHB rushed to organize a new party with another company on swank Star Island.

"It was pulled together in 48 hours magnificently," said Spiegelman, DHB's attorney. "It was a first-rate affair."



WELL-KNOWN CATERER: Military supplier DHB is suing party planner Barton G. Weiss, above, for allegedly trying to force the company to have a party at a private club where Weiss caters instead of aboard a yacht, as first planned, and price gouging.

CARL JUSTE/HERALD STAFF

(This is what prompted my letter of July 15, 2005)

July 15, 2005

Inappropriate party

With daily reports of our soldiers being killed in Iraq, I wonder if anybody else shared my sense of disgust when reading the July 12 story *Party pooper or party king?*

DHB Industries, which supplies body armor for our troops, has apparently made so much profit from the conflict in Iraq that it can afford to fly in some 50 executives to attend a \$207,000 party at a trendy South Beach club.

The symbolism of this party could not be more appalling. Our citizens are risking their lives in the desert so that these execs can dance the night away on a luxury yacht with female models.

-PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

(See opposite)

PROMISES UNKEPT



TIM CHAPMAN / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

OSCAR RIVERO GOT MILLIONS BUT DIDN'T BUILD BADLY NEEDED HOMES FOR MIAMI'S POOR

BY DEBBIE CENZIPER AND LARRY LEBOWITZ
dcenziper@MiamiHerald.com

Oscar Rivero, son of a Hialeah bus driver, charged onto Miami's affordable-housing scene four years ago with spectacular promises to build houses for poor families who have languished for years in crumbling and unsafe homes.

He amassed an elaborate web of properties, pledging 24 units on the banks of a canal north of Miami; 54 in a midrise in Little Havana; 42 on a tree-lined corner of South Miami.

That was just the beginning.

With his lofty plans and key connections to County Hall power brokers, Rivero quickly became a favored developer of local housing agencies, collecting nearly \$3 million in public money.

A rising businessman and former aide to then-County Commissioner Alex Penelas, Rivero hobnobbed with political

elites and snared coveted spots on public boards. While his business ventures seemed limitless, so did his personal life. He smoked fine cigars and drove luxury cars.

But the ultimate symbol of his newfound success is rising on a tree-shrouded street just beyond Coral Gables.

There, the boy raised in a concrete-block house in working-class Hialeah is building an 11,000-square-foot estate that includes a wine cellar, library, billiard room, elevator, pool, spa and fountain — plus a grand foyer, three stories high, fixed with Mediterranean columns and a spiral staircase.

It is Oscar Rivero's dream house.

And it is the only thing he has managed to build in the past four years.

*TURN TO RIVERO, 24A



Rivero's mansion

Two of Rivero's affordable

(Background to my August 26, 2006 letter)

August 26, 2006

Root out corruption, jail the guilty

Re the Aug. 26 story *Four years. \$3 million. One home under construction. His own*: I congratulate The Miami Herald for this excellent article on Oscar Rivero. It more than justifies my subscription cost many times over. Please stay with this issue and continue to expose people for what they are: criminals. Do not stop until they are all in jail and disgraced for life. They deserve nothing less.

- ANTONIO E. RIOS, Coral Gables

The poor people for whom Rivero was supposed to build housing should move into his unfinished house, even as squatters, and have him move to these poor peoples' current homes until all those projects are completed, if ever.

- J. JARDINES, Key Biscayne

I have followed this extraordinary investigative series with incredulity and horror. This story put the entire sordid tale in perspective by including a name, a face and a mansion. One question remains: Now that our elected officials have been deprived of Oscar Rivero's wine cellars, where will they go? I fear they will be forced back into the public trough.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

or refuse to, address: Wanton corruption and cronyism.

Rivero's arrest comes on the heels of the fire department overtime-pay scandal, the city of Miami's fire-fee scandal, the Miami International Airport fuel scandal. What has happened to the people involved?

As the headlines fade, so does the public's disdain for what seems to be a terminal condition of corruption. Can Rivero and countless others be truly punished? Not only should restitution be made of the monies he absconded with, but interest on it as well.

How about attaching all the gains he made from use of the public money? Maybe some extensive community service with a real housing agency like Habitat for Humanity would give a dose of reality to Rivero and those of us salivating for punishment that fits the crime.

- MARK GREENFIELD, Sunrise



DONNA NATALE PLANAS/MIAMI HERALD STAFF
Rivero surrendered Saturday.

I have no doubt that corruption is the culprit for all our societal problems. The Rivero case tells us two things: Corruption should be penalized at the same level as other crimes and Miami-Dade County is inept in awarding construction contracts. Rivero should stay in jail not just because of his alleged misuse of funds but also because of the mistrust that he created.

- BENITO LOYOLA SR., Miami

January 17, 2006

A busy terrorist

The Bush administration has long assured us that Osama bin Laden and his second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahri, barely are surviving a desperate and isolated existence in some primitive mountain cave.

However, we have learned that al-Zawahri's social calendar is so crowded and his obligations so numerous that he was unable to attend a dinner party given by his wife's socially prominent family and was obliged to send aides in his place. With such an active schedule, no wonder the CIA cannot keep up with him.

- **PATRICK ALEXANDER**, Coral Gables

(see opposite)

March 9, 2006

OPIN
S DIAZ JR., PUBLISHER | TOM FIEDLER, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

THE READERS' FORUM

Muslim caricatures

As a Muslim I denounce the violent protests in some countries where they were instigated by vested local political interests or national leaders seeking to gain attention on the international stage.

However, the anti-Muslim cartoon controversy has been oversimplified, focusing on freedom of speech and the fact that Islam considers visual depictions of the Prophet Mohammed blasphemous. This has obscured the more-important issue of what happens when hate speech or negative images are allowed to become widely accepted in society.

In America, Native Americans were portrayed as savages, so when they were killed, people wouldn't feel as bad about it. The same goes for African Americans, who were portrayed as subhuman. Similar treatment was meted out to Jews before the Holocaust in Europe. Knowing the consequences of stereotyping, why is the clock being turned back for Muslims?

There is less free speech in Europe than most Americans think. Several countries have anti-blasphemy laws that can cost you a fine or land you in jail if you openly insult religious figures. Denying the Holocaust is a crime punishable by time in prison. In Germany, mere public criticism of Jews can have serious consequences. So why not have similar laws for speaking against Muslims and Islam? You cannot exercise free speech to marginalize or degrade one community and restrict it for others.

- SYED RAHMAN, Weston

Fight irrationality

Re Leonard Pitts Jr.'s March 6 article, *Campus clash on cartoon riots simply juvenile*, about the Danish anti-Muslim cartoons: Displaying those cartoons is not childish. They should be displayed not because they are provocative but because they make valid points.

Religions are ideologies, therefore they deserve no special treatment.

The rise of militant fundamentalist Christians in this country and Muslims in the Middle East is alarming. They would spread nightmarish theocracies and mayhem such as we see in the Middle East. Rational people have a right and duty to stop this spreading insanity.

Those cartoons help fight the rising tide of irrationality. The idea that the other side can threaten our liberties and wreck our world, yet we shouldn't criticize them because it would offend them, is outrageous.

- ROY FISCHLER, Sunrise

Muslim image

A March 6 letter *Muslim caricatures* by Syed Rahman accuses the West of stereotyping the followers of Islam. But the controversy is not about the cartoons — at worst a single instance of bad taste — but about the unrestrained violence with which the Muslim world has reacted to them.

When Jewish journalist Daniel Pearl's throat was slit on camera in the name of Mohammed and Allah, Muslims did not protest against this terrible insult to their religion. Nor did Jewish mobs attack and destroy any mosques.

When terrorists destroyed the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in the name of Islam, Muslims did not take to the streets to protest this insult to their religion of peace. Nor did Christian mobs attack and destroy any mosques in retaliation. The only people who bomb and destroy mosques are other Muslims.

We do not create the stereotypes. We merely watch and observe with mounting horror and despair.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

I thank Syed Rahman for his letter. In a civilized world, when we talk of freedom of anything, whether speech, expression or action, it is

Arriola on la 'Unintention

Re the March 7 article *deal*: I have never omitted statement filings. My state rate.

I am required to file a "Interests" each year "by January 1" in which I hold [my] filed on July 1, 2005, for the acquire my financial interest until mid-2005. Therefore 2004 filings. It will appear due on or before July 1, 2005.

Also, a disclosure statement "Property Owned" needs to be filed by 2-615. I have never filed this city manager because I did not file until mid-2005. I was unaware that this form was due at the time the filing was due (July 1, 2005).

It appears that I was mistaken at the end of the calendar year December 2005. I am late in that filing with the city clerk.

I apologize to the community for the late disclosure filings were not timely.

To prevent this from happening my department to review our internal procedures for filing required state and local laws.

After reviewing the City filings, it has come to my attention that many people, including the city attorney, city clerk, city manager realize that I need to set the record straight, others may also. I am sure our disclosure requirements require one who is required to file.

Again, I apologize for the unintentional.

- JOE ARRIOLA, city manager, Miami

HERALD 3/9/2006

December 22, 2006

County buys artwork

Re the Dec. 14 *Prominent developer accused of hitting artist*: I am just a simple local resident who has trouble understanding some of the stories about more-sophisticated and well-connected fellow citizens. According to the story, civic leader Raul Masvidal and well-known artist Julio Larraz have been friends since childhood. Masvidal used \$287,000 of public money to purchase artwork created by Larraz to install in a building that Masvidal had been paid \$5 million in public funds to develop, but which has not yet been built.

Larraz also has loaned money to Masvidal, which the developer allegedly is refusing to repay. Indeed, Masvidal is so angry that he allegedly punched Larraz in the face.

If only somebody had the foresight to videotape the confrontation. It could have been featured at Art Basel as an artwork and then been purchased by the county. Civic leaders rarely miss such an opportunity.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER,
Coral Gables

June 10, 2007

IRAQ WAR

We ignore the fight

I was moved by Joseph L. Galloway's powerful and timely June 5 column, *Is this what we voted for?* He expresses outrage that Congress is taking a holiday while U.S. soldiers are being killed on patrol and innocent Iraqis are murdered every day.

My mother used to describe London during the World War II, when every day was a painful reminder that the nation was at war. Living in President Bush's America, I am struck by how unreal and distant the current war seems and how little it affects our daily lives.

*War seems unreal and
distant — and doesn't
affect our lives.*

I'm reminded of how Marcel Proust contrasted the extravagant luxury of Paris in World War I with the misery of the troops in *In Search of Lost Time: Time Regained*:

"When the time came for dinner, the restaurants were full; and if, passing in the street, I saw a wretched soldier on leave, escaped for six days from the constant danger of death and about to return to the trenches, halt his gaze for a moment upon the illuminated windows. it was with a philosophical shake of the head, without hatred, that on the eve of setting out again for the war, the soldier would say to himself, as he saw the shirkers jostling one another in their efforts to secure a table: 'You'd never know there was a war on here.'"

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

Feb 10, 2008

No to Clinton(s)

For eight long years I have yearned for the good old days of Bill Clinton. I have yearned to replace the endless body bags with blue dresses, however stained. But during the past month, watching the reality of the "Billary" tag-team, I remembered the divisiveness that they always engender and upon which they seem to thrive.

I am ready for a change.

-PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

June 5, 2008

I am concerned about the possibility of Hillary Clinton as a candidate for vice president. Not only would she detract from Barack Obama's message of "change," portray him as weak and unite the "vast right-wing conspiracy" in November, but it would also embroil us in all Bill Clinton's dirty laundry that, according to Vanity Fair, is showing more stains than ever.

Such a sordid distraction during the new presidency would be a criminal waste of this great opportunity to finally put the nightmare of the past eight years behind us. Despite her brazen self-centeredness, Clinton and her followers do deserve a seat at the table. I would suggest that she be made secretary for Health and Human Services. Health reform has always been a subject close to her heart, and this might prove her opportunity to redeem herself and build a lasting and valuable legacy.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER,
Coral Gables

November 17, 2008

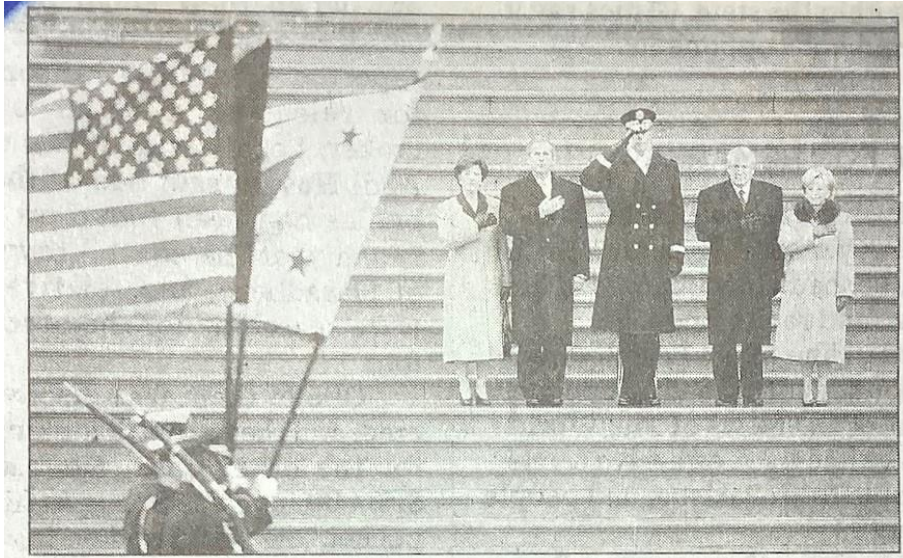
I am impressed by the solemn unanimity of purpose with which the Catholic bishops are confronting the incoming administration over President-elect Barack Obama's views on a woman's right to choose.

Despite this nation's tradition of a clear separation between politics and religion, the bishops feel conscience-bound to impose their own values on a new administration already confronting the pressure of two wars and the direst economic threat in a lifetime.

What a pity that the bishops did not display the same moral backbone and organizational zeal when confronted with overwhelming evidence of pederasty and abuse of the helpless within their own ranks.

**-PATRICK ALEXANDER,
Coral Gables**

January 12, 2009



President Bush reviews troops just after his 2001 inauguration. AP

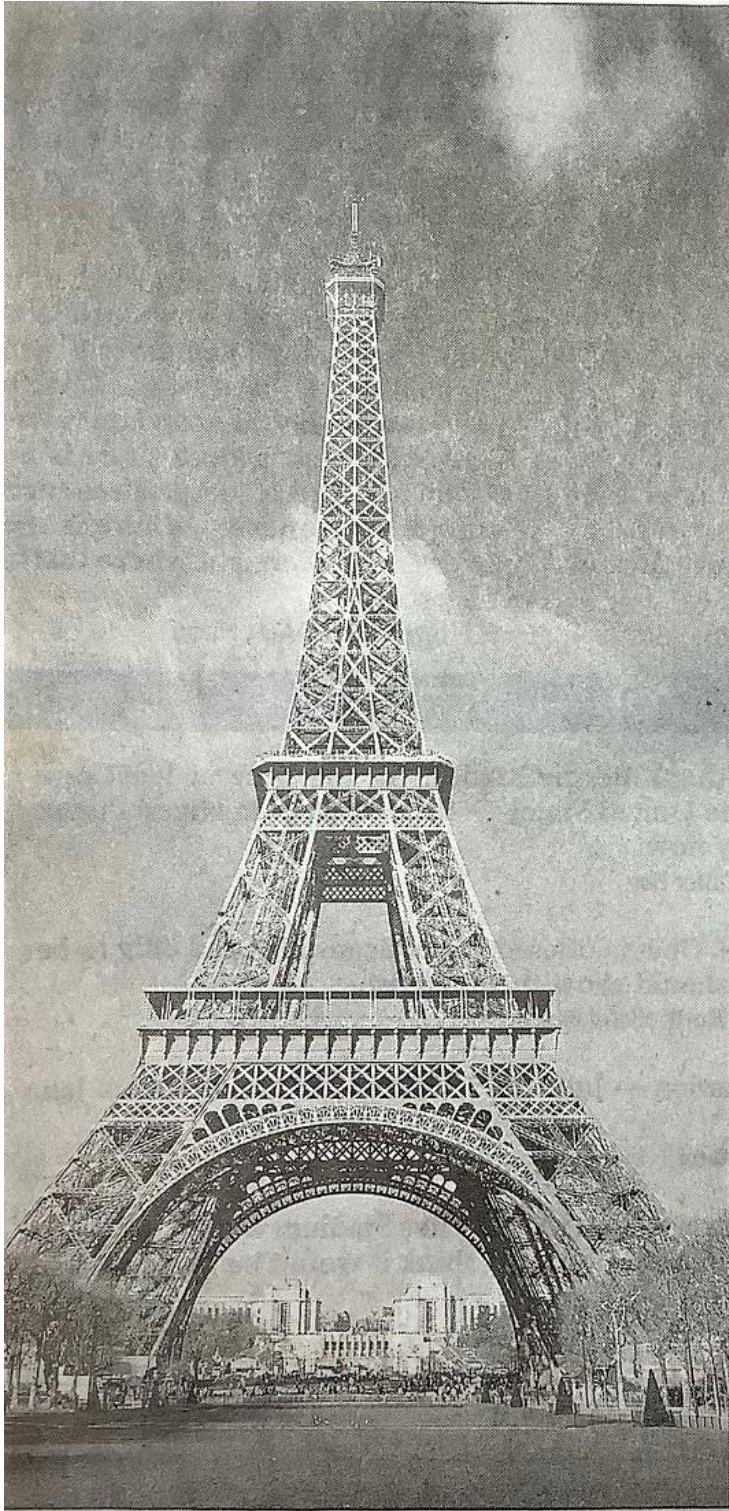
The lesson of eight years

Now that the nightmare of the past eight years is nearly over and the incompetence, arrogance, mendacity and disgrace of this presidency has become part of history, there is one good thing we can salvage from this train wreck. The Bush presidency proved, if proof were needed, that democracy really is the best system of government and the voice of the people should always be heard.

In November 2000, the majority of the American people voted for Al Gore.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

February 1, 2009



U.S. RENEWAL

France can be a model

In 1871, the year of Marcel Proust's birth, France had been totally destroyed. After suffering the most humiliating military defeat, the starving population of Paris was forced to eat all the remaining horses of the French army. German soldiers remained stationed on French soil until the war fine — an unheard-of five billion francs — was paid to Prussia.

The only good news was that the arrogant and incompetent emperor who had dragged his country into this devastation was forced into exile.

But somehow, through a supreme expression of the national will, Paris reasserted itself and entered one of the most exciting periods of its history: the Belle Epoque. Even with no charismatic young leader to inspire them, the French paid off the full five billion francs in just two years and the last German soldiers were removed from France. The splendid Paris Opera House was opened in 1875, and the historic Hôtel de Ville was completely rebuilt. French industry thrived, and within a few years Paris was to host a world's fair with the Eiffel Tower, the tallest building in the world, as its centerpiece.

The French people had rolled up their sleeves and worked together to make France once more the center of the world. Today, in America, can we not do the same? Yes, we can!

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

May 26, 2009

THE READERS' FORUM

Cheney's claims

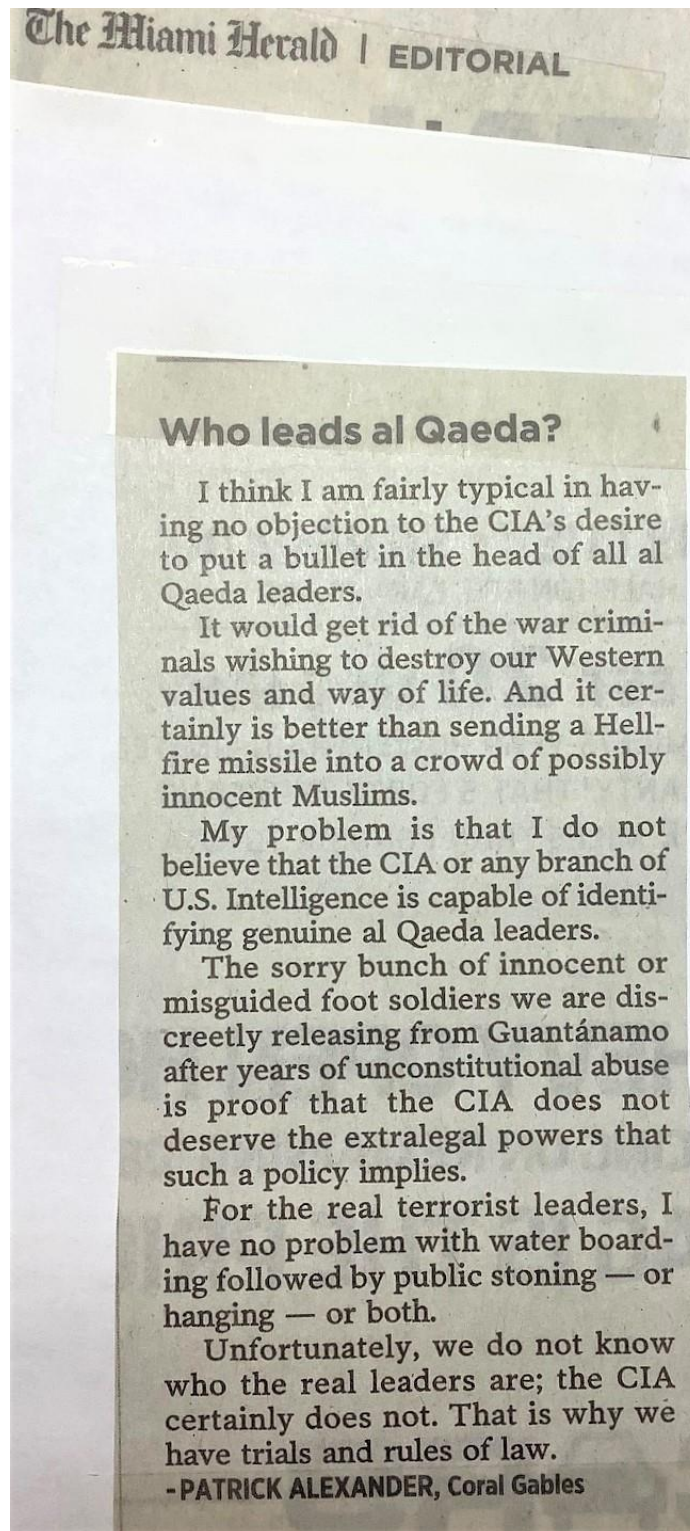
I agree with President Obama that to go after the self-serving scoundrels who created the political, security, financial, economic and ecological disaster in which we now find ourselves would be a distraction that would only prevent us from ever resolving our problems.

But when they refuse to go quietly, when they do indeed distract the president from clearing up their mess and continue to muddy the public debate with their lies and half truths — then they should be dealt with decisively.

Perhaps there is a reason to maintain the camp at Guantánamo after all — as an “undisclosed location” for Dick Cheney.

**- PATRICK ALEXANDER,
Coral Gables**

July 17, 2009



September 5, 2009

Outraged over salaries

What a shock to discover a world in which, even before Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Alvarez and County Commission Chairman Dennis Moss decided to hand out rewards to their cronies, there are hundreds of faceless assistant managers, spokespersons and schedulers all pulling down six-figure salaries. According to the Sept. 2 article Moss gave pay raises hours after warning:



MOSS

“Some assistant county managers, for instance, earn more than \$250,000 a year.” Commissioner Katy Sorenson said she gave 10-percent raises to two of her assistants because she “did not want to lose them to the private sector.”

Why on Earth would anyone want to leave the public trough for the private sector? In the private sector the salaries are lean, the benefits thin, the job security nonexistent; added to which you must justify your expenses, you are judged by results, you are expected to please your customers, put in a full day's work and be productive.

We are not just talking a few aids here, we are talking about hundreds of bureaucrats swilling down six-figure salaries of taxpayers' money.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

Don't reserve outrage for animal killings

BY JAMES BURNETT

JBURNETT@MIAMIHERALD.COM

I knew it would happen.

When police in North Miami-Dade announced Wednesday their second arrest in two recent horse butcherings, the outrage over the gruesome killings came to a boil.

Readers of news stories on the arrests of Santiago Cabrera, 19, and Miguel Cordero, 18, left comments on MiamiHerald.com ranging from "There has to be a special place -- somewhere -- for people like this," to "another teen murderer!"

Cabrera and Cordero have been charged with armed burglary, animal cruelty, killing a registered breed horse, and breaking a fence in the gruesome deaths of two horses at local ranches. Investigators say they carved up one horse while she was still alive, and sawed off her legs while her foal watched from a few feet away.

At least 15 more horses have been found slaughtered in South Florida this year, but no solid connection has been made between them and Cabrera and Cordero.

I get the outrage. I rode horses as a child. I own a dog and a cat. I get that four-legged animals, no matter how intelligent, depend on humans for proper care, and don't expect people to harm them.

WHAT ABOUT HUMANS?

What I don't get is why we can't express as much outrage about the slaughter of humans. When 15-year-old Jason Maharaj was shot and killed and a friend wounded in North Miami this month, a reader commented on MiamiHerald.com, grammar problems intact, that it was "No big lost, they should of been home studying."

So don't scoff and bluster about people not being as innocent as four-legged animals. Whatever your level of cynicism, you can't seriously believe that humans expect to be murdered any more than horses do.

So far, \$20,000 in reward money has been raised by Crime Stoppers and the Humane Society for information leading to arrests and convictions of the horse killers.

The situation is reminiscent of the 1996 murders of University of Miami students Marlin Barnes and Timwanika Lumpkins, both 22, in Barnes' apartment. Unfortunately for Barnes and Lumpkins, a dog named Lassie was stolen and brutally killed around the same time.

REWARD IMBALANCE

Miami Police Department investigators tell me that it was a struggle to scrape together \$11,000 in reward money for information on Barnes and Lumpkins' deaths. Lassie? The Herald reported then that her reward fund topped \$15,000. Police say it ultimately reached \$80,000, and that they had to beg the public to stop sending money because they couldn't keep up with the influx of donations.

It's not about rewards, though. It's about not showing proper respect for the lives of *people*, about taking people's lives for granted.

The most obvious problem with taking a dismissive attitude toward human murder victims and reserving the harshest criticism for animal killers is that it calls for a lower value to be placed on human life.

And we all know the less we value something, the less we try to protect it.

Be angry about animal killers. Feel the rage. Put it to good use. Volunteer at the Humane Society. Adopt a stray dog, or cat. Feed a horse.

But if you really want to show you have a heart, next time a human is killed in cold blood where you live, feel the rage. Put it to good use. Rally your neighbors. Volunteer for Crime Stoppers. And in case he reads the comments on MiamiHerald.com, tell the killer what he deserves and what you'd do if you could get your hands on him.

(Background to my letter of October 8, 2009)

October 8, 2009

Horse killings

Columnist James H. Burnett III misses the point concerning the public's outrage over the recent slaughter of horses (*Don't reserve outrage for animal killings*, Sept. 25.) It has nothing to do with caring more about the deaths of animals than humans. Rather, it's our horror at the cold-blooded brutality of the killings.

The horses' legs were smashed with iron pipes, and then they were butchered for their flesh while still alive. It is the crime's unimaginable cruelty that has ignited such passion.

Had the victims been humans, I am confident the public's outrage would be even greater.

-PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

(See opposite)

October 18, 2009

OCT 18, 2009

CLASSIFICATION: CIP 1134-10-11
THE MIAMI HERALD | MiamiHerald.com

SOAPBOX

Plan for café at club a really great idea

My family and I have lived within a three-minute walk of the Coral Gables Country Club for the past 25 years.

During that time, I have never felt that it was part of my community — it has been either shuttered and rather derelict in appearance or else exclusively for members only.

As a neighbor I am very excited to hear about the new plans to finally make the club part of the community — and I am especially excited to hear about the European-style sidewalk café.

I walk past the club to play golf at 7 every morning and I can

think of nothing nicer after my game around 8:30 than to have a coffee and croissant on the patio while reading The Miami Herald in the sunshine.

In the evening, my wife and I again pass the club when walking our dog around the golf course and I know that it would be wonderful to end the walk with a glass of wine in the outdoor café, possibly chatting with our neighbors.

I was playing a late afternoon round of golf with an architecture professor from UM a few weeks ago and he commented on all the joggers, cyclists, strollers and mothers with baby carriages

— “Granada Golf Course is the Coral Gables village green,” he said. “It’s the residential heart of the city.”

I told him about the proposed outdoor café.

“Brilliant!” he said. “It will tie it all together.”

I do not understand the scary objections that have been raised and all the silly talk about ‘beer and pizza’ being a threat to ‘women strolling down North Greenway with two babies in the carriage.’

For whatever reasons, the opponents are creating some sin-sodden South Beach out of a modest proposal to give Gables residents a neighborhood place to meet and relax in civilized surroundings.

Count me in favor — and all my neighbors too!

**PATRICK ALEXANDER
CORAL GABLES**

November 21, 2009

Look to England

I am tired of hearing criticisms of the United Kingdom's National Health Service during the debate about U.S. healthcare reform.

The experiences of my friends and family in the U.K. have proved the excellence of the British system. The annual survey by the U.S. Commonwealth Fund, of 10,000 doctors in 11 countries has found that the quality of healthcare delivered in the U.K. by the NHS is the world's best.

That refers to the healthcare available to everybody — not just the rich.

-PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

January 10, 2010

MEDICARE FRAUD

The media, not agency, unearthed scandal

Re the Dec. 29 Other Views column *Rooting out fraud*: Thomas W. Arnold's column claiming that Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration, which he heads, is successfully combating Medicare fraud reminds me of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano's initial claim that allowing a known jihadist to carry explosives onto a U.S.-bound plane proved that the system worked.

In the case of the Detroit-bound plane, disaster was averted only because the explosives failed to detonate and passengers tackled the bomber. The system had nothing to do with it.

In the case of Florida's Medicare fraud, AHCA was apparently unaware of the scandal until it was exposed by the media. If it were not for the investigative work by The Miami

Herald, Arnold's administration would still be paying out millions of dollars in obviously fraudulent claims.

As we enter the new year, let us be thankful for alert passengers, an active independent press and faulty explosives — and Lord protect us from the pompous complacency of incompetent bureaucrats.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

February 27, 2010

A death in Dubai

First, Dubai opens its arms to welcome and extend warm, cordial hospitality to a known terrorist ringleader. But later, when this same terrorist is assassinated in his hotel room, Dubai authorities become highly indignant and accuse the usual suspects of foul play.

Is Dubai considered a safe haven where terrorists can kick back and rest a spell while planning their next series of bombings and murders of innocents? I did not see that benefit mentioned on Dubai's home page.

- LARRY LOWENTHAL, Cooper City

Recent headlines have suggested outrage about the killing of a Hamas terrorist leader in a Dubai luxury hotel room. I don't recall such news coverage when Hamas killed innocent civilians — whether in hotels or buses or just walking in the street.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

March 29, 2010

THE READERS' FORUM

Public officials have no sense of proportion

What is most depressing about The Miami Herald's revelations of wanton mis-spending by our public servants is that deep down they do not understand the fuss. They live in a world where \$400 haircuts, \$600 hotel rooms and private jets between home and the office are a normal part of public life. A certain defensive defiance is to be expected. But the reaction of these officials is one of offended dignity.

I would almost prefer that these politicians (Republicans and Democrats alike) were consciously corrupt. What is worrying is that they really don't understand — years of living in the world of "public service" has

detached them from any understanding of the standards and restraints by which the rest of us live.

Ex-House Speaker Marco Rubio's aide, Richard Corcoran, for example explains that spending \$1,800 for a limousine service for four people during a two-day visit to Washington "saved them time parking" and thus enabled them to triple the number of meetings they held. Has he never heard of taxis? On this same trip the fiscal-four spent \$5,200 on a private jet and \$5,000 on hotel rooms for an overnight stay.

The money they spent is from Republican Party donors. But the inflated sense of self-

importance that seems an unfortunate product of public service, when combined with the easy access to party funds, inevitably produces the arrogant but blind hubris that The Miami Herald chronicles.

Unfortunately while these bureaucrats believe that \$1,200 engraved chairs and \$435 meals in Ruth's Chris steak house are "for the betterment of society," they will continue their ways unchanged, demanding that the public tighten its belt and accusing The Miami Herald and its readers of being socialists consumed with jealousy.

Well, I am jealous, and I've had enough.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

May 26, 2010

THE READERS' FORUM

Who's really responsible for the oil spill?

I worry that, because of the lack of a clear statement or demonstration of leadership, President Obama has reached his Katrina moment. Jim Morin's recent cartoon showing Obama saying "Heck of a job, BP" was cruel but, unfortunately, appropriate.

That a disaster like this could unfold under a Bush-Cheney administration would not be surprising. But for it to occur on Obama's watch is profoundly disheartening.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

Many Americans are placing the blame for the Gulf oil spill on everyone but themselves. But it's a fact that many of us can't seem to ease off the accelerator and use less gas to drive; nor can many Americans refrain from buying cheap imported goods that require massive amounts of oil to be shipped to the United States.

Both bad habits have caused the need for offshore drilling along our environmentally fragile coasts.

- RICHARD CLAYCOMB, Fort Lauderdale

We might see the oil in the Gulf of Mexico as a symbolic shroud for our planet. It's a death shroud that we know deep down we must shake off sooner rather than later.

Right now, the path seems brightest through the increased development and use of alternative energy. We all must encourage and support this to lend a helping hand to Mother Nature, whom we've kept waiting far too long.

- ALAN P. NOWELL, Pinecrest

How is it that BP is allowed to drill and refine oil in U.S. waters, given its abysmal safety record?

Wouldn't it be more patriotic to allow a home-grown oil company such as Exxon to destroy our environment instead?

- VINCENT LATHAM, Miami

To borrow the quote from Kate Hale in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew: "Where the hell is the cavalry on this one?"

- ZULMA SANTIAGO, Miramar

September 10, 2010

The world's media rightly condemns this awful little man in Gainesville who plans to burn copies of the Quran and give Islamic fanatics the perfect excuse to burn down Christian churches and murder yet more U.S. soldiers.

Nonetheless, it's the same media that will be there on Saturday taking photographs, shooting videos and giving him all the publicity he craves.

Ultimately, it will be the images provided by the media that will be responsible for inciting the Islamist violence that will inevitably follow.

- PATRICK ALEXANDER, Coral Gables

May 3, 2011

THE READERS' FORUM

Mission really and truly accomplished

When was the last time *everything* on the front page was good news? Osama bin Laden is dead, the Miami Heat beat Boston, the Dutch will help Miami drivers learn how to share the road with cyclists and Pope John Paul II is beatified. Perhaps John Paul's required three miracles for sainthood can be turning the hearts of terrorists, changing the attitudes of road-raging anti-cyclists and blessing the Heat with a playoff championship. The last one really wouldn't be a miracle, though — the Three Kings can take care of that.

— Lily Praelzo, Miami

Osama bin Laden is dead, and I am very happy — so is the rest of America. I see American flags out again, radio stations playing patriotic music and people cheering. But I must ask, why are we Cubans criticized for celebrating Castro's illness and leaving power? Why was the Orange Bowl party scheduled to celebrate his death cancelled? Don't we realize he is our bin Laden?

— Jose Sanchez, Palmetto Bay

ly to linger on despite bin Laden's death. He was an embodiment of hatred and violence, an anathema to the quintessential Islamic values of peace, compassion and humility.

— Mansura Bashir Minhas, Miami

While Donald Trump was noisily obsessing about birth certificates, President Obama was quietly working on a death certificate.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

Now that bin Laden is dead, will Donald Trump and the "birthers" insist on seeing the original death certificate?

— Richard Freeland, Miami

As I wrote this, I was rocking in my rocking chair waiting to hear from someone in the Republican Party give some credit, just a tiny little bit, to President Obama for eliminating Osama bin Laden. I have a feeling I am going to be rocking for quite awhile. I hope I don't get motion sickness.

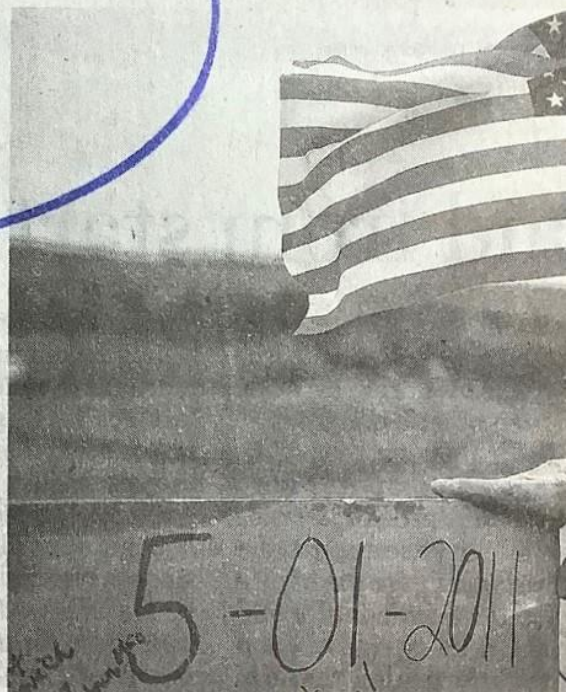
— Robert Gonzalez, Miami

It seems that Osama bin Laden was killed the day after the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's death.

— Frederick Johnson, Key West

It's a huge coincidence that bin Laden's killing was announced on Holocaust Remembrance Day and soon after the death of Moshe Landau in Israel, the chief

judge in Eichman was an hated life. With in days of its me minder murderer America —



May 15, 2011

THE READERS' FORUM

Duvalier photo highlights Haiti's extremes

I have been following your reports on events in Haiti for the past several years and, like most South Floridians, have felt overwhelmed by the image of poverty, hopelessness and human suffering that seems to engulf our unfortunate neighbor.

But there was also a nagging

sense that I was not getting the full story or seeing the complete picture — until I saw the photograph on the front page of the May 10 Miami Herald.

The photograph showed ex-president Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier relaxing in an upscale restaurant in Port-au-Prince

surrounded by equally well-dressed people, sipping cocktails and listening to jazz.

The revelation is not that a corrupt ex-dictator should be photographed relaxing; it is rather that a world of "upscale restaurants" and sophisticated jazz clubs, frequented by comfortably well-fed

and well-dressed people, should exist in a country that is otherwise portrayed as desperately in need of our financial aid.

Other Herald articles have asked "Where did the aid money go?"

Perhaps we have our answer.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

July 10, 2011

CASTING ANTHONY MOVIE

So Casey Anthony may be paid \$3 million for the movie rights, and Lindsay Lohan will have the starring role. Since Dominique Strauss-Kahn has lost his job at the International Monetary Fund, perhaps he could portray the father in the movie. The mother will be a difficult role to cast — but the baby should be easy. All you'd need is a bag of decomposing trash.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

September 21, 2011

HEARTBREAKING NEWS

I read the distressing story in the Sept. 14 edition of The Miami Herald, *Americans living in poverty at record high*.

In the same issue there was a report on the Hollywood referendum modifying city employee pensions in which one firefighter was quoted as being devastated that he was 46 years old, had planned to retire soon and now, perhaps, could not.

With the poverty report and the high level of unemployment that exists, it breaks my heart that this individual cannot retire at age 46 as planned.

— Dwain Hunkins, Hollywood

WHY WORK?

I was a loyal union member for 31 years working for a private company. Now I receive a reasonable pension of approximately 40 percent of my working salary and medical benefits with reasonable co-pays and premiums. I had use-it-or-lose-it vacation time and no preordained sick days, let alone the ability to accumulate them until full retirement which was 30-years service.

Many public unions are giving a bad name to unions in general; Hollywood is a case in point.

These union contracts were agreed upon by officials who themselves are grossly overcompensated, using other people's money, which makes it all very painless for them. I agree with residents who voted for cutting these unreasonable and unsustainable pension benefits. After all, who would work if they could get about the same or more compensation if they retired?

— Anna Pylant, Miramar

A BETTER APPRECIATION

After reading the Sept. 18 story on the generous retirement benefits of local public officials, bolstered by unused vacation and sick time, I have a better appreciation of the new Broward school chief's promise that "I will work 24/7, 365 days a year on behalf of the kids."

When Robert Runcie eventually leaves public service, for whatever reason, it appears there will be a lot of unused vacation and sick time to augment his pension plan.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

SOARING PENSIONS

The astronomical pensions paid to local government employees for plush jobs that are paid for out of my taxes are outrageous.

Any civil community that supports such an outrage is just as corrupt as those that are receiving such obscene pensions.

— Charles R. Williams, Palmetto Bay

FIREFIGHTERS DESERVE IT

The firefighters in Hollywood have lost 12.5 percent of their salary, and now their pensions are being cut.

Do we really want just the working class to pay back the money for those who overspent? I think the commissioners in Hollywood need to have a pay cut and basic classes in addition and subtraction and needs vs. wants.

When someone dials 911, something terrible has happened. Whom do you depend on to get your children to the emergency room alive when they have been in a car accident? Whom do you depend on to save your husband who is having a heart attack? Whom do you depend on to go into a burning building to save your elderly parents?

You depend on firefighters who are more brave and courageous every working day, than the average citizen is in a lifetime. I'm appalled at how many people believe that firefighters do not deserve the salaries and pensions they receive.

December 8, 2011

LITERATURE

Retirees read, learn about French writer Proust

■ A group of retirees from the University of Miami's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute have read the seven volumes of Proust's masterpiece in a year.

BY ANA VECIANA-SUAREZ
aveciana@miamiherald.com

This is the final class, the culmination of a Herculean feat: 16 retirees have finished reading Marcel Proust's classic, *In Search of Lost Time*.

All seven volumes — 3,275 pages, 1,404,975 words — in one year. And not one of them was required to do it.

On Wednesday, the group celebrated in an appropriately Proustian fashion, with tea and madeleines and a lively discussion of how an early 20th century French writer is still relevant almost 100 years after he published the first volume of his most important work.

"He still speaks to people, to the rights and wrongs in the small things of their lives," Patrick Alexander said.

Alexander was the instructor who guided the retirees through the yearlong course at the University of Miami's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Alexander is such a Proustian fanatic that he tweets about the long-dead author and has written a reader's guide, proof of his admiration for Proust's masterpiece, a novel *W. Somerset Maugham* called the "greatest fiction to date."

Before students arrived for the last discussion of a work that features about 400 "major" characters, Alexander declared: "This is one of the happiest days of my life. I've introduced another 20 people to Proust."

Alexander, a retired UM executive, initially agreed to teach an introductory course to "keep him alive," he said. "Not many people are willing to read the entire



TEA PARTY: Patrick Alexander, left, reads from Marcel Proust's 'In Search of Lost Time' as Murry Tamers listens.

PHOTOS BY MARICE COHN BAND/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

work."

That overview proved so popular that it was expanded, and about a third of the 75 original students agreed to tackle the massive work through several six-week mini-courses. The first course began Jan. 20 with *Swann's Way*, the first of the seven volumes, and at a clip of about 100 pages every week, the group read through *Within a Budding Grove*, *The Guermantes Way*, *Cities of the Plain*, *The Captive*, *The Fugitive* and, finally, *Time Regained*.

For the readers, the class was an opportunity to do what they might not have done alone.

"I love Paris and I always wanted to read Proust," said Rafael Miyar, a former international banker.

Of course, not everyone was possessed with a lifelong ambition to read the voluminous work of a writer some have called the greatest novelist of the 20th century.

Beverley West, a retired teacher, took the class because she



INSTRUCTOR'S WIFE: Jude Alexander holds a cake tin.

thought anything about Paris would be interesting. "Maybe I was asleep in my humanities class, but I had never heard of him until then," she admitted sheepishly.

But Alexander's passionate and lively discussions won West over. She's taking the class again in January.

What's the fuss all about? Let the Proustians tell you.



ATTENTIVE: Ileana Del Real, left, and Beverley West listen as their instructor reads from Proust's classic.

There's the language: "He'll spend two or three pages describing a tree and you would think that's boring, but it isn't," West said. "It's beautiful."

The universal themes and emotions: "The description of his feelings after his grandmother's death was so real that we couldn't get through it, we were so overcome," Carolyn Reed said.

And even the sex: "A lot of peo-

ple are surprised by that. He's sexually outrageous, a bawdy writer — and very, very funny," Alexander said.

Alexander began reading the first volume of *In Search of Lost Time* about 25 years ago. It took him 13 years to finish the six other volumes. He has read the entire work seven more times. He calls the fact that his students did it in one year "simply remarkable."

(Not exactly a letter – but an article on my teaching course on Marcel Proust)

December 9, 2011

dealsaver.com Today's deal: \$10 for skate session with rental plus pizza & soda at Galaxy Skateway in North Lauderdale

SUN AT TIMES, A STRAY SHOWER
HIGH 78 | LOW 66

HEAT TO SIGN SHANE BATTIER
GRIZZLIES' VETERAN FORWARD SAYS HE'S HEADED TO MIAMI, TD

HOLIDAY ROCK OPERA COMING TO MIAMI
WITH TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA, WEEKEND

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109TH YEAR, NO. 86 ©2011

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2011
FINAL EDITION

SPEEDING TO CHRISTMAS



PATRICK FARRELL/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

Jude and Patrick Alexander get help picking up their Christmas tree at the Hank Kline Boys and Girls Club on Southwest 32nd Avenue in Miami — from their Maltese dogs, Lucy and Frodo — on Thursday. This time of year, Christmas tree lots dot South Florida's landscape, a visual reminder of the approaching holidays. Not all trees are created equal, however. Just ask the dozens of tree salespersons around South Florida. **Story, 3B**

ASSISTED-LIVING FACILITIES

Grand jury to state: Get tough on ALFs

■ A Miami-Dade grand jury called for harsher penalties on filthy and neglectful assisted-living facilities — and greater protections for frail elders.

BY MICHAEL SALLAH AND CAROL MARBIN MILLER
msallah@MiamiHerald.com

A Miami-Dade grand jury blasted the state for allowing troubled assisted-living facilities to stay open instead of reaching into its arsenal to crack down on the worst abusers, including imposing steeper fines, shutting down troubled homes and weeding out rogue operators.

The report, released Thursday, put the blame squarely on the Agency for Health Care Administration for permitting dangerous homes to keep their doors open and not "doing a more effective job

... and the following day, featured with our dogs, above the fold!

July 5, 2012



(Too busy teaching my wine course during 2012 to write any letters to the Editor!)

May 2, 2013

GREAT LOCAL BOOKSELLER

Re the April 25 story *Big on books*: Perhaps one reason that Miami ranks only No. 3 on Amazon's "Most Well Read Cities" list is because we are so well served by Books & Books, we have no reason to purchase online.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

June 20, 2013

NO WAR MONGER

There are, of course, many reasons to be grateful that President Obama defeated Sen. John McCain in 2008. But perhaps Syria is the biggest reason.

How many foreign wars would we be now engaged in and how many more young American soldiers would be dead or injured if that belligerent old man had won the election?

Thank goodness for a cool young president who avoids emotional, unnecessary entanglements.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

July 6, 2013

RIGHT AND WRONG

What Edward Snowden did was wrong and he should be aggressively prosecuted. However, I am pleased that he did what he did and that the subject of government spying is open to public discussion.

Authorities are disingenuous at best when they claim that terrorists have been alerted and gone silent as a result of Snowden's disclosures. Osama bin Laden was aware of government eavesdropping and went digitally silent more than a decade ago. No serious terrorist group would think it was safe to use any sort of electronic communication.

— **Patrick Alexander,**
Coral Gables

Sept 6, 2013

SURVIVING THE STRAITS

I understand the desire and the challenge to swim, for example, the Hellespont or the English Channel, and I also understand the public praise and glory that results from a successful crossing.

But, is not Diana Nyad's highly publicized swim across the Florida Straits a cruel insult to all the lives lost by those poor people who made the attempt without TV crews, advisors and the permission and support of the Cuban and U.S. governments?

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

Sept 11, 2013

NO DIFFERENCE

Why do people arguing for U.S. military intervention in Syria always emphasize Bashar Assad's use of chemical weapons "against his own people?"

Would it be more acceptable if he had used chemical weapons against other, non-Syrian people?

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

October 3, 2013

DISREGARDING THE PEOPLE

As an English-born immigrant of some 30-plus years, I still struggle to understand the American political process.

It was my understanding that last November the American people clearly expressed their support for President Obama and their desire for him to enact his party's platform.

It was my further understanding that, if after four years the president's policies proved unsuccessful or unpopular, the electorate will elect a different president or party.

But, as is reported daily, this constitutionally elected president is being thwarted and defied at every turn. It is as though the people had never spoken.

This is not a legitimate expression of democracy; this is a blatant and insulting disregard of the people's will.

How can we demand the expression of the "people's voice" in Syria, Libya and Egypt when we cannot manage it at home?

— Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

September 19, 2013

CORAL GABLES

A tour of Cartagena's spirit

■ The Coral Gables Museum will showcase the architecture, food and drink of the Colombian city

BY MICHAEL SHARP
msharp@miamiherald.com

Patrick Alexander has a passion for history and wine.

He began drinking wine with his meals at age 5. Originally from England, Alexander lived in the wine-producing meccas of France, Italy and California — before moving to Coral Gables in 1986.

He spent seven years teaching education at the University of Miami and is now the resident oenologist at the Coral Gables Museum, where he conducts a series on different cities' wine, food and history.

From 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, he will present "The Spirit of Cartagena," focusing on the Colombia city on the Caribbean. Cartagena is Coral Gables' first sister city. He will serve aguardiente, the anise-flavored liqueur, and rum.

"It will be different from the others because there is

If you go

What: The Spirit of Cartagena

Where: The Coral Gables Museum, 285 Aragon Ave.

When: 7-9 p.m. Thursday, (Must call to RSVP)

Cost: \$30. \$20 for museum members or students with ID (must be 21 or over)

For information: Call 305-603-8067 or visit coralgablesmuseum.org

posite sides of the same body of water," Fett said. "A lot of Miamians originate from Colombia, many of them from Cartagena, so there is a special connection there."

Christine Rupp, director at Coral Gables Museum, says the series has proven to

be popular.

"The presentations are entertaining and very educational," she said. "As we always say about our series presentations, if history were this much fun in school, we would have paid a lot more attention."

no Colombian wine," said Alexander, 67. "However, the history of Cartagena is colorful and absolutely fascinating and they have great rum and aguardiente."

Alexander will be joined by Professor Steven Fett from the University of Miami's School of Architecture. Fett, who was born in Brazil and grew up in Wisconsin, will take guests on an architectural tour of the city.

"Miami and Cartagena have a relationship because they share geographic boundaries by being on op-

SEPT 19, 2013



DANIEL BOCK/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

CARTAGENA: Patrick Alexander inside the Sister Cities Exhibit at the Coral Gables Museum. Alexander will host the next Sister Cities Wine and Spirit Series today at 7 p.m.

December 26, 2013

HONOR MANDELA

In 1999, Time Magazine named Albert Einstein as the "Person of the Century" while Charles Krauthammer, writing in The Washington Post, disagreed and suggested Winston Churchill.

I am a great admirer of both Einstein and Churchill, but I remember how surprised and disappointed I was that the honor did not go to Nelson Mandela. The crucible of pain in which his soul was forged and the tensile strength of the steel that emerged, produced an ethical standard against which all world leaders should be measured.

I also admire President Obama, but think that the Nobel Peace Prize would rest more comfortably on Mandela's broad

shoulders. Perhaps Time in 2099 will vote him "Person of the 21st Century." I do hope, however, that other contenders will have emerged by then. Still, the world has lost a great man.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

STAND AGAINST CASTROS

I thank the Miami Herald for presenting diverse views of President Obama's encounter with Raúl Castro. It was more than a handshake — the president also spoke with a violent dictator who denies Cubans the most basic human rights. He has encouraged travel to the island where the money goes to a corrupt government.

The Castro brothers have long operated an apartheid system where Cubans were second-class citizens in their own country, forbidden to enter or stay at hotels or go to beaches or restaurants. They are not allowed to travel outside the country without government approval and cannot vote in free elections.

It is a shame that the world has

January 30, 2014

HAITIANS NEGLECTED

How typical that it was only Jacqueline Charles' Jan. 28 story, *Haiti government calls for action to stem illegal migration, deaths*, about Haiti's "island without hope" that finally forced Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe to send the starving islanders a truckload of rice and beans.

How typical that Lamothe should only learn about his people's plight in his hotel room in Paris while he was en route to some international conference in Ethiopia.

If Lamothe and Haitian President Michel Martelly spent more time at home with the poor and the helpless and less time on international jaunts with the rich and famous, there might at last be the beginning of hope for this poor island.

— Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

February 23, 2014

MIAMI HERALD | MiamiHerald.com

Feb 23 2014

SOAPBOX

City needs to give greens at Granada needed TLC

Coral Gables was recently recognized by the United Nations-backed International Awards for Livable Communities as one of the top-five cities in the world. Officials cited the Granada public golf course among the many rich quality-of-life features that make Coral Gables so unique.

Since George Merrick created the City Beautiful in 1923, Granada has been the Village Green; it is not just the heart, it is the very soul of Coral Gables, the jewel in the crown. Despite the magnificence of the stately homes that surround the Village Green, the democratic nature of the American civic tradition is evident wherever you look. The golfers are not wealthy elitists - they are regular Gables citizens and the people walking around the green represent a typical cross section of local residents.

Unfortunately, a problem has arisen over the past several months: the greens are dying. Nobody is quite sure why. Conflicting theories abound. But city management is providing no answers and no management.

For a non-golfer, driving or jogging around the course, it has never looked lovelier. Shrubs have been clipped, mulch has been laid and it looks like a beautiful park. But for those who play golf it has become a disaster. The greens need to be replaced and then they need to be maintained professionally so this never happens again.

Unless the city devotes some managerial support, Florida's oldest nine-hole course will not reach its centennial. The daily usage of this golf course measures

the pulse and the health of this city. City officials have a duty to protect it. Unfortunately, the few city officials who play golf prefer to use their membership at the Biltmore or the Riviera golf courses. Granada is just for the citizens.

The citizens deserve better. George Merrick deserves better. Coral Gables deserves better.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

March 18, 2014

UNDERAPPRECIATED GEM

While so much attention, understandably, is devoted to the Pérez Art Museum Miami, the Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science, the Arsht Center and the New World Center, the “little engine that could” gets overlooked.

The Coral Gables Museum remains an underappreciated gem. In addition to its permanent exhibit on the history and architecture of Coral Gables, the museum hosts concerts, exhibitions, talks and presentations from the historic to the most contemporary and cutting edge.

In its brief two-year history, the museum has hosted an eclectic variety of several dozen exhibits ranging from Spanish exploration of Florida to the graffiti glories of the Miami Marine Stadium. Currently the museum is hosting a stunning exhibit, *Marking the Millennium*, hosted by Beth Dunlop, that celebrates Miami's dramatic emergence on the forefront of 21st-century architecture and theatrically presents its fellow museums and public buildings around the bay.

When extolling South Florida's cultural emergence, the Coral Gables Museum should be included on that list of glorious institutions.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

January 13, 2015



January 13, 2015

U.S. SUPPORT MISSING

My daughter, her husband and their two children marched in their hometown of Paris on Sunday. They carried the 'Je Suis Charlie' signs; it was my grandchildren's first exposure to political expression. The fervent excitement on their faces said it all.

They were not alone, there were a reported 1.5 million like-minded people who took the streets in Paris alone. There were also 40 world leaders, but nobody of significance from the United States saw fit to attend.

My granddaughter called me from Paris to ask why President Obama was not standing with them. I did not know what to say.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

May 20, 2015

DIFFERENT ENDINGS

The May 16 Herald reported the ends of two lives. Two men came from similar poor backgrounds, but evolved in two different directions.

One leaves behind him an endless cycle of meaningful music (*Blues legend was an inspiration to many generations*), touching the deepest sorrows of the human soul, but always reaching out to hope, beauty and love. The other leaves behind nothing but meaningless pain and sorrow (*Jury hands down death sentence*).

Everybody has the choice of how they want their lives to be remembered. Very few of us have the gifts to be B.B. King, but all of us have the choice to not be Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

June 16, 2015

JUST NOT TRUE

Despite Sunday's front-page headline declaring Jeb Bush an "honorary Cuban-American," Bush is no more Hispanic than Rachel Dolezal, the former Spokane NAACP leader, is black.

— Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

@MiamiHerald.com; Fax: 305-376-8950
time phone number. Letters may be ed

September 30, 2015

Creating a new reality in Coral Gables

Over the past few weeks, there have been many different opinions circulating about the real-estate renaissance taking place in Coral Gables.

In the 11 years that I've operated and owned a restaurant in the City Beautiful, I have learned quite a few things about what it takes to be viable in this town.

The Gables is a unique community with loyal and passionate residents. However, what we also have is a central business district that is predominately bankrolled by commuters and non-residents. The dramatic decrease in foot traffic that takes place on nights and weekends is undeniable, and asking a restaurant owner to be profitable on a 40-hour workweek is unthinkable.

We need to build on the Gables' incredibly strong foundation and bring new dining, entertaining and shopping options that will attract more than just Gables loyalists.

We want millennials, young professionals, the vacationers, the hip and cool crowd to shop, wine and dine on our city streets. We want them not because we need their approval or our own validation; we want them because it's good business to appeal to more than just the traditionalists.

Significant strides by city leadership to bridge this gap are well under way with the Streetscape project and other improvements that will resurrect the downtown corridor so it can once again thrive as the vibrant hub it was always intended to be. I have faith in our current leaders to keep it classy, but contemporary, and I hope our community can extend them the same trust.

Once these improvements are in place, we'll be creating and celebrating a new tradition, a new reality — one that cultivates a generation that wants to live, work, learn and play in Coral Gables.

Cheers for a noble nod to the past and an energized fist-bump to the future.

*WAYNE ELDRED,
OWNER, TARPON BEND,
CORAL GABLES*

October 1, 2015

OCT 1
2015

and improvements of recent years.

We are delighted with the Streetscape project for the downtown district; we support the Underline project along U.S. 1; we admire thoughtful modern architecture like the Alhambra Towers; and we welcomed the creative transformation of the old police and fire station into the culturally vibrant Coral Gables Museum.

While national chains such as Starbucks and Barnes & Noble are an inevitable part of modern life, the Gables and its residents have also nurtured the charming intimacy of family-owned businesses that make the city so vibrant.

And that's the point. Coral Gables doesn't need Eldred's new reality.

Coral Gables is a vibrant place already, without the extra traffic, the millennials and the extra vacationers. If I wanted the contemporary attractions of Ocean Drive or CocoWalk, I would sell my house and move there. As it is, I prefer the charm of Coral Gables.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

GABLES' CHARMS

I was interested to read the letter from Wayne Eldred, the owner of Tarpou Bend, and his suggestions for keeping Coral Gables "classy."

My wife and I moved to Coral Gables 30 years ago, attracted by its big-city/small-town charms.

We are traditionalists in the sense of wanting to preserve the charms that first drew us here, but we also welcome the change

October 6, 2015

POWERFUL SPEECH

I found it refreshing, but also depressing, to listen to President Obama describe his inability to change the current cycle of meaningless gun-violence alone.

I saw the initial reports of Thursday's college shootings in Oregon on Google News and immediately told a room full of my co-workers. I was struck by how quickly the initial shock and disbelief was followed by shrugs of acceptance.

My co-workers are decent and sensitive people, but when mass killings become so routine, normal people reach a point where they can no longer be surprised — and eventually no longer are outraged.

That is a sad moment for all of us.

Obama, in his slow, dispassionate but powerful speech that evening, emphasized that this is not about Democrats or Republicans, or red or blue states — this is about the value of human lives in this, the most developed and powerful nation on Earth.

He also emphasized that he cannot change this culture by presidential decree — he needs the support of the American people and our elected representatives.

— Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Second letter published in the same week



March 19, 2016

APPLE DISPUTE

Though wary of the intrusive power of big government, I have been sympathetic to the government's position during the privacy/encryption dispute with Apple.

I felt that the Justice Department was being reasonable in requesting a one-time ruling in a specific case and that Apple was conjuring up some Orwellian threat out of proportion to the reality of a modern democracy.

But now, with the possibility of a Donald Trump presidency becoming a reality, I'm having second thoughts. As he develops his "enemies list" and prepares to change libel laws, the Donald must be salivating at any precedent weakening a citizen's right to privacy and increasing the potential powers of the Trump House.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

June 7, 2016

THANKS TO OBAMA

President Obama has proved somewhat of a disappointment.

Despite our high hopes, in his two terms as president he has not solved all the world's, or even all of America's problems.

However, the current electoral cycle can only remind us how lucky we are to have had him in the White House.

Looking at his possible successors, we can only recognize the intelligence, decency, calm integrity and true family values that we have all taken for granted during his terms.

We are going to miss Obama and the better angels of our nature that he has so quietly, but determinedly, represented.

*—Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

July 20, 2016

MELANIA'S SPEECH

From the moment I saw the silhouette of The Donald against the stage fog with the music of Queen's "We are the Champions" in the background, I felt I was watching a movie.

The unreal feeling continued and increased in intensity as he introduced his wife against the giant red and white stripes of Old Glory.

But then I saw a truly beautiful woman, free of her husband and handlers, alone upon the national stage, totally in command, speaking in a perfectly modulated voice, a perfectly written speech alluding to inclusiveness, concern and respect for women and children.

I have to confess I was surprised and impressed by Melania Trump.

She is a true professional. She inspired me and persuaded me as much as the robo-calls I receive daily.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

WAS IT PLAGIARISM?

Can you believe the Republican spin doctors are actually trying to say Melania Trump's did not plagiarize Michelle Obama's 2008 speech?

Maybe they think GOP stands for "Gullible Old People."

- Barry Levy,
Miami

NOW, I'M A DEMOCRAT

I have just done my bit for GOP party unity: I have changed my registration to Democrat.

Having watched on Monday the chair's selective hearing on a voice vote on party rules, I'm glad that I did.

- Arnold Slotkin,
Hollywood

July 28, 2016

FLOTUS FOR POTUS

After listening to first lady Michelle Obama's extraordinary speech on Monday night and being impressed both by her tough, but discreet, attacks on the opponent, and her charm and uplifting appeal to our better angels, I realized there is a simple way to heal the disunity of the Democratic Party and resoundingly win November's election.

Nominate Michelle!

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

August 8, 2016

I thought that devotion to the country and its people and one's belief that one's policies would be in their best interest would be foremost in a candidate's mind. Instead of being concerned about wasting time and money, shouldn't a candidate be terribly distressed by having disappointed his or her followers by being unsuccessful in making political views and policies resonate?

- Dennis Jenkins, Coconut Grove

CAN'T STAND THE HEAT

Donald Trump is threatened at each and every criticism. He is paranoid, narcissistic and self-aggrandizing. He deals with criticism like a typical third grader, with juvenile name-calling and other forms of retaliation. He cannot seem to help himself from lashing out at critics, time after time, with vitriolic attacks spiced with accusations of conspiracy.

One popular saying attributed to Harry Truman is: "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen." It is obvious that Trump cannot stand any measure of heat without the need to strike back.

But the heat of the campaign is lukewarm compared to what is felt when sitting in the Oval Office. His reaction to the Khan family asking about you "sacrifice" was unbelievable and unforgivable. He doesn't understand what he says is difficult to retract. He fails to even recognize the malice of his words. His presidency would be an unfathomable disaster. He needs to get out of the kitchen.

- Charles E. Hannemann,
Palmetto Bay

CLINTONS NOT INVITED

Making predictions in this most unusual and volatile election cycle is a job only for the most foolhardy. However, there is one prediction that I

“

A FOX NEWS NATIONAL POLL FOUND THAT PEOPLE PREFER HILLARY CLINTON TO DONALD TRUMP BY 10 POINTS. WHILE AN MSNBC POLL FOUND THAT HILLARY CLINTON HAS ALREADY BEEN PRESIDENT FOR TWO YEARS.

Seth Meyers

feel confident in making.

Donald J. Trump will not be inviting the Clintons to the wedding celebration, next time he gets married.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

After living in Miami for 45 years, I'm finally retired and could live anywhere. I stress about living someplace and not having the gift of being amid the cultural diversity Miami has to offer and that I have come to enjoy.

This election cycle has exposed this country's apparent widespread xenophobia. I think I'll stay right here where we celebrate our differences and love one another in spite of our diverse heritages.

- Douglas Stevenson, Cutler Bay

THE TRUMP MUTINY?

Is it me, or does Donald Trump sound more and more like Captain Queeg? I have yet to read or hear any accounts of him taking responsibility for anything relating to his campaign for president.

- Ben Nemer, Hollywood

September 14, 2016

GARISH GABLES ART

The two “sculptures” being installed on the Segovia Street traffic circles at great taxpayer expense are not only aesthetically appalling — they are also extremely dangerous.

Both pieces are located at very busy commuter hubs where, because of the high volume of automobile traffic, it is vital that drivers are not distracted.

But because of the garishly busy formlessness of the design, drivers eyes are inevitably diverted from the road as they try to make sense of the brightly colored objects.

Such public art might work well on Miami Beach, but they are entirely unsuitable and out of place in Coral Gables where their brash, tinný vulgarity affronts everything the City Beautiful represents.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

October 16, 2016

- Ruth Admire, Marathon

OBAMA'S PROGRESS?

I get sick to my stomach when I hear Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama being outraged over the Donald Trump tape.

Their self-righteous indignation isn't fooling anyone.

While I'm at it, President Obama's latest tirade about losing progress if Trump wins puzzles me.

What progress is he referring to? The disastrous deal he made with Iran, giving billions of dollars to an arch enemy or creating an atmosphere where our enemies don't respect us, our allies don't trust us. ISIS is getting stronger, we have no control over our borders, illegal immigration is rampant, our racial issues are worse than ever — and these are just a few of the things he calls "progress."

- Mary Bastek, Aventura

AMERICAN VALUES

Just as those of us of a certain age often wistfully recall the Eisenhower era or the Reagan era as "golden years" when phrases like decency, rational discourse and true family-values had meaning, I think that our children and grandchildren will recall the Obama years when the president and first lady showed us what representing American values' and being presidential really meant.

After the damage

DURING A RALLY IN FLORIDA DONALD TRUMP BOASTED ABOUT HIS PLANS FOR ISIS AND SAID HE WILL BE "THEIR WORST NIGHTMARE." OH, WOW, SO HE'S ALSO RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT OF ISIS?

Seth Meyers

brought by our "Apprentice President," will we as a nation ever recover our dignity and standing in the world?

- Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

CLINTON IS SAVVY

Andrew Oppenheimer got it right in his Oct. 13 column saying that Hillary Clinton's closed-door speeches, though leaked to embarrass her, actually deserve praise. The same is true for the released emails concerning the Clinton Foundation. That top corporations, and even foreign officials, contributed to a charity that has been ranked A+ for its effectiveness and transparency is to Clinton's credit.

We need to read beyond the headlines.

- Ralph Remis, Miami

January 1, 2017

HISTORY NOW

I have often wondered how people perceived life during the 1930s.

I wondered how people felt when politicians like Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini were voted into power by a popular, democratic vote.

I wondered how they watched, one by one, the foxes being appointed to guard the hen house, as the dictators appointed their henchmen.

At what point, I wondered, did Himmler, Heydrich, Goebbels and Goering become household names, representing the will of the people?

How did it feel, I wondered, to slide, eyes open, voluntarily and consciously, into a social and political morass where ethical and moral standards no longer have any meaning?

Unfortunately, I am now beginning to understand and no longer need to wonder.

This is exactly what it feels like.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

January 16, 2017

STYLE AND GRACE

I have just watched President Obama and his most gracious first lady, Michelle Obama, walk off the stage and into history. As I watched them leave, it was with a terrible sense of sadness, knowing we will not see that level of true style and grace, if ever again in our public life.

Whatever vulgarities, dangers or uncertainties the immediate future may hold, we should retain a memory of President Obama and his family as true standards of American values, dignity and leadership that we pray will one day return.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

February 17, 2017

CONWAY'S OK

The Trump campaign and presidency have been riddled with ethical lapses.

But Kellyanne Conway's exhortation to "Buy Ivanka's stuff" is not part of that pattern. It was a spontaneous, throw-away and even humorous line — the sort of thing Joe Biden might have said.

Politically incorrect maybe, but harmless — unlike her boss' tweet attacking Nordstrom. Let's leave Conway alone. Her words were silly and unimportant. To take it further wastes Democratic energy and, more important, credibility.

Lighten up. Deal with the real ethical problems we face.

They are far too serious for these reality-show-style distractions.

— *Patrick Alexander,*
Coral Gables

March 20, 2017

SENIOR MOMENTS

I am the same age as our president and understand, indeed sympathize, with his late-night impulse to just be himself. How many years do I have left, I ask myself as, after checking that my wife is asleep, I thinly slice some Parmesan cheese, open a can of anchovy filets in olive oil and pour another glass of Chianti to wash them down — while skulking in the kitchen. It's an old man's thing — we can do stuff that young folk can't get away with.

I might write inappropriate late-night letters to the editor of the Miami Herald, but I do not insult a previous president on Twitter or casually jeopardize our relationship with this nation's closest allies. Only crazy people do things like that, however late it is.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

June 28, 2017

TWEETS OF DOOM

I have enjoyed watching our so-called president as he stumbles smugly toward his own destruction. But I realize that after he has been arrested or at least impeached, it will all be too late. The damage will have been done.

With Vice President Mike Pence, we will have a religious fundamentalist presiding over a cabinet of birthers and flat-Earthers but without the reality-show entertainment of The Donald.

We are all doomed, either way, with him or without him.

The Roman Empire took a couple of hundred years to decline. The British Empire took half a century. As a respected world power, America has collapsed in less than six months — 140 characters at a time.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

July 25, 2017

CARTOON GENIUS

For many years, I have been a great admirer of Jim Morin's political cartoons. He has always had an uncanny ability to reveal the zeitgeist; the spirit of what his fellow citizens are feeling on a subconscious but almost visceral level.

His July 23 cartoon, "Take THAT!" of Trump brutally beating the living symbol of Justice into a bloodied, shapeless heap upon the ground and then saying "Pardon me" raised my admiration for Morin's

genius to yet a whole new level.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

September 11, 2017

CLIMATE ACCORD

If President Trump's various luxury properties in Doral and Palm Beach are destroyed by Hurricane Irma, is there a possibility that the United States might reconsider its opposition to the Paris Climate Accord?

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

September 24, 2017

October 15, 2017

GABLES VS. FPL

As a Coral Gables resident, I would like to disassociate myself from the city's lawsuit against FPL.

When there is still so much suffering throughout South Florida, with people sleeping in parking lots, residents of Liberty City and elsewhere without resources, this lawsuit by Coral Gables is an embarrassing example of petulant, privileged elitism.

FPL has done a wonderful job in restoring power. I saw its work crews everywhere, and if the city had ensured that trees were trimmed prior to hurricane season, much of their efforts would not be needed.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

CITY BEAUTIFUL?

Following the destruction of Hurricane Irma, the mayor and commissioners of Coral Gables publicly attacked and filed a lawsuit against FPL for not restoring power to 100 percent of its residents — immediately.

More than a month has passed since Irma's arrival, yet the city has still not cleared up all of the debris, and normal refuse collection has still not been restored.

Just walking the dogs around our residential streets has become a hazardous challenge, dodging fallen tree limbs and avoiding piles of rotten garbage.

Even today, going to a central downtown restaurant, our shoes were soiled after climbing over piles of debris in the public parking lot.

Most Gables residents that I know had their power restored within 24 hours. Instead of focusing on the 'mote' in FPL's eyes, the city should be looking at the beams littering the streets in its own 'eye.'

No longer the City Beautiful, we have become the City Bedraggled.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

November 17, 2017

REASONABLE PROOF

Perhaps now we will finally see an end to this disgraceful Mueller 'Russia-gate' nonsense that has been obsessing the liberal media since the election.

In several face-to-face meetings, President Trump directly asked Russian President Vladimir Putin if he had been meddling in the U.S. election.

Each time, the Russian leader stated steadfastly, "very strongly, vehemently," that "he absolutely did not meddle in our election."

Our own president and the president of Russia both agree there was no Russian meddling in the U.S. election.

How much clearer can that be?

What more proof could any reasonable person possibly want?

Understandably, President Putin is offended and insulted by any suggestion that he has been meddling.

As this liberal witch-hunt and politically motivated 'hit-job' continues, I can only blush to think what President Putin must think of us.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

TRANCE-LIKE STATE

Please, please tell me that the Nov. 17, "Reasonable proof," was tongue in cheek, in which case it sums things up quite nicely!

And if it is not in jest, what kind of spell has Donald Trump put on so many Americans?

- Thomas Grant Hagstrum,
North Miami Beach

WHAT PROOF?

The writer of the Nov. 17 letter "Reasonable proof" ignores facts.

He asks what more proof could a reasonable person want, when Putin insists that he didn't meddle?

His belief of Putin's "vehement" denial and those of other non-reliable sources, while disregarding our government intelligence agencies' findings, is typical of the president's blind supporters.

This is not a liberal witch hunt, but a thorough investigation of an act to disrupt America's democratic process.

Perhaps if the writer read the Miami Herald's reporting on this matter instead of watching, perhaps, Fox News or listening to Rush Limbaugh, he might come to a different conclusion — one based on facts, not hate.

- Oscar R. Friedman,
Cooper City

December 28, 2017

WE ARE TRUMP

For many months I believed the Trump presidency was an aberration, an accident, a historic mistake. His values were completely at odds with those of Americans.

I viewed this presidency as a temporary abnormality that the tides of history would correct.

As we draw near the end of President Trump's first term, I have had to revise my opinion. Trump is not an imposter; he, indeed, does represent the American people. "We have met the enemy and he is us." As the rest of the world watches in appalled disbelief, they see not only the bullying, boastful, arrogant, mendacious narcissism of our president, they see us, too.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

December 31, 2017

TRUMP PRESIDENCY

For many months, I believed that the Trump presidency was an aberration; that it was an accident, an historic mistake.

I thought that, whether because of Russian meddling or Clinton's incompetence, America found itself with a leader whose values were completely at odds with those of its citizens. I viewed this presidency as an embarrassing, but temporary, abnormality that the tides of history would soon correct.

Unfortunately, as we draw near the end of Trump's first year in power, I have sadly and unwillingly had to revise my opinion.

Donald Trump is not an imposter; he is indeed president and he does indeed represent the American people. "We have met the enemy and he is us."

When the rest of the world watches in appalled disbelief, they see not only the bullying, boastful, arrogant, mendacious narcis-

sism of our president; they see us too. Sad.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

March 11, 2018

IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE

Reading about the growing movement by the leaders of China, Venezuela, Russia and the Philippines, among others, toward lifetime autocratic dictatorships, I am so grateful that I live in a nation where such a step would be pure anathema to our own Dear Leader.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

April 17, 2018

WELL DONE

I really don't understand why everybody is questioning the president's use of the phrase "Mission Accomplished."

Of course it was a very successful mission.

These strikes in Syria removed all mention of Michael Cohen and the Mueller inquiry off the evening news.

Mission accomplished!

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

May 16, 2018



August 13, 2018

OPEN MIC

PHOTOS TELL A STORY

I have followed the Miami Herald's reporting on the FIU bridge collapse on Southwest Eighth street with a layperson's detachment.

I accepted that the discussion of hairline cracks, design issues, stresses and structures all are specialist/engineering concepts best left to the experts.

But then I saw the photographs on the front page of the paper.

You don't need to be a specialist or an engineer to understand those photographs.

Those are not hairline cracks; they are significant fractures and clear signs of damage and danger.

Anybody who was aware of those gaping fissures and did not close down the road and remove the bridge should be held accountable and prosecuted.

The expression that, "A picture is worth a thousand words" is a gross understatement.

Thank you for publishing the photographs and showing the public the reality of "hairline cracks."

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

September 2, 2018

OPEN MIC

Catholic Church has not done enough to stop pedophile priests

There is a general sense in the public discourse that, after several generations or even centuries, of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, a corner has been turned.

Pope Francis recently acknowledged and apologized for years of abuse in Ireland and, after an initial denial, apologized for similar abuse in Chile.

The recent damning report in Philadelphia, the resignation of Cardinal Bernard Law in Boston, a current courtroom trial in Australia and other *Maxima Mea Culpa* around the world would suggest that the Vatican has finally recognized its need to reform a paedophilic core.

[A grand jury report said that internal documents from six Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania showed that more than 300 "predator priests" have been credibly accused of sexually abusing more than 1,000 child victims.]

Many saw the public exposure and disgrace of Cardinal Law as a significant turning point. But nothing has really changed.

The Roman Curia remains a group of elderly men. Following his exposure by the Boston Globe as a protector of pedophile priests and his public shaming in the Oscar-winning movie "Spotlight," Cardinal Law resigned as Archbishop of Boston and moved to Rome where he spent the rest of his life as Archpriest of the Basilica Di Santa Maria Maggiore, a sinecure with only ceremonial duties; a Vatican Prince living in one of Rome's most splendid palaces.

When this evil man finally died last year, Pope Francis gave him a ceremonial funeral befitting a revered prince of the church.

Little boys should still be very wary of holy men in black cassocks.

Nothing has changed.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

December 14, 2018

OPEN MIC

*Impeaching
Trump is
the wrong
move for
House
Dems*

There is a growing movement for Congress to impeach President Trump on the Michael Cohen revelations as soon as the Democrats regain control of the House. This is a recipe for disaster. Whether the president violated campaign-finance laws, or whether another president had sex with an intern in the Oval Office, are not issues the public feels sufficiently deeply about to tear the country apart.

Impeaching Trump over the Stormy Daniels affair however, would certainly tear the country apart. It would be a long, sordid and painful process. The final vote could go either way and would only deepen the bitterness and intransigence of the losing side. Moreover, if Trump were to be impeached and removed from office, there would be two immediate consequences.

Vice President Pence would become president (God help us all). And a large percentage of the voting public would feel that an injustice had been done and an election had been stolen by sore losers and conspirators.

A third probable consequence would be a monumental Republican victory in 2020 -- and four more years of Pence. Unless Robert Mueller's report reveals unassailable evidence of criminal behavior that cannot be ignored, Trump should be allowed to continue as president. During the next two years, a Democratic House will keep him under control, while the reality of his incompetence and corruption slowly seeps through the electorate -- even to his base.

Although America's real international enemies are gloating and thriving over our troubles, our true and historic allies recognize this is merely an embarrassing blip on our history. If Democrats can exercise enough discipline, we may finally elect a leader who can repair the damage of this presidency and truly begin to Make America Great Once Again.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Miami H

February 19, 2019

A REAL COMEDIAN

I must agree with President Trump: Alec Baldwin's parody speech on "Saturday Night Live" was not very funny. The president's original speech was much funnier.

This president lives beyond parody.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

April 2, 2019

OPEN MIC

Clogged streets, building hurting city beautiful

My wife and I have loved living in Coral Gables for more than 30 years.

We are fortunate enough to live within walking distance of the downtown area. A 10-minute stroll through a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood brings us to all the sophisticated pleasures of a vibrant urban core.

Miracle Mile, and the downtown in general, used to be rather drab and provincial, but over the past 20 or so years, we have watched it blossom into a world-class city with a fabulous bookstore, theater, movie house, museum and countless great restaurants, bars and cafes, all within easy walking distance of each other.

But all that changes when I need to drive my car within the city.

What once took 10 minutes, now can take almost an hour; sitting at one jam-packed intersection after another. The automobile traffic is destroying the quality of life in our city and it will only continue to get worse with all the current monster development projects.

Candidate for mayor Jeanette Slesnick is right to argue for "tapping the brakes on mega-development."

In the March 31 Miami Herald article "Development is major focus of rivals in race for Coral Gables mayor," I was pleased to see that finally somebody is opposing the "Brickellization of Coral Gables and its future as a traffic-clogged concrete canyon."

Let us hope she is not too late to save the City Beautiful.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables



El Nuevo Herald

Traffic moves on U.S. 1 along Coral Gables

Miami He

May 31, 2019

DESTRUCTIVE PATH

Many people write to the Herald complaining that various laws are already on the books but simply are not being enforced, especially concerning gun ownership and traffic offenses. The problem, always, is that unless we move into a fascist state with armed cops on every street corner, we can never catch every infraction of the law.

But someone should have foreseen the case of Mariam Coulibaly, the young woman accused of killing three teenagers waiting at a bus stop.

She had 35 infractions in the past 10 years. And, according to her bankruptcy filing, was \$325,000 in debt. The May 29 Herald story "Stripper suspected of killing 3 teens in crash had history of bad driving," details some of her infractions.

But what is so horrific is not her consistent, determined and well-documented behavior; it is the way the system allowed her to get away with it. The cops did their job. But somehow, the courts each time dropped the case and allowed her to continue on her dangerously reckless way. Perhaps the Herald's most excellent team of investigative reporters might focus on why traffic courts appear to ignore their statutory duties.

somebody might well ask: "What will it take to stop this person from her destructive path? How many people will she have to kill?" Maybe it is only the senseless deaths of three promising young men that will

finally make the justice system take somebody with 35 infractions seriously.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

June 21, 2019

FORGET AMERICA

I wonder what Neil Diamond thinks of President Trump's immigration policy: It's not "Coming to America."

- Jim Rudolph,
Miami

A VOTE FOR BIDEN

I am a 73-year-old white male. The world I grew up in was different in many ways from the world in which I now live. I, too, am different. The know-it-all teenager became a husband, then a father, then a grandfather. Over the past half century, I have experienced many things that educated me, changed me and altered my opinions. I am a different and, I hope, a wiser person than I was 10 or 30 years ago. If we don't change and grow, what is the purpose of living?

Joe Biden is being attacked for positions he took or opinions he expressed earlier in his career. But they are irrelevant. The positions he takes and the opinions he holds today are all that count.

That he was able to work with fellow congressmen from across the aisle, however hateful or distasteful their public positions or opinions might have been is a sign of maturity and pragmatism that this Congress desperately needs. It is because people like Biden were able to talk to, and work with those segregationist bigots, that civil rights eventually became the law of the land.

In an ideal world, I would like a presidential candidate whose youth and

idealism could inspire me to imagine a new and even better America than the one I know and love. But given the reality of the world we live in, I want a president who can take us back to a world where truth and decency still count.

I want to go with Joe.

- Patrick Alexander
Coral Gables

CAMPS REDUX

The harsh criticism being heaped upon Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for her use of the term "concentration camp" underscores the fact that the term, which will forever be linked to the Nazi genocidal infrastructure of the 1940's, was euphemistic from the start.

Those "camps" should have been referred to as "extermination" or "death" camps. But someone chose the milder phrase "concentration camp," which describes any open-space detention facility (including the areas where Japanese Americans were "interned" during that same time period), and now the unspoken semantic rule is that, if a place doesn't resemble Auschwitz, you are grossly insensitive if you call it a "concentration camp."

I am willing to presume that Ocasio-Cortez was unaware of this rule. She was, however, almost certainly seeking the benefit of the negative connotation that most of us attach to the term "concentration camp." On balance, I think she is receiving excessive criticism for her use of this term.

- Marc Rohr, Plantation

July 10, 2019

OUT OF FOCUS

At a time when yet another woman has come forth to accuse the president of rape, and when evidence is emerging of Jeffrey Epstein's cabal of wealthy, powerful and well-connected older men abusing vulnerable young women, I find it frustrating that much of America appears more obsessed with, and critical of, Joe Biden's touchy-feely, close-talking persona.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

July 25, 2019

OPEN MIC

Minimum wage goes up, I lose my job

I am a retired senior who works part time on a local golf course as a "starter."

I am paid the minimum wage of about \$8-an-hour. It is not enough to support a growing family or put kids through college, but I've already done that, and this is simply a nice augmentation to my Social Security.

If the minimum wage is raised to \$15, I will lose my job; not because my bosses are cruel, mean or cheap, but simply because there is no way they can double my wage without losing money or doubling our customers' fees.

Without a "starter" maintaining order on the course, our customers' golf experience will also suffer. We will all be losers. At the same time, I have grandchildren who hope to get a part-time job in the school vacations.

Having a job at \$3, \$5, \$8 or any amount per hour will teach them so many valuable lessons; the value of money, responsibility, punctuality, self-worth and pride. But nobody is going to pay my grandkids \$15-per-hour. They are not yet worth it, just as I am probably no longer worth it.

And between old timers like me looking for a bit of pocket money and social interaction, and young kids looking for a learning experience — there is a vast pool of potential taxpayers: new immigrants, college leavers, people just out of jail who just need a toehold in society, an entry into the world of honest work, where they can prove their value and soon be earning \$15 because they have shown they are worth it. But if the starting salary is \$15, who will take the risk with an unknown, untrained worker?

Apparently the national economy is strong, and unemployment is low. That means we have a competitive job market, and employers are all competing for good quality workers. A good, hard-working employee should have no problem proving himself or herself worthy of \$15 or more, without the need of yet another government regulation.

In the meantime, I would rather have my \$8-an-hour job than find myself unemployed — in addition to being old.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Miami He

January 3, 2020

CARTOONIST RETIRES

What a terrible start to the New Year and new decade, to learn that Miami Herald editorial cartoonist Jim Morin is retiring. How can we survive without his insights and humor?

My hope is that he's retiring in order to focus on a book, a collection of all his Trump cartoons over the past few years.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

NO LAUGHING MATTER

I thank the Herald for starting the New Year off with some really good news: The retirement of Jim Morin.

Over the last three years, Morin has gone so far over the top with his anti-Trump, anti-conservative bias, it has been a disgrace.

Now, maybe, the Herald editorial pages will be only about 95 percent anti-Trump rather than the normal 96 percent.

*- Doug Hardin,
Coral Springs*

January 14, 2020

EPSTEIN'S WEALTH

Re the Jan. 11 story "Report: MIT took Epstein's money until near the end:" I am once again left wondering about the source of all these millions. The donations, the bribes, the jets, the islands, the extravagant lifestyle, the luxury properties — where did all the money come from? Nobody seems to know.

When I submit my tax returns, the sums involved are modest and the activities minor.

Yet, whenever I've made a mistake or discrepancy, the IRS has been swift to spot and question it. It is hard to keep any secrets from the federal government.

So how is it possible in today's high-tech surveillance state, despite the

eagle eye of Herald reporter Julie Brown, and all the 21st century resources and federal powers of the IRS, that we still do not understand the origins of Jeffrey Epstein's obscenely limitless wealth?

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

BRING BACK MORIN

How I miss Jim Morin's glorious and insightful art. One look at the Jan. 12 Herald arouses my distress in viewing the less than stellar work of other artists.

I admit, they do try. But they rarely achieve the masterful combination of artistic skill and political expression reached by our Pulitzer-winning editorial cartoonist.

I beg Morin to please come out of retirement if only for a moment (say on Sundays) to refresh our world with his own very special imagination.

- Dan Forer,
South Miami

February 17, 2020

OPEN MIC

JOHN KING RULES

I having a sense of dread as we enter these next few months when TV pundits will hold us hostage to their endlessly boring political analysis — on whatever channel you may be watching.

But recently, I was reminded of the one bright light in the whole mind-numbing experience: John King on CNN.

Whether you are Republican or Democrat, a “Bernie bro” or a Trumper, you have to love this man. It’s like listening to George F. Will discussing historic baseball scores.

Just watching him speak nonstop without a script, using those large hands of his to touch the magic maps, explaining minute changes and springing them visually to life, from the national to the state and then the precinct levels, is hypnotizing — whatever your political leanings.

Before November comes, I would not be surprised to watch him touch the Miami map and say:

“Here is (your name here) who voted this way in 2016 but swung the other way in 2018, he’s of traditional white Anglo-Saxon Protestant background, still with his second wife, who votes this way, holds a professional job, has two teenage daughters, but is known to visit gay bars.”

Our future lies in John King’s hands.

— Patrick Alexander
Coral Gables

September 12, 2001

Reaction to a tragic ac

All terrorists must die, and the
ner the better, unless they surren-
to law enforcement immediately.
ere's no excuse for allowing these
ple to walk freely among us.
f a nation refuses to arrest terror-
with the help of our military —
wing our forces full access to cap-
: or kill them — then it can only be
sidered to be harboring criminals.
by doing so, each becomes a crimi-
state and must suffer the conse-
nces that Japan and Germany suf-
d in World War II.

GARY GROMET
Homestead

I hope that the United States will
restrain against the terrorists
attacked our country.

After all, that is what it continues to
ise Israel to do in a year when its
zens have been murdered and its
s attacked.

And now these poor Palestinian
edom fighters" dance in the streets
e West Bank to celebrate the mass
der of American citizens and the
oc they wreaked on the streets of
v York and Washington.

Don't think about touching Osama
Laden, since we all know that the
eted assassination of murderers is
thical and immoral. Terrorism
e looks different when it's in our
k yard, doesn't it?

CYNTHIA SIEV
North Miami Beach

This will wake up America to make
ie changes. We are at war.

RICHARD BURR
Miami

The anti-Arab and anti-Islamic
ch hunt now will reach a fever
h. It is dark day to be an American
b.

While it is true that Arafat and

to sway Americans' hearts and minds
absolutely boggles the mind.

The cause of Palestinian justice
may well have died Tuesday along
with thousands of innocent people and
America's sense of security. Making
the case of Palestine to the American
people has now become a million
times more difficult.

MICHAEL LOPEZ-CALDERON
Miami

Why have we allowed Osama Bin
Laden to threaten us and go unpun-
ished?

Roosevelt did nothing while he
knew that innocent lives were being
lost because it did not directly affect
American interests.

Despite repeated pleas from our
allies for our assistance it took Pearl
Harbor to get us in the fight. Congrat-
ulations, Mr. President, you have
failed to avoid the avoidable. You have
waited too long, now take charge for a
day that will live in infamy.

MANUEL ABELLA
Miami

Where are all the Palestinian ter-
rorists' sympathizers after this act of
cowardice?

Now we know how the people of
Israel feel when they lose family,
friends and neighbors to despicable
people who have no conscience at all.

DAVID SALZVERG
Miramar

I want to be, in these times, with the
American nation. I pray to the Lord —
no more catastrophes.

VILMA MONTES ARACHE
Puerto Plata,
Dominican Republic

The terrorist attacks are the price
we pay for ignoring the wisdom of the

March 2, 2020

OPEN MIC

SCANDALS REVEALED

The slowly unraveling saga of Tiffany Carr's outrageous salary at the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) is yet another example of the importance of a free and unfettered press.

The Miami Herald first revealed this story 18 months ago, but it took all this time, with continued revelations in the newspaper, before the authorities were finally forced to act.

It is fitting that during the same week that the Carr scandal was being addressed in the Florida House, the Esserman family generously donated \$2.5 million to the Herald to support investigative journalism.

Without the Miami Herald's team of indefatigable journalists, Carr would still be controlling the FCADV from her millionaire's lair in North Carolina, and Jeffrey Epstein would still be abusing young girls on his private island in the Caribbean.

Keep up the good work!
- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

April 13, 2020

ETHICS AND VALUES

We all know there is a revolving door from senior federal administrative jobs to and from the private sector. We may not like it, but it's a fact.

But there are growing numbers of people of conscience, like the inspectors general and U.S. Navy commanders, who are being expelled from government positions.

While many parts of the private sector, understandably and traditionally, wish to hire people who maintain contacts and influence within the gov-

ernment, I sincerely hope other parts of the private sector will value and hire people who have put courageous loyalty to truth and the common good above their personal career goals.

Whether testifying truthfully before Congress and the American people; whether fulfilling their constitutionally mandated obligations to report the truth as inspectors general; or whether fighting to protect the lives of those under their command, these brave men and women have sacrificed their careers for something higher than political expediency. I hope the moral qualities they have demonstrated will not go unrewarded.

If I were CEO, or even on the board of a large corporation, I would not only be proud, but also relieved to know that a person of such integrity and courage was representing and safeguarding my organization's ethical values.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

RICK HIRSCH
MANAGING EDITOR

NANCY AN
EDITORIAL

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33172.

ie phone number. Letters may be edited for grammar, brevity

Friday, May 15, 2020

PERSISTENCE

I am a long-time admirer of Leonard Pitts. Not only is he a talented and intelligent writer, he is obviously also a man of deep integrity. Nonetheless, as a middle-class white liberal male, I often feel that he goes too far about racial bias and inequality in our nation.

And then I read about the Ahmaud Arbery killing in Georgia and understood why Pitts never lets up. The photograph of the two murder suspects, with their bearded red faces and angry eyes, said it all. All they lacked were MAGA hats.

- *Patrick Alexander,*
Coral Gables

Thursday, June 11, 2020

ABOVE THE LAW

Readers of Julie K. Brown's June 10 story about the Epstein case might be forgiven for thinking that Palm Beach Sheriff Ric Bradshaw is soft on crime because of his generous work-release policy.

However, another story in the June 10 issue, "DeSantis signs \$6 million claims bill for man who was paralyzed after sheriff's deputy shot him 4 times," should reassure them of the sheriff's harsh law-and-order credentials. After one of his deputies shot an unarmed black man four times, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down, Bradshaw actively opposed paying the victim any compensation.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Friday, July 10, 2020

DEO WORKS!

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, I was laid off from my job for 13 weeks between March and June. I immediately applied for unemployment relief and, like many others, spent several frustrating weeks unsuccessfully dealing with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's (DEO) on-line system.

Finally, I submitted a written application, and eventually my claim was registered in mid-May, ignoring my previous eight weeks of unemployment. However, the DEO finally launched a new site for claiming retroactive pay, and now I have been fully paid for all the weeks I was unemployed.

Yes, the DEO has deliv-

ered on its promise, and the much-maligned system does indeed work.

However, I had the luxury of sitting at home with my computer, no young children to care for and plenty of time to pursue my claim.

I also had sufficient savings to cover immediate needs and the added comfort of knowing my job was waiting for me when the lockdown ended.

But my heart goes out to those whose access to a computer is the local library, who have no savings, who have a household of young children and who have no guaranteed future employment.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Sunday, August 30, 2020

ANGRY PROTESTERS

As though the murder of George Floyd were not shocking enough, the recent senseless and brutal shooting of Jacob Blake further demonstrates the systemic racism that pervades our nation, and the desperate need to make reforms.

Reform will be neither easy nor rapid, but under the leadership of Biden and Harris, first steps will be taken and a solid foundation laid.

Under President Trump, the problem will only get worse. Unfortunately, videos of angry protesters storming government buildings, torching auto dealerships, looting shops and harassing diners in restaurants merely inflames Trump's racist base and almost guarantees four more years of his autocracy.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

TOO LATE FOR MANY
While I wish a full and speedy recovery for the president and first lady, I also regret this did not happen seven months ago. Had the president fallen ill in March, he could have encouraged his administration and his base to treat the virus more seriously. Think how many lives might have been saved.
- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Monday, November 9, 2020

OPEN MIC
NO LAUGHTER

We anxiously face the remaining 70-plus days of Donald Trump's presidency, after all that toxicity be unleashed not to mention the real damage that he did to our physical and mental health.

I think one observation, which seems to have been overlooked, sums up Trump's gravely flawed personality: We have never heard his laughter. Not once.

- David Kwiat, Miami

THE GOOD AND BAD

Good news: We have a new president. Bad news: We still have the same old president for more than two months.

He's most likely trying to figure out how to wreak even more havoc on our country. I hope he doesn't succeed.

In the meantime, I guess all we can do is continue "Biden" our time.

- Ray Koterba, Miramar

RABBIT HOLE

In 2016, a demagogue led Americans down the rabbit hole.

On Saturday, 75 million of us ascended, but at least 70 million remain in the dark.

May the Republicans now be able to grow to their full size and lead them out.

Our nation's success depends on it.

- Mayree Morin Fernandez, South Miami

WORLD LEADERS

On Saturday, the whole world (except the Russians) breathed a sigh of relief that the nightmare of the past four years is finally over.

The lies, the name calling and all that chicanery coming from our embarrassment of a president will be no more.

It is time to regain our position as the leader of the free world, honor our international commitments and be a participa-



“COUNTING VOTES IS NOT FINDING VOTES. THEY'RE NOT SCANNING THE BEACH WITH A METAL DETECTOR.”

Seth Meyers

appropriate and tweeted about it in real time while bashing most of the news media.

The amount and rate of change was enormous and fast, perhaps beyond the ability of the existing members of the establishment to adjust to and, in some cases, understand. That environment created frustration, anger, dislike and hatred.

Might a shift toward a more genteel and grandpa-ish demeanor, after he was elected, have saved the day for Trump?

We will never know, but Joe Biden ran against the person, not his accomplishments, which were many. The market, however, perceives that Washington may soon return to business as usual, pre-Trump, with an appropriate dash of gridlock.

- Robert E. Panoff, Pinecrest

ting member of the international community again.

The free world is waiting for America to be its leader again.

- Carlos Castillo, Miramar

NO MORE TWEETS

With Joe Biden's election perhaps now our long national tweetmare will finally be over.

- Michael Marmesh, Miami

CONTRASTING VIEWS

I watched Joe Biden's speech on Wednesday, then Donald Trump's on Thursday evening speech. Words fail me.

I would need a large Thesaurus to find a vocabulary sufficient to describe the contrast between these two visions of America.

One was so inspiring, unifying, dignified and presidential.

The other was divisive, incendiary, petty and petulant.

I am depressed to discover that, even as we approach a quarter million needless deaths from COVID-19, enough of my fellow Americans still believe that this corrupt, narcissistic and incompetent bully of a president should have had four more years, draining the nation's morals, coffers, institutions and international reputation.

It is chilling to know that I am still surrounded by such ignorance, racism, hatred, bigotry and fear.

Is this really who we are?

- Patrick Alexander, Coral Gables

TALK IT THROUGH

I attended two recent meetings, one virtual and one in person, during which the subject of understanding those who embrace a different world-view came up. We were like-minded folks reinforcing each other's point of view. Implicit in the discussion was that those

on the other side were idiots. But explicit was the assertion that an effort has to be made to understand why someone has the diametrically opposite point of view.

"Pick a day and declare it "Take an idiot out to lunch day."

That tongue-in-cheek title should remain in your inner voice, but the purpose should be carried out: Build some intellectual bridges.

An honest effort in this country needs to be made to understand what is happening.

That effort is true for political parties as well as individuals.

President Lincoln's famous line, "A house divided against itself cannot stand," is as true today as it was when he said it. We all need to make an effort to understand the other side respectfully and with an honest effort.

- Sid Kashey, South Miami

SUNNY SIDE UP

At least it wasn't the state of Florida that left the presidential election hanging in the balance.

If nothing else, Florida got it right this time.

- JoAnn Lee Frank, Clearwater

OLD DAYS RETURN?

Many thought that if President Trump lost his reelection, the market would fall. But as long as Republicans kept the Senate, that was never a realistic view.

When candidate Trump was elected in 2016, a political owner, instead of an owned politician was now in office and he wanted to implement his agenda quickly.

He was a lobbyist's worst nightmare.

Trump was not politically correct or polite about it.

He discarded existing social and political conventions and bureaucratic positions as he deemed

Miami Herald

Opinion content from syndicated sources may be trimmed from the original length to fit available space.

NANCY MEYER
PRESIDENT

JOHN S. KNIGHT (1894-1981)

Write to us: Send your 150-word letter to HeraldEd@MiamiHerald.com; Fax: 305-376-8950; or The Readers' Forum, Miami Herald, 3511 NW 91st Avenue, Miami, Fla. 33172. Include your name, address and a daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for grammar, brevity and clarity. All letters submitted become property of the Miami Herald.

AMINDA MARQUÉS GONZÁLEZ
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

RICK HIRSCH
MANAGING EDITOR

NANCY ANCRUM
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

JAMES L. KNIGHT (1909-1991)

Monday, November 9, 2020

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- Sid Kaskey,
South Miami

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

OPEN MIC

Trump has done all of us a huge favor

Thank God for President Trump!

He has saved us from the complacency of assuming democracy was an inexorable and inevitable aspect of American life, like manifest destiny. Until Trump, I had never before seriously questioned the strength and integrity of American institutions.

I took for granted the freedom, equality and respect for law that the United States of America represents to the rest of the world. While people elsewhere fought and died to have their voices heard, I was comfortable to live here in the land of liberty, where "we, the people" control government. It never crossed my mind that democracy and the rule of law could be vulnerable in the United States.

Thank God for President Trump.

In just four years, he has shown us how delicate and vulnerable our democracy really is. Despite his endless character flaws and political failures, he has managed to retain the loyalty of more than 70 million fellow Americans who ignore a devastated economy, a spiraling death toll and a bitterly divided citizenry lacking all faith in democratic government. Pentagon officials calling for martial law, politicians suggesting that opponents be taken out and shot at dawn demonstrate the chaos William Butler Yeats predicted 100 years ago.

Thank God for President Trump.

George III and his redcoats are gone, but Trump has shown us and demonstrated just how vulnerable we still are, and how close tyranny remains. We have four years to plug the gaps, enact the laws and make sure that no future autocrat will be able to manipulate the levers of power that Trump was able to grab, but was simply too incompetent and lazy to master.

Our next aspiring autocrat will better understand our weaknesses as a democracy. Unless we address our vulnerabilities very soon, we surely will be doomed.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables,

Miami He

Opinion content from s
sources may be trimmed
original length to fit avail

Christmas Day, December 25, 2020

OPEN MIC

We are elderly, but give vaccine to workers first

Like everyone else, my wife and I have suffered terribly for the past nine months. Not only socially isolated and cut-off from friends, children and grandchildren,

Both of us are in our 70s and vulnerable; we know that if one of us is hospitalized with COVID, we will probably never see each other again.

We are desperate for the reassurance of a vaccine.

However, I am distressed to learn that those of us in our 70s, are being given priority over essential workers.

[Gov. Ron DeSantis announced Tuesday that Floridians 65 and older will be the first in the general population to be vaccinated for COVID-19, differing with federal recommendations that said that group should be inoculated along with essential workers. The first doses to local seniors could be administered as early as this weekend at Mount Sinai Medical Center on Miami Beach, the Miami Herald reported.]

My wife and I have the economic comfort of being able to remain safely cocooned in the security of our home.

We do not need to risk our health by entering the workspace in order to feed our children or pay the rent.

We have the luxury of choosing to keep ourselves safe.

So many others do not have that freedom of choice.

While I am eager to receive the vaccine as soon as possible, I think DeSantis is wrong to override the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations to give priority to essential workers and those with underlying conditions.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Miami He

Opinion content from sources may be trimmed to original length to fit available space.

February 15, 2021

(Following the 2nd Impeachment Trial of Donald j. Trump)

EMPEROR'S MOB

I have lived in the United States for half my life and I know that a lot of crazy, violent people live here. But I've also lived in Europe and know they have just as many crazy, violent people.

These people exist worldwide and are capable of such things as killing their workmates over a trivial affront, shooting up a school or blowing up a federal building. Acting alone, they can inflict great harm on their fellow citizens.

But when these people are organized and groomed, when they are trained and manipulated into a mob, then the harm they inflict threatens the whole of society.

It was a well-groomed and manipulated mob that desecrated the nation's Capitol Building in January.

Sadly, the crazies will always be with us, and all we can do is try to help them before they do harm. But when harm is done, they must be held account-

able.

The Department of Justice has already arrested more than 200 crazies following the recent attack on the heart of our democracy.

But locking up people sporting buffalo horn head-dresses and Nazi tattoos will not make us safer. We need to lock up their leaders, those who inspire and manipulate them.

We will not be safe until Donald Trump is behind bars.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

BIDEN'S OVERREACH

Every president issues executives orders, but President Biden is really pushing it. Some orders reverse many of former President Trump's policies, but others are really actions that should be undertaken by Congress. The Keystone Pipeline is an example. Congress should be discussing it and voting on it because it involves so many states.

Biden should review his previous statements during

Miami Herald

**NANCY A. ME
PRESIDENT**

March 16, 2021

OPEN MIC

Support your local small businesses

For too many of the people receiving the government's new stimulus check, the \$1,400 will be desperately needed for food, rent and basic necessities.

But for many people, especially those living in such areas as Coral Gables, the money, although welcome, is not a critical necessity.

So what should those fortunate enough not to need it for basic survival, do when we receive the check?

Rather than return it to the government or leave it in the bank, it is our duty to spend it immediately, and thus stimulate the economy.

Amazon does not need our support, nor do the big national chains.

It is the small, local, family-owned businesses that need our money.

Those businesses — and business owners — that have not gone bankrupt, liquidated or shut their doors during the past 12 months have struggled bravely to survive.

So now is the time to show our appreciation and support.

In Coral Gables, with \$1,400, I can enjoy drinks and some jazz at The Globe Cafe; a delicious paella and flamenco at La Taberna Giralda Spanish restaurant; and the latest best sellers — along with more food and wine — at Books & Books.

And I would still have plenty of money left over for the many other family-owned businesses that make Coral Gables such a delightfully vibrant place to live — even during a global disaster.

From Brickell to Wynwood, Miami's neighborhoods are filled with family-owned shops, bars and restaurants, all of which need our support.

Be a good citizen and do your duty: spend local.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Miami He

Thursday, April 15, 2021

CORPORATE TAXES

I am confused by all the ongoing debate about corporate tax rates.

Why is this considered important when it is so irrelevant and hypothetical?

Like our former president, major corporations simply don't pay taxes. Amazon.com, Delta Air Lines, Chevron, General Motors, Occidental Petroleum, Honeywell International, and John Deere are among 91 Fortune 500 corporations that paid zero taxes according, to a Dec. 2019 investigation by CNBC.

It's the little people who pay taxes.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

Friday, May 14, 2021

OPEN MIC

Editorial on Merrick missed the full story

Re the May 13 editorial, "Praise the good, acknowledge the bad:" Segregation in Florida was the law of the land in 1937, mandated by the state constitution of 1885. Black and white residential areas were kept separate by law, and George Merrick had no choice but to follow the law.

Henry Flagler had created Colored Town at the turn of the 20th century, keeping Black people on the west side of his railroad tracks. Living conditions were deplorable. Mortuary records of that era chronicle a horrific litany of unnecessary deaths from typhoid, yellow fever, tuberculosis, and other diseases. Due to the flimsy nature of the buildings, house fires were a common occurrence, often wiping out entire families. Most significantly, Black residents had no access to water or basic sanitation.

In a speech, reported in the Miami Herald on May 23, 1937, Merrick made an impassioned plea on behalf of Miami's Black population, describing their living conditions and the unfair, short-sighted and wrong ways they were treated. He proposed destroying Flagler's awful slums and move the people to new, healthy locations with decent housing and access to water.

Merrick argued that Blacks represented one third of Miami's population and deserved fair treatment: "We cannot receive fairness unless we give fairness ... it is proposed to give fairness to this deserving one third of our citizenry." Far from being a racist, Merrick was a compassionate visionary constrained by the segregationist laws and racial limitations of the society in which he lived.

Merrick died in 1942, penniless and childless, leaving no heir to preserve and honor his memory. All that is left of him is his vision, a beautiful vibrant city, an ungrateful university — and his name.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Miami Herald

Thursday, October 7, 2021

OPEN MIC

OUT OF FOCUS

The Oct. 6 Herald editorial, “Why no outrage for Emicheline Etienne?” while correctly identifying the terrible problem of female, intimate-partner violence and homicides, draws an incorrect lesson from the case of Gabby Petito.

The media circus around Petito is not because she is pretty, white, and blonde. The media attention would be the same if Petito and her partner were Black and Haitian.

The story has nothing to do with race and has everything to do with intrigue, mystery, sex and exotic settings. The strange and outrageously suspicious behavior of her boyfriend and his family; all the visual documentation, the photos, the videos from beautiful National Parks; the American romantic dream of the endless summer road trip — all these elements combined are what make this such a compelling story.

The problem of intimate-partner violence is indeed serious and the Herald is right to draw attention, but not with such a distracting and meaningless comparison.

– Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Monday, November 22, 2021

THOUGHT-PROVOKING

If I were Black, nervously aware of the number of other Black men shot to death (often by police), and carrying an AK-47 in public for my own protec-

tion, I would be curious how a jury might judge me if I shot and killed a couple of other people because I felt threatened.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

Thursday, December 2, 2021

FLASH MOBS

Leonard Pitts' Dec. 1 column, "Why are flash mobs looting stores? Because today's America gave them the go-ahead", is not the correct answer.

The answer is because liberal Democrats gave the mobs the go-ahead, with no bail policies, catch and release, fabricated racism and basically decriminalized these crimes.

While it's nice that he noticed it's a problem, it would be better to realize whom to blame.

- *Dave Schaublin,*
Key Largo

RUNNING AMOK

Leonard Pitts' Dec. 1 column, "Why are flash mobs looting stores? Because today's America gave them the go-ahead", is so very accurate. Sometimes the simplest explanation is the best.

How true that in today's society we really do lack accountability.

People see the former president of the United

Should there be no restrictions on carrying those, either?

- *George Dziamniski,*
Finleyville, PA

INSPIRED COLUMN

Leonard Pitts' Dec. 1 column in the Miami Herald was inspired.

"Why are flash mobs looting stores? Because today's America gave them the go-ahead."

Without over-simplifying a complex situation, he has identified a common theme that explains so much of what is wrong with today's society.

- *Patrick Alexander,*
Coral Gables

Thursday, December 16, 2021

OFF THE RAIL

May I nominate the designers and engineers at Brightline and Tri-Rail in downtown Miami for this year's "They Only Had One Job To Do" Award?

I know competition in South Florida is fierce, but this particular group is clearly a "step" above the others — and on a platform by themselves.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

Wednesday, December 23, 2021

OPEN MIC

Democrats must pivot to save democracy

In an ideal world, President Biden's Build Back Better (BBB) bill would be a wonderful campaign to support. I do not understand all the details, and I am sure there are valid arguments to be had on both sides concerning many specific line items; but the overall direction appears to reflect the needs and aspirations of most Americans. No political bill is perfect, and no political action will ever satisfy everybody. Because it is a large and ambitious bill, controversy is inevitable.

Pushing such a bill when Democrats have a razor-thin hold in Congress is never wise, especially when the future of our democracy is at stake. Child tax credits, free college and expanded Medicare might be wonderful goals, but none of them will be realized if the Party of Trump regains control of Congress.

All the social, environmental, and racial problems that must be addressed pale into irrelevance when we consider the existential threat to our democracy. The Democratic Party needs to shift its priority and focus from BBB to addressing voting rights and ensuring that a 2022 defeat does not lead to a 2024 dictatorship.

If Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis or any of their trolls, take control of the presidency, then democracy will be finished. While progressives and moderates bicker, DeSantis is assembling his Office of Election Crime and Security to ensure that neither group will ever hold power again.

If the great American experiment in democracy survives, we will have time to debate and improve our pursuit of freedom and happiness next year or the following. If we are unable to defend our democracy, in less than three years from now, JFK's and Reagan's "Shining City Upon a Hill" will be replaced by an undrained swamp.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Miami He

Monday, January 3, 2022

OPEN MIC

NAMING NAMES

A combination of vast financial resources, expensive legal support, innate arrogance and a sense of privilege allowed Ghislaine Maxwell to believe she would be exonerated in a court of law.

During this time, she could never name names or share other information from her little black book with prosecutors without admitting her own guilt.

Now that she is facing life in prison, she has nothing to lose and everything to gain by testifying against Jeffrey Epstein's other accomplices.

Prince Andrew, Alan Dershowitz, Leslie Wexner and, possibly, some former presidents now have everything to lose and everything to fear.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

FLYING HIGH

The Jan. 3 letter "Naming Names" says that Ghislaine Maxwell now has nothing to lose and everything to gain by testifying against Jeffrey Epstein's other accomplices. The writer names Prince Andrew, Alan Dershowitz, Leslie Wexner "and possibly some former presidents"

Possibly? Bill Clinton should have been the first name on the list.

- Armando Cortina,
Miami

January 4, 2022

Monday, February 28, 2022

PROPAGANDA MEN

During World War II, William Joyce was an American-born English fascist who broadcast German propaganda to the British public from Berlin, on behalf of Adolf Hitler. Because of his affected, upper-class British accent, he was derisively known by the English as “Lord Haw Haw.” He was hanged for treason in 1946.

Tucker Carlson’s treasonous programs on Fox News, in support of Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, contradicting official U.S. foreign policy, is being rebroadcast by the Kremlin-controlled RT television network, and fed to the Russian public and to Donald Trump’s base.

Carlson has always

affected a preppy, New England persona, but is that enough to qualify him as a modern Lord Haw Haw?

– *Patrick Alexander,*
Coral Gables

Sunday, March 13, 2022

OPEN MIC

Blind faith in leaders is scary

I've always liked the Republican Party's emphasis on self-reliance and responsibility, while being wary of its disdain for society's more vulnerable. I've always liked the Democratic Party's emphasis on social equality and compassion for society's more vulnerable — but I remain of its Big Government and bureaucratic “woke” tendencies.

The GOP has become the party of Donald Trump — a cult. Democrats are still an undisciplined mix of radicals and moderates, destined to seize failure from the jaws of victory.

Former Attorney General William Barr, in discussing his ex-boss, was asked why he might vote for Trump in 2024.. He said he believed Democrats' progressive agenda is the “greatest threat to the country.”

Some Democrats promote radical ideas, but that is nothing new. Such ideas have always seasoned American politics. Nevertheless, Democrats rejected those ideas and selected Joe Biden, a moderate. The American people elected him president.

While another Democratic victory might push the country in a more-liberal direction than Barr would like, he should understand that another Trump presidency will push us in a direction few can predict or like.

Confronted with a choice between a moderate Democratic Party, which might not agree with his Catholic beliefs, Barr still would prefer a man who he variously describes as a liar and dangerously childish to lead our nation. Such blind loyalty from an intelligent and accomplished man not only is depressing, it is also frightening.

— Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

Miami He

Sunday, April 10, 2022

BULL SESSION

I do not understand cryptocurrency. I have been curious about it, reading articles for the past few years. But I am as baffled now as I was when I first began. I had the same lack of understanding in the early 1990s, when I heard about the internet and the World Wide Web. “One of those passing fads,” I probably scoffed.

However, the mayor of Miami hosted Bitcoin 2022 at the Miami Beach Convention Center — complete with a 3,000-pound bull, similar to the one on Wall Street.

Some people say the whole thing is a Ponzi scheme; others, like the mayor, say it’s our financial future. Either way, “Miami Bull” seems an appropriate description.

— *Patrick Alexander,*
Coral Gables

Miami He

Thursday, May 19, 2022

EROSION OF TRUST

I agree with Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas: the public is losing faith in the Court. However, the lack of faith and trust is not caused, as he suggests, by a leaked draft opinion.

The real cause is much deeper and more serious and concerns Thomas' refusal to recuse himself from cases involving his own wife's attempt to usurp the will of the people and overthrow the duly elected president.

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

STILL IN CHARGE

As a grumpy old white male, living in an increasingly tense and dangerous world, my only source of optimism and hope is listening to my children and grandchildren. These new generations are so much more open, diverse and resilient than their predecessors.

If anyone can save our democracy, not to mention our planet, it must be the young people who will inherit what we have left them.

So why is the world still under the control of bigoted, close-minded, old white males?

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

August 30, 2022

MUST BE HALLOWEEN

When Trump University was sued for fraud, Donald Trump called it a witch hunt. When he was impeached for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, Trump called it a witch hunt. When he was impeached a second time, Trump called it a witch hunt. When Mar-a-Lago was searched because he unlawfully retained top secret documents, Trump called it a witch hunt.

Seems the disgraced witch keeps getting caught in the act.

- *Michael Friend,
Kendall*

TOO DOG-FRIENDLY?

We need a friendly reminder about whether animals are allowed in places where food is sold to the public. I've owned

The same concerns exist anywhere food is sold or served, but store managers conveniently ignore the rules. I don't want contaminated edibles. I don't want to see animals fighting or to hear their loud noises while I shop or wait for food service. Nor do I want to worry about an animal accident that needs a cleanup in an aisle.

Please, dog owners should be more considerate.

- *Martin E. Segal,
Coral Gables*

FLEECED STUDENTS

Does President Biden's new student loan forgiveness plan cover debts acquired while attending Trump University?

- *Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

January 10, 2023

LOOKS FAMILIAR

After watching, with horror, the armed thugs invading the seat of Brazilian government on Jan. 8, I am so grateful that I live in the civilized safety of the United States.

- *Patrick Alexander,*
Coral Gables

March 28, 2023

OPEN MIC

Are the standards falling in Coral Gables?

The vitriolic verbal attacks that first erupted with Donald Trump's descent on his Fifth Avenue escalator in 2015 now, unfortunately, have become the new normal, so that even his most recent spiteful rants in Waco, Texas, this past weekend barely raised an eyebrow. This depressing decline in standards has also spread to Florida, with almost daily extremist rants from Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Previously, we could console ourselves that it was all "up there," that is, north of Flagler Street, in Washington, D.C., Tallahassee or Mar-a-Lago, but now the poison has seeped

into the civilized redoubt of Coral Gables.

A recent email headlined "Naked, Dirty and Afraid," sent apparently from a Gables-based group attacking a commission candidate for his alleged "dirty tricks" (all in caps) asked, "Aren't you sick of these people, their perverted tactics and their lies?"

I will not name the candidate being attacked or the candidate in whose name the attack was made. However, I am concerned with good grammar and civil discourse.

Coral Gables is one of the few municipalities in Miami-Dade in which neither a mayor nor a commissioner has been charged, arrested or incarcerated with a felony. I have always been proud to reside in a city where elections have been conducted with at least a modicum of dignity and decorum.

That we now appear to be entering an era in which bold red type in all caps attached to crude insults is acceptable in the City Beautiful is disgusting. Coral Gables is well known for its strict rules controlling the font size of "For Sale" and "Lost Pet" signs.

Can we not introduce similar restraints on political notices?

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

April 26, 2023

MEDIA HYPOCRISY

I was delighted that Tucker Carlson was fired from Fox News. Out of curiosity, I checked Fox broadcasts, but, of course, there was no mention of Carlson's disgrace, any more than there had been reports concerning the network's multi-million payment to Dominion

Voting Systems last week.

I was surprised and disappointed that the same hypocrisy prevailed at CNN, and even MSNBC, concerning the firing of CNN host Don Lemon. I watched all the news shows and there was no mention of Lemon.

With two major TV personalities being fired on the same day from two radically opposed networks, how could that not be the subject for an honest, on-air discussion?

That Fox News ignored the controversy does not surprise me; I do not expect honesty from that network. That CNN, however, displayed the same dishonest hypocrisy, is not only disappointing but far more troubling. I used to trust CNN.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

May 26, 2023

WHAT A GIFT

Was the \$170,000 that a developer gave to Miami Mayor Francis Suarez paid in MiamiCoin cryptocurrency, or was it just stuffed into paper bags in the time-honored Miami tradition?

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

September 15, 2023

BOOSTER CHOICES

Re the Sept. 14 story “Florida bucks CDC and advises against new COVID shot for people under 65:” Glad that this story included opinions of other medical professionals who support CDC policy.

My fellow Gators and local residents should also know that while the University of Florida was required to employ Ladapo, likely because of political pressure, he is not respected within UF’s School of Medicine. His position on COVID-19 is allegedly not supported by

management or faculty at UF Health.

While individuals will have to make a decision about getting the new COVID-19 vaccine, the decision should be made based on science from medical practitioners who specialize in virology. Ladapo’s specialty is cardiology.

– Juan A. Galan, Jr.,
Coral Gables

SAFEST OPTION

My wife and I are uncertain about whether to get the new COVID-19 booster and have been searching for some reliable guidance. On Wednesday, Gov. Ron DeSantis and Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo issued strong warnings against the new shots. That is exactly the sort of unequivocal advice we were seeking.

We will be first in line tomorrow to get our shots.

– Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

October 15, 2023

OPEN MIC

Proposal to prevent heat illnesses makes sense

If I were the corporate boss of a team of Florida outdoor construction or agricultural workers, I would ensure that they had adequate access to shade, rest and water.

Not because I am a softhearted liberal or a “well-funded, politically linked activist,” but because, in my experience, rested and well-hydrated workers tend to be more productive than sick or dead ones.

Therefore, I cannot see why I could possibly object to the regulations that ensure when temperatures rise above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, employers must provide 10 minutes of rest every two hours, as well as giving access to free drinking water.

Why, then, did Jorge Perez, founder, chairman and chief executive officer of Related Group, and Jose “Joche” Smith, chief executive officer of Costa Farms, write an op-ed in the Oct. 13 Miami Herald arguing that heat regulations would cripple the construction and agriculture industries, which are the backbone of the Florida economy?

I am sure that Perez already keeps his workers healthy and hydrated without being forced to do so. He is an intelligent and successful businessman.

In addition to objecting to the proposal to be considered by the Miami-Dade County Commission, did he also object to State Senate Bill 732, introduced by Republican Sen. Ana Maria Rodriguez, requiring employers to put in place heat-exposure safety programs like access to sufficient, free drinking water, as close as possible to the workplace?

When I play golf in temperatures of 90 degrees Fahrenheit, I need at least 10 minutes of rest every two hours.

How can Perez object to that for his workers, who are just doing their jobs under Florida’s brutal sun?

*- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables*

December 6, 2023

BE GONE!

What is so surprising about the decision to expel George Santos from the U.S. House is that there even was a discussion, let alone a debate, and that the outcome could ever have been in doubt.

If we can think back to the strangely distant world we lived in, prior to 2016, and the accepted standards of ethical and social behavior, it is hard to imagine a how a man who had been publicly exposed as a blatant liar could ever have been accepted in any but the most degenerate of social gatherings.

The idea that, after all his lies had been revealed, he could still remain a legitimate member of Congress would have been inconceivable.

But sadly, the world has changed.

Today the only reason Santos was expelled is because he was caught stealing from his fellow Republicans.

- Patrick Alexander,
Coral Gables

January 2, 2024

UNSAFE DRIVER

There are many reasons to fear a second Donald Trump presidency; his authoritarianism, his racism and his thirst for “retribution” are just the most obvious. Perhaps the most consequential danger is simply his incompetence. Trump has a long history of failure, from failed businesses, to failed marriages, to failed relationships, and failed promises.

His threat to democracy, ethical standards, or “America’s international standing” — while real enough — are abstract concepts. On the other hand, driving the country into bankruptcy, not by sinister design, but by sheer ineptitude, is a real and consequential danger.

I profoundly fear that, under Trump’s incompetent mismanagement and a bankrupt economy, I will be unable to collect my monthly Social Security check — small cheese in the big scheme of things, but important to my wife and I. And also, I’m sure, to many of our fellow citizens.

I hope that when November arrives, America’s voters will remember that you don’t give your car keys to a petulant 5-year old, even if he promises to take his Ritalin.

- Patrick Alexander,
- Coral Gables

