

COMMENTARY

For Left, of Left, by Left Why McCain lost in N.Y.

Sen. John McCain had a rough week in New York City, facing protesters who resented his speeches at Columbia University's Class Day and the New School for Social Research commencement ceremony.

The New York Daily News quoted a graduating senior who didn't want him at Columbia. "He encouraged us to speak up, but we still resent that our graduation day was used as a political platform," she said. She has a point, but it is a very small one and not very relevant to McCain's remarks. Yes, he seems to be on track to run for president, but candidates and potential candidates give commencement talks all the time. As long as they seem to be addressing the graduates, rather than their own partisan nostrums and ambitions, that's fine.

The only New York newspaper that gave us any clear idea of what McCain said at Columbia was the conservative New York Sun. A Sun editorial said, "It's hard to remember a more moving moment in college oratory" than the one the senator gave. He talked of his anger, as he sat in a Hanoi prison during the Vietnam War, hearing the piped-in voice of an antiwar American activist. The activist was the late David Ifshin, who had traveled to North Vietnam to denounce the United States. McCain said he and Ifshin later reached out to each other, and by the time Ifshin died of cancer at age 47, they had become friends who worked together toward shared ideals. Tales of political healing and the ability of political adversaries to work together are obviously important these days. McCain also spoke for civility in debate and respect between political adversaries. This is over the line?

At the New School in Greenwich Village, student protesters pressured former Sen. Robert Kerrey, now president of the school, to rescind his invitation for McCain to speak. Kerrey refused to yield. Writing in the New York Observer, Niall Stanage said: "It is blatantly obvious that (the protesting students) do not object at all to their graduation being used as a political platform, so long as the politics in question are liberal — hence the dreamy reference to the 'values and spirit' of the college. What they object to is the same platform being given to political opinions with which they disagree."

That's a fair comment. The New School describes itself as "progressive," and it has all the modern hallmarks of an institution set up by and for liberals, including a strong insistence on political orthodoxy. It functions as a sort of leftist seminary, where the seminarians are not eager to hear from competing faiths. After all, they already have the truth. On a radio program, the vice chair of the University Student Senate said: "I'm really concerned just in terms of the principles that our university was founded on, and McCain obviously has made it clear ... that he does not necessarily endorse those or share those same views. ... That's really what we're founded on, and that's what we're all taught."

Horrors! A speaker who disagrees politically with the university and what it has been teaching all the seminarians! What's next — teachers who dissent from the faith and lapse into heresy?

Though resistant to conservative, Republican and even some moderate speakers, a few highly political campuses seem ready to accept even ax murderers as commencement speakers, provided that they speak from the left. The late "Tookie" Williams gave two commencement speeches. He is ineligible for more because he was executed last December for the slaughter of many innocents in two robberies. Mumia Abu-Jamal has given many commencement speeches, including five in one year; on tape of course, since he sits on death row for the cold-blooded execution of a cop. So far, no such invitations to the Unabomber, though.

The politicization of choices for commencement speakers isn't new. Brent Bozell at the Media Research Center has been documenting it for years. What's new is the sense of deep grievance when a moderate conservative like John McCain shows up.

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John Leo is a syndicated columnist.



LEO



Ridge & Valley preserves open land for the future

Editor's Mailbag

Editor:

I am fairly certain that most of the people living in the Ridge and Valley region of Sussex and Warren counties appreciate their rural lifestyle, with its lovely scenery, relatively clean water and air, and freedom from exasperating traffic congestion.

Having lived in suburban Essex County during the 50s and 60s, I can remember how the unchecked, creeping process of sprawl was destroying farmland, forests and wildlife habitat. Replacing these were malls, shopping centers, corporate headquarters complexes and dense housing developments. Outdoor recreational opportunity was vanishing in proportion. Not fully realizing it at the time, I was witnessing the death by a thousand cuts of the landscape and lifestyle I had so appreciated.

All this can happen here! This may explain why I am so passionate about the work of the Ridge and Valley Conservancy (RVC), a local non-profit land trust headquartered in the historic First National Bank building at 16 Main St., Blairstown.

RVC acts as a facilitator, catalyst and advocate for preserving the open space and rural way of life which are under assault in so many parts of New Jersey.

Local municipal governments can help by zoning to foster a rural ambiance, including limiting light pollution and requiring unobtrusive signage.

RVC has made great progress in carrying out its open space preservation mission. To date, RVC has participated in the preservation of more than 2,000 acres. Projects are currently planned or under way for preserving another 1,000 acres.

Ways used by RVC to achieve results include working with

farmers and landowners to recommend the most advantageous ways to preserve their land; making preservation projects financially possible by putting together funding from state, county, local municipal and private sources; shepherding land protection projects through to completion; identifying and attempting to preserve lands particularly important for preserving water quality, outstanding views, or habitat for rare and endangered species, and planning and maintaining hiking trails and ensuring some form of public access to appropriate preserved land.

We cannot relax our efforts to keep the specter of sprawl and environmental degradation at bay. It is my hope that RVC will continue to play an increasingly important part in preserving the rural, scenic and healthful character of our region, a legacy we can proudly pass to future generations.

More information can be found about the Ridge and Valley Conservancy at its Web site, rvclandtrust.org, or by calling (908) 362-7989.

Gene Clifford
Vice President
Ridge and Valley Conservancy
Blairstown

Space for 14 point hed

Editor:

The letter from Vernon resident Bonnie Schulz gave me an idea. Since she is the president of

Pork in the water

The billions in federal money that flow each year to water projects — flood control, navigation enhancement and so on — are allocated by pork-barrel politics at its purest. Members of Congress back one another's pet projects in return for support of their own; the Army Corps of Engineers builds the needed economic case. Even the White House has little influence in the matter.

And the voters seem pretty much OK with this, as long as their areas get their fair share, so senators and congressmen find no gain in opposing a dumb idea that brings home a barge-load of money.

Alaska's famous quarter-billion-dollar "bridge to nowhere" is perhaps the most notorious recent example. But that absurdity is a trifle when laid against continuing revelations from coastal Louisiana, where decades of federal investment not only failed to protect a great city from long-predicted disaster, but made things worse.

Early headlines after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita pointed to cuts in spending for flood-control projects. These cuts were surely ill-considered but, in the end, a secondary factor. Louisiana was still receiving its customary biggest share of all the states, and for years its delegates in Washington steered too much of it to projects with popular short-term payoffs. Though amply staffed with people who knew better, the Corps took its typically cooperative stance.

Thus, levees designed for weaker storms than everybody knew would come. Thus, floodwall designs so flawed they allowed the city to flood from the north, after the hurricane itself had passed by.

It has been said that insanity consists in repeating familiar mistakes while hoping for different results. Congress could begin to change this pattern by adopting modest reforms proposed by Sens. John McCain, D-Ariz., and Russ Feingold, D-Wis., requiring independent review of large projects, and setting formal national priorities. But sponsors and lobbyists are pressing hard to get the pork barrel packed by Memorial Day.

The solution, it seems to us, is a potent, independent board like the one that picks military bases for mothballing— sparing lawmakers the task of putting the national good ahead of local preference. The chief difference being that what's at stake in a base closing—in lost lives and property, environmental ruin, wasted resources—is ever so much smaller.

— *The Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune*

How will history treat President Bush?

What will historians write about the war on two fronts into which the United States was dragged as a result of a sneak terrorist attack on that fateful day? Will they be kind to the president who realized that in order to protect America and the free world from a monstrous ideology having the destruction of Jews as its centerpiece, he deemed it necessary to not only wage a war against the nation which orchestrated the attack but those countries which also shared its world-dominating ambitions? And how will historians treat those men and women who died defending the freedoms we all hold dear?

Historians have already written tomes on World War II, the war we fought on two fronts, in the Pacific theater and Europe. After being attacked at Pearl Harbor, we declared war on Japan. A declaration of war against Germany, which never attacked us, followed shortly thereafter.

Only three days after Japan's sneak attack on Dec. 7, 1941, Congress declared war against Hitler and the Nazis, whose demonic bent on world domination was enough of a threat in itself to make a declaration of war justifiable.

The similarities to America's war on terror are striking. It was a sneak attack by terrorists with a monstrous ideology of world domination. The extermination of Israel is its centerpiece.

Whether 19th-century Nazism or 21st-century Islamo-fascism, these ideologies were and are equally destructive threats to our way of life. We view FDR as a courageous hero for his leadership during a tumultuous era in America's history. Will historians see the parallels to this era and give President Bush the credit he deserves?

One major obstacle is the Loony Left—the Bush-haters—and how they are given a platform of legitimization by the mainstream media, predominately because it too harbors charter members if not being a Loony Left-fan club itself.

When those who report the news and shape opinion are blinded by rage and hatred, truth

becomes the casualty.

Last weekend's rude treatment of Senator John McCain by the faculty and students of the New School in New York serves as a recent case in point. The senator was invited to speak at the school's commencement. The Wall Street Journal reported on the "ugliness" of the crowd, explaining, "(d)ozens of faculty and students turned their backs on the Senator, others booed and heckled, and a senior invited to speak threw out her prepared remarks and mocked their invited guest as he sat nearby. Some 1,200 had signed petitions asking that Mr. McCain be disinvited." Sen. McCain, you may recall, was a POW for several years during the Vietnam War.

The Journal editors rightfully point out that it is the "larger goal" of the opposition to "turn the Democratic Party solidly against the war on terror and especially against its Iraq and Iran fronts."

Good thing this strategy failed last century when the American Way of Life and the stability of the free world were threatened by several madmen. As the son of parents who lived through the days of Pearl Harbor and D-day, I can cherish the freedoms and liberties in my country because of the sacrifices of our GIs and the wisdom of a president and a Congress that understood the dangers confronting them.

Our way of life is again at risk. The stability of the free world is again on the verge of tipping. I tremble at the thought of the politics of hatred succeeding and ultimately dooming America's efforts this century to maintain our hard-fought freedoms and liberties.

Freedom is not free. I think the majority of us understand this. Wisdom, sacrifice and difficult decisions are necessary to ensure its continuation. I hope the majority understands this also.

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Gregory J. Rummo is a syndicated columnist.



RUMMO

Too early to say goodbye

Even though I'm in a hospice, I'm not going to heaven immediately. My doctor said I could stop over in Martha's Vineyard on the way.

For those who have been wondering what this is all about, it has to do with the fact that my kidneys weren't working and I didn't want to take dialysis, which is a machine you are attached to three times a week for five hours.

In February I was warned that if I didn't take dialysis I wouldn't survive more than two or three weeks. Since I didn't want dialysis, I decided to move into a hospice and go quietly into the night.

For reasons that even the doctors can't explain, my kidneys kept working, and what started out as a three-week deathwatch has turned into nearly four months.

When word got out that I was in a hospice, I became a celebrity. I was on all the TV shows and the notice of my intentions was in all the papers, including the Washington Post and the New York Times, which made it valid.

The more publicity I got, the more attention my kidneys got, and instead of going quietly into the night, I was holding press conferences every day.

Then the mail poured in.

People were pleased that I had made my own choice. The letters and e-mails were in the thousands. At the same time, friends came to the hospice to say goodbye. Everybody felt they should make the pilgrimage. They came with flowers, cheesecake and corned beef sandwiches.

I sat in the salon of the hospice and, pretty soon, when people came to see me, it was as if they were visiting Lourdes. They came to be blessed and cured.

Since I was expected to die soon, the French ambassador gave me the literary equivalent of the Legion of Honor.

Because of the publicity I've gotten, the National Hospice Association made me man of the year.

I never realized dying was so much fun.

Then a few weeks ago, my doctor said I had to change course. He advised me to go to Martha's Vineyard.

Things I didn't care about because I was going to die, I now had to care about. This included



BUCHWALD

shaving in the morning, buying a new cell phone that works, rewriting my living will and scrapping all the plans for my funeral. I also had to start worrying about Bush again.

Alas, the people who come to visit me now look at me with great suspicion. They want to know if the whole thing was a scam. They can't believe, after I said goodbye, I'm going to Martha's Vineyard instead of paradise.

I called up the TV stations and the newspapers and asked them if they would make a correction and retract the original story. They said they never correct stories about people who claimed they were dying and didn't.

This is where I am now. I'm writing a book called, "Standby in Heaven: The Man Who Wouldn't Die."

I'm still seeing friends, but instead of saying farewell we discuss the Redskins.

So, dear reader, I hope you don't feel you were duped. The moral of this column is, never trust your kidneys.

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Art Buchwald is a syndicated columnist.

BY GARRY TRUDEAU

