

A very close call

"I saw your sky fall down today. Suddenly turn from blue to gray. 'Til one by one the raindrops turned to tears upon your face. Wish I could ease the pain from you. But I've never felt so helpless. It's like you're drowning right in front of me"
— "You Know Where to Find Me," Matthew West

A parents' worst nightmare: a son or daughter becomes critically ill away from home. It's not a pleasant experience, and I feel for the mom or dad who has passed through such a storm.

On Aug. 19 my wife and I, along with our two daughters and our oldest son, John, flew to West Palm Beach, Fla., for a combination vacation and college send-off. John was starting his freshman year at Palm Beach Atlantic University and instead of putting him on a plane with all his belongings, we decided to accompany him to make sure he got a proper send-off.

That decision may have saved his life.

When we got off the plane, my wife noticed John's right leg was swollen. He had been complaining of tightness in his groin and thigh for over two weeks and thought he had pulled a muscle playing hackey sack. The swelling, coupled with the finding of microscopic traces of blood in his urine during a routine physical exam on the day before we left, made us call John's pediatrician in New Jersey. He suggested we bring John to an emergency room.

There the two of us spent the night.

Early the next morning, the doctors discovered John had a deep venous thrombosis — a blood clot in a vein in his thigh and pelvis. He was started on IV heparin and transferred to the pediatric intensive care unit at Palms West Hospital in Loxahatchee.

Our son is an athlete. During his senior year, he played varsity soccer and baseball for Hawthorne Christian Academy. Over the summer, he worked at Party City. He exercised regularly at a gym. He was eating healthy foods; whole wheat breads, high fiber cereals and salads.

So how does a healthy, 17-year old get a DVT — a life-threatening condition that normally affects women on birth control or older people or people who are obese or inactive? None of the doctors at Palms West could give us a definitive answer. To them, John was an enigma. The pulmonologist said it was his first case in such a young patient in 20 years of practice.

As of last Thursday, there were no definitive explanations. After almost two weeks of extensive testing, looking for things like genetic clotting disorders, lymphoma, infections and inflammatory syndromes such as lupus, only one test came back with an intermediate level of antibodies which may indicate a clotting disorder known as anti-phospholipid syndrome, but even this test would need to be repeated in several months to determine if

indeed this was the cause or a blip in his blood work.

The hospital's pharmacist, however, was adamant about the cause of John's clot. "It's his migraine medicine," she said. "Look at him. He was a healthy kid, he took the medicine, and this happened. There can be no other explanation."

John's neurologist in New Jersey had prescribed Maxalt last winter to reduce the intensity or prevent the onset of migraines. Information about potential harmful side effects is listed on Maxalt's Web site. Anyone with a history of high blood pressure, chest pain, shortness of breath, heart disease, stroke or having any risk factors for heart disease or blood vessel disease is not a good candidate for this medicine. "These are all conditions brought on by the formation of blood clots," the pharmacist explained. "Yet there are no warnings about the possibility of causing a blood clot. I am going to write up a med-watch alert and send it to the Food and Drug Administration. He may be a one in a million case but the FDA needs to know about him."

It's tough when a 17-year old's hopes and dreams are shattered; maybe tougher still for his parents to stand by and watch, helpless to intervene. John was to have shared a room at college with his best friend. The two of them grew up together. It was a difficult moment when he realized he would have to come back to New Jersey with us for extensive follow-up treatments in the weeks and months ahead.

The doctors are telling us it will take months for the clot to completely dissolve. And depending on the cause, John may be on blood thinners for the rest of his life.

"God decided to give you life's junk up front," the pharmacist joked with him. "You are going to get better." The apostle Paul had a slightly different spin on the same idea: "All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose."

While we cannot yet see a purpose in all this, perhaps in time it will be revealed. In the meantime, we are thankful to have our son. Had we not traveled to Florida with him, and the clot not been discovered until it was too late ... I shudder to think what we would be dealing with at this point.

John plans to take 15 credits of online courses through Bergen Community College as he slowly recovers this fall. This will allow him to stay caught up with the Class of 2010. He hopes to be able to return to Palm Beach Atlantic University for the spring or fall 2007 semester.

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GREGORY RUMMO

No 'Ike' moment for Bush

WASHINGTON — Late in the 1952 election campaign, he promised that he would "go to Korea." So in late November, Dwight Eisenhower and aides "used light planes to fly along the front":

"Except for sporadic artillery fire and sniping, there was little action at the moment, but in view of the strength of the positions the enemy had developed, it was obvious that any frontal attack would present great difficulties."

With that assessment, laconically recalled in his 1963 memoirs, the experienced soldier decided to liquidate the war. He had seen at a glance that continuing it was not worth the costs.

George W. Bush might yet face an "Eisenhower moment" regarding Iraq. But not yet, in the opinion of Sen. John Warner, the five-term Virginia Republican who chairs the Armed Services Committee.

Warner's father was a field surgeon in World War I; his great-uncle lost an arm fighting for the Confederacy at the Wilderness. Warner joined the Navy in January 1945 at 17, served until 1946, then volunteered as an officer in the Marine Corps during Korea. Because he is a military man who broadly construes the president's inherent powers as commander in chief, it was startling when he recently said that the Oct. 11, 2002, resolution

authorizing the use of force against Iraq did so for purposes that were largely achieved by the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime. Last month Warner asked:

"What is the mission of the United States today under this resolution if (Iraq) erupts into a civil war? ... I think we have to examine very carefully what Congress authorized the president to do in the context of a situation if we're faced with all-out civil war and whether we have to come back to the Congress to get further indication of support."

But Warner, who in 27 years has served with 260 of the 1,885 people who have been U.S. senators, and who in May became the 26th senator to cast 10,000 votes, knows that no Senate vote is apt to determine war policy. On July 25, 1967, President Lyndon Johnson, meeting with Democratic Senate committee chairmen, was angered when even Georgia's hawkish Richard Russell questioned his Vietnam policy. Johnson acidly told the group: "If you want me to get out of Vietnam, then you have the prerogative of taking out the resolution" — the Tonkin Gulf resolution — "under which we are out there now. You can repeal it tomorrow." Every war ends, but none ends that way.

Speaking in his Senate office,

Warner says he is convinced that the essential characteristics of civil war are not yet present in Iraq. Iraq's government, he says, is "functioning," the security forces are improving, and senior military officials are not plotting against the government.

But Warner also knows: The Iraqi government's writ barely runs beyond Baghdad's Green Zone. The security forces are not yet competent to hold areas that U.S. forces clear of insurgents. Holding such areas might require sending more U.S. forces to Iraq, which would further alienate Iraqis. Moqtada al-Sadr, whose support helped make Nouri al-Maliki Iraq's prime minister, has a militia that is becoming Iraq's Hezbollah — a sovereign force within the state, and one imperfectly controlled by Sadr.

For three reasons, Eisenhower's challenge in ending the Korean War was simpler than Bush's problem would be in extracting U.S. forces from Iraq: Eisenhower had a static military front. The U.S. objective of pushing the invaders from South Korea had been accomplished.



GEORGE WILL

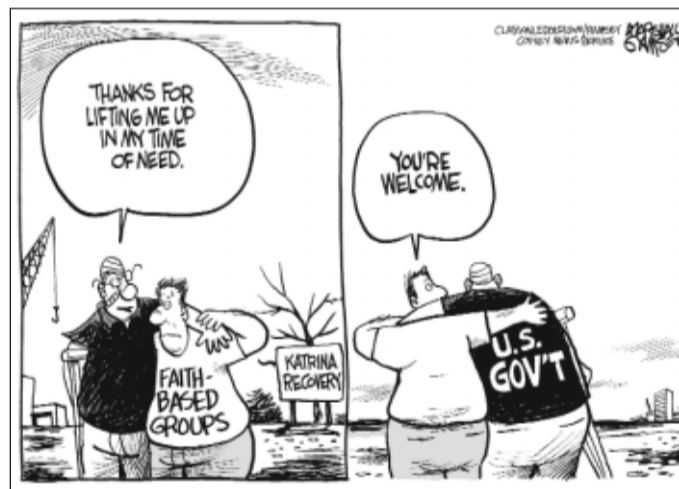
And Eisenhower had a coercive threat.

In "The Cold War: A New History," John Lewis Gaddis of Yale, who calls Eisenhower "at once the most subtle and brutal strategist of the nuclear age," says that Eisenhower early in his presidency believed — he later changed his mind — that when nuclear weapons "can be used on strictly military purposes," they should be used "exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else." And Eisenhower allowed America's adversaries to know that his military advisers were seeking ways to use such weapons to end the Korean fighting.

Warner believes that most congressional Democrats understand that there is an unpopular way to oppose an unpopular war — by voting for abandonment of all the objectives for which blood has been shed. Warner defines the U.S. objective in Iraq not in terms of a glittering achievement, democracy, but as avoiding something appalling — the Iraqi oil fields in jihadists' hands. Regarding Iraq, there will not soon be an Eisenhower moment.

George Will is a syndicated columnist.

WEEKEND GALLERY



Voices

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Hurricane Katrina

The Jonesboro (Ark.) Sun

One huge storm. One colossal nightmare of a foul-up. One rainbow. But to get to the rainbow, which is all we want to remember about Hurricane Katrina, we have to revisit the awful prelude.

Katrina was a tornado the size of Georgia ... in the maddening days that followed, we saw images of our neighbors dying of dehydration, disease, despair. We watched as our government failed to save its citizens, and we loathed the incompetence, the nonchalance, the disregard for which our government appeared to hold the victims of the storm.

What Katrina couldn't do to our spirit and confidence in our nation's fabric, the monumental mistakes that multiplied in its aftermath nearly destroyed.

But the waters finally receded. The lights came back on. The sun rose again.

In the light of day, we saw the best of America. In the wake of a human tragedy, we saw the power of the human spirit. It manifested itself in the men, women and children of Northeast Arkansas and elsewhere who opened their hearts and homes to those in need.

Several thousand Katrina survivors made their way to our part of the world, and the efforts to welcome them were nothing short of magnificent.

Gyms became dorms. Churches, new way stations. Businesses, collection points for clothes, food, money. Northeast Arkansas answered the call to support those who needed help without asking how many or why or for how long ...

The response to Katrina, the wave upon wave of heartfelt empathy — that's the rainbow of Katrina. That's the image we want to remember, keep with us even as another hurricane approaches ...

Failing New Orleans

Star Tribune, Minneapolis

Americans remember watching in helpless horror as Hurricane Katrina devastated parts of the Gulf Coast one year ago.

The numerous failures of local, state and federal agencies in Louisiana have been well-documented. Today, those failures are compounded by a continued poor response to victims' needs and by the lack of a comprehensive plan to rebuild New Orleans. ... it certainly doesn't help that efforts are so bogged down in political maneuvering and evident incompetence.

... New Orleans' history of corruption, power struggles with other units of government, raucous and racial politics, bad schools and high crime arguably made it one of the most-troubled, least-livable cities in the nation.

Today, citizens there must not let those same old problems hinder recovery. City leaders must make the case to get over deep-rooted suspicions, develop a plan and rally residents around a vision for the city. ... Government messed up big in planning for and responding to Katrina. In the year since, it hasn't done much better.

The rush to judgment against Karr

By SUSAN ESTRICH

In an e-mail dated July 19, he described his excitement about two 5-year-olds "flashing their hot little bellybuttons at me," later saying a "naked little foot felt so sexy in my hand." Less than a month later he was arrested. Clearly he has no business teaching school.

But what made prosecutors ever think John Mark Karr killed JonBenet Ramsey?

And why in the world did the press write literally over a million stories about him in the two weeks that he was under suspicion, including any number that pronounced the crime SOLVED?

Poor Mary Lacy. The prosecutor looks like a fool. Her desire to get this man away from a classroom of Thai children is commendable, but there were other ways to do it. Thai authorities should have been notified of the existing California child pornography charges. Karr could have been arrested and returned to the United States to face those charges, without regard to the Ramsey case.

But why arrest someone based on an e-mail correspondence that does no more than reveal publicly available details, however small, of a sensational case?

The answer, of course, is that Karr confessed.

If this ridiculous episode teaches anyone anything, it should be the limited value of confessions.

Publicity hounds will confess to crimes they didn't commit to attract attention. Frightened people will confess to crimes they didn't commit in the face of pressure and too much attention. The only thing worse than a confession too freely given from a too willing defendant is one that is coerced from a too unwilling defendant. That is why physical evidence is so important.

It is also why prosecutorial restraint is so important.

If you want to play God, I always tell my students, go be a prosecutor. Not a judge, mind you. Not only do you have to be older and more experienced to be a judge, but everything you do must be explained and is subject to review.

Big decisions tend to be the subject of written opinions, reviewed by panels of more judges, and then more judges, with no single judge having more than one vote. Whereas even a junior prosecutor can ruin a person's life on her own say-so, not to mention sending everybody else on a wild goose chase, just by deciding to bring charges and have the person arrested and locked up.

In this case, you can't feel sorry for Mr. Karr. He asked for it. "We're deeply distressed," his defense attorney said, "by the fact that they took this man and dragged him here from Bangkok, with no forensic evidence confirming the allegations against him and no independent factors leading to a presumption that he did anything wrong." Dragged him from Bangkok? With champagne in business class and teams of journalists documenting his prawn and duck dinner? While court-appointed counsel is certainly right that there was an undue rush to judgment, it seems his client's biggest complaint might

be that his 15 minutes of fame are ending.

It's the public that got hoodwinked on this one. Nobody did it on purpose, but it was all too easy. Newspaper reports suggest there were problems with certain elements of the confession from the get-go — details that didn't match the crime were ignored. Family members placed Karr outside of Colorado at the time, but no investigation was done prior to the arrest. The prosecutor snapped her fingers and there he was — on the plane, first to Los Angeles, then to Boulder, then being held on charges for a crime there was simply no way he could have ever committed. To her credit, the prosecutor ended the absurdity in 12 days, at least undoing her mistake.

But if this were an unknown victim instead of JonBenet Ramsey, if there were no press corps hammering for details, would the prosecution have been so quick to admit it got everything wrong?

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