

Dinnertime Musings

My most enjoyable musings are at dinnertime. It used to be, when there were kids at home, that I refused to put on the TV during dinnertime. Music – yes; TV – no. The kids went away to pursue their own mistakes in life and to do great things, and gradually the TV snuck back in. Unfortunately, this trend was spirited along by the boredom caused by COVID-19. Who could not love looking at my wife's beautiful face? But, on the other hand, we look at each other a lot these days and hence the resurgence of TV watching. One day I noticed that none of my kids knew anything about opera. When we were kids, the only dinnertime conversation was that provided by Puccini or Verdi. Guess what? Rather than watching all of the horrible political news, we have started to listen to music during dinner. It is much more pleasant, less controversial, and it provides a lovely cap to an often frenetic day.

However, dinnertime is still great for musing. Some of my most profound and worthless thoughts are conveyed to my wife during dinner, usually before I start playing a really terrific opera aria. The other night it dawned on me that Donald Trump wanted the Republicans to lose the Senatorial races in Georgia. In fact, maybe he even wanted to lose the Presidential election. After all, he is getting up there in years and who would be crazy enough to want to be President a second time after his tumultuous first term? Well, okay, Donald Trump may be crazy enough, as would Joe Biden; but who knows? Most normal people would not want to be at the epicenter of hatred and political divisiveness for another four years, after a first four-year term of such folderol. It was for that reason that George Washington refused a third term, which was permitted in those days. Instead, the Federalists simply passed the Alien and Sedition Acts and put behind bars those newspaper people who opposed them.

My predictions about elections are usually wrong, but this time, in both the Presidential race and Georgia Senatorial race, I was correct. Donald Trump and the two Southern Senatorial seats are the best fundraiser the Democrats ever had. Better than when the Democrats ran against Black suffrage in the South in the post-Civil War years, and better than the early '60s when the Democrats had morphed in the party of the minority citizen. President Trump is so easy to hate that he and his feckless allies have handed the Presidency, and at least one (if not two) Senatorial races in Georgia, to the Democrats on a silver platter.

My real concern is not for Donald Trump, who will be cosigned to the trash heap of American history (except for a few notable accomplishments which will quickly be forgotten), but for the Republican Party which will continue to suffer for some time. The Democrats were beaten up over President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Bob McNamara lying to the American people about Vietnam, and the Republicans took a beating over Richard Nixon. That is the way the political opposition works. If a politician is as bad to the bone as some we have experienced in our own lifetimes, the opposition party is sure to come roaring back with big electoral wins. The ousted Republicans will be punished by the incoming Democrats, just as the Republicans have done when they garnered too much power.

Whatever Donald Trump could do to alienate voters who are not part of his firm base, he has done. Whether Trump knows that he has snatched defeat from the jaws of victory is anybody's guess. What is obvious, however, is that the angrier people get, the more Donald Trump seems to relish that poisonous stew. Trump, of course, is not the first politician to harness anger to his benefit. Demagogues, despots, and good old fashioned American politicians have done the same thing from time immemorial. President Trump has a fired-up base that will be even more angry because of the Presidential election results and the results in Georgia. On a personal ego level, that is a good thing for Donald Trump and Republicans in very securely Republican jurisdictions. Democrats, of course, are basking in the glow of their electoral victories. The hardcore of the Democratic Party, which seems to be shifting increasingly to the left, will certainly use and abuse its power because that is the way it works in politics.

The pendulum theory of political persuasiveness is a putative reminder of the punitive nature of the process we call government. Sorry - could not think of another "p" word. All cynicism aside, it is never a good thing when the parties are defined by their most extreme elements and when it is those components which do battle in the public forum. What happens in that scenario is that the majority of Americans either get pushed to the side or simply leave the stage due to boredom and listen to Puccini instead. I will continue to deal with politicians and government agencies to the extent that I can stand it. I will review their legislations, as I have done for many years, try to redraft it in a sensible way for the citizens of this country, and I will continue to lobby on behalf of an independent, fair and open court system. That is an agenda more than enough for any activist citizen to swallow.

The New Year will present new challenges. The closing of 2020 does not mean that everything unpleasant in the prior year will miraculously disappear. Disease will be reckoned with; politicians will continue to manipulate the public; and, hopefully, we can all get back to business and family life. And, by the way, if you do not like Puccini or Verdi, try Bizet or even Bernstein.

Happy and healthy successful New Year to all!

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