

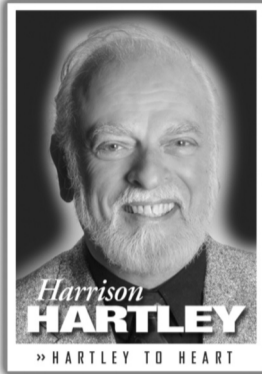
## Founding Father's Minds Revealed!

Among the most common of logical faults is overgeneralization: the tendency to present personal opinion as if it were universal law. Several closely associated faults (guilt by association, faulty sampling, arguments ad populum and ad hominem and such) spring from the same impulse: the lamentable human tendency to think that one's own experiences and ideas are a nearly perfect representation of reality everywhere (as if one saw perfectly; heard without error; understood everything with complete clarity, and had never made a mistake or been fooled).

Obviously, this is not the case. The number of really terrible, genuinely dangerous people who think they've never been wrong even once in their entire lives is (thank God) fairly small, and many (if not most) such people are confined to jails or institutions for the deranged. And yet, the weakness for this kind of self-righteous absolutism exists in all of us, and is expressed forcefully and far too frequently in American popular culture (that strange hybrid entity bred of myth, fear, intellectual sloth, habit, prejudice, provincialism, gossip, and the overwhelming desire to eat a lot of junk food and walk as little as possible).

One strange and persistent mani-

festation of American popular culture can be seen in a kind of general distrust of "experts." Many Americans spend a lot of energy talking about how "experts" really don't know anything; certainly nothing practical; particularly if the "experts" disagree with them.



Consider, for example, the common complaint that about 85% of university history and government professors are self-described liberals. This gives conservatives fits and makes fuel for conspiracy theorists who are usually the chief expert distrusters. They would rather imagine a grand plot to corrupt the nation's youth rather

than consider the fact that the very people who have spent their lives studying history and government overwhelmingly agree on certain facts. It is as if we discounted modern medicine because 85% of doctors prefer anti-biotics to sacrificing a chicken... "Oh, those ol' experts... what do THEY know, anyway?"

Of course, even scoffers don't talk that way when they need the "experts" to bail them out – say in a medical emergency, an international crisis, or smoke coming out of a wall socket – but they usually revert to type when the crisis has passed and they have to pay the bill. In fact, this is such common behavior

it calls for recurring to the last line of the preceding paragraph and adding "cheap" where paying for something practical but not glitzy is involved. That, however, is another topical aspect of all-American silliness, though it is closely related to the following, to wit:

A close association with the American tendency to over-generalize and make snap-judgments based on whim, personal preference, or the mood of the moment is the claim of many (expert and non-expert alike) to know the minds and hearts of the "Founding Fathers." (It is instructive to note here that the Founding Mothers usually get short shrift, but that is because, unfortunately, all the best jobs went to the fathers and the mothers were left home to do the laundry and bake pies. With luck, this will change in time and the founders of tomorrow will be both men and women, though it is a virtual certainty that a hundred years from now, even if things have changed, somebody will be claiming to know just what the "Founding Mothers of the modern era" had in mind and will be happy to tell everybody else just what it was.)

The "minds;" the intentions and wishes of the Founding Fathers; beyond reading what they wrote and trying to interpret it as objectively as possible, how would one know that? Jim George, a retired "expert" academic historian, came up with a beautiful scenario to explain it. As

Jim tells it, he was discussing history and politics with one of those marvelous creatures who claimed to "know" just what the Founders meant and how we ought to read The Constitution and such until Jim put it to him roughly this way:

"So, there you were, right? In bed, ready to go to sleep – maybe like Scrooge in A Christmas Carol – when all of a sudden the spirits of the Founding Fathers appeared to you and said 'Bob... Bob... we're the Founding Fathers and we came to tell you just what we intended when we made the nation and just what we meant in all the great documents of our day so that you can go and tell all the others and save them from error and confusion.' And then when they told you, isn't it marvelous that it all turned out to be just what you thought it was all along!"

Marvelous, indeed. And it would be even more marvelous if American popular culture adopted just enough humility to grow out of its self-possessed cynicism; but that, too, is an overgeneralization. After all, if most Americans were like that the whole, country would already have crashed and burned. Of course, one might wish that those who have a little more good sense were as active as the lunatic fringe, but that, too, is another topical aspect of all-American silliness and a subject for another time.

## City Election / Petitioning Door-to-Door

### Petitioning Deadline Approaching

The deadline for turning in petitions to run for city office is getting closer. Tuesday, December 15th is the last day to pick up and/or file petitions to run for Mayor, City Council or Municipal Judge.

So far four people have picked up petitions to run for mayor, including Council member Bill Falkner, Norma J. Maccoux, Richard "Dick" Sipe, and Steve Warner. Mayor Ken Shearin is not seeking reelection.

Those running for the three City Council at-large petitions include incumbents Donna Jean Boyer and Jeff Penland. Also running at large are Kim Brant, Jerome L. Goolsby, Steven F. Haskey IV, Byron Myers and John Russell.

Candidates for 1st District Council include Reba (Kendall) Hebert, Michael R. Stevens, and Andrew J. Trautman. Incumbent Roger Baker is not seeking reelection.

In the second district, incumbent Joyce Starr is being challenged by Sarah Hochschwender.

In the third district, I am being challenged by Steve Sewell.

Fourth district incumbent Gary Roach is being challenged by Richard Sharp.

So far incumbent Barbara LaBass does not have an opponent in the Fifth District. Municipal Judge John Boeh is also unopposed.

### Footnotes on Petitioning

Four years ago when I was circulating petitions to get on the ballot, I intentionally worked in a number of different neighborhoods in the third district. Even though I have been a political activist for over 35 years and have written this column in *The Telegraph* for 16 years, there were a lot of people who did not know me. I went to grade school in the southside--Hosea--

and my parents had owned the Corral Drive Inn Restaraunt on Lake Avenue. But we moved to the country when I was finishing the seventh grade and I went to the 8th grade at Clarksdale and Maysville to high school.

In 2006 I was running against a two-term incumbent who was known by nearly everyone. His well-known nickname was "Southside Charlie." I knew I had my work cut out for me so I knocked on hundreds of doors all over the district.

Last week I visited some of the same neighborhoods where I campaigned four years ago. A couple of people said they remembered signing for

petitions for me last time.

One lady said she recognized me from pictures she had seen. She didn't say it, but I know I have one of those faces only a mother, and maybe God, could love.

Several times in the last few weeks I've knocked on doors of friends. It's always good to catch up with people you care about.

Petitioning gave me a chance to hear people's concerns. I heard complaints on streets, sewers, property maintenance and other issues. Some thanked me for continuing to push for a bridge over the rail road tracks to connect with the Stockyards Industrial Park, Kirscher-Purtell addition and the Lake Contrary area. It was an opportunity to explain why this council made some decisions and explain some of the votes I've cast.

So far this campaign, I've only had one person refuse to sign my petition. She felt property maintenance hadn't been strict enough with her neighbors and told me the city manager hadn't returned her call. So she wouldn't sign for me to run again.

I don't think she was being fair, because she hadn't contacted me at all about her frustra-

tions with city staff. I can't look into problems if I don't know about them.

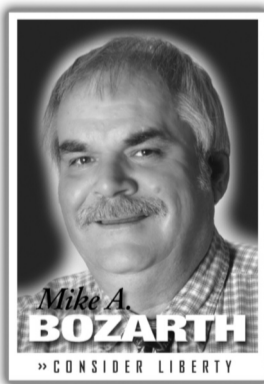
### Got to mention the dogs

I can't talk about petitioning and door-to-door work without saying something about dogs. I love animals and like making friends with cats and dogs when I'm out and about.

Four years ago I remember walking along this chain link fence with a mean-looking, barking, growling, snarling dog on the other side. As I walked closer to the house I noticed the front gate was open--about the same time the dog did. I'm sure I set new records in running long jumps when I leaped over the ditch to get away. My 50-foot dash to the car was pretty good too.

Thankfully this year I haven't been chased by any dogs. Most were friendly. But I did get bitten three times, but it was by a small dog and it didn't break my skin.

But it takes more than that to break my resolve. I'll just start wearing an extra pair of socks and continue.



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