

OUR VIEW

Out to Lunch?

The more you get to know President George Bush, the less you should like about him. We already know that he's not the most well-read or politically or culturally astute man to sit in the Oval Office. We know that he generally doesn't read newspapers or pay much attention to other forms of media. We know that he has peculiar information-gathering tastes, preferring historic or cultural tomes that may or may not have anything to do with anything pertinent to his job than books, either critical of his governance or not, that address the very problems he faces as the most powerful man in the world.

These things we know because Bush and his public relations henchmen (and henchwomen) repeatedly tell us this, whether we want to hear it or not.

Maybe our president's lack of curiosity is behind his recent spate of blunderheadedness. There's the not-so-little matter of his tacit approval to temporarily suppress news that the personal information of 26.5 million U.S. veterans were stolen. You'd think that Bush would get this information out as soon as possible and let the American public know what his administration is doing to strengthen defense controls to ensure something like this would never happen again. That's what you think he'd do. But it appears that Bush was out of lunch on this one. Because of this, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee is now investigating how the Department of Veterans Affairs defense mechanisms were so porous. "One of the things that's clear is the employee who took the data home in violation of the policy," communications director Jeff Schrade told *The Examiner*. "Did that person do that on their own? Did the supervisor know they took this home? That'll be part of focus of the hearing."

Then there's the fairly embarrassing matter of Bush learning from the press that U.S. Marines reportedly killed two dozen unarmed Iraqi civilians, including women and children. As White House press secretary said in response to queries about when the president learned about the alleged massacre in Haditha: "When a *Time* reporter first made the call." Let's remember that this is the same president who admits disdaining the media, whose relationship with the Fourth Estate is three steps below icy and whose administration has created a Nixonian level of secrecy and distrust. You get us into war, the least you could do is stay on top of what's going in the war.

According to published reports, Marines killed the unarmed Iraqi civilians after a bomb battered a military convoy on Nov. 19, killing a fellow Marine. Marines reportedly fatally shot Iraqis sitting in a taxi and went into homes and killed other civilians. If this doesn't stick in Bush's craw, it should: the anti-media president being one-upped by his enemy; the press informing him of something he, as commander in chief, as architect of the Iraq war, should have known about. Really, this is par for the course for Bush. On most issues concerning Iraq, Bush has proven that he's out to lunch.

Somebody please ring the bell. Lunch should be over.

Too late to talk?

Facing down a multitude of problems in his rapidly diminishing presidency, it's understandable that George Bush would seek solace somewhere. But Iran?

Oh, how the mighty tuck their tails and run for cover. Bush now wants to sit down and talk to Iran about its pursuit of nuclear capabilities. He wants to talk after five years of browbeating Iran, after dutifully enhancing American's reputation in the Islamic world as the "Great Satan," after hinting that military force might replace punitive measures if Iran, whose leadership says it needs nuclear power for generating energy—we'll grant him that America has to be careful because the country doesn't have a pristine reputation of truth telling—doesn't suspend its enrichment of uranium.

Ultimately, talks with Iran are the right things to do—even if Bush came to the idea via desperation. By choosing diplomacy over military intervention, Bush gives his administration a chance to resolve matters peacefully and, if not, he can at least say he tried his best.

DRIVE-THRU
DAIQUIRIS



Another violent summer

By Dora LaGrande
Sentinel-Voice

Summer has not even begun yet and the violence has already started. This past Sunday, the residents of Berkeley Square, located in Las Vegas' Historic Westside, south of "D" Street and Lake Mead Boulevard, were gathered together for their seventh annual Berkeley Square Memorial Day weekend block party when five to six unknown gunmen opened fire on them in an attack which left three people dead and four people wounded.

Metro has said it is sure that the shooting was gang related.

What kind of society are we becoming when innocent people can't even get together and have a good time for fear of thugs gunning them down in broad daylight, without regard for women, children or themselves? These alleged gang members caught everyone off guard with their brazenness.

Gangs and gang members are one of the fastest growing violent populations in the United States. Gangs and the number of gang members are growing at an alarming rate in Southern Nevada and they are becoming more violent. Gang related homicides are up 50 percent across the nation, and it is no longer just a major metropolitan area problem. Today, gang violence does not make any distinction along socioeconomic lines, but try convincing metro of that. Gangs have in-



ON THE RECORD

By Dora LaGrande

creasingly spread throughout Nevada drawing members from all walks of life.

Remember the 311 BOYZ, the infamous well-to-do northwest Las Vegas teens that were part of a gang? Then there are the Hispanic gangs, another rapidly growing group in the United States. Gangs experienced with drug cartels are among the most notorious and dangerous groups in America.

The Mexican gangs run their own distribution networks in the United States and produce a sizable amount of the methamphetamine used north of the border. They have become the leading law enforcement threat facing the United States, and my guess would be that Metro is ill equipped to deal with them, since they have a hard time handling the customary Bloods and Crips, which they are used to.

As we embark upon an election season, it should be our hope that the issue of gangs is made a top priority with the candidates running for sheriff. Gangs are either now or soon will be a major problem here in Las Vegas if something isn't done soon. Not only does Metro need to be aware of the signs of gang activity, but we as parents

and community citizens need to take responsibility for the safety of our friends and families, as well. We need to stop being so afraid to get involved and use the available, anonymous resources to help combat this activity.

Drugs, drugs and drugs is what fuels gang activity, and when added to the problems of high concentrations of poverty in specific areas and easily available illegal guns, as well as the promotion of violence via some rap songs, the combination is often deadly to both gang members and innocent bystanders.

There is a big movement here in Las Vegas to recruit young people into gangs. In speaking with a few teachers, this recruitment process is reaching students as young as

elementary school.

Maybe, just maybe, the situation that happened over Memorial Day weekend will be a wake-up call. That could have been any of us, in any neighborhood, having a block party and enjoying ourselves and then becoming subject to arbitrary attack. We have got to see what we collectively and individually can do to help reach the many young people who may be targets of crime, either committing a crime or being a victim of one.

Parents have got to stop saying not my child, or my son/daughter wouldn't do that. You don't know what your son or daughter would do when you leave them to run the streets until two or three o'clock in the morning when they are at the ages of 14, 15, 16 and 17.

I hear several parents of teenagers say that their child doesn't have a curfew. Well, they should. My mother used to tell me that the only thing

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Email: lvsentinelvoice@earthlink.net

Contributing Writers:
Asmeret Asghedom
Chelsi Cheatom
Tanya Flanagan
Tasha Pope
Lés Pierres Streater
Photographer:
Isaac Sawyer

Ramon Savoy, Publisher, Editor-in-Chief
Parker Philpot, Copy Editor
Don Snook, Graphics
Ed & Betty Brown, Founders

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