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In defense of booze

There was a lot more drinking in Washington, D.C., before May 15, 1978. That was the date on which I had my last drink. Before that, I had answered too many last calls in too many saloons in too many towns.

But never once in all those late nights in any of those gin mills did I ever end up with either an altar boy or a chorus girl nestled in my lap.

Alcohol, even when consumed in unhealthy amounts, does not turn one into a sexual predator. As an excuse, "Booze made me do it," is as believable as, "The dog ate my homework," or, "My grandmother died." They're all variations of ducking responsibility for one's actions.

U.S. Rep. Bob Ney, R-Ohio, blamed booze for having lived like a junta general while junketing overseas and sponging, both here and abroad, off of criminal-lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

Actor Mel Gibson spewed anti-Semitic bilge at a Malibu, Calif., cop who had stopped him for driving under the influence.

Both men went directly into rehab, as did resigned U.S. Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fla., 52, whose e-mails to 16-year-old congressional pages requesting they send him photographs of themselves did not arouse any suspicions on the part of his caucus colleagues or party leaders.

Two questions: Do you know any grown man who asks teenage boys for their photos? Doesn't it seem unfair that the Boston Strangler didn't know about rehab?

This is awkward because, as everyone knows, the Republicans are the party of traditional values and religious principles.

Evidence for that commitment can be seen in Republicans' fight to prevent civil unions or same-sex marriages from sabotaging and undermining traditional American marriages.

According to most polls, the three leading GOP presidential candidates for 2008 are Arizona



Politics and Punditry

MARK SHIELDS

Sen. John McCain, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Among the trio, let it be noted, there have been eight marriages—but all traditional one man and one woman.

Gingrich is an interesting case study. On Fox News, he defended the House Republican leadership's failure to discipline Foley for his unnatural interest in male congressional pages this way: "I think had they overly aggressively reacted to the initial round (of e-mail messages), they would also have been accused of gay bashing."

By whom, Newt, and for what? This was not about anyone being or not being gay, but instead about an adult male superior communicating in objectionable, sexual language to professional inferiors who are children sent by their families to Congress to be treated as children are treated.

No relationship between any member of Congress and any congressional page is remotely equal.

The member is the finger-snapping master, and the page is the

nimble-footed servant ready to run quickly any and all errands. The congressional page can best be compared to the Major League Baseball team's batboy, who holds the grown-up "stars" in both awe and fear.

A personal note: Long after college and service in the Marine Corps, and having seen everything, including the Texas State Fair, twice, I went to work as a legislative aide for a U.S. senator.

I was 28 when Vice President Hubert Humphrey addressed me by name. How thrilled was I? I called home that night, on my own nickel, to share the good news with my parents.

If Hubert Humphrey had asked me, I would have gladly mowed his lawn for the next 12 months.

Now, if you will, imagine the reaction of the lowly page when a member of Congress not only calls him by name, but compliments him on his appearance.

Before we leave Gingrich and his limp rationalization for the party's failure to order Foley to cease and desist, let us recall how, on election eve 12 years ago, when a young South Carolina mother, Susan Smith, was arrested for drowning her two children in hopes of making herself more attractive to a suitor, Newt sought to exploit the tragedy for political profit. He said, "I think the mother killing the two children in South Carolina vividly reminds every American how sick the society is and how much we need to change things." Then he added, "The only way you get change is to vote Republican."

That, of course, was the election that brought change—along with Bob Ney and Mark Foley—to Congress.

Let Republican politicians stop blaming booze and, manfully, accept responsibility for their actions.

Mark Shields is a columnist with the Washington Post. He appears weekly on public television as an analyst for the Jim Lehrer "News Hour." © 2006 Mark Shields.

More lands for Arizonans to enjoy

Guest Comment

By Carl Jones

I would like to thank *Green Valley News* for covering the forum on Proposition 105 and 106 dealing with the State Trust lands.

After reading the Oct. 18 article in your newspaper and being the proponent for Proposition 106, I feel some points need to be clarified.

I am qualified to speak on the matter because I have 30-plus years of natural resource management, 25 years of which were with the Arizona State Land Department.

If Proposition 106 is voted in, not only will 59 special areas totaling 694,000 acres be set aside for conservation use, but the legal tools to better manage the State Trust lands will be updated and thus produce more revenue for essential educational funding.

Most importantly, in the last paragraph the article it was mentioned that if Proposition 106 passes and receives the most "yes" votes, the State lands in Proposition 105 will not be set aside and this is true.

However, it should be pointed out that if Proposition 105 receives the most "yes" votes between Proposition 105 and Proposition 106, and passes, all those 59 identified unique areas totaling 694,000 acres will not

be put into conservation.

They are competing propositions. If voters pass both propositions, only the one with the most "yes" votes passes into law. If voters vote "yes" on both Propositions they, in effect, nullify their vote.

If the public is confused, they can blame the state Legislature and special interest groups of home builders and land developers for this because that is the only reason Proposition 105 is on the ballot—to basically cause confusion and be a "spoiler" for Proposition 106.

So I hope the residents of Arizona go to the polls and vote "yes" on Proposition 106 and vote "no" on 105!

Send a message to the state Legislature and their special interest groups that Arizonans want more lands set aside for all Arizonans to use and enjoy!

Carl Jones has been a resident of Green Valley for two years, moving here after 28 years in Tucson.

Prop. 106 will protect natural areas

Guest Comment

By Luther Propst

Executive Director of the Sonoran Institute

State Trust land reform is one of the most important issues on the November ballot. If you care about protecting natural areas and carefully planning for future development, you'll want to vote yes on 106.

Arizona has changed significantly since the framers of the Arizona Constitution in 1912 structured State Trust land management. Arizona's population is now at nearly 6 million citizens and is expected to double in the next 25 years. Currently, all State Trust lands in Arizona must be leased or sold at auction to the highest bidder to benefit the public school system and other beneficiaries. Under existing law the land department can sell as much as it can prepare, but is not authorized to conserve even one acre. That has to change.

The only way to change the management of State Trust lands is to amend our state constitution through a vote of the people.

Broad group of interests

After years of discussion by a broad group of interests including the Sonoran Institute, Arizona Education Association, The Nature Conservancy and 70 other groups representing education, conservation, local governments, recreation, legislative leaders and the business community - Proposition 106 was successfully placed on the ballot with 301,000 signatures - a record number of voters' signatures in Arizona.

In addition to protecting 59 of Arizona's most spectacular and special places from development, Prop 106 will require the land department to plan their land in cooperation with local communities, and it will create a citizen board of trustees to safeguard the trust for the children of Arizona.

This board of trustees is our only chance to help protect other local areas, including the proposed West Desert Preserve in Green Valley.

It's up to Arizona voters to decide whether open space is a valuable community asset and whether protecting almost 700,000 acres of the more than 9.3 million acres of State Trust lands is an important investment for hiking, biking, hunting, horseback riding, fishing, wildlife corridors and other uses. Green Valley's Santa Rita Experimental Range is one of the 59 special areas that will be protected from development under 106.

More than 83,000 acres of grassland will be protected from development thereby ensuring open space

for the residents who live nearby and who are moving here for the spectacular scenery. That's what's at stake in this election.

The Central Arizona (Phoenix) Homebuilders Association is financing a lavish campaign to maintain their privileged status by attacking Proposition 106. The big developers in Phoenix don't want to see the rules change to promote conservation, to encourage smart growth, and to raise more money for schools - at the expense of their profits.

These self-serving developers would rather see the land department sell small parcels of land to throw up "cookie-cutter" subdivisions rather than allow them to carefully plan land to include schools, parks, bike trails, and open space.

The latest false ads funded by the Phoenix developers say we will shut down ranchers' ability to maintain their grazing lands.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Sonoran Institute has worked for years to establish relationships with ranchers who care about the land.

The Yes on 106 team has many ranchers on board.

Don't be fooled. The Phoenix developers that are funding opposition to Proposition 106 care about their short-term profits, not sound range stewardship.

Gov. Janet Napolitano, Tucson Mayor Bob Walkup and Marana Mayor Ed Honea support Proposition 106.

Other endorsers include the Santa Cruz Valley Bicycle Advocate Committee, Santa Cruz County Citizens Council, The Nature Conservancy, Arizona Audubon, Arizona School Administrators Association, Southern Arizona Leadership Council, every member of the Pima County board of supervisors, the mayors of Phoenix, Scottsdale, Flagstaff, Oro Valley, hundreds of business leaders, and several responsible developers.

Please visit www.conservingarizonasfuture.com for a complete list of supporters and maps of the special areas protected. I hope you'll agree it's time for a change. Vote yes on Proposition 106.

Luther Propst is the executive director of the Sonoran Institute, an Arizona-based nonprofit that works in the West to promote community



"At one point I'd hoped to find WMD. Now I'd be happy if we could account for all the weapons we gave these guys."

Letters to the Editor

Deprived voter

Editor:

Regarding the flap over the absence of Jonathan Paton from the election process due to his service in Iraq.

The Republicans got a "buy one get three free" deal, whether by design or not.

By volunteering for the National Guard and Iraq service, Paton is to be honored for his service.

However, he has put himself at risk of additional deployment time, or, worst case, not coming back at all.

Meanwhile the Republicans can bask in the patriotic effusion of public relations, deprive Clarence Boykins of the process of debating his opponent in fair and open discourse, and give Tim Bee double ex-

posure as Paton's spokesperson, and as a candidate for the state Senate, while his opponent, Jeff Chimene, does not get this double exposure.

As a voter, I feel deprived of the opportunity to hear fair and open discussion between both candidates.

It was a very smooth maneuver on somebody's part, and puts Mr. Boykins in a difficult position no matter what he does.

I admire his honesty and courage in calling it as he sees it, a quality we can expect him to continue to have as a state representative.

He is not a "smooth operator" but a man of integrity and dedication to the truth and service to the people, regardless of the consequences.

**June Wortman
Green Valley**

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