

In Real Life

THE DAILY WORK OF AMERICANS

DOPE AT THE TOP

By Raymond Wisher

Just as a pebble perched on a mountain-top can start a landslide, foolish national policies soon enough tumble down as dangerous avalanches to us police officers on the street. And so I'm depressed to report that on the drug front, the Clinton era has now trickled down.

The President of the United States was once a doper and has now surrounded himself with dopers in the White House. He's made it clear he doesn't have a problem with that. To paraphrase the popular T-shirt slogan, "This is your government on drugs."

Libertarian friends of mine say "big deal." But every day now, President Clinton's lax attitude toward drugs is affecting my life—and yours.

You see, it finally happened. The other day one of our detectives arrested a young man who is a known dealer of everything from marijuana to crack. He likes hanging around with teenagers (usually good kids like yours), dealing to them, having relationships with them. When he was stopped, he had three juveniles with him, two girls and a young male runaway. One of the girls was his girlfriend, the other was someone I hadn't met yet.

As a matter of course, I take these kids to one side and try to get them to wake up and realize what kind of people they are with, what kind of choices they are making by being with them. So I asked the unfamiliar girl whether she would keep company with a murderer. "Of course not." Then I asked if she would befriend a rapist. "Never." Burglar? "No, I'd be too worried about my house." A thief? She hesitated, then said, "No, I don't think so." How about dopers and drug dealers? "I don't use it myself," was her answer, her justification. "But you are known by whom you associate with," I said.

About that time our adult suspect's 16-year-old girlfriend walked up and heard what we were talking about. She got upset and began complaining that we were picking on her boyfriend. She began to list reasons why using dope shouldn't be taken so seriously. Reason number two was, I quote: "Why pick on us? What's the big deal? I mean, look at President Clinton." The other girl looked to me to see my answer. I was stunned, though I should have been prepared.

I hesitated a beat, but then jumped next to the new girl and tried to recover: "Hey, what he does doesn't justify what you are

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doing. Does that make it OK?" The girls looked for a second, then rolled their eyes and smiled. I lost the argument. All that effort—and one bad example a thousand miles away cuts me off at the knees.

When I got back to the car, my partner could see I was upset. I told him what had happened. He shook his head. I scratched mine, turned, and asked him a question. "If they have figured it out, how many more have caught on?" Apparently lots, because the reports show big up-ticks in drug use over the latest three years, following long declines. Lord knows LSD use is jumping. We recently intercepted three juveniles in separate incidents who had just bought blotter acid that day. They were all heading for parties. Roofies are also on the rise. That's the date-rape pill you've heard

about. It does knock the woman out. She can do a whole lot of stuff and have no clue, like a walking zombie.

Thanks to reduced interdiction, acid now ranges between four and five dollars a hit. Roofies are about three to eight dollars, depending on whether you buy in bulk or not. Cocaine is down to \$35 a gram or less; marijuana is dirt cheap. People wonder if legalizing drugs would stop crimes committed to nab drug-buying money. The fact is, drugs are almost free already. Which explains why some kids today can't even do "hamburger-flipping" jobs without painted pictures to follow.

A captain of mine once explained why he opposed legalizing drugs: "How do you tell your ten-year-old son that drugs are bad if he asks, 'Then why does the government say it's OK?'"

I never thought I would actually be faced with that as the real-life message communicated by government in this country. But I think that's now where we are. And that's why I think, contrary to Michael McCurry's opinion, that acceptance of drugs in the White House is a very big deal.

Raymond Wisher is a Florida police detective.

THE HOLT COUNTY VOTE

By Blake Hurst

Of the 53 people arrested for traffic violations in Holt County, Missouri, during the last week of July, four were Holt County residents. Only a cynic would attribute this to the fact that Bernie Delaney, the sheriff of Holt County, was involved in a hotly contested primary race.

I first met Bernie when he was deputy sheriff running for the state legislature in a special election in 1991. The Republican Central Committees in the legislative

district met in a local truck stop to pick their candidate. Bernie was the first of the three candidates to speak, and his talk was easily the most memorable. He sauntered to the front of the room and announced that his willingness to serve the good folks of Northwest Missouri was unsurpassed. As an example of past service, he gave an all-too-graphic description of his experience as the first officer to arrive at the scene of a convenience store murder. Perhaps his description of "brains dripping down the front of the pop cooler" was not totally appropriate for that particular audience. Bernie did not get the nomination, but his speech earned him a permanent place in our family lore.

Julie and I next saw Bernie when he was one of 19 speakers at the Holt County Farm Bureau Candidates' Night and Hog Roast held this summer in Oregon, Missouri. His speech this time was in a little better taste. Perhaps he had been in touch with Mark Helprin.

There are only 6,000 people in Holt County, just south of where I live, and 25 of them were on the August primary ballot. And quite a collection of candidates it was, too. Seven of the eight candidates for sheriff were Republicans. The revolution is secure in Holt County, if nowhere else. The lone Democratic candidate's entire speech consisted of introducing herself and explaining that she was running because she thought her party ought to be represented on the ballot, too. The candidate who bested Bernie in the primary is also a woman, guaranteeing Holt County a sheriff of the distaff persuasion. The new Republican candidate is a shoe-in, since Republican primary voters outnumbered Democrats 16 to one. The high number of candidates led to a huge turnout, and the results were delayed because polling places ran out of ballots.

One of the other Republicans running for sheriff was a newcomer to Holt County, who hailed from the West Coast in 1992. He didn't have a prayer. County offices are some of the best jobs available

in our area, and we don't give them to carpetbaggers from California. If he pays his bills and stays out of jail, maybe his kids can successfully run for county office.

There were three candidates for county collector, including one lady who had worked in the collector's office before her children were born, and now that they were reared, was ready to return. Holt Countians are sympathetic to career breaks caused by child-rearing, and the empty-nester was an easy winner.

The last five speakers were all running for assessor. The sole Democrat was quick to claim two of the Republican candidates as relatives.

All of the candidates bragged about their expertise with computers, which must be important to assessors, and one candidate remarked that he was printing all his campaign literature in his basement on his home computer. Not a campaign boast likely to be repeated by either Clinton or Dole.

One of the candidates for assessor was Margaret Salfrank. She had decided that she wanted to be Holt County assessor some five years ago, and had entered college in her fifties to prepare herself for the office. Her campaign plan was simple. She was going to knock on every door in Holt County. At the time, she had been to 1,400 houses, with only one small town to go. She must have completed her self-appointed task, because Margaret won her primary.

To poke fun at folks running for local offices can be all too easy. They tend to be unpolished in both appearance and speech. But I was much moved by those 19 candidates as Julie and I listened to their pleas for their friends' and neighbors' votes. They are honest and hard working, and used to making dollars stretch to the breaking point. I'm not sure Margaret Salfrank is what the policy wonks in Washington have in mind when they talk about devolution, but she should be. If dedication and sincerity

count, I'd as soon trust Margaret with my tax dollars as any national politician I can name.

Blake Hurst is a regular contributor to The American Enterprise.

IN PRAISE OF NEIGHBORHOOD NARROWNESS

By George Marlin

As youths in New York City neighborhoods, we were parochial, protective of turf that was often nothing more than a stoop, or a piece of sidewalk that saw the joys of stickball, punchball, boxball, and scooters made from wooden milk crates. Indeed, much of life revolved around stickball and punchball teams, organized by parish, and the most athletic of us would boast how many sewers we could punch our Spalding rubberballs (translation: sewer manhole covers are about 75 feet apart, so a ball hit two sewer covers travels about 150 feet). Growing up in neighborhoods also meant being instilled with respect for family, education, discipline, hard work, and loyalty.

The old ethnic neighborhood is what native New Yorkers have in common. In the city of New York, Poles, Jews, Hispanics, Orientals, Irish, Italians, and Germans blend in with their cosmopolitan environment while working in Manhattan. But when they return at day's end to the neighborhoods of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Ridgewood, Jackson Heights, Flushing, Woodside, and Bay Ridge, they return to their cultural heritage.

Regrettably, outsiders do not easily grasp the value of the ethnic neighborhood, or how its citizenry operates. Many wrongly view it as a breeding ground for racism, narrow-mindedness, and rudeness. They don't understand that neighborhoods are self-contained life centers that protect traditional virtues and repulse state domination. These densely populated areas do not add to government bureaucracy; they have the opposite effect. Their residents hound their civic and property-owners' associations, planning and school boards, and local legislators. "If you believe in no bigger than

