

Where are we going to put all of those prisoners?

The new president will have to decide what happens to the hundreds of alleged terrorist prisoners being held at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The U.S. government can't keep the prisoners on the base, which is Cuban territory under a long-term lease to the U.S. that dates back to the Spanish American War.

Guantanamo survives as a capitalist enclave in communist Cuba because we simply refused to leave when Fidel Castro took over more than 50 years ago. Its nearly total isolation — there are no gates that allow commerce with Cuba and only sea approaches to the heavily guarded base — made it a perfect site to hold terrorists.

Or so it seemed.

The Bush Administration wanted the prisoners outside the U.S. court system, where lawyers could have tied the cases up for years. The foreign site kept the prisoners more out of the courts and out of the public eye at first.

However, scandals involving treatment and alleged religious abuse managed to leak out. Lawyers began to file court cases on the U.S. mainland. And many around the world objected to the extralegal way they were being treated.

The true radicals among the crowd refuse to bow at all to U.S. authority. A former chief of public relations for Al-Qaida, Ali Hamza al-Bahlul, was found guilty of 35 counts of conspiracy, solicitation to commit murder and providing material support to terrorism last week.

He ordered his lawyers to stand silent, making no plea or case, and vowed to continue the fight against America. It's hard to see how we can release someone like that, especially after he was convicted of masterminding videos and Internet sites for Osama bin Laden.

Others, such as a group of Chinese muslims captured in Afghanistan, have no place to go. The U.S. no longer sees them as a threat, but cannot send them home to China, where the government would arrest them. The Bush Administration, for many reasons, does not want them here, either.

Still, that leaves al-Aahlul and others like him, real terrorists.

But where to put them, and others convicted in special military courts on the Navy base?

No state wants them. Kansas' senators, usually eager to grab any jobs offered by the government, both wrote to reject the idea of building cells at a military prison in Leavenworth.

Wherever they might be held, these political prisoners — we call them war criminals, but their own people do not — would be a target for escape and retribution. Released, they would only return to their crimes.

Keeping them forever in Cuba is not much of an option. New Democratic president-elect Barack Obama, already has vowed to close the prison there. A Republican president eventually would have had to do the same.

Nor does it seem likely that another location could be found on foreign soil that would not draw world protests, possible terrorists raids and other problems.

The only real alternative would be to build a special camp somewhere in the U.S., but in an open society, that would be hard to hide. Opposition would be strong.

It is a dilemma. No one wants to see the prisoners released, the terrorists at least, and no one wants to have them near. It's no wonder Guantanamo looked so good at the start.

Perhaps, in hindsight, taking these people into the regular courts and regular federal prisons would have been the smart thing to do, but it may be too late for that.

There is no easy solution here, just tough questions.

— Steve Haynes



Daughter and I agree on most things

After my "soapbox column" of last week, I received an e-mail reply from my oldest daughter, Halley. She said it would be fun to do the math and see how things turned out — percentage wise — in terms of how I had passed my views on to her.

So, with her permission, here is her reply.

Pollution: I think we agree in that we are both against it. I still remember watching the crying Indian commercial with you. After you explained it to me, I thought, "How sad." Before that, I thought it was a stupid commercial because I hadn't seen Indians crying in all their original dress — didn't make the connection.

Bad table manners: Against them.

Chewing gum in public: I don't like it either but think I lack your passion.

People who don't vote: We totally agree on this!

Little girls wearing make-up: Agree.

Boys wearing baggy pants: Agree.

Abortion: Disagree. But, we do good at finding common ground. Get rid of unwanted pregnancy and you can end abortion. But, stopping people from having sex is not a viable solution...Sorry, I got carried away.

Girls with hair in their eyes: Not a fan, but again, lacking your passion on this topic.

Prejudice: We agree. If the election goes for Obama you will have a lot more opportunities to share with people how deplorable and anti-productive it is.

Cruelty to animals: Agree, unless it is time for a BBQ. Then, I say, "Kill 'em

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



and fry 'em. Medium, please."

Concrete yard ornaments: Agree. There is really no excuse.

Donating blood: Agree. But, I am bad at it and throw up whenever I do it. I think you have a freakish gene neither Kara (her younger sister) nor I got. If someone I knew (and liked) needed it, I would do it again.

Smoking: I guess I'll agree. I don't really care.

Parents who don't discipline their children: I HATE this. I think there are three simple solutions to this: For one week either give them to you, Kara, or the state. Either way both parties' attitudes would change.

Children who don't mind their parents: See above. Agree.

Volunteering: Important. I'll even add donating money. Agree.

Gas prices: Totally wrong. But, I think it is part of a larger conspiracy. Agree.

The economy: Frightening right now. Probably have different ideas on how to solve it. But, agree that it needs solved in an ethical way with the best intentions for citizens at the core of the solution. I'm going to agree.

Terrorism: I hope it is safe to say we are both against it. We might disagree on the definition, but overall, we agree it is bad.

Vulgar language: Hmmm. Tough, because sometimes only vulgar language can explain vulgar acts and situations. But, I can work on this more.

Defending America: TOTALLY agree.

Wearing white shoes after Labor Day: Totally agree. This is the same as concrete yard ornaments.

The right to bear arms: Agree.

Letting children sleep in your bed: Agree, and I would like to add, pets.

Okay, so here are our results. Of your values reflected (now that I have seen the math, I am wondering if "imposed" is not more appropriate).

84 percent — we agree

12 percent — neutral, but swaying toward agreement on all.

4 percent — disagree.

She closed by saying, "I would say you did a good job. Thanks Mom! Glad you set me up with good values."

I think I did a good job, too. But, don't ever let anyone say, "You're so lucky to have good kids."

Luck didn't have a thing to do with it. I put a lot of hard work into raising good kids and a lot of purposeful decisions about what I wanted them to know.

If I had it to do over again there would be less television and more game nights; I would have worked outside the home less and spent more time baking cookies; and we would have been in church more.

It's time to bid the garden farewell

Open Season

Cynthia Haynes



I snipped the torn pieces of sheet, removed the fence and pulled up the stakes Sunday afternoon. Garden season is over, and it was time to clean up the mess that Mother Nature had left in my little patch.

First, she gave us lots of sunshine and plenty of rain, and the tomato vines grew. Then there was hail and replanting. Then more sunshine and rain, and it was time to put in the stakes and bind the plants to the wooden slats with strips torn from old white (and blue) bed sheets. Before we knew it, it was time to tie them again, and again and again as they grew, until the vines topped the six-foot stakes and their weight pulled some of the stakes over.

I got a metal pole, planning to put up bird feeders this winter. It went into service right away, standing in the middle of four tomato plants like the only sober person at a party.

While the tomato vines were taking off

in the main garden, the zucchini vines were working their way through the fence on the side yard and snaking across the yard. This required me to hold the vines up each week as Steve mowed. He muttered about the vines killing his grass, but he likes my zucchini bread too much to complain all that much.

Then the weather forecast called for the temperatures to maybe fall into the low 30s. I grabbed all the old sheets I keep for that purpose and covered every tomato vine, pepper plant and squash vine in both gardens. My back yard looked like a con-

vention of colorful ghosts. I did this three nights before just going out and stripping the vines of all their fruit, which I stored in the refrigerator and the basement.

Then I let the freeze do its worst, and one morning the leaves were all black and crumpled and the vines dead. That was more than a week ago. I gave them a while to dry, and then pulled and pushed until the vines were in garbage bags, the stakes and fencing in the garage and the hoses stacked for the winter.

This is always a tough time of the year. It took so much work and was so much fun to raise the crops of lettuce, spinach, peas, beans, tomatoes, green peppers and zucchini. By next month, I'll have forgotten the work and be drooling over seed catalogs for spring. Like all my brethren who work the soil all across this great state, I'm an eternal optimist.

Some of us just work smaller areas than others.

A foreign friend's view of the election

Guest Commentary Tom Betz Editor, TheGoodland Star-News

The election is over, and a new day is dawning on America and the world as we digest what historic events we have seen.

More than five years ago my wife, Ava, got to know a lady in England through the Internet. The couple, Liz and John, have visited with us and we traveled together for several days down to Santa Fe, Houston and New Orleans (before Katrina).

Over the years we have talked about politics in both countries, and John was very interested in the election this year.

I received this e-mail from him Wednesday morning:

— — —

Dear America,
What a clever country you are! And so many of you have shown such, unexpected, common sense. Crossing this

particular Rubicon is a small step for a man but a giant leap for mankind, as someone once said. I see it as the glorious and timely emancipation of a race and almost a fulfillment of what Martin Luther King said 45 years ago. Obama's election will change the perception of America throughout the world and that, very much, for the better.

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