

points of view

Shame on the ravages of Iraq

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

While we Americans coped with the terrible stress of war, gratefully turning to instant support groups and hot lines, and debating at length how best to shield our young test they are marked by unfolding events, something escaped our attention altogether.

From 100,000 to 200,000 Iraqis died. A spokeswoman for the Southfield-based Chaldean Federation narrows the figure to between 112,000 and 135,000, counting both civilian and military deaths.

Now I know that Saddam Hussein started it all, and that advanced technology has virtually assured only military targets were bombed. But still, one hundred to 200,000! Certainly that counts for something, at least a touch of compassion. As somebody pointed out, we're not talking about rabid dogs here.

WHAT HAPPENED? What's happening?

I think the answer partially lies in what may well be the greatest public relations spin of the century, or perhaps ever. The great fiction.

First, we said Operation Desert Storm was necessary to protect the oil. That didn't wash well with the American public who had the good sense to realize oil is hardly worth a war.

Next, we said it was necessary to provide protection against a pending invasion of Saudi Arabia. When that didn't come to pass, the correct formula for arousing American passion was found by comparing Saddam Hussein to Hitler.

Dictator that he is, Hussein simply is no Hitler. Today, there are only two Hitler clones, Uganda's Idi Amin who lives quite comfortably in the country of our close ally, Saudi Arabia, and Cambodia's Pol Pot who is our political ally. Both murdered an estimated one-third of their own peo-

ple. Idi even ate some of his.

NO, SADDAM is not a Hitler. Not a nice guy (with a conflicting political agenda to ours), but certainly not worth decimating an entire nation for or, in the words of President Bush, showing who's in charge.

While we Americans bravely faced the war with our yellow ribbons, and in the process also rid ourselves of residual guilt over Vietnam, a nation comparable to New York or Texas in population lost in less than 60 days two to four times the number of Americans killed in Vietnam over 15 years.

I suspect it's going to take a bit more than a support group or a hot line for Iraqis to come to terms with that in years to come.

But as a presidential spokesman so aptly put it on March 21, "Americans aren't going to feel guilty" because Saddam started it all.

After all, Iraq was a military might, an awesome, fearsome threat

ready to devour its neighbors. Odd, isn't it, they barely got off a shot.

FROM THE beginning, I was puzzled by the depiction of Iraq's military prowess. Anyone who has ever traveled to a developing nation knows full well there is little comparison to the industrialized west. This is not discrimination. It's fact. Developing nations are just that, developing.

Don't get me wrong. I don't object to a good fight, so long as it's fair. And so long as it's not based on a great fiction. Once war is declared, I say fight to win.

But indifference to the suffering of the magnitude now ravaging Iraq is shameful. Shame on us!

Janice Brunson, who has two sons that are officers in the Air Force, writes for *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*. She lives in West Bloomfield.

Services mark her memories

LAST WEEK WAS the 110th anniversary of the opening of J.L. Hudson's in Detroit. As I read Judith Doner Berne's description of the once grand downtown store as she remembered it, it evoked earlier, treasured memories for me dating from 1936.

I wonder if we appreciated the affable doorman? Yes, doorman. One was stationed just inside the Woodward entrance, and one at Farmer Street where the carriage trade alighted from their chauffeur-driven limousines. These men were actually greeters, or so it seemed.

One could leave a message with either, and be certain that it would be conveyed to the person for whom it was intended.

The glove department was on the first floor. Each customer was individually served. The seated client rested her elbow on a small satin pillow, as the sales person carefully fitted her, by easing the glove onto her hand.

At that time nobody young or old would be seen without gloves.

And that applied to hats as well. I WELL REMEMBER leaving a bus, to duck into Himmelhoch's to buy a fall hat.

It was the Tuesday after Labor Day, and one simply could not be seen in a summer hat. It was not the done thing. This was before the plastic age, and each sale was cash or store charge.

In Hudson's, a uniformed elevator starter answered questions about where merchandise was located, and uniformed elevator operators whisked us to the floor desired.

My favorite was the fourth floor, which housed children's clothing, and was adjacent to a spacious waiting room.

Decks were among the comfortable chairs. One had only to ask the matron in charge for stationery. Thus the customer was gainfully employed, while awaiting her luncheon companion.

The next stop was in one of the delightful restaurants. The food and service seemed to rate four stars. Memories crowd as my friend Betty Guest tells a J.L. Hudson anecdote.

Her mother was to make a christening dress for Betty's first born. The lace which she was first shown

lacked the proper quality. To produce lace of the needed quality, the saleswoman went to the vault!

Hudson's delivery policy was generous. From a spool of thread to a grand piano, all was delivered free of charge.

Carrying packages was considered a bit de classe.

NO MEMORY of Hudson's would be complete without a mention of their month-end sales.

The last Friday of the month every department in the store held a sale. For dedicated shoppers, that day was sacrosanct.

The smart shoppers boasted of their good "buys" at the Month End Sale.

Returning to the convenience of the check room - where you left your coat and intermittently delivered packages to a locker - another incidence comes to mind.

A friend and I took our 11-year-old sons to Hudson's for a shopping spree. The boys had their allowances.

We had other errands to do and agreed to pick them up in the car at the Grand River entrance at a certain time.

As we arrived, the boys rushed out and asked us to wait while they picked up their stuff. As we waited for them I remarked how clever it was of them to find the check room.

As we drove home, I said as much to the boys, as they munched their candy.

One answered, "Oh! We didn't do that. We hid all of stuff between the mattress and springs in the bed in a model room."

AND, AS WE prepared for our daughter's wedding, our home was a daily stop for the driver of Hudson's delivery truck. It was exciting as the gifts and our purchases arrived. The driver, too, seemed to enjoy the stop. My husband declared that, on the day of the wedding, when the minister customarily asks, "Who giveth this woman in marriage?" that he was going to answer, "I and J.L. Hudson."

C.C. Himes is an 87-year-old Troy resident who writes occasionally for the *Observer & Eccentric*.

School finances curb education

Q: Our school district has not been able to pass a much-needed millage vote in its last five attempts. They are talking about cutting out all athletic events. I know money is tight but cutting football bothers me. My son plays on the team. Don't educators believe sports are important for a good program?

A: I am a great believer in the value of athletics, music, art and other enriching experiences for students. But cutting football is the least of the educational problems in a district that is "going down the drain" due to lack of financial support.

For instance, lack of operating money means not only cutting programs but cutting teachers, especially when a district's student enroll-



Doc Doyle

ment is declining. Even more damaging is the reassigning of teachers who survive staff reductions.

You see, teachers in Michigan are either elementary or secondary certified. An elementary certified teacher can teach any grade level or subject from kindergarten through eighth grade.

Secondary certified teachers can teach in their major or minor subject area in the high school and mid-

dle school - and any course at the middle school level.

AS A RESULT of this state certification language (and local teacher contract language), I have seen some devastating classroom situations in districts that are financially strapped. Situations such as:

- A junior high physical education teacher, after years in the gym, was reassigned to teach first grade because the first grade teacher had less seniority and was released.
- I remember a great second grade teacher with five years experience who was reassigned to teach English at the eighth grade level because of a lack of money and the release of less senior staff.
- How about the high school chemistry teacher with 2 years experience who was told he would now teach junior high English?

BECAUSE OF state certification and teacher contract language, you literally could have a kindergarten

teacher bump a junior high shop teacher with less seniority.

So to answer your question, cutting football is unfortunate. But the damage to the K-2 education because of a lack of local financial support far exceeds the reduction of football.

I coached for several years. Athletics, music, art, play production and other enriching experiences develop student confidence and help round out young adults. But so can teachers positively mold young adults in the classroom if they are teaching in the area for which they were prepared.

YES, FOOTBALL is important. But long periods of financial instability in districts with quality educational programs is far more damaging.

James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm.

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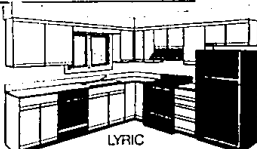
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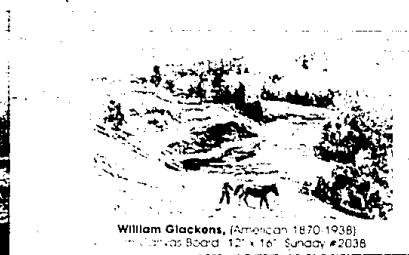
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