President Eisenhower’s Lessons for President Obama

by Melvin Goodman

On January 17, 1961 President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued his prophetic warning about the military-industrial complex, anticipating the increased political, economic, military, and even cultural influence of the Pentagon and its allies. Several weeks earlier, he had privately told his senior advisers in the White House Oval Office: “God help this country when someone sits in this chair who doesn’t know the military as well as I do.” Several months after his inauguration in 1953, he had warned against warfare that had “humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

Recent presidents have found no way out of increased military deployments and expenditures although the Cold War ended two decades ago with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nor have they challenged the national security influence of the military. No president since Eisenhower has genuinely understood the dangers of the Pentagon’s increasing influence over our national security policy. Eisenhower made sure that he was never outmaneuvered by his military advisers, particularly on such key issues as the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam, which his immediate successors thoroughly bungled. President John F. Kennedy never understood that the Pentagon anticipated the failure of the CIA in Cuba in 1961 and hoped to use its air power to achieve success. President Lyndon B. Johnson failed to challenge pleas from the Pentagon for more force and additional troops in Vietnam until it was too late.

Unlike presidents Kennedy and Johnson, Eisenhower ignored the hysteria of the bomber and missile gaps in the 1950s as well as the unnecessarily heightened concerns about U.S. security in NSC-68 in the late 1940s and the Gaither Report in the mid-1950s, which called for unnecessary increases in the strategic arsenal. Eisenhower ignored the many Democrats and Republicans who advocated for increased defense spending, and he even cut the military budget by 20 percent between 1953 and 1955 on the way to balancing the budget by 1956.

Eisenhower clashed with the military mindset from the very beginning of his presidency. He knew that his generals were wrong in proclaiming “political will” the major factor in military victory; he would have shuddered when General David Petraeus recently proclaimed that political will is the key factor for U.S. success in Afghanistan. Eisenhower knew
that military demands for weaponry and resources were always based on inexplicable notions of “sufficiency,” and he made sure that Pentagon briefings to the Congress were countered by testimony from the intelligence community.

Henry A. Kissinger was one of the rare national security advisers and secretaries of state who understood Eisenhower’s point of view. During the ratification process for the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT I) agreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in 1972, he countered conservative and military opposition to SALT and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with two questions the opponents of arms control could never answer: “What is strategic sufficiency? What would we do with strategic sufficiency if we had it?”

Eisenhower warned in his farewell address that the United States should not become a “garrison state,” but nearly fifty years later we have developed a garrison mentality: unprecedented military spending, continuous military deployments, exaggerated fears with regard to “Islamo-terrorism”—and now cyber wars, and exaggerated aspirations with regard to counterinsurgency and nation-building. He understood that it was the military-industrial complex that fostered an inordinate belief in the omnipotence of American military power.

Eisenhower knew the limits and constraints on use of force and did not fall prey to the type of planning that led to Kennedy’s Bay of Pigs; Johnson’s Vietnam; Reagan’s Grenada; Bush II’s Iraq; and now Obama’s Afghanistan. He started no wars and wisely settled for a stalemate in Korea. He stood alone in heavily criticizing the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956, and he ignored criticism for not assisting the Hungarian uprising weeks later.

Unfortunately, with the possible exception of President Richard Nixon, we have not had a president who understood the military mindset and was willing to limit the influence of the military. Democrats such as Kennedy, Johnson, and Clinton as well as Republicans such as Reagan, Bush I, and Bush II have deferred too readily to the military. They devoted too many resources to the military and often resorted to the use of power instead of diplomacy and statecraft.

The twin military setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan, where failed counterinsurgency strategies have cost billions of dollars and thousands of lives, should lead to a serious national security debate to prevent the mistakes of the past two decades. But President Barack Obama finds himself in a position where the military wields far too much influence on Capitol Hill and within the Intelligence Community; controls too much of the weak U.S. treasury; and has the leading policy voice on security issues. Instead of catering to the military, Obama would do well to heed the philosophy and advice of Eisenhower, who stood alone in understanding America’s infatuation with military power.

Melvin A. Goodman, intelligence and national security columnist for Truthout.org, is senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and adjunct professor of government at The Johns Hopkins University. His 42-year government career included service with the CIA, the State Department, the Defense Department, and the U.S. Army. He is the author of the forthcoming Reversing the Militarization of the United States, City Lights Publisher.
He Ain’t Heavy—He’s My Brother

by Sheila Weiss

With urgency in her voice, the young mother repeated herself several times during our phone conversation: “I have five-year-old fraternal twin boys—one with quite a few disabilities, the other healthy. They are sweet guys. The brothers adore each other and do all activities together. I would like you to see them for art therapy. We all look forward to meeting you.”

After setting up our appointment, I realized I hadn’t asked the extent of the handicapped child’s needs, perhaps intuitively wanting the four of us to get together so that I could take a look for myself.

As I watched from my window, a dark red van, almost the size of a truck, swiggled its way into the handicapped-accessible parking space, squashing the last summer flowers that late September afforded. Teddy, the brown haired twin, helped Mom open two back doors, which brought down an electric ramp. A chubby blonde haired boy smiled as he was rolled down the ramp on a wooden platform with wheels. Seeing Timmy, my throat tightened with sadness. He appeared to have stumps for arms and no legs below his knees. Bracing myself to greet Mom and her two smiling youngsters, I opened my office door and waved hello.

Upon entering, Teddy and Mom shook hands with me and I bent down to Timmy, moving my hand like a windshield wiper across his back, saying, “I’m happy to meet you.” His marble-sized blue eyes radiated warmth and excitement. Teddy laughed and told Timmy to get off his horse and onto the carpet. With that remark, Timmy giggled and landed on the padded, pale gray tweed wall-to-wall carpeting, flipping his body as if he were a porpoise. Mom pulled at his waist to get his back against the sofa, his sitting-up position.

While Bess, the boys’ mother, filled out my questionnaire, I sat cross-legged on the floor with the guys, smiling, asking them what they would like to do. Teddy replied, “Paint, draw, build things, play with clay—everything.”

His brother, moving with apparent pleasure, shook his torso. I thought torso, handsome head and face, stumps…This will be difficult.

“Oh, my brother can’t really tell you what he wants. He doesn’t speak like us, but I always know what he means. He wants to do all of those things, everything, with me,” said Teddy.

“Then we should get started,” I exclaimed, not knowing what my next move would be.

“Go along with Ms. Sheila, boys, and look at the rest of the studio,” smiled Bess, as she reached into her bag for her knitting.

Two more rooms and a bathroom extended from the waiting room with no bumps or steps. Teddy pushed chubby Timmy over, like a walrus on dry land. The boy rolled his body over and over, and over again, until he was in the main studio. After I’d propped his body up with support for his back, I began to show these little guys the materials they could use. And I wondered how I would manage this.

“Do ya’ have a big ball for my brother?” asked Teddy.


Elated, Timmy lunged over to the ball, laughing joyfully. “Okay, Ms. Sheila,” said Teddy, “now we can get started. My brother will help with all my decisions.” Drawing a colorful picture of his family, Teddy put his puppy, named Snooks, next to Timmy and himself, with Mom and Dad on either side. Musical notes were scattered around Timmy’s head. As we were talked about the drawing, Teddy explained...
that the notes were because Timmy “is happy and he sings a lot,” although you can’t exactly “get” the words. “Our mom plays lots of music for us and he understands all the songs, so we call him The Music Man. Sometimes we roll him on his ball, sing and play, doing lots of silly stuff.”

To me, these were two, well-adjusted happy children, so I left them on the padded carpet with the Slinkies, balls, soft toys for Timmy to roll on, clay for Teddy and told them to have fun while Mom and I talked. Their giggles made me wonder why art therapy was necessary.

“Bess, tell me about your family. These boys play beautifully together. I’m not picking up anger, resentment, or unhappiness. There’s nothing that seems to need my art therapy skills. Playing together comes naturally to them,” I said.

Sighing deeply, Bess described her son’s rare condition, saying, “Timmy will die within the next two years. This is a certainty. It would be helpful for the twins to form a relationship with a professional who knows them both well, so that we can help Teddy with his grief as Timmy declines…My husband and I are planning for the inevitable.”

After discussing this situation, we decided to have the guys come once a week.

For a year-and-a-half, the twins did come once a week. I fell in love with both boys. On the floor, holding yellow haired Timmy against my body so that he could sit up, I read to him and we all sang songs together while Teddy painted or constructed buildings for Timmy. Soothing Timmy as he started to choke with increasing spasticity became a part of my job. I asked Teddy how it made him feel when his brother was having a hard time.

“Mom says my heart’s right here,” pointing to his chest, “so sometimes I rub right there, because something inside feels funny,” explained Teddy.

Our weekly sessions ran for one more month. Bess came to the door one day while her twins were in the van. “We’re moving,” she said tearfully. “My husband’s company gave him two weeks’ notice. His territory will be North Carolina. I don’t want to take the twins away from all their doctors, familiar places and friends, especially during Timmy’s last months, but there’s no other choice. We’re a family and must stick together.” Drying her eyes, she said, “I’ll get the boys and bring them in.”

My eyes were full and shiny. My heart sagged with the sorrow of loss on all sides. Teddy and Timmy understood about the move and we used the last three sessions for closure.

“I’ll write to you Ms. Sheila, from that place called North Carolina,” Teddy said, holding out a package wrapped with the Sunday comics and a big blue bow. “Here, this is for you. My teacher at school is having a baby next month and we gave her a present that we made here. So, this one’s for you, because you’re a teacher too and you’ll probably have a baby when we’re not here anymore. We wouldn’t want to miss giving you a present.”

All four of us embraced and cried, tears dripping onto our clothing.

As I waved the family on, the big, red van drove away—to what? Who knows? I still wonder. I’ve never heard from them again.

War Revisited:
The Korean War Memorial

by Barbara Orbock

In shadowed light of early dawn
They stand in groups and gaze upon
Faces etched into the wall

In voices low they talk of yore
Of fighting a forgotten war
Of comrades lost and history’s gall
Behind them a platoon of stone
With blank eyes just like their own
Trudges up some unknown hill

Again they feel familiar pain
And wonder at the worth of gain
And who will be the next they’ll kill

War came and robbed them of their youth
But from it they discerned a truth
That armchair generals fail to see

War’s a little people’s story
It’s full of fear and short on glory
And freedom’s never free

You probably read her Sun papers theater critiques under the byline J. Wynn Rousuck. She was the Sun’s drama critic for 23 years and currently serves in that same role at WYPR radio. Nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for her Sun paper series on *Hairspray*, Judy Rousuck has won numerous prizes for her film and theater criticism and now shares her insights and expertise at Osher.

As those who took her recent Osher course know, Judy loves Sondheim: so much so, that her wedding to a fellow Sondheim enthusiast featured Sondheim’s music. What class members may not know is that she is a native of Cincinnati, an honors graduate of Wellesley College, and her daily companion is a Jack Russell terrier. Judy grew up with dogs. Her father was a dog show judge.
In addition to teaching at Osher and Odyssey, Judy works with inner-city elementary school children and will soon teach a high school course on West Side Story. Her WYPR reviews are heard on “Maryland Morning with Sheilah Kast,” which airs 9–10 a.m., Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays on 88.1 FM.

**Holiday Dance**

*by Martha McCoy*

Finally the waiting is over! The young men and women who attend the Day Care Center for Developmentally and Physically Handicapped Adults eagerly anticipate the most important social event of the year—the Holiday Dance. It is the only social event of the year and features a live band and free refreshments.

Running down the steps, my husband puts on his coat and shouts, “Let’s get going!” He has other things he would much rather be doing than driving our twenty-one-year-old son to a dance. Sam, on the other hand, loves music and is looking forward to dancing to a real band.

As they enter the cement block building, a slightly out-of-tune teenage band is playing. Members of the band are high-school students who live in the neighborhood and welcome an opportunity to practice their music while earning the modest fee of $100. Sam’s father hurries in the direction of the music, while Sam plods along behind, shyly waving to a few of his friends.

The school’s multipurpose room is no longer the colorless activity center where many of these young adults spend most of their day. Everyone has been working for several weeks, making the large red poinsettias, white stars, and brightly colored crepe paper swags that now decorate the room, transforming it into a welcoming place for a party.

Chaperones greet the anxious guests and make sure that everyone has a place to sit and a friend with whom to talk. The smells of hair spray, mousse, and musk permeate the air. Each girl is wearing a special dress for the evening. Many have added their own decorations made out of classroom art supplies: ribbon remnants, plastic flowers, and holly leaves from the tree in front of the building. The young men look serious in their sport coats and sweaters—one, the envy of all, is wearing a light blue tuxedo jacket.

Special attention to appearance helps minimize many of the health difficulties. One of the guests, unable to stop drooling, wears a color-coordinated bib over his clean white shirt and carries a real handkerchief instead of the usual Kleenex. Another rides in a wheelchair decorated with red and green streamers. Sunglasses conceal a damaged eye, and hats cover early hair loss and misshapen heads. Missing limbs are appropriately clothed in spite of their absence. Each person has some distinguishing problem, and each problem has been provided a compensating “fix.”

Inconspicuously placed in a far corner of the room is a card table covered with evergreen wrapping paper—the nurses’ station. Emergency medical needs are assembled there. Orange juice and instant glucagon for diabetics who dance too strenuously, adrenalin for asthma attacks, and various prescriptions in small vials for those whose medications are scheduled to be taken during dance hours. Perched jauntily in a red basket are bandages, antiseptic solution, and cotton balls. An extra chair with a big red bow is placed against the wall for anyone needing a break from the action. And, extending the festive feeling to this serious, out-of-the-way area, the nurse sports a lighted Christmas tree pin on her jacket and a sprig of mistletoe on her cap.

Soon the dancing begins. Although a few of these young adults still live with their parents, most live in an institutional setting and treasure these moments of close contact. Many ache for a caring touch. For them,
this type of human connection is either a distant memory or never has existed at all.

After making sure that Sam is seated at a table with friends, my husband turns to leave. As he heads for the door, one of the guests hesitantly invites him to dance. Surprised, he looks around for an escape. Realizing that there is none, he gallantly presents his arm and proceeds onto the dance floor. His six-foot frame, clothed in a dark suit, necktie, and white shirt, presents a dramatic contrast to his partner. The young girl dancing with him is no more than five feet tall and considerably overweight. But, as they twirl around the floor, she radiates an inner, youthful beauty in her hand-me-down flowered dress, hiking boots, and paper hair bow decorated with glitter.

The other young men and women enviously watch their glowing friend as she dances with Sam's father. Soon, they begin to form a line. Each in turn, eager for the warmth of a loved one, cuts in on the swirling couple for a spin around the room with the tall impressive man.

Later in the evening, Sam and his weary father dance together, slowly circling the floor to the strains of the final song. The other dancers, who earlier had borrowed the warm circle of his arms for a brief moment, choose a new partner or wistfully look on, wishing that their holiday dance would last forever.

Serendipity

by Barbara Orbock

I am not particularly sentimental and my husband is definitely not a romantic. Over fifty-three years we have had our moments—shared adventures, favorite places and special times that evoke in us memories that touch the heartstrings. Yet many of our endeavors and travels have been undertaken without the other's presence. That's why what happened in May of 1993 remains such a riddle.

Dave spent a month as an exchange artist in the state of Maryland's sister province, Anhui, China. When his exhibits and lectures were over, he traveled to other parts of the country with a Chinese friend from NASA. During this time I heard from him only once, because in 1993 phone service was erratic, and he was often in places where it was totally nonexistent. His accommodations were not the usual tourist hotels, but the homes of villagers or inns for traveling Chinese. There was little chance of finding a telephone in places where his bath was heated with boiling water brought to his room in thermos bottles.

At this time I was teaching and could not accompany him. My job, as well as competitive tennis matches, and an occasional visiting grandson filled my days. It was only at night, when half the bed was empty, that missing Dave became acute.

Then, one day very near the end of his journey, while I was driving to work, I tuned the car radio to a classical music station. A solo violin mesmerized me. The piece was so lovely that tears filled my eyes and fell onto my lap. When the music ended, the announcer said the name of the piece, Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto, and that it could be purchased at An Die Musik.

I tried to purchase it the next day, but was told the store was sold out. They had received only three copies and expected more in two weeks.

Two days later Dave came home, full of tales, film to be developed, and lovely souvenirs. The last thing he pulled out of his suitcase was a small flat object in a brown paper bag. It was a CD—the Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto. He had heard it as he passed a music store in Guangzhou. He went inside to hear it more clearly and had suddenly missed me. When we compared notes and calculated the time difference, we were astonished to learn that we had heard the music on the same day at almost the same time.

How to explain this occurrence? My "scientist" husband chalks it up to the laws of probability, though he does admit the odds are miniscule. I know better. On that day, the gods looked on us with favor and sent a message of love. No cupid's bow was needed, just a beautiful violin concerto sent across the universe.
Equinox

by Lewis Schneider

Earth spins diurnally upon itself, stately orbit around the sun, not quite a perfect circle. Nature abhors perfect circles. I wrote a poem about that once.

Now at the quadrature the Equinox of Autumn, not seen the signs of fall, the climate stays warm, leaves stay late on the trees, the golf course remains open. Palm trees and tropical ferns grow in my garden.

I swirl with the world, only slightly vertiginous my body’s seasons passing in slower rhythm than the celestial.

Now it is winter and notwithstanding the ambient tropicality I am cold. My bones ache. I wear sweaters, turn up thermostats, drink hot tea and at night shiver under the covers.

Outside my window the day is bright. Butterflies and exotic birds flutter over the garden. I wait for snow falling in gray light and bare branches coated with rime.

If You Knew Susie...

by Leight Johnson

...like I know Susie, Oh, Oh, Oh What a Gal

Susie Robinson is the lady who works at Osher’s Columbia office on Mondays to help with the extra load brought on by Monday classes there. On the other weekdays she works at Osher’s Montgomery County office.

An English major at Wells College in upstate New York, her working experience has been as editor of company (American Chemical Society) publications and as a freelance editor for various employers. She claims to enjoy her current job with Osher and seems to have the patience necessary to deal with its myriad demands.

Her outside interests include gardening, reading, hiking, biking, sailing, and cross country skiing (an intimidating list to an elderly Journal editor).

While still single, she shared an apartment with two other women in a building that harbored bats in the attic. Bats occasionally flew into their apartment, generating a flurry of excitement and calls for help from the young men in another apartment. One day the responder was Hugo Robinson, whose success as a bat exorcist led to romance. So Miss Partridge became Mrs. Robinson (not the one in the movie or song).

We welcome her to the Osher community.

Growing Up

by Ursula Krafchick

I had been in England for nine months when the war started on September 1, 1939. I still remember
walking along the beach, thinking that just over the other side of the sea my parents were now out of my reach. I was eleven and was living with a Jewish family in Withernsea, a little seaside town outside Hull, Yorkshire. Weekly letters from my parents were my lifeline. Then they became intermittent. They needed to be forwarded to me by my sister in Baltimore, who could receive letters until America entered the war. Early in 1942 the letters ceased to come.

In the summer of 1941 I left my foster family to live at a Hostel for Refugee Girls in Harrogate, Yorkshire, a lovely little spa town. We girls went to St. Peter’s School for Girls. Each day we had to bring our gas masks to school. At the hostel we were taught how to extinguish incendiary bombs. Crawling on our bellies we had to aim a hose at a smoldering object masquerading as a bomb. We also had to crowd into an Anderson Shelter when there were air raid drills. The shelter was partially underground and our gas masks always fogged up, making us very uncomfortable. It was dark and only when we heard the “all clear” could we take off the gas masks and go back into the house.

I only experienced one real air raid. I think it was 1943. Bombs were dropped on Manchester around Christmas. I was visiting a friend whom I had known in Bremen, my home town. Everyone went to the shelter, but I stayed in bed, perhaps out of bravado or because I did not care whether the bomb hit me.

I started working for the Women’s Land Army office in Harrogate, and when the hostel closed I was fifteen and lived with Kitty, one of the other hostel girls who had a job painting little gift objects in a souvenir shop. We had to deal with ration books—each book allotted ¼ pound of meat a week; we had no idea how to cook. When the grocer told me that the child could have an extra pint of milk, I looked around for the child, suddenly realizing that “the child” he was talking about was me. I was entitled to the extra milk ration!—as I was not yet sixteen.

As soon as I was sixteen, I had to register as an Enemy Alien, and whenever I moved to a new address I had to register with the police. I came to England as a child and grew up in England forever grateful. England had opened its doors to 10,000 Jewish children after Kristallnacht when other, wealthier countries did nothing.

Reflections On Ole-Time Washington

by Julius Rosen

My first impressions of Washington, D.C. began to take shape around 1919 or 1920 when I was about four or five years old. Washington was a decent-sized city when I was a boy, though looking back, it seems like it was a quiet, sleepy little town. Horse-drawn wagons delivered blocks of ice for your ice-box; bakery and milk trucks brought loaves of bread and bottles of milk to your door; and scissors-grinders drove around town sharpening kitchen knives and scissors.

Trolley car at the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue & F Street, looking toward the Treasury Building, Washington, D.C., circa 1920

Our town was designed in 1792 by the French-born Pierre L’Enfant, who laid out the capitol city in a master grid: numbered streets running north–south and alphabetical streets, east–west, crisscrossed by diagonal avenues and boulevards. To make things “simpler,” he divided Washington into four quadrants: NW, NE, SW, and SE, totaling 100 square miles—each a 10 x 10-mile square. Virginia, of course, later reclaimed its 30, leaving Washington with today’s 70 square miles.

The city was extremely congested when I was growing up, with most of the population concentrated in
today’s downtown area. The majority of white families lived in downtown NW; some lived in SE. The affluent whites lived out 16th Street and in Georgetown. The colored families, as they were then called, lived mostly in NE, though a pretty large enclave lived around 9th and U streets, NW. But, without a doubt, the poorest part of town was SW where I lived—on ½ Street!

When I first began to explore my neighborhood, the first major street I became aware of was 4 ½ Street SW—where the famous Al Jolson family lived. (No, I never met him, never saw him, but it’s likely that one or more of my four older siblings, all brothers, did.)

Transportation in those days was primarily walkin’, walkin’, walkin’. There were some automobiles and lots of streetcars. Trolleys ran all over town—up and down 7th Street, and 9th Street, and 14th Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and NW, NE, SE, even some parts of SW, but mostly all through and around NW. Of all those streetcar routes none could beat the open-air trolley. Brave trolley car riders stood on the running board, holding tight to railings (like San Francisco’s trolley riders), brushing against bushes and tree branches as they passed through beautiful tree-filled green pastures and farms. This was, by far, Washington’s most popular trolley ride—especially during the steamy summers, long before the days of air-conditioning. The trolley ran some 10 miles from downtown Washington, clickety-clacking to its final stop at the outskirts of a town called Glen Echo, Maryland.

Glen Echo housed a large amusement park: merry-go-rounds, electric bumper car rinks, roller coaster, Ferris wheel, and “whip;” swimming pools, hot dogs, and real dogs; mirrors that made you skinny and mirrors that made you fat; and many other attractions, including bands and a dance pavilion. It was Washington’s very own “Disney World.”

Nearly everyone got to Glen Echo by open-air trolley. While most streetcar fares were probably a nickel or dime, the Glen Echo ride cost more—maybe 10 or 15 cents. It was worth it.

Only the more affluent made the trip to Glen Echo by automobile. The speed limit then was 15 mph. But the high-speed roads beckoned some to zip along at the hair-raising speed of 18 mph! Those were the days!

As exciting as Glen Echo was, there were other fascinating sites—or sights—around town. If you walked 7th Street between F and G, you might be startled to see a huge polar bear standing on its hind legs. The bear stood right in the middle of the sidewalk in front of Zlotnick’s, the furrier. Kids never looked so small as when they sidled up to that polar bear. And, in all the years it stood there, I never heard of a single case of vandalism.

Less than a half block from the bear was a four-sided square clock perched on top of a 25-foot pole. You couldn’t miss seeing it. The clock, like the bear, stood in the middle of the sidewalk in front of a retail store. Chas. Schwartz and Son’s Jewelry Store sold watches and clocks as well as jewelry. Their huge sidewalk clock kept perfect time.

Kann’s Department Store, 7th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, Lansburgh’s, a block away, between D and E, and the Hecht Company, 7th and F, were other 7th Street landmarks. Kann’s was the store with the best prices.

Washington’s two upscale department stores were Woodward and Lothrop, located on G Street, between 11th and 12th, and Garfinckel’s, located at 14th and F or G streets. Woodward and Lothrop boasted Washington’s most delightful tea room and had spectacular Christmas window decorations. Three or four decades ago, when Woody’s closed, their building almost became Washington’s opera house, today located at the Kennedy Center.

And talking about downtown Washington, if you ever yearned to see your friends, all you had to do was stand on the corner of 13th and F. Within five minutes you’d see three of your best friends!

There are stories by the bushel that I can tell about ole-time Washington. Like the time the wharf in SW caught fire and burned for days, lighting up the nighttime skies with an eerie yellow-orange-red glow as firefighters from Washington, D.C., and Virginia and Maryland tried desperately to put it out. There was the time the Center Market, which ran for blocks down
the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue, was torn down to make room for an avenue of new federal buildings, causing rats to scatter all over town. And the time Goose Goslin of the Washington Senators baseball team hit a triple-bagger and—after taunting the pitcher with a dozen false starts—suddenly streaked for home plate with great daring and speed—safe! Goose Goslin had stolen home base! And then there was the football team that bade Boston farewell and came to town around 1937 or 1939 as the Washington Redskins: in their first year (I think), the triple-threat sensation from Texas, long lean Slingin’ Sammy Baugh, led the Skins to the world championship!

I remember, too, Washington’s great art deco theaters and nighttime concerts outdoors along the Potomac at the Watergate. I remember Harry Belafonte at the Carter Barron Amphitheatre. And, of course, the world-renowned contralto Marian Anderson, who sang her magnificent renditions on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1939 after she was denied access to the DAR Constitution Hall and Eleanor Roosevelt rescued her performance. Another memory is the time the Potomac River and tidal basin overflowed their banks and flooded downtown Washington all the way to Pennsylvania Avenue.

There are many more stories of ole-time Washington that I can tell, yet others that I can’t tell you much about—like Washington, D.C., during World War I. I was only three years old in 1918. I can report that Washington, D.C., on March 30, 1915 was a cold day—I’ve been told. A few years later, Washington, like cities and towns all over the world, suffered huge casualties from the worldwide Spanish influenza pandemic that killed millions of people.

Fortunately, most of my memories of growing up in Washington, D.C., are happy ones.

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**HUMOR COLUMN**

**On the Leight Side**

**Comparative Religions Class—Fall 2012**

This coming fall, Osher will offer a special course comparing religions of the world. The Dalai Lama will be the instructor for the course, which will run throughout the fall and following spring semester for a total of 24 weeks. Classes will be held in Baltimore on Tuesdays and Thursdays, mornings and afternoons.

Although the Dalai Lama’s native language is Tibetan, his lectures will be in English—for the most part. Religions to be studied include Buddhism, Baha’i, Christianity, Christian Science, Confucianism, Falun Gong, Greek Orthodox, Hare Krishna, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Mormonism, Rastafari, Roman Catholicism, Scientology, Shinto, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism.

Those completing the course who wish to earn a PhD in religious studies may submit their requests for a thesis committee to Wafa Sturdivant or Susan Howard.

Course enrollment is limited to the first 200 students who sign up.
The Osher at JHU Journal, the newsletter of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Johns Hopkins University, is published under the auspices of the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences two times per academic year.

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