

Color and Commentary

Agenda for the future



World Focus

Frank Shatz

Iean Baptiste Alphonse Kerr, the legendary editor of the French newspaper Le Figaro, is credited with saying, "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

Most of the problems in the world the Obama administration is going to face are longstanding. The tension between India and Pakistan goes back to a 1947 partition of the subcontinent that made refugees out of more than 15 million Muslims and Hindus and cost the lives of more than half a million people.

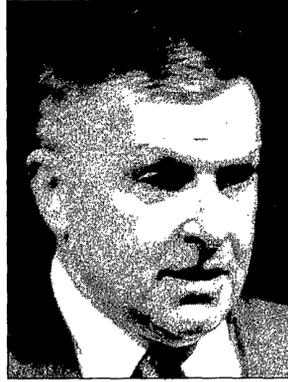
Finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which dates back to 1948 when the state of Israel was established, is another problem that calls for the attention of the new president.

"You will see a lot of the world's leaders rushing to Obama's doorsteps to seek U.S. engagement and involvement and a change in policy," said retired Marine Gen. Anthony Zinni in an interview. "It would be very easy to be overwhelmed by all this. Obama must be very careful where he makes commitments."

Zinni, who lives in Ford's Colony, is the former chief of U.S. Central Command, a position now held by Gen. David Petraeus. Zinni was a special envoy for President Bush to the Middle East. He was among the first retired, high-ranking military officers who warned the Bush administration about the pitfalls of the war in Iraq. In response to my questions, he outlined some of the pitfalls that the Obama administration may face.

He figures the first order of business for Obama should be rebuilding relationships around the world and taking a hard look at where we are committed, as in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"There would be clamoring for us to be involved in places like Darfur, and other conflicts," he said. "I think that



Gen. Anthony Zinni

for Obama—the first and biggest test would be not just how he handles the Pakistani-India conflict, but the whole mess there. It is complex, with so many components. NATO is involved; you have to deal with the tribal issues and enemies, like al Qaeda and the Taliban. I think it is where his attention should be focused, in the beginning."

Zinni, as the chief of Central Command, was responsible for the whole Middle East region. He kept Saddam Hussein in a "box" for years. I asked if he would accept an assignment from the Obama administration to be a special envoy to the region.

"I am certainly not lobbying for the job," Zinni said with a laugh. "I am used to government service, and if the president asks me, I will probably say yes."

In his view, there is a need for new ideas and a new approach to solving the Israeli-Palestinian, and the India-Pakistan-Afghanistan problem.

"I don't think that assigning an envoy is the right way to go. Instead, a larger group should be created that would be permanently based over there in the region to tackle economic, political and security issues all at the same time. The trouble with the envoys is that they come and go; they

negotiate an agreement, then some action by extremists blows it apart." He added, "It is easy to get an agreement in principle. The hard part is to implement it. It has to be done on a full-time basis with a very professional group of people. You have to invest your time and resources in the right areas, in places that are the most important in regard to our national security interest."

The fact that his former comrade-in-arms, Gen. James Jones, was selected as national security adviser gives him added confidence in the Obama administration.

"He is a great guy," Zinni said of Jones. "I had known him for 30 years. He is very intelligent, knows Washington well. He has the right temperament for the job. I think that he would be a national security adviser much like Gen. Brent Scowcroft was to President George H. W. Bush. He is one who will be able to gain consensus and run a very efficient organization."

Zinni believes that the first order of business should be "to define this problem, how bad it is, how serious it is going to be, how long it will take to get us out of this."

In spite of all the discouraging signs, he remains an optimist. "I think we can manage to get out of this. But it's going to take, my guess is, at least two years. The government must take some serious actions. We have to focus on things that are most damaging to our society, like unemployment and people losing their homes. We can't just worry about the business, we have to worry also about the welfare of people on Main Street."

He added: "It won't be easy. But I have confidence in the people whom Obama selected for his administration."

Frank Shatz lives in Williamsburg, Va. and Lake Placid. His column was reprinted with permission from The Virginia Gazette.

Let the holiday wash over you



Martha Sez

Martha Allen

By the time this paper hits the streets, there won't be much more you can do about Christmas. You'll just have to relax and let the holiday wash over you.

There is always so much to do for many of us at this time of year. Some things are bound to be forgotten or go by the wayside for other reasons.

One woman I know was ready to get into her car and head out to visit her mother for Christmas. The only task she was unable to accomplish was to dump her compost.

Normally this wouldn't have been a problem, she said, but today the snow in her backyard was hip deep, and besides, it was pitch dark out there. She didn't feel like facing it, so she packaged up the compost and put it in her refrigerator. I just know she will wonder, "Now, what's this?" when she comes home after the holidays, and will probably be surprised for a moment when she opens the container.

People are already discovering items that they forgot to include in the Christmas packages they mailed out. This will continue for months, as closets are cleaned and drawers ransacked for missing socks. Sometimes gifts are too well hidden.

Finding the perfect gift and knowing it is a mystical, serendipitous experience. Like other mystical, serendipitous experiences, it is rare.

"It's the thought that counts," people say, almost invariably in a negative context, as follows:

"Oh well, it's the thought that counts," she said, tossing the sweater into a large fruit basket from which most of the offerings had been removed, leaving only a few squashed kumquats, a miniature foil-wrapped fruit cake, and now, the sweater.

Why do we give gifts at Christmastime, anyway? The Wise Men brought gifts to the baby Jesus.

According to legend, St. Nicholas gave gifts to the poor, never wanting or expecting anything in return.

Today, in America, we are supposed to buy Christmas presents in order to keep the economy going, or in hopes of rescuing it. Experts tell us to save, but then other experts caution that if we save too much without spending, the economy will never recover. It's too late to

stop spending now! If everybody just said, "Oh, well, it's the thought that counts," and exchanged only gifts like home-grown herbal tea and gingerbread boys, the world market would collapse. If it hasn't already. But let's not even think about that until next year.

At a meditative Christmas concert, another woman I know said that she intended to knit, but the room was so quiet the click of her knitting needles constituted a disturbance. There was nothing for it but to give in and relax. It sounded to me like a mystical, serendipitous experience — like finding the perfect gift.

"I wasn't really sleeping," she says. "I was meditating."

There's an expression about giving that I've been thinking about lately.

Give a man a fish, he'll eat for a day. Give a man a fish hook, he'll eat until he loses the hook, which for me doesn't take too long. But, why not give both, I wonder?

There's something to be said for eating for a day, especially if it's today. Oh, go ahead, give him the fish — and remember St. Nicholas. Throw in a lemon, too.

I know two very busy, bustling business women who wrapped a big CLOSED sign around their store right after Thanksgiving and hit the road.

"On Christmas, we'll be walking along a beach," one of them told me.

"Well, I hope it's a beach in some warm climate," I said, imaging Lake Superior, a great, but extremely cold lake, even at the best of times, or Lake Champlain, a pretty good lake that is plenty cold enough this time of year.

"Yes, it will be warm in South Carolina," she assured me. I think they're smart.

Deep meditative relaxation is probably what those of us who stayed in town need right now, and with any luck at all we'll get it soon. No more finishing touches will be possible. No more cookies to bake and decorate. No more cards to write and send. No more shopping. If the tree isn't up, it won't be up. If the packages aren't mailed, they won't go out, at least not today. All across America, people will be collapsing into chairs and having, I hope, a very merry and relaxing Christmas.

And have a good week.

The History of the Skating Club of Lake Placid 'for dummies' Part 3



Growing up in Lake Placid

Barbara Tyrell Kelly

The "glory years" of figure skating in Lake Placid occurred during the early 1940s under H.L. "Jack" Garren's administration, when the best skaters in the U.S. and Canada came to town in the summer to train under the best professionals in the world. There was plenty of opportunity for skaters of all ages to perform in ice shows comparable to the professional shows that toured the country and made movies in Hollywood.

Not only were there two big shows each summer, but there were two full weeks of social ice dancing followed by a ranking ice dance competition, which attracted the adult ice dancers from clubs all over the country and Canada. In the summer, the local kids were not forgotten and many of them, including myself, were able to be on the ice with skaters such as Dick Button, Eileen Seigh and Bill Grimditch. We were also able to skate in the group numbers in the two summer shows, one in July and the other over Labor Day weekend. Most of us club skaters could not afford lessons from the summer pros, but we did a fair amount of learning by hanging out near the bull pen on the side of the 1932 rink where, among others, Gus Lussi, Howard Nicholson and Walter Arian taught lessons. I learned to spin by watching Gus teach our national competitors. I also attended evening social ice dance classes and found myself a partner who was then at my level, John Ladue from Plattsburgh.

When the Garren family left Lake Placid in 1949 for Troy, bobsledder Stanley Benham became the arena manager. In the 1950s, one of our club senior ladies was Phyllis Krinovitz,



Barbara Colby

(Feinberg) of Saranac Lake, who was club Senior Ladies Champion in 1952. Another headliner during this period was Aldrina Lebel, who not only did figure skating but was a speed skater and, along with her brothers Leo and Kenny, was a champion barrel jumper. Almost all ice shows during the early years featured comedy routines. Ted Cave was a nationally recognized comedian on ice, who moved to Lake Placid in the 1940s and never left town. Before coming to Lake Placid, Ted was a popular entertainer in professional ice shows. For more than 20 years he performed for the Skating Club of Lake Placid and supported his family here by running his own disposal service.

Barbara Burgoyne Colby was the club professional during the 1960s and she choreographed all the club shows during that period. As a young woman, she came to Lake Placid to train in the 1950s and stayed on to marry one of our popular local athletes, William

(Bill) Colby. Today she still skates and teaches for the Skating Club of Lake Placid.

Jack and Joan Devitt were the teaching professionals for the Skating Club from November 1969 until March 1984. They coached a local pair, Leeanne and Jeff Labrake to National competition, once at the junior level, winning a bronze and the following year to senior level. The Devitts coached other locals who placed in pairs, dance and freestyle in North Atlantic and Eastern Sectionals. Jack and Joan also coached non-locals from Canada and the U.S. to gold medals in figures and free style, and to national and international competition. During the Devitts 15-year tenure with the club, they choreographed and produced 14 shows and skating portions of the opening ceremonies of the first Skate America. The Devitts continue to teach privately and for the club.

In 1981, the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) and the town of North Elba (that owns the Olympic Center building) signed a contract with the Skating Club of Lake Placid. The contract stipulated that in return for ORDA providing ice for the Skating Club of Lake Placid sessions, the club would provide volunteers for all the competitions and test sessions, and also skaters for corporate shows. The town of North Elba agreed to contribute to ORDA a sum of money each year to support the programs at the Olympic Center for our local children, such as those run by the Skating Club of Lake Placid and the Pee Wee Hockey Association.

The years following the 1980 Olympics brought many changes.

Ned Harkness, who was a hockey and lacrosse coach, became the new administrator of the Olympic Center for ORDA. As he was more inclined toward hockey, it seems to me that the figure skating program suffered as a result. It will take me another column to bring the Skating Club history from 1980 to 2009.



Jack and Joan Devitt, Skating Club of Lake Placid professionals, 1969-84

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