

Saints & Martyrs

A while back, I took Hank Aaron to task for hanging on to hate mail from 1974, when he was closing in on Babe Ruth's career homerun record of 714. To this day, he admits to storing the stuff in his attic so he would never forget. He also said that white people are no different today than they were then, except that instead of hoods, they now wear shirts and ties.

Aside from the fact that I sent him a congratulatory letter in 1974 to which he didn't respond, I thought it was not only a pathetic and racist thing for him to say, but one showing a tremendous lack of gratitude. After all, this is a guy who got to make a great deal of money playing baseball for over 20 years and then got a good-paying front office job with the Atlanta Braves, and none of those checks were signed by a black man. They were also not signed by a white man, for that matter, at least not one wearing a hood.

But something I neglected to mention is that 13 years earlier, another man was closing in on Babe Ruth's other cherished record, the one for most home runs in a single season. His name was Roger Maris. He was a white guy who was a first-rate outfielder for the New York Yankees, but had never hit more than 39 home runs in a single season. But 1961 was magical, and he would ultimately hit his 61st homer on the last day of the season. But in the meantime, he received a ton of hate mail, some of it involving threats on his life and the lives of his wife and children.

It seems that a lot of people didn't want to see Babe Ruth's 34-year-old record broken, but if it was to be broken, they wanted to see Maris's Yankee teammate Mickey Mantle break it. In a way, it was rather ironic because Maris was a decent, straight arrow, married guy, whom fathers could have held up as a role model to their sons, whereas Mantle was a notorious boozier and womanizer, who had kicked off all traces of his

Oklahoma upbringing once he became the toast of New York.

But Maris wasn't a black guy, so we didn't have to spend 40 years listening to him bitch about having his feelings hurt. What's more, in 1961, Baseball Commissioner Ford Frick announced that unless Maris broke Ruth's record within the first 154 games of the season (the season having just been extended to 162 games), it would go into the books with an asterisk attached.

But 13 years later, nobody said that Aaron's career record would be tainted because he hadn't broken Ruth's career record within his first 8,399 at-bats, as Ruth had done. So even though it took Aaron 3,865 additional at-bats to hit just 41 more home runs, nobody – least of all “Hammerin’ Hank” – ever mentioned it.

But he's not alone. You notice that a great many blacks are constantly letting you know how offended they are by the Confederate flag, but you never see them honoring or erecting statues to the hundreds of thousands of northern soldiers who fought and died in the Civil War.

Sadly, it seems that grievance alone is a part of their DNA, never gratitude.

Apparently, Benjamin Franklin, were he still alive, would not be a liberal. As I was recently reminded, Franklin once said, “I am for doing good for the poor, but I think the best way is by not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it. In my youth, I traveled much, and I observed in different countries that the more public provisions were provided for the poor, the less they provided for themselves, and of course became poorer. And, on the contrary, the less was done for them, the more they did for themselves, and became richer.”

Even now, that seems so obvious, but Franklin lived at a time when politicians didn't require the votes of poor people to

remain entrenched. One would think that after a while, adults would be ashamed to be dependent on political hacks who see their role as that of a perverted Santa Claus, depositing other people's hard-earned money in the Christmas stockings of able-bodied brats.

While politicians dither over what should be done to dissuade Putin from his imperialistic designs on Eastern Europe, someone sent me a seven point plan that would stop him in his tracks: (1) Force Russia to ban the use of coal. (2) Mandate that Russia dismantle its health system in favor of PutinCare. (3) Don't allow any oil drilling on Russia's public land. (4) Have the EPA take control of Russian businesses. (5) Curtail the Russian work week to 30 hours. (6) Raise the Russian minimum wage. (7) Demand that the Russian government provide welfare benefits for unqualified citizens and illegal immigrants.

I say it's worth a try. Obama's agenda has certainly managed to turn America into a second-class power closing in on third world status.

Finally, as you probably noticed, Pope Francis oversaw two canonization ceremonies in one day. He did so by simply ignoring the previous two miracles yardstick. To me, it suggests that standards have gone out the window and that sainthood is no longer what it used to be.

Some have suggested that Francis intended to help unify two segments of the Church, but when I saw the turnout in St. Peter's Square, I thought it might just be a papal bone tossed to Roman restaurants, ice cream parlors and souvenir shops.

But, whatever the case, it means I am no longer setting my sights on sainthood, instead focusing on receiving a knighthood. Sir Burt has an even nicer ring to it than Saint Burt, which definitely carries with it the off-putting aura of hungry lions and burning stakes.

**Burt's Webcast is every Wednesday at Noon Pacific Time.
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