

# Gold Medals, Fried Chicken & Antiques

Now that the Winter Olympics are over for another four years, let me say, at the risk of being regarded as a party pooper, that I think the Games are one of the worst ideas anyone has ever come up with.

As far back as 1948 and 1952, I knew that when people praised them as a way to bring nations together in peaceful competition, with the emphasis on the individual athletes, I knew I was listening to high-sounding hooey. I knew that because every day, the newspapers would let us know how many medals the U.S., the Soviet Union and East Germany, had won. And if it happened that the Commies were winning more gold medals than we were, we'd make a big deal about the larger number of silver and bronze medals we were taking home.

Future Olympics were no better. In Mexico City, we had arrogant, angry black American sprinters, raising their black gloved hands, displaying their contempt for the nation that had enabled them to have their moment of glory.

Then there were the games in Munich, which saw Arabs massacring the Israeli athletes. Other Games merely saw cities such as Montreal bankrupt itself in order to blow money it didn't have trying to impress the world.

When it comes to corruption, it would be hard to beat the Olympic Committee, whose members are as open to bribes as the various governors of Illinois and the members of the California Coastal Commission. And as if that's not bad enough, time and again, Olympic judges have shown they are quite willing to award medals based on politics rather than performance. But, then, you're always asking for trouble when victory isn't determined with a yardstick or a stopwatch, but

by a bunch of clucks holding up cards with numbers written on them.

By this time, we all know that, among its many sins, one of the more notable ones connected with ObamaCare is that it provides a disincentive to work. The worst part of it is that it's actually members of the workforce who will suffer. If those being laid off were politicians and federal bureaucrats, even I would have something good to say for Obama's signature piece of abominable legislation.

Speaking of politicians, I can understand why those who rely on their party leaders for committee chairmanships and campaign contributions might be reluctant to display the slightest bit of independence. But when these schmucks finally get around to announcing their retirement, wouldn't you think that for once in their pathetic lives, they would have the courage to wander off the reservation?

Wouldn't you expect, for instance, Henry Waxman to say what he really thinks of Obama's constantly siding with the Palestinians who despise us and negotiating with the Iranians, who want us dead, while showing nothing but contempt for our allies in Israel? But I guess 40 years of party fealty, otherwise known as gutlessness, is a mighty tough habit to break.

Being a regular reader of mysteries, I am at a loss when it comes to their being adapted to the screen. At least in the old days, the studios tried to stick pretty close to the original. If you read "The Thin Man," you would have recognized William Powell as Nick Charles. If you were familiar with Sherlock Holmes, you'd have thought Basil Rathbone had stepped out of Arthur Conan Doyle's pages. Although a great many actors have portrayed Philip Marlowe, including Humphrey Bogart, Robert Mitchum, Dick Powell, Robert Montgomery and James Garner, only Elliott Gould struck a really false note.

With a little makeup and a so-so Belgian accent, even Albert Finney made an adequate Hercule Poirot in "Murder on the Orient Express."

But these days, the studios have gone nuts. Jeffery Deaver has written a series of books about a paraplegic, a brainy white guy who solves murders through the use of forensics, but when it came time to cast "The Bone Collector," Denzel Washington got the role.

When James Patterson's literary franchise, Alex Cross, a Minnesota police detective who has made a fortune designing computer programs and who drives expensive cars, came to the screen, he was a middle class black man, portrayed by Tyler Perry, living in Detroit. No fortune, no fancy wheels.

When it was time for Jack Reacher to reach the screen, Reacher, a nomadic former Army M.P. who stands 6'5" and tips the scales at 250, was portrayed by 5'7" Tom Cruise, who isn't even big enough to have been an M.P.

Then there's Robert Downey's rendition of Sherlock Holmes. Downey is a fine actor, but he is nothing like Holmes, and the special effects are like nothing to be found in Doyle's work.

My question is: why do they make these movies? If it's to cash in on the popularity of the books, it stands to reason that the fans of the fiction are not going to care for actors who are entirely unsuitable in the roles. Instead, why don't the producers simply have screenwriters create their own characters? That way, nobody stands to be disappointed, except if the movie turns out to be a stinker.

Something else I have never understood is why it's offensive to connect black people with fried chicken and watermelon, but it's quite okay to link Italians with pizza and spaghetti and Jews with blintzes and matzo ball soup.

Finally, the other night I was walking past the TV while my

wife was watching "The Antique Roadshow." So I picked up a pot lid, insisted it was a 16th century Spanish helmet and told her it was easily worth \$9,000. I figure if the experts on the show can get away with that stuff, why shouldn't I? Furthermore, I say that unless they're prepared to write a check on the spot, those experts are just conning gullible people.

I mean, have any of you actually tried selling an antique? Now that's a show I'd watch!

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