

Things That Muddle My Mind

There are any number of things that don't seem to bother the rest of you that manage to keep me awake nights. One of these is the Olympics. Why, I find myself wondering, does the world every four years turn its entire attention to athletic events it will then totally ignore for the next four years? I make no bones about the fact that I have no interest in the whole shebang, but how is it that the rest of you don't suddenly start devoting the same attention to 12-year-old gymnasts, discus throwers and synchronized swimmers that I do to baseball if you find these and sundry matters so darn enthralling?

Next, why is it that you can't wait to gorge yourself on roast turkey every Thanksgiving but don't even think about having it on any of the other 364 days of the year? I am even willing to bet that no condemned man ever ordered it for his last meal unless, of course, he was slated to meet his maker on the fourth Thursday in November.

This brings us, inevitably, to politics. Of course with the 2012 presidential campaign being well under way, everything these days brings us inevitably to politics. But what I specifically have in mind are Iowa and New Hampshire. Now, please understand I have no problem with either place. I once even spent a pleasant week in and around Des Moines. But how was it determined that those two improbable states would be given so much importance? I understand that for reasons I can't quite fathom they get to kick off the primary season, but so what? To me it makes about as much sense as inflating the importance of winning the coin toss at the start of a football game.

The plain facts are these: The Hawkeye State doesn't even have a primary election, but merely a caucus at which a few hundred people get to root for their favorite candidate; while the

Granite State is so small that in 2008, Obama and McCain divvied up a mere 701,528 votes. Shoot, you get bigger turnouts than that in mayoral elections in a slew of American cities.

But if you listen to the various pundits, you would think that instead of Iowa and New Hampshire, it was California and Texas or at least Florida and New York that were up for grabs. In the general election, Iowa and New Hampshire will account for a total of 11 electoral votes. That would mean that even if one of the presidential candidates swept both of them, he or she would still have to rack up another 259 votes before collecting the keys to the White House.

Two other things keep gnawing at me. How is it that people who drive around with bumper stickers that read "War is Not the Answer" aren't the least bit embarrassed to be seen in public? Of course, as most of us realize, there are many occasions when war is exactly the right answer. There are also, I grant you, many occasions when it isn't, as, for instance, when the question is "Who portrayed Dr. Watson to Basil Rathbone's Sherlock Holmes?" or "Which team won the 2002 Super Bowl?" (Because I don't wish to cause any of you sleepless nights, the correct answers are Nigel Bruce and the New England Patriots, 20-17, over the St. Louis Rams.)

A related question that comes to mind is, why the hell are we still squandering money and lives in Afghanistan or Iraq?

For that matter, who are we to decide who should be running Libya? Considering the presidents we've elected in the years since 1988, it's clearly not something we're good at.

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