

CITY COUNCIL WEARS BOY SCOUT KHAKIS

It's been an interesting few weeks of contrasts. I had the hysterically delightful privilege of being the guest of the Fairfield Kiwanis Club. After the Pledge of Allegiance, a patriotic song and a moment of prayer, I savored some of the best stand up, sit down and slap your knee affectionate barbs, teasing and comedy I had heard in years. Then we chatted about the role creative activities have in our children's lives.

One by one, wonderful men and women glowed with generosity as they gave "happy dollars" to the club kitty as monetary tokens of their fellowship and united goodwill. One by one, they counted out their currency, mugging contrition for protocol miscues while fining themselves "sad dollars". I was in God's own little coed smoke free smoking parlor and the air was never sweeter. Bless those men and women and any who join their team.

Madame P is now a fiddler in the making. Thus, a week later I was sitting in one of God's many creative musical workshops. The Solano Suzuki Strings recital at the community center had munchkin to mature VIT's (virtuosos in training) bedecked in Halloween garb all nestled in among loving friends and families. The evening ranged between gloriously played "Spooky Twinkle Little Star" to a brief beautiful Handel solo. God blessed those parents, their children and their dedicated teachers and I got to be in their slipstream. Ah, life was so sweet.

Yet also in the past weeks, like an adulteration of a perfect recipe, came charges and counter charges of not so funny ill gotten campaign monies. The press dutifully reported the noise. We all expended too much energy assaulted by emotional appeals, personal attacks and the 'stinking thinking' that can surround any campaign season. I took a cue from one councilman's common refrain, "cut the crap", and apologized to myself for getting a bit too critical, too caustic and too jaded.

Yes, we must not be naïve in our voting and we must look carefully at the broader issues of fiscally wise governance as so perfectly explained by Randall Carlson's letter to the editor yesterday. Yes, we must grapple with the understandable facts that crime data have not changed for the better and that the pole vaulting of our youth into life as powerful, productive and creative individuals is at risk of sliding below a limbo bar.

Yes, candidates' personalities and pasts are germane and help us understand leadership style and their ability to play well with others in the sandbox. What they have done, what they have learned and what they promise are clues as to how they prioritize issues, discern root causes of problems and reflect and reason rather than rant, rave, and react. It is also a cue as to how they might meet ethical challenges. When they faced their stalemates in life, what did they do; that is the grist of leadership.

However, it seems to me like we are spending too much time finger pointing and tongue wagging. Remember, all fall short in the right light.

So to whomever assumes the helm; model the good humors, genuine respect and affection of the Kiwanians. Hear the pitch of Solano Suzuki Strings and be virtuosos in training who craft creative solutions bringing a new tune to Fairfield. Be part of our solution and not our problem. Public office is not the place to work out personal agendas or angst. Your demeanor, as well as your deeds, will affect us all.

If there is any uniformity to our next council, perhaps it could be the Boy Scout khakis worn proudly in one candidates' campaign literature. If it were not for that pesky issue of earning the right, I suspect that is not a half bad idea for us all. And oh yes, forward my mail to 001 Pollyanna Place, Utopia.

Kevin Ryan is a retired Colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield.