

PERSEVERANCE: A MEANS AND AN ENDS

Of the many lessons the Christmas season evokes, one seems particularly poignant at this juncture in the journey of our adolescent nation; perseverance.

Perseverance can alternatively start or stop the perils or promise of transformative change. The nativity story is rife with it. Joseph was steadfast in his confidence of the purity of his pregnant wife. John the Baptist, intransigent in his beliefs, lived to realize his mission before his martyrdom. Mary Magdalene willingly suspended disbelief and the Sanhedrin, recalcitrant in their outrage, persevered and effected great change.

While not the stuff of divinity or the messianic saving of souls, the arduous journey of the American revolutionaries, guided and goaded by our founding fathers, is a similar story of perseverance and transformative change. We are the fruits of their labors.

World War II then taught us, among many things, that perseverance may not be fast and in fact be both the means and the ends. In the blink of an eye of history and rudderless in the doldrums of a global depression, America rallied and saved the world. But it did not go well at first. In the beginning, we fled the Philippines as men marched to death in Bataan and determined Brits' huddled and hung to hope in their subway tunnels. America came to ration everything on the home front, but not perseverance.

Amidst those days of horrid destruction, clarity of purpose and steeling of that impossibly wonderful American sense of can do propelled us on. Citizens of all stripes pretty much knew right or wrong and trusted in a God who would keep them clear if they wandered.

Back then, entitlement was a word linked to opportunity and governments, weary and swollen from war turned to their greatest asset, their people, to produce and build a better world. The nation persevered in those core beliefs for a generation longer and then, it began to change.

Now we are again at a nexus of transformation. In a nation where most believe in God, we bow to the godless in commerce, in courtrooms and even in classrooms. In a nation of unparalleled fortune made through perseverance, we tinker with socialism and wealth distributing notions that have never worked, are contrary to the nature of man and from which we may never recover. Our nation has "dumbed down" and fattened up. One wonders if this will be the latest iteration of the ugly American.

The noble notion of the right to access to superb health care in the wealthiest of nations has become disfigured and disheveled at a cost, if enacted; we cannot pay while maintaining a constitutional democracy. A malignantly bloated government and its metastatic minions of legislators are ignoring the national will on this, climate change and many other issues as they persevere in plotting to dissemble the principles of American exceptionalism.

Other citizens have persevered in their objections to this through tea parties, town hall meetings, snail mail, call-in talk radio, email and phone calls. They understand that the guidons of choice, personal liberty and responsibility, small government, free markets and capitalism are principles and not party platforms which describe our view of humanity and shape our role abroad.

The Health Care debacle is but one of proposed legislative actions that address the core character of our constitutional republic. We must persevere in understanding that America is at war, assaulted by terrorists from without and draconian transformation from within; she may lose her way. Her debt is staggering and excesses of entitlement threaten enfeeblement. The tolling of her liberty bell must not be funereal.

Let this Christmas season mark continued perseverance against substantive changes in our laws and lives and the diminished liberties they will visit upon us. Citizens must persevere in engagement of their legislators now, and in the next election.

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