



David Lias
Between The Lines

We failed. Hooray

Remember the 1980 Moscow Olympics? If you were alive then, and tuned in to the sports world, there's a good chance you really don't recall much at all about them.

Maybe you've forgotten this. But we weren't there. You see, the Soviet Union had just invaded Afghanistan (we weren't in that country yet, either) and President Jimmy Carter wanted to send the Kremlin a signal.

So, he forced our Olympic athletes to boycott the games. If I recall correctly, I believe he talked about 50 other countries into staying home, too.

The effect? Well, Moscow hardly noticed. American athletes, however, who had dedicated their lives training for their shot at the games, were devastated.

And our boycott of Moscow did nothing to get the Soviets out of Afghanistan. It took awhile, but the USSR pretty much decided that, after years of bumbling around that mountainous haven, the country just wasn't worth the effort to try to conquer.

Carter's boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics was one of the more embarrassing moments of his presidency. It still stings today. All of which makes the right-wing reaction to President Barack Obama's attempt to secure Chicago as the site of the upcoming Olympics just a bit, well, strange. I guess. Although that term seems to be inadequate.

How about downright weird. I am not making this up. Earlier this week, while watching one of the evening talking head political shows that for some reason draws me like a moth to a flame (when I feel like staring at the TV without thinking) some video from a town hall meeting was played.

The scenario has become familiar by now. It was homemade video, shot in herky-jerky fashion, by someone attending a meeting of a Republican member of Congress (whose name I can't recall).

The politician, however, could hardly contain himself. He had just received word that President Obama was not successful in his attempt to attract the games to Chicago; in fact, he said, the Olympic committee decided that the host of the 2016 Summer Olympics will be Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

How do you think the crowd reacted? Were they disappointed? Angry? Visibly upset?

Um, no. They applauded. As if to say, "Thank you, President Obama for making our day by failing."

It's strange, this conservative mindset. I mean, certainly in these rather dismal economic times, we wouldn't want anything as progressive as the most premiere athletic event in the world to be staged within our borders, would we?

The Carter Administration, after deciding to boycott the 1980 Olympics, tried to win over athletes and display their support at high-profile White House gatherings.

One of the people mentioned in the Carter's White House memos as one of "the articulate athletes" whom they might try to enlist to support the boycott was Anita DeFrantz, 27, a member of the women's rowing team and then a member of the U.S.O.C. athletes' advisory committee. DeFrantz recalled the pain of that time when she attended the White House ceremonies with other athletes and her patriotism warred with her disappointment and real questions about the policy. She eventually became an outspoken critic of the action and remains so today.

"It was a pointless exercise and a shameful part of U.S. history," she said in a 1996 interview. "I asked one of the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time, whom they had called on to talk to us athletes, if he could tell me truthfully whether it would save one life — and he couldn't."

DeFrantz conceded that Carter and his Carter Center here have done much to advance peace and improve health and housing in the world. But she said that he, like many Americans, never understood the deep respect among Olympic athletes, transcending nationality.

"It nearly destroyed me," she said. "That the Games have continued to thrive is neither consolation nor solace for that. It's just a fact."

Keeping that bit of history in mind, it seems rather fitting that we should be appreciative that we currently have a president who demonstrates that he understands all of that.

Obama's attempt to bring the Olympics to the U.S. was a noble gesture. The fact that it can be used as a means to criticize him only demonstrates how demonizing and out of touch those critics actually are.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Plain Talk encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 350 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the Plain Talk will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

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Golden Gloves not part of Bob's wardrobe



Bob Karolevitz
Writer At Large

Swimming season in South Dakota always reminds me of one of the most memorable episodes in my errant life.

Back in the Dirty Thirties when I was a small-for-my-age youngster, I had some crazy idea about becoming a prizefighter. With grand visions of winning a Golden Gloves championship, I hid off to the local gym to learn to bob and weave from the experts.

Shortly thereafter the word got around that I was taking boxing lessons, and that led to an unexpected confrontation. It occurred in the dressing room at Tripp Pool, then Yankton's municipal swimming hole (which, incidentally, had its own brand of Agent Orange).

One of the bigger boys — Harold Becker by name — decided to test me, and without malice threw a light punch in my direction just to see if I had really learned how to duck. I had and he missed, scuffing his knuckles on the dressing stall wall in the process.

It obviously hurt, and he swung again a little harder with the other hand. I avoided that shot, too — just as my mentor, Lloyd Holbrook, had

taught me to do — and Harold got skinned up on the opposite wall.

In an instant, he changed from a jovial taunter to an irate foe. Suddenly without really knowing what we were fighting about, we were engaged in one of those old-fashioned boyhood slugfests.

Edgar Wieland, the lifeguard on duty at the Tainted Tub, chased us from the bathhouse and out into the street, through the parking lot. Immediately the pool emptied as some 300 kids (more or less) surrounded the two gladiators and effectively closed the road to all traffic.

As the crowd goaded us on, we flailed away in time-honored fashion. My arms were too short so I couldn't reach him to do any damage, and I had just enough newly learned

skill to keep him from raining any telling blows on me (although I took a couple of hard raps on the top of the head as I covered up to protect my nose and my chin).

Then, as if by signal, our audience grew strangely quiet, and we paused in our pummeling long enough to see what had caused the quick change. Easing its way to ring-side through the throng of barefooted swimmers was Yankton's lone police car, summoned by a call from a neighborhood lady who didn't appreciate the disturbance. I recognized the blue-clad officer immediately when he stepped from the vehicle. He was easy to recognize. He was my father!

Straight and stern; he promptly dispersed the onlookers and loaded the two of us

into the car. There wasn't the slightest hint in his eyes or his manner to indicate that I was anybody but a complete stranger.

As we drove off, he headed out of town, not toward the jail as his two uneasy passengers had feared. Finally, I dredged up enough courage to ask where he was taking us, and he gruffly replied: "If you two enjoy fighting so much, I'm taking you out to a cornfield where you can go at it until one of you drops."

The psychology achieved instant results. Harold and I shook hands and thereafter became friends until we grew up and went our separate ways.

I became a sports writer and I remember the verse I wrote some time after my battle with Harold Becker:

My head went east, my nose went west.

I felt a mallet strike my chest.

It didn't take me long to see That fisticuffs were not for me!

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It's gotta hurt so good to be real

MyStory YourStory



Paula Damon
Columnist

Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns. — George Eliot

At the risk of looking tacky, I'm thinking about putting up my Christmas lights in October, while temperatures are pretty close to perfect.

With the mercury rising to about 65 degrees by day and dipping to only 48 or 50 in the evening, I could decorate the whole house in Bermuda shorts and a sleeveless shirt. Since the sun does not set until 8 p.m. or so, I'd have all day to twist garland, tie bows and string lights, while sipping lemonade and wiping sweat from my brow.

Why not? Retail stores are stocked for Christmas, and I heard holiday music on the radio the other day. I even thought I saw jolly old Saint Nick on TV. No, wait a minute ... that was former Senator Tom Delay in his jump suit on Dancing with the Stars.

Every year at this time, as

each day slips by, I think about how I should be dragging out boxes marked "XMAS."

But then I wonder how will I get into the spirit of Christmas if I have to douse myself with bug repellent before venturing outside.

It's just that stringing holiday lights in the warmth of long harvest days seems way too painless for me.

In my opinion, it has to hurt to be genuine holiday decorating.

When is the right time to decorate, you ask? Well, let me count the ways.

You know it's time to put up outdoor decorations when...

You anticipate spending

four hours or more fumbling around in cheerless darkness searching for every gosh darn plastic wreath and all those little hooks to hang lights from the eaves.

You put on three or four layers of thermal clothing, you can hardly walk, fall down, can't get back up and cry for help.

Your Christmas cards shatter when you accidentally drop them.

Your nose is running and it takes four blocks to catch it.

A glacier begins to pass by your house.

Your grandmother's dentures chatter all by themselves.

You actually don't mind spilling your cup of coffee all

over you lap.

And you immediately regret waiting until the cold dark reaches of December to decorate.

Even after all of this, you know for certain it's time to put up your outdoor decorations when you have an unexplainable feeling of peace as you string lights, tie bows, hang wreaths and so on....

A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula Damon is a national award-winning columnist. Her columns have won first-place in National Federation of Press Women, South Dakota Press Women and Iowa Press Women Communications Contests. In the 2009 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contest, Paula's columns took three first-place awards. To contact Paula, email pauladamon@iw.net, follow her blog at www.my-story-your-story.blogspot.com and find her on Facebook.

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LETTERS

Thanks for successful event

To the editor:
On behalf of the Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie and Auxiliary, we'd like to thank everyone who helped to make our Eagles Child Health & Safety Carnival / "Child Advocacy Day" held on Saturday, Oct. 3, at the Eagles Club in Vermillion a great success!

Special thanks to our participants, sponsors, and partners, including: Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie and Auxiliary members, the City of Vermillion, Vermillion Police Department, Clay County Sheriff's Office, Clay County Child Protection

Team, Vermillion Fire & EMS, Vermillion Chamber of Commerce & Development Company, Vermillion Parks & Recreation, Sanford Vermillion, Vermillion Public Library, Hy-Vee, Wal-Mart, Pizza Hut, Casey's, Vermillion Chiropractic, American Family Insurance, Market Street Café, McDonald's, Amy's Whoopi Do, Chesterman / Coca-Cola, Prairie Eye Clinic, Rebel Style, Brady Enterprises, USD Dental Hygiene, USD Communication Sciences and Disorders, USD Physical Therapy, United Way of Vermillion, Birth-to-Three and Three-to-Five Development Programs, Vermillion Taekwondo, "Mickey" and "Jewel" the Clowns,

David Lias / Plain Talk, the B, B, & B BBQ Team, event co-chairs Michelle Haskell, Geri Dooley, and Kelly Thurman, our many volunteers, and the 120 children and their parents who attended this educational and fun-filled event!

We truly appreciate your efforts with this event and in helping us achieve another step in our mission of "People Helping People." It was great working with all of you and we'll look forward to next year's event in May of 2010!

Sincerely,
Lisa Ketcham,
vice president
Eagles Auxiliary

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