

Opinion



INSTIGATING LOGIC

By JARED PUTNAM
Union Sentinel Editor

Controversial, or just outrageous?

Being over the top, outrageous, or whatever you wish to call it, has become commonplace, even popular, in society today.

There may be no better example of this than in the media.

Consider the examples of ultra-conservative Ann Coulter and ultra-liberal Bill Maher. While the two are on polar opposite ends of the political spectrum, both are very controversial figures who never hold back.

Maher recently made headlines for saying that more people would live if Dick Cheney had been killed in Afghanistan assassination attempt, while Coulter drew fire for referring to presidential hopeful John Edwards as a "faggot."

As much as both of them like to talk, hopefully they are also familiar with the phrase "jumping the shark." It originated as a metaphor for the tipping point in which a television series runs out of quality ideas and experiences a dramatic decline in quality, usually due to nonsensical plot material.

Fittingly enough the term comes from the *Happy Days* episode in which a water-skiing Fonzie literally jumped over a shark. It has been said that was the point at which many viewers could no longer suspend disbelief and realized that the show was no longer worth watching.

These days, "jump the shark" is more of a pop culture term that can refer to the downfall of almost anything. With that said, you have to wonder if loudmouths like Coulter and Maher have finally jumped the shark.

Don't get me wrong, their type will always attract the people that will not only listen to the outrageous, but crave it. After all, talk shows don't go off the air just because they begin to take the easy route of attracting viewers with "Is my

man cheatin' on me" lie detector tests and "Who's my baby's daddy" paternity tests.

But will any significant number of reasonable people continue to take seriously the likes of Maher and Coulter? The unfortunate part of it is, the term "controversy" will probably get dragged through the mud with them.

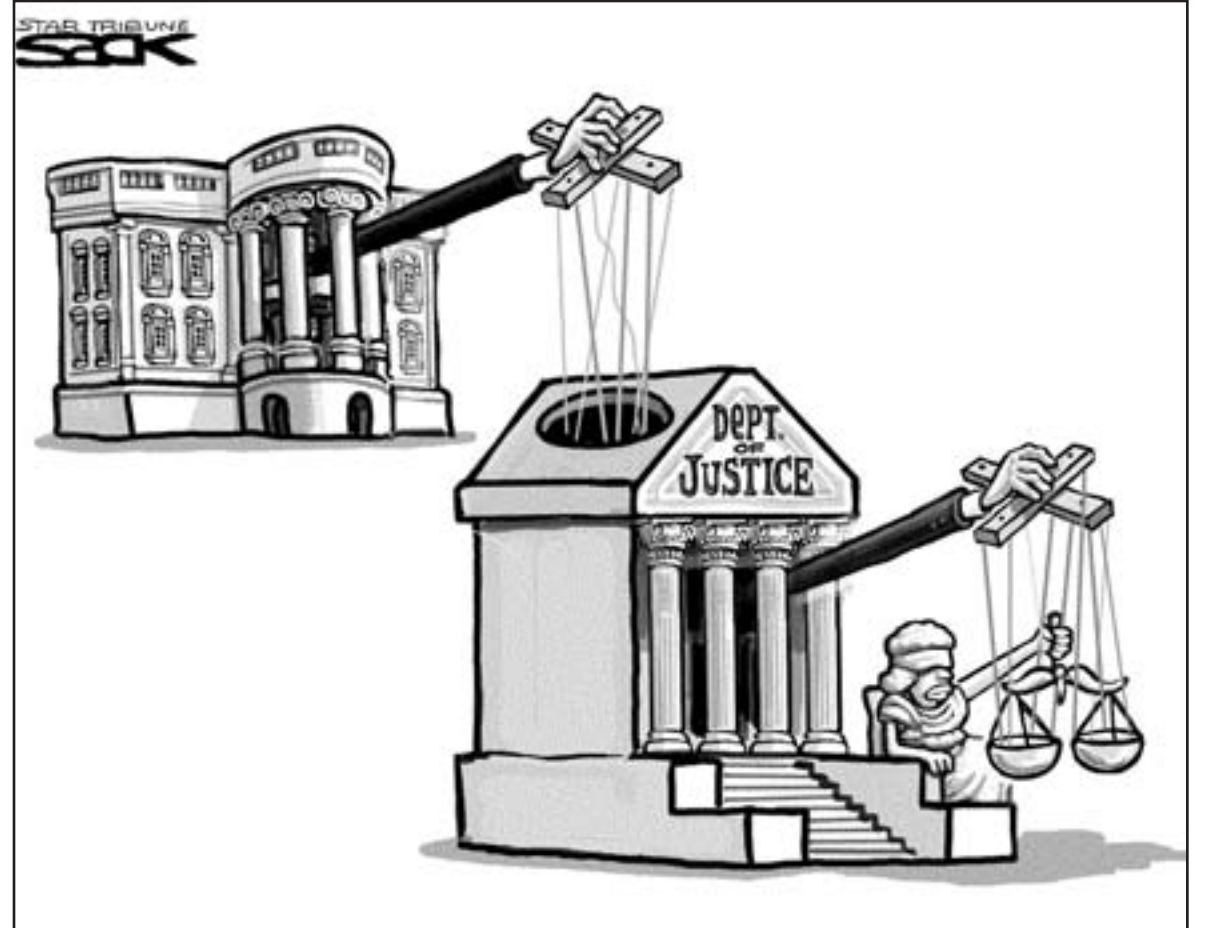
Outrageous people often give controversy a bad name, but controversy is not always a bad thing. Controversy can break down barriers that need to be broken down. Problems rarely get solved by people agreeing *not* to disagree and by wrapping things up with a great big group hug.

I definitely buy into the idea that people often need dramatic examples to shake them out of apathy or to get a point across. But that may be the litmus test for controversy: Is there any sort of a halfway legitimate point trying to be made? Regarding Coulter and Maher, I would say no.

Therein lies the problem. When you have such an individual, who no longer even bothers to try to make a point, it becomes evident that their whole identity is tied to being outrageous, and they must continuously up the ante regardless of whether or not they have anything meaningful to say. Because as soon as their audience becomes desensitized to a certain level of outrageousness, a controversial figure has little choice but to up the dosage, or risk becoming irrelevant.

Even if they start out with a good message, it can quickly turn from edgy, thought provoking material, to a stream of venom laced with any bizarre or distasteful thought that pops into their mind.

Saying those kinds of things doesn't make a person courageous or clever, it just signals a disconnect with reason and a lack of any sort of filter.



BILL O'REILLY

The illegal immigration tango

It was fascinating to watch the tango between President Bush and Presidente Felipe Calderon in the Yucatan a few days ago. Mr. Bush pledged to try to pass "comprehensive" immigration reform, while Senor Calderon put forth that America needs to "do more" for Mexico.

OK, so what are these guys really saying?

First of all, President Bush has no heart for the immigration fight. As the former governor of Texas, he well understands the myriad of problems chaotic illegal immigration has caused. But Mr. Bush, I believe, sincerely believes that most migrants are honest, hard-working folks who simply want a better life. He also calculates that tough action against illegals will ultimately cost the Republican Party crucial votes, because the pro-alien lobby demonizes politicians who try to crack down.

For his part, Presidente Calderon claims he wants to stem the flow of immigrants and narcotics into the USA, but it's baloney. Calderon actually told the truth when he said that because millions of Americans want drugs, the supply would continue to flow through Mexico.

South of the border, this immigration/narcotics deal is all about money, and we're talking billions of dollars. The cash illegals send home to Mexico and the narco-trafficante dollars fuel Mexico's entire economy, with only oil competing.

The old saying is "where there's a will, there's a way." But there's little will in the

USA to get illegal immigration under control. Right now there are at least 37 so-called "Sanctuary Cities" ranging from Anchorage, Alaska to Katy, Texas. These are municipalities that have flat out told the Homeland Security Department they will not cooperate with any investigations into the status of illegal workers.

In New York, for example, many officials look the other way while immigrants, both legal and illegal, pack into dwellings, organize into criminal gangs and generally do whatever they want. On Long Island, where I live, 60 men were living in one suburban house. When Suffolk County authorities finally responded to desperate complaints from neighbors, the newspaper *Newsday* went wild, calling attempts to control the illegal situation "anti-immigration mania."

The unintended consequence of all this chaos is, unfortunately, death. Last year, 453 people died while trying to cross into the USA illegally. All of them were victims of the deserts or criminals preying upon them.

Recently, in the Bronx, nine children were killed in a horrific fire after a row house ignited into flames. I have the floor plan of that dwelling. It was designed to house eight people at most. Seventeen children and five adults from Mali were living there with no fire

escapes, bad heating and no sprinkler system. Sanctuary isn't much good if the shelter is lethal.

A mixture of political cowardice, idealistic nonsense and corrupting cash has resulted in a crisis that is hurting just about everyone but the business people who exploit the illegals. And judging by the performances of Presidents Bush and Calderon, I don't see real reform on the horizon.

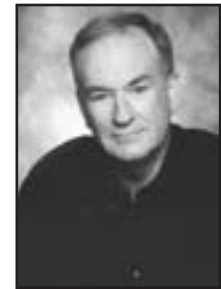
The USA needs to secure the border with barriers and the National Guard, develop a fair, disciplined guest worker program that serves legitimate business needs, and require all illegal aliens already here to register so they can be evaluated as potential citizens.

Mexico needs to police its border and stop the drug runners and poor migrants from doing whatever they want to do.

Both countries could accomplish those things; there is a way. But, truthfully, there's no will.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Who's Looking Out For You?" To find out more about Bill O'Reilly, and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com. This column originates on the Web site www.billoreilly.com.

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Bill O'Reilly



RAINER'S RAMBLINGS

By RAINER ARNOLD
Union Sentinel Publisher

Good to be home

Last Saturday I got home from a short vacation and I must say it is really nice to be back home. After all, how can anyone not like people saying "Welcome Back" and "it is good to see you back" and many of them even giving you a hug. That is a great feeling.

But then, when I think about things a little more I start to realize that it is really great to be back home. Upon return on Saturday my wife and I went to a small St. Patrick's Day party at a friend's home. That was nice and I had to tell all about why I did not go skiing like I said I was going to. See, Austria did not have a lot of snow where I was going to go skiing. So, I would have had to go much higher up in the Alps than I wanted to. And the slopes there were really steep. Now, I can ski, but I did not want to break my legs skiing above my limitations. And I must say, the steep and narrow paths above 7,000 feet made it easy for me to pass on skiing.

It was also nice to come home to your own bed and easy chair. I actually went to several homes over there and not a one had an easy chair in the living room. They just don't know what they are missing. I also slept so much better in my own bed than elsewhere.

It is also great to get back into the routine of life work and playing soccer. I actually had soccer practice yesterday and I am still tired this morning. I am back working, writing and making arrangements for a variety of stories.

It is great to be able to drive my own truck rather than a rental where you have to worry about getting a little scratch or minor dent. With my truck it does not matter much. It is also nice to know where everything is, but there are things I do miss.

Most of all, the fruits, meats and veggies over there are really fresh and flavorful. And since I love tomatoes I miss the ones they get from Spain. Boy, they are good.

I also miss the great meals at a reasonable price. Yes, food is actually cheaper over there than here.

And, believe it or not, most people like Americans. They may not like American politicians, but they generally like American people very well.

So, I must say, I was glad I had a vacation but I am also glad to be back. Really, it is great to be back in a routine that has become comfortable.

Taylor Cobb

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attention of his hearers. They kept him going by well-placed "Amens". He wrote: "My 'God-blessed tone' melted their hearts, and soon tears, sobs, shouting, handshaking, and rejoicing filled the shack. After the service, a deacon took me to his home to spend the night."

At the evening meal, his host deacon told Cobb, still not recognizing him as a U. S. Revenue Agent, that his son was making moonshine whiskey. This fact saddened the deacon. Cobb said that he had always wondered how the liquor was made. The deacon

offered to take him to his son's still, since he was doubling off a run that very night.

When the pair got to the still deep within the mountains, the old deacon took off his old cap-and-ball pistol, laid it on a shelf, and went to work at the still himself. After the deacon got well into the process, Agent Cobb grabbed the man's pistol and arrested his son, the supposed owner of the still.

He put the captured moonshiner on Old Steel behind himself, and started for the nearest jail. Since it was late at night, the two agreed to stop at a cabin along the way to get some rest.

At the next house, they awaked the owner and the old man gave the two—agent and captive—the best bed in the house. Exhausted from his hard day's journey, the energy exerted to preach the gospel, and the arrest of the moonshiner who had been his host, Cobb soon fell asleep.

When Taylor Cobb awoke the next morning, he found his prisoner gone. He had taken Cobb's pants with \$25.00 in his pocket. Cobb told the man of the house that he was a "traveling preacher, and had picked up the man the previous evening along his route, and that he had

robbed him. The man gave him a garment of his own, which Cobb described as "fitting him like a bolt of loose cloth." After an excellent breakfast at the cabin, Cobb was soon on his way. He put money in the mail and sent it to the man who had loaned him the suit.

The very next year, President Hayes issued a general pardon for moonshiners. Cobb saw this as a way to get the deacon's son off from arrest and a year in prison. He went to the man and offered to get him "off" if he would repay him his stolen \$25 and the cost of the suit he had stolen. The two went to

Atlanta, and Cobb pleaded the man's case, getting him off without a jail term.

On their way back to the mountains from Atlanta, Cobb told the deacon's son that he would "get others off" if they would surrender. Twenty-eight moonshine makers came to Cobb, confessing their part in the manufacture of mountain spirits. Cobb summarily pleaded their cases in Atlanta and they were pardoned.

"They thought it was my influence that got them released," wrote Cobb. "I soon became the most popular man in that area. Even the old deacon

forgave me and sang my praises from the housetops on every occasion."

Taylor Cobb, this man of the mountains and U. S. Revenue Agent, was born June 14, 1846 and died May 31, 1920. He was interred in New Hope Methodist Cemetery in the Ivy Log District of Union County, Georgia. The oldest grave in the cemetery with a legible name is that of Lydia Keys Cobb who was born in 1773 and died in 1848. The church was founded in 1851 and W. A. Cobb was one of the first trustees. How these relate to the notable revenue agent will take some more research.