

Grant: Memorial Day is designed to make us take stock

Contributed by Lowell Grant
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Memorial Day is always the holiday that makes me think of my father and his entire generation, who put everything on the line to both save the world and create a world that was so easy for the baby boomers to grow up in. Their courage, sacrifice and accomplishments overcoming grave economic and political threats are still awesome to me. That's a word that is so badly overused, but utterly powerful when you think about what it really means.

The "greatest" generation pulled together as one, facing down threats we could hardly imagine. They put their lives on the line, paid taxes without bitching, built superhighways, schools and infrastructure that the rest of the world couldn't imagine. They rose up as one to transform everything from top to bottom and then showed their kindness and generosity not only by creating social security, the GI bill and unemployment benefits here, but in rebuilding both Germany and Japan while allowing both to retain their cultures without taking tribute in victory. The world has never seen anything like it before or since.

Today our country is going through a trying time. There are real threats to our economic lifestyle and our political dominance of the world. How are we responding? Are we unified, rallying behind our new leader who inherited two wars, staggering debts and an economy in freefall? Are we willing to sacrifice and pay taxes to help those less fortunate? Hardly.

We want everything but are not willing to pay for anything. We talk about how much we believe in god and religion, but oppose all social programs designed to help the needy. Provide health care for all so that we don't lose everything we've worked for all our lives during our last six months of life due to crushing medical bills, even if we were actually "insured"? Don't be silly, you must be a commie, or a socialist or a fascist, or all of them at once!

Today you see it's all about name calling, just like in third grade. Take for instance a great man who has dedicated his life to service of this country, Colin Powell. He is called a "RINO" (Republican in name only) because he didn't tow the party line and vote for his party's candidate in the last election. Those calling him a RINO and calling for him to be drummed out of the party have never worn a uniform, risked anything for their country or made any kind of real sacrifice. The brave Dick Cheney "had other priorities" during our generation's war in Vietnam. Rush? Please. What sacrifice has he ever made?

Pay no attention to the fact that Powell was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest rank in the U.S. military. Or that he was born black in the Bronx and that he worked hard for every one of his many achievements with no help from a wealthy and politically connected family. Nope, you are told to judge him solely based upon the fact that he voted his conscience and it wasn't Rush or Cheney's pick!

On Tuesday, President Obama nominated Sonia Sotomayor for the Supreme Court. Like Powell she comes from the Bronx, her parents both having come here from Puerto Rico. Her brother became a doctor. She too worked hard for everything and has had a brilliant career, first being appointed a federal judge by the first President Bush. She is the first Hispanic ever nominated for the Supreme Court and by almost all accounts the most qualified nominee in decades.

The right wing had signaled that they were prepared to filibuster anyone that Obama might nominate and their name calling started before the news conference had ended. They have done everything possible to stall and hinder every single action the president has proposed to date and their utter lack of cooperation in this regard only plays true to their form.

So as I reflect on Memorial Day and all that it means to me, I wonder how so many people can come here from all around the world and achieve so much so quickly, while so many Caucasians, whose families have lived here for so many generations, have achieved so little. They speak the language of the country (my Dad spoke only German until he was 6, Sonia Sotomayor's father never learned to speak it!), they are white and they are both destitute and resent immigrants. They actually listen to Rush and think he represents the truth and them. Rush preaches the Rand theory of "Darwinian Economics," which is survival of the fittest, or to put it another way, the "I got mine, to hell with you!" philosophy.

The damaged mind of Rand took it to the next step, "If I'm stronger than you, I can take what your's too!" It's horrific and repulsive. I wonder what Jesus would say to the right wing if he came back to preach a sermon next Sunday and they were there to hear it. Lowell Grant lives in Kelseyville.