

Valentine's Day: The Most Worthless of All Holidays

By Jim Bielenberg

We are getting close to the most worthless of all holidays, Valentine's Day. Now, hear me out before you call me a bitter, jaded, affection-starved sap. Because that, although true, has nothing to do with it. In theory, Valentine's Day is a wonderful opportunity for mates to express and recognize the feelings they have for one another. However, in practice, it is a meaningless day that benefits no one and actually harms most people. To solidify my point, here are the harmful effects of Valentine's Day on each of a variety of classes of persons:

Couple Actually In Love.

Status: These two have been dating for quite a while, or are married, and you don't hear or talk much about them because their relationship doesn't involve drama. They care for one another and know that their partner cares for them.

Harmful Effects: These people don't celebrate Valentine's Day because they have no need to. They see Valentine's Day for what it is: a day that has been slapped with fake importance so that card, flower and chocolate companies can boost their revenue. They go through the day as they normally do, attaching no significance to it. Because they don't do "something special" for Valentine's Day, their moron friends who believe in the sham think that the relationship is on the rocks. Therefore, they have to engage in countless fruitless conversations wherein their friend—whose last relationship, incidentally, ended in a bout with Chlamydia—counsels them about the way love is "supposed to be."

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## Bring me the head of that absolute despot, George W. Bush, or Throw out this King George too.

President Bush agreed with great fanfare to accept a ban of torture, but later he quietly reserved the right to ignore it, even as he signed it into law. It is hard to decide whether this act wrenches at the gut as more un-American than the revelations that he has also been spying on American citizens for the last several years without the due process guaranteed in the 4th Amendment. Now before you get the idea that I'm a pinko, left winger, which I am, you should know that I love America; I just think that the current government has not just stepped out of line, but led us panic stricken headlong over a cliff and down the road to fascism.

If, five years ago, I had described a government that kidnapped people off the streets of foreign countries and spirited them away to secret detention camps to be tortured interminably without having a day in court or ever hearing the charges against them, would you have approved? What if this country captured people in battle or rounded up prisoners (from a war) in a defeated country, but claimed that the facile verbal twist of calling them "combatants" meant that we did not have to treat them according to the tenets of the Geneva convention? What if these prisoners were tortured in interment camps, or to avoid the most minimal due process and restrictions on types of torture, were shipped (secretly) to

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I've Got a Little List

By C. Dale Slack III, Society Editor

"As some day it may happen that a victim must be found/I've got a little list, I've got a little list/ of society offenders who might well be underground/ and who never would be missed, they never would be missed...." So quips Koko, the Lord High Executioner in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. While Koko was talking about finding someone to execute to save the town of Titipu (which may or may not have been intentionally obscenely named by former attorney W.S. Gilbert) from being reduced to the rank of "village," I am talking about the day I finally snap from all the annoyances of the basement carrel area, or "LawCave."

First of all, I fully realize that the basement is "Party Central;" this is where things happen. A keg might roll in around 5:30 and an impromptu cocktail party commence, perhaps a minor celebrity will stop by for a chat—that's why I chose it. And I realize I'm as guilty as anyone down here—my carrel is the center of *tout le monde* here at the Shyster-Mill, and people drop by unannounced at all hours to my *petit salon* for the latest gossip and disgusting old Vaudeville jokes; but before 5:00 PM, this is still a place of business, and should be treated as such.

There comes a point, however, where the ceaseless nattering and trivial offenses of others grates my last nerve like so much cheese on a quesadilla; and rest-assured, one day I will snap. I will grab my lucky LawPen and plunge it into the jugular of the first offender I find. So beware, those whose deeds place them upon this list.

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1. **Cell-Phone Abusers.** TURN OFF YOUR CELL-PHONE when you come in. I realize that you're all, in addition to law students, brain surgeons on call to save lives on a minute-by-minute basis, that that ever-important call may come in at any time and you will have to spring into action, and that you simply **MUST** take this call. But please put it on vibrate. And when you answer, have the courtesy to go to the student lounge or out back on the loading dock to have your twenty-minute conversation.

2. **Video Watchers.** The lounge has a rather nice television set with cable and everything; but perhaps your tastes run to cartoon clips of ninjas, football highlights or TeeVee news bloopers. Fine. Download away. But **DO NOT WATCH THEM ON YOUR LAP-TOP AT FULL VOLUME.** It's patently annoying and shows an utter lack of respect for those around you. Jesus invented headphones for a reason, and that reason was to save you from my all-encompassing scythe of virtuous wrath.

3. **Far-Talkers.** [Not to be confused with "Fart-Talkers," who are a different breed entirely and normally only appear in French circuses.] Remember in kindergarten when the teacher would urge you to use a "six-inch whisper?" When someone is two feet away from you, try using a "two-foot tone," which means that people up to a hundred feet away don't hear every word you say at a normal volume. You may think that your conversation would be of interest to the rest of the basement, but chances are you are

wrong. It is not interesting, funny or entertaining in any way whatsoever, and in practice will probably open you up to a lot of lawsuits over breach of confidentiality when you tell an entire restaurant where the murder weapon is. (NB: This does not apply to Dan Bott, whose smooth voice is so soothing that I could listen for days nonstop without annoyance).

4. **Loud Eaters.** Every day I curse the damnable crapsmiths who created the Carl's Junior ad campaign in which some slovenly plebeian in a t-shirt eats a burger and fries in a way so as to share the sounds of his mastication with Vietnam. The same is true of those who eat their lunches so that I can hear them. Unless you're on my lap, I do not want to hear you slurp, crunch, swallow or belch. In fact, stay the hell off my lap while you're at it.

5. **Debaters.** I know, I know: Brandt did raise an interesting conundrum with her lecture on delivery of marketable title and the lack of equitable remedies post-closing; but now is really not the time to have a heated discussion of your personal views on this subject. Go get a beer at the Garden (or a chocolate malt at Mr. Weatherby's Ice Cream Parlor) and discuss it there. I really don't care to hear your fresh approach to conversion, business-entity liability or the Pacers' chances this year. Argue somewhere else, or really, really quietly.

As I said, these rules only apply between the hours of 7:00 AM and 5:00 PM (whilst I'm trying to sleep). Post-5:00 PM, feel free to unleash your fetid Bacchanalia and yelling; just be sure to invite me.

## Behind the Robe: Samuel Alito

By Jeff Dearing, Political Affairs Editor

It is almost a sure bet that Judge Alito of the Third Circuit will soon become a justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. Earlier this week John Kerry (after losing a bet to Lincoln Chafee) made an attempt at a filibuster to prevent Alito's nomination from coming to a full vote. This effort failed on Monday because it was a dumb idea.

Now that we are sure Mr. Alito will more likely than not be eating Warren Burgers and Hugo Blackened Catfish the in Supreme Court mess hall by the end of the month, I think it's valuable to find out a little bit more about him. This was the Senate's, job but they thought it would be more important to spend a good four straight days talking about abortion without actually asking any questions instead.

Judge Alito was born in New Jersey on April 1st, 1950 to Italian immigrant parents. His parents briefly considered naming their new son after popular US Senator Estes Kefauver; however this idea was rejected after it was decided trying to explain why their son's last name was Kefauver would be more trouble than it was worth.

Judge Alito went on to attend Princeton. While at Princeton he publicly stated he hoped to someday "warm a seat on the Supreme Court" and actively worked to prevent the sexual integration of the student

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### inter alia

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**Single People Who Define Themselves By Their Relationships.**

Status: This person oscillates between being in the throes of a two-week relationship and a two-week period where he is looking for his next two-week relationship. He believes that the only thing that matters in life is who he has on his arm. Furthermore, he feels that having a douchebag/douchebagette for a partner is better than being alone. Unfortunately, this year, Valentine's Day randomly falls at the time in his monthly cycle where he is single.

Harmful Effects: This person hates life on Valentine's Day and makes sure that everyone else knows that he hates V-Day. A simple greeting, such as "Good morning, how are you," can elicit a rant against the evils of Valentine's Day worthy of *Crossfire*. Worse still, these people tend to congregate with each other for bitching sessions, building a perfect storm of bitter envious negativity. They end the day either crying themselves to sleep, hooking up with a similarly-situated bar slut (which, of course, will turn into their next two-weeker), or getting faced and slashing a random ex's tires. This person's insecurity is just plain annoying as hell for everyone else on the planet, and that is exacerbated ten-fold on Valentine's Day.

**People Who Don't Care.**

Status: This person couldn't care less about Valentine's Day. She is single because she hasn't met a good match for herself lately. She prefers being alone to dealing with the drama that comes with forcing a relationship with someone she doesn't mesh with. Sure, she wouldn't mind having a steady hook-up to play slap-n-tickle, but she focuses on the

good parts of being single: not having to answer to anyone; saving money; not celebrating a worthless holiday, etcetera.

Harmful Effects: These are the real victims of the tragic non-holiday. They just want to carry on their normal day. However, those who have been snowed into believing in the significance of the day are convinced that these people's refusal to recognize it shows how truly deep their sadness runs. Therefore, all of their misguided acquaintances will perform an intervention of sorts, forcing them to go out with random, emotionally-unstable clingers. Under protest, they will go on the dates on the condition that their friends drop the issue, then they'll spend the next three months trying to get rid of the psychos that their friends hooked them up with.

**People In Crappy Relationships.**

Status: This person has been involved in a terrible relationship for some time now. He doesn't really like the person he is dating and constantly bitch about him. He has been cheated on and has cheated throughout the course of the relationship. However, short of triple-homicide, there is no way this person will break up with his partner. He just can't seem to justify breaking up "just because I can't stand him."

Harmful Effects: This class of person uses this one mythical event to prove that, under optimum circumstances, they can actually be civil to one another for a couple of hours. Of course, the only reason they can achieve this feat is that they know they are going to get some at the end of the night, and its probably going to be better than usual. They use this better-than-average sex to convince themselves that there might actually be something to the relationship. They agree to either "work on their problems" or "start fresh" which works until about halfway

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through March, when one of them nails a bar slut. In the ensuing months, problems mount culminating in a knock-down drag-out fight in which they threaten each other's lives. Their friends are excited about the prospect of the debacle finally coming to a close when Valentine's Day strikes again and the process is repeated. Years later, after they are married and conceive a slew of kids, they realize that they hate each other, get divorced, and become the baggage-laden creepy old people at the Corner Club on Saturday night.

**Bitter, Jaded, Attention-Starved Saps.**

Status: A first-rate tool, this person is easy to spot. He is outspoken, annoying, and extremely wordy. He hates life, and seeks to improve that life by talking about how terrible other people's lives are. He is on a dry spell of epic proportions, and has been celibate for so long that he may begin to speak in tongues. He also has low sexual stamina.

Harmful Effects: Although they proceed as if they hate or don't understand Valentine's Day, they are so obsessed with the subject that they find it necessary to write a lengthy exposé on its evils that no one wants to read. When only four people end up reading it, and none of those people find it remotely funny, this person reasons that no one is insightful enough to see how truly brilliant his or her commentary is. Someone is finally so annoyed with this clown that they stab him in the neck with a ball-point pen. Thankfully, this person never procreates.

**Euphemisms for flatulence.**

- Having a touch of the vapors.
- Cleaning out last night's baked beans with a hot today.
- Number three.
- Flying by the seat of my pants.
- Exorcising the chili demons.
- Burping backwards.
- Airing out the linens.
- Physical manifestation of severe emotional distress.
- Cracking off a Pablo.
- Refueling the Hindenburg.
- Delivering a hot meal to an elderly shut-in.
- Greasing the wheels of justice.
- Winning a Tony for Best Musical Revival.
- Breaking the Kyoto Protocol.
- Kicking Terry Gross out of the bedroom.

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less enlightened societies where they could be freely tortured indefinitely?

What if this country had attacked two different countries, killing tens or hundreds of thousands of civilians, not counting combatants, claiming self-defense and it turned out that neither country could fight its way out of a wet paper bag? The rogue elements of al Qaeda who we invaded Afghanistan to capture slipped away, while the WMD we invaded Iraq to secure turned out to be completely distorted fabrications. These elements all add up to a picture that Ronald Reagan would describe as “the evil empire” when those elements applied to the communists, and for which the American judges at Nuremberg would be issuing lengthy prison sentences or the death penalty.

A glance at the Declaration of Independence and the justifications for our revolt from the despotic English government reveals many parallels to the modern despotism of the current ruling George. The long train of abuses and usurpations began before the war on terror with George rewriting policy on the environment, the tax codes, and the energy development, and claiming executive privilege allowed him to keep his counsels secret. Then, with the Authorization to use Military force, he has become, in his mind, above any law of the land. He has bluntly informed Congress that he has no intention of executing provisions that he considers an encroachment on his authority. Sounds like the King George who “refused his assent to Laws, most wholesome and necessary for the public good.” When such laws are passed, he has suspended them or “he has utterly neglected to attend them.” “He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people.” Think of the Department of Homeland Security—eerily reminiscent of references to the Fatherland, or to the various departments in the Soviet Bureaus—and

whether it serves any purpose other than a repository for cronies and justifications for more military spending.

Finally, the Bush monarchy has been visiting the very the abuses that prompted the specific protections guaranteed in the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Amendments upon US citizens and citizens of the world, under the guise of leading us toward a more enlightened form of government. These Amendments prohibit cruel and unusual punishment, warrantless searches, the deprivation of life or liberty without due process of law, indefinite detention; and they guarantee one a right to confront an accuser in court, discover the reason for one’s detention, and have a jury trial for the charges. The president has said the we are a nation of laws and that we are working to spread the rule of law to the rogue nations of the world. Actions speak louder than words, and we’d better start with some sweeping changes to the way we approach the rule of law and how we act to secure the unalienable rights given to all men, right here at home.

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body. Clearly the young Samuel was an enthusiastic and forward thinking person.

Mr. Alito was appointed to the Third Circuit in 1990 by the first President Bush. Since then, Mr. Alito has divided his time equally between the court and doing various craft projects. In a widely reported story in the Cumberland County Reminder, Judge Alito spoke fondly of his penchant for making sock puppets and reenacting the Lincoln-Douglas debates for kids with terminal illnesses. The story noted there was no marked affect on the health of the children after seeing the “puppet fueled historical drama”. It is unclear whether a position on the Supreme Court will curb these activities.

In the weeks to follow Judge Alito will likely be sworn in on the Court, thus replacing Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. Justice O’Connor has expressed an interest in starting a chain of go-kart tracks in the southwest after her retirement. With Judge Alito being only 56 years old it is possible that some of you reading this will someday argue in front of him...possibly even as a lawyer.

## **\$1 Per Day**

By Christopher Taylor

I have seen more than my fair share of newspaper and magazine articles bemoaning a group of people forced to subsist on “\$1 a day or less.” And I find this practice reprehensible. It is a scare tactic that glosses over significant differences between lifestyles, costs of living, and the availability of government services. I am not going to suggest that everyone in China is well off. Indeed, I am not going to suggest that there are not Chinese people struggling to get by. But to quote the number as evidence of that fact is misleading and disingenuous. Some services are provided by the Chinese government that are not provided by the American government. Some goods are cheaper in China than in the U.S. And I do not find the double standard at all problematic wherein we in the U.S. measure poverty by whether we can afford cable television, and yet measure poverty in China by whether they can afford to eat.

If our concern is whether a people have access to enough nutritious food, health care, shelter, and the like, to honestly address the problem you must frame it in terms of these things. If shelter and food can be had for 50 cents per day, and health care can be had for free, then a dollar a day doesn’t seem so bad.