

Observer Opinions

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The views expressed in columns and letters to the editor are the author's own and should not be viewed as an endorsement—explicit or implicit—by this publication. The institutional view of this newspaper is published on the left-hand side of the editorial page each week. The Observer's only explicit endorsement is that our pages should be an open forum for civil public commentary.

More than us vs. them

"You're either for us, you're against us."

This is a common clarion call especially in times of war or conflict.

The insinuation being that in a war of good and evil, there is no room for neutrality.

Unfortunately, this was a common theme this past election in Bristol— which thankfully is over.

(As a note, due to printing press and contractual considerations with commercial customers, and the constraints placed on The Observer for timely delivery by the U.S. Post Office, the results—for now—are confined to our online edition at www.BristolObserver.com. A more in-depth story of the results will appear in next week's print edition.)

Let's be clear for a moment, as far as The Observer is concerned and has always been concerned, no matter who is elected, we must work with the winners to get the news to our readers. We told those who listened, we had no skin in the game. Republican, Democrat, write-in, they were all the same to us.

And, on the same token, if the current mayor and council need to stray, need to be watched, and criticized, we hold no allegiance that will bind us to turn a blind eye. That said, we also will cover their indiscretions fairly, even though their foes preach vengeance.

But this past election, there seemed to have been an undercurrent by both sides that if we didn't support them openly, didn't accommodate them when they violated our parameters, did not give their headlines and advertising more prominent placement, wrote articles that put them in a bad light, and did not shout their names from high upon the mountain as the greatest leaders ever to stand before the voters, we were supporting the other side. Every mistake, omission, and absence were seen as an affront. Our unwillingness to surrender our salaries, personal time, and revenue to "be more fair" to one side or the other was evidence of our bias. If one side sent in more letters to the editor than the other, we clearly were their opponent's dupes. Our staff member's associations off the clock were viewed as suspect.

If we weren't for them, clearly, we were against them.

Make no mistake, this was a contentious election. And with several serious issues still lingering from the past term—the sexual harassment suit against Ken Cockayne did not go away once the polls were closed and the huge deficit discovered in the school budget under the watch of the Democratic school board majority and how it happened still has not been resolved—the post-election does not seem as if it's going to be more peaceful. Issues need to be resolved by the current council and tempers likely will flare.

And the Observer will be there to watch events unfold. And how we report those events may not please the players because we will not sit on their side or the other's.

A free and independent press is not a press that acts in the manner that any side should expect. A free and independent press can be capricious. And not every twitch, step, and breath we take should be viewed as evidence of our role in a vast "fake news" conspiracy.

The election is over. Now is the time for everyone to "take a chill pill" and get to work.

And this is why the rooster crossed the street



Grace
Gagnon
From Where
I Sit

Why did the chicken cross the street?

Answer: to get to the other side, of course!

But why would a rooster cross the street? I'm still wondering the answer to that one myself.

Last Friday, I was minding my own business while stopped at a four-way intersection, a very busy one I might add, right near the University of Connecticut's campus. Cars fly recklessly down this street, which explains much of the road kill in Mansfield.

I was sitting at a red light when all of a sudden, I saw a rooster bopping its head up and down across the street. I sat and

watched him for a few moments, praying he would turn around and start walking away from the intersection.

He didn't. I watched cars zoom by, just a few inches away from the rooster. He had no idea his life was in grave danger.

I sat at the red light, crossing my fingers that I wouldn't have to witness this poor rooster's execution right in front of me.

I looked both ways and drove across the intersection. I pulled over very quickly and ran over to the rooster. I didn't want to scare him and risk him running right into a moving car.

I gently approached him saying, "Rooster! Rooster! Come here Rooster!" At this point, he was already in one lane of moving traffic.

He turned around, looked at me, and said, "cock-a-doodle-doo."

He continued waddling across the other side, blatantly ignoring me. My heart was racing.

I saw cars speeding up the street, and I saw the rooster's life flash before my eyes.

I made my presence known to driving cars, since they likely wouldn't be able to see the small rooster. I ran into the street, cautiously I might add, waving my arms and pointing at the rooster to make cars stop.

Luckily it worked, but not without a

few people swearing at me.

Heaven forbid you stop for five seconds to spare the life of an innocent creature. I really was asking for a lot, I get it.

Anyway, I watched the rooster get to the other side of the street. I realized his home was on that side because I saw a chicken coop. I heard him "cock-a-doodle-doo," and with that I felt confident the little guy would be just fine.

As I was driving away, I thought about the classic joke about a chicken crossing the street. I remember telling it when I was little and thinking how funny it was to think about a chicken crossing the street.

Now I look back and can't help but laugh. Sure, it was a rooster, not a chicken, but I would have never thought in a million years I would ever see one cross the street, let alone help it do so.

The chicken crossed the street to get to the other side. But why did the rooster cross the street? Well I now know, it's because he needed to get back home, and he did, all thanks to me.

Grace Gagnon, a Bristol resident and a student at the University of Connecticut, is a columnist for The Observer. Comments can be directed to mchaiken@bristolobserver.com.

Letters

Because this is America: Reader shares family's immigration experience

To the editor:

My mother, Eva, was a Greek Orthodox Catholic who grew up on the fertile soils of Ukraine. When she was approximately 11 years old, the Nazis invaded her farm, took all of her family's possessions, stripped her, shaved all the hair off her body and sprayed her with vile disinfectant. She was then thrown into train cattle cars and shipped off to Nazi work camps that became her home for the next 10 years. She told us she generally worked 20 hours a day, but could not bring herself to tell us more.

My father, Stephan, fought in the Ukrainian underground. Some days he exchanged fire with Nazis, some days with Communists, and some days with both. One bullet would eventually cripple his left hand, a hand that remained a closed fist for the rest of his life.

My parents met in Germany, married and gave birth to my brother, Bohdan. They were poor, separated from home and family and struggled to eat and to stay alive. Somehow, they came to America; land of the free, home of the brave, the land of hope and opportunity. They disembarked the boat on Saint Patrick's Day. Their first impression of Americans? They all dress in green and are drunk in the streets.

They loved this country, their freedom, and the opportunity to work hard and get their rewards— no matter how meager those awards might have been. They were thankful for the dirt floors we

grew up on, in America; thankful for dirty oily factory jobs, in America; thankful for what they could buy, in America, and never resentful for what they couldn't. They were never wealthy, always proud and they were believers that the future would always hold good things for them, because this was America.

My brother died in a horrible accident at the age of 30. My father had a debilitating stroke that kept him from speaking or moving any part of his body for the three years before his death. And my mother, despite any adversity as a child or as an adult, lived on happily, remained ever optimistic believing life was good. She was kind, loving, and funny and to know her was to love her. She never stopped loving and thanking America for all that she had.

My mother taught me that despite horrific, challenging, and painful experiences, if you lived in a country that doesn't close the doors to opportunities, you will find doors that open opportunities. She taught me that if you live in a country that does not fill you with fear of others and fear for your life, you have infinite opportunities to live a free and creative existence. She taught me that every human being deserves to live in freedom; and, with freedom, you can make your life and the lives of others so much better.

I don't know what would have happened to my parents if they never came to America. My mom might not have

ever put some emotional distance between herself and her trauma as a child. I know my father felt that he would have been hunted down and been persecuted or killed. And my brother, I doubt that he would have been senior class president, a member of the National Honor Society, a 1960s hippie, an incredible artist, and a public servant as a policeman.

I would not have had one of my greatest moments of pride that I experienced while watching my parents and brother in a Hartford Courthouse reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and becoming American citizens. We all cried, laughed and hugged and said a prayer thanking God for the start of a new life, as an American family.

Throughout the history of our country, countless doors have been opened for people like my parents, my brother and millions of others who found opportunities they could not have had anywhere else. Yet, it appears that a growing number of people seem to believe that many of these doors are now closing, or have been fully shut. I, for one, listen to the lessons of my wonderful mother. Work hard, never give up, remain optimistic and have faith in humanity; by so doing, the doors of freedom and opportunity will never close – because this is America.

Michael Suchopar
Bristol