

## **America, Beautiful Or Ugly Adolescent?**

Interestingly, the first of six volumes of “The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” by Edward Gibbon arrived on the shores of the fledgling American colonies as initial copies of the Declaration of Independence were flooding every hearth and home with the promise of American excellence. America was to be beautiful.

On the clock of history, this nation is at best an adolescent, appropriately struggling to avoid the fate of being merely a tempest in a teapot. However, the weave of our grand American experiment into the tapestry of time now grows weaker, not because of the design, but because of the labors of those at the loom.

Presciently, Alexander Tyler, a Scottish history professor at the University of Edinburgh, penned what many thought; this rogue nation with promise reminiscent of the golden Athenian age of Pericles would decline when ... “they discover they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury”

An “inevitable” chain of events was described from bondage, through transforming faith to a time of abundance. Then those candidates painting the brightest, broadest portrait of shared wealth for an electorate grown fat and enfeebled from entitlements would usher in the pillaging and collapse of the republic from within. Acquisition would exceed the need to achieve, consumption would eclipse the drive to create and the religion of the perpendicular pronoun, “I” would deny the faith of the founding fathers. A search for analgesia in an inherently capricious and unfair world would lead to apathy and ambivalence towards the greatness of American values.

Like an addict seeking the next high, we are surrendering to the enfeebling power of larger governments. The enemy is us as we languish in our less than stellar lives failing to launch like a lost, long past adolescent.

We are surrounded by monuments to the mediocrity of big government. Noble notions in principle have gone astray and grown beyond their intent and our means such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, Fannie and Freddie Mac and the failed 16,000 person, \$ 24 Billion dollar Department of Energy. They hemorrhage American dollars and we are awash in red ink.

States, which can neither declare bankruptcy nor print their own currency, grow weaker with every federal incursion. Their collective income versus expense gap exceeds \$55 billion. More than half live hand to mouth on less than 1 % reserves. Their dilemma is non partisan, elephantine in scope and asinine in nature.

Civic virtue wanes as we sadly fear our own sweat equity and progressively expedite our educational decline, wasting money hand over fist.

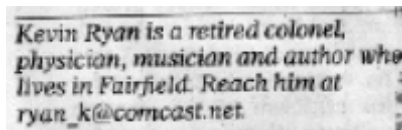
Fortunately, the architect of American exceptionalism is not mortal. The foundation of our ideals will not quietly collapse unnoticed and the nation is awakening. Perhaps we see entitlements are not a long term solution but a potential national narcotic when misapplied. Perhaps we remember the magic in a meritocracy and that accountability, like justice, must be equally applied. Perhaps we remember that evil is not defeated by apology, rhetoric or appeasement.

Let us not look for the next Messiah of the moment as some fool on the hill promising all and delivering nothing. As was true with the Continental Congress, it remains true for all who call themselves American; leadership starts with you.

We are in a golden age of information with tools to discern wheat from chaff. Learn how we got here. Take that first step back. Do more than vote on November 2<sup>nd</sup>; become an agent of change.

Take a moment; listen to some of the most beautiful words penned by an American about America who knew this nation's fortunes are driven by you.

"O beautiful for pilgrim feet whose stern impassioned stress, a thoroughfare of freedom beat across the wilderness! America! America! God mend thine every flaw; confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law!"



Kevin Ryan is a retired colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield. Reach him at ryan\_k@comcast.net