

'state of education' — by eugene goll



ABC's back-to-school documentary mostly fiction

It is unusual to sit through a three-hour TV special and not learn something. The ABC program on education "To Save Our Schools, To Save Our Children" proved to be an exception for me.

On September 4, to coincide with the opening of schools for another year, ABC put on a documentary. The special presumed that schools in the nation are in real trouble, an argument that prompts big criticism of the program.

It would have been better to provide balance instead of concentrating so much on the negative side of education. Perhaps the fault lay with Marshal Frady. After years of writing about his native South, Frady has more recently provided commentary on national issues.

It seems as if Frady had been living in a cave since the late 1970's when another wave of criticism of the schools

emerged. Frady offers here an example of a person lacking thorough knowledge of a subject who suddenly begins to look at it closely. The program plowed over much of the same ground of criticisms made in recent years.

Peter Jennings, who introduced the special, set the tone. The schools must be "saved" or the future of the nation as a democracy is threatened as well as its economic health.

Frady then recalled the "good old days" when education was better, which in itself is nonsense. The program depicted students today as different. They care less about learning than previous students because more distractions — booze, drugs, TV, and video rock — are available now. (Students as a whole today are hardly worse than those of earlier years and they actually may be more serious about their education.)

There are more single parent families than ever, the program noted. This means more latch-key children, who go from school to a home where there is no one to provide support when they come in from school. (There may actually be more social support agencies that help fill in the void than in the past.)

A real clue pointing to the inadequacy of background research (making things in education seem worse than they are) were mistakes the program made. For example, Frady interviewed Diane Ravitch, who recently wrote a book on the history of education. She is shown saying that there was more respect for teachers 30 to 50 years ago. (As a serious scholar, she has to know that society has never held the teaching profession in high esteem.)

The TV special emphasized that the colleges are turning out fewer by half the number of graduates going into

teaching. Yet, nothing was said about the unwillingness of students to major in teaching because they could not find jobs in many subjects or that declining enrollments have led to teacher layoffs.

The program focused on the inner city schools where economic conditions are bad. The only solution Frady offered was that an infusion of aid is needed at a time when there is a leveling off of federal aid to disadvantaged students. (This is news?)

Inner city schools do remain a problem. Remember "The Blackboard Jungle" that goes back more than two decades? All schools aren't located in the inner city, however, and schools overall are not worse than they have been in recent decades. But that doesn't make for the sort of TV special that grabs the attention of viewers.



'what's in a name?' — by ven pitoni

Semper fidelis

Happiness — good fortune — prosperity.

All those delightful things are pooled into the Old French word "bonair" (later "bonheur") from which stems the surname Bonner.

Way back before the Middle Ages "bonair" was written "debonere" and "debonaire." The terms denoted persons of good manners and bearings.

As time wore on, "le debonaire" became a nickname meaning civil, gentle, gracious, courteous and kind. People exhibiting those "Le Bonair" qualities soon found themselves with the descriptive surname Bonner, sometimes spelled Bonnor, Bon(n)ar and Boner.

But there were misnomers even in those days, according to one genealogical expert who has dug up an illustration of Horace Smith's saying that surnames "even go by contraries."

It has to do with a Bishop Edmund Bonner who lived in England from 1495-1569, during the reign of Queen Mary. History shows, according to the authority Lower, that the bishop was noted for the persecution of Protestants in England. He was deposed in 1559, and died in prison.

Early homes of the English Bonners were established at Herefordshire, Hunts and Oxfordshire, and Combe St. Nicholas, in the county of Somerset; where the family name occurred in the Anglo-Saxon forms of Bonere and Le Boneere.

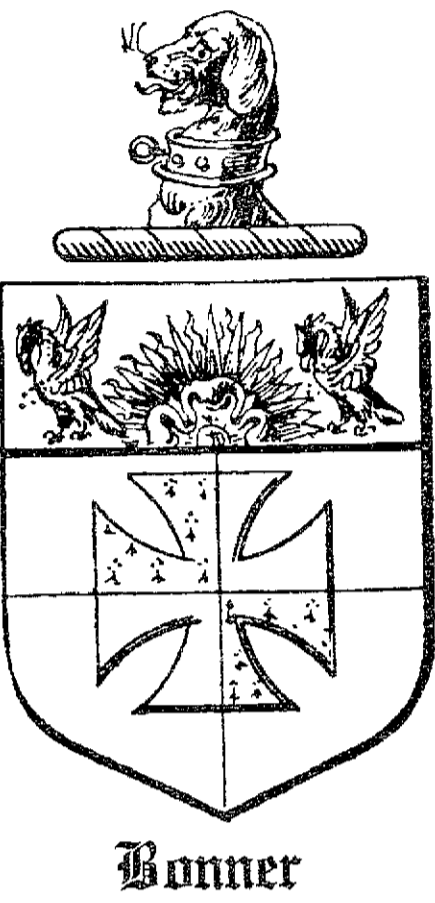
In Burke's account of the Scottish family of Bonar or Bonnar it is stated that the surname was at one time so numerous in Scotland that no less than 37 different lines of Bon(n)ars are to be found on record, each styled by their territorial designation. The Irish form Bunner derives from the Gaelic "Cnaimhsighe," meaning little bone or the frail one.

The famous French painter, Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899), was the first woman ever to receive the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor. "The Horse Fair" and "Studies of Animals" are among her notable paintings. Her brother, Auguste (1824-1884) was also a landscape and animal painter. An American contemporary, Robert Bonner, was founder and publisher of the old New York Ledger. He married Kate Helena Griffith in 1880.

Among the early settlers of the name in America was John Bonner of London. He sailed over to Boston, Mass., in 1678 and eventually settled down in Cambridge, Mass., in about 1697. Another was William Bonner, who died in 1847, a resident of York County, Pa., and Bath County, Va. He married Hannah (1790-1868) — surname unknown.

The ancestral insignia reproduced here is the same arms found on the tomb of Capt. John Bonner, who was buried in the old Granary Burying Ground in Boston. The captain was the son of New England pioneer John Bonner above.

"Semper fidelis" is the family motto, which when translated from the Latin means "Always Faithful."



Bonner

FOR FURTHER READING:
THE FAMILY RECORD OF WILLIAM NEVEL BONNER, a concise sketch of the lives of his sons and the family record, by Jno. E. Bonner. 25 p., n.d.

BONNER-SMITH CIRCLE; a compilation of the family lines which intersect Bonner and Smith lines. By Ruth E. Bonner. 228p., 1975.

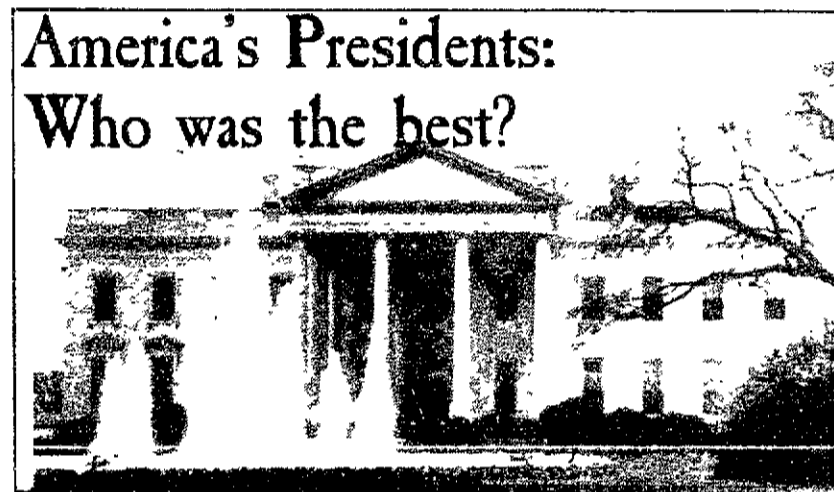
'editor's choice' — by holmes alexander



The 'possessive,' contradictory president

(Second in an eight-part series)

Congressional warhawks join the long-lasting Franco-British conflict with disastrous results. The unconstitutional Louisiana Purchase by Jefferson extends the Slavery Question westward. The dynasty ends with Monroe's Era of Good Feeling and the rise of Andrew Jackson.



America's Presidents: Who was the best?

The country enjoyed a government of efficient moderation until the congressional warhawks of 1812 joined the long-lasting Franco-British war.

The excitable young representatives Clay and Calhoun were mainly responsible for sending the army and navy into action against Canada. They made elaborate plans to divide the dominion, as well as left-over French possessions in Louisiana into American states, Clay was a true fire-eater, a duelist, but Calhoun proved a physical coward.

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It was an age of vivid contrasts. The ferocious Andrew Jackson said on leaving office that his only regrets were that he had not shot Clay and hanged Calhoun. John Adams, in the same position, wrote that when he died and went to Heaven he hoped to meet his bitterest enemy Hamilton there.

Although careless historians have so written, we did not lose the war. The decisive Battle of New Orleans was fought and won well before the peace treaty reached the Senate. Had the British not been beaten here, they would almost certainly have pressed their gains. But before the New Orleans battle, we had suffered the capital city being put to flames and the president to ignoble flight. A newspaper reported:

Fly, Armstrong, fly,
Run, Monroe, run
Were the last words of Madison.

These events would have been improbable had Hamilton/Marshall continued the Washington regime. Hamilton had determined in youth to ride to success on a war tide, and he was first over the enemy ramparts at Yorktown. Marshall was a cheerleader of morale at Valley Forge, and he became known as General Marshall for heading a militia unit that subdued an uprising in Virginia.

In subsequent years of the 19th century, the United States did not undertake war unless prepared to win it by vigorous enlistment or conscription and the use of its military academies. In every case war was successfully waged, and profitable peace terms dictated, in engagements against the Indian tribes,

Mexico, the Confederate states and Spain.

Other than the one military embarrassment, Madison's time in the dynasty ran smoothly, the windfall of the Louisiana Purchase leading to exploration of the West by Lewis and Clark. The formation of new states alarmed non-presidents like Clay and Webster who worked furiously for compromises to halt the spread of slavery.

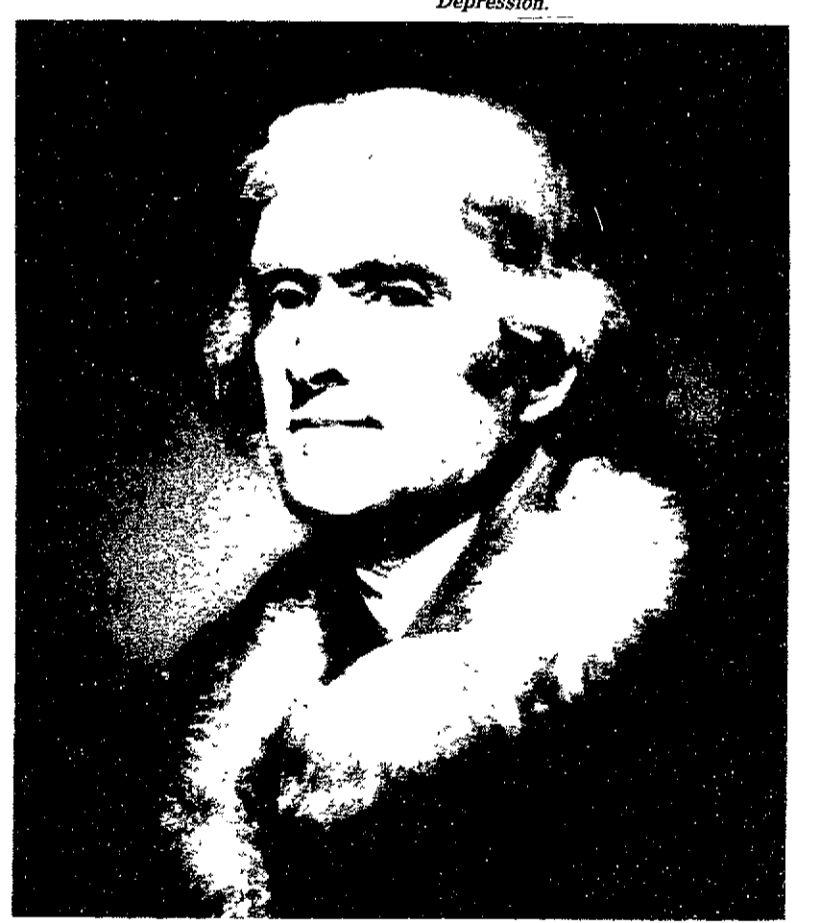
Had Jefferson gone the constitutional route, he would have asked for an amendment to authorize acquisition and disposition of the vast territory. He was always against slavery in theory, but not in practice, using more than 100 blacks on his several plantations. He had been extremely cautious on the subject of Sally Hemings who now was mothering him a slave-family at Monticello, a matter fully exposed in the opposition newspapers.

While the scandal did Jefferson no political harm, it was a personal embarrassment and warped his judgment in state-craft on the Louisiana question. He turned to executive action, quite out of line of his democratic self-government principles.

Jefferson's mind was too large to be tethered by tedious inconsistencies. Always a man of inexplicable contradictions — making him, however, a warm personality — Jefferson in the Continental Congress introduced and strenuously supported a bill that provided neither slavery nor involuntary servitude after 1800 in the new states.

This was the Free Soil plank, which entered every presidential election for a half-century. Jefferson's measure lost by one vote, an absentee, and Jefferson lamented, "The voice of a single individual . . . would have prevented the abominable crime from spreading . . ."

The adjective among many biographies that fits Jefferson best is "possessive." He would not liberate his own slaves, which were valuable property. He was deeply in love with the almost-white Sally. He brought her back from freedom in France, where he



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had made her pregnant, to the bondage of Monticello. Like the Apostle Peter this man was all too human. When all his ambiguities and failures are enumerated, the Virginia dynasty stands as a second masterpiece to the Constitution and an admirable, if paternalistic and imperfect, model for republican governance.

Any opportunity of continuance past Monroe's Era of Good Feeling ended when William Crawford of Georgia, Monroe's secretary of war, candidate of both the dynasty and Van Buren's New York regency, was knocked out of the presidential race of 1824 by a paralytic stroke. Again, there was a run-off in the House of Representatives, which delivered a president-without-mandate in John Quincy Adams.

Tomorrow: Jackson's "dust-business" regime and Van Buren's Depression.

'world focus' — by don graff



Totalitarian dungeons

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (NEA) — This report comes to you from a "totalitarian dungeon."

That's Ronald Reagan's recent description of Nicaragua under its Sandinista rulers.

You could fool me. Seen from inside, the dungeon seems remarkably unconfined. Travel throughout most of the country is unimpeded with a couple of notable exceptions — the mountains to the north of here and the Miskito Coast in the northeast where the border war with the Honduran-based *contras* is going on, and the new military airfield a few miles from the city, shown to journalists in mid-August and then declared off limits.

This is my third visit to Sandinista Nicaragua since the overthrow of the Somoza dynasty. The first impression is of little physical change.

Managua, sweltering beside its fetid lake, still has a two-building skyline — the ersatz-Aztec pyramid of the Hotel Intercontinental and the Bank of America tower, the only two large structures to survive the 1972 earthquake.

Hundreds of millions of dollars for aid and reconstruction poured into Nicaragua after that disaster — most of it directly into Anastasio Somoza's own pockets. Downtown Managua remains as he left it, a wasteland overgrown with weeds and crisscrossed by streets going nowhere.

But there are changes. Begging children are seldom encountered. A few years ago, leaving the airport terminal or the Intercontinental meant running an obstacle course of overstretched hands.

And the free-lance money changers have closed up shop or gone into hiding. They once did a thriving business out of cars and vans parked in front of the Intercontinental.

These days, you do your business at the hotel desk at a rate of 28 cordobas to the dollar, or cross the street to a single authorized change shop which gives 40 to one. The word is that there are still dealers who will go 200 and more, but it is strictly black market, illegal and risky.

The changes have to have come from tougher enforcement measures.

They can't be consequences of improvement in an economy that is clearly going downhill.

Food appears to be in adequate supply. But otherwise, in a country where almost every manufactured item has to be imported, things are tight.

You see that in the bare shelves of shops and the scarcity of basic items — try to find a ballpoint pen in Managua. You hear it in the complaints of merchants operating out of makeshift stalls in the sprawling public markets. To a person they blame the government for the shortages.

If they accurately reflect public opinion, the Sandinistas could be heading for trouble in the Nov. 4 election — if the voting is free and fair and if the major opposition parties, which continue to balk at this writing, participate.

On the other hand, still to be heard from is the countryside — the less vocal but more numerous peasants who have benefitted most from the revolution's health, literacy and land reform programs.

There is also some turmoil on the labor front. My arrival coincided with a work stoppage that temporarily cut off supplies of what is arguably — I'll argue it — one of the world's great beers, Victoria. The Sandinistas did not send in the troops — Polish style — but negotiated with the brewery workers on their wage grievances.

There are other aspects of the Nicaraguan scene that do not quite fit the American president's description of a trapped and oppressed people.

Rotary still meets every Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. at the Intercontinental. The Lions have Fridays at 7 reserved.

The better restaurants still do a good evening business, especially Los Antojitos. By early evening, if it isn't raining, the open-air terrace across the street from the Intercontinental is crowded with young Managuans, most, judging from the Mercedes and BMWs in the parking lot, from comfortable circumstances despite the country's straitened ones.

It's not what I would call an oppressive scene, but then what do I know about totalitarian dungeons.

'on the light side'

Tiger tied to tree gets jailed

HOUSTON (AP) — A 1-year-old Bengal tiger is back behind bars at the animal pound after residents complained that the 180-pound cat was too dangerous to leave chained to a tree in the back yard.

Tiffany has lived on a farm owned by Mark Crior's parents since last February, when neighbors complained about Crior keeping the cat in his yard and officials took her to the pound.

The latest chapter in the tiger's troubles began when Crior, 19, had ear trouble while he visited a friend over the Labor Day weekend.

"He was only going to stay for the weekend," said the friend, 17-year-old Charlie Osborne. "But then his car got stuck and when he went back to try to get it," it had been towed.

Tiffany had spent about a week chained to a mimosa tree in Osborne's back yard before a neighbor called police.

"I don't want to be seen as the neighborhood bad guy, but I wanted somebody to see if the guy had the right papers for that tiger," the neighbor, who declined to be identified, said Wednesday.

Authorities were awaiting a visit from Crior to pick up the tiger, but Osborne said he was in Columbus, Texas, asking his parents for help in recovering the car and the cat.



BY PETER WUERKER