

Decent Democrats (Holy Cow!)



by Lee Duigon

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As a reporter and managing editor of The Bayshore Independent, in the 1970s, I covered lots and lots of politics. Most of the politicians—and voters—in our circulation area were Democrats. And for more than a few of them, that didn't matter. Let me cite a few of those to show you a vast difference between then and now.

*Frank S. was chairman of his township's Democrat organization. Over a highly-qualified candidate, Frank was appointed director of their regional sewerage authority. We journalists provided the sardonic laughter. Another no-show job handed out as a reward to a political hack!

We were amazed when Frank fell in love with that job and put in a full day, every day, in his office at the plant. He studied hard and learned fast: the authority never served its public better. All these years later, it still seems like a miracle.

*Hyman G's day job was as an executive with Standard & Poor's. His sole interest lay in putting his skills and experience to work for the community, which elected him to the township council.

This township was famous for its cut-throat politics, mostly within the Democrat Party itself: it had too few Republicans to make any kind of impact. Two Democrat factions slugged it out, day after day. It was great sport. But Hyman had no politics to speak of, and somehow succeeded in remaining aloof

from the blood-bath. He accomplished good things for the township's finances, even if the perpetual politics confused him. I like to think his township appreciated his efforts.

*Assemblyman Walter K. was just an all-around good guy who knew how to laugh at himself. He was well-known as a good listener. He used to stop at my office to bring me up to speed on developments in the State House. He was an easy interview: you didn't have to keep asking yourself "What does he *mean* by that? What's his game?" But Walter had no game—unless you wanted to count honest answers as a game.

*Congressman Jim H. was re-elected in a landslide every two years. Why? Because he served all his constituents, helping them in any way he could, regardless of their politics. When he wasn't there because he had to be in Washington, his office staff was voter-friendly. Whatever they could do for you, they did. It was almost impossible to find anyone who ever voted against him. He made it his business to do his level best to represent everyone in his district.

Oh, sure, there were some rotters, a couple of whom wound up in jail. As the years went by, there seemed to be more and more of those—and fewer and fewer of the good guys. It seems amazing to me now to think that most of the mayors and committee members I knew *deserved* the votes they got. I'm reasonably sure I didn't dream that. I was a reporter, after all—supposedly a member of an audience that had a notoriously critical eye.

What happened to our politics? And to our politicians? The long-time mayor of my own home town, a pharmacist by trade, used to be the only Democrat on the town council. Heck, my mother knew him from their childhood. He could have remained our mayor for as long as he kept living—because by and large, he *earned* the voters' loyalty. His own politics, whatever they were, never came into it.

Some say we get the politics that we deserve. If so, Heaven help us.

I have discussed these and other topics throughout the week on my blog, <http://www.leeduigon.com/> . Click the link and drop in for a visit... whenever you're feeling sentimental about our politics. My articles can also be found at www.chalcedon.edu/ .

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