FORUM

Work as jailer, cop burned in immorality, futility of torture

As a young U.S. Marine in the late 1950s, I worked the brig on an aircraft carrier. We called them "brigs," but they were jails. And the brig was a tough jail.

On my watch, prisoners were not beaten or maltreated — but they weren't treated well either. They were not treated with dignity or respect and the things I had to do as a guard made me feel uncomfortable as a person. My buddies reminded me that we guarded the bad guys of the Navy — and time in the brig was supposed to be "hard time.

Even though I was still a teenager, I came to see that working the brig under these "hard time" rules was making me less of a person. When you don't treat other people with dignity or respect, you both suffer. I asked to be reassigned and, luckily, I was. I often look back at that time and wonder what would have happened to me if I had stayed and gone along with the "hard time" rules.

This experience, however, stayed with me. It was with me when I began my career with the police and when I went back to the university.

In my early days in the police I heard stories from my fellow officers about colleagues who used the "third degree" to gain information and confessions from suspects. In one instance they told me about two detectives who often threatened suspects by taking them to a well-known high bridge and telling them they would push them off if they did not get the information they needed.

But this was the 1960s, I told my self, not the 1930s, when the Wickersham Commission exposed police behavior like this and said it was not only immoral but illegal.

Thankfully, most of the police I worked with did not use such methods. We came to believe what we were taught in the police academy: that we were to obey the law while we enforced the law.

When we left the academy and got on the street, practicing these beliefs quickly labeled us as untrustworthy by our more senior colleagues.

To many of us, torturing suspects to get a confession demonstrated not only a lack of ability but also ignorance. Not only did we know that such methods were illegal and the results of those confessions would be

excluded from court, we knew that information obtained by torture was simply unreliable. And we came to see that police who used torture soon became unrecognizable from the criminals they pursued.



Couper

While spending time both on the street and in the university classroom, I came to enlarge the view I had of the police function. I came to see that police were vital links to the survival of our democracy and way of life. If the police failed to carry out their constitutional responsibilities — acting illegally and destroying the trust of the people — our great nation would suffer. I saw the police had the unique ability to demonstrate how a democracy works: with fairness and respect for others, and within the

I came to see that a great number of Americans, mostly the poor and the disadvantaged, first experience democracy on the street, and not necessarily in the courtroom or the Legislature. Therefore, I saw that the most important operating value of a police officer is to act on his or her belief in the dignity and worth of all people: from burglars, street prostitutes and child molesters to new immigrants, the poor and the mentally

Therefore, the use of torture is simply not permissible in a free society. As U.S. Sen. John McCain, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, and others have said, maltreating prisoners of war not only puts our military in jeopardy, it also deeply harms those whom we authorize to conduct it. It was a lesson I began to learn early in my life working a Navy

Now we may not call certain behaviors torture. We may try to define it more loosely or give it another name. But whether we call it "waterboarding" or 'dunking," it is still torRev. David Couper Guest Columnist

We came to see that police who used torture soon became unrecognizable from the criminals they pursued.

ture. And the standard we should use is this: If we would not want our military personnel subjected to that kind of treatment when they are captured, then it is not permissible for any representative of our government to use it on others. We should not forget that earlier in our nation's history we used the "waterboarding" method on a number of girls in Salem, Mass. It was quite effective. They all confessed they were witches.

We should also historically note that most all of our nation's police departments have been able to operate effectively for well over half a century without having to resort to torture to accomplish their mission. So why is it necessary for our nation's military and intelligence services to use torture to accomplish their mission?

ver the years, the police have arrested child molesters, kidnappers, murderers, and persons accused of the most horrible crimes and they were able to solve or resolve nearly all of those crimes without using methods of torture. Our nation can do the same. The intelligence and military missions of our nation can be accomplished without torture, without diminishing all of us as human persons.

So let's not play word games. Let's outlaw the use of torture by anyone in our name and mandate those who represent us to stop it now.

The Rev. David C. Couper is an Episcopal minister and the former Madison police

Voice of the People

Madison is correct to be smoke-free

Dear Editor: It is time to stop guestioning Madison's smoke-free policy. I have a friend who has worked at a bowling alley in a nearby town for four years now. He does not smoke, but is surrounded by it three or more

According to several studies, the risk of developing lung cancer is three times more likely for my friend than it is for people who work in a smokefree environment. There are many young people in this state just like my friend who will suffer the same consequences of working in a smoke-filled environment unless we decide, as Madison leaders have, to protect all workers by passing smoke-free workplace ordinances.

Think about how many young lives could be lengthened and improved if

all bowling alleys, restaurants and bars in Wisconsin were smoke-free, as they are in Madison. My friend's health (and the health of all workers) depends on the action of local govern-

By supporting the smoke-free ordi-

nance in Madison, the City Council has shown that it understands the dangers of secondhand smoke and that it values its citizens' right to breathe smoke-free air. Hopefully, other cities in Dane County will join the inevitable smoke-free trend.

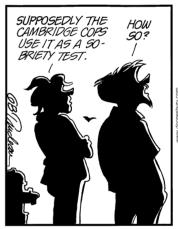
I feel very lucky to live in a smokefree Madison, where I never have to choose between my health and my

> **Lindsey Mercier** Madison

DOONESBURY by Garry Trudeau









U.S. legal, moral restraints thrown out in detainee bill

Oh dear. I'm sure he didn't mean it. In Illinois' 6th Congressional District, long represented by Henry Hyde, Republican candidate Peter Roskam accused his Democratic opponent Tammy Duckworth of planning to "cut and run" on Iraq.

Duckworth is a former Army major and chopper pilot who lost both legs in Iraq after her helicopter got hit by a rocket-propelled grenade. "I just could not believe he would say that to me," said Duckworth, who walks on artificial legs and uses a cane.

Every election cycle produces some wincers, but how do you apolo-

The legislative equivalent of that remark is the detainee bill just passed by Congress. Beloveds, the final version is so much worse than even that pathetic deal reached between the White House and Republican Sens. John Warner, John McCain and Lindsey Graham. The White House has since reinserted a number of "technical fixes" that were the point of the putative "compromise." It leaves the president with the power to decide who is an enemy combatant.

This bill is not a national security issue — this is about torturing helpless human beings without any proof they are our enemies. Perhaps this could be considered if we knew the administration would use the power with enormous care and thoughtfulness. But of the over 700 prisoners sent to Guantanamo, only 10 have ever been formally charged with any-

The first reported case of death by torture by Americans was in the New York Times in 2003 by Carlotta Gall. The military had announced the prisoner died of a heart attack, but when Gall actually saw the death certificate, issued by the military, it said the cause of death was homicide. The "heart attack" came after he had been beaten so often on this legs that they had "basically been pulpified," according to the coroner.

The story of why and how it took the Times so long to print this information is in the current edition of Columbia Journalism Review. The press in general has been slow in reporting torture, so very few Americans have any idea how far it has spread. As is often true in top-down institutions, the orders get passed on **Molly Ivins**



in what I call the downward communications exaggeration spiral.

For example, on a newspaper, a top editor may remark casually, 'Let's give the new mayor a chance to see what he can do before we start attacking him."

This gets passed on as, "Don't touch the mayor unless he really screws up.

And it ultimately arrives at the reporter level as, "We can't say anything negative about the mayor.'

The version of the detainee bill now in the Senate not only undoes much of the McCain-Warner-Graham work, but it is actually much worse than the administration's first proposal. In one change, the original compromise language said a suspect had the right to "examine and respond to" all evidence used against him. The three senators said the clause was necessary to avoid secret trials. The bill has now dropped the word "examine" and left only "re-

spond to. In another change, a clause said that evidence obtained outside the United States could be admitted in court even if it had been gathered without a search warrant. But the bill now drops the words "outside the United States," which means prosecutors can ignore American legal standards on warrants

The bill also expands the definition of an unlawful enemy combatant to cover anyone who has "purposefully and materially supported hostilities against the United States. Quick, define "purposefully and materially." One person has already been charged with aiding terrorists because he sold a satellite TV package that includes the Hezbollah net-

The bill simply removes a suspect's right to challenge his detention in court. This is a rule of law that goes back to the Magna Carta in



Former Army Maj. Tammy Duckworth gets help from her husband, Bryan Bowlsbey, in December as she starts her campaign for Congress.

1215. That pretty much leaves the barn door open.

In July 2003, George Bush said in a speech: "The United States is committed to worldwide elimination of torture, and we are leading this fight by example. Freedom from torture is an inalienable human right. Yet torture continues to be practiced around the world by rogue regimes, whose cruel methods match their determination to crush the human spirit."

ellow citizens, this bill throws out legal and moral restraints as the president deems it necessary — these are fundamental principles of basic decency, as well as

I'd like those supporting this evil bill to spare me one affliction: Do not, please, pretend to be shocked by the consequences of this legislation. And do not pretend to be shocked when the world begins comparing us to the Nazis.

Nationally syndicated political columnist Molly lyins writes from Austin. Texas.

School 'security' is wrong response

Dear Editor: I have great sympathy for those affected by the Weston school shooting last week, particularly the family of John Klang.

That said, the new "security measures" in place as students return to school seem to me a prime example of the wrong sort of response, the kind Americans are so good at these days, of putting good people on lockdown in the wake of a singular act by a single person. One very troubled youth commits a horrific act, and now the rest of the school is subject to armed surveillance and the registration of outsiders?

What sort of message is that intended to send — we are trying to prevent further armed attacks by bringing in more arms and suspecting everyone?

I urge the School Board to consider intelligently and rationally addressing root causes here, even in the wake of a very irrational and heartbreaking incident, before initializing knee-jerk measures that can only result in more fear and anguish.

> **Bill Whitney** Madison

Baldwin will protect our Social Security

Dear Editor: On Wisconsin Public Radio recently, Republican congressional candidate Dave Magnum said he supports the privatization of Social

Privatization would have individuals take their money out of Social Security and invest, instead, privately in the stock market. While today the stock market may be up, we know tomorrow it can be down, jeopardizing our financial futures.

Social Security affords all of us a crucial safety net, protecting our nation's retirees. Dare we gamble in an unstable stock market?

We worry about a privatized Social Security system that is not guaran-

teed, that could leave us — our friends, our families and our elderly neighbors — with less income rather than more in retirement.

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin has pledged to secure our Social Security system! She opposes any plan that threatens the future of this vital program. We also know that, while in Congress, Tammy Baldwin has been working for seniors and our own futures, and she will continue her work for all of us!

Please join us by voting for Tammy Baldwin on Nov 7.

> Mike and Cheryl Moskoff Madison

Voting systems not up to standards

Dear Editor: The front page article in the Sept. 18 Capital Times on major problems with new voting systems quoted one high election official as saying, "We know the equipment works because it's been qualified to federal standards.

Here is evidence against that assertion. Recently the Rocky Mountain News reported on a Colorado lawsuit about voting machines: "Federal certification of some computerized voting machines skipped significant security tests, an expert witness testified in a lawsuit seeking to bar use of the machines in the November election in Colorado.'

Here in Wisconsin, the staff of the state Elections Board wrote in a report to the board on March 22, regarding Diebold equipment: "These components include interpretive code, which is prohibited by the 2002 federal VVSS." Even though the test labs had "qualified" the equipment, it is widely acknowledged that it did not meet the voting system standards.

Clearly significant improvements need to be made in the process of certifying election equipment. In addition, audits of vote counts should be conducted on all Wisconsin elections a few days after the election. An audit of vote counts consists of a 2 percent or 3 percent manual count of the ballots in wards randomly selected.

> Paul Malischke Madison