

VIEWS FROM THE GREEN MOUNTAIN STATE

Robert W. (I write about anything I want to) van de Velde

Editor: Responding to Art Moody's encouragement, Bob van de Velde has sent us some of the editorials which he has written for The Valley Voice, a weekly newspaper published in Middlebury, Vermont.

Headed for the business world as an undergraduate, Bob did work for R. H. Macy and for Scribners before World War II. Then the army became his career for the next 16 years. He served as Intelligence Officer in the U. S. II Corps in Sicily and Italy. In the early fifties he found time to earn a Masters Degree in Public Affairs and a PhD in Politics at Princeton. Thus equipped, on retirement from the army in 1958, with the rank of colonel, he joined the faculty of Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. At some time before retirement, he met the owner of The Valley Voice on a visit to Middlebury. The owner needed a new columnist and offered to pay Bob \$10 per column. Bob: "There began my journalistic career."

Moving to Middlebury on retirement from Princeton he has written a column per week for almost 15 years, winning some prizes and Honorable Mentions along the way. He finally worked up to \$15 per column, "and the paper went broke." After a three year hiatus, he resumed writing in 1993 and now receives \$20 per week. Bob: "... so you can see that I keep as close to starvation as I can, but I still gain weight."

The following are two samples of his column, which is titled:

IT'S WORTH THINKING ABOUT.

Admiral Kelso and Tailhook.

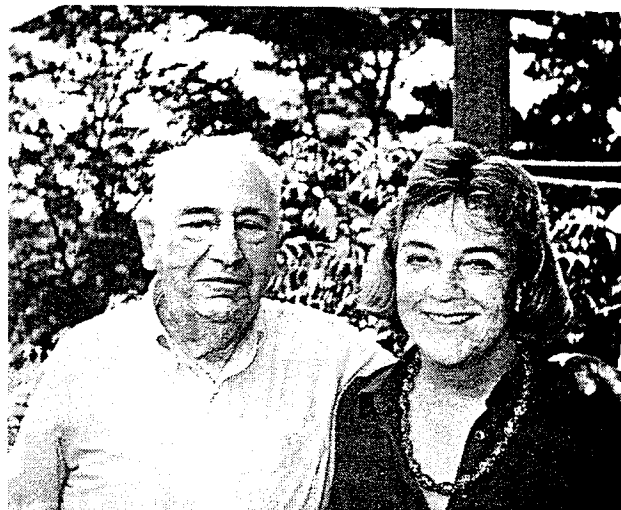
May 2, 1994

It's a national disgrace. I'm talking about the U. S. Senate's vote (19 April) on whether or not retiring Admiral Frank B. Kelso II should retire in the four-star rank he holds as Chief of Naval Operations, or revert to his two-star permanent rank. Why is it a disgrace?

Because Admiral Kelso was the top Navy officer at the time of the Tailhook Convention in Las Vegas and he was there, but said he didn't see or know anything about the scandalous behavior many of the younger aviators engaged in. That was a lie according to the Navy's own judge advocate (law officer) who was necessarily involved with the official investigation.

Because every female in the Congress joined in trying to have the Senate vote "no" to the Admiral's four-star and thus higher pay rank because they unanimously agreed that while he had done some good in promoting sexual equality in the Navy, he had also decided that the old "boys will be boys" standard of the Navy was not a bad thing.

Because not only was the 54 to 43 vote a repudiation of all the women in Congress, but it was a slap in the face for all women everywhere. No one disputes that the orgy of sexual harassment that took place at the Tailhook Convention was a disgraceful performance by many male "officers of the U. S.," but this vote says that Admiral Kelso is excused even



Deane and Bob van de Velde Cornwall, Vt. - July 1994

though he was present and certainly at least knew about the behavior in the hallways.

Because lobbyists for the "old boy" network in the Pentagon again won out over the "civilian control" in the White House and the Senate, making something of a mockery of that basic concept of our democracy. Even Navy Secretary John Dalton, who last year wanted to dismiss Chief of Naval Operations Kelso for lack of leadership, caved in and spoke up for the "old boys", as did the Secretary of Defense.

Because Navy Lieutenant Paula Coughlin, who was at Tailhook and suffered some of the same indignities visited on the other women present, and who subsequently officially reported the disgraceful behavior of the male fliers, was so harassed following her report that she realized that her Navy career was doomed and has resigned her commission.

So it is that women everywhere, but particularly in the armed forces, have again been made to realize that they are not to be considered as, or treated as, the equals of men in the same jobs, and even wearing the same uniform.

But to my mind a factor of much longer lasting import to the nation, and particularly perhaps to the armed forces, is the fact that the Kelso vote now condones the idea that an officer can utter falsehoods with impunity. It may be that I am hopelessly old-fashioned, but I still cling to the belief that an officer's word (if not that of all men) is as good as his bond. It used to be that when I was a young officer no one doubted us when we said something was true or gave our word that we would do or not do something. A promise was a sacred sort of thing. Merchants would cash our checks even when they did not know us personally, and there were no ID cards then.

I am not such a starry-eyed romantic as to believe that no officer lied, but it was the unusual one who did so about anything important. I once wrote a scholarly monograph on lying by public officials and during that research I discovered, to my satisfaction at least, that official lying became widespread in this country almost contemporaneously with the beginning of the Cold War and with McCarthyism. Everything I've ever read about Harry Truman, for example, makes me believe that he was a very truthful man.

Moreover, if one reads David McCullough's *Truman*, one is reconvinced over and over again that Truman was the last president who understood and accepted the need for a sense of personal responsibility and accountability for his words and deeds as a man, as a citizen and as an official. He would have rejected Senator Nunn's plea to the Senate that it not "punish" Admiral Kelso for Tailhook. Well, damn it, he was the CNO at the time, he was there, and he lied about his knowledge of the scandalous behavior of his aviators, so why should he not be punished?

I was glad to learn that our U. S. Senator James Jeffords voted against retiring Admiral Kelso at his present four-star rank. His vote signifies that once again Jeffords has voted his conscience rather than with the pressure groups. His vote was not only the result of his recognizing right from wrong, but also, because he is himself a senior officer in the U. S. Naval Reserve, it showed courage because it's one the "old boys" in the Pentagon will almost surely hold against him when he becomes eligible for promotion to the rank of rear admiral.

With some difficulty I later learned that Senator Leahy, whom I have long admired, had also voted against giving the Admiral the golden parachute he and his "old Boy" lobbyists had so wanted.

Views of 61st Class Dinner



Moody, Keasbey, Mary & Ernie Chamberlin, Townend



Naomi & Lou Reik, Barbara Hewson, Matty Haythe, Kate Roebing, Kemmerer with back to camera.