

He's My President Now

I'll admit it publically. I did not vote for Barak Obama for President.

(I'd pause here to wait for the gasps of surprise, but know there won't be any.)

But the fact is he won a resounding electoral victory. He has been sworn in as President of the United States. That means he is my President.

When Walter Mondale was interviewed at the end of his career in Washington, he was asked what the biggest change was that had taken place in the Capital City over his years of service. Without hesitation, he responded: "Incivility"

No doubt things had changed, and not for the better. At the same time, I have trouble believing that Congress under Samuel Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson was all love and harmony. Politics is a messy business, and one of the things we are advised to never watch being made – sausage being the other.

Lake County's Ardent Democrat stopped by one day last fall. He does that on occasion. I like to think it's for the insightful conversation and witty repartee we engage in. Truth be told it probably has more to do with my wife Shele's great cooking and hospitality. Regardless, it was a cold and wet day, and he had his usual good sense to stop by at lunch time. So we were able to take lots of time to work over the (then) pending election and the current slate of candidates. I suggested he get a Norm Coleman yard sign, which he said he would do as soon as I put a Wellstone! bumper sticker on all my trucks.

Neither is likely to ever happen.

He and I stand at the opposite ends of the political spectrum. Polar opposites. So some who know both of us tend think our friendship a bit odd. But in reality, we share some important core values, regardless of our politics. While not definitively speaking for him, I can say we agree that individuals should be responsible for themselves. A good day's work never hurt anyone, and doing it to support yourself and those close to you is not only honorable, but right. Honesty and fairness should be recognized in all our dealings, business and otherwise. We'd all be better off if the Ten Commandments were not just displayed in public, but displayed in our lives. When someone is down, even if they are down due to bad decisions on their own part, you should try to give them a hand up. If someone is trying, you should help; if they are not trying, don't waste your time. Life is not summed up in how many toys one can accumulate; giving back is more important than accumulating.

Where we disagree is the best way to go about accomplishing these things. How much can government programs and agencies do, and how much needs to be done by individuals? How do we encourage individuals to do what they are not inclined to do, but is in the greater good? Is government the means by which things can get done, or is it the roadblock on the highway of progress?

We amiably argue about means. We don't disagree about ends. We know where we'd like to be. We debate over how to get there.

Which brings us back to President Obama. The election is over. We face, as a people, economic and political challenges most of us have not experienced in our lifetimes. If there is any hope of making progress to fixing them, it won't be found in the bi-partisan political maneuvering of the likes of Karl Rove or James Carville. Nor will it be fixed by an "I've got mine, you're on your own" attitude.

Today, Barak Obama is not merely The President. He is MY President. And yours. His election is not a travesty, nor is it an abomination. Nor is he the Anti-Christ. Vox Populi, Vox Dei. (The voice of the people is the voice of God). For those who believe truth of the Bible, we are reminded that governments rise and fall by the hand of God, and we are to pray for our leaders. Keep in mind that Nero was in charge when the Apostle Paul penned those thoughts.

President Obama will no doubt initiate policies and programs that I disagree with. That does not mean that I need to malign him as a person. I may argue the merits of the means he chooses, but we need to support him as far as we possibly can.

If we all do that, perhaps the atmosphere of incivility and bi-partisan bickering could become a thing of the past.