

After all, everyone understands that no "right" is absolute. We cannot yell "fire" in a crowded theater. We cannot holler obscenities on the corner of a residential neighborhood and not get arrested for disturbing the peace.

And if I don't like someone, I can say so, but I cannot express my dislike by punching him in the nose. When my dislike goes from thoughts, or words, to action, well, then I have crossed the line the Supreme Court itself has drawn in the sand over and over again.

The finest constitutional minds in the country—including Judge Robert Bork and legal scholars Stephen B. Presser and Richard D. Parker—tell us that this is not a First Amendment issue.

They will tell you that for any society to survive, there has to be some common basic rules of civility and respect which we all can live with. Every viable society has to be able to say: "This you shall not do. We, as a community, find this conduct highly offensive!"

The only other alternative is chaos and fragmentation. This is true even in a society as pluralistic and diverse as ours. In such a society, it is all the more important to protect the most important symbol of unity we have. And what's more important than Old Glory? Our flag and all it represents make us Americans.

You know, not long ago, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Iwo Jima, and we all know that the Marines did not run a copy of the Constitution up a pole on Mount Suribachi. When some tragedy occurs, we do not fly the Presidential Seal at half-mast from our federal buildings. We do not salute the Liberty Bell.

And so it's been across the world. Whether it's been Manila, or Paris, or Kuwait City, whenever American troops have liberated cities from oppressors, they have been greeted by grateful people waving—not the Constitution, not the Presidential Seal, not Big Macs or blue jeans—but the American flag.

And that love of the flag certainly is not dead in our own country. Eighty percent of the American people want this amendment. Over 100 national civic, fraternal and veterans organizations have been working since 1989 for its ratification.

Furthermore, forty-nine (49) states have asked Congress to pass this amendment. That's 11 more than the 38 needed to ratify it! When was the last time any amendment (regardless of whether or not it was ratified) garnered such broad-based support.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that consensus and reasoned arguments are going to enact this amendment, as opposed to the passions and politics of the moment. The grass-roots movement which has gathered steam over the past eight years is a testament to this.

For those who worry how ratifying this amendment would lead our nation down a slippery slope, I can assure you that the very difficult process which our Founding Fathers created to amend the Constitution will prevent a floodgate of amendments from happening, just as it has blocked frivolous amendments for more than 200 years.

And so, to sum up—We are not banning desecration of the flag. We're only giving Congress the right to do so, a right that it really always had up until the past eight years.

Not only does our amendment enhance rather than threaten the First Amendment, but burning the flag is not speech or expression, it is a hateful tantrum. And defecating on a flag is even worse.

Finally, the American people—and the constituents of every member in this room—want us to pass this amendment. So let's do it.

IN MEMORY OF MIKE ROYKO

HON. JOHN EDWARD PORTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 1997

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, when Mike Royko passed away this week, America lost more than a syndicated newspaper columnist. We lost one of the greatest writers and most consistent voices of reason in modern journalism. This loss is especially hard for Chicago, a city where he was born, whose people he loved, and who loved him right back. At the time of his death, Mike was also a resident of Winnetka in my congressional district, and I am very proud to have represented a journalist of his caliber.

For an entire generation of newspaper readers, Mike Royko captured the daily wonders and absurdities of life like no one else. From his early days at the former Daily News to his work at the Chicago Sun-Times and then the Chicago Tribune, Mike made millions of faithful readers laugh, cry, and most of all, think. He wrote with an understated eloquence that touched us and made us confront the most difficult issues of our time.

Mike was especially quick to expose the foibles of elected officials and the ridiculous excesses of bureaucracy. But while the targets of his columns would gnash their teeth, they had to admit that, more often than not, Royko was right on target. He was keeping the politicians and the bureaucrats honest. And in those rare instances when he made an error, Mike was the first to correct it.

Back in 1994, I became incensed about the treatment of Hyde Park restaurant owner Hans Morsbach, who was being unfairly charged with discriminatory hiring practices by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. I decided to address this matter in the House, went down to the floor, and talked about this crazy situation at the EEOC.

Well, my comments were brought to Mike Royko's attention—who had been writing about the Morsbach case—and the very next day he devoted his column to my floor statement. Being included in Mike's column is one of the great honors of my career in public service * * * especially since I was fortunate enough not to be the target of his razor-sharp wit.

Throughout Chicago and the Nation, there are many, many people who knew and worked with Mike over the years who are paying tribute to him. One of the most fascinating comments, which I understand was shared on a Chicago radio show recently, was about the richness and enduring insight of Mike's writing. The observation was something like this: 100 years from now, if a student wants to understand what life was like in America during the latter half of the 20th century, there is only one thing he or she has to do—read Mike Royko's columns.

Mr. Speaker, Mike Royko set standards for all journalists to admire and a legacy of work that will long endure. I know that I speak for many when I say that when I read the Chicago Tribune from now on, there will be a void on page 3 that can never be filled.

Thanks for all you added to our daily lives, Mike. We will miss you more than words can say.

A TRIBUTE TO "VOICES FROM VIETNAM"

HON. THOMAS M. BARRETT

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 1997

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, on February 28, 1968, reconnaissance Sgt. Marvin Acker of Middleton, WI, wrote to his fiancée from the steamy, jungles of Hue and Phu Bai of North Vietnam. Acker wrote:

I've seen how easy it is to die. So very, very easy. One second you're alive and the next second you're dead. I can't wait until I'm home again where there's peace and not half as many worries as there are here.

Sergeant Acker is one of more than 57,000 Wisconsin residents who put their lives on the line and served their Nation with distinction and honor in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam conflict. The emotions, thoughts, and observations of these brave men and women have recently been chronicled in one of the most important works to be published in recent memory: "Voices from Vietnam."

Published by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, "Voices from Vietnam" is a bold and comprehensive project which chronicles the Vietnam war from the broad perspective of more than 230 Wisconsin veterans and their families. With their assistance, an incredible 12,000 letters were donated to the Historical Society for this ambitious effort. The book covers the Vietnam experience from scores of sources, from those who were on the frontlines fighting the Viet Cong, to those who were held captive in the infamous Hanoi Hilton.

Through their letters, their harrowing experiences are brought to life.

Lt. Frederic Flom of Menasha spent 6½ years enslaved in the Hanoi Hilton after his plane was shot down over North Vietnam. During this time, Lieutenant Flom kept a diary written on 27 tiny cigarette wrappers which he kept hidden from prison guards. He wrote of "tiny dark rooms with no windows * * * ungodly hot during the summer and bitter cold in the winter." Lieutenant Flom had the good fortune to return home alive, after surviving torture, rats, and starvation, but others were not so lucky.

John K. Marshall was born in Green Bay and enlisted in the Marine Corps in December 1967, while still a senior in high school. The year 1968 was tragic for this heroic marine. John wrote to his parents after receiving his first purple heart award during a mortar attack, "you know if you get three purple hearts you get out of Vietnam." Less than 6 days later, John received another purple heart during another firefight with the VC. Then, 2 months later on November 14, 1968, John wrote to his mother and father, "I had a dream last night that some VC were coming towards me and I got shot up pretty bad but lived and got a third purple heart." Three days later, young John was killed in action and his parents were mailed his third purple heart which was awarded posthumously.

Some of the letters, however, reveal a lighter side of the Vietnam experience of which we seldom hear. Larry Kammholz, a Milwaukee native and commander of the 736th Medical Detachment at Moc Hoa, wrote to his wife and asked her to mail cans of Schlitz, Pabst, and