

The Monday Morning Memo

Better Angels

August 27, 2018



**WE ARE NOT ENEMIES, BUT FRIENDS.
WE MUST NOT BE ENEMIES.
THOUGH PASSION MAY HAVE STRAINED
IT MUST NOT BREAK OUR BONDS OF AFFECTION.
THE MYSTIC CHORDS OF MEMORY, STRETCHING FROM EVERY BATTLEFIELD
AND PATRIOT GRAVE TO EVERY LIVING HEART AND HEARTHSTONE
ALL OVER THIS BROAD LAND,
WILL YET SWELL THE CHORUS OF THE UNION.
WHEN AGAIN TOUCHED, AS SURELY THEY WILL BE, BY THE
BETTER ANGELS OF OUR NATURE.**

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS
MARCH 4, 1861



“He knew how to lead by listening and teaching.”

– Erwin C. Hargrove, a professor of political science at Vanderbilt University, writing in 1998 about a leader he much admired.

I, too, have known brilliant leaders like that; men and women who lead by listening and teaching.

Brian Scudamore, Lori Barr, Richard Kessler, Cathy Thorpe, Erik Church, Sarah Casebier, David Rehr, Michele Miller, Richard D. Grant and David St. James to name just a few. I mentioned one such leader, Dewey Jenkins, in last week's Monday Morning Memo. Another of them, Ken Sim, is currently running for mayor of Vancouver.

According to Professor Hargrove, the key to leadership is to hearken to “the better angels of our nature,” a phrase he borrowed from Abraham Lincoln, who used it in his first inaugural address on March 4, 1861.

But we didn’t listen to Lincoln. We chose civil war just 6 weeks later.

The leader that Professor Hargrove admired who “knew how to lead by listening and teaching,” was another American president who encouraged us during a different time of social upheaval – the Great Depression.

“In February 1933, a man shot at [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt, who was riding in an open car in Miami, but succeeded in killing Anton Cermak, the mayor of Chicago, who was with the president-elect. FDR was calm and decisive, ordering the driver to go immediately to the hospital, paying no attention to his own security, and talking to the wounded man. His calm courage impressed all who saw him.”

– Erwin C. Hargrove,

The President As A Leader: Appealing to the Better Angels of Our Nature, p. 79 (1998)

The Stanford Library review of Professor Hargrove's book ends with this statement: “In harking back to Lincoln's evocation of the better angels of our nature, Hargrove reminds us that we may, even as leaders, be better versions of ourselves.”

And the key to becoming that “better version of ourselves” is to become focused listeners and patient teachers.

The reason history repeats itself is because we didn’t pay attention the first time.

Anti-intellectualism in American Life was written in 1964 by Richard Hofstadter, a professor of American History at Columbia University.

It won him the Pulitzer Prize. It was his second. He won his first Pulitzer for his 1955 book, *The Age of Reform*.

Reading these books has caused me to develop a theory.

Can I share my observations with you?

Our obsession with the internet and our cell phones has led us to believe that we are smarter and wiser than any previous generation.

We quietly assume that anyone over 40 is a dinosaur, and every famous historical figure was innocently naive. "But they couldn't help it," we sympathize, "because they didn't know everything like we do now."

We are teaching. But we are not listening.

And those who teach - without listening - share their own preferences as though those preferences were wisdom.

But what do I know? I'm over 40.

Roy H. Williams