



## Suspect holdings topped with nuts

Sunday, August 06, 2006

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When you ask somebody who rarely thinks what he thinks and he talks to you, that's called a poll.

Such polls come in handy for politicians who slant them. They are also great fillers for newspapers on slow news days. I suppose that's why my newspaper ran this headline the other day:

"36 percent suspect U.S. aided 9/11 plot."

This lengthy story came from a poll conducted by my alma mater, Ohio University. Here is its opening paragraph:

"More than a third of the American public holds suspicion that federal officials helped in the 9/11 terrorist attacks or took no action to stop them so the United States could go to war in the Middle East, according to a new Scripps Howard/Ohio University poll."

Whatever happened to brevity? The public "holds suspicion"? What's the matter with "suspects"? Is the public holding suspicion the way a penguin holds on to an egg, hoping it will hatch? Well, this one won't.

I can't stand the Bush administration. I think it's the worst I've ever seen. But I don't think he or his cronies were complicit in the attack on the Twin Towers. If I thought so, I'd probably be in Toronto tonight. But I have no plans to leave. Not before the election.

Yes, I think the president and his gang used 9/11 to take us into a war in Iraq, which never should have happened and which they have totally bungled. And now, having painted themselves into a lethal corner, they have no idea how to get out.

I think we ought to toss them all out in the next two elections, and if you don't like the guy running against them, vote for the guy you never heard of. How much worse can he do?

But I don't believe the Bushies had anything to do with killing Americans on that terrible day. That stupid poll merely counts the nuts. And I'm glad the nuts are just a third of us.

There are people still alive who think Franklin D. Roosevelt knew in advance about the attack on Pearl Harbor, but kept it quiet because he was spoiling to get us into World War II.

Now that Roosevelt is generally regarded as our third-greatest president, it is easy to forget that Republicans felt about him then the way Democrats feel about George Bush now. The idea that he "allowed" Pearl Harbor continues to this day. And it's bunk.

Oliver Stone, the Hollywood director of "JFK," did history a great disservice by implying that the government was in on the Kennedy assassination. There was never a shred of evidence suggesting this might have been so. But his movie gave aid and comfort to people who find emotions more compelling than facts.

If a poll were taken today of how many Americans thought people from outer space were living among us, I'd guess we'd hit 25 percent. That's one of every four people who passes you on the freeway.

Once I had to cover a UFO convention in Akron. It was packed. Pilgrims had come from all over the country to compare their personal encounters with aliens.

When you met them one by one, some of them seemed brilliant. It was a strange combination of a Mensa convention and a punch-and-cookie open house in a psycho ward.

They all believed that men in black raincoats were walking the Earth and that they had been sent from another planet to spy on us. Many intelligent-sounding papers were read, and there was much applause.

But they were all nuts, in some form or other.

And so are the people who think the Bush administration had something to do with 9/11.

It's what they did after 9/11 that the two-thirds of us who are sane ought to be thinking about. We are the great middle of America.

The people in that poll have delusions of paranoia, and our government is run by people with delusions of grandeur.

I don't know which side is nuttier. But unless we form a conspiracy of sanity, as a great Irish poet once said, the center cannot hold. And it must.

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