

Time to end feud

I'm tired of the Weisberg-Meachum feud. The desire to prove who is the better columnist for the *Frederick News-Post* is occupying valuable print space which should be used not for personal attacks but for educated, intelligent opinion and commentary on a wide variety of topics, such as Meachum's "Gun stories," Nov. 27, 1987. Like it or not, it's what a column should be. Not a constant source of ridicule, verbal hatchery or complaint. In other words: Grow up, Meachum and Weisberg, and educate us on worthwhile topics.

CARL REGGIO
Monrovia

F.P.O.W. 12/2/87

Sympathy for the senile

One of the unpleasant facts of life is that we will grow old. While some of us will remain in full possession of our faculties, others, less fortunate, will not. Those of us in the latter group will become senile, whether from some specific disease, or from simply old age. We will become incoherent, ramble and stutter. We will do and say things that embarrass ourselves and our friends. We will believe, nonetheless, that our minds are sharp, and that those who speak with us or read our writings still have the same respect for our opinions that they might once have had. In truth, they will probably consider us old fools and wish that we would stop bothering them.

But one of the main concerns of the elderly, especially those who are overtaken by senility, is that of living out the remainder of their years in some degree of comfort. Most jobs will be closed off. Social security was never intended to provide a full income, and is becoming less reliable all the time. Pension plans have proven undependable and inadequate.

That is why it is a pleasure to see that some areas of the private sector still continue to provide employment to the elderly, even those in advanced stages of senility. The Frederick newspapers have shown true sympathy for the plight of such a person by continuing to employ Roy Meachum. You are to be congratulated.

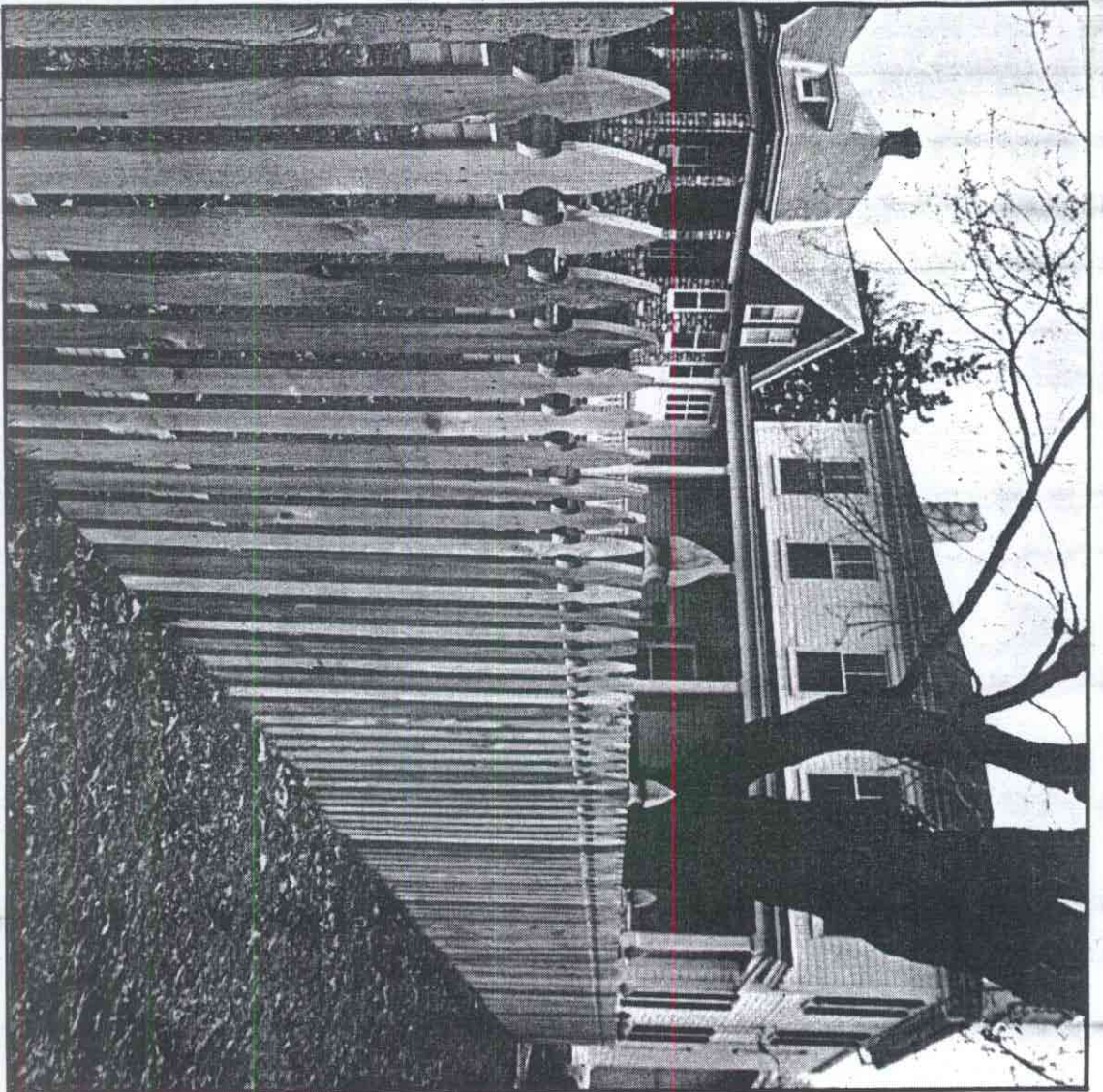
JAMES E. KEENAN
Middletown

12/7/87

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Whether this fence stays or goes is up to the city zoning appeals board.

Staff photo by Janet Worme

Meachum informed fence illegal

11/7/83

By PETER MERTZ
News-Post Staff

Roy Meachum moved from a historic district townhouse on Fourth Street to a large, century-old house uptown early this year, thinking the zoning covenants and restrictions of city life were behind him. They weren't.

As Sharon Meachum painstakingly renovated the home her husband called "a century-old farmhouse," the Frederick community received periodic updates on the Meachums' progress through Mr. Meachum's bi-weekly column in the Frederick News-Post.

In the fall, the Meachums decided to erect a picket fence in the front yard of their house at the corner of Ninth and Market streets. The fence extended about 60 feet along the Ninth Street side of the property and approximately 20 feet across its Market Street frontage.

Apparently, Mr. Meachum didn't check the fence regulations in the city's zoning ordinances, and a warning from an alderman at the In the Street Festival was followed by a notice to appear at the city's monthly board of zoning appeals meeting Tuesday night.

And that was where Mr. Meachum was formally informed he had erred.

Mr. Meachum, who arrived at the hearing an hour late, promptly called the uniform code "Draconian," and asked the Frederick Board of Zoning

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Meachum asks for variance

(Continued from Page A-1)

Appeals for a special exception on the grounds that the fence enhanced the historical worth of his home.

Mr. Meachum's explanation was cut short when zoning board chairman E. Robert Bowlus asked the columnist on what grounds would the board be justified in granting him an exception, "when you know the ordinance."

City zoning ordinance 10.06 (1), states, "In any R or DR district a fence, wall or hedge may be constructed only in any side or rear yard, not a front or street side yard . . ."

Mr. Meachum appeared visibly upset by Mr. Bowlus' question, and he raised his voice when he said, "You'd have a hell of a problem trying to enforce the uniform code across the city. I see violations everywhere."

"It fits in nicely with the period of the house," Mr. Meachum continued, "and I thought the city was concerned with

preserving the historic nature of Frederick."

Mr. Meachum then launched into a brief historical account of the home, the restoration of which had been described in great length to readers of the News-Post, prompting replies to the paper of both praise and disdain for the topic matter.

"We believe the house is the oldest from Rose Hill to the historic district, and the neighborhood grew up around the farm," Mr. Meachum said. "The hedge next to the fence once ran beside a lane used by wagons getting feed from the barn behind the house."

"We have had innumerable compliments on the fence," he said.

But Mr. Meachum was cut short again by Mr. Bowlus, who said, "Mr. Meachum, the law is very clear."

Mr. Meachum's voice rose, causing the microphone at city hall to reverberate. "That's feedback. . . It occurs

when the volume is turned up too high," Mr. Meachum said angrily.

Mr. Meachum also looked upset when he told the board about "erroneous accounts" that he tried to cover-up the construction of his illegally-constructed fence.

"Let me correct a whim and mystery that the fence didn't appear overnight," Mr. Meachum said. "I've mentioned it several times in my column."

"And while my column may not be read by everyone in Frederick County, I have strong reason to believe its readership in City Hall is rather extensive . . . I wasn't trying to hide the fact."

"If anything, I have to live my life somewhat out of a goldfish bowl because of my chiding local politicians," he said.

The board told Mr. Meachum they would "take his request under advisement," and make a determination on the matter at their January meeting.

In the past year French Premier Jacques Chirac has brought home eight of his countrymen held hostage in Lebanon. No Americans have emerged into the sunlight of freedom since the Iran-contra scandal hit the headlines last December.

The Paris government can claim no clean sweep. A handful of its citizens remain captive. The stories told by the pair of Frenchmen released this week create further concern for those still held hostage, chained and sometimes blindfolded: locked up in bleak aloneness.

M. Chirac is receiving stiff criticism from French politicians, right and left. The terms met to deliver the captives transgressed against all the high-flown rhetoric unleashed five months ago when Paris broke diplomatic relations with Teheran. I was in France that July weekend.

On a table nearby lies a collection of Paris newspapers. Somehow "never" sounds much more final when translated *jamais*. Reviewing the quotes may not be fair, and the fear of having their own words summoned up against them may be a major cause for the politicians' reaction to M. Chirac's success. After all, the French are in the middle of a presidential election campaign.

In July, with a united, thundering voice, all French parties and individuals of any importance declared there would be no compromise with the Khomeini regime. The Iranian embassy was ringed by a well-armed circle of tough security police. Inside was a man Teheran described as a diplomatic interpreter, whom the French accused of playing a major role in terrorist bombings.

This week the blockade barriers came down. The police returned to barracks. The interpreter-terrorist boarded a plane, after submitting to a routine body-check at the airport. At the same time, the head of France's diplomatic mission departed Teheran, released of criminal charges lodged in July by the Iranian regime.

Significantly, the hostages came home first, before the stand-off between the two governments resulted in a stand-down.

Unlike the White House amateurs who "masterminded" U.S. participation last year in the weapons dealings, M. Chirac's negotiators demanded the Khomeini regime deliver first on its promises to use its influence to free hostages.

Supposedly, the French read the Tower Commission report, to provide guidelines for how not to deal with Teheran. Although I doubt that, with its previous experience in the Middle East, Paris needed the primer on arrogant ineptitude.

And if you wonder at the use of "arrogant," then consider the bluff and bluster maintained by the Reagan administration at the same time it was dealing under the table: the constant repetition of the theme that America would never stoop to trading for its

hostages. The French simply omitted that assertion.

Paris never lost track of its national responsibility to deliver its nationals out of bondage, by any and every means. In all the rhetoric last summer the French hostages were never mentioned.

His own presidential ambitions may have contributed to M. Chirac's agreeing to the swap; it doesn't matter. His political rivals' sniping was all but drowned out in the nation's joy over having its fellow citizens home.

Still outstanding is \$660 million owed Iran on a loan made by the late shah. The French have offered, but not yet handed over, half the amount due.

The importance that should be attached to the money is that it gives Paris leverage for more bargaining to spring its remaining hostages. At any rate, it can be considered no ransom, but payment for a loan, a legal obligation which must be met eventually.

All but lost in the White House rush to furnish deadly arms to Teheran last year was the fact that Washington still controls millions also owed Iran, under all existing international conventions.

Of course, the U. S. could not use the money to bargain for its hostages because the administration had sold the American public the poppycock that it would never countenance treating with terrorists.

President Reagan somehow believed that open discussions with the hostages' captors would be tantamount to bestowing legitimacy on their savage brutality. The myopia of that logic always frustrated me.

After all, when police counsel victims' families to attempt to reach agreement with kidnapers, no one suspects they are condoning the criminals or their crimes. The first obligation is to free the victims. This was the principle which motivated Premier Chirac and his advisers. Bravo!

It can only be hoped that some of the Gallic good sense will take root in the Reagan administration, as it heads into its final year. The president owes his successor a maximum effort at cleaning up all outstanding messes before stepping down.

While the list of unresolved problems is not short, the American hostages in Lebanon deserve the highest priority, in the name of simple humanity. The French have shown the way.

What is our choice? I am reminded how the British Empire followed America's present line, in refusing to ransom English men and women seized in the great Sudan religious uprising in the 19th century. London eventually triumphed, but not for 15 years. The few survivors were scarcely human beings.

As we head into this holiday season, eight Americans held in Lebanon deserve our prayers, and much more. From their government, they have a right to expect this Christmas will be their last spent in unholy submission to fanatical gangs.

Whatever it takes.

12/2/84

Roy Meachum

Free

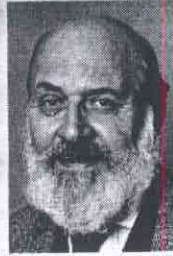
the hostages



Roy Meachum

12/4/87

Official 'comedies'



Our elected officials remain a constant source of amusement, although most are badly lacking in anything that resembles a sense of humor when it comes to their conduct in office.

Ronald Reagan is reportedly furious with the congressional report on the Iran-contra scandal.

How dare the senators imply the president was not in full charge? Mr. Reagan apparently wants the whole world to believe not a single White House paperclip falls without his personal permission. Harry Truman would snap his bow tie at that knee-slapper.

The man from Missouri's the-buck-stops-here acceptance of responsibility for the Oval Office made no attempt to encompass the peccadillos of his underlings. Swapping influence for mink and deep freezers cost a pair of Mr. Truman's closest chums their high jobs.

In fact, during nearly seven years in Washington, Mr. Reagan has taken great public pride in managing the nation's affairs by delegating authority. Fortune magazine ballyhooed the president as the very model of a chief executive because he passed around the reins of authority.

When disaster struck, as in the massacre of the Marines outside Beirut, Mr. Reagan gained high marks in opinion surveys for seeming to take personal blame. He was at fault, but in a much more serious way than projected by his posturing before television cameras.

Those Marines' blood belonged squarely on the hands and souls of the gung-ho presidential advisers who advocated their dispatch into the middle of Lebanon's bloody chaos. What adolescent mentality would believe "a few good men" could keep the peace where both the Syrian and Israeli armies had failed?

There was the beginning of the Iran-contra scandal, in Mr. Reagan's refusal to hold accountable the men who betrayed his confidence, failed the national interests and set up the Marines, in the process.

As Harry Truman demonstrated, while no president can possibly keep track of all his men's doings, when malfeasance in the White House is discovered, he must move to preserve the integrity of the office. (And if this Republican chief executive prefers an example from his own party, then let him look to the manner with which

Dwight Eisenhower handled the Sherman Adams affair.)

Unfortunately, Ronald Reagan grasps so little the burden of the presidency that, according to some sources, he may pardon Oliver North and his cohorts, thus denying both them and the cause of American justice their "day in court."

For Mr. Reagan to assume anyone would accept that he is in-charge ranks as one of the sickest jokes in Washington history.

To prove moral myopia is not limited to the federal level, then have a look at Maryland Gov. William Donald Schaefer and the man who tended Mr. Schaefer's automobile while he was Baltimore's mayor.

Since the State Police furnish drivers for the state's chief executive, Mr. Schaefer's long-time chauffeur moved up to become major domo of the governor's mansion.

When the man lost that job to Mr. Schaefer's official hostess, Secretary of State Winfield Kelly created the position of Official High Keeper of Slot Machines for the counties where they are legal.

When that exalted rank fell under protests from the counties, Mr. Kelly withdrew the title but left untouched the one-time chauffeur's fatter paycheck. He's still drawing a state salary.

When the Baltimore Sun first broke the story, Mr. Schaefer rushed to protest he found the situation "embarrassing." There was a mild disclaimer that Mr. Kelly had promoted the former chauffeur without informing the governor.

When that dim-witted ploy fell flat, Mr. Schaefer thrashed out at the press for reporting his embarrassment, or something.

Frederick County commissioners earned their way into this column by attempting to stonewall when *Glade Time* and *Mountain Mirror* columnist John Ashbury exposed questionable Winchester Hall purchasing procedures.

Even when subordinate officials admitted the procedures were out of control, the commissioners undertook no cure, opting instead to call for an exhaustive and time-consuming audit.

Some of Mr. Ashbury's printed allegations deserved direct response. They created the impression of criminal acts by county employees. Left unanswered,

they spread the notion that the commissioners are covering up.

Winchester Hall's failure to request a criminal investigation, along with the audit, smacks of bureaucratic tap-dancing. It guarantees a longer life to the sordid affair, and a further expenditure of taxpayers' dollars.

Of course, some commissioners hold Mr. Ashbury responsible for their plight. A "gag" order has been slapped down on county workers, aimed at the columnist.

Still, the affair is not without comedy. County workers who cooperate with the audit were promised immunity by the commissioners. However, since the county mother and fathers have no power over law enforcement or courts, what does their offer of immunity amount to? Maybe a good belly-laugh.

One brief note to end.

When this column reported Frederick Mayor Ron Young planned to open a downtown restaurant, he accused me of printing "outright lies." He called this newspaper "unethical" for publishing the column.

Two weeks ago, on the front page, Mr. Young announced his R. J. Jilly's restaurant will open this month. Of course, he did not disclose the sources of his funding, merely stating he and two partners each had put up \$10,000 in cash. Additional money, according to the mayor, will come from borrowings, but, he added, not from banks.

Not to worry. No problem. You see, Mr. Young and his colleagues have such a dynamite record of spectacular success in the high-risk restaurant business that there must be an army of investors all wanting to get rich, "along with Ron baby." That's the scoop, straight from the Tooth Fairy.

And tomorrow there'll be a sack of apricots outside each News-Post reader's door.

We all know what the road to Hell is paved with. If you have doubts, then read the heading to this column.

And that's the super-highway the county Board of Education decided to hurtle down when faced with the problem of celebrating the coming holidays, as noted in an editorial on this page earlier this week.

In an effort to offend no one, the BoE has decreed that Christmas is a non-event, except as an excuse for an extended vacation. Schools are permitted to deck the halls but there can be no carols, at least none which mention the true reason underlying the season's festivities.

Based on published quotes from a spokesperson, explaining that Christians celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas would add to the confusion for youngsters only recently come to this country, and whose families practice different religions.

In my view, the school board's logic is all wet on the simple basis that there is no way anyone can successfully find a path into this culture unless he understands its roots. The United States is a nation firmly founded on Mosaic-Christian principles. In other words, I agree with that editorial, but want to expand its scope.

There is simply no way, despite any language problems, that any child can grow up in America and escape the influence exerted by our major religions. It is one of the wonders of this democracy that, despite their small numbers (less than 10 percent), America's Jews have contributed in so many vital ways to this nation's ethical growth.

Of course, much of Judaism's influence comes through its underlying foundation to the formation of Christianity. In the Baptist Sunday School of my boyhood, we memorized passages from the Old Testament. It seems to me that too many people forget that Jesus Himself was a rabbi, a teacher whose wisdom was accepted even by those who could not believe He was the Son of God.

Aside from these indirect contributions, the waves of Jewish refugees who found sanctuary here around the turn of the century have proved a mighty force in shaping the better aspects of today's America. It is almost impossible to name a major social, medical or cultural element of our society that has not benefited from the Hebraic principle, which demands a sharing for the common good. Yet, under the dictum laid down by the local BoE, Hanuka's arrival next Tuesday evening will also be ignored. I find that a greater injustice under the schoolpolicy than its blindness toward Christmas.

After all, the United States remains a Christian nation, in every way except under the law. Our schools look merely silly when they refuse to explain the

reason for Christian holidays. But, it seems to me, they contribute to bigotry when they fail to inform students that different Americans have different ways, and different means of celebrating their faiths.

Unfortunately, until recent years, Jewish students had no easy road in winning acceptance from some school authorities for absences so they could keep their holy days. In most places, sometimes only after court injunctions, they won the right for all non-Christians to receive time to mind their faiths. But no more.

Considering the peculiar embarrassments young people endure when they are forced to admit their differences from their peer groups, I find almost criminal the reluctance in America's schools to legitimize those differences within the framework of their authority.

Teaching theology does not fall within the scheme of our public education, but promoting culture is an essential element in our classrooms, furnishing the spirit which underlies our American way of life. These days the need for expanding beyond the basic three R's has become more compelling because of changes taking place in the makeup of this country.

When I was a child, the average American was considered to be blue-eyed and blond, and Protestant: the product of a British or northern European heritage. Catholics and Jews, many with brown eyes, were looked upon as outside the mainstream of our national life. Only after World War II was the reality accepted, sometimes begrudgingly, that Americans derived from other lands. But true equality was never granted under the law until won for blacks by the Civil Rights movement. Still, prejudice exists, fed by ignorance.

While Jews and Catholics, black and white, have found their footing, more or less, our schools and all our other institutions now flounder over the question of the newest waves of "different" immigrants, many from Asia and the Middle East, including refugees from Khomeini's Iran. These newest Americans have brought with them a range of new cultures and religions. As their numbers continue to grow they will become elements in our national cultural life, which deserve explanation in our classrooms.

There my argument rests.

In the Name of the One God, toward Whom the bulk of humanity strives for an understanding, and for the sake of America's future, I ask the Frederick County Board of Education to rescind its ban, beginning with Hanukah, extending through Christmas, including Tet, encompassing the Prophet's Birthday and all the richness of the varied experiences now finding their way into our national life.

Roy Meachum

Good intentions

