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Donald Trump: Unworthy of Winning?

A Newspaper Column by Evan Barrett

November 21, 2016

In sorting out the recent national election, I am having to think longer and harder than usual. This highly divisive election has been wearying on the electorate, me included.

First, let's look at some numbers. Hillary Clinton's popular vote margin over Donald Trump now has widened to more than 1.7 million votes – expected to eventually reach nearly 2 million votes. Yet because of 107,000 total combined votes in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, Donald Trump won the Electoral College -- 306 votes to Hillary Clinton's 232.

But this election isn't just in the numbers. It's also about our national values – about the process itself -- the game, if you will, not just the result.

“Winning isn't everything ... it's the only thing.” That quote, usually attributed to renowned football coach Vince Lombardi, reflects the seeming winner-take-all culture in America today. We, as citizens, appear to be more interested in who is the winner than we are in how he or she won. The win, it seems, washes away any concerns for the process of winning.

But I believe the values of most Americans are more reflected in legendary sportswriter Grantland Rice's words:

“For when the One Great Scorer comes
To mark against your name,
He writes – not that you won or lost –
But how you played the Game.”

Former Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, who twice lost the presidential race to Dwight Eisenhower (1952 and 1956), spoke to those values as they relate to the political world. Stevenson, a brilliant and literate man said:

“The hardest thing about any political campaign is how to win without proving that you are unworthy of winning.”

That idea is not about likability. In the 2000 election, everyone seemed obsessed with the idea of “who would you like to sit down and have a beer with?” I'd have to agree that George W. Bush was the odds-on choice over Al Gore in that regard. I disagreed with many of the policies espoused by young Bush, but I never felt that he was a bad person. In fact, I thought he was a good human being who, as an avowed “compassionate conservative,” reflected much of what is good in humanity. I'd not only

feel comfortable having a beer with him, I'd be comfortable sharing our Thanksgiving table with him and his family.

Donald Trump, on the other hand, has since day one of his campaign exhibited conduct and personal characteristics that most Americans find abhorrent. Millions upon millions of words have been written about his appeals to racism, misogyny, xenophobia, and religious intolerance, let alone his egregious personal assaults upon his fellow citizens and fellow candidates and disrespect for the requirements of our laws and Constitution. I wrote several columns last year about how much of Trump's approach is completely contrary to American values. His personal history, especially with women, would disqualify him from being welcome at our families' table sitting with our daughters and granddaughters. His business history of jilting his workers, contractors, investors and partners in pursuit of the almighty dollar is outrageous. His willingness to lie about so many things that "fact checkers" can't keep up with him reveals a life built on "conning" the world around him. His continuing unwillingness to allow voters to see his tax returns and know which of the thousands of his private entanglements might influence his presidency goes beyond the pale.

I could go on and on, but I won't. I will simply apply the Stevenson rule: in the process of running, Donald Trump has proven himself unworthy of winning -- stunningly unworthy. But win he has -- he will be our President. Perhaps it was because of his opponent. Perhaps for other reasons. But this poor excuse for a human being is to be our president for the next four years.

The majority who opposed Trump, and even some who reluctantly voted for him, are now relegated to hoping that he may be elevated by the import of the job and can discover some way to work on behalf of the American people while reflecting some American values. Only then will we be able to ask our children and grandchildren to look up to him. We can only hope.

Evan Barrett of Butte, will soon be retiring after 47 years at the top level of Montana economic development, government, politics and education. He currently writes columns and commentaries, is an award-winning producer of Montana history films at Montana Tech/Highlands College and occasionally teaches. These are his personal views.

(700 words in the body)