

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

The good news recently was the reported and apparent confirmed death of Osama bin-Laden in a relatively secure compound in Pakistan. He joins the the mentors and theorists for pure uncompromising Islam: Taymiyya (Islam must prevail as only true religion, defeat/persecute the others); Wahhab (argued oneness and voice of Islam); al-Banna (founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose theme was the 'mental colonization' and necessity for Jihad Holy war) and Qutb (weaned in the west and appalled at the apparent blatant sexuality on ships, dance halls and churches). And one would have to be naïve to think that now is the opportunity to relax in the hope and change world of Obama and those who believe militant Islam is an anomaly.

The bad news was a Mother Nature tirade in the form of killer tornadoes whose main thrust seemed to be the path through Alabama, especially Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, and Cullman, although other towns and states suffered as well. It was devastation of major consequence with high death tolls, and the hunt for those still missing. Like the call for action, relief and help as we remember Katrina, our church among others via Project C.A.R.E is an on-going 'train' - food, materials, medical supplies, etc - revealing the Christian example of God's inspiration, this hope and change will make a difference.

As a mis-placed Southerner - I was born in California - much of my life has been spent in the South. Beginning a trek at Fort Knox (basic training) in WWII, I through choice and opportunity became a professional soldier and served in Korea and Vietnam in those wars. Fort Benning has been like a second home and memories of great soldiers and their legacy sustains me even to this day. Marriage to a Southern lady whose lineage bespeaks of Alabama and a beloved Livingston family, and I am proud to be part of it.

Bill Livingston –we lost him last summer- at the age of 93. If still alive he would be saddened by the destruction and death in Cullman, his place of birth and the resting place of many Livingstons. In tracing his lineage, it was said the line went all the way to the storied David Livingstone, Scottish missionary and much traveled man. This Livingstone wished to plant native missionaries in Africa, often repulsed by the Boers and hampered by the Portuguese slave trade. Then received mission to find the source of the Nile and watershed. Found in ill-health by Henry Stanley and at death his friends embalmed his body and conveyed it to England where he reposes in Westminster Abbey. Too, the line seems to lead to a Livingston who signed the Declaration of Independence, another on the Supreme Court and a Governor of New Jersey.

Once upon a time- though we weren't perfect- we seemed to be a relatively well-knit society made up of immigrants and their progeny. First of these were required to support the laws and the Constitution, learn English and become a part of the great melting pot. Former cultures and languages were not disallowed but placed in the perspective of becoming an American. Religion was sacrosanct and one was not required to become a Christian, though the tenets of the Founding Fathers drew on this. What has happened and what is our destiny?

Others have written that their time required faith and hope, that times tried men's souls and the future suspect. I remember those dark days of war, yet we did have moments to cherish and draw on. Robert Browning told us: "Grow old with me, the best is yet to be."

I wait and wonder?