

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Parenting and Politics

It's been a few weeks now since we saw our last young'un off to college. Our fourth and youngest—all 6'2" of him, on his way to become whatever fate, destiny, or God has in store for him. He will do just fine, although, looking at my side yard where we played football, soccer, street hockey, basketball, and every father and child's favorite pastime, catch, I wonder where that little guy went. It saddens me that it will be no more. That his way in the world is one he has to find and determine on his own (with a little help and consultation from his old man and his wonderful mother).

As hard as it was to see him off, it pales in comparison to a friend of mine who has dropped his son at the airport three times now as he fulfills his duty in Iraq and now Afghanistan. Now that's tough! But one's sadness, as is pain, is not diminished by the fact that someone else has it worse. It is unsettling to the beholder either way.

Well, at the minimum it took away my angst and utter dejection with politics here in Illinois on many levels, both local and state, and yes, even at our Federal level where "FUBAR" may not adequately explain what's going on between the Tories and the Whigs.

Oh, sorry, it's Democrats and Republicans now.

Here in Illinois we are a political joke. Corruption exists in all corners of village halls as well as the rotunda in Springfield. No, not all the politicians are evil, stupid, incompetent, uncaring, deal-makers, boorish, or corrupt. Sometimes it just seems that way.

But that's how they are sometimes portrayed in the media, print and visual, and on various late night comedic television shows. And maybe it's a stretch to consider them as parents of the people, but they are supposed to be representing all of us—cops, too.

Maybe it's George Ryan, maybe Blago, maybe the allegation of all those taking plea deals to save their own arses who are under investigation. Who is the next "pentito" (repentant) in government now?

Among our famous politicians in trouble are the ones waiting in the wings for the other shoe to drop. But as we wait, life goes on and so does the deal making. That starts with the legislature and the legislators currying favor with the House and the Senate leaders as they determine what bills to "refer to rules" (where all bills deemed not worthy die!).

"Che di vai e l'assessino" I ask? (Which one was the killer?) Why does some legislation go the way of "sleeping with the fishes?" I mean now our pension legislation, which is soon to be massacred by our elected officials.

The good bills go through the process successfully, and then they have to be approved by those House and Senate leaders to make it to the governor's desk. Deals and handshakes and maybe some hog calling to boot in order to advance. You have seen the photos of these political leaders in the print media, laughing and joking and bantering. Something they are doing now, as they prepare to weaken your pension in the next few months.

Testing the fall veto session and getting ready for the mid-term elections before they pull the plug on our retirement (for future cops only, they say). But does it matter to these politicians, where your ability or age to retire goes? Nope, I don't think so. I think they care only for their political futures and they smile because they can and they know that they will probably not have to fear the mid-terms or the next terms. That is what a political base, a machine, a consummate politician does. Know how to get re-elected and fool the public once more. And in this matter, it is we the police who will get court jestered right out of our funny hats. What has happened to "our parents" in the assembly in Springfield that at one time protected our retirement?

The politicians who screw with so many livelihoods—are they following our best interests? You make the call. If you ask a politician what he is most proud of, they will maybe say it is passing legislation. Hopefully they won't be proud of what they will be doing to cops all over Illinois in the very near future with the passage of legislation that will surely be detrimental to police. I wonder if they even feel that they failed?

You know, as I looked at my son as we said our goodbyes at college, I feel the words I read a long time ago "Sometimes I think I'm a total failure as a parent, but I'm all they've got (and the missus). Before my son looks at anyone else, he looks at me and I've tried to live so I can look squarely back at him."

With those words, Harper Lee's Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* reveals his responsibility and emotions of being a parent. Hopefully these politicians will engender some emotion before they forever change the face of our police pension futures. We'll see if they can look straight back at us when they do it. After all, we are looking at them as a "distant" parent who will always be looking out for those of us who serve in government. I hope they do not let us down. But I pretty much know that they will.

Vita é bella