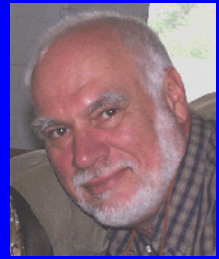


**Bellicose Veins—the roots of violence in US culture**

**PATRIOTISM? TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?  
CO-OPTED? YOU BET!**

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Remember the foo-foo bird? When we were grade school-aged guys, we passed around the story of the legendary foo-foo bird. This winged wonder flew around faster and faster, in ever tighter circles, until it finally flew up its own backside and disappeared. A laughable paradox, yes. Wisdom? We didn't recognize it then. We need to recognize it now.

Our culture is like this. It has developed marvelous traits and values and stories to help us survive and thrive on our part of the planet. It enables us to soar upward and outward to new levels of well being. But then, the environment changes, but our thinking does not. What worked before should work again and again, like a magic spell. The culture starts to crumble under the weight of the senseless repetition of now destructive ideas and actions. We ignore our neighbors and exhaust our resources--and theirs as well. The momentum increases.

Or, there is a serious threat to the environment, like 9/11. Instead of taking advantage of diverse values and perspectives, politicians, drunk with the chance to seize power that crisis offers, magnify the threat. They call on most basic and most primitive values and responses that our culture holds. They tell the same stories over and over until nothing else can be heard. They are now free to do whatever they want, as panicked people buy duct tape to seal their windows instead of their ears.

Beset by fear and urgency, we respond to slogans and suspicions that elicit primitive flight and fight responses. Some of us blindly lash out at anyone who looks or feels like the enemy. We intensify the vortex. Others, more timid, do nothing but add dead weight to the momentum of the deadly swirl.

Immigrants, who flocked to our shores, now flee the ugliness. They pack their bags and go, taking their diversity with them. Friends and long-friendly nations who see and disagree are branded weasels and traitors. The vertigo increases as the nation gets ready to fly up its own ass.

How do we stop this vicious spiral? Patriotism? Well, yes. A hair of the dog that bit us. Millions are starting to see that we are on a collision course not just with the rest of the world, but with ourselves. They demonstrate, write letters, resist. We will see more and more patriots placing themselves in the line of fire.

This column will have one simple objective--to look at and put into play our full and diverse heritage in this time of crisis. It will restore circulation to the rich, nourishing patriotic values and stories of the USA. We will focus specially on "Bellicose Veins," values and beliefs that have atrophied, been plugged up, and turned into weapons of mass psychological destruction. We will turn them into prescriptions for healing.

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Each column will discuss a traditional US cultural value. It will identify the images and history that have emerged from it, and finally offer a Rx for turning it into sane, sound and motivating medicine for the health of our nation. You can look forward to discussing Manifest Destiny, Frontier Justice, In God we Trust, Horatio Alger and Hoop Dreams, and many more of the messages that live in the corners of our national consciousness, messages that can give us glory or add to our pain. It will welcome your insights and viewpoints.