

CHRISTMAS AT EMPTYWHEEL: FRIENDS CURRENT AND PAST

And so we reach another Christmas Eve together here at the Emptywheel Blog. And I mean together, because this is a community, from Marcy, Jim White and me, to all of you who participate here with us. You are not just names on a computer screen, you are our friends and colleagues.

We deal with a lot of hard, and far too often infuriating and depressing, topics. Sometimes you just want to scream, because really success seems to be measured only in whether you can slow down by a fraction, or put a slight dent in, the bad things going on in this country and the world.

Occasionally, however, there are truly bright spots in what we cover and push. One of these is certainly the movement on marriage equality and equal protection for sexual preference. Another is, as problematic as they are in their own right, the victory of the Democrats and Obama over a slate of Republicans who would have materially regressed about everything we hold near and dear. It may be small solace, but it is far better than the alternative. So there are good things too.

But the one irreducible minimum is, despite the passion we all have for various subjects and policies, life will actually always plug on one way or another for most, it is simply a matter of how it does so. And that is really something too easily lost sight of...what really counts when you get down to it are the people.

Here at Emptywheel, so it is the people who really count too. And we would like to take a moment to thank you for sharing your time, your experience, your knowledge, your humor and yourselves. It makes all of us richer and that is something to be thankful for as we look

forward to Christmas day and the week of festivities that culminates in New Years Day. Health and happiness to one and all.

I'd also like to take a minute to remember that not all are doing well. Some are struggling and have health problems. We know of several, but it would not be appropriate to discuss the individual situations. Just know that we know, we care and our thoughts are with you.

And then there are those that we have lost along the way this year. One in that category really stands out. One year ago tonight, our friend, colleague, and contributor to this blog, Mary Perdue, passed away. We miss Mary a lot, both in content and in her unique character. I constantly see discussions and think "Damn, Mary would have been all over this".

However, Mary is not the only important voice here that has gone dark this year. We also seem to have lost MadDog. I first encountered MadDog at FDL during pretrial proceedings in the Libby case. We both quickly became regulars at the precursor to Emptywheel, known as The Next Hurrah. He followed us from TNH to Firedoglake and then to here. Like Mary, MadDog was a constant colleague with a well developed sense of irony and sharp analytical skills. The last comment by MadDog was on September 11 at 8:16 pm, since then a deafening silence. We have tried to determine what happened by both email and phone, but no luck so far. We miss him greatly.

In that regard, I want to excerpt part of a post we did in memory of Mary when we learned she had passed. Not just to honor her again, but because much of it applies to the nature of all who participate here, have participated here, and how we feel about them and you:



The internet is a strange and wonderful thing. Just about everyone and everything in the world is on it, even though it is nothing but data in the form of binary computer code traversing by random electrons. Yet thought is crystalized, and friendships born and nurtured, through commonality of interest and purpose. And so it is here at Emptywheel, where many of us have been together since the days at The Next Hurrah, through years at Firedoglake, and now at our new home. Just because it germinates via the net does nothing to detract from the sense of community, friendship and admiration for each other gained over time.



With profound sadness, I report we have lost a true friend, and one of our longest tenured contributors, Mary. **Mary Beth Perdue** left us on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2011.

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Here at Emptywheel, she was just Mary; and she was so much more than a simple obituary can convey. She was funny, kind, and, most of all, razor sharp in analysis of extremely complex issues surrounding torture, indefinite detention, international human rights, illegal wiretapping and executive branch overreach.

But this is the way it is with one and all here. You all contribute so much. Thank you. All here are indeed more than electrons and impersonal screen names.

It is the people – you – that count. Marcy, Jim and I raise a glass of fine IPA in toast to one and all. So, as you sit down with your families

and friends for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and the holiday week, from our family to yours, enjoy and thanks!

This is an open thread for all things – news, politics, cooking, sports, holiday greetings and all manner of discussion. Music by the incomparable Alicia Keys.