



TO LOUIS CALDERA: For resigning from his post as head of the White House Military Office on the count he set up the photo-op of a low-flying Air Force One over New York City that people thought was another Sept. 11.



TO FORMER SEN. EFRAIN GONZALEZ: for pleading guilty to fraud charges, admitting he used charity groups to steal hundreds of thousands of dollars from the state government. He faces up to nine years in prison.

Politics won't change this man

When Kyra and I walked into Paulo Lombardi's we saw Lou Desso greeting everyone at the door. I really didn't know what he was running for until I saw the sign: "Lou Desso; Rensselaer County Legislator." In fact I didn't even know what party he belonged to until I spoke to him later. He is a Conservative and I am registered a Democrat. It is not important. If someone has outstanding character and will help better the lives of people around them, I'll support them.

I have confessed to you many times my ignorance of the political world. It is of no consequence because it is a world that I encounter rarely.

Unfortunately, that night, at the fundraiser, I found myself surrounded by many curious creatures — politicians. There were also business people, family and friends of Lou and other supporters among the crowd of over 300. When I do find myself among politicians and "civil servants" my mind floods with the questions immediately.

Who are these people whose on the job training often involves developing what I call SSS or Skill of Seeming Sincere. Tragically, many of them are legitimately sincere to begin with but after their initial indoctrination appear oddly insincere. It is very confusing to me.

I have taught Psychology courses for several years, was not confused when counseling drug abusers and convicts in NYC in the 80's or deciphering the unethical shenanigans of administrators at large institutions where I have been employed. I can interpret the language of hustlers on the streets of Saigon and see through the devious-

Then & Now

John Ostwald



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ness of my boys but I really don't have a clue when it comes to figuring out politicians.

Maybe the dictionary will help. Politician: one actively engaged in politics; often used with implications of seeking personal or partisan gain, scheming etc. — sounds nasty. The definition reminded me of the time when someone who got a job at a place where I worked that didn't have the proper credentials. My coworker said, "It's political." Again so much negativity associated with this word.

I asked Joe, an intelligent, worldly guy I play racquetball with what he thought. He said, "most of them start out with descent goals and high ideals then get corrupted by the system."

During the week, a greeter at Wal-Mart recognized me and said she enjoyed my column. I thanked her for the compliment and asked her what she thought about politicians. She said, "They take a course on how to be idiots."

I must also confess that twice during

the past 20 years, I have asked a political friend for favors. It was nothing really important. She made a few phone calls and it worked out okay.

I fear that I will never be able to decipher the political animal. You say it doesn't matter; but it does. It matters when a trusted, childhood friend and confidante becomes a public figure. Will their new celebrity status change them? Can they still be trusted when we say, "this is between you and me."

Lou Desso hasn't developed SSS. He will always be sincere without training or political grooming. His hug was sincere and his speech was genuine, honest and filled with gratitude. During this passionate discourse he humbly mentioned his alcohol/drug addiction that ended over 26 years ago. Many of us certainly know about this issue and sometime wish that we had the courage to face our own "addictions" as well as Lou has. Lou concluded with the brief but meaningful phrase, "I'm proud of whom I am."

I am proud of being called Lou Desso's friend and comforted by the fact that I will never have to worry about him changing his basic character. Lou knows what many deny. He knows that everything ends. Our careers end and our lives end. Sure, we are all aware of this obvious fact but when we really feel it emotionally and spiritually, significant wisdom follows. Lou has this wisdom. He knows that while we are on this brief journey we should do our best to help others. He will not change.

John Ostwald is a professor at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy. His column, "Then & Now," runs every other Sunday.

STREET TALK

What would you like to thank your mother for?



Terri Crouse, Marriott employee, East Greenbush: For being there for me in good times and bad times. I had a brain tumor when I was three and she was there for me through it.

Mitaja Polite, lifestyle mentor, Troy: I would like to thank her for passing on her strength and resilience. For instilling in me that I can do anything and overcome anything. She's always supportive.



Mindy Barrett, Arsenal employee, Troy: Everything she has done for me. For helping me and always being there for me. She always does the right thing and she cries when I send her cards.

Lisa Kelly, caterer, Watervliet: For bringing me into the world and raising a wonderful family. She is not only a great Mom but a great friend.



Carl Gamble Sr,