

The Highs and Lows of the State of the Union

by Gary Fouse



I have never been terribly interested in State of the Union addresses. They tend to be over-hyped in their presentation, and the language often gets too mundane, boring and corny. In recent years, the partisanship has been a turn-off even though it might increase the interest. Trump has no doubt made the SOU more interesting. Given the impeachment proceedings and all the rancor, I was sort of looking forward to last night's event.

While some of Trump's speech was standard cornball rhetoric, it was one of his best speeches. There were some negative references to what the last administration had failed to do, which outraged the Democrats, but mostly it was a positive speech.

Another feature of recent SOUs which have bored me are when the president starts talking about some heretofore unknown person in the audience who stands and receives applause. Last night, however, there were some truly inspiring moments; the Tuskegee Airman general and his grandson, the surprise appearance of an Army sergeant, whose wife and two children were in the gallery, and Rush Limbaugh (fighting advanced lung cancer) getting the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and others. Yet, for much of it, the Democrats in Congress sat on their hands. To be honest, they all looked like they had a bad case of the flu. Their facial expressions, posture and body language were downright embarrassing. Yes, there were a few times they applauded, a few even stood once or twice, but they also sat out many applause lines that everybody could have joined together on.

Then there was Nancy Pelosi.

Whether or not Trump saw her extend her hand at the opening is open to question. He was turning away and may or may not have seen it. That said, Pelosi knew that she was constantly on camera sitting behind the president, and that her expressions and actions would be seen by the whole country. Simple respect for the occasion and the office of the presidency should have compelled her to sit respectfully. She did not do that. Instead, she had a strange expression of disgust on her face and often resorted to reading (or pretending to read) her copy of the speech. It was unnecessary. She was listening to it real time.

But that was just for starters.

Incredibly, as the President finished his speech, she stood and tore the speech up and dumped it on the desk. When has a speaker of the House ever done that before? It was not only a gesture of disrespect to Donald J Trump, whom she clearly loathes, it was a gesture of disrespect to the presidency. Many are saying today that she also tore up the references to

General McGee, Rush Limbaugh, and all the other worthy people who were in the gallery being recognized. Whether she considered that prior to doing what she did I don't know.

Pelosi probably never considered that not only were Americans watching on television, her constituents and Trump's constituents, but people around the world were watching as well. Today, I spoke on Skype with a Dutch friend of mine in the Netherlands, The first thing he wanted to discuss was Pelosi tearing up the speech. He felt that it was shocking and inappropriate.

This is what we presented to the world last night-the "world's greatest deliberative body." Trump fulfilled his role last night, but Nancy Pelosi and her gang did not. They were, frankly, an embarrassment.

I have never considered Pelosi to be a very bright person though she is said to be politically shrewd. Now she is becoming a caricature of herself. Some claim that she is having problems with alcohol, which may account for her increasingly embarrassing performances. I don't know if that is true, but something is very wrong with Nancy Pelosi.