

Pirates in the Indian Ocean

It seems pretty clear how to end the piracy on the open seas off the east coast of Africa and in the Gulf of Aden.

Either send a hundred Navy SEALs TDY to some cargo ships or, as is now being done, hire Israeli security guards to ride the cargo vessels and protect them.

There was an interesting development today - South Korean snipers in a helicopter came to the rescue of a North Korean flag cargo ship. Yes, necessity is the mother of invention.

From personal experience, I can tell you that the Indian Ocean is one rough body of water. It's a little hard to imagine those little dinghies getting around with the pirates aboard. And, the Indian Ocean is one large sucker. Water, water everywhere. For 30 days straight, the good ship Lollipop (the Navy preferred USS Jamestown) rocked and rolled. 24/7. No kidding, it was never calm.

Having sailed in all three of the major oceans, it surprises me that the Indian Ocean is the smallest of the three. It feels like the largest. Maybe it seems so large because the traffic is north to south and vice versa and, once away from the coastline, there is nothing to the east. The Pacific is more than twice the size of the Indian Ocean but traffic is east/west and there are some islands along the way.

About the only thing to look forward to in navigating the Indian Ocean is crossing

the equator. Which, in the Navy - if it's your first time - calls for a childish "initiation" and you become a "Shellback." With that certificate and a couple bucks, you can get a cup of coffee at McDonald's.

In time, I crossed the equator in all three oceans but only the first time counts for anything. If you cross it at the prime meridian (0.0 degrees) off the west coast of Africa, you are something more special. We missed that by just a little bit.

I didn't realize it until I did research for this story that I am a much decorated sailor. I am a member of these fraternities: The Order of the Ditch (passing through the Panama Canal), The Order of the Rock (transited the Strait of Gibraltar) and The Safari to Suez (passed through the Suez Canal).

Now, I wished we had diverted a tiny bit and crossed the equator at the prime meridian. No one would have known of our diversion. I could have been an Emerald (or Royal Diamond) Shellback.

Anyway, back to the rats that have been labeled pirates. There was little recognition for the SEALs who did their jobs to rescue the captain of the Maersk Alabama. Riding those waves for a month on end, I can tell you those guys did a helluva job. Taking out someone from a steady deck would have been quite an accomplishment. Taking out three simultaneously is something else. We knew it - now you know it. Navy SEALs rock!

John Edwards is not being investigated

It's not hard to understand when local media get it wrong. But the national folks ought to know how a political campaign works. And about campaign laws.

There is a lot of rightful glee when John Edwards is reported to be in trouble. Not only with his wife but with FEC authorities. Elizabeth's book is coming out now and it will reveal some of her emotions on learning that the husband she had always supported politically had been unfaithful to her. In spite of that knowledge, she stuck by him in his campaign for the presidential nomination.

At the same time she learned her cancer had returned and was untreatable, that

self-righteous jerk was fooling around on his stricken and supportive wife. Not once, as he told her, but multiple times.

Now, the FEC is investigating whether his campaign committee improperly used campaign contributions to make payments to the mistress, a videographer.

The likely outcome will be that the campaign committee did not make improper payments to her (John Edwards did not technically or legally call the shots on how the money was spent, his campaign chairman or treasurer did) because she was filming some footage that could have been used in commercials, a profile, etc. But, Edwards is at no personal risk.

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Banning teenagers from the mall is a hurt that will keep on giving

The die has been cast. The deed has been done. The anchor dropped.

Frontier Mall has decided that it would chance a boycott of young people and their families. How will it work out?

In retailing, Cheyenne is both a tiny and marginal market to have a "regional" enclosed shopping mall. And when Frontier Mall was built, the local competition from large retailers outside their walls was virtually nonexistent. Over the past 20 years, competition for the inferior mall along Dell Range alone has rendered it a redundancy.

There could be no worse time to drive away the potential business there was.

But, they chose to do exactly that.

They will try to spin the effects quite differently. Mall management here has never been experienced - Tennessee hires whomever they can find to hold down the positions they offer locally. And the advertising they collect for in leases is invisible. Retailers do their own advertising - especially the stores that are attached to the mall but not a part of it.

Does the mall "management" not realize that many of those walking around the mall with strollers are not shoppers but lookers? They can get out of the wind and walk the mall for exercise and some are curious just what is going on in the isolated loneliness called Cheyenne's mall. For years, except for gift buying occasions like Mother's Day and Christmas, few people, youth or adults, were carrying sacks as they strolled around the temperature-controlled interior. They

were killing time or they were looking around or they were "walking off dinner."

Look at today's shopping options. Twenty years ago, someone may have cared if the mall wanted to ban certain groups of people. Today, they don't.

What is there in the mall that can't be bought somewhere else in town? Or in Fort Collins? There are some category voids in town to be sure. But they are categories not offered in the mall either.

Think about it for a minute. What is there in the mall that you can't find outside the mall? Here in Cheyenne, even, without traveling to Fort Collins or south to find.

Tragically for the mall, they cannot unring the bell. They have told the responsible young people of Cheyenne, along with their families and friends, "we don't want or need your business." But, they do. The sales per square foot at Frontier Mall are pathetic. They need everybody who will spend money to patronize the mall.

Had they done the job expected of them, the problem with a small group of rowdies could have been nipped in the bud. To hire security that - well, the two recent popular movies depicting "mall cops" point out what I don't want to say here.

They can try to convince themselves that people wearing athletic shoes and walking in circles will increase their business. It won't. The problem for them is that consumers don't need them. That is sad.

In a few months, the Cheyenne Herald will dispatch a couple of "undercover" agents to view the destruction.



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