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| FROM THE EDITOR |

Remembering Our American Values

by Lee E. Mortenson, D.P.A.

This summer my wife Carol and I had a chance to visit beautiful Medora, N. Dak. Two friends of ours live out there and invited us for a week of hiking in the Badlands and for an evening at the Medora Musical, including dinner at the Pitchfork Fondue. This opportunity was just too good to pass up. So, in the early days of August, we packed up and headed out to see the Old West.

The musical was performed under the stars in an amphitheatre that can hold 2,500, and the Pitchfork Fondue was outrageous.

The musical was purely Western in flavor, featuring a cast of talented young people singing, dancing, and joking alongside a couple of special acts (including a group of Chinese acrobats). To give you a taste, the show opened with a lone cowboy on horseback herding a lone elk with an enormous rack down the ridge. You next saw the cowboy riding onto center stage carrying the American flag.

Of course, the audience stood for the Pledge of Allegiance (which I believe was the "under God" version). Those of you who are old enough will understand why the music at the end included recordings of the dulcet tones of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, and Gene Autry. At one point, a huge American flag came up onstage after a skit about Teddy Roosevelt and the audience just spontaneously stood up.

In other words, the musical featured the stuff we grew up with in the 1950s, and it brought both a smile to my lips and more than one tear to my eye.

The next morning I had a chance to meet with the team that runs the

show and heads the Theodore Roosevelt Badlands Institute, a new retreat center that is being developed to promote the ideals of Teddy and another great man from the Dakotas, Harold Schaffer. These are values like courage, optimism, honest work, accountability, conservation...you know, the ideals we want our kids to think are important.

As we ate breakfast at the all-you-can-eat buffet, we talked about the team's ideas and challenges. And then, in the middle of breakfast, one of the guys leaned forward and asked me if I'd change anything about the show. I thought for a moment and said, "Not a thing. It was great." And then I asked him why he asked. He said that he'd had one really strong complaint about the show being too patriotic. I asked where the person was from, and sure enough, the individual was from Washington, D.C.

Of course, I roared with laughter and said, "I hope you said you were just portraying an indigenous culture," and the guy's eyes twinkled as he said, "I believe that's the exact word I used."

The moral of this story is that the folks inside the beltway need to get out more. When your Congressman comes home, make certain that he or she visits your office or your hospital oncology unit. Unless we keep reminding them about some of the down-home values of the folks in the United States, they're going to lose touch with reality.

Of course, we need diversity. We also need to honor the basic values of a great country with honest folks who trust that we are there to serve them and care for them as they do for each other and the other members of the community they call home. ☐

