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Church versus state in R.I.

When it comes to talk of God, the United States, led by the Supreme Court, stands solidly in the middle of the road. God is allowed on our currency, "In God We Trust," and is honored in our Pledge of Allegiance, "one nation, under God." God gets the green light in our courts, too, where witnesses swear to tell the truth "so help me God."

God is invoked in our legislatures, which convene with a prayer and is the sole guest of honor at Thanksgiving, a national holiday in which all of America offers thanks to God.

And yet our Constitution mandates a wall of separation between church and state and forbids government not only from prohibiting religious freedom, but also from AIDING any religion. How, then, is God constitutionally allowed?

God is allowed because the God invoked in courts and ceremonies nationwide is generic, a denominationally neutral deity who represents and aids no one religion. If the Constitution were more broadly interpreted, God could be expelled from all of American life and there would be no more Thanksgiving and no more "In God We Trust."

Clearly, then, this generic, constitutionally acceptable God should be welcome at any public ceremony, including middle school graduations.

The American Civil Liberties Union strongly disagrees, however, and has as-

serted that an invocation at a Providence, R.I., middle school graduation ceremony last year constituted prayer in public school and was a violation of the Constitution. Two courts have agreed with the ACLU, so the Providence School Committee is taking the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"It is entirely inappropriate and unconstitutional under existing decisions of the court for the school to officially select members of the clergy to give a religious message at a public school," maintains ACLU member Barry W. Lyon.

But the text of Rabbi Leslie Gutterman's "inappropriate and unconstitutional" message is vintage middle-of-the-road. "God of the Free, Hope of the Brave: For the legacy of America where diversity is celebrated and the rights of minorities protected, we thank You... For the liberty of America, we thank You... For the destiny of America, we thank you... May our aspiration for our country and for these young people, who are our hope for the future be richly fulfilled, Amen."

In 1952, Justice William O. Douglas, writing for the majority in *Zorach v. Clausen*, penned words that were true then and remain true today. "The First Amendment... does not say that in every and all respects there shall be a separation of Church and State... We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being."

It is, like, pretty awful

If English is beginning to sound like a foreign language to you, it is probably because you've been listening to too many TV newscasts. Or too many teenagers. And too, too many puppies.

There was a time — not too long ago — when words, whether spoken or written, meant exactly what they said. But that was before reporters began filling us in on burglars who "snuck" into homes, only to be driven off by occupants who were "wokened" by the noise they made.

Those are not acceptable words. They are ugly sounds, the use of which would have doomed sixth grade scholars to be kept after school for punishment duty in the dear, dead past. Now they are not only tolerated but in some cases are actually copied by listeners who should know better — but don't.

Uglier still, in our view anyway, is the use of "goes," usually by those in their teens, as a substitute for "says" as in "he goes,"... or "she goes." Ugliest of all is the abuse of "like," as either a pause, or possibly a punctuation mark; e.g., "so we snuck aboard the bus, like, until it was time to, like, get off and, like, get a seat on a train before it got, like, crowded."

Then there's computerese, manufactured on Route 128 and adopted by upscale careerists everywhere.

They don't just meet others, they "network." They don't communicate, they "interface" and sometimes they "interact," — which means much the same thing.

Is all this one bystander's complaint? Sure. Will it do any good? He doubts it. But is he glad he said it? You betcha.

Doris Bunte rally drums up support and a whole lot of love

POLS & POLITICS

Passersby on City Hall Plaza recently may have thought they had come across the Doris Bunte Telethon as a rally to defend the beleaguered Boston Housing Authority director turned into a mushy love-in.

"We love you Doris! We love you!" BHA manager Hattie Dudley yelled as she danced across a stage. "Oooh, I get all excited when we start talking about love!"

As if the round of glowing speeches from various politicians and BHA employees wasn't enough, the group of supporters joined hands and circled Bunte as an organist played. "That's What Friends Are For."

It was all very moving but hardly spontaneous as Mayor Ray Flynn and Bunte arrived on stage on cue as the crowd chanted, "We want Doris!" Flynn flack Arthur Jones dutifully handed out the mayor's canned remarks and the singer urged the crowd to turn to the lyric sheets "in your folders."

A Silber 'soaker'

The collapse of the banking industry, Democrat John R. Silber explained the other day, is a "shocking phenomenon."

"Who would believe that the First Republic Bank of Dallas would go bankrupt?" he asked rhetorically.

Certainly not Silber, according to a huge capital loss that he declared in his 1988 tax returns.

In late 1987, Silber bought \$21,884 worth of stock in First Republic Bank, which had managed to turn itself into the largest commercial bank in the Lone Star State by gobbling up some of its rivals.

At the time, the bank was flying high, trading around \$25-a-share on the New York Stock Exchange despite worries about a bevy of bad real estate loans in the bank's portfolio.

"We can handle it ourselves. We don't need federal assistance," Gerald W. Fronterhouse, the bank's chairman, confidently predicted just before the bottom rapidly began to fall out.

In March 1988, Fronterhouse ate his words and asked for a federal bailout. In July, the bank filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Then in September, the bank's securities were delisted.

Silber finally unloaded the stock in December 1988 for the princely sum of \$1.

A tale of two 'tails'

No sooner had the Herald termed Richard Gaines, spokesman for Republican U.S. Senate hopeful James W. Rappaport, the only mainstream male to don a ponytail than we were corrected.

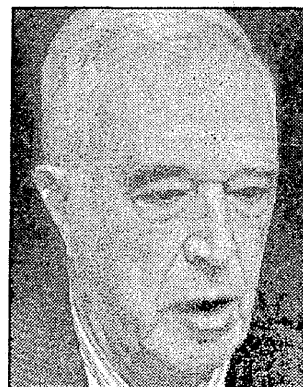
Vann Snyder, the long-haired Goldman Associates fund-raising expert and one-time aspiring pro wrestling promoter, worked full time for Lt. Gov. Evelyn Murphy with his ponytail. He said he was "deeply offended" to have been left off the list.



MARY HURLEY
Snubs radio host



DORIS BUNTE
City Hall love fest



LLOYD B. WARING
Signs on with Silber



JOSEPH BRENNAN
Maine gov hopeful

Snyder called Gaines — known for affecting a look that approximates a drug-addled jazz musician from the 1950s — a coward for caving into his close-cropped boss' desire to present a better image. Gaines has cut his hair, while Snyder's locks grow ever longer.

Radio host sounds off

A radio talk-show host camped for more than six hours in a Springfield City Hall phone booth last Thursday night and refused to leave until Mayor Mary Hurley promised to appear on his show and discuss the Question 3 tax-roll-back initiative.

But Hurley had the last laugh when police cheated WSPR-AM talkmaster Dan Yorke out of his big moment just before 10 p.m.

"We asked him to come with us and escorted him out the door," one Springfield Police official said. "I think he thought he was being arrested. Then we said 'Goodnight' and locked the door behind him."

Hurley telephoned Yorke at about 9:30 p.m. "Basically what I have to say is that this is a cheap publicity stunt," said Hurley, who vowed to appear on other local radio stations.

Yorke responded by calling Hurley "a jerk," "a moron" and a "stinking, sniveling snipe."

Yorke accuses Hurley of trying to sabotage Question 3 by threatening "Armageddon" — drastic layoffs of police, firefighters and other city workers.

A Maine event

Some big Democratic guns will be taking time out from the William F. Weld-John R. Silber contest Thursday to pitch in on

another gubernatorial race a little farther north.

Boston Mayor Raymond L. Flynn, Rep. J. Joseph Moakley (D-S. Boston), former House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill Jr. and his namesake son will be hosting a 1 p.m. reception for Maine Rep. Joseph Brennan at the Union Oyster House.

Brennan, who served two terms as governor before going to Washington, is hoping to unseat incumbent Republican John R. "Jock" McKernan.

And, if you're tired of the same old Bay State faces, an added attraction at the event will be Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell (D-Maine).

The reception's organizers, one of whom is Moakley's son Christopher, expect to raise about \$30,000.

Wanted: Good housecleaner

Lloyd B. Waring, one of the GOC's (Grand Old Conservatives) of the GOP (Grand Old Party), has transferred his money-raising skills this year to Democratic gubernatorial candidate John R. Silber.

Waring, a wealthy retired businessman from Rockport who raised big bucks for ex-U.S. Senate candidate Ray Shemie and for Richard Nixon's presidential campaigns in the '60s and '70s, sent out a fundraising letter to his friends.

In it, he said Silber will "clean house and select qualified people to help him run state government — regardless of party affiliation."

— Joe Sciacca, Eric Fehrstrom, Robert Connolly, Wayne Woodlief, Jack Meyers and Ralph Ranalli contributed to this column.