

Association For Intelligence Officers

The Tom Smith New Mexico Chapter

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President

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APRIL MEETING

Wednesday, 11 April 2012

Marcello's Chophouse, Albuquerque Uptown

11:15 AM: Arrive, Sign in, Order Lunch **11:45 AM:** Call To Order

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I'm tempted to say how comforting it is to be able to observe from a distance the global perturbations of national strife, internecine warfare, economic upheaval, nuclear proliferation, suicide bombings and general skullduggery. Alas, distance does not equal detachment, and we Americans are inescapably touched by each of these misadventures, every day.

I find it getting harder even to discuss the ramifications of these events with people, especially those who have no military, Intelligence, or genuine overseas experience. Many of the folks I run into who are concerned about the apparent unraveling of worldwide networks and governments, whose stability they have always taken for granted, find it harder and harder to cope with the flood of (mostly) bad news. Well, if it's hard for regular folks to digest it all, imagine the strain on the Intelligence Community! OK, enough dime-store philosophy.

On a more down-to-home topic, we have spent some effort, lately, trying to come to grips with way too many allegations about what may be a major problem here at home. I'm speaking of what may be both misguided policies and widespread malfeasance throughout the Department of Homeland Security. Revelations of misconduct by senior officials, coupled with persistent reports of security clearances being granted to unqualified persons, the improper naturalization of foreign citizens, faulty background investigations of personnel who then move into sensitive positions, etc., etc., are so outrageous they are hard to believe. Yet, we are told there is ample evidence of widespread evasions of procedure and policy and that—though it has been brought to the attention of senior officials, and perhaps even Congressmen—no substantive (i.e., independent) investigation has yet been mounted. I know as well as anyone how blind bureaucracies can be, and how difficult it is to tilt at these windmills, but if it is true, anywhere within DHS, that improperly vetted, unqualified people—especially foreigners recruited via waivers and rubber stamp approvals—have been, or are being, given access to security clearances and therefore classified information, then we have a real problem.

In the worst case scenario, officials responsible for safeguarding this country may actually be guilty not only of undermining our whole application and review process for granting security clearances, but of sowing the seeds of a future repeat of 9/11. Maybe that's an overstatement, but I invite you to consider the implications of a corrupt Intelligence structure.

I would like to think that someone at the upper levels of our government (not beholden to any political entity) is performing a thorough external review of these allegations and working to purge what appears to be a seriously corrupt agency of every trace of wrongdoing. Maybe I'm hoping for too much, but—as an American with a vested interest in this system—I hope not.

I had hoped to offer you a definite agenda for this month's meeting, but some pieces of that puzzle are missing, so I can't be specific at this time. My apologies for the lack of detail.

PERSONNEL NOTES

AL ABBOTT, many of you may recall, attended a meeting a few months ago, when he was 99 years old. Well, last month (Mar 20), Jim Hoffsis, Al Baye and I attended Al Abbott's 100th birthday party at La Vida Llena. Wow! La Vida Llena put on a terrific party for him, and I counted over 120 people in attendance. Al is still very much "with it," and was talking up a storm. His many accomplishments were celebrated by representatives of organizations he has volunteered for or made donations to, and a rep from Mayor Berry's office came along to present him with an "Al Abbott Day" certificate from the city. La Vida Llena did a bang-up job for the occasion and, as they say, "a good time was had by all." [Photo below]

JERRY MONAHAN, I'm happy to report, is feeling much better, and is doing well enough that he's planning to attend the meeting next week. That's great news.

RON CUELLAR remains in Texas, remains in good humor, and wishes—as we do—he was back in Albuquerque. He also remains one of the best informed people I know, and is more on top of current affairs than I am. We wish him continued good health and hope to see him back here one of these days.

BRENDAN O'DONOVAN, to the best of my knowledge, is doing well, though I haven't spoken with him recently. I hope to have an update for you at the meeting.

With best wishes to all for a glorious Easter, I remain,

Yr.obt.svt., Pete Bostwick



Al Abbott – 100 Years Young