



'Tis the season to be free

By Jim Waters

Gov. Steve Beshear came close to trading places with Scrooge.

Residents greeted his invitation for Kentuckians to join him for the lighting of the “holiday tree” with all the holly jolly of a football coach hearing he lost his job, as happened at Western Kentucky University and could be in “the Cards” for another in-state coach.

Of course, WKU Coach Dave Elson became the fall guy for a school administration bent on becoming a big-time football program in a state that’s as crazy about basketball as a 9-year-old about that new pink bike under the tree ... uh ... Christmas tree, that is.

WKU officials failed to consider that the transition from winning I-AA championships to I-A punching bag is, to quote Bowling Green Daily News sports editor Daniel Pike, “hard. Really, really hard.”

Elson tried hard to win, but didn’t. Beshear tried hard not to offend anyone, and ended up insulting lots of freedom-loving Kentuckians of faith, who sensed he wanted to sacrifice for political safety a symbol we hold dear.

Patience is necessary when building a football program. But sometimes the people’s long suffering must end. When it did with Beshear, he changed step faster than a Baptist preacher at a Pentecostal Christmas pageant.

The people simply refused to accept his premise that “political” correctness serves best. “No, it’s a [Christmas tree!](#)” they said. And the top politician in the state caved.

If nothing else, this incident serves as a reminder that despite the fantasies of the crowd in the White House or the statehouse, this country and commonwealth still belong to “the people.”

The coal-in-the-stocking with this bah-humbug-turned-kiss-under-the-mistletoe moment is that Kentuckians often get more riled about symbols than substance.

Don’t misunderstand. I’m a “Merry Christmas” guy. You can take the “Happy Holidays” PC stuff and stick it out back in the garbage with all the used wrapping paper.

But the people who demonstrated the “Christmas spirit” when the governor wanted to mess with a tradition are the same people who too often fail to stand up against bad policies that have a much-more adverse affect.

While your chestnuts roast, think about the impact that many had by saying “no” to “holiday” and “yes” to “Christmas.” Then ask yourself: “Why is it that they seem to find it so easy to rip a weak-kneed leader for wanting to avoid a church-state battle with the ACLU yet often remain quiet as church mice when it comes to public policies tearing the very fibers of our freedom?”

Before Beshear surrendered, not many of the Christmas-loving protesters held back with the excuse: “well, one person’s voice won’t matter.” They raised their voices. They showed passion, even anger. The governor messed with an important symbol. No one dared tell them it wasn’t within their power to keep Christmas at the capitol.

As the late-night Christmas Eve fire crackles this year, sugarplums won’t be dancing in my head.

Instead, I’ll be dreaming about the nightmare those same passionate Kentuckians could cause self-serving politicians by demanding they change plans to raise taxes, poison the finest health-care system in the world, implement wacko environmental policies and avoid dealing with failing schools.

You can dream about “a white Christmas.” I’ll be dreaming of a commonwealth where hard-working taxpayers and good people have lost their patience and retaken control of their destinies. I’ll dream about a government that is protecting — instead of threatening — our liberty, and a place where Kentuckians revel in the peace, joy and blessings of freedom.

Talk about being both happy *and* merry!

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