

Missing Dr. Charles Krauthammer

A man for all seasons, and in my opinion a man for all time, has now been gone from this Earth for over two years. And it's not a stretch to say that I find myself *in his mind* at least once a day as I reflect on what's happening to and affecting us in our rapidly-changing world. If you're not familiar with this paragon of wit and wisdom you owe it to yourself to buy his last book ("The point of it all") a posthumous work that was compiled by his son, Daniel. It is more than a son's homage to his father, though it's clearly that, too. It is a sampling of some of his best short articles about America and Americans. Though it's too late to buy as a stocking stuffer, it's not too late to give it to all your friends as a New Year's gift.

Dr. Krauthammer's life must be described as a profile in courage as he faced more obstacles in his twenties than most people do in a lifetime. Paralyzed from the waist down from a diving accident in his first year in medical school studying psychiatry, he convinced his teachers to allow him to attend class from a hospital bed and later from a wheelchair. After graduating medical school, he subsequently went on to become a speechwriter for Vice-President Walter Mondale and contributed political articles to the *New Republic* and essays to *Time* magazine, among other periodicals.

In 1985, he started writing regular editorials for the *Washington Post* and ultimately became syndicated to 400 publications. It's fair to say that he combined his two disciplines - medicine and journalism - to pen some pretty poignant pieces which ultimately led him to an even larger audience on PBS and later Fox News. In 2013, just five years before his death, he published one of my favorite books, "Things that matter: Three decades of passions, pastimes and politics." That book went the equivalent of Platinum and was on the *New York Times* best-seller list for 38 weeks.

The awards piled up throughout his career, the first major one was a Pulitzer Prize in 1987. Among the accolades, the prestigious newspaper, the *Financial Times*, named him the most influential commentator in America. Such was Dr. Charles Krauthammer's professional life - a life of perseverance and immense curiosity about everything and anything. I'm actually re-reading "The point of it all" now and tracking his observations with the reality that's playing out in our country on a whole host of subjects.

One of them is 'tribalism,' especially how it affects our American immigration problem/challenge. Krauthammer's view was that without successful assimilation (into our culture) and successful English language skills, our immigrants are doomed to a life of smaller tribes co-existing within a larger one. Distinct, yes, but distinctly disadvantaged as we all are in the larger tribe by their disenfranchisement. Dr. K. wasn't a political hawk, but he had the hawk's eye for observation of his fellow man. He was a firm believer in the 'law' of human nature and of the importance of common sense. He also had a scientist's mind when he approached a subject, allowing for the unknown to play a role in his conclusions. This comes through in spades in his many columns as does his rapier wit.

I saw an interview with his son, Daniel, on Fox News recently, and it was plain to see and hear how much he idolized his father and admired his unique ability to see adversity as an opportunity instead of an incommutable sentence. We could use a bit more of that today as we whine and howl about the little things that go bump in the night and the big things like our self-destructive partisan politics and our escalating and ever-expanding victim class.

Back to tribalism for a moment. I suspect that Dr. K. would be very upset at what's happening with the widening ideological gulf that's about to separate and swallow us up in the coming years and the Bidenite, warp-speed push for a new, more deadly round of identity politics gamesmanship.

Indeed, as a man who sought to eradicate any social label that would have classified him as an 'invalid,' Krauthammer would have probably been at the forefront of a movement to eschew any form of identity politics that would have *gifted* him with bureaucratically-induced pity and confer second-class citizenship on people with physical disabilities. Instead, he would have called them 'challenges' and fought for access to opportunity not excess opportunity from the rest of us.

I feel quite comfortable in putting those words in his mouth given the hundreds of columns of his I have read over the years and the dozens of panels I viewed in which he participated. He was a staunch proponent of free and unfettered speech and could hold his own with the many literati and pundits of which there are legion in his home in Washington, DC.

His life was a study in unbridled curiosity and one in which he found the absurdity of things to be humorous and powerfully head-shaking. It came through in his always clever turn of a phrase or choice of exactly the right word to distill something complex into something enjoyable and memorable. That was the mark of not only an educated man but an extremely talented one. Krauthammer didn't mince words; he savored them, rolling them around in his mouth like a connoisseur at a California wine-tasting conference.

He loved our English language and honored it in his writing and public speaking without sounding erudite like William F. Buckley used to do. It was easy to look up to such a man without having to use a 'but' or a 'despite' to describe his successes. Such was the genius of Dr. Charles Krauthammer, and it's fitting as we approach a new year that we should remember the lessons he taught us about humility and courage and of living a life of purpose, always looking forward to the next new horizon.

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