

Interview with Case Wagenvoord Author of “Open Letters to George W. Bush”

Reader Views is excited to be talking with Case Wagenvoord about his deeply satirical political book called “Open Letters to George W. Bush.” Case is talking with Juanita Watson, Assistant Editor of Reader Views.

Juanita: Thanks for talking with us today Case. Please give us an idea of the content in your unique book “Open Letters to George W. Bush.”

Case: The book is a collection of prose political cartoons in the form of letters to the president. Like political cartoons, they derive their humor from caricature and exaggeration, both of which contain elements of truth.

Juanita: What inspired you to write your book?

Case: My wife worked in the South Tower of the World Trade Center. By the grace of God, she was running late the morning of 9/11 and was a block from the WTC when the first plane struck. She lost fifteen to twenty friends in the tragedy. The book was born of the anger I felt over the invasion of Iraq, which had nothing to do with 9/11.

Juanita: What are some of the topics that you, through your alter ego Belacqua Jones address in “Open Letters to George W. Bush”?

Case: The primary areas I address are mendacity in government and the commodification of life.

Juanita: How did you come up with Belacqua Jones and who is this character?

Case: The name Belacqua first appeared in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. As Dante was entering the mountain to begin his ascent to paradise, he passed Belacqua huddled in the shadow of a boulder. When Dante asked Belacqua to join him, he replied, “O brother, why bother going up?” That reply seemed to characterize the Bush administration, and so Belacqua Jones was born.

Juanita: What do you feel is the biggest problem with political leaders in control of our country right now?

Case: They are more interested in power than they are in governing.

Juanita: What is your political philosophy – Are you liberal or conservative?

Case: Actually, I'm neither. I have an inherent distrust of all ideologies. I believe deeply in a democratic republic and the rule of law. It saddens me to see both being eroded.

Juanita: What do you see as the proper role for government?

Case: It is to provide a safety net below which no person is allowed to fall. This means no child goes to bed hungry, and no individual is denied medical care simply because they can't afford it.

Juanita: What areas do you feel are the most glaring examples of the overstepping of boundaries in government today?

Case: The Patriot Act, NSC warrantless wiretapping, and the concentration of power in the executive branch of the government.

Juanita: What issues do you feel are being completely neglected by the state?

Case: The economic welfare of the working poor.

Juanita: Do you think there is any hope for us with the state of the world being in such chaos?

Case: Absolutely! This country has been in worse shape in times past. We are a resilient and decent people. We can be a little slow at times, but eventually we become fed up with corruption and the abuse of power.

Juanita: What are your statements regarding the massive military industrial complex that is overshadowing all other endeavors?

Case: It is a dinosaur. The Cold War is over, so we no longer need a bloated military. Every time I look at the Pentagon, I see what could potentially be the world's greatest indoor shopping mall.

Juanita: What are your thoughts on War and Terrorism?

Case: War is evil. Occasionally, a tragic set of circumstances arise when it becomes a necessary evil. Iraq is not such a case. Terrorism is a crime and is needs only sharp intelligence and competent police work to deal with it.

Juanita: How do you feel the media is doing these days in reporting political interests?

Case: They are doing better, but there is still plenty of room for improvement.

Juanita: If you could pose one question to George W. Bush, what would that be?

Case: What were you thinking?

Juanita: Case, have you always been a critic of government?

Case: Not at all. This is a recent development that began with 9/11.

Juanita: What are your thoughts on the growing numbers of dissatisfied Americans that are speaking out on their contempt of the way George W. Bush is handling his position?

Case: It's an encouraging sign. Barnum was right about fooling all of the people.

Juanita: Is this your first book and do you have plans for any in the future?

Case: This is my first book. I hope to put together another collection of letters this Summer.

Juanita: How can readers find out more about you and your endeavors?

Case: They can read my more recent letters at <http://blogs.salon.com/0004024> or go to my website at www.belacquajones.com. I'm planning to redo the website at the end of the month.

Juanita: Thanks for talking with us today Case. Do you have any last thoughts for your readers today?

Case: The philosophy of the Bush administration is that if they scare the chickens enough they'll vote for the fox. We will preserve our democratic republic only to the extent that we are unwilling to buy into their fear mongering.