

## Fourth of July fruit salad: Apples, oranges and sour grapes



**BARB GUY**

Next year on Independence Day we'll still picnic, we'll still watch fireworks, we'll still fight wildfires and George Bush will be president of the United States. Still.

It's hard to celebrate the birth of our nation when the guy who has done more to tear it apart than anyone in memory is still captaining the ship. We're facing another 560 days with George Bush in charge, and I just can't endure it.

A large percentage of Americans seem to agree. *Newsweek*, CBS, all your mainstream media types, have been reporting on the "all-time low" presidential approval ratings for more than a year now, characterizing the plummet as the lowest regard we've had for a president in 35 years. (Read: since Nixon.)

A lot of folks have been joking that only George Bush could

make lefties wish for Tricky Dick's return. There's a worse Dick in the White House now, and he and President Bush are presiding over this terrible decline in approval, in large part due to the war in Iraq.

Responsible media outlets cast about for new ways to describe the slide, the historic low, because every time they turn around it's lower still. In the next 560 days I fully expect a number of good reporters to finally lose the will to live.

Yes, the apotheosis of George Bush has come and gone. Hardly anyone mistakes him for a god anymore. Even former fans wish he'd go on a long vacation. The rest of us reminisce about the days when all he did was play video games, choke on pretzels, horrify school kids with his grammar and clear brush at the ranch.

Speaking of school kids, I struggled to explain the meaning of "apples and oranges" to a student the other day, and since then I've been frustrated that I didn't produce a satisfactorily snappy definition for her.

If only she could look inside my psyche, all would become clear. I've been having an existential crisis all week as I've wrestled with an apples-and-oranges dichotomy over what to say in

this space while Independence Day is still fresh.

**Orange:** President Bush lied to us again this past week. Earlier he said he'd have the hide of whoever outed Valerie Plame, but when a court of law saw fit to send Dick Cheney's former right-hand man, Scooter Libby, to jail for lying about it, Bush commuted the prison sentence he hadn't begun serving.

**Apple:** A 20-something woman spoke at a luncheon I attended Tuesday. She described an impoverished life as a child laborer in Vietnam, never learning to read or write, never setting foot in a classroom until she emigrated, half grown-up, to the United States.

When a relocation social worker took the girl and her family to a grocer to learn American ways, the girl couldn't believe apples were available to her.

She said, "In my country apples are for rich people. I saw them but I never thought I'd eat one. When I came to the U.S., I ate about five pounds of apples." And went to school.

She's at a fine college now and will attend law school.

So what could I do but make fruit salad on Independence Day?

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I wanted to honor an inspirational story where the simple image of an apple stands for the unlimited promise of our great country. Some immigrants and their descendants prefer “fruit salad” to the melting-pot metaphor because each fruit is still recognizable while it contributes to the value of the whole.

Fruit salad was also a way to illustrate my apples-and-oranges feelings about our country and to show that George Bush provides the sour grapes. Still.

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*BARB GUY is a regular contributor to these pages. © Salt Lake Tribune.*