

FORUM

COMMENTARY

Nearly 100 years ago, a dog named Laddie Boy captured the hearts and gritty spirit of America's newsboys



Images of the late President Warren Harding's beloved dog, Laddie Boy, still decorate the Harding home and museum in Marion. *Rich Warren, Special to the Plain Dealer*

Harvey Rachlin

We all know that the rise of the internet has abetted the decline of newspapers, with people able to get the news virtually instantaneously from sundry sources other than a print or online newspaper.

But for much of the 20th century, the print paper was a dominant news source, and it was the newsboys who brought the printed paper to the doors of American homes and to city streets. Like the transistor radio, public pay phone and typewriter, they have largely been forgotten, but we may remember them with a special story in the annals of newspaper history, of which Jan. 23 is the 96th anniversary.

On this date in 1929, an Airedale terrier named Laddie Boy died, but for newsboys across the nation this was no ordinary dog. Laddie Boy had once galvanized American newspaper delivery boys across the nation to come together on a mission in which they would pay tribute to a true friend of their community, and at the same time show the nation that its youths can be caring, warmhearted and responsible members of society.

Warren G. Harding was inaugurated as the 29th president of the United States on March 4, 1921. Prior to entering politics, Harding pursued his interest in newspapers. He purchased the Marion Star, a daily newspaper in his central Ohio hometown of Marion, and became the newspaper's editor as well as publisher. Harding later married, and his wife Florence, with a keen business head, ran the paper successfully. She is also credited with the idea of having youths deliver newspapers to homes, a practice that continued robustly for most of the 20th century.

Harding later changed his interest to politics and after ascending the ladder of

Harding received Laddie Boy as a gift. The 55-pound brown-coated First Doggie became Harding's devoted companion at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

politics in Ohio ran for president and won. Desiring a special companion for the difficult job ahead, the erstwhile newspaper chief wanted to have a dog with him in the White House. Different kinds of dogs were offered, but he turned them down saying he wanted "a regular dog ... an Airedale."

Soon after he was inaugurated, Harding received Laddie Boy as a gift. The 55-pound brown-coated First Doggie became Harding's devoted companion at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. When the president sat in his office, Laddie Boy would lounge by his side. When Harding walked around the Ellipse, Laddie Boy would be there right with him, too. As one newspaper reported, "Few of the presi-

dent's friends are believed to enjoy the friendship that the president bestows on his dog."

President Harding died unexpectedly in office on Aug. 2, 1923, and with his background in newspapers and the interest he had taken in the Brookline, Massachusetts, memorial of a former newsboy from the Boston area — Albert Edward Scott had enlisted in the U.S. Army during World War I as a high school freshman and was fatally shot at the age of 16 by German fire in France — the Roosevelt Newsboys Association of Greater Boston wanted to show their appreciation to the late president.

They came up with a plan to commission a replica of Laddie Boy.

The Boston newsboys created a poster to enlist the help of fellow newspaper boys around the country. Revere, Massachusetts, newsboy Leonard Poretzky wrote the prize-winning essay on the poster, in which he praised Harding as "one of the best friends" newsboys ever had and "a man to whom the newsboys of the country could give no greater honor than to erect a fitting monument to his memory ... the plan is for every newsboy in the country to give one penny."

The poster was nationally distributed and newsboys around the country sprang into action, collecting 19,314 copper pennies that were used to create a life-size bronze statue of Laddie Boy that now resides at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. Today, it is a monument to a bygone era.

Rachlin is the award-winning author of many books, including "Lucy's Bones, Sacred Stones and Einstein's Brain." He wrote this for The Plain Dealer and cleveland.com.

COMMENTARY

Teflon Don should have drawn a fine and probation



Eric Foster

On May 30, 2024, Donald Trump was found guilty by a New York county jury of 34 counts of Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree — a class E felony under New York law. Prosecutors argued he falsified business records to cover up a payment of \$130,000 made on his behalf to Stormy Daniels in the final weeks of his 2016 presidential campaign. The payment was in exchange for her silence regarding an extramarital relationship between them in 2006. Trump said he was completely innocent, that Daniels and his former attorney who testified to making the payment for him, Michael Cohen, were lying.

Trump was scheduled to be sentenced on July 11, 2024. However, the sentencing was rescheduled after the U.S. Supreme Court issued its sweeping decision in Trump v. U.S., in which the Court addressed the scope of presidential immunity. In August 2024, Trump requested his sentencing be moved until after the 2024 election. That was granted.

After Trump won the election, he filed a motion to dismiss the case, jury verdict and all. Trump's primary argument was that because he was elected to be the president, the doctrine of presidential immunity required dismissal. Generally, this doctrine holds that a president who acts within his constitutional authority is generally immune from lawsuits based on those actions.

The trial court made its decision shortly after the New Year. In a decision dated Jan. 3, 2025, Judge Juan Merchan denied Trump's request for a dismissal. Judge Merchan ruled that the presidential immunity doctrine did not apply because ... well ... Donald Trump was not the president. He was the president-elect. Said another way, the presidential immunity doctrine applies only to presidents, not soon-to-be presidents.

Trump made another argument for dismissal as well. He argued that his case should be dismissed "in the interests of justice." New York courts must consider several factors in deciding to dismiss on this basis, including the seriousness of the offense, the evidence of guilt, and the history and character of the defendant. Of course, Trump argued that all these factors weighed in his favor.

Judge Merchan disagreed. In response to Trump's argument that the offense was not that serious, Judge Merchan wrote in his Jan. 3 decision and order:

"Here, 12 jurors unanimously found Defendant guilty of 34 counts of falsifying business records with the intent to defraud, which included an intent to commit or conceal a conspiracy to promote a presidential election by unlawful means. It was the premeditated and continuous deception by the leader of the free world that is the gravamen of this offense. To vacate this verdict on the grounds that the charges are insufficiently serious given the position Defendant once held, and is about to assume again, would constitute a disproportionate result and cause immeasurable damage to the citizenry's confidence in the Rule of Law."

SEE FOSTER, D8

COMMENTARY

Trump can't deport everyone. Here's what he should do instead.

Ramesh Ponnuru

No issue has done more for Donald Trump during the past decade than illegal immigration. As he starts this second term, this boon is about to become a serious challenge.

The president-elect campaigned on promises of "mass deportation." Asked recently whether that meant deporting "everyone who is here illegally over the next four years," he responded, "Well, I think you have to do it" — while allowing that it would be "a very tough thing to do."

More like impossible. The federal government is not close to capable of carrying out such an ambitious project, and even people who sympathize with the goal would not enjoy living under a government that was.

There are also more political constraints on Republicans than some of them realize. "Trump has a mandate to do what-

ever he wants on the border," conservative pollster Patrick Ruffini recently opined. And it is true that during Joe Biden's presidency, public opinion swung sharply toward a crackdown on illegal immigration — and even toward cuts in legal immigration.

But during Trump's first term, sentiment swung in a liberal direction.

One reason Biden's immigration policy proved politically disastrous was that Democrats took the public's short-term reaction against Trump's excesses as evidence of a permanent change in the national consensus.

To assume the public will support draconian measures on immigration, such as large-scale family separation, would be to make the mirror-image mistake.

The backlash to Biden's policies could be seen in the exit polls from the presidential election, which showed an increase in the percentage of Americans

who would deport most illegal immigrants. But a larger percentage still wanted to give most of them a chance at legal status.

At the same time, Trump cannot content himself with merely cosmetic changes to immigration policy. A reasonable benchmark is the size of the illegal-immigrant population in the United States, most recently estimated by the Department of Homeland Security to include 11 million people.

If that number appreciably shrinks — and not because of a recession — Trump will have delivered on his promise. He will also have proved that illegal immigration is not an inexorable force, and that government won't just ignore voter demands on the issue forever. If that number doesn't shrink, on the other hand, it will be fair to conclude that Trump's presidency failed at one of his main goals.

SEE PONNURU, D8



Migrants walk through Tapachula, Chiapas state, Mexico, on Jan. 2, in an attempt to reach the U.S. border. *Edgar H. Clemente, AP*