

Chicago Tribune

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Daley's Olympic dream dashed

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In bid blame game, point fingers here

Chicago's bid to host the 2016 Olympics was a humiliating loss for Mayor Richard Daley's nephews and other well-connected idealists and some taxpayers who were their best friends.

In bid game, I'll wear the jacket and make my friend the mayor happy. What I've been a supreme idiot for opposing the mayor's Olympics and all that noncynical fun.

Sure, the taxpayers were worried about digging into their pockets for Olympian cost overruns, just so the politicians could hand out Olympic gold to their friends. But upon reflection, I fear that I've stupidly cost myself oodles of cash.

My God, what have I done?

Just before Chicago's embarrassing fourth-place finish in the Olympics sweepstakes in Copenhagen on Friday, my young friend Wings and I were about to make a killing in the T-shirt business. We were set to order hundreds of thousands, and sell them at a ridiculously high markup, The Chicago Way.

On the front, the shirt would have said, in the official Olympics script, "Chicago 2016."

And on the back?

"Terre Haute 2020."

Why?

John Kass
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'My loss isn't just financial, it's professional, too. A Chicago 2016 Olympics would have produced seven years of corruption stories. ... Why didn't anyone stop me?'

In bid blame game, point fingers here

By John Kass - Chicago Tribune - Oct 04, 2009 at 12:00 am

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2009-10-04-0910030028-story.html>

Chicago politicians, politically connected contractors, trucking bosses, Mayor Richard Daley's nephews and other wide-eyed idealists need somebody to blame for their humiliating loss of the 2016 Olympics.

So blame me. I'll wear the jacket and make my friend the mayor happy. Why?

I've been a supreme idiot for opposing the mayor's Olympics and all that noncynical fun.

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As every Chicago politician knows, Terre Haute, Ind., is home to a federal prison. That's where a few would be tossed after boodling their way to Olympic fortunes. And why 2020? That's how long it would take for grand juries to do their work.

The T-shirt racket has been on my mind ever since "Chalkie 2016" became wildly popular. As you know, Chalkie became the unofficial mascot of the anti-Chicago Olympic movement. He was featured on a T-shirt that drew the wrath of City Hall.

Chalkie is a hypothetical, chalk-outline homicide victim. He would have held his chalk-outline Olympic torch high, though he's most comfortable sprawled dead on the ground, his tiny legs akimbo.

Chalkie would have been easy to blame for losing the Olympics. But Chalkie can't accept blame. He has no lips with which to speak and say, "I'm sorry."

So if we can't blame Chalkie, I'll take the heat for trying to play it both ways.

I planned to support the games, just as soon as Daley and his buddy and Olympic maestro Pat Ryan cut me and my young colleague Wings in on some fantastic deals.

We planned the exclusive Kass' Celtic Corn/Salty Gyros Olympic franchise, and the exclusive rights to sell \$8 bottles of plain Chicago tap water. Wings dreamed of peddling Wings' Cabeza Loca Sangria at \$10 a glass.

"It's just cheap wine and fruit juice. I was going to make a killing and sell 500,000 glasses," cried Wings.

Stay thirsty, my friend.

"You blew it," Wings said, giving me a double-handed moutza before coldly turning away.

My loss isn't just financial, it's professional, too. A Chicago 2016 Olympics would have produced seven years of corruption stories, seven years of the mayor babbling that he didn't know the guys who got the contracts, even if they're related. So the loss is devastating for columnists and investigative reporters. Why didn't anyone stop me?

Though Wings and I are distraught, we're in better shape than a lot of those poor TV reporters who covered the mayor in Copenhagen. Oddly enough, Daley blamed them -- sort of like biting a dog that licks your hand.

His argument? That those unctuous, ever-obedient Brazilian reporters were much nicer to Rio than those hard-bitten, cynical Chicago reporters were to his 2016 dreams.

"I respect their strong emphasis on the press, that they were supporters," Daley said. "It was overwhelming. This is not to criticize you (Chicago reporters), but they say, 'Ours is the best city.' They're really behind their city."

Unfortunately, the mayor's media theory is completely wackadoodle. One might even call it kooky talk.

The cameras were focused on the mayor, so you probably couldn't see broadcast reporters behind the cameras. They were devastated, as if they'd just been told that Tinkerbell was dead.

In fact, the Chicago media were, for the most part, such cheerleaders that I wonder if they'll ever get over it. They wanted fun. They wanted an end to all that cynicism. They wanted to prove that Chicago is a world-class city, even though everyone knows there are lots of flush toilets and electric lights in every home.

One local TV personality was all but weeping, and through quivering lips told an on-air guest these immortal words, "Thanks for helping us get through this."

And writers? Well, all I'll say is a posse of grief counselors was needed in every newsroom. The first step is acceptance. It gets harder from there.

With many of my friends in the media acting like a quivering mass of grief-stricken humanity, weeping about those cruel cynics who refuse to trust Chicago politicians with billions of your dollars, someone has to take the blame.

This is terrible. Wings is so mad he won't talk to me. We're out a big chunk of change. Our dreams of Olympic profits have been dashed upon the ground, just like Chalkie.

I blew it, Chicago. Sorry.

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