

## Favor yourselves, watch the debates

The Republican presidential hopefuls were back on stage Sunday night to debate. FOX News did the questioning and it should be pointed out some of their questions were hot potatoes to deal with. Hats off to them for putting the candidates' feet to the fire, something that has been lacking badly in past debate settings.

Sen. John McCain, we feel, came off as probably the night's winner. In fact, he got a prolonged standing ovation for one of his answers, the only such acknowledgment accorded.

Former Gov. Mitt Romney and former Mayor Rudy Giuliani did OK, but weren't on the top of their game. They seemed to fuss around too much. Former Sen. Fred Thompson is still a question mark. Gov. Mike Huckabee wasn't as sharp as we've seen him in the past debates. The rest of the field performed as expected.

One candidate took himself out of the debate by withdrawing as a presidential contender. That was Sen. Sam Brownback, who begins polishing his machinery for a gubernatorial run in 2010. He just wasn't catching fire and his fund raising was less than poor.

Something odd is going on in these debates, especially on the Republican side. You hear the name President Ronald Reagan mentioned time and again, but rarely is the name President George W. Bush invoked. How come?

And Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's name surfaced enough Sunday night in the GOP debate, leading one to believe she already won the Democratic nomination, a feeling with which we disagree. And if we are right and they (the GOP hopefuls) are wrong, they'll have to do a quick about face and retool their thinking.

If you aren't a debate watcher, give it a try. It gives you an opportunity to watch the people wanting to occupy the White House react to questions and situations that sometimes catch them totally off guard. It sort of gives you a hint as to how a certain candidate would act as president.

Give another couple of months and the debate stage on both sides of the political landscape will have fewer people answering questions. We can see the GOP stage eventually featuring Giuliani, Romney, McCain and perhaps Huckabee or Thompson. And the Democrats will be Clinton, Sen. Barack Obama, former Sen. John Edwards and Gov. Bill Richardson.

Go, Rockies!

— Tom Dreiling

## Not too much has really changed

In 1798, the Congress of the United States, at the urging of President John Adams, passed the Alien and Sedition Acts. The Alien Act authorized the president to send all aliens considered dangerous to the safety of the United States out of the country or to imprison those who refused to leave. The Sedition Act imposed a fine and imprisonment on persons who were convicted of writing, speaking or publishing anything false, scandalous or malicious about Congress, the president or any government officer.

Isn't it amazing that today we are still struggling with how to deal with alien immigrants and how much power the government should have over what people say or do?

Both the Patriot Act, with its tremendous increase in the power of government to silence opponents and imprison those the government considers dangerous, and the present immigration debate, concern many of the same questions raised in 1798.

Our government rests on the right of the people to choose between opposing views. An informed public is vital to democratic government. Freedom of speech and a free press are essential to a free people.

Often say we live in interesting times. Truthfully, we live in a dangerous time. Our country is at war. Millions of people have entered our country illegally.

We are unable to control our borders. Divisions in our country over the war in

### Citizen Duties Bob Strey



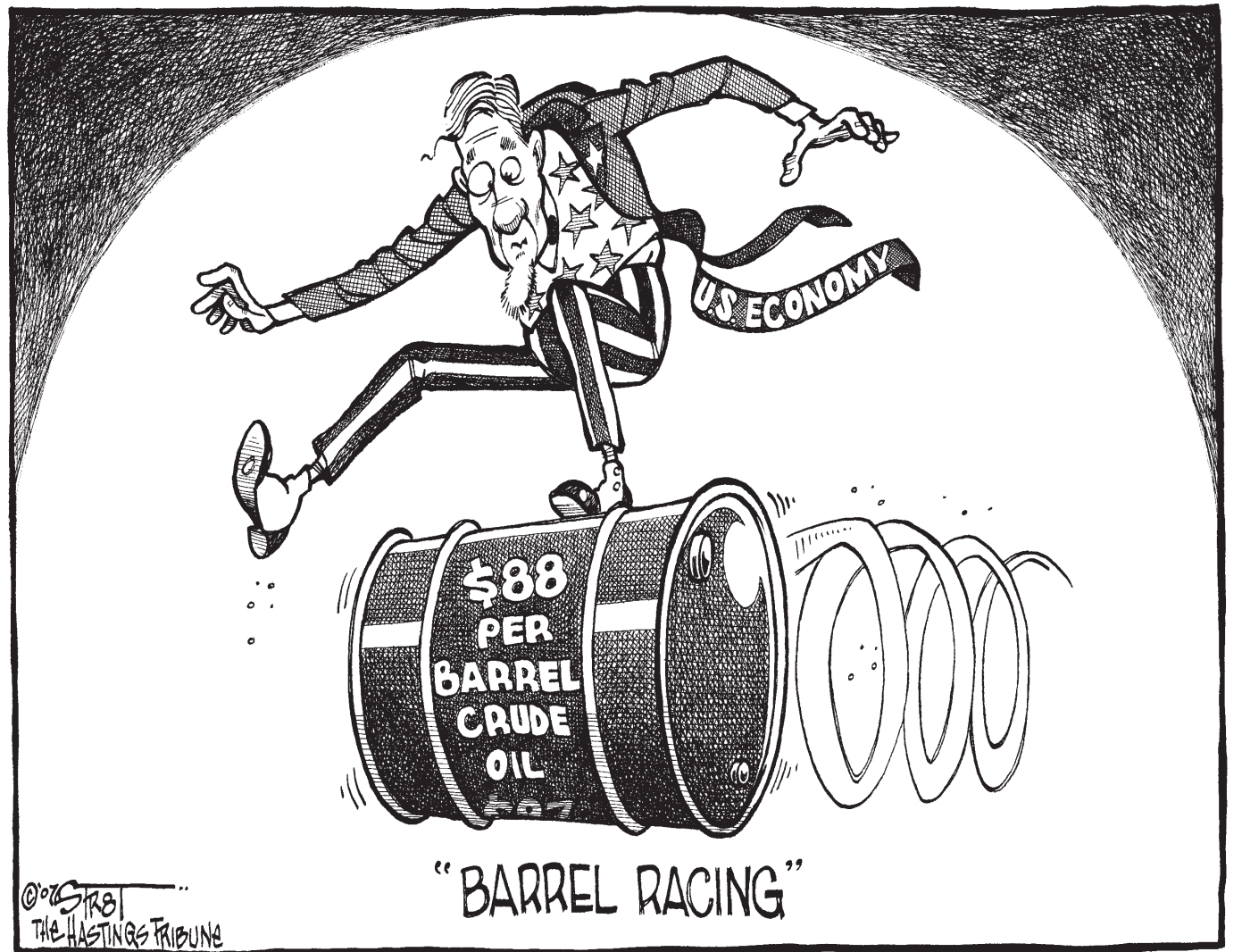
Iraq have weakened the nation. Some people are so certain they are right, that they are willing to sacrifice our liberties to silence their opponents. Likewise, some people want to find ways of preventing aliens from becoming citizens. The old Alien Act of 1798 prevented aliens from becoming citizens before they had lived here 14 years.

We need citizens who are willing to stand up for our liberties. Many people have endured great hardship to give us a free press. We should not give it up lightly. Our press needs to recognize the need to be objective and non-partisan.

If only one viewpoint is allowed a hearing, the people's ability to choose is restricted. In the 1932 election the press overwhelmingly supported President Hoover's re-election. But people could see with their own eyes that the press was biased.

Do we have that problem today? Is the press giving a fair presentation of the facts, or are they pushing a special agenda?

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## There's a reason why we got up so early

See if I ever let Jim set the time to get up on a mission trip again. We crossed into Mountain Time late in the afternoon and everyone set their clocks back an hour. Bedtime rolled around and it was decided to get up at 5:45 a.m. to be able to leave by 7 a.m.

I awoke and saw Jim was already up. He said the alarm was about to go off, so he pulled the plug on our air mattress and got up.

As I stumbled toward the bathroom, I noticed a clock on the wall. I took a second look and asked Jim if we were operating by Mountain Time or Central Time.

Rather indignantly, he said, "Carolyn,

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



we're in Mountain Time — everything from now on is Mountain Time!"

"Well then," I said, "you need to know it's a quarter till 5 a.m."

No one else was awake, but with the air out of our mattress, there was no going back to bed. Nothing to do but get up

and dressed.

So we were back on the road ahead of schedule. Now, we are sitting in the parking lot of the church in Ruidoso, N.M., waiting for services to start at 9:30 a.m.

Half of the fun of a mission trip is the travel time.

It's been non-stop talk and laughter. Imagine that! Jim and I laughing and having fun.

It's almost time for church to start so this will be short. We've been here before and a woman from the church will fax this to my office.

Hope you have as good a week as we're going to.

## 'For everything there is a season'

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



Revenge is mine. I don't know who said it first but I really do think it applied to Halloween about 10 years ago. We had set pumpkins on our front porch in honor of the holiday and in celebration of finally living in a small community where porch decorations were sacred and never damaged by vandals.

Imagine my surprise when one morning I discovered two of our five pumpkins smashed. Not only was I sad to have lost the pumpkins, I was saddened by the loss of innocence my community had just experienced. Of course it was naive of me to believe Norton was void of crime, or that children's pranks could occur here, but after 30+ years away I was certain the problems of other communities hadn't filtered into Norton. Obviously, I

had forgotten the youthful antics of my own era.

But in the late 1990's, Michael was in high school and the morning following the "crime" a student in one of Michael's classes informed him he "didn't get all the pumpkins on our porch so he would come back and finish the job." Not the brightest criminal on the circuit and probably would qualify for Marvin's genius award on KQNK.

This is where the revenge part came in. The following evening we covered the remaining pumpkins with honey and sure enough the next morning the young vandal complained to Michael, "Boy, I don't know what was wrong with your pumpkins, but they were all sticky."

The next spring we were surprised when small pumpkin plants began to sprout in our front lawn. We had always wanted to turn part of the front lawn into a flowerbed and this provided the perfect opportunity. The scattered seeds from the smashed pumpkins took over part of our lawn and we trained them to cover just the area we wanted to have in flowers.

Revenge is mine?

Well, maybe, but maybe more appropriately, "for everything there is a season," or is it a reason?

## Don't forget, farmers, to tell your story

### Insight John Schlageck

While visiting with farmers across the state during the last few weeks, one successful producer said it best when we visited about his profession's obligation to provide the public with an understanding of agriculture. "Helping consumers understand agriculture is vital to my success, my community, the future of agriculture and the high-quality, low-cost food Americans enjoy."

How do farmers help consumers understand their profession?

It begins with the commitment to tell their side of the story whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself. Whether farmers are talking to grade schoolers, members of service clubs or state legislators, they must practice the art of relationship building between the rural and urban, between agricultural production and consumption of agricultural products.

Today, most consumers are at least one or two generations removed from the farm. But just about everyone has a lawn, garden or shrubbery. These same consumers enjoy, and some cherish, their ties to a father or grandfather who tilled the soil.

How do you initiate a conversation about farming?

It's easy to find a common denominator with urban cousins. Begin by noting

the fertilizer they buy for their garden or lawn is no different from what you, as a farmer, put on your wheat or corn. The rose dust, herbicide or insecticide used to control scab, dandelions or mosquitoes is similar to the plant protection chemicals you use.

Sometimes the common denominator can revolve around nutrition. A good analogy might be the parallel between a person's need for healthy food and a plant's need for a well-balanced diet.

It's easy to move from nutrition to some of the more difficult challenges facing agriculture. One such hot topic is groundwater contamination.

Today, many people are concerned about chemical run off into lakes, rivers and streams. As a farmer, you cannot afford to overuse these expensive products. Let them know that you, more than anyone else, are concerned about the land where you and your family live and work.

Public understanding of how a modern farmer runs his operation is only half of the challenge. Perhaps equally important is the need to be sensitive to the concerns

of the community.

Remember that people, most of them living in towns or cities, are the ones who call for regulations and new laws. It is this public that will enforce them. In the end, ironically, it is the public that will suffer if the laws have a negative effect on our food production and consumption system.

And remember, who knows more about farming than you do. You live this profession every day. You and your family depend on your knowledge and expertise of agriculture.

You must become a spokesperson for your industry. You can bet an autoworker, seamstress or stockbroker does not have the expertise or time to talk about agriculture. If they talk about any subject it will probably be related to what they know about — their own profession.

In Kansas and other states across the country, farming is a proud and cherished lifestyle. It is also the number one industry in Kansas.

Be proud of your profession and your heritage. Whenever and wherever, don't forget to tell your story.

(John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.)

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