

Electability doesn't spell C-l-i-n-t-o-n

I think we are watching a recipe for disaster. A political recipe for disaster, that is. And it's playing out on the stage of the Democratic Party, the party that likes to bill itself as the unity bunch, not a party that divides. Well, the debate Monday night in South Carolina certainly smacked of anything but unity.

Sen. Clinton and Sen. Obama ripped one another apart, engaged in shouting matches, and in the end received failing grades as far as debating goes. It was ugly. Standing by was former Sen. John Edwards, hoping to survive the bombardment so he could pick up the pieces and move on as the man who can restore peace in his party.

Sometimes these flare ups result in wounds so deep they never heal. And what I witnessed Monday night fits that category. With former President Clinton forgetting he's not the candidate, his presence on the campaign trail, nonetheless is becoming a real problem. His comments about Sen. Obama are puzzling, disturbing, in fact. I'm of the opinion he's not a plus to wife Hillary's campaign. Some of the commentators on television tell us Bill Clinton is the most popular political figure of our time. Every time I hear that statement I wonder if those commentators are auditioning for Comedy Central.

I'll tell you what I fear most — if Hillary is elected — is an eventual knock down, drag out between she and Bill as to who the REAL president is. The stage is being readied. A big embarrassment awaits.

Sen. Obama wants change. And I think most all of us agree that Washington needs an airing out. Badly. Change is also being echoed by Republicans Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee.

I'm not going to play in the same pool most of the pundits play in when they talk about the historic significance of this election. I don't see it that way. I am going to simply say Hillary Clinton is not a woman, she is a **candidate** for President of the United States. Barack Obama is not an African-American, he is a **candidate** for President of the United States. Mitt Romney is not a Mormon, he is a **candidate** for President of the United States. Unity is not found in a basket in which we separate gender, color, religion, much like we separate clothing before putting it in the washer.

It all boils down to this: Do we want Bill and Hillary back in the White House? Do we want to continue this Bush-Clinton hand-off? In case you've forgotten, it was George Herbert Walker Bush (4 years), who handed the keys to the White House to William Jefferson Clinton (8 years), who handed the keys to George W. Bush (8 years), who might hand the keys to Hillary Rodham Clinton. Is that what we really want?

I don't think so. Electability no longer spells C-l-i-n-t-o-n!

-td-

Now, knowing I may eventually have to eat those words, I will season them with a little bit of "NRD's Select Toppings for Political Hash."

-td-

A few mornings this week produced temperatures in the lower single digits. In

Good Evening Norton
Tom Dreiling



fact, one morning my temperature gauge showed minus 2. Too cold to sleep out on the patio! I did some reflecting over breakfast on the minus 2 morning and recalled a radio announcer at the station in Sheridan, Wyo., saying, "You better pull out your sweaters today. It's cold out there." He then told his listeners what the temperature was. It was minus 36 — you read that right! And that didn't include any wind chill. Thank goodness there was nary a breeze that morning. If there had been it would have felt like a knife cutting through your skin.

When I got into the car that morning (I had no garage), I felt like I had plopped down on a brick. The seats were that hard. It was nearly impossible to shift into any gear. The sound of the engine was unlike anything I had ever heard. Once the engine started up, I had to let it run for a good 15 minutes, even longer, before it would do anything.

That night, the newspaper, *The (daily) Sheridan Press* (of which I was editor), held its annual Christmas tree auction at the Sheridan Holiday Inn. When the night ended, I and a couple of friends climbed into my car as I was the designated driver that night. We let the car warm up while we stood in the motel's lobby. When we returned to the car, and as I shifted gears, the plastic housing around the gear shift shattered. It was that cold. Trying to determine what gear was what, was nothing short of a guessing game (automatic transmission). When we finally got it into the drive mode, we headed out. Radio man said the temperature wasn't falling as much as it did that morning. Mercy, it was only minus 20! Wow, break out the shorts!

January, I guess, is always the coldest month, but I never dreamed it could get that cold! And I fully understood what fellow employee Doug Edwards meant when he said I should never engage my emergency break in the winter — in Wyoming!

The Christmas tree auction I mentioned was quite a thing. Organizations and clubs and businesses would decorate a dozen or so trees. Then on auction night the public was invited out to view the trees and submit a bid. Always, all of the trees were sold, some for rather healthy amounts because the funds raised would go to a specific community need. The trees were then delivered to the homes of the successful bidders. Boy, there were some awfully beautiful trees each and every year.

Hmm, suddenly I'm getting cold again!

-td-

So, you have a good evening. And rest assured you won't be freezing in the church of your choice this weekend.



Debate certainly wasn't a plus for Hillary

This article will get me in lots of trouble, but here goes. Hillary Clinton just proved my point. I have always believed many women should not be president until after they have gone through menopause and then for some women it wouldn't make any difference. Monday's debate proved it doesn't make a difference. It was a fiasco complete with moments to embarrass any democrat. Hillary's declaration the following day sighting Sen. Barack Obama's "frustration from his losses" and his "looking for a fight" only proved her pettiness.

It was certainly not Obama's finest moment either, but he did not start the attacks and he had allowed her to speak during her time. Is that the way she will

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



handle foreign policy, interrupt the dignity from another country. I pray she is not behind the attacks on his religion. There is no patent on generating fear to gain votes. I don't believe I have to "like" our candidates, but I do have to believe they will handle diplomatic situations in a diplomatic way.

John Edwards was a voice of reason in the debates. With his southern charm he

was able to defuse the situation and get things back on track, mainly health care. My greatest concern is what the exchange cost the democrats, not just the individual candidates. If you were a first time voter and undecided, Monday's debates may have helped you, but probably not in the democrats' favor. Exchanges such as those do little to establish your platform and your passions. The passions established Monday night were what "buttons" can be pushed to make you respond. And now we know.

Some people enjoy the World Wrestling Federation displays on TV and other "contact sports" and maybe this exchange is just a part of that, but for this Kansas democrat it runs counter to my mother's genteel expectations.

Interesting challenges on the plate

The 2008 Legislative session is just under way, and it promises to be another interesting challenge. Several issues will stand out this year: School Finance, Energy, and Healthcare, to name a few.

The Kansas State Board of Education testified in front of the Senate Education Committee earlier this week, and I would like to share a few of their statistics with you.

One of the major challenges for Kansas schools is dealing with the shortage of certified teachers, specifically math, science, and special education. This problem will only compound in the next 5 years as 25 percent of Kansas teachers will begin to be eligible to retire. About 33 percent of these eligible teachers are over the age of 50, so it is assumable to believe that the problem of teacher shortage will continue to get worse in the next few years.

Currently approximately 1700 teachers are entering the work force each year, but

Senate Doings
Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer



Kansas has a current need of about 2500 teachers each year. A survey conducted in June last summer listed 1144 vacancies for licensed school personnel, and by August 2007 that number had decreased to 476 vacancies. On many occasions districts have not received adequate interest in open positions, often left with the choice of leaving the position vacant or filling it with an uncertified teacher.

Kansas teachers' average salaries rank 37th in the nation at \$41,467.00. Currently the US average teacher salary is \$49,026.00, and I am certain the school

districts in Northwest Kansas are dealing with teacher salaries well below even the Kansas state average.

On a positive note, Kansas students continue to rank in the top 10 percent for reading and mathematics on their ACT tests. Currently 77 percent of Kansas graduating seniors pursue post-secondary education. I am willing to bet the percentage of youth attending college or trade school is even higher in the 40th district. It goes without saying that Kansas has a strong education system, but it is going to get harder to fill teaching positions as seasoned teachers retire.

For your address books, here is my Topeka address and phone number:

Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer
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(Senator Ostmeyer represents the state's 40th District.)

Norton helped save 1500 lives in '07

To the Editor:

The American Red Cross, steward to nearly half the nation's blood supply, relies on more than 150,000 volunteers to collect six million pints of blood each year. Our lifesaving mission cannot be completed without the generosity of committed volunteers.

The community of Norton, which graciously sponsors four blood drives each year, provides approximately 500 pints of lifesaving blood each year. Because each pint can be broken down into three separate components, your community potentially helped save 1500 lives last year! What an amazing testament to your town's giving nature and sense of

LETTER

civic duty.

The Red Cross is looking for an energetic, compassionate individual to volunteer as a Blood Drive Coordinator. Everything you need to successfully manage the blood drive will be provided by your Red Cross representative.

As a Blood Drive Coordinator, you will start a chain reaction that ultimately ends with the opportunity to help save countless lives. Every two seconds someone in

America needs blood and by coordinating a blood drive through the Red Cross, you are giving patients a chance to survive. Patients count on you and your community's unwavering commitment to achieve a safe and adequate blood supply.

Find out how good it feels to wear the Red Cross emblem. Please contact me for more information on this wonderful opportunity to help save lives.

Sincerely,

Kim Talkington
Donor Recruitment Representative
American Red Cross
Central Plains Region
(785) 650-0078, or
talkingtonk@usa.redcross.org

Thumbs Up...

To... The Lenora Family and Community Education Unit, on your 70th anniversary! (called in)

To... Jack Ward, for being named "Blue Jay Booster of the Year." A well-deserved honor. (e-mail)

To... The Norton High School Scholars Bowl team, for placing first out of 17 schools at the Phillipsburg meet on Jan. 22. (called in)

To... Dick Boyd, for the photo of a real Norton Blue Jay! Great! - (regular mail)

(To submit a name of names, e-mail tom.d@nwkansas.com, fax 877-3732, phone 877-6908 or 877-3361, regular mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, or stop by the office. Thanks for your continuing input. -td)

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THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654

Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002

Incorporating the Norton County Champion
Marion R. Krehbiel, editor



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