

Debate failed to produce winner

From Other Editors
Tom Betz

When the two major party candidates for president took the stage two weeks ago in Mississippi, some people expected it to be a definitive show and produce a clear winner. Just getting to the debate produced some pressure, with Sen. John McCain saying earlier he wanted the event delayed because of the country's financial crisis. He suspended his campaign to return to Washington to work on a solution.

Sen. Barack Obama scored some points when he said he did not see a reason to delay the debate, as neither he nor McCain were central figures in the negotiations. In a jibe at McCain, he said as a president he would have to be able to handle more than one thing at a time.

Both men flew to Mississippi on Friday, and put Oxford on the presidential history map with the first debate of this campaign.

Many had expected this to be McCain's debate from the start, as it was supposed to be on foreign policy, which is not considered Obama's forte. However, with the financial crisis on everyone's mind, moderator Jim Lehrer gave both men an opportunity to talk about what they would do as president if faced with such a situation.

The first 40 minutes were spent on the economy, with Obama making some points, but McCain kept hammering away at wasteful spending in Washington.

In the second half, which turned more to the foreign arena, McCain appeared to be more comfortable, but Obama was able to make some major points on Iraq and Afghanistan.

At the end, both men appeared with their wives and shook hands with many of the people who attended.

Neither scored any kind of major knockout, and as you would expect, both later claimed they'd won. McCain's staff put out a press release saying he had won almost before the debate was over.

It was something of a setback for the Arizona senator, who has fallen off the pace and is back to trailing Obama in most of the national polls by 2 to 9 points.

There will be two more debates between McCain and Obama before the election, (one tonight) and some experts think a lot of the undecided voters may wait until the last debate to decide who to support when they vote on Tuesday, Nov. 4. Tonight's debate will be at 8 p.m. (CT) at Belmont University in Nashville, moderated by NBC's Tom Brokaw. The final event will be at 8 p.m. on Oct. 15, at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., moderated by CBS's Bob Schieffer.

Being on top in the polls, the Illinois senator has to be careful not to give McCain a big opening, and being behind, McCain needs to be more aggressive and find a way to get Obama to give him that.

The debates are not really high drama, but as a part of the American political process, they are an interesting exercise to watch.

— Tom Betz is editor of *The Goodland Star-News*

Thumbs Up

To... **everyone** in the homecoming parade Friday for spreading spirit throughout the community. (called in)

To... **Hank Austerman**, for your input on the Opinion Page, your facts, and 'been there, done that' were very good. (called in)

To... **Stanton Nelson**, for your fantastic piano and violin recital on Sunday in Norton. (brought in)

To... **the Norton Blue Jays** football team, for your great homecoming win over St. Francis. (brought in)

To... **Mr. Austerman**, for your letter of response in Friday's paper, and for opening up the political dialogue in the community. Didn't agree with a lot of what you said but commend you for saying it. (e-mail)

(To submit a name or names, e-mail tom.d@nwkansas.com, call either 877-3361 or 877-6908, fax 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654 or drop by the office. Thanks for your input. -td)

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THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

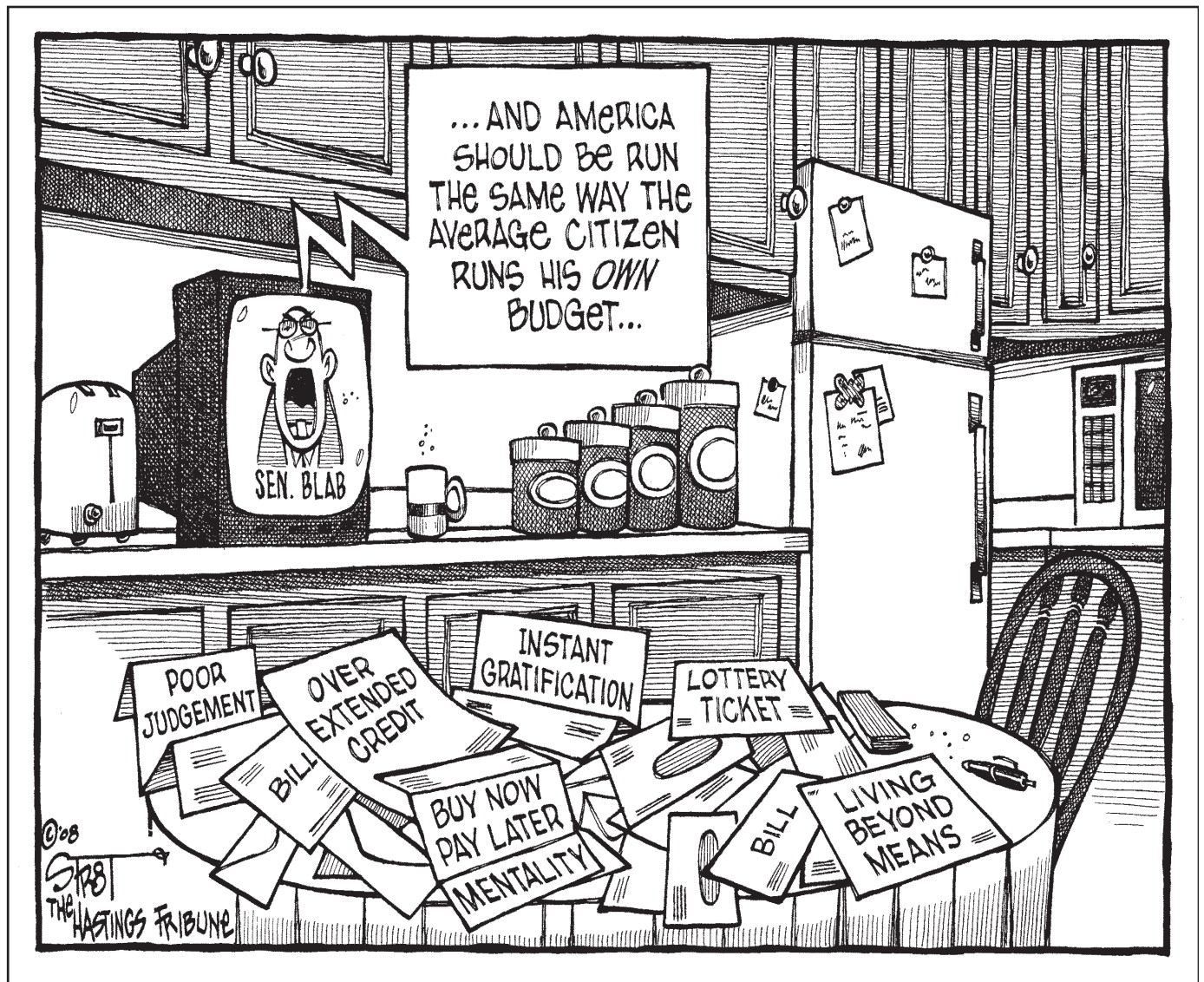
Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the 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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Well... 'Dr. Jim' does it again!

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



Jim's theme song should be, "There, I Did It Again". Through this column you've followed him through cutting a chunk out of his finger with a circular saw; through almost losing his thumb while driving in a metal post; to performing his own surgery to remove a massive splinter from his finger.

The latest chapter in "See Jim Hurt Himself" was written last Tuesday when one of the guys Jim is working with called me to say Jim had had a "little" accident. Now, I've been married to a carpenter long enough to know that could mean he cut off his arm up to the elbow. Lee went on to say he had driven Jim to the clinic because he shot a nail through his finger.

"I'll be right there," I told Lee. It wasn't like I could really do anything to help. But, I thought I could, at least, offer some moral support. When I walked into the office of the clinic, the receptionist pointed me to the room marked "Surgery". I knocked politely and walked in. There Jim stood, the index finger of his left hand elevated with only smudges of blood left as evidence of an injury.

"This isn't too bad," I thought. Then he held up the X-ray. There, (just like in an old western movie, where the Indian arrow went completely through the soldier, and you saw it from both sides), was the nail neatly entering the underside of his finger and exiting the top side, barely behind the knuckle. At first glance, you

thought it went completely through the bone. But, upon closer examination, you can see the groove in the side of the bone the nail made on its way by.

The story unfolded about how Jim was climbing down a ladder after using the nailgun. He had the airhose in his left hand and the nailgun in his right with the trigger depressed. Nailguns are engineered to shoot a nail only when the tip of the gun is pressed against a surface. He evidently pressed it against the ladder because it fired a nail, grazing his left thumb and attaching the airhose to his finger.

Jim said he called out, "Lee, I think I shot my finger."
Cool Hand Lee said, "I don't think you shot your finger — I know you did."

Still conjoined to the airhose, Jim took his utility knife and severed the connection. Later, he said, "I really hated that. That was Lee's airhose."

At the clinic Jim was told there would be no way to deaden the finger because the wound was too deep. His only request was that he be the one to pull the nail out. He said, "I knew how much pain I could

stand." So with the doctor gripping his hand and finger, Jim took a pair of pliers and tried to pull out the nail. Did I forget to mention that this was a 16-penny nail? This was not a finishing nail or a tack. This was a humongous construction nail, designed to hold a house together.

After three sweat-popping attempts to extract the nail, Lee reminded Jim that the nail was a cement-coated nail. This is a nail that is coated with a resin that is engineered to heat-up from the friction of being fired from the gun and then it bonds to the material it is shot into. In this case, it bonded to Jim's finger.

Well, that explained it. Now, he had to add twisting and breaking the bond to pulling. With that being said, that's what he did and easily pulled the nail out. After hearing the story, I'm glad I wasn't there to "help". I would have been as much help as a man is to a woman when she's having a baby. All I could have said was, "Pull, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Breathe."

We left the clinic with his finger securely bandaged, prescriptions for antibiotics and pain killers and the admonition to "take it easy". I managed to convince Jim to take the rest of the day off and by that night he was glad I did. The drugs helped dull the pain, but he definitely knew he had been hurt. Still, Wednesday morning saw him back on the job. I guess you can't keep a good man down.

Morale of this story: never pull the trigger unless you're ready to get shot.

Governor's enticement causes concern

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



I am a firm believer in mentoring as evidenced by my former position as director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Norton County. I welcomed any extra people in my own children's lives, but Gov. Sebelius recently enacted a mentoring enticement for many state employees that concerns me. The plan allows these individuals to mentor a youth through a qualified mentoring program for up to 90 minutes a pay period.

I see a couple of major problems with this. An obvious concern is the argument, if we can afford to allow these state employees (or even ten percent of them) the time, perhaps we could dissolve certain positions and save the state money. It is an argument set for political finger pointing.

A close friend had another thought. Her remark was, "volunteering is about giving of your time, not being given the time." Volunteer is defined by Thesau-

rus.com as someone who offers his or her services freely. I don't think Gov. Sebelius' program would qualify as a "volunteer" program. Most people who volunteer don't have any more hours in their day, they just fit more activities into those hours. Do I think these individuals are mentoring only to get time off? Of course not or certainly most aren't.

Kansas isn't the first state to undertake this type of program. California and Oregon as well as others have similar plans. The Governor's motivation may be if you initially involve someone in a

mentoring program they will become an active participant with or without time granted from work. One would hope this is true. Although I don't have any statistics to support it, my work indicates truly dedicated mentors do not need to be bribed. Children are very astute so it is critical these children know their mentor will be there whether the state supports their absence from work or not.

I am a great admirer of Gov. Sebelius. BBBS of Norton County has benefited from grant money from the Governor's Office for several years allowing the organization to make several one-on-one mentoring matches, but I do have reservations about this program. Our children need adults in their lives, parents or mentors. Perhaps parents could be offered a similar enticement as a way to build a stronger family without feeling guilty about their absence from work.
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To the Editor;

The mini park on Washington is a really nice addition to our downtown. It's a place to just sit and enjoy on a nice day, or to have lunch.

Also, it happens to be in a place where it is one of the first things visitors see coming into town from the south. It tells a visitor a lot about our community. It says we are proud of where we live and want it to look nice.

It says that we are a friendly community and we invite them to come on in, sit a spell and get acquainted.

How fortunate that we had the kind of people here that had the foresight and perseverance to see a project like this through and give us yet another reason to be proud to live in Norton.

Your Turn
Mini park
another plus
for Norton

June Prout
Norton