

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint

Senator McCain's goodness radiates

Sen. John McCain is everybody's senator. And he proved that again this morning in an interview on one of the major television networks. The quizzer (Katie somebody — we only know those folks by their first names), asked Sen. McCain about Sen. John Kerry's selection of Sen. John Edwards as his vice presidential running mate. McCain said it was a good choice, that Sen. Edwards was a good man. He also mentioned that he worked on some committees with Sen. Edwards and continued his praise of the North Carolinian. The quizzer we think was a bit disappointed in his answer. We think the quizzer was hoping to get a negative bead on Edwards from McCain, probably one of the country's most popular senators. But that didn't happen. She then tried another tactic — both President Bush and the Democrats using McCain in their political advertising — that didn't work either. She ended up with egg on her face, but that is not uncommon for these glittering stars of the electronic corps of (and we despise using the word *journalists*) entertainers. Sen. McCain has been around the block far too often to fall into their trap. The Arizona senator made no bones about the fact he is supporting President Bush in his bid for re-election. And why shouldn't he? McCain is a Republican and although he is in disagreement with the president on some issues he still feels Mr. Bush is performing as the country expects the president to perform. We have heard a lot of chatter from some quarters that Sen. Kerry had wanted McCain as his vice presidential running mate and therefore Sen. Edwards was Kerry's second pick. Reports now coming from both camps indicate no offer was ever made by Kerry to McCain. And if so, so? It is not unusual for a presidential candidate to not get his #1 choice. And to the question being aired in some political commercials, Edwards would be as well prepared to step into the presidency if circumstances warranted as George W. Bush was when he got the checkered flag in the 2000 race. So, hurrah for McCain; hurrah for Edwards; hurrah for Kerry; and hurrah for Bush. Oops — hurrah for Cheney.

Tom A. Dreiling
Publisher

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansas.com.

Where to write

- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorrison@ink.org web:<http://www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison>
- State Sen. Ruth Clark**, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: rclark@ink.org



Oh boy, talk about sore muscles!

Mesa Verde is a wonderful national treasure, but it's a long ways from anywhere. We were in Durango, Colo., and our itinerary called for a visit to the cliff dwellings in Mesa Verde National Park. We hadn't been to Mesa Verde for 30 years. All I remembered about the park was that it was hard to get to the cliff dwellings and that it was really, really hot the day we decided to visit.

We were in a car that had vapor lock problems. We had to either sit in the hot sun for an hour waiting for the car to cool off enough to start, or put cool washcloths around the gas line. We learned to do the cool washcloth trick quickly and used it often on that trip 30 or so years ago.

This time, we would be on a tour bus with other members of the National Newspaper Association, which was holding its summer board meeting in Durango.

It takes more than an hour just to get to the park from Durango so we sat back and enjoyed the beautiful mountain scenery and watched for traces of the big burn, which took thousands of acres and dozens of homes near Durango two summers ago.

The fire damage could be seen on hillsides where only the dead trunks of trees remain. It will be years before these skeletons fall over, but new growth has started in most places.

Once you get to the entrance, it's another hour to the ruins. We stopped at Cliff Palace, one of



Cynthia Haynes

Open Season

the largest of the cliff-dwelling sites. There are more than 100 rooms and several kivas. Archeologists now believe this was a ceremonial site used by the surrounding peoples as a religious center with just a small resident population.

Mesa Verde itself was a farming community. Scholars believe that the people, who lived on the top of the mesa for about five centuries, built the cliff dwellings in the 13th century so that they would have more land to farm and a place to safely store their produce.

A 20-plus year drought and overpopulation caused friction among the clans of the area and they finally moved out to settle the pueblos along the Rio Grande, from Taos, N.M., to El Paso in the south.

Today, the descendants of these people live in the pueblos, including Acoma, Santa Clara and Zuni, and the Hopi reservation.

The Navajo in the area are a later migration, as are the Southern Utes, who traded the gov-

ernment the Mesa Verde site for a mountain sacred to them to the west.

While climbing down into the cliff dwellings is not for the old or infirm, the government has put in stone steps and log ladders for 650,000 visitors, who swarm over the area every year.

After climbing down and around the area and then out again, my legs were complaining. The next day I could hardly walk because my muscles were so sore.

The Indians who lived in these rookeries cut small hand and foot holes into the rock to get from one place to another.

Now that would have been a fun climb to work — straight up and straight down with hundreds of feet of nothingness in between.

After our visit to Cliff Palace, we checked out several other ruins but didn't get off the road again.

The ancient Indians probably had a pretty good life for the times, at least until the drought came, but I think I prefer the air-conditioned comfort of our bus.

Guess, I'm just lazy — and after that day, a little sore.

Cynthia Haynes and husband Steve are owners of Nor'West Newspapers, of which the Colby Free Press is a property. Her column is a standard in The Oberlin Herald and she also writes for The Norton Telegram.

Here's how you can get involved

You don't have to be a professional writer to share your questions, answers or opinions. Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press has made our nation what it is today and it is what will continue to keep it strong and viable. However, those freedoms are of little value and will be lost in time if we don't practice them.

Mr. (Tom) Dreiling, you may need to hire another ad salesman! You need to sell enough ad space to pay for two or three pages of letters! Subscriptions don't pay all the cost of publishing a newspaper. Back in the medieval days when I was in journalism class in high school they told us we would need advertising space to equal all space not devoted to advertising. I'm sure there are more folks out there with opinions that need to be shared, and many with writing skills to make their points known.

What value is freedom of religion if you are not active and involved in a religious faith and do not know what that faith is? I happen to claim the faith of Christianity and practice my faith in fellowship with members of the American Baptist Churches of the U.S.A. Does that mean that I don't fellowship with Christians of other denominations? Does that mean that I think American Baptist Churches are the official voice of God? Absolutely not! When I speak about Christianity and the church, I am including churches of all denominations, including the independents who have no formal judicatory affiliations with any other churches. I don't hold that any church, regardless of affiliation or non affiliation, is The Church.

There is no hierarchy of man in the American Baptist Churches. We are autonomous, meaning each church is independent from any higher authorities in the denominational structure. We

Ken Poland

Ken's World

do not consider our pastors as having any special authority in governing the organization or having any absolute authority in scripture interpretation. And for sure, most of us don't consider the pastor to be our partisan political voice of authority. They carry a great deal of influence by virtue of their education and commitment. We believe in the 'Priesthood of the Believer.' That simply means that man can go directly to God without having to have permission from any other man and that no man can deny our access. That does not mean we can't or shouldn't use the pastor or specially trained individuals to help us. When I use the terminology "man" it is generic and includes both male and female.

The point I have attempted to stress in most of my columns is: The church, regardless of the faith or denomination, does not need the authority of government to validate its teachings. Neither does the government need the authority of any church or faith to validate its laws. Local, state, and national government have the responsibility of regulating civil and secular dealings of man in society. The church has the responsibility of man's religious affiliation with the God of their particular faith. Man, by his very nature, is religious. He may believe in the God of Abraham, the Divinity of Christ, any one of several pagan religions or profess to be atheistic and

answer to no God. Neither the church nor the government has the authority of God (any God) to make final judgment of man regarding the hereafter or for the judgment of those who do not believe in a hereafter. My faith tells me that God is perfectly capable of final judgment and doesn't rely on me to make eternal judgment on any man.

Some denominations don't agree with me. Neither do I have authority to speak for all those folks who affiliate themselves with Baptist churches. My opinions are strictly my own, right or wrong.

And by the way, before you jump to any conclusions about "any God," my God is the God of Creation, the God of Abraham, and the Father of Jesus Christ, who is the author of my salvation. In a society that protects religious freedom, you may pick any god or representative of god you choose. Or, you may declare there is no God. But, you still should abide by the civil laws of your community and you have a responsibility to help formulate the structure and laws governing society. If you don't like the law, change it. Don't break it. That is what a democratic republic is designed for.

This means that anyone holding elected positions in civil government may and should be actively involved in their chosen faith communities. It also means that active members or professionals in the faith community may and should be involved in government.

Be a good citizen, both spiritually and nationally.

Get involved.

Ken Poland is a Gem farmer and a frequent contributor to this page. E-mail rcwinc@cheerful.com.

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freepress@nwkansas.com
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Tom (TD) Dreiling - Publisher
td@nwkansas.com
NEWS
Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkansas.com
Tisha Cox - General Assignment
tcx@nwkansas.com
ADVERTISING
Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director
crystal@nwkansas.com
Jeremy Blackwill - Advertising Sales
jblackwill@nwkansas.com
BUSINESS OFFICE
Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager
Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building
japplegate@nwkansas.com
Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com
NOR'WEST PRESS
Jim Bowker - General Manager
Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight
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