

commentary

from other pens...

December shows how the winds shift

During the past year, Democrats scrambled without success to regain their footing against the Republicans and their popular president with political momentum fueled by the public's anxiety about terrorism. With the 2004 presidential race looming, Al Gore appeared to be moving toward another run in a possible rematch with President Bush. Then unexpected events in December offered a reminder of how quickly the political winds can shift. Republicans, backed by the president and his wartime campaign themes, had surged to historic midterm election victories Nov. 5. The GOP gained ground in the Republican-controlled House and narrowly reclaimed control of the Senate. Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., was preparing to reassume his role as Senate majority leader and Republicans were ready to flex their newfound political muscle. Then Lott made his now infamous tribute to Strom Thurmond on Dec. 5 as the South Carolina senator celebrated his 100th birthday. Lott said if Thurmond had been elected in 1948 the nation would have been a lot better off. Thurmond ran for president on the segregationist platform of the "Dixiecrats."

A storm of protest from conservatives and liberals grew over Lott's comments and his continuous apologies failed to stem the tide. Just more than two weeks after Thurmond's party, Lott stepped down and Tennessee Sen. Bill Frist, a favorite of the Bush administration, moved quickly to fill the gap. Now Republicans are looking to repair the damage.

"Lott's situation reminds us just how fragile political success can be," said political analyst Norm Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute.

Soon after the Republican gains in the elections, Congress passed the Bush proposal for the new Department of Homeland Security—a change that could dramatically alter federal government in the coming years.

While Republicans were having their way much of the year, Democrats got a glimmer of hope in early December when they rallied to hold onto Sen. Mary Landrieu's seat in a Louisiana runoff election.

"Democrats have to figure out whether the last election was a one-shot setback or whether it suggested deeper problems within their party," said Robert Shapiro, a political scientist at Columbia University.

The Democrats have the added burden of competing under new campaign finance laws passed this year that ban unrestricted donations known as "soft money" from labor unions and corporations to the parties.

Democrats had become adept enough at collecting soft money in recent years to neutralize some of the Republicans' financial advantages. Democrats are scrambling to get more competitive under the new rules.

"The terrain has shifted dramatically," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication. "If the courts uphold the law, it could give a structural advantage to the Republicans in perpetuity."

After spending much of the year testing the waters, Gore was starting to wonder late in the year whether he wanted to run again despite the doubts of many in his party. Associates knew of his hesitance, but said Gore's mood would shift from day to day.

On Dec. 15, Gore surprised many by bowing out of the 2004 presidential race where he would have certainly been the early front runner.

Now Democrats have a wide-open competition for the party's presidential nomination. Vermont Gov. Howard Dean is already running and Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry has formed an exploratory committee.

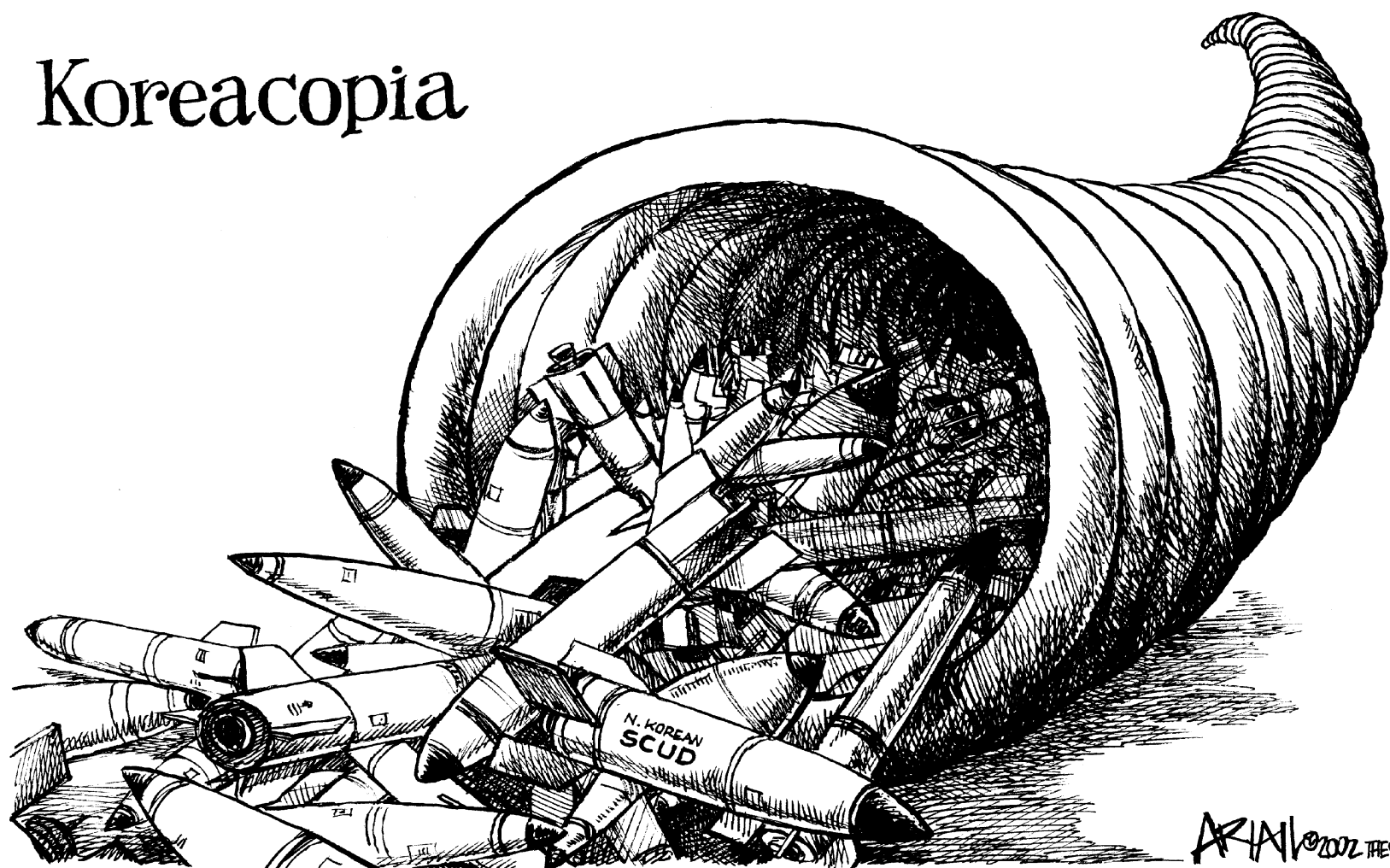
The competition to pick a Democratic nominee may not be that relevant unless Bush stumbles, said political analyst Stuart Rothenberg.

If the economy bounces back and Bush avoids a foreign policy morass, "it doesn't matter if the Democrats put up (Missouri Rep.) Dick Gephardt, John Kerry or (retired General) Wesley Clark," Rothenberg said.

"But if the president faces domestic and international problems, then almost any of the Democrats could run credible races."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Will Lester covers politics and polls for The Associated Press.

Koreacopia



I look forward to gathering wild berries

In the middle of winter I look forward to getting seed catalogs, snow crocus and the greening of the landscape. In the book "Wild Berries of the West" by Betty Derig and Margaret Fuller there are descriptions of many wild species and recipes to boot. If you plan to gather wild berries be sure they are edible and determine if any chemicals have been used on them.

In the surrounding areas I know there are currants, mulberries, elderberries, and chokecherries. As well as tamed varieties of grapes, raspberries, blackberries and strawberries. Available in stores are also prickly pear cactus fruit and tomatillo.

Groundcherry (tomatillo) Crockpot stew

- 1 pound stew beef
 - 5 large potatoes, cubed and peeled
 - 1 large onion, chopped
 - 3 stalks celery, chopped
 - 3 large carrots, sliced
 - 1 fourteen ounce can diced or whole tomatoes
 - 3 cups water
 - 3 beef bouillon cubes
 - 1 teaspoon pickling spice
 - 8 gingersnap cookies, broken
 - 2 cups frozen mixed vegetables (optional)
 - 1 cup groundcherries (tomatillo), halved
- Put the first nine ingredients in a crockpot. Cook on high for 8 hours. Add groundcherries,



pat schiefen

• postscript

gingersnaps and frozen mixed vegetables. Cook for an additional hour or more.

Wild Strawberry Shrimp Salad

- 1 six ounce can tiny shrimp, drained and rinsed
 - 2 large dill pickles, diced
 - 2 stalks celery, diced
 - 1 large cucumber, diced
 - 1 cup fresh strawberries
 - 2 tablespoons mayonnaise or more to taste
 - 1 tablespoon vinegar
 - 1 tablespoon sugar
 - lettuce
- For the dressing mix mayonnaise, vinegar and sugar. Combine remaining ingredients. Arrange on bed of lettuce leaves on individual plates. Add French bread for a meal. Suggestions for dessert sherbet or watermelon.

Zesty Rose Hip syrup

- 4 cups rose hips
- 2 cups water

2 cups sugar
2 tablespoon lemon juice
Boil rose hips in water for 20 minutes. Crush berries and strain to remove seeds. Pour juice into clean pan. Add sugar and lemon juice. Boil 3 to 4 minutes until syrup begins to thicken. Pour cooled syrup into a jar and refrigerate. Syrup will keep two weeks or more in the refrigerator. Use on pan cakes or ice cream.

Variations: While hot add cinnamon to taste or add 1/4 teaspoon powdered ginger or 1/2 teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger.

Leah's Chokecherry jam

2 quarts chokecherries
1/4 cup lemon juice
apple juice as needed
1 package fruit pectin
4 1/2 cups sugar
Simmer chokecherries in a heavy, stainless steel kettle, adding 1/4 cup water if needed. When the berries are soft, press through a strainer or colander to remove pits. This should give 3 cups of pulp. If there is not three cups add apple juice. Mix pulp with lemon juice and 1 package of fruit pectin. Bring to a full rolling boil and add the sugar. Bring mix to a full boil for one minute. Remove from the heat. Skim off foam and pour into clean, sterilized jars and seal. This can also be frozen into plastic containers.

Takes patience to watch diamonds grow

There seems to be a tradition in the Betz family, or at least my branch, which says it should take more than four years to get a college degree.

Saturday, Dec. 21, I watched and cheered as my youngest daughter, Nikki, received her Bachelor of Science from Colorado State University.

Nikki becomes the fourth generation of the family with a degree—counting my Grandfather Fred Betz's honorary doctorate from the University of Colorado, which he served as a regent for 12 years.

She is the first to get a degree from another university, but she assures me she is still a CU Buffs fan, and promises that even if she ends up going to a graduate school in Nebraska, she would not wear red.

Nikki is the second of the family to get a psychology degree, as that is what my younger sister got from CU and has gone on to get her masters in. She is now a licensed psychologist in Denver.

My father, Fred Betz Jr., was going to school in Boulder when I was born, and received his Bachelor of arts in journalism just before I turned 1.

It took me 10 years to finally get my Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, and the really great thing is it is signed by my father, who was chairmam of the Board of Regents when I graduated.

Watching Nikki walk across the stage was wonderful, and now it will be really great if she can get a job.

While I was younger I did not get into the concert thing, but must admit that changed a few years ago when I got to see a variety of Rock 'n' Roll groups at the Colorado State Fair. I have seen some more since.



tom betz

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Having seen Three Dog Night, Blood, Sweat and Tears, Bob Dylan and Neil Sedaka at the fair and The Ventures in Lamar, it was a real treat when Nikki invited me to a concert in Greeley with The Beach Boys.

We had a great time, and a few months later, she saw a sign for CCR, a recreation of my favorite group. The original was Creedence Clearwater Revival, and their music is what I like to listen to while driving.

The concert with the new Creedence Clearwater Revisited was at the Grizzly Rose in Denver. Again, we had a ball, and danced and whooped and hollered all night.

That said it was wonderful news that The Diamonds were coming to Goodland.

I looked through my music collection to see what I had of the old Diamonds, and found their No. 1 song "Little Darlin'," which came out in 1957. It went gold and was on the charts for 35 weeks, making it as high as No. 2 on the Billboard chart in both the U.S. and Canada.

There was a good crowd to hear the Diamonds at the Elks Lodge and Safari restaurant this month. Our hats off to Dale Goodwin and Bankwest for sponsoring their visit, and giving us a chance to enjoy their Rock 'n' Roll music.

Getting on the Internet, I was able to find several web sites that told about the beginnings of the Diamonds, who came from Canada.

Many of their hits were in fact cover versions—songs which had been recorded by others. Today, the concept of artists doing covers is often frowned upon, but at the time, this practice was a part of the musical culture.

Artists such as the Diamonds, who recorded for major labels, were under contract to record whatever they were given. In many cases, an original record would have gotten nowhere without being covered. A prime example would be "Little Darlin'." The original writer and performer, Maurice Williams, recorded for a small label in Georgia called "Excello." Given the poor distribution capabilities of labels such as this, the best that could have been hoped for would have been a medium sized hit on the Rhythm and Blues charts. The Diamonds cover version

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