

from our viewpoint...

## Presidential picture becoming clearer

The presidential picture is becoming clearer. And clearer. And unless the sky falls between now and election day in November 2008, the Democrats will have a team unmatched in the history of this great land.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton will be the first woman selected by a major party to vie for the presidency, and her chosen running mate, Sen. Barack Obama, will be the first black candidate for the nation's No. 2 post. It will be one of the boldest political moves ever.

Is the country ready for a women president? Is it ready for a black man to be a heartbeat away from the most powerful office on the planet?

Those are the two questions that will be answered in 2008, questions that have lingered for many years.

We might be jumping the gun on this one, but we firmly believe the Democratic Party, in order to move into the White House, must take risks. The only other time the Democrats had someone other than a man on their ticket was the unsuccessful presidential bid in 1984 of Sen. Walter Mondale of Minnesota and his running mate, Congresswoman Geraldine Anne Ferraro of New York. That was risky, and having a woman on the ballot didn't sway the female vote as Democratic leadership at that time thought it would.

Although we are early into the 2008 presidential derby, there seems to be a sense that Sen. Obama would welcome a spot on the Clinton ticket — if asked — should he not be successful in winning his party's nomination.

Maybe it's just us, but these early debates seem to almost point to a Clinton-Obama ticket in 2008. There are some openings in the debates that would have allowed Sen. Obama to press the New York senator, but he seemed to back off.

They say Sen. Obama doesn't have enough experience to sit in the oval office. But if chosen by Sen. Clinton, and should she be successful, he would gain in the experience game.

If a Clinton-Obama ticket emerges, this will be without question, the most clear-cut choice ever for president of the United States: a female candidate and a black candidate ticket vs. two white guys.

That may be a stark description, but if it turns out as we see it this far in advance of the election, you can bet your fender skirts there will be one whale of a lot of reposturing on both sides of the political landscape.

—Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*

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## Great time listening to old-time cowboy



### steve haynes

• along the sappa

Panhandle and still calls Texas home. He raises horses and runs stock, and the farther he gets from Nashville, the more cowboy he is.

He's also a heck of a nice guy, an entertainer of some means who takes time to sign everything offered and talk with each fan in a long line after the concert. He's done benefits, like the one Sunday, for restoration of the old Shirley Opera House in Atwood, for years.

Back in the days when southern Colorado ranchers were fighting a Canadian billionaire who wanted to sell their water to California, Michael would drive up from Taos each summer to do a benefit for the water war. He never failed to draw a crowd to the rodeo grounds in Monte Vista.

He left New Mexico for Colorado a few years back, he told the crowd, when yuppies cooking steaks behind their condos started to outnumber the elk he could see from his porch. He didn't want to wake up to a forest fire, he added, and it was getting a little crowded. There was an attitude.

And at 10,000 foot elevation, it was pretty poor range anyway.

He started something called "Michael Martin Murphey's Cowboy Experience" in central Colorado, where dudes could live in the bunk-house and ride horses all week on vacation. Maybe the real cowboy life wasn't for most city folks, but he gave that up a couple of years later — for love.

His new wife, he said, has three girls who can't leave Wisconsin, so that's where Michael punches cows these days. He doesn't seem any worse for the wear.

We hope Jeff and Alice Hill and their supporters made a few bucks for their project Sunday, but we know they made a lot of music fans happy. Michael, too.

He gave the crowd a heavy dose of new and old cowboy tunes, teasing them a little about his Nashville life.

But when they stood and cheered, he rewarded them with "Wildfire," his first and most enduring hit.

The song came to him in a dream, he said, and interpreting dreams is God's work.

"I don't know how to tell you," he said, "but I don't understand this song. I don't know how to explain it."

Nobody really seemed to mind.

## He's not a Hitler, he's a baby sitter

"Let's go, he can't hit, he can't hit."

"Stop the game! How dare you suggest that the batter, an innocent 12-year-old kid who only wants to make contact with the ball, cannot hit! Have you considered how your ridicule will harm his self-esteem? As the umpire of this game, I forbid you to utter such taunts again. Play ball!"

"We want a pitcher, not a belly itcher!"

"Stop the game! I see the other team is just as offensive. How dare you suggest the pitcher lacks the skill to throw the ball over the plate. Perhaps, through no fault of his own, he has an affliction that causes his skin to itch. I don't want to hear that again. Play ball!"

"Swing battah, swing battah, swing!"

"Stop the game! How dare you make the batter swing before he is good and ready. Do you have any idea how hard it is to hit a little white ball with a bat? How dare you try to embarrass him while his family watches. I better not hear such words again. Play ball!"

"We want a pitcher, not a glass of water!"

"Stop! A glass of water! You're suggesting the pitcher is weak and unstable like some clear fluid? Do you have any idea how hard it is to throw a ball over the plate knowing the batter might hit a home run? How would that make you feel? No more water comments. Now play ball!"

"He's not a batter, he's a broken ladder!"

"Stop the game! Broken ladder! You're suggesting the batter is skinny and gangly the way a ladder is? What's worse, he's like a broken ladder? The next kid who makes a ladder comment will be ejected from this game. Play ball!"

"He's not a pitcher, he's an underwear stitcher!"

"Stop! An underwear stitcher! Has it occurred to you that the pitcher may be from a poor family? Maybe he has only one or two pairs of underwear that his mother has to repair. How dare you make fun of someone who has so much less than you. Now play ball!"

"He's not a hitter, he's a baby sitter!"

"Stop! Baby sitter! What is that supposed to mean? That a boy can't be sensitive and caring and still hit a baseball? Or that if he is sensitive and nurtures a child then he can't hit at all? How dare you. Now play ball!"

"Whoop de do, you throw like my sister Sue!"



### tom purcell

• commentary

"Whoa, whoa, whoa! It's not enough for you to attack someone's self-esteem, but now you bring gender politics into it. Now you suggest that girls are not equal to boys? Is that it? Is that the kind of world you want to live in?"

"It's no wonder that Little League associations around the country are banning taunting and chatter. MSNBC reported on the trend last week. Something must be done to stop some kids from assailing the self-esteem of others.

"I know some believe the chatter ban is outrageous. They say chatter has been a part of baseball — it pulls kids together and keeps them from daydreaming.

"They say traditional chatter is useful. Baseball teaches children lessons about life — teaches them about competition, success, failure and adversity. They say that in the real world, some people will root against you — that chatter exposes kids to this concept in a harmless way.

"They say that the ban has little to do with kids anyway. The kids can handle the gentle ribbing. It's the parents who can't handle it. And since many parents have micromanaged every other aspect of their child's life, they're trying to micromanage Little League baseball, too.

"Maybe that is true, but I want you to know this. As long as I am umpiring this game, there shall be no more taunting of any pitcher or any hitter. Now play ball!"

"He's not a catcher, he's a nose scratcher!"

Tom Purcell is a nationally syndicated humor columnist. For comments to Tom, please email him at [Purcell@caglecartoons.com](mailto:Purcell@caglecartoons.com).

