

from our viewpoint...

War protestor back, running for office

So Cindy Sheehan is back. Sigh. It wasn't much of a break. It's been less than two months since she sold her Texas protest park and said goodbye. She said she felt her antiwar efforts had been in vain and she was tired of smears from the right and the left. She said we wouldn't have Cindy Sheehan to kick around any longer. If only. Dick Nixon was gone longer. Now she's ready to run for Congress in San Francisco, taking on the ultra-leftist Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi. Yeah, that Nancy Pelosi. "Democrats and Americans feel betrayed by the Democratic leadership," she said in a pre-announcement press conference from her Crawford, Texas, park. "We hired them to bring an end to the war. I'm not too far from San Francisco, so it wouldn't be too big of a move for me. I would give her a run for her money." Um, sure. The antiwar mother — her son, Casey, was killed in Iraq in 2004 and she began protesting outside President Bush' Crawford ranch the next year — said she'd announce her campaign on Tuesday. Sunday, she began her final week at the Crawford park, five acres she bought after camping along the road to the ranch. She's sold the place to Bree Walker, a multi-enhanced California talk show host who vowed to keep it open to protesters. It's the American way, talk radio and protest. No logic required. And the far fringe in both parties biting the hands that feed them. That's Ms. Pelosi's problem now, of course. Her office had no comment. Neither (smirk) did the White House. Fratricide on the left can't be bad for them, forgetting the times the religious right has bucked the president. We suspect Ms. Pelosi is secure in her post, but in San Francisco, home of Haight-Asbury and the Summer of Love, you never know. Roadside Cindy might give her "a run for her money." This week, apparently, she's leading a caravan to Washington. Wearing an "Arrest Cheney First" T-shirt, she said the Democrats had caved in on the war. They should impeach the President for lying to the nation, she says. Cheney second, we presume. Anyway, it should be quite a show on cable news. We need some entertainment. Many would like to ask Casey what he thinks of his mother's mad dash to the left, but of course, he's not around. Most of the soldiers we know think they could predict his answer. — *Steve Haynes*

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Green beans new favorite vegetable

I have a new favorite vegetable — green beans.

It's gardening season, and every year I go nuts planting stuff.

This year it was lettuce. I planted the lettuce crop that ate New York. Well, actually, it was the lettuce crop that New York could eat.

We ate lettuce, gave lettuce away and left lettuce on doorsteps and in unlocked cars.

It was a great crop, but as the weather heated up, it's grown, flowered and been pulled so that the green peppers and tomatoes, planted directly behind, could flourish. And they are flourishing. I've already gotten both peppers and tomatoes out of our little field.

Our garden is divided into two parts — the main garden, a large rectangle in the back yard, and a yard-wide strip next to the yard on the south side of the house.

Along the house is where we grew our tomato and pepper plants for about a dozen years. Last year, though, we decided to rotate crops and moved those plants to the main garden. On the side of the house we tried to raise corn and cucumbers. The cucumbers did well but the



cynthia haynes

• open season

corn wasn't an overwhelming success.

So this year, I decided that we needed to try something new. I planted green beans in half the space and Steve put zucchini on the other half.

I planted a bush variety of beans so that I wouldn't have to put in cages or stakes, but bush is sort of a misnomer. The beans are sort of bushy the way tomatoes are, but shorter. They are putting the zucchini to shame.

I went on vacation and asked the girls at the office to pick any produce, assuring them that the green beans should be picked every other day. Then I picked all the beans the day before we left. The next morning, there was another mess of beans on the plants, so I called the girls and warned them that the beans needed daily picking.

Now we've always liked canned green beans. I cook them for a couple of hours with an onion and a couple slices of bacon. I let them almost go dry and then add water. The flavor is great.

With the fresh beans, I've tried two recipes. The first is just to boil them for an hour with the old recipe allowing, them to get almost dry and add a little water.

The second is to boil them for 10 minutes, drain and stir fry them.

I pull a couple of onions from the back of the garage, a garlic from the iris patch (don't ask) and add whatever is available from the garden — green pepper, asparagus or snow peas.

Sauté the onion and garlic in butter or olive oil, add the green pepper and cook some more. Then add the beans, peas and/or asparagus and cook until heated through. Add some teriyaki marinade, preferably one with hot pepper flakes. Allow to cook for a couple minutes more and serve as a side dish.

Now my biggest problem is mediating the space on the side of the yard between the zucchini and green beans — talk about a pair of overachiever vegetables!

This is our time



from other pens

• commentary

At the recent Take Back America Conference in Washington, 3,000 grassroots progressives were in a joyous, euphoric mood. For a quarter-century they had been on the periphery of American politics, but not now.

Having led opposition to the Iraq War, liberal Democrats have the most to crow about as their party basks in dreams of winning the White House and electing a filibuster-proof Congress next year.

Think how far they have come from the Reagan landslides, how their issues of the war, social and economic justice, and universal health care now lead the national debate. And along the way, the progressive push has taken the sexism out of party politics.

Liberal Democrats have fought long and hard for gender equality, so you can imagine the excitement as the Take Back America conference got underway: their party's two most prominent leaders are women.

Hillary Clinton leads all Democratic candidates for the 2008 Presidential nomination.

Nancy Pelosi is the first woman ever elected Speaker of the House of Representatives.

So how did conference participants celebrate this triumph?

They booted them both.

I'll confess two of the great loves of my life are the Democratic Party and the New York Yankees and I don't know which aggravates me more. I'll leave it up to Joe Torre and Steinbrenner's checkbook to get the Yankees back on track, but I can't ignore Democrats booing Nancy and Hillary.

When liberals became infatuated with Ralph Nader in 2000 it cost Al Gore the election.

I'm a great admirer of Robert Borosage who heads up Take Back America. As he told the fifth annual conference in his opening remarks, "The right has failed. Their policies are bankrupt. They still dominate the Republican Party, but they are well on their way to turning it into a minority, regional party of white exclusion. This is our time."

I could not agree more, and one of the reasons the Democratic Party is stronger today and more effective than in decades is because of leaders like Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi.

Liberals and moderates may disagree and show their discontent by stamping their feet or raising their voices but it won't be "our time" if Democrats tear themselves apart on how to end the Iraq war.

Pelosi doesn't have the votes to bring home our troops, but even those who booed her at Take Back know how superior her leadership

blame for the continued violence.

Republican friends of mine concede that 2008 is an election they can't win — that Democrats have to lose it. Which we have a talent for doing. Larry Sabato, the University of Virginia political pundit, asked "how can the Democrats blow this election with all their built-in advantages?" He answers his own question (as Larry is prone to do): "Everything depends on whether Democrats consider the big picture prior to voting."

The big picture is the need for Democrats, whether liberals or moderates, to understand they are the political mainstream in this country. A Pew Foundation study shows 54 percent think government should help the needy, and two-thirds want government to guarantee health insurance for all. That's why Democrats need to Take Back America. That's the big picture.

So when Democrats boo and jeer other Democrats, I want to respond like Ronald Reagan: "There they go again..."

Victor Kamber is a political consultant. He was recently won the Public Relations News' 2006 Hall of Fame Award for his career in labor communications and politics. His blog can be read at www.victorkamber.com.

