

from other pens...

Candidate attacks Fox News' coverage

Fox News is under attack from a presidential candidate who could end up in the White House, and strangely, it's not a Democrat, but a conservative Republican who is quietly going about the business at hand.

Former U.S. Sen. Fred Thompson accused Fox last Sunday of being against him. He's upset with what he calls the network's continuing claim that his campaign is in trouble.

And Thompson's attack on the agency was made on Fox News' Chris Wallace show. He maintained that Fox, at the outset, "went negative" on his campaign.

The former senator, not a television actor, was seen early on as less than energetic, not enthused, lacking the "fire in the belly" candidates need to survive. And it wasn't just Fox who saw it that way; many in the Republican ranks were also concerned. Fox was doing nothing more than echoing what reporters heard on the campaign trail from likely voters.

Thompson said the network's "biased" reporting against him is not in concert with what national polls show. He insists he is running second. And he indicated the same kind of stuff was tossed in his path when he ran for the U.S. Senate, when on election night he proved the media wrong.

What bothers the candidate most, he said, is the "negative tone" Fox employs when it comes to him.

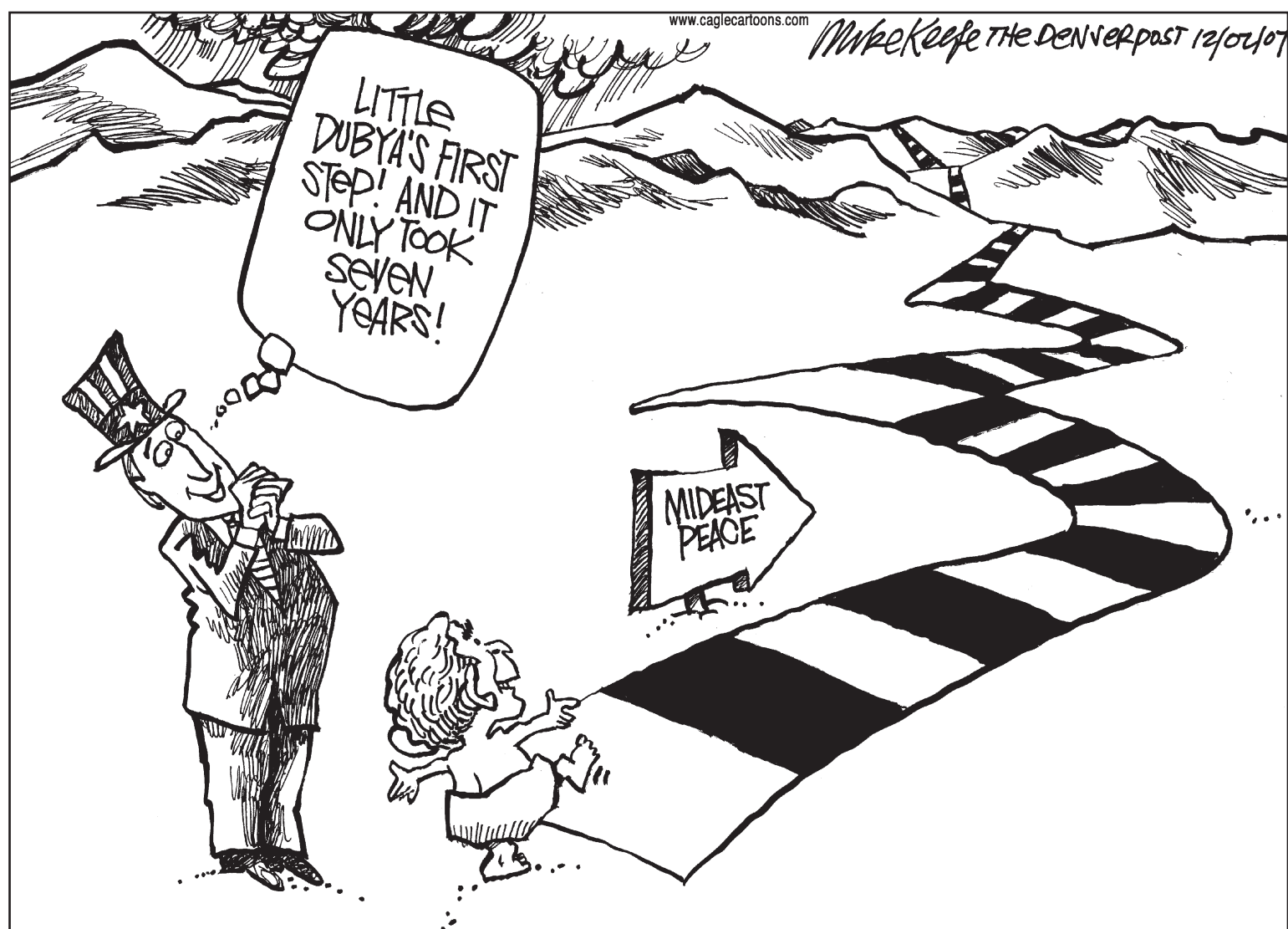
If we were advising Thompson, we would first insist that he wear a tie with his suit. C-Span showed one of his campaign stops in Iowa Sunday evening, and there he was in a suit, shirt collar sticking out over part of his lapel. That, to us, doesn't look presidential. But Thompson isn't alone. There are other candidates who look less than presidential in the way they dress. Frankly, they look sloppy.

It's not just Fox News, it's voters who see Thompson in a negative light. And unless he kicks his campaign in high gear, now, he might end up on the short end of the political stick.

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney are pretty much seen as the front runners. Thompson, in many polls, comes in third but is being threatened by the surprise surge by former Gov. Mike Huckabee from Arkansas.

With the Iowa caucuses 30 days away on Jan. 3, time's running out. And maybe, just maybe, Fox News was giving Thompson a wake-up call. Many experts view Thompson as the only candidate in his party who can beat Hillary Clinton in November, if Sen. Clinton gets that far.

That said, he's got to get the nomination first. — Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*



Guide was best part of our Vietnam trip

People ask me to name the best part of our trip to Vietnam, but it wasn't teaming Saigon, or the beautiful countryside, not even the "Hanoi Hilton," the old French prison where American fliers were held during the war.

Hanoi, with its old French colonial heart and wondrous lakes, is a beautiful city. But as usual, it's a people story that makes things interesting.

For me, it was Lam, our guide in Saigon. After a couple of days of Lam explaining the sights of Saigon and the history of the "American War," someone asked what it was like for the losing side, the non-Communists, after the Americans left, and Lam started talking about his mother's family.

Lam told us that, until a couple of years ago, the children of good Communists got a few points added to their test scores. Usually, that was enough to get them into college and often, to keep the others out.

He said he felt lucky to have gone to college and have a good job, since his family had been on the losing side. Had he been born a few years earlier, he said, he might not have made it, but things are changing.

Most of his mother's family sympathized with the non-Communist southern government after the French pulled out of Vietnam in 1954, he said. The oldest sister ran away from home at age 16 to join the Communists. Her three brothers joined the South Vietnamese army, while his mother married a southerner who went to college and taught history at a high school.



steve haynes

• along the sappa

All did well on their chosen paths. His aunt eventually became a colonel in the Communist army, her husband a general.

His non-Communist uncles became officers, too, one a major general, one a colonel and one a major. His parents taught, his father a professor at the high school, his mother at a junior high.

When the war ended, all elected to stay in their homeland though many people were leaving. The Communists sent the uncles and his father to "re-education" camps for "reactionary elements." The length of their terms depended on their political progress and the depth of their involvement with the losing side.

The army officers had to spend up to seven years in the labor camps, living Lam said, under cruel conditions with little food. His father was released fairly soon, but of course, the general had a longer stay.

His aunt and her husband could not help them, he said, because that would have caused them to lose face with their fellow Communists.

While the men were in the camps — "They were really concentration camps," Lam said — two of their wives fled to America with other men. Eventually, though, they earned their

release. As it became easier to leave Vietnam, all moved to the United States.

His parents stayed. His mother could still teach, he said, since her job at the junior high was considered less political. His father applied for jobs time and time again. Each time, he was told, "Never."

The family was forced out of their house and had to settle in a smaller place. On his mother's pay, they got by.

His father? He wound up selling lottery tickets on the curb in Saigon, about the lowest job a former teacher might sink to.

Now, Lam said, his parents are retired and his father has accepted his fate, relaxed and begun to enjoy his old age.

Family gatherings, though, were strained for years. All the children would come home for holidays, he said, but there was not much for the rest to say to his aunt and her husband.

Today, most people in Vietnam have no memory of the war, he told us, and things are better. Still, the Communists get the best jobs and the most honors.

Would he ever join the party to better himself?

"Never!" Lam said.

Many families could tell similar stories, I'm sure. Many in this country might have told one like it 150 years ago. But for an American used to free and open competition in life and society, it's a sobering tale, one that makes you realize how much we have to be thankful for, no matter what our country's faults.

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Israel, Pakistan, India... sure, no problem boys, load up. YOU can go thermonuclear. Because not only are you like us, you're our friends. You invite us to your birthday parties. And give us ice cream. Your leaders wear suits which makes us comfortable. Syria, Iraq and Iran. No. I'm sorry. You wear funny clothes and you're mean to us and never had us over to the house for cookies and milk- so no nukes for you. What it boils down to is: it's not enough to be like us, you also have to actually... like us.

This might be a good time to try and explain George Bush's Mideast nuclear policy, which to the untrained eye must seem trickier than doing calculus on a solar powered calculator in the front seat of a high-speed roller coaster while wearing gloves, at night. As leader of the free world, he's taken a monumental task upon himself to divide the world into two distinct and separate groups: those countries sober and sensible enough to handle the whole nuclear thing in the mature manner of a good democratic nation like the United States, and all those other fourth-rate, scorpion-infested hellholes that still allow barnyard animals to board airplanes.

And what of the borderline calls? You know, countries with a couple of low-rent, knockoff fast-food franchises whose streetcars still allow live chickens in the overhead compartment? Easy. The nations we like can have nuclear weapons. And the ones we don't like — can't. It's that simple. And don't give us any lip either. Or we'll talk to some buddies of Warren Buffett and get your Burger Imam licenses revoked.

Being the sole member of the "We Made a Big Badda Boom" club burdens us with the authority to write the admissions policy for all guild applicants. Not a pretty job, but someone has to do it. And the more like us you are, the more likely we'll let you have what you want. As long as what you want is what we want you to want. The less like us you are, the more likely your topographical features are of becoming a vast expanse of smooth, green glass.

Although we've had the bomb for over sixty years, we have proven ourselves to be totally reliable and trustworthy having only used it on actual people twice. Sure we've waved it around a couple of times, but if you can't menace somebody with a nuclear bomb, what's the use of squandering your children's future to build it? George Bush is going the extra mile to make sure that every nuclear wannabe is as determined to pursue diplomatic answers to complex international problems as he is. And those who don't like it might want to start

