

from our viewpoint...

Does wearing a pin make a person better

Is Barack Obama a patriot?
Was he before he started wearing an American Flag pin?
Does it matter whether he salutes the flag during the Pledge of Allegiance or the National Anthem?
What about his wife, Michelle?
Do we care if she'd ever been proud of her country before her husband's victory in the primaries?
Does all that matter?
Yes, and maybe no.

Everything the candidates say, everything they do, everything their families and friends and supporters do and say, means something.

Sen. Obama didn't used to wear a flag pin, not until opponents started to point that fact out.

Now, he wears one some days.

That probably says something about how he feels about patriotism and the flag. Or maybe it only says something about how he feels about flag pins.

A lot of people don't wear one every day. That includes a lot of politicians.

It's a sign Barack Obama is not Lou Dobbs, the anti-immigration CNN commentator.

But not a sign, necessarily, that he's anti-American. If he didn't love this country, why would he give up his former life to serve it?

His wife's comments, while not exactly politic when you think about them, should not be surprising, coming from a young, activist woman in her situation.

She didn't say she didn't love her country. She just said — whether she meant it or not — that she'd never been proud of it before. Probably, she meant she never had been so proud of it before.

And you can't fault her for that. A lot of people might agree.

Then there's the comments this weekend by former Gen. Wesley Clark, who disparaged Sen. John McCain's military record by saying it didn't necessarily qualify him to be commander in chief.

Gen. Clark, a former NATO commander, probably thinks his experience is superior, but voters have said otherwise. His campaign for president, like Sen. McCain's fighter jet, went down in flames.

Capt. McCain, a Navy pilot who spent five years as a prisoner of war after his plane was shot down over Vietnam, took offense.

And while it's true the Arizona senator and probable Republican nominee never advanced to flag rank, as his father had, he has served for years in the U.S. Senate, overseeing in part the nation's foreign affairs.

In any event, his military experience far exceeds Sen. Obama's.

Who's most qualified to be commander in chief?

The voters will have to decide.

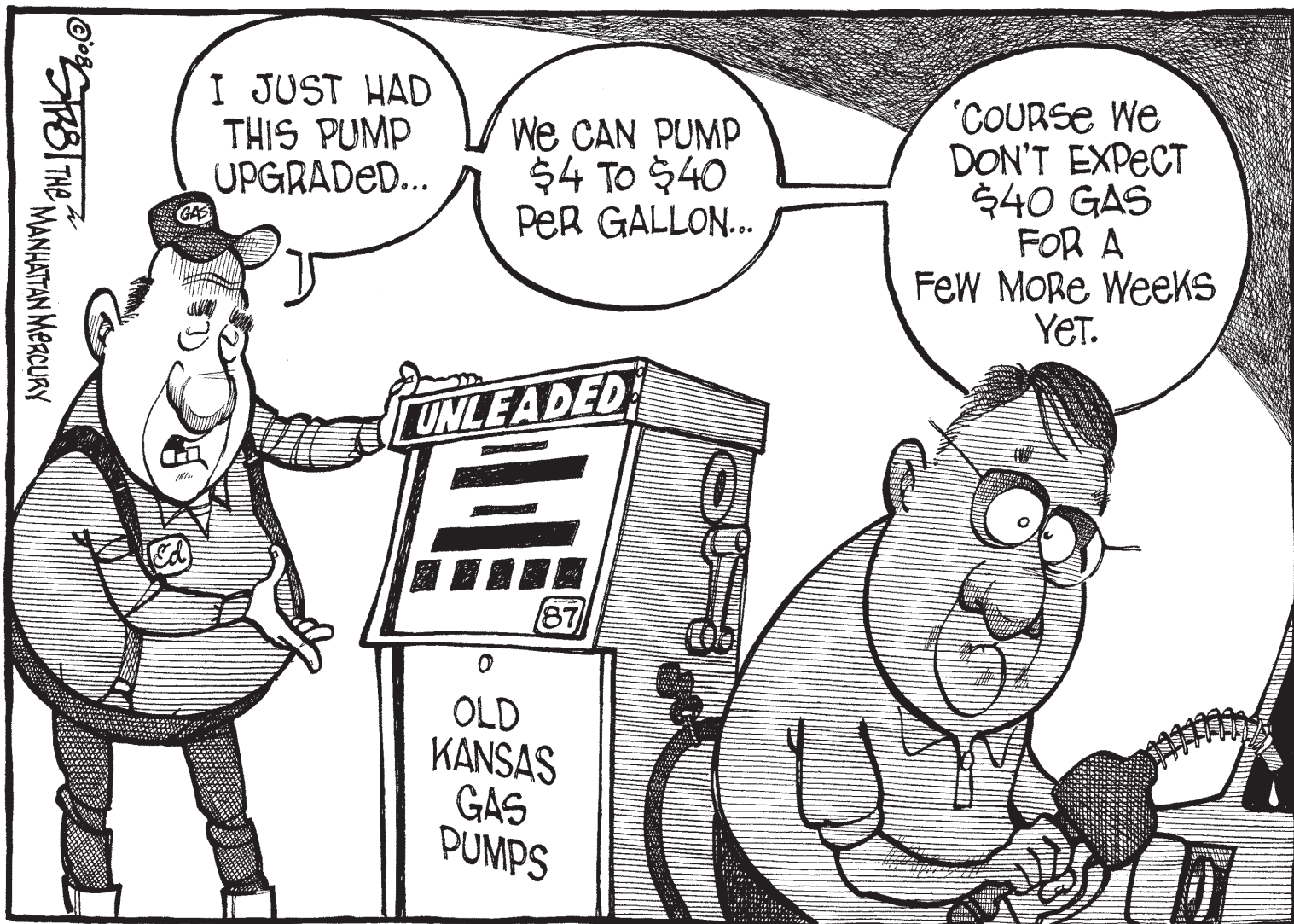
Our view is voters will divine something about the Obamas' thinking from their comments and actions. Some will like it, some will not.

The same can be said for the candidates' experience.

Some may want a leader who's never been in the military, who brings "fresh" thinking to the White House after a few years in the Senate.

Others will want a seasoned veteran of both worlds.

In November, we'll know. — *Steve Haynes*



Katrina left deep scars in Deep South

Remember spelling it out in school — MISSISSIPPI — the Deep South, where stately, tree-shaded antebellum mansions line the roads — and the beach?

Not no more, baby.

Our 10th state press association meeting was in Biloxi, Miss., along the Gulf Coast, where three years ago Hurricane Katrina wrecked devastation every bit as bad as that in New Orleans, just a short jaunt down the coast.

Today, people decry the loss of the New Orleans of yesteryear as the city struggles to rebuild its business and commercial base.

Well, it isn't the only one to lose its history.

Along the beach highway, which itself is being rebuilt, scraggly trees try to shade the foundations of mansions truly Gone With the Wind — and waves.

What has come back are the casinos. Gambling is legal in Mississippi, and the glitzy, ritzy palaces of slot machines and poker spot the landscape.

There are still a few of the old homes, either being renovated or rebuilt. One is Beauvoir, the last home of the first and only president of the Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis.

Beauvoir (say "bow view," or beautiful view, and it is) was built in 1848 by James Brown, a



cynthia haynes

• open season

wealthy plantation owner, as a summer home. The next major owner was Sarah Dorsey, who named it.

In 1877, Mr. Davis rented a side building, once used as a school, from Ms. Dorsey. He planned to spend his remaining years writing his memoirs and telling the tale of the Confederacy.

Later, he purchased the home from Ms. Dorsey, who died shortly after the former president had made his first payment. She left it to him in her will.

The Davis family lived there until his death in 1889. The home went to his spinster daughter Winnie and, when she died, to his widow Varina.

It is said that, although she lived in genteel poverty and was offered up to \$90,000 for the property, she would not sell Beauvoir. She left it as a home for Confederate veterans, their wives and widows. It was used for that from

1903 until the last widows went into a nursing home in 1957. The property was then turned into a memorial to President Davis.

Several hurricanes damaged the property over the years, but Katrina almost did it in. Three days after the storm, photos show the partly roofless building in a shambles. The outbuildings, including the one where Mr. Davis first lived, are gone, along with the porches, and most of the furniture, paintings and memorabilia.

Last week, however, men were reglazing windows, hanging and repainting frescos on the ceilings and walls. Some furniture had been salvaged and refinished and two rocking chairs sat on the wide veranda porch. Beauvoir had taken a hit, but battered and torn, had weathered the storm.

Out front, an equally battered statue of Jefferson Davis stands, staring out over the highway to the beaches of the Gulf.

In Mississippi, people took a long time to come to grips with that unpleasantness with the North and the carpetbaggers who came with Reconstruction. They'll take about that long to come to grips with an equally unpleasant visitor, Miss Katrina, but like Beauvoir, they will.

A new declaration of independence

In the course of human events it is necessary, now and again, to dissolve our political bands with the ninnies who keep abandoning our founding principles.

It used to be self-evident that our government's role was primarily to protect certain unalienable rights, such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

It used to be that our government did the bidding of the people — that any power it derived was solely through the consent of the governed.

It used to be our country believed in limited government — that government at its best was a necessary evil and should be aggressively restrained.

But too many of the birds running things these days don't see it that way.

In 2008, the federal budget is more than \$3 trillion — up from \$1.7 trillion only a decade ago. Republicans, who once preached fiscal restraint — they even tried it for a few years — ended up growing government more than Democrats ever dreamed.

Things are getting worse in a hurry.

Take on a gimmicky mortgage bigger than you could afford? Not to worry. Our esteemed Congress is pushing through a \$300 billion bill to bail you out with taxpayer dough.

Struggling at the pump now that energy prices are at record highs? Not to worry. Some of our politicians promise to tax energy companies lots more so they can pay your energy bills for you.

Think it's unfair that some Americans, through education, hard work and risk, are making good incomes? Not to worry. Though the "rich" already pay the lion's share of taxes in America, some politicians want to tax them plenty more so they can transfer more goodies to you.

Sound like the ideas of a government founded on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

They're not. They're the ideas of the "Takings Coalition," a term coined by Grover Norquist, author of "Leave Us Alone: Getting the Government's Hands Off Our Money, Our Guns, Our Lives."

The Takings Coalition is composed of trial lawyers, labor unions, big-city political machines, government workers and contractors, nanny-state radicals and lots of other folks who benefit as government size and power



tom purcell

• commentary

expand.

The Takers "view the proper role of government as taking things from one group and giving them to someone else."

Fortunately, explains Norquist, there is another coalition that stands in stark contrast to the Takings crowd: the "Leave Us Alone Coalition," the center-right, commonsense folks who simply want the government to leave us alone.

We don't want other people's dough and we don't want other people taking ours. We want to start our own businesses without being over-regulated and overtaxed. We want to educate our kids where and how we see fit.

Whereas the Takers are trying to turn America into France — where most everybody is dependent on government in one way or another — we Leave-Us-Aloners believe what our Founders believed.

We believe that government should handle the basics, then butt out so that the creativity, ingenuity and productivity of the average Joe

can be unleashed — that by allowing individuals to freely pursue their own happiness, great economic miracles will occur.

Great miracles have occurred. Despite the introduction of some Taker ideas now and then, America has mostly been a leave-us-alone country. That is why, in a short period of human history, we exploded into the most prosperous, productive country in the history of mankind.

We're on the precipice though. The Takings Coalition is having a great run of late. The Takers are led by Barack Obama, a charismatic figure who favors old ideas that, in a nutshell, will impede individual liberty and restrict our pursuit of happiness.

As much of the world is emulating America's leave-us-alone success — many countries have slashed taxes and reduced government meddling to unleash the ingenuity and productivity of their citizens — we're fast headed the opposite way.

Hey, it's the Fourth of July. Let's re-declare our independence from cockamamie government-meddling concepts.

For goodness' sakes, just leave us alone.

Tom Purcell is a nationally syndicated humor columnist. Visit Tom on the web at www.TomPurcell.com or e-mail him at Purcell@caglecartoons.com.

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor

Pat Schiefen, Society Editor

Sharon Corcoran, Reporter

Jordie Mann, Jessica Corbin, Advertising Depr.

Sheila Smith, Office Manager



Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Betty Morris, James Jackson

Lana Westfahl, James Ornelas, Tasha Shores

Barbara Ornelas, Elizabeth Brock, Judy McKnight



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, July 4th and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

