

from other pens...

Sebelius might be good ticket choice

After further review, maybe an Obama-Sebelius ticket in November wouldn't be so bad after all. They have a few things in common, mainly saying things that shouldn't have been said.

Earlier this week, Obama made a mess of himself explaining how the Christian religion should influence politics. In what appears to be a horrendous attempt to attract the attention of evangelical Christians, which supposedly help George Bush win in 2004, Obama asked if America should be ruled under someone who believes in the Old Testament or the New Testament.

True Christians, especially evangelicals, use the Old Testament as the history of their faith, but know it's the New Testament that drives them. Obama's refers to the laws in Leviticus, which include diet restrictions, and that doesn't matter to Christians anymore.

Obama's comments complements his earlier statements on how rural Americans only care about their religion and their guns. Great way to attract voters, huh?

Obama's talk reminds us of Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and her occasional blundering comments and actions.

Remember, it was Sebelius who told people in Washington state that Kansas-made wine is horrible. Even if she doesn't like it, should the governor, nominally the leader of state export efforts, publicly admit it?

Her son designed a disturbing board game, similar to Monopoly, but set in a prison. The innuendoes in the game are more appropriate for a porn magazine, not a newspaper. Sebelius said she was proud of her son's creativity. At one time, orders for the game could be sent to the governor's residence at Cedar Crest.

Like Obama, Sebelius, appears to have an allergic reaction to rural. She is governor of one the smallest states in the Union, as her borders stretch from Topeka to Kansas City. She appears to only go west of Topeka the day after a nasty storm or when is invited to some social event that looks good on front pages and on television.

In 2006, debates with Republican candidate Jim Barnett were all held east of Hutchinson.

Great way to attract voters, huh?

Go ahead, Obama, ask Sebelius to be your running mate.

— John Van Nostrand, Colby Free Press

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Women throw intimate apparel at singer

Readers, be warned. This column involves women throwing intimate apparel. Grown women. Matronly women.

If you or your children find this a sensitive subject — and I'm sure the kids will — best cover some eyes.

I have to admit, I was a little naive, not knowing what to expect from a Tom Jones concert. Sure, the Welsh singer was a heart throb when we were in college back in the 1960s.

I remembered his hits from those days — "What's New, Pussycat?", "Delilah" and "She's a Lady," for instance — and knew he was still out there, but he hasn't exactly been a hit maker lately.

Back in the day, he had a weekly television program on ABC and filled stadiums for concerts, but then, didn't they all?

But while I followed the careers of Linda Ronstadt and Bonnie Raitt, I can't say I ever felt like buying tickets to see Tom Jones. So I was, uh, a little unprepared for what would happen when friends told us they had tickets for us to see his concert Thursday in Biloxi, Miss.

"Sure," we said. "Why not?"

I can't say that either Cynthia or our hostess, Amy, are exactly Tom Jones fans. (Cynthia gravitates to elevator music, country rock (for swing dancing) and Jimmy Buffet.) But I know neither Bill nor I was prepared for this experience.

My first warning came when we entered the foyer and came face to face with two huge posters, one of a clean-shaven young Tom Jones in tight leather pants, leaning into the mike, the other of Sir Tom Jones at 68, in not-so-tight pants, beard and a smile, holding a big cigar.

Women were snapping them up.



steve haynes

• along the sappa

Inside, still well before the show, we made our way to our seats. I smiled at a nice-looking blonde matron of 55 or so. She was absolutely squirming in her seat, but I didn't for one minute think I had anything to do with that.

After we sat down, a young couple sat to my left.

"Are you a fan?" asked Jamie, a perky 20-something reporter from west Mississippi, "or did you just come to make your wife happy?"

I told her I thought Amy had bought the tickets, and I was just along for the ride.

"Me, too," said Jason, Jamie's husband.

"Well, I didn't have to go to that 'Sex in the City' movie," I said, and that got a grin. We high-fived.

And soon enough, the great man came out, wearing relaxed-fit pants, a red sports coat and his trademark open-neck black shirt.

Women screamed. He sang. Women screamed again.

"I wonder if he has to dye the chest hair," Cynthia whispered.

About then, Tom started another song, and Jamie grabbed my arm.

"Isn't this great?" she shouted, jumping up and dancing.

Pretty soon, I noticed a couple of women edging up to the stage. One threw a pair of panties. A security guard politely ushered her

back toward her seat, but the other one got off a shot.

About that time, Jason sneaked out, saying he was going to the restroom. That took about five songs, and when he came back, he'd fortified himself with a second beer. Jamie disappeared for a while, too, and I'm not sure where she went.

As the show wound on, the carpet of underwear began to grow. White ones, grey ones, pink ones, red ones.

"Bet you didn't know Depends even came in red," Cynthia whispered.

The security crew — an older man and an even older woman — had increasing trouble shooing the women away. Then Tom said, "If you want to dance in the aisles, this is the time."

And that was pretty much all she wrote. The man retreated to the wings. The poor woman tried her best to guard the stage, looking first one way, then desperately, the other. Finally, she just gave up and started bobbing to the music.

Exactly an hour and a half — and three curtain calls — after the show started, Tom went off and the house lights came up. The women began to file out. Tomorrow they'd be grandmothers again.

Except for Jamie, barely a mother. But she was beaming.

"I'm so sorry about your ears," she said. I just smiled and nodded.

Bill, Jason and I had survived. In fact, I'd have to admit, ol' Tom put on a pretty good show.

But not as good as the one out in the seats. Or the one in the pit.

McCain: Four more years of mumbling

years of listening to a president mumble. I don't care how great the man is otherwise, and a quick look at the amazing progress in present day Iraq accomplished by the president reveals a greatness that offends liberals, but if he's a mumbler that's what he'll be seen as.

The same is true of John McCain. His wartime heroism and whatever he's accomplished in the United States Senate fades almost into obscurity because he is seen — and joked about — as a politician who, despite his boast of being a straight talker, is seen as a man who mumbles his way through the verbal thicket.

You can't make a point if you can't articulate it in the strongest and clearest way possible.

People remember a president who communicates. You may hate his message but you have no trouble absorbing it when Barack Obama speaks. He's like the Pied Piper — he'll lead you off a cliff, but while he's doing it there's no doubt that he can put two words together, finish a sentence, and sound as if he means what he says and has enough fiery rhetoric in his verbal arsenal to keep you marching behind him on the way to the cliff's edge. He's like a Venus's-flytrap — you think you're smelling roses when no matter how sweet the odor, it is really poison gas.

He's a communicator, not a mumbler.

You don't get that from John McCain. The faithful old Republican guard may understand him and vote for him, but if you're looking for new recruits to cross over, your candidate has to at least sound as if he knows what he's talking about on matters other than the Iraq war.

He has to lead, and he can't just sit back and decide he is going to play this really nice guy with nary a mean word to mumble about his opponent, while his opponent has no intention of playing nice.



michael reagan

• making sense

The Republican Party is looking for a real leader, not a Dr. Phil who can see the bright side of a tornado.

The last leader Republicans had was Newt Gingrich. You may not have liked him but you always knew damn well where he stood. He never equivocated, and you could hear and understand everything he said. And he led his party to an astonishing victory in 1994.

Barack Obama, with all of his manifest faults and empty promises and outright misstatements of the facts, is at least leading the troops. And that's exactly what John McCain is not doing, and what he has to do if he wants to win in November.

He is deluding himself by thinking he can sit on his campaign bus and make nice with his pals in the media who no longer worship at his feet, having found a new idol in Barack Obama.

He needs to show leadership instead of musing about how he was once a prisoner of war who heroically resisted his brutal captors, because many of the people who'll vote in November were not even alive during the war in Vietnam. To them it's ancient history. They want to hear solutions to the gas-price crisis, for example, not recollections of a past they didn't share.

He can't gain any points recalling the failed presidency of Jimmy Carter because there are lots of people out there who at best only vaguely know that Carter was once president or who have any idea of what he did when in

the White House.

When he talks about the Vietnam war, or Jimmy Carter, McCain has to explain what he's talking about, and the American people have little interest or patience in matters that have to be explained.

If something has to be explained, it's something you shouldn't talk about.

McCain doesn't seem to realize that what the public perceives is reality. In politics, perception and reality are the same. True or not, the perception is that George Bush hasn't led. The reality is that we have no leadership and we're hungry for a leader.

At this point in time, Barack Obama may be leading us off a cliff, but at least he's whistling the tune the voters want to hear.

John McCain needs to find his tune, and then sing it loud and clear. He can't mumble his way into the White House.

Mike Reagan, the elder son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationally. E-mail comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com.

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