

from other pens...

Debate a tossup, both get a C+ score

Sen. McCain? Sen. Obama? Which one won the first of the three scheduled presidential debates last week? If you said McCain, you are wrong. If you said Obama you are wrong. It was, without doubt, a tossup.

McCain lost points because he stubbornly refused to acknowledge the presence of his opponent, giving him the cold shoulder throughout.

Obama lost points because he just doesn't seem to know when to quit talking. He apparently doesn't recognize the difference between debating and lecturing.

On the issue of commander-in-chief, either would serve that purpose well.

On the matter of the economy, both have faults.

On national security, McCain needs to get straight in his mind who runs what country, and Obama needs to convince us he has a better handle on that issues than does his challenger.

On earmarks, there are a lot of justified expenditures in that category, just as there are foolish ones, and if Sen. McCain plans to veto anything that smacks of an earmark, he might get smacked by Congress.

And on the \$700 billion bailout, both were, in some fashion or other, bailing out of telling us specifically how they felt or would vote.

We came away from the first debate no better informed than before. Both senators need to study, over and over, the tapes of their performances last week so they are better prepared next time around. We need sharper, to-the-point answers. Hesitation, skirting the questions and muttering an answer doesn't smack of leadership in our books.

Maybe the two guys who want to occupy the Oval Office will do better than the c+ we've given them on their first try.

— Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*

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Community newspapers are quite healthy

I'm just fed up with the way the newspaper industry is reacting to its current "crisis."

First of all, it seems like half the editors and publishers in the country and two-thirds of the journalism deans are ready to write our obituary. Some already have.

And a lot of newspaper people stand around, shoveling dirt into the grave.

Yet the dearly has not yet departed. In fact, community newspapers are quite healthy, and the future is nothing but bright for this growing and vital industry.

Yes, I said the future is nothing but bright for the *community* newspaper, like the ones most rural editors put out. We're not going to tumble to the Internet any more than we rolled over and died for television or radio or cable.

We're better at what we do than any of those "new media," or any that's likely to come along.

We'll still be printing newspapers, still be making money and still be covering our communities like no one else will do way down the road.

I just wish our colleagues would stop shoving that dirt in my hair.

Stop writing that newspapers are about to fade away. It's not true.

Stop claiming that to make money, we have to become "new media" companies. It won't work.

Fortunes will be made in the Internet and



steve haynes

• along the sappa

other new media, but darned few of them will be made by newspaper companies. As newspapers did with broadcast, we're going to find that this is a different business.

A lot of newspaper companies will make some money at it, and as in broadcast, a few will make a lot. Don't count on the Internet saving us, though. That kind of thinking has never worked.

My company knows we need to use the Internet to survive, as any business does. We're growing online revenue sources, but we don't expect them to overtake newspaper income in the foreseeable future. We expect to make some money, but we expect print advertising to be our bread and butter.

Sometimes newspapers are own own worse enemies. I picked up a city daily the other day and got a shock: The lead story in the lifestyle section was all about how to find coupons online. The story did not that newspapers still handle 80 percent of all coupons, but made it clear that online was the sexy, fun way to find them.

Why would any newspaper feature that?

Why not just get a gun, and get it over with?

The same day, I came across an article from the Readership Institute, where Director Mary Nesbitt reported that newspaper reading habits have held up pretty well over the last two years. Even the kids are not deserting us in the numbers we've heard.

Where was that story on the financial pages, among all the bad news? I didn't see it.

If we take advantage of our strong position, community newspapers have a strong position. We're about the only mass medium left, as television, cable, radio, magazines and websites continue to fragment their audience.

Only a newspaper can command the attention of an entire town.

That's valuable.

Metro dailies should pay heed. They will have to become local, community newspapers again to survive, giving up in many cases the pretense of regional power. They started out as community newspapers, and need to return to their roots. Those that do — and stop writing their own obituaries — will share in the bright future of our industry.

I'd invite the journalism schools, the pundits and the naysayers to take another look, too.

This is a good business, and it's going to get better — for those who pay attention to what readers want in the way of news.

Old piranha pants



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• raging moderate

enough to qualify for frequent flyer miles.

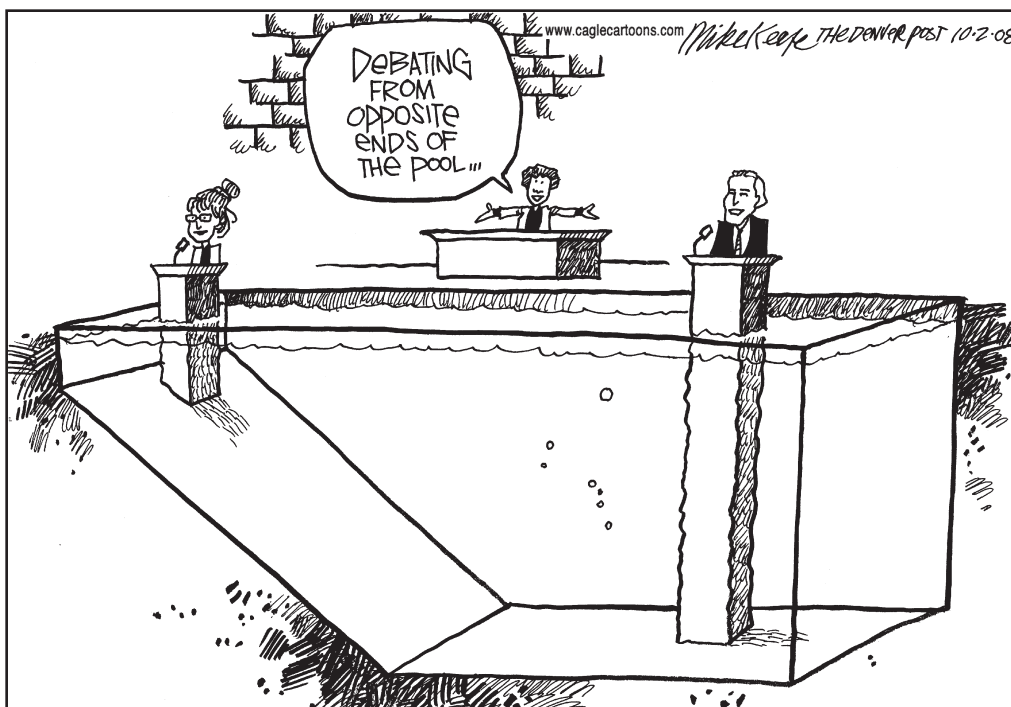
It was drinking the Daily Gallup Kool-Aid that transformed Dr. Unconcerned into Mr. Proactive. But even with the makeup and the rubber mask, the role still seems a bit off-kilter on a man who is so notoriously free market that he escorted the French philosopher Laissez-Faire out of range of the security cameras, fed him a handful of roofies, then locked him in the evidence room behind a file cabinet wrapped in a pile of piano blankets.

Responding to the recent Chernobyl-sized melt down on Wall Street, the Bush Successor Wannabe insisted that, "The fundamentals of our economy are strong," demonstrating a cluelessness you don't normally associate with folks still in possession of a pulse, or not related to one of the judges on "So You Think

You Can Dance." But totally in line from a guy not sure of how many houses he owns. And I have a quick question here: When you own seven houses, how big do your pants pockets need to be to accommodate all your keys? He should do what I always do: Trade four houses for a hotel.

McCain jumped off the De-Regulation Express so fast, that Jamaican Bolt guy probably tried to buy his shoes. His cure for what ails us calls for empanelling a blue ribbon study group like the 9/11 Commission, sounding like reform the same way that a pneumatic jack-hammer sounds like a dial tone. He put off proposing concrete solutions, such as equipping tourists with steel umbrellas to repel falling hedge fund brokers, but maybe he's squirreling that one away for his fact-finding commission. He did talk about dismantling the Old Boy Network in Washington, and that could actually work. Especially when you consider the Senator's current standing as Ranking Old Boy.

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