

from our viewpoint...

Army concert great after big election

It was good to see a big crowd at Max Jones Fieldhouse on Thursday to hear the U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers Chorus, and it felt good to be patriotic just two days after the election of a new president.

Not only did the Army band make hearts swell in patriotic pride, but so did watching the high school band students who sat in with the Army group for the "Washington Post March" by John Philip Sousa.

The students signed up at the beginning of October and the Army people sent out sheet music for each one based on what instrument each played. The nine students did not get a chance to practice with the band, but had to be ready to jump in when the concert hit their song.

This was the first time we have had students play with a military band, and we hope they get another chance. When the Army advance team was in Goodland in August, they said we could have up to 12 students play. Apparently, the band started doing this a couple of years ago.

Some things don't always go the way you expect, but with the help of the Fieldhouse maintenance staff, Steve Zeigler and Danny Studer, we were able to make most everything work for the concert.

We certainly enjoy being able to put on these concerts and know that without the help of the Goodland School District, it would not happen. Having a great place like Max Jones Fieldhouse is what makes it possible.

This is not the first concert here by the Army Field Band. The conductor said the band had been here about 50 years ago, but that certainly was not at Max Jones.

The great music was a wonderful reminder of the freedoms we enjoy in America, and a great tribute to all those who have served and are serving in the armed forces.

Two days before the concert, we watched as the country went through the process of electing its 44th president. The historic choice of Barack Obama, who traces his ancestry on his mother's side to Kansas, made us proud.

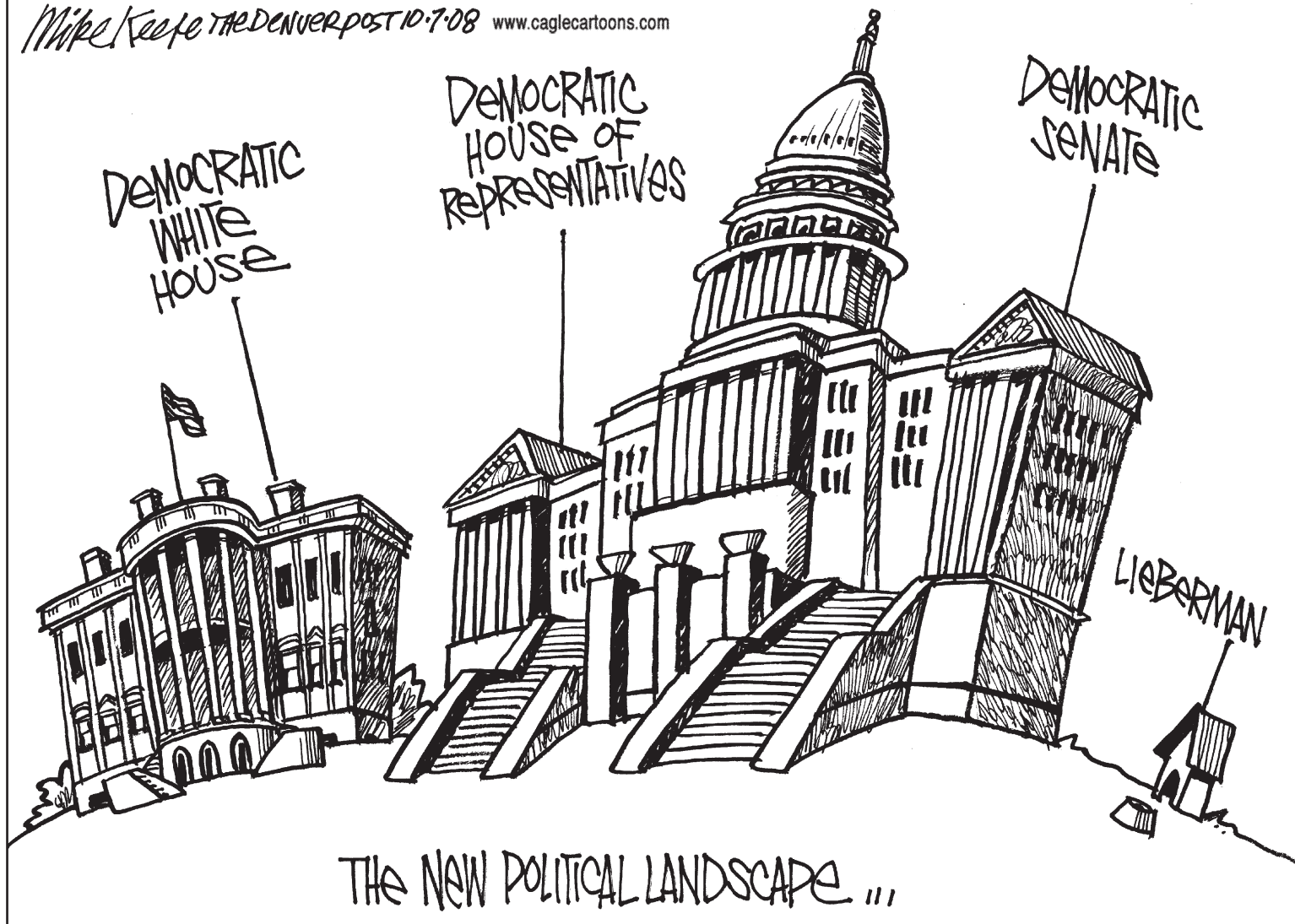
We elected a black man to the highest office in the land, and it was a great day to watch the people of all colors and generations celebrating. Every time we go through the lengthy and tumultuous process to change our government, it is a wonder to many around the world that we can do it in such a peaceful manner and then come together to face the issues of the future.

Today, as we pause on Veteran's Day to honor, those who are serving and those who have served our country, let's each say a prayer for all those who were elected last week. It is the armed forces that protect our freedoms, and the elected representatives to whom we entrust the job of supporting our troops in the task of preserving those freedoms.

We stood together Thursday as the Army Field Band played "Stars and Stripes Forever," and an encore of "God Bless the U.S.A."

Let's take that spirit and reach for the unity we need as a country to get through these hard times. We should know that the American spirit will help us succeed in the future. — Tom Betz

Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 10-7-08 www.caglecartoons.com



Tomb of the unknowns

Hurricane Isabel struck Washington, D.C., hard that night.

It was Sept. 18, 2003. I lived in Alexandria, Va., at the time. I rode out the storm reading a book and enjoying a glass of wine.

At the Arlington National Cemetery, just a few miles from where I sat, the sentinels who stand guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns were having an entirely different experience.

The Tomb of the Unknowns was established in 1921. Three of its chambers contain the remains of unknown soldiers from World War I, World War II and Korea (a fourth chamber had contained the remains of an unknown soldier from the Vietnam war until DNA technology determined his identity).

Only the finest soldiers are selected to guard the Tomb. The sentinels are specially trained soldiers of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard). They watch over the Tomb 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As each solitary guard paces before the Tomb, his movements are precise, his dress impeccable.

Each guard's dedication is made clear by the Sentinel's Creed:

My dedication to this sacred duty is total and wholehearted.

In the responsibility bestowed on me never will I falter.

And with dignity and perseverance my standard will remain perfection.

Through the years of diligence and praise and the discomfort of the elements,

I will walk my tour in humble reverence to the best of my ability.

It is he who commands the respect I protect.

His bravery that made us so proud.



tom purcell

• commentary

Surrounded by well meaning crowds by day alone in the thoughtful peace of night, this soldier will in honored glory rest under my eternal vigilance.

Which brings us back to Hurricane Isabel.

For the first time in the Tomb's history, in preparation of a potentially dangerous storm, the commanding officers established a contingency plan.

The sentinels were free to withdraw to safer positions under the Memorial Amphitheater arches or inside the trophy room should conditions become life-threatening — positions from which they could still maintain their mission watching over the Tomb.

But none would leave.

It is a solemn duty to march before the Tomb, after all. The sentinel's meticulous ritual is an outward display of gratitude and remembrance for the sacrifices so many have made for their country — particularly the unknown soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice.

By guarding the Tomb with eternal vigilance, the sentinel validates the words of the soldier's prayer:

"It is the soldier who has given us our freedoms. It's the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press. It's the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech. It's the soldier, not the campus orga-

nizer, who has given us the freedom to object. It's the soldier, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial...."

And so, as Hurricane Isabel struck — 24 trees would be uprooted across the cemetery and three headstones would be crushed — each sentinel took turns standing his ground.

There really was no other option. How could a sentinel retreat to safer ground in the midst of a dinky hurricane when so many others have given so much more?

It's true the hurricane could have been plenty worse than it turned out to be. It's possible that life-threatening severity might have caused the sentinels to, for the first time since they began guarding the Tomb in 1948, maintain their mission from safer ground.

Though I doubt it.

We've just come through a wrenching political season — some folks are jubilant at the results, whereas others are deflated and even worried — but despite the disagreement over policies and politics, I'm confident America will do the right thing over the long haul.

I'm confident America's best is yet ahead.

I believe this because virtue still lives in America. Honor, sacrifice and duty are still alive and well.

If you don't believe me, pay a visit to the Arlington National Cemetery and stop by the Tomb of the Unknowns.

It is one place where American sacrifice, duty and honor are on full display 24 hours a day every day of the week.

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.

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e-mail: star-news@nwkanssas.com

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nwkanssas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nt.betz@nwkanssas.com)

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

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The new American landscape

American cynicism lost the battle this week as Barack Obama became the newly elected 44th president of the United States and a promise was finally fulfilled. Even in the boroughs of New York City where pessimism was cherished as a local export, optimism overcame ordinary citizens who were running outside in droves and greeting each other with shouts of, "We did it!"

The Bronx cheer, the old sputtering rasp-berry, was replaced with loud, shouts of unrestrained joy. All over America Tuesday night at 11:01 p.m. as the networks began to declare Obama the winner people spontaneously poured into the streets shouting for joy, including in the South Bronx right by that American symbol, Yankee Stadium.

The cheering and honking horns only grew louder until Obama appeared in Grant Park, Chicago before a crowd of 160,000 people to acknowledge what had just happened. Suddenly, the streets across the nation were quiet again as everyone rushed back indoors to watch on TV as American history expanded to include more of her citizens.

When Obama was done the streets filled once again while in the Bronx people danced up and down the Grand Concourse in a peaceful celebration openly weeping and singing, hugging and laughing long into the night. In Washington, D.C. residents streamed toward Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House filling the wide boulevard long after the lights inside the White House were turned out. Everyone wanted to see what the world looked like now and the only way to do that was to be among the crowds.

Change has arrived and it was visible on the faces of the human American landscape as everyone realized a new truth. We are no longer a nation that offers the possibility of the fulfillment of dreams; we are the nation that has delivered on that promise. Even better, the dec-



martha r. carr

• commentary

laration did not come from one, isolated group but from a patchwork of every background that stretched across the map.

The power behind the idea of one body, one vote and how it can shape a nation was manifested in the action of everyone who turned out to vote. Not only in those who voted for Obama, but in those who chose to vote for McCain and peacefully acknowledged the loss of their candidate. Senator McCain gave an eloquent and gracious concession speech and showed other nations around the world another facet of democracy in action.

However, there are still large issues looming over us and it will take the creativity, minds and muscles of everyone to come up with new solutions for sustainable energy, to rebuild the economy and declare peace in ongoing world conflicts. We can each start from where we are on a local level and let the effort expand

outward.

It's the time to take all of the new enthusiasm and volunteer in a local charity or ask how to be of service in the local government.

Our new day has arrived America and we are on the path to building something better for all of us. Voting was only the beginning, though as the real work gets underway. And now that the election is over, we become one nation, motivated to look for ways we can all compromise and collaborate together.

We started as a country made up of a shared ideal and have grown to include new citizens every year. Now we have begun a new chapter in our story. During the 1960's when so many idealistic leaders such as Robert Kennedy or Martin Luther King were slain, a generation lost some of their confidence that things could be different. But, a new age has begun and our optimism has been restored. Send up a cheer and then go lend a hand.

Martha Randolph Carr writes a weekly newspaper column. Email Martha at: Martha@caglecartoons.com or visit www.martharandolphcarr.com.

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; web address — roberts.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; web e-mail address — brownback.senate.gov/CMEEmail.me

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 web address — www.jerry Moran.house.gov

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 242W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676; e-mail address — jmorrison@ink.org

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, Rm. 128-S, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399; e-mail address — ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Kansas Attorney General, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767