

from our viewpoint...

Watershed election in American history

The election of Barack Obama as president is a watershed, a turning point in American history in so many ways.

The fact that voters worried far more about the way the country was going than they did about race or religion speaks volumes about how far this nation has come since the Civil Rights era less than 50 years ago.

In 1960, it seemed unimaginable that we could have a Roman Catholic president, despite the fact that the Roman church was the largest denomination in the country. It simply had never happened.

How long ago, how far away that seems today.

Now, we have a black president elect with a Muslim name — though it's considered impolite to stress that fact.

Even one short decade ago, who could have imagined.

And the country is looking for President Obama to lead them out of the wilderness.

But that's just part of the story.

Coming as it does at a similar time of economic and social crisis, this election marks an opportunity for the Democratic party that comes but once or twice a century. The only comparable times for the Democrats came with the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, at the height of the Great Depression, and of Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

Under Roosevelt, with majorities in Congress, the party moved to remake the American system, instituting Social Security, union-friendly labor laws, vast new social programs and a belief that the government could solve our every problem.

FDR's legacy is with us even today, when we look to a new president to lead us out of similar problems, though this crisis — so far — is neither as deep nor as permanent as the one he faced.

Lyndon Johnson, in his first term, seemed to be able to do no wrong. In a session, he passed a bundle of New Frontier welfare programs that had languished when John F. Kennedy was alive.

The combination of sympathy for the slain president and Johnson's persuasive powers and knowledge of the Congress was too much for conservatives to resist. He steamrolled the opposition, just as he plowed through the noble but out-of-place Barry Goldwater.

His majority, itself of historic proportions, blinded President Johnson to the growing malaise that would drive him from office. The dissatisfaction with the Vietnam War and the loss of American lives viewed nightly on television news would hang around to haunt him.

In the end, he squandered his mandate, had few concrete accomplishments in his second term and left a beaten man.

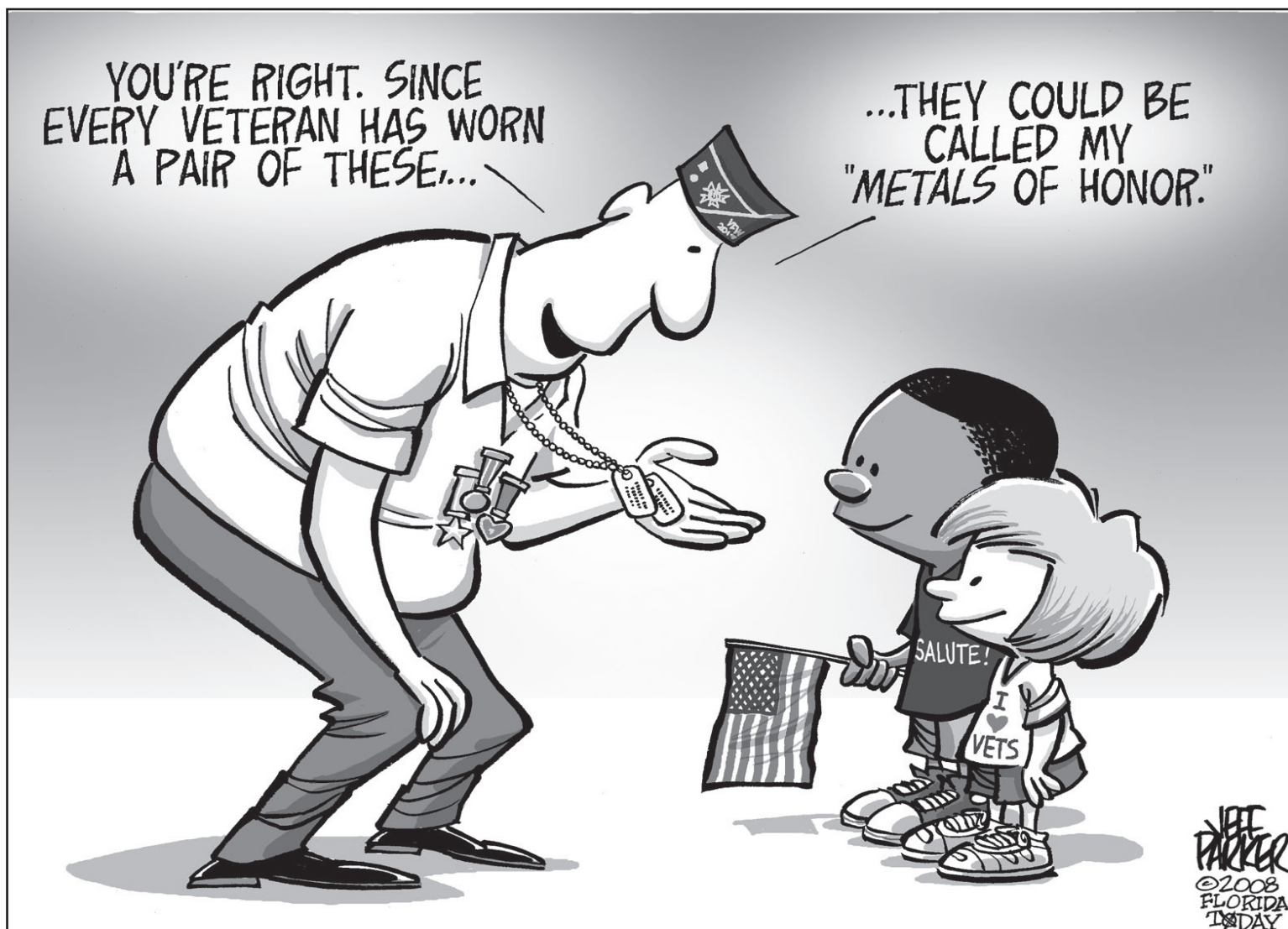
The Republicans, perhaps, had a similar opportunity after the reign of Ronald Reagan. Having vanquished the Soviet Union, ended the Cold War and tamed inflation, the GOP could have reshaped the government in its image.

Instead, it left us with a legacy of even larger deficits, a bloated and out-of-control bureaucracy, a corrupt Congress dedicated only to its own re-election and two wars of uncertain need and purpose.

Instead of an Abraham Lincoln, a Theodore Roosevelt or another Ronald Reagan, the Republicans gave use two George Bushes. You might say they blew the opportunity.

But perilous times make great presidents. Only time will tell how history views Barack Obama, or even George W. Bush.

We can say today, though, that it will be a fascinating four years. — Steve Haynes



Words made me think of veterans I know

When the priest asked us to pray for all the dead, especially those who have died in wars, I started thinking about the veterans I know and I said a prayer for one special veteran who probably has only me and my mother left to pray for him.

We have quite a few people who have served this country working for our company — Tom Dreiling, publisher of *The Norton Telegram* publisher, is an Air Force veteran; Dave Bergling, *Oberlin Herald* advertising manager, Army; John Dehn, the Internet guy, Army; Tom Betz, *Goodland Star-News* editor, Navy; Steifon Matthews, *Colby Free Press* graphic artist, Army, Navy and Marines; and Jim Jackson, *Nor'West Press*, Army, and maybe another one or two I missed.

Then there's the family. Both Steve's dad and my father served during World War II. Lacy Haynes was in the Navy and Buford Desilet in the Army. Both made it through without a scratch, as did my uncle Jeff Ellis, who served in the Navy, and my aunt Madelyn Curtis, who was an Army nurse.

In the next generation, both nephews on my father's side served.

Cousin Greg Ziller was in college and not re-



cynthia haynes

• open season

ally too excited about being drafted for the war in Vietnam, so he joined the National Guard in Missouri. His unit was one of the few called up during that war.

Cousin David Lynn joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) when he was a student in the University of California at Berkeley, where some of the first protests against the war started. He eventually joined the Air Force investigation unit, and served until he retired as a colonel.

My maternal grandfather had to take medical retirement as a captain after serving during World War I and with John J. "Black Jack" Pershing over the Mexican border after Poncho Villa. Spinal meningitis stopped his career before my mother was born.

His only grandson, my cousin George Crocker, graduated from West Point in 1966 and served in Vietnam and elsewhere for more

than 20 years, retiring as a lieutenant general.

The oldest granddaughter, Judy Curtis, followed both her parents — her father had served in Korea — into the service, first in the Navy and then as an army Nurse.

But, my special prayer was not for the living or even for my grandfather, father or father-in-law. It was for Charles McClure, who was killed on D-day.

The McClures lived next door to the Ellises, and Charles was like a second brother to my mother. Either he was at their house or they at the McClures as they grew up. They attended the same grade and high school, and when my mother tells a story from her youth, it's more likely than not Charles McClure is in it.

When mother moved into the nursing home a few years ago, my sister and I went through her photo album. There among the photos of smiling sorority sisters and men with huge strings of fish was an obituary, carefully preserved for more than 50 years.

Rest in peace Charles, grandfather, Lacy and Buford. And, thank you Tom, David, Steifon, Tom, John and cousins.

Why McCain lost

Barack Obama is president-elect of the United States because the Republican Party and John McCain handed him the presidential election on a silver platter.

The Republican Party and the Bush White House walked away from Republican ideals and they walked away from Republican values.

George Bush allowed the Republican Congress to overspend in the first six years of his administration without once using the veto pen, blindsided the conservative Republican members of Congress on many occasions, and walked away from the base of his party on immigration reform and other issues such as Medicare and No Child Left Behind.

He refused to sit down and break bread with the conservative members of his own party on Capitol Hill, yet believed that he could break bread with the liberal Democrats in Washington the way he did with the Democrats in Austin, Texas. And when he discovered it didn't work in Washington, it failed to stop him from trying and trying and trying over again what was obviously impossible.

Finally, the coup de grace was Dick Cheney's endorsement of John McCain in the waning days of the campaign, which gave Barack Obama the final nail to put in the coffin of McCain's campaign, which was striving mightily to distance him from the Bush administration.

Then there was McCain's campaign itself. It was the worst campaign since Bob Dole's on the Republican side, and the best campaign since Ronald Reagan's on the Democrat side.

The McCain campaign was a campaign out of the 20th century, while the Democrats were running a campaign in the 21st century.

We need to understand that this was not a referendum on Reaganomics and Ronald Reagan. This was a referendum on George Bush, and Bush-ism, and Bush's lack of leadership.

John McCain wouldn't stand up against the Democrats in Washington D.C. on the Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac scandals, against expanding government, a \$700 billion bailout, and going against the traditional values of conservative Republicans.

The economic collapse was the Democrats' fault. Yet John McCain never bothered going after them on that. He let the burglars walk away with the loot because those were his friends, and with George Bush failed to point the finger of blame at the people who caused



michael reagan

• making sense

the financial collapse that has plunged the nation into a certain recession. Bush had the bully pulpit but failed to use it, and the Democrats walked away scot-free.

Shockingly, John McCain failed to use the most potent weapon in his arsenal — the culpability of Barack Obama and his friends in the wholesale looting of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac that led to the current debacle. McCain had the goods, but wouldn't exploit them.

The McCain campaign made inadequate use of Gov. Sarah Palin, who had enormous crowd appeal. A lot of people voted for John McCain because of Sarah Palin. There were bigger crowds because of Sarah Palin. Yet some of the functionaries in the McCain campaign are trying to point the finger at her for McCain's defeat.

John McCain lost because of his lack of a clear message. He needed more than the fact that he is a maverick. His answer to the

economic crisis was a \$300 billion bailout for delinquent mortgagees. He was offering welfarism, while Barack Obama was offering socialism.

People laugh at me when I tell them the difference between Republicans and Democrats is that Republicans take a week longer to embrace communism.

This was not a referendum on Ronald Reagan. As a matter of fact, my dad might well have voted for Barack Obama just based on what he was seeing his party doing.

Finally, I hope that when Barack Obama was making elaborate and extravagant promises about what he was going to do, he was flat-out lying.

I hope Barack Obama will not be what he has promised to be. I hope he doesn't have a civilian security force. I hope he doesn't raise my taxes. I hope he doesn't spread the wealth. I hope he doesn't raise taxes on corporate America. I hope he looks at nuclear power. I hope he allows us to drill. I hope that there will be no revival of the fairness doctrine.

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.

The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

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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

