

Election of Obama could be a watershed

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 protester police beat and gassed outside the convention hall in Chicago 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 us 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



Passing along your values

After my "soapbox column" last week, I received an e-mail reply from my oldest daughter, Halley. She said it would be fun to do the math and see how things turned out — percentage wise — in terms of how I had passed my views on to her.

So, with her permission, here is her reply:

Pollution: I think we agree that we are both against it. I still remember watching the crying Indian commercial with you. After you explained it to me, I thought, "How sad." Before that, I thought it was a stupid commercial because I hadn't seen Indians crying in all their original dress — didn't make the connection.

Bad table manners: Against them.

Chewing gum in public: I don't like it either, but think I lack your passion.

People who don't vote: We totally agree on this!

Little girls wearing make-up: Agree.

Boys wearing baggy pants: Agree.

Abortion: Disagree. But, we do good at finding common ground. Get rid of unwanted pregnancy and you can end abortion. But, stopping people from having sex is not a viable solution.... Sorry, I got carried away.

Girls with hair in their eyes: Not a fan, but again, lacking your passion on this topic.

Prejudice: We agree. If the election goes for Obama, you will have a lot more opportunities to share with people how deplorable and anti-productive it is.

Cruelty to animals: Agree, unless it is time for a barbecue. Then, I say, "Kill 'em and fry 'em. Medium, please."

Concrete yard ornaments: Agree. There is really no excuse.

Donating blood: Agree. But, I am bad at it and throw up whenever I do



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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I think you have a freakish gene neither Kara (her younger sister) or I got. If someone I knew (and liked) needed it, I would do it again.

Credit card debt: Tricky #%&!@! won't let me have any more, so I hate it too.

Smoking: I guess I'll agree. I don't really care.

Parents who don't discipline their children: I HATE this. I think there are three simple solutions: For one week, either give them to you, Kara, or the state. Either way, both parties' attitudes would change.

Children who don't mind their parents: See above. Agree.

Volunteering: Important. I'll even add donating money. Agree.

Gas prices: Totally wrong. But, I think it is part of a larger conspiracy. Agree.

The economy: Frightening right now. Probably have different ideas on how to solve it. But, agree that it needs solved in an ethical way with the best intentions for citizens at the core of the solution. I'm going to agree.

Terrorism: I hope it is safe to say we are both against it.

Vulgar language: Hmmmm. Tough, because sometimes only vulgar language can explain vulgar acts and situations. But, I can work on this.

Defending America: Totally agree.

Wearing white shoes after Labor Day: Totally agree. This is the same as concrete yard ornaments.

The right to bear arms: Agree.

Letting children sleep in your

bed: Agree, and I would like to add, pets.

OK, so here are our results. Of your values reflected (now that I have seen the math, I am wondering if "imposed" is not more appropriate).

- 84 percent — we agree
- 12 percent — neutral, but swaying toward agreement on all.
- 4 percent — disagree.

She closed by saying, "I would say you did a good job. Thanks Mom! Glad you set me up with good values."

I think I did a good job, too. But, don't ever let anyone say, "You're so lucky to have good kids."

Luck didn't have a thing to do with it. I put a lot of hard work into raising good kids, and made a lot of purposeful decisions about what I wanted them to know.

If I had it to do over again, there would be less television and more game nights, I would have worked outside the home less and spent more time baking cookies, and we would have been in church more.

From the Bible

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding.

Exalt her, and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

Proverbs 4:7-8

Thanks to all our veterans

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 really too excited about being drafted for the war in Vietnam, so he joined the National Guard in



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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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 her 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

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Listen to these instructions

I try to listen to the readings in church, at least when I'm not nodding off.

Actually, because I'm a lousy oral learner, I follow along in the book or handout, because if I can't read something, there's little chance I'll remember it. I learned that in college.

And I try and save the nap for the second half of the sermon.

The other day, my ears perked up, because I thought maybe the Lord had been talking directly to Americans of the 21st century, and not just to the wandering tribes of Israel.

Here is the text, from Exodus Chapter 22, verse 20:

Thus says the Lord: "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt."

People like to debate the meaning of scriptures, and a lot of the Bible may be open to some interpretation. Some things are pretty clear, though, and this passage seems to me to be one of them.

Someone will say it only applies to legal aliens, but I doubt it. It's a pretty simple sentence, no qualifiers or modifiers attached.

Another scholar will claim the Lord was just talking about the way things were back in ancient times, when the Jews were wandering in the wilderness, looking for the promised land.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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Maybe, but again, I'm pretty sure He doesn't work that way. When he gives clear instructions, shouldn't we listen?

Does He mean we should welcome one and all into our country? Legal or illegal? Rich or poor? Working or not?

Here I cannot say with such certainty.

What does oppress mean?

Does it mean keeping out those who want to come here and share our riches?

Does it mean only immigrants who follow our laws?

Does it apply to people with a different skin color or a different religion?

I'll take some guesses.

I think the Lord is talking about anyone who winds up in our country, legal or not, invited or not.

But surely we oppress an immigrant who isn't allowed to work, or to go to school, or to get decent health care or housing.

I'm not sure it speaks to immigration as such, though I'm pretty sure the Lord will judge those who are not just and caring. That's not my job.

It ought to be our job to build an immigration system and a body of law that works fairly and in reasonable time. In America, we sure haven't done that.

Then, it would be reasonable to say to the prospective immigrant, "follow the law and we welcome you."

For those who sneak in, treatment ought to be fair and humane, no matter what.

Should an employer be allowed to take advantage of immigrants just because they could be sent home on his say-so?

I can't see the Lord buying into that, can you?

I can't see a lot of things about the way immigrants are treated, but there you go.

But I have to say, I think the Lord is a pretty sensible guy.

City will decide buy-back rate

To the Editor:

A recent letter to the editor from Sunflower Wind discussed the proposed wind turbine for the Oberlin School District. The letter included an Internet reference to Midwest Energy's parallel service tariff and Midwest Energy's recent wind energy buy-back rates.

Letter to the Editor

Since Midwest Energy does not provide electric service in the City of Oberlin, it would not be involved with the proposed project in any way, and the cited tariff and numbers do not apply. The actual

buy-back rate must be determined by the City of Oberlin.

Patrick Parke
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Midwest Energy
Hays