

Each political party should have its own slant

Since former Secretary of State Colin Powell started an uproar by claiming that the Republican party needs to move away from Rush Limbaugh and, apparently, closer to Barack Obama, whom Powell supported over Sen. John McCain last fall.

That's an argument that comes up every time the GOP loses an election. The way to beat the Democrats is to become more like them. But is that what either the party or the nation needs, now or next year?

Hardly. Powell has established himself as the spokesman for the so-called moderate wing of the party. In national politics, as in Kansas, that means the liberal Republicans. While they're seldom dominant, there are a few of them — and more in a state like Kansas, where Democrats hardly ever win.

The idea of making the party of Lincoln and Reagan more like the party of FDR and JFK belies the fact that the parties are as alike as they are different. In most elections in the last 60 to 70 years, the nation has been more or less evenly divided. It's easy to forget that George W. Bush, while elected by razor-thin margins and court orders, had a big Republican majority in Congress when he came into office. Or that the Electoral College produces majorities out of near ties.

Today, the Democrats have an even bigger margin of power, but in politics, as with the economy, things change quickly. Today's majority is tomorrow's minority; the shift of a bloc of voters here and a line there can bring on regime change.

For all the talk of difference, the county is most evenly divided. Voters swing to one party one year, the other the next. The difference is just a few percentage points. The goal of a party establishing dominance for decades is elusive, maybe impossible.

This is not bad. It's one of the things that

makes democracy work, here and elsewhere.

That said, is it a bad idea for the parties to stand for something? To offer a clear choice in a confusing political world.

Sure. Why not?

Democrats, if they stand for anything, stand for bigger government and more state solutions, more regulation. Republicans do themselves proudest when they stand for less government and more freedom. For both parties, though, the difference is far from clear.

Republicans like our Rep. Jerry Moran, who voted against No Child Left Behind and other budget-busters, represent these ideals a lot better than Colin Powell.

Neither party stands still. The Democrats were for a balanced budget when it suited them, and the money was rolling in. Republicans claim they want to balance the budget, but some Republican presidents, including George W. Bush, adapted easily to big spending, big government ideas.

You could argue that the much-reviled Bush strategist Karl Rove had the party positioned to dominate for a generation after the first Bush II victory. His vision joined traditional conservative blocs with Hispanics and black Republicans to form an enduring majority.

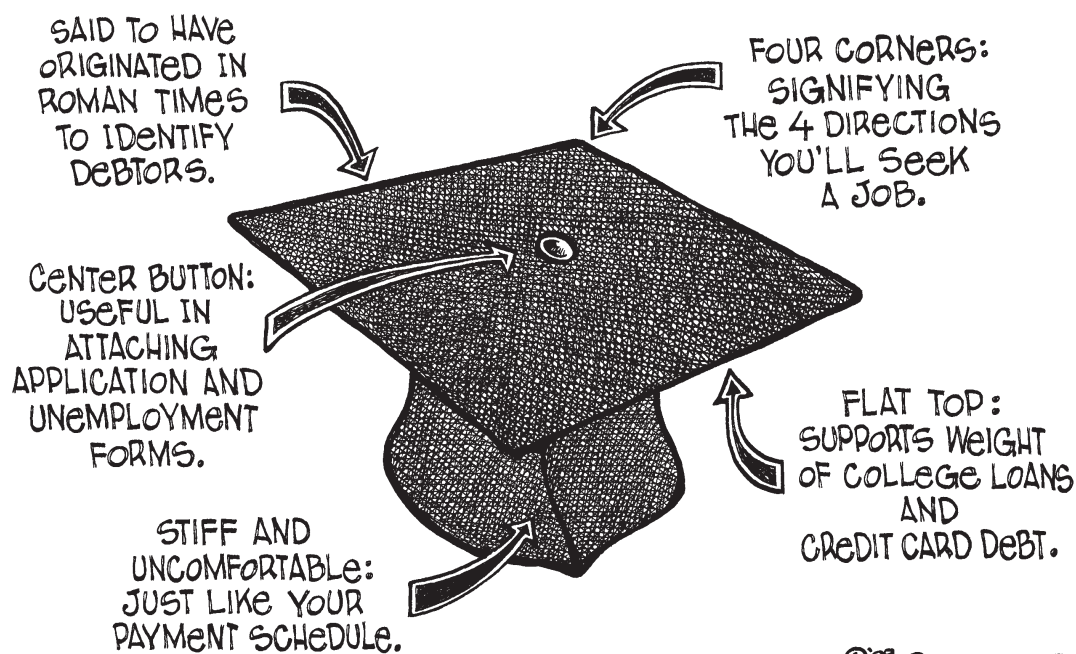
The party largely squandered the Bush-Rove Hispanic initiative by sucking up to jingoistic anti-immigration groups, just as it squandered its once-strong relationship with black Americans to court the Southern vote.

War and terrorism undid the rest of what Rove accomplished. That left the party sitting on a narrow base of social conservatives, anti-immigration hysterics and other fear mongers. That's no way to build a majority.

But neither is imitating the other side. Bottom line, the Republicans will be better served by principles than pandering. Thanks, Colin, but no thanks.

— Steve Haynes

Kansas Mortar Board Lore



Ticks were extra baggage

It's tick season in South Carolina.

We know this because a hike, picnic and walk in the woods with our daughters produced sightings of birds, reptiles and amphibians — and a dozen ticks.

I really hate ticks, and luckily, we found all the hitchhikers before they had a chance to grab a free lunch. Still, even though I was lucky enough to only find one on me, they just make my skin crawl.

Our daughters have been going on sister hikes about once a month since January. They get together and go to a park in Georgia or nearby South Carolina. Since we were coming to visit and we love to walk, the girls decided to take us on one of their explorations.

And it was great fun. We drove a little over an hour from Augusta, Ga., where they both live, to Parsons Mountain in South Carolina. Then we put on our packs and climbed past abandoned gold mines to an old, abandoned fire tower on the top of the mountain, which rises to an astounding 800 feet. By comparison, Oberlin is at 2,562 feet and Mount Sunflower, the highest point in Kansas, is 4,039 feet.

Still the climb from near sea level



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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was a good one, and we encountered a beautiful and very large moth, toads and frogs in all sizes, a lizard and a garter snake, which I had to shoo off the trail before we could proceed. We also heard and saw numerous birds we couldn't identify and several we sort of knew — including a woodpecker and a heron.

Before we even got to our hiking spot, we had a close encounter with wildlife.

Driving down the road, we spotted a box turtle in the middle of the lane.

Oldest daughter, our driver, successfully put her wheels around the turtle, slowed, pulled over on the shoulder and did a U turn. Soon we were speeding back to rescue the errant turtle.

But as we went we watched in horror, an 18-wheeler and half a

dozen cars came our way in the turtle's lane. Surely, we thought, one of those vehicles would squash the little hiker.

But, no, there it was. Daughter stopped, and I jumped out and grabbed the turtle and jumped back in the car.

Our youngest daughter, a former biology teacher, took the turtle and proclaimed it a male.

Amazing, we exclaimed, how in the world can you tell?

Male box turtle, she said, have red eyes and an indent on their bottom shells. Female turtles have brown eyes.

Yep, our little hiker had red eyes and an indent. I won't say what that's for.

You just never know what wonderful bits of knowledge you'll gather visiting your children.

Exhausting weekend still fun

What a weekend! We crammed alumni events and two days of Memorial Day activities in, then collapsed on Monday.

This was Jim's dad's 70th high school reunion, and I don't think he's missed a single one. He graduated in 1939, two years behind the class he started high school with. A foul-up with his required classes revealed he had not taken American History, and he was not allowed to graduate with the Class of 1937. He laid out of school for a year, then went back to take that one class. Following graduation, he, like a lot of graduates in those days, took Normal Training and became a teacher himself.

Including Dad, there were seven from his class at their afternoon reunion. Jim and I stayed and visited along with him. I think we had as much fun as he did.

That evening, it was back for the banquet and more visiting.

By the time we got him back to his room, he was exhausted, and so were we.

I was thrilled the flowers were all bloomed in time for decorating graves. The peonies were beautiful



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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this year, as were the iris, roses and some purple weed I let exist in my yard until Memorial Day. Jim said my mother would have been proud of me, using what was at hand.

Now, it's raining. And, no sign of letting up for the next day or two. This kind of weather makes we want to stay inside and make fudge.

When we lived out on the farm, that's what my brothers would do on a stormy day. Of course, we always had plenty of fresh cream and a well-stocked pantry. They would make fudge in my mother's cast-iron skillet, and when it reached soft ball stage, take it outside on the porch and beat it until it was ready to pour into a pan to harden.

I was convinced they were the best brothers in the world because they let me lick the spoon. I still

think they are.

From the Bible

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

John 1:6-10

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Granddaughter 'just perfect'

It amazes me how something so little, so perfect, could not be here one minute, and the next be living, breathing and stealing my heart.

At 2:20 a.m. Friday, I became a grandma. I know some may think I'm a little young for the job, and I have to admit at 31 it seems a little surreal, but I'm loving it.

I have definitely figured out the spoiling part of grandparenting, as I went to Colorado equipped with several outfits and a cute little frame I found in town, ready for a picture of the perfect baby and her strong momma.

I've been stocking up for this moment, buying diapers every time I'm at the grocery store, clipping formula coupons and buying clothes and shoes on sale.

Little Alyssa was 7 pounds, 5 ounces and a little over 19 inches, with long fingers and good-sized feet. Perfect in every way!

Although I've had nine months to prepare myself for this little being, I don't know if it actually hit me that God was creating this little girl until



As I See It

By Kimberly Davis
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I sat in the birthing room waiting for her arrival. It struck me then how His plan really is perfect.

Living 4 1/2 hours away from the kids, we wondered if we would make it for the delivery, but we did with time to spare. We were there to hear her first little cries, to see her first bonding experience with her momma and to see her feet and hands get printed.

My heart grew 10 times larger that morning as God provided room abundantly for my first grandchild.

I've held her, snuggled her, kissed her and just stared quietly into that little face. And yes, I did count her 10 little fingers and 10 little toes.

Like I said, perfect in every way.

Yet, even after taking hundreds of pictures and loving my little granddaughter, it still amazes me that she's here.

I'm sure grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles everywhere feel the same way as I ever time a new little one enters the world, proud, happy and full of love.

Yet, I am still in amazement of the way it works and how I can love someone so small and so new, so much. The way I see it, though, that's just how it's supposed to work, and I'm confident that as the years pass, I will find new amazement in each little thing she does as I settle into my role as Grandma.

Volunteers make day memorable

To the Editor:

Memorial Day services and the Avenue of Flags marked another successful celebration honoring those who have served our country, as well as deceased loved ones and friends.

It is only through the work and cooperation of the Oberlin American Legion, Sons of the American Le-

gion and Legion Auxiliary, spouses and the many, many volunteers who faithfully assist that this event is possible. We also extend our appreciation to those who presented

the program, which helped make it a memorable day.

Greg Cundiff, commander
Oberlin American Legion

Letters to the Editor

Thanks for new piano

To the Editor:

I wanted to publicly thank the Oberlin City Council for the purchase of a new Clavinova (digital piano) for The Gateway. This instrument will be a benefit to those who use the facility, young and old alike, for many years!

It is a fitting tribute to Fred and Henrietta Bremer, who donated the money to the city, as music was an important part of their lives!

Thanks also to City Administrator Austin Gilley for his efforts to add this asset to the Gateway.

Susan Nelson, Oberlin

Money to help victims

To the Editor:

Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Services has received \$500 from Decatur County. This money, which will be used to provide services to victims of domestic and sexual violence in Kansas, is greatly appreciated. It is a fortunate community in-

deed whose governmental officials recognize the needs of all of its citizens.

Jennifer Follis, advocate
Hays

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.