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The THINK Club

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The Presidents

Also Including

LEAVING GENERAL MOTORS

SHOULD THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE BE ABOLISHED?

WHY WILL I NOT VOTE? • PRESIDENTIAL FACTS

LIES, ELECTIONS AND OTHER POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS



Letters

What a great piece of work; the author seemed to have read my thoughts completely. I believe another suiting title for this article might be presented in the form of a question, "Have Americans abandoned their common sense and ability to reason, in pursuit of special interests and elusive pipe dreams?" In an effort not to offend, our Congress has taken the "do-nothing" stance to solve our nation's problems. It seems that they would rather see our country fall before they would step on the toes of those groups with extremist agendas and theory. Currently both presidential candidates are promising change if they are elected, yet they fail to define the substance of that change. I would remind Americans that change is an easy promise to fulfill. The question one should ask is what type of change is being promised? Change can be a good or bad thing; without defining the substance behind it, it is really just a lot of smoke and mirrors.

John Cutler
Travelers Rest, SC

Awesome Editorial!! This writing sure does make a person stop and think

Tina LaBelle
South China, ME

As I watched the Olympics last month, your Point Counterpoint articles was in the back of my mind and I struggled with the issue probably more than the average American in that I am blessed to not only be a child psychologist, but a father of two young boys as well. To make matters worse my first master's degree was in Sports Psychology. Here are my musings: I believe that paid or unpaid athletes are meant to first entertain, then if conditions allow – inspire. If you accept the first "job description" of athletes being entertainers, then I would agree that their role model status is undeserved because their primary function is to amuse us, just as stand-up comics, TV game shows, or the lions vs. Christians back in ancient Rome have for us in the recent and distant past. If athletes entertain only, then they should not be held to a higher standard, and that their off-the-field antics should not be considered. By paycheck or social contract athletes are meant to first entertain. Ah, but secondly they INSPIRE. This very intoxicating human condition that causes us to raise athletes to a higher level. The error in this "logic" occurs when athletes inspire us to be better employees, mothers, chess players, jump ropers, and students and we then hold them to a higher standard as a human being. We make the illogical jump that player performance on the field should equal their "human" performance off the field. And this error begins in early:

What child fan says that its their favorite player\'s United Way volunteer work and fund raising for sick children that makes them their favorite player and role model? My profession has been called "The Secular Priesthood" in that Psychologists are held to a higher standard than most other professions in the community. This is because my profession is connected to healing the "humanness", by removing such symptoms as anxiety and depression. My reputation and possible "role model" status has to upheld at my office and when I'm at the grocery. I earned a state license which states that I must uphold the highest ethical standards while providing the best in evidence based practice. It\'s what I signed up for, and I'm not aware of any professional athlete who signed up for the same via their multimillion dollar contract. If we can somehow learn to let athletes entertain us on the field and inspire us off the field then I believe we could then begin to introduce all the millions of other \'hidden\' role models who exist for our children in their everyday lives. Doug Walker Father Husband Friend Clinical Psychologist

Douglas Walker
Northshore, LA

Thinking Wildly

I once wanted to become an atheist, but I gave up - they have no holidays.

— Henny Youngman

One time a cop pulled me over for running a stop sign. He said, "Didn't you see the stop sign?" I said, "Yeah, but I don't believe everything I read."

— Steven Wright

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Publisher: **Bala Prasad**
Managing Editor: **Anil Shrivastava "Musafir"**
Consulting Editor: **David Beagan**
Address: **The THINK Club**
PO Box 451
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303-0451

Phone: **248-651-3106** Fax:
email: letters@thethinkclub.com
Visit us: www.thethinkclub.com

Why Will I Not Vote?

By Musafir

As I am approaching 62, I am disillusioned with organized religion, self-ordained family patriarchs and politicians. I have found them to be menacing, hypocrites and corrupt in that order. I am weary of anyone who preaches morality, family values (including ancient culture) and national interest. I will not trust my children to such people. The louder they speak, the farther I run.

Coming to politics, I am not voting in November 2008. Our democracy, in its present form, is a mockery. This is a government of the special interest groups and lobbyists for the special interest groups and lobbyists and by the special interest groups and lobbyists. We have two major presidential candidates this year to choose from, John Sidney McCain III and Barack Hussein Obama II. Both of them are inept, ignorant and insidious.

Before the collapse of Lehman Brothers and rescue of AIG and purchase of Morgan Stanley, Mr. McCain repeatedly said, "the fundamentals of our *economy* are strong." Although I do not expect him to have a PhD in economics, general knowledge and common sense could tell that it wasn't so. By the way, general knowledge and common sense are two essentials that our two presidential candidates ought to have, but are sadly lacking in both. Mr. McCain, a possible leader of America does not know the difference between Security and Exchange Commission and Federal Election Commission as he has often used them interchangeably and mistakenly. One day before the Federal Reserve System bailed out AIG, Mr. McCain was against any federal bail out. He changed his position the next day.

McCain is a self-declared champion of campaign finance reform. But the fact remains that McCain has 59 lobbyists raising money for his campaign, more than any of the other presidential candidates, according to the latest finding from government watchdog group, Public Citizen. Besides the above points, Mr. McCain has fumbled and shown ignorance on many important foreign policy matters. For example, he did not know the difference between the Sunni Muslims and the Shia Muslims. He thought Iraq and Pakistan shared a border. He believed Czechoslovakia was still a country. He's been confused about the difference between Sudan and Somalia. McCain, following a recent trip to Germany, even referred to "President Putin (now Putin is the Prime Minister of Russia).

McCain is a hypocrite when it comes to family values. He praises Sarah Palin as a perfect mom and demonstrates his love for his beautiful blonde wife who is his ATM machine. He had on-going affairs on every continent (we all know about the Brazilian beauty) while he was still married to his first wife, Carol (one time a swim wear model). Mr. McCain does not even care to know how many houses he owns. How would he care about the hardship of the American people?

Mr. Obama is no saint either. I will not trust my country to someone who does not believe in it. Senator Obama spent most of his Fourth of July week attempting to convince voters that he is patriotic. No man who aspires to become the president of a

country should be attempting to convince that he is patriotic. He should be patriotic beyond any reasonable doubt. Period! We all know the stories behind those suspicions and about the company he kept (including Reverend Wright controversy). I am not going to reiterate them here.

Mr. Obama is talking about the present financial crisis related to the financial sector, but he is totally clueless when it comes to a proposed solution. The Illinois senator said that the events of the past few days have delivered "the final verdict on an economic philosophy that has completely failed." When confronted by Bloomberg (a financial channel), he said, "I think it's a little premature for us to move forward on that, and frankly something like that probably could not get through Congress until we have a new Congress and new president." In my opinion, that is mumbling and we cannot expect the would-be leader of the free world to mumble on such an important issue instead of coming with a firm solution. That was the hour to show his mettle.

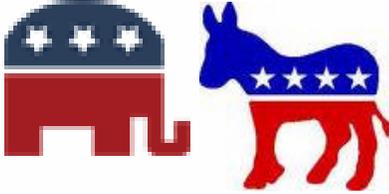
Mr. Obama has no record of achieving anything in the Senate. One thing is for sure, he does not believe in bipartisanship. When asked about forming a national commission modeled after the bipartisan panel that investigated the 9/11 attacks, he labeled that as "the oldest Washington stunt in the book." (September 16, 2008) "You pass the buck to a commission to study this problem," Obama said, rejecting the measure as unnecessary. "We know how we got into this mess. What we need now is leadership that gets us out. Ill provide it." That talks plenty about his attitude.

Mr. Obama always claims not to take money from the lobbyists; The truth is far from it. Last August The Boston Globe, in a piece by Scott Helman, took a hard look at Obama's contributions, noting that "behind Obama's campaign rhetoric about taking on special interests lies a more complicated truth." That truth revealed that as a state legislator in Illinois, a U.S. senator, and as a presidential aspirant, Obama had collected hundreds of thousands of dollars from lobbyists and PACs. Mr. Obama's campaign also received \$126,000 from Fannie Mae according to the CNN News (Lou Dobbs, September 24, 2008). Dishonesty and lies are worse than all other vices for a person in his position.

Neither the presidential candidates nor the Senators and the Congressmen have any idea or plan for solving the health insurance and rising medical cost crisis, creating mass transit, fixing the crumbling infrastructure, regaining American leadership in technology, balancing the budget, creating employment, matching or containing the dominance of Russia and China, elevating the standard of education, saving social security, and safeguarding us from our enemies. They are all bought by the lobbyists and special interest groups so, why should I rally around them or why should I even vote? Just thinking!

My Party? I'm Independent

By Robert H. Bickmeyer



I have heard people say, “I don’t vote for the party, I vote for the man. I’m Independent.”

They are proud of the fact that they do not blindly follow any political party.

A number of polls asking registered voters if they are liberal or conservative disclosed that about 15 percent of Americans claim to be liberal and 35 percent are conservative. It is reasonably safe to assume that the liberals vote Democrat and conservatives vote Republican, but not necessarily so.

At one point in the current presidential campaign an Associated Press-Ipsos poll disclosed that 43 percent of registered voters had not made final decisions on whether to vote for John McCain or Barack Obama.

After a national test of high school seniors, educators advised that just 26 percent of them were considered well versed enough in civics to make reasonable, informed choices at the polls. Post-mortems on the 2000 election disclosed that among 18-to24-year-olds, 25 percent of them could not name both presidential candidates and 70 percent could not name the vice presidential candidates. An uninformed voter is a detriment to our democratic system.

I have a test for the Independents / undecideds / uninformed. As you read the following underline the party with whom you agree. There are exceptions, of course, but generally speaking:

Abortion – Democrats favor ... Republicans oppose.

Gay marriage – Democrats favor ... Republicans oppose.

Gun control – Democrats favor ... Republicans oppose.

Affirmative action – Democrats favor ... Republicans favor equal opportunity without any preference for skin color, gender or religion.

Capital punishment – Democrats oppose ... Republicans favor.

Tax increases – Democrats favor ... Republicans oppose.

Continued war against terrorists – Democrats oppose ... Republicans favor.

Illegal immigrants – Democrats favor amnesty ... Republicans favor deportation.

Free use of pornography – Democrats favor, pleading free speech under First Amendment ... Republicans oppose.

Unwed couples living together – Democrats favor ... Republicans oppose.

Removing God from the public square – Democrats favor ... Republicans oppose.

Spending for defense (Military) – Democrats oppose ... Republicans favor.

Traditional families – Democrats and Republicans both favor.

“Progressive” families (unwed couples living together, planned single mothers, single parent adoption) – Democrats favor ... Republicans oppose.

Evolution vs. Creation – Democrats accept Evolution ... Republicans stress Creation.

Federal health care – Democrats favor ... Republicans favor current private system, except for Medicare.

Now that you have completed the test, grade yourself. If you lean heavily toward one party you might identify yourself as a member of that party. If your leanings are somewhat evenly divided, you are truly an Independent. You should, of course weigh the importance of each issue to you.

Some voters claim the millions of dollars spent on political TV commercials are a waste of money as they already know who they will vote for. The political experts running the campaigns know differently as many voters, especially those who vote only once every four years in presidential elections, are uninformed, thus easily influenced by TV ads. They are easily influenced as they do not read newspapers. Consequently, I cannot change their mode of gathering news as they will not read this column. Fellow Americans, we are stuck with the uninformed who, I reluctantly admit, may decide this election.

Wait 'til I Win the Nobel Peace Prize

By Musafir

“So what do you plan to do after your retirement?” My friend, Puppy asked me the other day.

“I have been thinking a lot on that subject. I guess I’ll write a novel,” I replied.

“Novel? Who’s going to read that? You will be better off donating those rims of papers to poor school children in Namibia.”

“Well, I will become a greeter at Disneyworld where I’ll see happy faces all day,” I changed my mind.

“Have you lately looked yourself in the mirror? No one is going to hire a grouch like you to greet happy people,” Puppy reminded me of real me.

“How about going on ‘Jeopardy? I can win some real money and also meet Alex Trebeck at the same time.”

“No chance! You are not quick enough to answer those tough questions,” Puppy rejected my idea.

“Then what should I do Puppy? Do you have any suggestion?” I asked in desperation.

“Well, the only thing you can do is try winning the Nobel Peace Prize.” Puppy surprised me with his confidence in my ability.

“Don’t look surprised. Any nincompoop like you can win the Nobel Peace Prize. After all, Al Gore did not get it for inventing the Internet. It was the ‘slide show stupid!’ Arafat did not get it for redefining terrorism. He got it for being a lap dog of Barbara Walters. Jimmy Carter did not get it for his failed attempt to rescue the hostages from Iran. He got it for bad-mouthing America. Kofi Annan won it for nepotism and mismanaging UNO’s budget. In my opinion and knowing how vain you are, you may even be overqualified for the prize. But there is no harm in trying.”

But how do I go about it? Where do I start? I don’t even know any presenter of the Nobel Peace Prize,” I answered half excited and half scared.

“First you have to find a cause before you can hope to get the Nobel Committee’s attention,”

Puppy tried to help me, “and the cause has to be subliminal that people are not aware of, something intrinsic. “

“Such as?” I really wanted to do something meaningful in my retirement years.

“Look around and you will find numerous human abuses that are barbarous but go unnoticed. The beauty salons all over the world cut human hair without administering general anesthesia. Humans do not have to be awake to witness brutal comb swipes or use of scissors and clippers across their head to mutilate their God given tresses. What if you had to be awake during open heart surgery? The worst part wouldn’t be the pain or having to see your insides, it would be the trauma of watching the maiming of your body part.”

“That’s very impressive Puppy!” I exclaimed.

“Think about it, Puppy continued, “wouldn’t it be nice to sit down in that barber chair, say what you want your hair to look like, suck on some gas and pass out, and then wake up when the hair surgery is over? No more awkwardness for you while you’re sitting there with nothing to do, and no more distractions for the stylist, who can focus all her attention where it belongs: your hair.”

Folks, I am really taking Puppy’s message to the masses. Won’t you like to join me in my cause and eradicate this shameful human torture? Obviously, haircuts are just the beginning. General anesthesia could be used to fast forward through all the boring parts of life. Have a boring sermon in the church? Are you subjected to nagging by your wife? Have to sit through watching wedding videos? Relax, suck some gas, and wake up when the ordeal is over. General anesthesia is our birth right and it should be made available to everyone by the tax payers. Do you think this is absurd? Wait till I get the Nobel Peace prize.

Leaving General Motors

By Musafir

For some individuals cars are objects of desire, for some they are a mere means of transportation. For some a car is an obsession that fuels passion and for some it is a means of livelihood. Cars have images of being family friendly, submissive, subliminal, sexy and racy. I have seen cars from all the above angles and have driven them from all the above aspects.

I was fortunate to work for General Motors Corporation, the largest automotive company on earth. Our company celebrated its 100th birthday on September 16, 2008. It was my privilege to be a part of that celebration, a few months before retiring from active duties when I will turn 62.

It was my childhood dream to work for the greatest General of all. I tried several times but was rejected until I got a chance to work for its Advanced Manufacturing Engineering Department in 1985. The US car manufacturers were losing their manufacturing superiority and labor cost advantage to the Japanese who were coming forth with new manufacturing concepts and innovations such as 'Kanban (Just in time),' Kaizan (continuous improvement),' 'TPS (Toyota Production System),' "Heizunka (Production smoothing)," "5S (Standardized Cleanup)," "Muda (Waste Reduction)," and "Pull System (Replacing only what has been consumed)." For us, the manufacturing engineers, it was another space race reminiscent of early 60s when then Soviet Union had left America scrambling to win the space race. Speaking frankly, we were intimidated by the Japanese manufacturing prowess and especially by the Toyota Production System (TPS). As a result, Roger Smith, at that time chairman and CEO of GM decided to form a joint venture with Toyota called NUMMI (New United Motor Manufacturing Inc) where Toyota built cars for both the companies (Toyota and GM).

So far, the world had known only two kinds of car manufacturing, the *craft manufacturing* perfected by the Europeans and *mass manufacturing* invented by Henry Ford I and perfected by GM, Ford and Chrysler. The Japanese were still learning prior to the 1980s. Their manufacturing quality was so bad that Datsun had to reinvent and rename itself as Nissan. However, in the 1980s, the Japanese finally put their acts together and came up with the concept of *lean manufacturing*. The Japanese hoped to achieve the craftsmanship of the Europeans by applying the *mass manufacturing* practiced by the Americans. They named their divisions and cars *Infiniti*, *Accura*, *Maxima*, *Lexus*, and *Altima* to bring their message to the consumers while the American companies settled with names like *Cordoba*, *Corsica*, *Expedition* and *Tornado*.

GM has long considered people as its greatest asset; therefore, despite criticism from Wall Street, it protects and treats its employees with respect. Back in mid 1980s, GM hired the best manufacturing engineers to turn its manufacturing around. I was fortunate enough to work with

the brightest manufacturing engineers and great visionaries that included Jerry Elson, Gary Cowger, Tom Lasorda and Bob Eaton to name a few. They were all my directors at one time or the other. Roger Smith may have neglected the product, but he poured \$20 billion in new technologies. We, the new breed of manufacturing engineers, were given the full freedom to invent new manufacturing technologies and learn from our mistakes. We worked on the application of artificial intelligence in predicting failures, DFM (Design for Manufacturability) tools, reliability and maintainability (R&M) techniques for machinery and equipment, quick tool changeover, application of RF (radio frequency) for material handling, real-time production monitoring systems, information mapping tools and various other manufacturing engineering tools. We were provided a factory of the future in Saginaw, Michigan to put our ideas to practice.

Today, in 2008, General Motors has four of the 10 most productive assembly plants in North America. According to the latest Harbour Report, for the second time in the last four years GM's Toledo plant led all plants producing rear-wheel drive transmissions (2.54 hours per transmission) and was the No. 1 plant overall. GM's Spring Hill 4-cylinder engine lines turned in the best performance by an engine plant at 2.27 hours per engine, edging out Toyota's Buffalo, W.Va., plant (2.29 HPE), which had captured the top spot for five straight years. Similar honors go to the stamping plants also.

Now is the time for GM to regain its place in product and related technologies. It already has a notable list of past contributions such as the Lunar Roving Vehicle, catalytic converter, front wheel drive, air conditioning, tilt and telescopic steering wheel, turbo-charged engine, electronic ignition, fuel-injection, automatic transmission, plastic body car (Corvette), automatic headlamp-dimming system, sealed-beam headlamp, electric windows, independent suspension, air bag, head-up display, ABS and traction control, power sliding doors, electric vehicle (EV1), OnStar, night vision system, Fuel Cell Vehicle (FCV) to name a few.

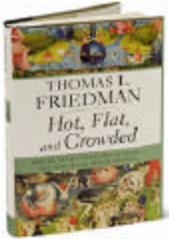
As I am leaving General Motors, it is time to turn around the product and product technology. GM has once again hired the best product engineers who have a passion for product and related technologies. They are relentlessly working on Volt's E-flex electric propulsion system, fuel cell technology, homogeneous-charge compression ignition (HCCI), the new generation of hybrid and the most efficient engines and transmissions. These new engineers will beat the world in product and product technology. This is another space race to beat the Asians and the Europeans in product innovation. Unlike the manufacturing team of mid 1980s, this time the team is global with obvious tinge of diversity. With such talented men and women working for GM, I am sure that it will be the most innovative and dominant automotive company for the next 100 years.

Book Review

Hot Flat and Crowded

Author: Thomas L. Friedman

First published in 2008 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (448p)



Thomas L. Friedman's *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need A Green Revolution-and How It Can Renew America* is the right book, by the right author, at the right time. Just when it is becoming apparent that the days of petroleum are ending we get a book that can serve as a platform for future discussion on the energy situation and may even form an outline for

future action. This is a positive book and is also a realistic one. Readers will appreciate the proof he includes as he makes his points. For example, don't think that the flattening of the population is causing shortages in a variety of materials? How about scrap iron? Manhole covers (p. 65) have been disappearing all over the world. Initially in the Asia, the stealing has reached Chicago and will continue to spread. Copper is the latest in scarce materials that is being stolen.

Whether Friedman is discussing fuels from hell or fuels from heaven, his approach is intelligent, positive and, in my opinion, dead on target. There is opportunity in this crisis for however many people want to and invent our way out of it. Friedman's first law of petropolitics states that "as the price of oil goes up, the pace of freedom goes down". Certainly this isn't going to be a topic of debate among the readers of this book. Can anyone doubt that we have fewer freedoms today than say thirty years ago and that much of that is related to the price we pay for petroleum based products?

Among the many points that Friedman makes is our half-hearted attempts that have been made on behalf of the environment. Certainly "going green" is a popular phrase in the United States today. I know, I saw a bumper sticker on the back of a large Ford SUV a few weeks back announcing "Earth Day." Up to now being environmentally aware didn't require a lot of sacrifice. That, I think Friedman would agree with, is about to change.

As a solar energy advocate for more than 30 years I've often been frustrated by our inability to wean ourselves from not just petroleum, but from all fossil fuels. The federal government has been reluctant for any number of reasons to provide the leadership on this effort, and the private sector, while seemingly the one sector that should see the huge economic pay off of using solar energy where possible has been slow to lead the way. I guess that as long as cheap oil was available many felt that the investment in alternative energy sources just wasn't worth the effort...NO PROFITS. That is going to change.

Thomas L. Friedman's *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* isn't a book that tries to point the finger at any individual or group. In fact, the book is remarkably problem and solution oriented giving it a certain amount of legitimacy. While it does point up our short falls in the past, it also offers hope for the future.

Reviewed by Robert Busko

Sent your comments to:

**The THINK Club,
P.O. Box 451,
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303-0451**

Or email to:

TheThinkClub@AOL.com

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The September 12 Paradigm America, Europe, Russia, and China

By Robert Kagan

These are the excerpts from the above article originally printed in Foreign Affairs)

The world does not look today the way most anticipated it would after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Great-power competition was supposed to give way to an era of geoeconomics. Ideological competition between democracy and autocracy was supposed to end with the “end of history.” Few expected that the United States’ unprecedented power would face so many challenges, not only from rising powers but also from old and close allies. How much of this fate was in the stars, and how much in Americans themselves? And what, if anything, can the United States do about it now?

Hard as it may be to recall, the United States’ problems with the world – or, rather, the world’s problems with the United States – started before George W. Bush took office. French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine complained about the “hyperpower” in 1998. In 1999, Samuel Huntington argued that much of the world saw the United States as a “rogue superpower,” “intrusive, interventionist, exploitative, unilateralist, hegemonic, hypocritical.”

Although Huntington and others blamed the Clinton administration’s constant boasting about “American power and American virtue,” the Clintonites did not invent American self-righteousness. The source of the problem was the geopolitical shift that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subtle psychological effects of this shift on the way the United States and other powers perceived themselves and one another. By the late 1990s, talk of a crisis in transatlantic relations had already begun, and despite all the finger-pointing, the underlying cause was simple: the allies did not need one another as much as before. The impulse to cooperate during the Cold War had been one part enlightened virtue and three parts cold necessity. Mutual dependence, not mutual affection, had been the bedrock of the alliance. When the Soviet threat disappeared, the two sides were free to go their own ways.

In the United States, the conversation remained more traditional. Clinton officials shared the European perspective, but they also believed that the United States had a special role to play as the guardian of international security – the “indispensable” leader of the international community – in a traditional, power-oriented, state-centric way. Faced with crises over Taiwan or in Iraq or Sudan, they dispatched aircraft carriers and fired missiles, often unilaterally. Even Bill Clinton would not endorse the land-mines treaty or the International Criminal Court without safeguards for the United States’ special global role. Nor could Clinton officials hide their impatience with what they regarded as a European lack of seriousness about these perils, especially Iraq. As then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright put it, “If we have to

use force, it is because we are America. . . . We see further into the future.”

The end of the Cold War gave everyone a chance to take a fresh look at one another, and the Europeans, in particular, did not like what they saw. American society seemed to them crass and brutal – just as it had to their nineteenth-century ancestors. Védrine called on Europe to stand against U.S. hegemony partly as a defense against the spread of Americanism. “We cannot accept . . . a politically unipolar world,” he said, and “that is why we are fighting for a multipolar” one.

By the late 1990s, the moment for multipolarity seemed ripe. U.S. relations with China and Russia were also turning sour. The Chinese had long complained about the United States’ “superhegemonist” ambitions, and Beijing justifiably considered Washington to be hostile to China’s rising power. Anti-American nationalism exploded after the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 by U.S. pilots during a war in Kosovo that both the Chinese and the Russians regarded as illegal. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov called the war the worst aggression in Europe since World War II. It did not help the Russian mood that 1999 was also the year the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined NATO. The days of a quiescent Russia, yearning for integration into the liberal West, on the West’s terms, were ending. Russian President Boris Yeltsin made Vladimir Putin prime minister in August 1999. Putin invaded Chechnya in September, and in less than a year he was leading Russia under a more nationalist, less democratic banner.

BUSH, THE REALIST

The terrorists struck on September 11, 2001. The attacks naturally brought about a shift in the Bush

administration’s foreign policy, but it was not a doctrinal revolution. The administration did not abandon its national-interests-based approach. It was just that the protection of even narrowly defined interests – such as the defense of the homeland – suddenly required a more expansive and aggressive global strategy. The “strategic pause” was over, and the United States was back in the business of extensive global involvement in what became known as “the war on terror.”

Did that mean that the United States was also back in the business of global leadership? The Bush administration believed that it did. Yet there were serious obstacles to returning to the old Cold War style of leadership in a post-Cold War, post-9/11 world.

One was the understandable self-absorption of Americans

Continued on Page 12

Heritage

The Honorable Col. Kellian Van Renslear Whaley (1821-1876)

West "By-God" Virginia

Kellian Van Renslear Whaley was born in Onondaga County, New York on May 6, 1821, moved with his father to Ohio and then to Ceredo, Virginia in 1842 where he was engaged in the lumber and timber business.

Whaley was a congressman representing the pro-union portion of Virginia. He was elected, on May 23, 1861, as the "Unionist" representative of the Restored Government of West Virginia to the 37th U.S. Congress succeeding Congressman Albert Gallatin Jenkins who had joined the Confederate Calvary.

Delegates from the pro-union western counties of Virginia met in Wheeling, objected to the secession of Virginia and established the "Restored Government of West Virginia" as Union. When West Virginia was admitted into the Union as a state in 1863 Whaley was elected as an "Unconditional Unionist" to the 38th and 39th Congresses and served as a representative until 1867.

Congressman Whaley was commissioned as a Colonel by Governor Pierpont of the Restored Government and was assigned the duty of recruiting loyal Union Regiments. He recruited two regiments of Union Infantry, the 5th Virginia (Union) Infantry and the 9th Virginia (Union) Infantry. A recruit camp was established in Guyandotte situated at the junction of the Guyandotte River and the Ohio River.

Whaley was in command at the Battle of Guyandotte and was captured by Confederate Col. Albert Gallatin Jenkins. Jenkins had reason to personally target Whaley as the pro-unionist. Whaley had occupied his congressional seat, raised Union Regiments and was therefore charged with treason against the Confederacy. Col. Jenkin's home was near Guyandotte and in his command were three companies of Confederate cavalry recruited in the Guyandotte area. These Confederate troops were especially eager to attack the union forces being organized in Guyandotte.

About 150 Union recruits were assembled at the recruit camp at Guyandotte and had not received their weapons or uniforms. The confederates decided to raid Guyandotte and Col. John R. Clarkston was selected commander of the raiding force, the "Wise Legion Cavalry" (5th Virginia Calvary) and the 8th Virginia Cavalry. The 8th Virginia was commanded by Col. Jenkins, the 5th and 8th consisted of 1,200 mounted men.

The attack took place on November 10, 1861 and was a complete surprise to the townspeople and the Union recruits.

The first warning of the attack was the sound of horses coming across the suspension bridge spanning the Guyandotte River. It was assumed that no confederate troops were within 100 miles of Guyandotte.

Col. Whaley was able to rally about 40 recruits who fired on the Confederate cavalry from a building near the bridge. After 45 minutes they retreated in the town and Col. Whaley standing in the street directed the defending fire until the Union defense was crushed by the Confederates. During the battle nine Union recruits were killed, 6 wounded and 98 of the new recruits and unionist civilians were captured. The confederate losses totaled 7 killed and 14 wounded.

The Union Prisoners were tied together in pairs and the pairs connected by a rope down the center of the column. Col. Whaley was tied at the head of the column. Union reinforcements arrived on a steam ship armed with a small cannon and fired at the Confederate cavalry. The Confederates formed and rode out of Guyandotte with their bound prisoners, recruits and civilians.

The prisoners were forced to march at a rapid pace 40 miles on the first day without food or water. Col. Whaley requested the Jenkins shoot him and the other captives rather than subject them to such torture. Not until the morning of the third day were the prisoners fed. Whaley was separated from the other prisoners and when his guards fell asleep that evening he escaped. Traveling at night and hiding during the day he avoided the Confederate cavalry patrols searching for him. Col. Whaley did not have shoes or a shirt during his escape. It took him five days to make his way back to the Union lines in the Kanawaha Valley of West Virginia.

His capture and harrowing experience suffered while escaping ended the military career of Col. Kellian Van Renslear Whaley. He resigned his commission and took his seat in the Congress for the 1861 session. Whaley delivered a speech in the House on July 11, 1862 in support of a bill to admit West Virginia into the Union as a separate state.

Whaley was a delegate to the 1864 Republican Convention which met in Baltimore and nominated Pres. Abraham Lincoln for a second term. Whaley was a friend of Lincoln and was a pall bearer for the slain president.

After serving in the 37th, 38th and the 39th congresses he became the Collector of Customs in Brazos de Santiago, Texas in 1868. Kellian V. Whaley died in Point Pleasant,



West Virginia on May 20, 1876 and was interred in Loan Oak Cemetery, near Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

Electoral College Should Stay

By Bala Prasad

More than two hundred years ago, the system of the electoral college was adopted by our founding fathers to elect the President of the United States. This was the best of all the systems they had considered. While the nay-sayers were howling against it from day one, it has withstood the test of time and done what it was designed to do.

In the electoral college system, delegates are elected by voters of each state. The number of delegates allotted each state is the number of congressional seats based on population, plus two, the number of senators in each state. The party that wins the simple majority of votes in a state takes all delegates. The exceptions are Maine and Nebraska where delegates are awarded proportionately based on the result of election in each congressional district.

While there were many reasons for the adoption of this system, the most important was to balance the power between smaller states and the more populous ones. Thus in the election of the President, South Dakota will have more say than its size would suggest, and New York less.

Not much had been heard about this system in modern times until the 2000 presidential election which was decided in the end by Florida's electoral college delegates. In this election Vice President Gore won the popular vote but lost to President Bush in the electoral college.

While the system of electoral college is an inviting target for critics, it works quietly as the founding fathers intended. Born in compromise, the system accommodates many conflicting necessities. It gives voice to regional concerns and amplifies the impact of minorities in an election. Under the electoral system African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans and other minorities have more weight because they form significant blocks in electorally viable states. A strict popular vote will certainly dilute their importance. With no electoral college clout, perhaps no presidential candidate would campaign in South Dakota.

As in every situation, there is the iron law of unintended consequences. Historically most presidential elections have not been close, though popular votes have been close so many times. With the winner take all system in most states, the margin of victory is magnified thereby solidifying the country behind the new President. There are no better examples of this than the 1960 and 1968 presidential elections. In the former, President Kennedy led Vice President Nixon by only 0.2% in popular vote but by 15% in electoral votes. In the latter, Nixon led Humphry by less than 1% in popular vote but by 20% in electoral votes. It should be noted that between 1804 and 2000, for good or bad, only two presidential elections were decided by less than 20 votes. However more than 17 elections were decided by more than 200 votes in electoral college.

The electoral college system undoubtedly operates in a different society today than in 1787. Still it has shown an amazing ability to adapt to modern day America. With so many more challenges in society at every turn, it might be more relevant today than it ever was.

Keep It Simple - Abolish the Electoral College

By Musafir

The Electoral College has outlived its utility. This Electoral College system for choosing the president was decided in the 1787 Convention on the pretense that the public may not have the knowledge about various candidates necessary to make the right decision. The founding fathers also took into the account the poor literacy rate at the time. Times have changed since then. Almost all of our citizens are literate now and they have access to the 24-hour cable news, the Internet, cell phones, satellite radio and a global network of friends and opinion leaders! Now everyone can pry upon everyone else, let alone the candidates for the presidency. We, probably, know more about the candidates (including what is stored in their medicine cabinets and the kind of undergarment they wear) than we may be knowing about our own spouses.

Another argument given in favor of the Electoral College is that in a popular vote, the presidents will always be elected by the most populous states undermining the states that are sparsely populated. That is also a lame argument since all of the 538 members of the Electoral College are not equally distributed across all the states. For example, California has 55 Electoral delegates, Texas has 34 and New York has 31. Compare that to 4 from Rhode Island and 3 each from Delaware and Wyoming. To me, this does not seem to make enough difference to the end result.

Furthermore, whenever the candidate receiving the most popular votes has not been chosen to be the president, people have always questioned his legitimacy. It happened in 1824 when John Quincy Adams was chosen though Andrew Jackson had received more popular votes. The history repeated itself in 1876 and 1888 when Rutherford Hayes was chosen over Samuel Tilden and Benjamin Harrison was chosen over Grover Cleveland respectively. What happened in 2000 between George Bush and Al Gore is still fresh in our memories.

No matter how we dissect it, direct election is seen as more consistent with democratic principles than is the Electoral College system. The Electoral College may have been necessary when communications were poor, literacy was low and the voters lacked information. None of the above is true anymore. Therefore, let us change to the popular vote and keep the matter simple.

How to Rule the World

by Sarita Sarvate

I have to hand it to the Republicans. They found a way to rig the U.S. presidency. Turned out it was even easier than controlling the head of state of Pakistan. The latter requires blood and gore, but the former, we now know, simply calls for the evil genius of Karl Rove.

As cable news talking heads would say, "Who would have thunk?"

The formula to control the leadership of the "free" world, it turns out, is relatively simple. First, nominate a septuagenarian for president. Then name a young, good-looking, Bible thumping, celebrity look-alike to the Vice Presidency. After your presidential nominee assumes office, simply bide your time until the actuarial odds kick in. Bingo! You have a new president with a pair of photogenic glasses, an electrifying hand-wave, a messianic conviction about holy war, and such paltry knowledge of the world that she has to follow your direction.

The nomination of Sarah Palin to the McCain ticket is the ugliest trick the Republicans have ever pulled.

That is saying a lot, for these are the people who gave us Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt, who thought we didn't need to preserve the Grand Canyon because of the "Second Coming."

These are the people who gave us Donald Rumsfeld, who famously said, "You go to war with the army you have, not the army you might want or wish to have at a later time."

Rumsfeld also notably said, "There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know."

The problem is that most Americans not only don't know what they don't know, but they don't know what they should want or need or care about.

No wonder, then, that they have been hoodwinked into thinking that what they really need is the church instead of secure white collar jobs with benefits, a reasonable healthcare system, low cost education, a retirement and welfare safety net, and a healthy planet for their children and grandchildren.

They have also been told by Fox News that they should want a president just like them, meaning, someone as ignorant, uneducated, and parochial;

someone who possibly thinks that Beijing is in Thailand, or that the world is 4,000 years old, or that if you just talk about abstinence it will happen.

Why would Fox News want to play such a dirty trick?

The answer, as usual, is the greenback.

Neo-cons like Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and Paul Wolfowitz have used the presidency of W. and words like "freedom" and "democracy" to work toward American dominance of the oil fields of Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Oil is also the reason they will not stop arming Israel.

But to say so for them would be suicidal, because, no American, however hungry for gasoline, will give the president carte blanche to spend billions on an unjust war abroad while depriving citizens of the basic necessities of life.

So they invoke religion to incite the masses.

And all the while, the oil industry cronies of W. and Cheney keep getting rich off the backs of dead Iraqi civilians.

And peace in the Middle East remains a mirage.

As long as U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East does not shift, Islamic terrorism continues to escalate. Yet evangelicals continue to support Israel because they believe in the coming apocalypse, when the Antichrist will be defeated in the holy land.

Oh, you don't think Sarah Palin believes in Armageddon? If she believes in creationism, you can bet your Miranda Rights that she believes in apocalypse, too.

Sarah Palin is the GOP's clever ploy for a takeover of the presidency by the Christian fundamentalist bloc and the oil lobby, which, in this campaign, have become strange bedfellows.

So, fellow Indian Americans, don't be fooled. When I hear some of you say that you won't vote for Obama because he will stop the outsourcing of jobs, that he will thwart the entrepreneurial ambitions of the NRIs (Non-Resident Indians), I am alarmed.

When I meet Indian Americans who think of themselves as a model minority not dependent on government handouts, who fear that Obama will carry out an agenda of unchecked governmental spending and

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Continued from Page 10 America, Europe, Russia and China

and their leaders after September 11. The first sign that the old solidarity would not be so easily revived came in Afghanistan. The invasion of Afghanistan – unlike both the war in Kosovo and the first Gulf War – was about U.S. security first, not about forging a “new world order.” Unlike during the Persian Gulf War of 1991, when George H. W. Bush made painstaking efforts to summon the international community, during the war in Afghanistan, the second Bush administration, with many of the same people in top positions, preoccupied itself with the task of eliminating al Qaeda bases and overthrowing the Taliban. This meant acting quickly and without the alliance-management problems that had bothered General Wesley Clark in Kosovo.

This narrower approach was hardly surprising given the panic and rage in the United States. But neither was it surprising that the rest of the world saw the United States not as a global leader seeking the global good but as an angry Leviathan narrowly focused on destroying those who had attacked it. For this effort, the world had less sympathy. And this was the second great obstacle to a return to the old style of U.S. global leadership: the rest of the world, including the United States’ closest allies, was also self-absorbed.

There was no escaping the reality of the post-9/11 situation. What had happened to the United States had happened only to the United States. In Europe and most other parts of the world, people responded with horror, sorrow, and sympathy. But Americans read more into these outpourings of solidarity than was really there. Most Americans, regardless of political party, believed that the world shared not only their pain and sorrow but also their fears and anxiety about the terrorist threat and that the world would join with the United States in a common response. Some American observers cling to this illusion even today. But in fact, the rest of the world shared neither Americans’ fears nor their sense of urgency. Europeans felt solidarity with the superpower during the Cold War, when Europe was threatened and the United States provided security. But after the Cold War, and even after 9/11, Europeans felt relatively secure. Only the Americans were frightened.

When the shock and horror wore off, it turned out that the September 11 attacks had not altered fundamental global attitudes toward the United States. The resentments remained. A Pew poll of opinion leaders around the world taken in December 2001 revealed that while most were “sad to see what America [was] going through,” equally large majorities (70 percent of those polled worldwide, 66 percent in western Europe) believed it was “good that Americans know what it is like to be vulnerable.” Many opinion leaders around the world, including in Europe, said they believed that “U.S. policies and actions in the world” had been a “major cause” of the terrorist attacks and that, to borrow a phrase, the chickens had come home to roost.

Many also felt that the United States was undertaking the fight against terrorism strictly in its own interests. In Western Europe, 66 percent of the opinion leaders surveyed said they believed that the United States was looking out only for itself. This was not surprising given how little the Bush administration was attempting then to make U.S. allies feel

differently or to turn the struggle in Afghanistan into a struggle for international order.

Judged on its own terms, the war on terror has been by far Bush’s greatest success. No serious observer imagined after September 11 that seven years would go by without a single additional terrorist attack on U.S. soil. Only naked partisanship and a justifiable fear of tempting fate have prevented the Bush administration from getting or taking credit for what most would have regarded seven years ago as a near miracle. Whatever else the Bush administration has failed to do, it has not failed to protect Americans from another attack on the homeland.

In a world of selfish states and selfish peoples – which is to say, the world that exists – the question is always, “What is in it for us?” The inadequacy of the “war on terror” paradigm stems from the fact that very few nations other than the United States consider terrorism to be their primary challenge. The United States’ fight has not been regarded as an international “public good” for which the rest of the world can be grateful. On the contrary, most nations believe that they are doing the United States a favor when they send troops to Afghanistan (or Iraq), often at a perceived sacrifice to their own interests.

The war on terror has never attracted that kind of international allegiance. China and Russia have welcomed it because it has distracted the United States’ strategic focus away from them – and because both have seen utility in a war on terror that for Moscow has meant a war on the Chechens and for Beijing a war on the Uighurs. But to most of the United States’ traditional allies, it has been at best an unwelcome distraction from the issues they care about more.

In Europe, it has been more than a distraction. Americans believe that Europeans share their concern about radical Islam. But European concerns are different. For Americans, the problem is largely “out there,” in faraway lands from which radical Islamic terrorists can launch attacks, and therefore the solution is also “out there.” For Europeans, Islamic radicalism is first and foremost a domestic issue, a question of whether and how Muslims can be assimilated into twenty-first-century European society. To European eyes, U.S. actions only inflame Europe’s problems. When the United States whacks a hornets’ nest, the hornets fly to Europe, or so Europeans fear.

The war on terror, in short, has been a source more of division than of unity. The United States, which in the 1990s was already seen by many as a bullying hegemon, came to be viewed after September 11 as a self-absorbed, bullying hegemon, heedless of the consequences of its actions.

In a selfish world, this kind of enlightened wisdom may be beyond the capacities of all states. But if there is any hope, it lies in a renewed understanding of the importance of values. The United States and other democratic nations share a common aspiration for a liberal international order, built on democratic principles and held together, however imperfectly, by laws and conventions among nations. This order is gradually coming under pressure as the great-power autocracies grow in strength and influence and as the antidemocratic struggle of radical Islamic terrorism persists. If the democracies’ need for one another is less obvious than before, the need for these nations, including the United States, to “see further into the future” is all the greater.

Longevity and Health Issues of U.S. Presidents

By Niru Prasad, MD

We are aware of the fact that the average lifespan of the humans has markedly increased in 20th century due to better nutrition and healthcare, awareness of good health practices and the advances in modern medicine.

With these thoughts in mind I decided to study the effect of medical advances on the health issues of Presidents from last two centuries. It was interesting to note that all the Presidents were white male politicians, military veterans and most of them came from wealthy families.

Here are some interesting observations

- Presidential diseases – From George Washington’s toothlessness (he had no teeth left by middle age) to Grover Cleveland’s attack of gout, to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s polio, to Ronald Reagan’s Alzheimer disease, George Bush’s colon polyps. Most of the Presidents throughout history suffered from the same diseases and ailments like all of us.
 - The first five Presidents of United States who died of major illnesses include:
 - George Washington at 67 years old died of Peritonsillar abscess in 1799.
 - John Adams at 90 years old died of heart failure and pneumonia in 1826.
 - Thomas Jefferson at 83 years old died of old age and multiple system failure in 1826.
 - James Monroe at 73 years old died of tuberculosis and heart failure in 1831.
 - James Madison at 85 years old died of old age and multiple diseases in 1836.
- The demise of these five presidents, all dying before 1840, are closely linked to the fact that they all lived in the pre-anesthesia, pre-germ prevention, and pre-antibiotic era.
- Our last five Presidents died after 1960, by then medical and surgical advances and cardiovascular surgeries were available.
 - Herbert Hoover at 90 years old died of internal bleeding in 1964.
 - Dwight Eisenhower at 78 years old died in 1969 of congestive heart failure and organ failure.

Harry Truman at 88 years old died in 1972 of old age and multiple system failure.

Lynden Johnson at 64 years old died in 1973 of a heart attack.

Richard Nixon at 81 years old died of a stroke in 1994.

Ronald Reagan, who suffered from arthritis, gunshot wounds with collapsed lungs, pneumonia, hearing loss, colon cancer and Alzheimer’s disease, died in 2004.

- It seems that most of our past Presidents were immune to cancer except Ulysses Grant who died of throat cancer in 1885.
- Our Presidents who have been assassinated and died include:
 - Abraham Lincoln (16th President) died on April 15, 1865
 - James A Garfield (20th President) died on September 19, 1881
 - William McKinley (25th President) died on September 14, 1901
 - John F. Kennedy (35th President) on November 22, 1963
- There have also been several past attempted assassinations on our Presidents such as Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and Richard Nixon.

The causes of death of early Presidents are highly speculative and controversial. There was no microbiology to speak of until the last third of 19th century so tuberculosis was only a suspicion rather than a diagnosis. Any abdominal catastrophes that cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal distention were attributed to a diagnosis of “Biliousness,” in other words, gall bladder disease.

In summary, our good health and the way we function are most important for continued good health – not our age. Our Presidents get the best healthcare in the world. A team of physicians, nurses, paramedics and physician’s assistants are available to them on around the clock and that certainly affects the longevity of our Presidents.

Short Story

Bill and the Big Bang

by Bill Phillis

Forest Road Elementary School was the home of my favorite teacher, Miss Bassett. In Miss Bassett's classroom I remember my beloved ants, my garter snakes, and, oh yes, my exploding pocket. I was in the third grade – probably around 1951 or 1952, many, many years ago. I had to repeat one semester of the third grade due to my poor performance, however, Miss Bassett was a wonderful teacher. She rescued me academically and permitted me to have several garter snakes, *Thamnophis sirtalis*, in class, confined to a cage my father had constructed. One day the snakes escaped and I discovered where several were hiding but could not find the biggest, meanest of the snakes. It was hiding in Miss Bassett's desk drawer. She opened her drawer, saw the snake, closed the drawer instantly and called me to the front of the classroom. When she opened her desk drawer there it was awaiting me. I reached in, grabbed the snake and it bit my right hand. I was so startled that I pulled it off my hand and due to its teeth pointing backward a hunk of skin was torn from my hand. Today at 66 I still have the scar near my right index finger knuckle. However that was not my most horrifying experience. My exploding, burning, smoking right pocket far surpassed that snake bite.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars bought the school a new flag and flagpole. The flag pole was erected in front of the school. The veterans had fought in World War II as my father had, protected our country and I was very impressed by them. We were to receive the new flag the veterans had purchased for the school with full honors to the student body. We were instructed to be on our best behavior, rehearsed the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, sang The Star Spangled Banner and stood at attention. This was to honor the veterans for their service to the United States and thank them for the flag and flagpole.

We were prepped, prompted, prodded and warned that naughty behavior would not be tolerated and that this was to be a most solemn event. For several days we were taught our places and our required performance. We were marched into an open square around the flagpole. A three sided student square with the flag-bearing, rifle carrying veterans forming the fourth side of the square.

The day of the flag presentation arrived and we were marched into our open square to sing and pledge allegiance to our new flag. This is when disaster found me and I got into trouble. I loved caps. I loved cap guns. And particularly I loved "Bang Caps." They were big, powerful and noisy caps. Caps contain a small amount of gunpowder encased between to thin sheets of red paper. When placed

in a cap gun or pounded with a rock they explode. Caps come in rolls and in circular discs. I had cap guns that held rolls and I had cap guns that held discs. I liked them both and as much as I loved cap guns. Whenever I had any money I always spent it on "Bang Caps." They were the biggest, loudest, and most powerful caps available.

Never wanting to be without my caps I had taken them to school hidden in my right pocket. So there I was, at our new flag pole, on my best behavior, ready to sing and pledge allegiance with a pocket full of Bang Caps. This combination was one of extreme disaster.

It is hard for me to stand still. Today I still wiggle my foot and fidget. The Veterans marched in carrying their rifles and dressed in their uniforms. I was thrilled to watch them complete the square surrounding the new flag pole. I became bored however with the flag presentation, the speeches, formality, litany and I began to fidget. I reached into my pocket and there they were, a pocket full of "Bang Caps." The biggest, loudest caps known to man and I started to play with them. I felt them. I could imagine what a wonderful popping sound they would make in my cap gun. I scratched the caps between my forefinger and thumb. With this final assault, the caps would tolerate no more, and they burst into flame. There I was with a whole pocket full of exploding caps. Each cap would in turn ignite a next cap. Pop, pop, pop as the gunpowder exploded. I started hopping. The caps caught fire and smoke billowed out of my pocket. This was all happening while we were singing the Star Spangled Banner – "...the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air" Bombs were bursting in my pocket, and I was on fire. Everything stopped as I hopped and howled in agony and as the caps popped and my pocket smoked. I was the center of attention. I ruined the solemnity of the flag presentation. I am certain the veterans understood as they were laughing at my ordeal. A teacher rushed over, grabbed me by the ear and escorted me to the principal's office to be punished for destroying the solemnity of the flag presentation. That was the end of the flag presentation at Forest Road School and I was once again a fallen star with a hot smoking pocket. Fortunately we moved the following year and I could start over. A clean slate, a new beginning and goodbye to Forest Road Elementary School, the ants, the school psychiatrist, the bang caps, my smoking pocket, the ruined flag presentation, wonderful Miss Bassett and hello to Edison Elementary School in Dearborn, Michigan and my new adventures.

Lies, Elections and Other Political Considerations

By David Beagan



In the early days of this presidential campaign, Barack Obama and John McCain made overtures about raising the level of political campaigning. We hoped for a campaign that was tough but fair, tackling the important issues, each candidate bringing into focus how he would differ from his opponent. However, we get precious little of this kind of informative campaigning. It seems that each campaign is so intent on portraying the other in an unfavorable light, that most anything goes. The McCain Campaign continued touting the supposed fact that running mate Sarah Palin vetoed the bridge to nowhere. Even after media watchdogs had revealed that she initially was for it and only later after it lost support was she against it. Barack Obama tried to posture that he wasn't really aware of the extreme views of his spiritual mentor Rev. Jeremiah Wright. A number of media organizations have taken to evaluating the statements of the candidates for truthfulness. All too often the candidates are loose with the facts, using innuendo, exaggeration and half truths to paint the other candidate in a negative light.

Consider this tactic used successfully by Obama to paint Bill and Hillary Clinton as being race baiters. Attempting to do the same with his presidential campaign against McCain. He stated:

Nobody thinks that Bush and McCain have a real answer to the challenges we face. So what they're going to try to do is make you scared of me. You know, 'He's not patriotic enough, he's got a funny name.' You know, 'He doesn't look like all those other presidents on the dollar bills.'

Interesting how he says "Bush and McCain" tying his opponent to a very unpopular president. Furthermore he states as a fact that the McCain Campaign will do something, which to my knowledge, he cannot honestly assert will happen. If you make statements about something which may happen but assert that that something will happen, that is not honest.

Consider this statement by the other campaign, by John McCain in speaking of the first failure of the passage of the bailout bill.

This bill failed because Barack Obama and the Democrats put politics ahead of country," McCain said.

But wait, Obama publicly stated that he was for the bill and urged its passage. Moreover, 37% of republicans voted in favor, 60% of democrats.

As the campaigns grovel toward election day, I suspect that the untruthful rhetoric will intensify. There will be plenty of these television commercials where the announcer reveals some half baked innuendo in a hushed tone of voice, the kind of tone that you associate with overhearing gossip.

It is so sad for the electorate, apparently this negative campaigning and mudslinging seems to work. At least that is what the polling apparently tells the campaign leaders. What does that say about each of us? Are we so gullible? Do our cravings for entertainment in the form of negativity and half-truths mean that we ignore or are bored with sober, intelligent debate? Do either of these candidates have the guts to say, "no more"?

As voters what are we to do about all of this? Just stay home because, "my vote won't matter anyway?" Sometimes I hear people speak of a wasted vote – that is a vote is wasted unless cast for a winning candidate. This kind of thinking is wrong. The only wasted vote is one that is not cast. I think often that people who care not to take the time and trouble are the ones who speak of a wasted vote. "Looks like Obama is going to win this thing so my vote for McCain would be wasted." This is the ultimate in rationalization, using the excuse of not wasting a vote as justification for actually wasting the vote.

Sometimes spouses who disagree on choice of candidate conspire in a marital vote wasting pact, neither spouse votes rationalizing that our votes will cancel one another out! This is absurd, ridiculous.

There are a number of alternative candidates out there. Robert Barr, former member of the US House of Representatives in the presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party. A vote for Barr would be a way for you to register your vote but abstain from casting a vote for a candidate of the two major parties. This would be your way to register your vote against the democrat and republican status quo. This is not an endorsement for the Libertarian party or candidate. The Constitution Party has put up Chuck Baldwin as their candidate. the Green Party has nominated former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney. And there is always Ralph Nader, on the ballot in 45 states. There are many choices, and each is effectively a way to register your vote for "none of the above."

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How to Rule the World

higher taxes, I am worried.

When I come across Indian Americans who are still smarting from the Clintons' defeat, who are mad at Obama the novice, I feel helpless.

When I realize that some Indian Americans will simply not vote for a black person, I am saddened. Racism, I realize, is not the sole purview of the white man.

I want to tell all these Indian Americans, "Vote for McCain/Palin at your own peril, because you will soon be living in a land where you will be considered an elitist alien simply because you don't carry a gun, don't attend church, and don't believe that arctic drilling was ordained by Jesus Christ."

"And you will be stuck forever with Al Qaeda at the doorstep of your native land because the likes of Sarah Palin will never see Pakistan or India as more than pawns in their God-given geopolitical designs for the world."

Watching Palin speak about the war in Iraq as a task from God, I can't help wondering: Does she believe that Armageddon has already begun? That would explain why this hockey mom is martyring her only healthy son to the combat zone.

I am moved to remind the mainstream, middle, or working class voter in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Colorado that while Republican operatives invoke God to carry out their shameless greed, Wall Street is crashing, your children face a grim future, and a decent life is becoming more elusive for millions of Americans.

If things continue like this beyond November, we will all be wishing for Armageddon.



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Mental Exercise

By David Beagan

The Pythagorean theorem is one of the most notable and fundamental theorems in all of mathematics. There are numerous proofs of this theorem. The 20th president of the United States James Garfield provided one of these proofs. Surely President Garfield must have been a puzzle fan. Enjoy these presidential puzzlers.

Notable Presidents. Name the US President described by each of these statements:

The president who was never elected as president and never as vice-president.

The first President born in a hospital.

First president born in 20th century.

He was the tallest President.

He was the youngest president.

Only President to serve in both world wars.

First president to appear on television.

Last president to wear visible facial hair.

The first American to ever win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Geographic Mystery. These three cities: Cleveland, Ohio – Jackson, Mississippi – Monrovia Liberia all have something common. What is it?

Missing President. George W. Bush is known as the 43rd President of the United States, and yet only 42 men have ever been President to the United States. What is the explanation of this?

Top Name. What is the most common first name among all of the Presidents of the United States?

Non-President. Which of the following men was not a US President?

John Tyler, James Monroe, James Taylor, James Buchanan.

VP Home. The President lives in the Whitehouse. Where does the Vice President live?

A. On the grounds of the White House.

B. On the grounds of the US Naval Observatory

C. On the grounds of the US Capitol.

D. On the grounds of the National Mall.

Start and Finish. It is known that Thomas Jefferson would always start his with this.

It is further known that William Howard Taft would always end his with this.

And it is certainly known that Theodore Roosevelt would start and end his with this.

Identify These. The following is a list of what?

S

Gamaliel

Jefferson

Milhoux

Hint: in the near future, one of the following two names will be added to the list: Sidney or Hussein.

Unscramble. Use the following sixteen letters to form surnames that identify five US Presidents:

FORT

PLUB

DOFT

KASH

Each letter can be used as often as it appears. The F, the O and the T appear twice and are to be used twice.

Answers

Notable Presidents

Never elected: Gerald Ford.

Born in a hospital: Jimmy Carter.

Born in 20th century: John Kennedy.

Tallest President: Abraham Lincoln.

Youngest president: Theodore Roosevelt. (Note Kennedy was youngest *elected* president)

Serve in both world wars: Eisenhower.

First on television: Franklin Roosevelt.

Last with facial hair: William Howard Taft

First American Nobel Peace Prize: Theodore Roosevelt

Geographic Mystery

All three cities were named after US Presidents.

Missing President

Grover Cleveland is both the 22nd and the 24th president.

He gets counted twice because he served two non-consecutive terms as President.

Top Name

James

James Madison, James Monroe, James K. Polk, James Buchanan, James A. Garfield.

Non-President

James Taylor was not a US President.

VP Home

The Vice President lives on the grounds of the US Naval Observatory.

Start and Finish

Presidential signatures. The letter T begins Thomas Jefferson's signature, ends William Howard Taft's signature, and both begins and ends Theodore Roosevelt's.

Identify These

These are Presidents middle names. William *Gamaliel* Harding, Harry S. Truman (who only had an initial for his middle name), William *Jefferson* Clinton, and Richard *Milhoux* Nixon.

Two 2008 Presidential candidates are John *Sidney* McCain and Barack *Hussein* Obama.

Unscramble

The letters can be used to identify these presidential surnames: Taft, Polk, Ford, and Bush. The last of these names identifies two presidents for a total of five.

We Must Vote

By Bala Prasad

So, another national election is at hand. One of the basic civil rights that we have is our right to vote, and we must exercise this franchise.

The first group of American citizens were granted the power to vote after the Revolutionary War in the 18th century. But this came with some restraints. In order to vote, one had to be a property owner, pay taxes, and pass an education test. This resulted in only 6% of white American males eligible to vote.

The next wave of voters won the right to vote in the 19th century. Black males were given the right to vote but there were so many restrictions placed against them, most of them could not exercise this right. It took another century before these restrictions were removed. In the early 20th century, women won the right to vote and later in the 20th century, the voting age was reduced to eighteen. Today every American citizen can vote with the exception of convicted felons and the mentally incompetent.

Our voting rights came to us at different times and in different ways but they were all related to political or military upheaval. The right to vote for American males came after the Revolutionary War against the British; the right to vote for African Americans came after the Civil War which won them citizenship; women won the right to vote after World War I; and finally the voting age was lowered to eighteen after the Vietnam War.

Today people consider the right to vote as unimportant in election after election. However we forget that this right came slowly and with great difficulty. So pick a candidate, take a position, go to the polling booth, and vote!

Sincerely,

Bala Prasad

Election	Voting Age Population	Turnout	% Turnout of VAP
2004	215,694,000	122,295,345	56.7 %
2000	205,815,000	105,586,274	51.3 %
1996	196,511,000	96,456,345	49.1 %
1992	189,529,000	104,405,155	55.1 %
1988	182,778,000	91,594,693	50.1 %
1984	174,466,000	92,652,680	53.1 %
1980	164,597,000	86,515,221	52.6 %
1976	152,309,190	81,555,789	53.6 %
1972	140,776,000	77,718,554	55.2 %
1968	120,328,186	73,199,998	60.8 %
1964	114,090,000	70,644,592	60.9 %
1960	109,159,000	68,838,204	63.1 %

The voting age population includes all persons age 18 and over as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, which necessarily includes a significant number of persons ineligible to vote, such as non-citizens, felons, and the mentally incompetent. The actual number of *eligible voters* is somewhat lower, and the number of *registered voters* is lower still. The number of non-citizens in 1994 was approximately 13 million, and in 1996, felons numbered around 1.3 million, so it can be estimated that around 7-10% of the voting age population is ineligible to vote.

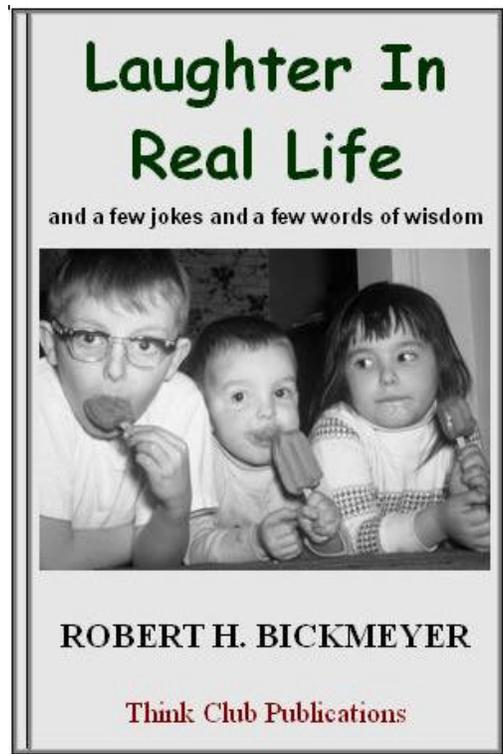
Note that the large drop in percentage turnout between 1968 and 1972 can be attributed (at least in part) to the expansion of the franchise to 18 year olds (previously restricted to those 21 and older).

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