OPINION

Guest Editorial

Ready for the Fall
By: Victor Kamber

The greatest myth perpetrated this election cycle is that the nasty, bitter Democratic presidential campaign will leave the party divided this fall. Sure, supporters of the losing candidate will be angry and disappointed and may sulk a bit, but any notion they will go for Sen. John McCain in November is Republican fantasyland.

When the Democrats leave Denver in August, their presidential nominee will have a double-digit lead and the "battle" over lapel pins and Bosnian snipers won't even be a blip on the voter radar honed in on Iraq, the economy and eight years of Republicans Gone Wild.

No matter how many times McCain says "my friends," he will have few of them among general election voters when they give unbridled attention to his position on issues they care about.

Soaring gas prices, stagnant wages and the housing collapse have our economy in tatters, and McCain concedes this isn't his strong suit even though "I've got Greenspan's book." Our failing economy is one of the casualties of the Iraq War that McCain continues to strongly support. At long last, the media are beginning to ask some hard questions about the cost of the war.

Ron Brownstein of National Journal poses this question for McCain: "If the war really is crucial to America's security, shouldn't today's taxpayers finance it?" As has been pointed out numerous times, Iraq is the first major war that this country has fought by transferring the entire cost to future generations through government debt. President

Bush never proposed raising taxes to pay for the war. Worse, in 2003 he substantially cut taxes, unprecedented in war time.

Expect more of the same from a McCain administration. McCain has already endorsed tax cuts that would cost more than $300 billion a year, including reduction of the corporate income tax from 34% to 25%. And, of course, he wants to make the Bush tax cuts permanent, another $110 billion.

A constant worry to families across America is our deteriorating health care system where rising costs leave nearly 50 million with no insurance coverage and millions more underinsured. The current system cherry-picks the healthy and tells those with chronic diseases to get lost. When a journalist asked if the Senator's skin cancer might make him sympathetic to the idea of requiring that insurance companies offer policies to those with such conditions, McCain responded: "That would be mandating what the free enterprise system does." (He is referring of course to a system that does indeed allow insurance companies to choose the healthiest people and refuse coverage to those who are sick.)

McCain told the Boston Globe he would give people with preexisting conditions "an extra tax credit" to help pay for insurance funded by savings in the Medicaid program. The Columbia Journalism Review made this observation: Where does McCain think the Medicaid savings will come from? Does he mean cutting benefits to poor people who depend on Medicaid for health care? Or from middle-class families who rely on Medicaid to pay for nursing home care?

Real issues like these keep people awake at night, and

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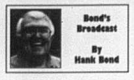
Bond's Broadcast



Marilyn and I had the privilege of being included on the invite list for the wedding reception of Jim Brown and his new wife, Kay.

The mega event was held at the Ramada Inn in Paintsville a couple weeks ago and hosted by the facility's staff. I don't know for sure, but I figure there were probably 400 people there for the event.

Marilyn and I have known Mr. Brown since we lived in Carlisle in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He of course owns Deposit Bank of Carlisle, and several other businesses across the state.

One of the properties he owns is the Ramada Inn, where the event took place.

As some of you may know, we are now associated with the Big Sandy News in Louisa, which is a regional paper with offices in four counties, including Johnson.

The Paintsville office is about four blocks from the Ramada Inn, and as I visit there on business regularly I have spent time in the motel.

At our table were Bob and Carol Sparks of Carlisle. Bob is originally from Belfry in Pike County, went to Pikeville College and of course was a long-time dentist with his partner Leon Riggs here in Nicholas County.

The event was certainly a top-shelf affair. The mayor of Paintsville, judge-executive of Johnson County and state representative Hubert Collins honored Mr. and Mrs. Brown.

There were a wide variety of folks who joined the festivities. We saw several who made the trip from Cynthiana, including former Commonwealth's Attorney Jack Keith and his wife Donna.

The trip afforded us the opportunity to meet many new people. There were those from all walks of life who joined together to celebrate the marriage. George and Wilma Justice joined us at our table.

George is originally from Pike County and while he and Dr. Sparks didn't know each other they surely knew where the other was from. Mr. Justice is from Phelps, another Pike County community. He and his wife live now in Menifee County near Cave Run Lake.

It's such a small world we live in. Almost everywhere I have gone I have encountered people from our small corner of the world.

It's an amazing thing.

I have to say that it was an emotional time for Mr. Brown and his wife Kay. When the newlyweds were finally introduced at the end of the speeches, it was obvious the tremendous outpouring of friendship at this very special event touched them.

I'd like to use my space to congratulate the couple and wish them only the best in the years to come.

– HB –

I have been reading about the watered down bullying bill passed by the Kentucky General Assembly.

Bullying has always been around. Back when I was in high school, during black and white television time, there were a few bullies in the whole school looking to fight anything that walked.

Usually in short order someone would take the challenge, go out behind the schpol and before long there was one less bully.

The other part of this equation is that after the fight, usually within a day or two, these people were the very best of friends. They would be together more and more and have lunch for at least the rest of the school year.

Today bullying has taken on a far deeper perspective. Internet bullying alone has created more problems than anything the past can offer.

First, it often involves more than one – it's a group. There are four or five who choose to gang up on one.

Those kinds of odds have always been unfair. I don't care who you are or whether or not you're male or female. It's unacceptable.

I have seen this go on quite often. In fact, the things I have witnessed are nothing less than harassement.

There is no room for this. What does this have to do with going to school?

This is being territorial at its worse. Just think about all the things this can impact.

I have no idea how this can continue.

On top of it all, there are groups of boys willing to bully a girl – and visa versa.

What is that? How can this go on? It's time we take a long look at what is going on.

I know young people hate to hear – "when I was your age" – but I can tell you this didn't go on. I believe people were far happier and could enjoy life without a lot of money and a lot of things.

Maybe a return to a little calmer time wouldn't be all that bad.

And so, for another week, thanks and thirty.

Veloz Viewpoints

Greetings from Nevada! I hope you are all having a great week.

The weather here has been absolutely beautiful the past week. It has been in the 80s and 90s with the wind only blowing some of the days. And the babies are loving it.

When the weather is warm and isn't too windy I try to spend a lot of time with the kids outside. They love to be outside. When I bring them out of their bedroom in the morning the first thing they do is point out the window to tell me they want to go outside.

Unfortunately, because we live in the desert, the weather isn't always warm enough to go outside first thing in the morning. We have to give it time to warm up. Plus, the sprinklers run in the front yard in the morning, so I have to give it time for the water to dry before we go out to play in the grass.

But when we do go outside, they love it. And they are doing so much better walking around too. Up until Monday, most of the time spent outside, they were still crawling. They walk a lot when they are inside, but I guess they feel sturdier outside when they are crawling. Anyway, Ben was playing with them outside on Monday after dinner and they were walking all over the place.

It is amazing to me how fast they are growing. I look at newborn clothing and can't believe that they were even smaller than that when they came out. My friend, Jessica, had her baby girl last Wednesday. I was there when she was born and when I held her, it was so hard to believe that just a short while ago, my babies were even smaller than her brand new baby.

Now, I look at these kids that have such amazing personalities and I can't believe that they are my tiny babies. I can't imagine how I will feel as the years progress. They are just getting so big so fast, it makes me wonder how my parents feel about me. I still remember my childhood so vividly. It has gone by fast for me, I can't imagine how my parents feel.

Antonio uses please so well, he really seems to know what it means. Well, he at least knows to say it if he wants the cookie that Mommy is holding. Of course, if he sees something he wants he will say it to. For instance, in the morning when I'm having my cup of coffee, he will say "drink please". I almost feel bad having to tell him no after he has been so polite.

And Analise, what a fireball. She will give you the biggest grin in one second and then the next second she will smack you upside the head. She has done that to me a few times. But, after I firmly tell her, no, she gives me those puppy dog eyes and grins. Sometimes it is really hard to stay mad at her!

Next week they have their 15 month check-ups. I can't believe they are almost 15 months old. It certainly seems like yesterday that I was on my way to the hospital to have them. It definitely makes me try harder to slow my life's pace and enjoy these precious moments with them. I know I'll only have this time with them once.

Until next week, make it a great one!

Amy

Talkin' From The Mountains

Ignorance Is Not Bliss

The following is an account, to the best of my recollection, with an 18 year-old who is joining the military:

"So you're joining the Marines?"

"Yeah, I want to go fight for my country in Iraq and get the job done."

"What job?"

"Win the war."

"How do we win the war?"

"We achieve victory."

"What will be considered victory? What do we win?"

"Defeating the enemy."

"Who's the enemy? A whole bunch of different factions are fighting each other in Iraq. It's a civil war."

"All those armies that invaded Iraq."

"Our Army was the only Army that invaded Iraq. Because of the chaos created with our invasion, terrorists have made their way in from other countries. They weren't there in huge numbers before we invaded."

"No, we didn't invade Iraq. We went over there to get rid of that guy Hussein who had invaded and taken over their country."

"We dropped tons of bombs on them and then invaded them, and by the way, Hussein was an Iraqi."

"But he was bad and the people asked us to come over and get rid of him."

"No, they didn't. He was evil, but the Iraqi people didn't ask us to get rid of him."

"Well, they are real grateful to us!"

"Only a portion of them are grateful. If they are grateful, why have thousands of our military men and women been killed? Why have tens of thousands been wounded? Are you aware that Iraqis have orchestrated huge demonstrations demanding we withdraw our members of their parliament have resigned because we are still occupying their country?"

"Hey, if we weren't fighting them there, we'd be fighting them in our own back yards."

"Not all the factions fighting in Iraq are connected to any terrorist organization, and there's no organized terrorist Army with the resources to invade any country full-scale. And if they had an Army, this would be the perfect time to invade us, or to pull another terrorist attack. All of our military resources are overseas.

"We still got the National Guard."

"Our National Guard is devastated from being sent to serve in Iraq rather than being allowed to do the job they are supposed to do here in the United States."

"Well, Senator Jim Bunning said they'd even be killing us in the streets of Fort Thomas, Kentucky if we weren't fighting them in Iraq, and Senator Bunning's a real smart, educated man."

"He was a baseball pitcher."

"Oh yeah? Well what about all those Muslims that have taken over in Iraq?"

"That's a religion. Most Iraqis are Muslim. Always have been."

"There ain't but one religion and that's Christianity."

"There are many religions. The Muslim Faith basically teaches the same things as Christianity and it's based on many of the same teachings. Don't confuse good Muslims with extremist Muslims. There are extremist Muslims and extremist Christians."

"You're a traitor. A loyal American never disagrees with the nation's leaders. We could lose our freedom if people tried to disagree with our leaders like Senator Bunning."

"Freedom is being able to express our opinions."

"Not if it disagrees with our leaders. Freedom is only for those who agree with the President."

"Have you read the constitution?"

"I heard something about it in school."

"Are you aware that polls show that only a small minority of Americans think there's a chance of achieving any kind of victory in Iraq? That only a small percentage support George W. Bush?"

"My Marine Recruiter explained that to me. He said those polls are only taken on college campuses where professors have turned college students into Communists."

"That's absurd. Define

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OPINION

Steve's Report

If you are familiar with Comedy Central's Dave Chappelle Show, you will know that he is best known for his out-spoken, somewhat foul-mouthed comedy. He says offensive things, but he says them in a funny way, so everybody laughs.

I personally don't care for that kind of humor and don't watch the show. The only way I know about it is because many of the people I work with watch it on a regular basis and then talk about it at work the next day. With most shows, this might not have been a problem, but because of the language used on the Dave Chappelle Show, it was almost guaranteed that sooner or later, someone would get offended. It was only a matter of time.

One day, three or four African American co-workers were standing around talking about a recent episode of the show. One of them quoted the line: "Oh, no! That [N-word] has got to go!" and everybody laughed. A white co-worker who was standing nearby had seen the same episode and joined in, quoting the next line: "I punched that [N-word] right in the face."

Nobody laughed. The African American co-workers were extremely offended and one of them later filed an official complaint against the white person for using that racially derogatory term.

There are clearly two sides to this issue. The white assumed that by quoting the exact same show the others were quoting, he would be considered a part of their group. "They thought Dave Chappelle was funny, and so did I," he explained. "They had just used the exact same word and laughed about it, so I figured it was no big deal."

The black co-workers, including the one who made the complaint, admitted that none of them considered their white colleague to be a racist, even though he had repeated the N-word. They all admitted to using that same word on a fairly regular basis amongst themselves and were not bothered when they heard it from another African American. So why was this such a big issue?

There was a clear double standard at play. They didn't find it offensive for a black person to use the N-word, but it was a huge issue if it came from a white person – even though they considered the white person to be a friend and knew he did not intend anything racially insulting with the expression. As a matter of fact, a couple of them found it so offensive that they felt they could no longer work with the white individual on a professional basis.

This double standard may not make sense to some of us.› I admit that I didn't understand it at first until the black co-workers shared with me the words of the black columnist Eric Hinton to help explain the difference:

"...as a black man, another black man cannot 'hurt' me with the N-word. Perhaps it's because we have a shared history of oppression with the word. Perhaps it's because as he uses it against me, I know it's been used against him. It's a word without any vigor behind it.

"But, if a white [man] were to use the word... then I see those words being used as a blunt instrument. They're being used to hurt, humiliate and destroy."

They explained that ANY white person using that word brought back images of a time when white people used that hateful term publicly, without fear of reprisal. Hearing a white person say the N-word felt like a threat to them – that those bad times might be coming back.

Jumping back to the white co-worker's justification for his actions, do you feel that the African Americans' public use of the N-word in conversation with other African Americans – in the presence of whites – made it acceptable for the white individual to use the word? By using the word themselves, did they forfeit the right to later claim they found the word offensive? Should the white person still be held accountable for using a word he knew to be racially-charged?

If you feel the white person was justified in using the term, then how do you feel about the following situation: Supposed a young woman goes to a bar wearing a fairly revealing, low-cut top and very tight jeans and spends the evening flirting with some guy, maybe even dropping suggestive hints and letting him buy her drinks. Do you believe that through her actions she has forfeited the right to later tell this guy "No?" Are his actions justified if he forces himself on her, claiming she was "asking for it?"

You might think, "Hold on, now! These are two very different situations and you can't compare the two." At least, that is what I thought at first. But let me tell you, the black co-workers felt there was a very real comparison between the two – that nothing a black person says or does can ever make it OK for a white person to use the N-word, just as nothing a woman says or does can ever make it OK for a man to force himself on a woman.

I found it terribly ironic that this event happened on April 4, 2008 – exactly 40 years from the day Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. You'd think in 40 years, we would have come a lot farther than this – that we would be much closer to realizing Dr. King's dream.

Still, it's a good dream; one worth hanging on to.

But Dave Chappelle... you're not helping.

Signing out from Honolulu
Steve Scalf
**** Steve Scalf is a member of the U.S. Military. Reach him at slscalf@msn.com**

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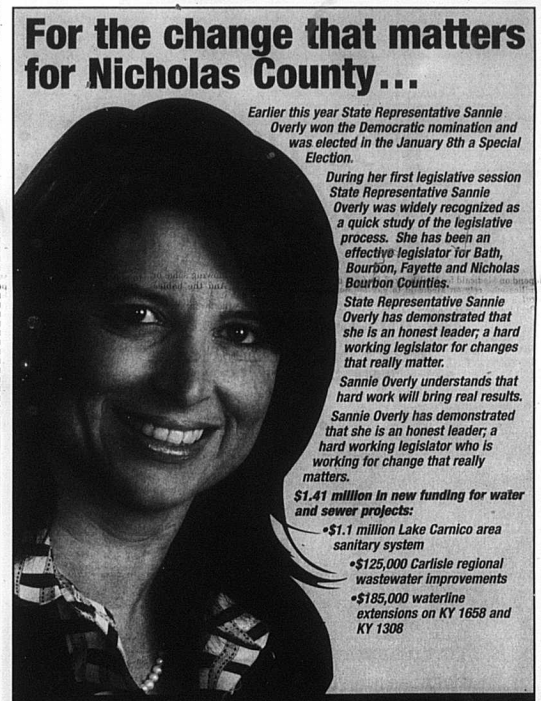
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