

Opinion



From other pens

McCain corrects woman's comment

Republican presidential candidate Sen. John McCain set the record straight over the weekend, and in so doing probably enhanced his standing with some independent voters.

He pretty much has his base locked up, but needs an infusion from the Reagan Democrats and independents.

What Sen. McCain did was to correct a misinformed supporter at one of his town hall meetings. A lady in the audience told Sen. McCain she didn't like Sen. Barack Obama and concluded by saying he is an "Arab."

It didn't take Sen. McCain but seconds to grab the microphone from her and say, "Sen. Obama is a decent family man. You don't have to be scared of him." The senator then explained that he just happens to have disagreements with Sen. Obama over issues in their campaigns for the presidency.

That, in itself, was a bold move on Sen. McCain's part. There was booing in the audience, but he handled that reaction well.

We all know from watching presidential campaigns over many years, that the role of the vice-presidential nominee is to be the "attack dog." Gov. Sarah Palin is carrying that out as viciously as we have seen in years. Poll numbers would seem to indicate, however, that she is wearing thin with the voters. Perhaps Sen. McCain needs to take her to the side and have a chat.

When the governor came on board, she was something new to Republican politics. She came in like a tidal wave. And to her credit, she woke up what had been a sleeping giant.

We don't know if Sen. McCain will continue his support of his rival as it relates to personal attacks or not, but it was a generous act, indeed. And Sen. Obama did call to thank him.

We would hope that Sen. Obama tones down his party's attacks on his rival now. We'd all be the better for it if he did.

— Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*

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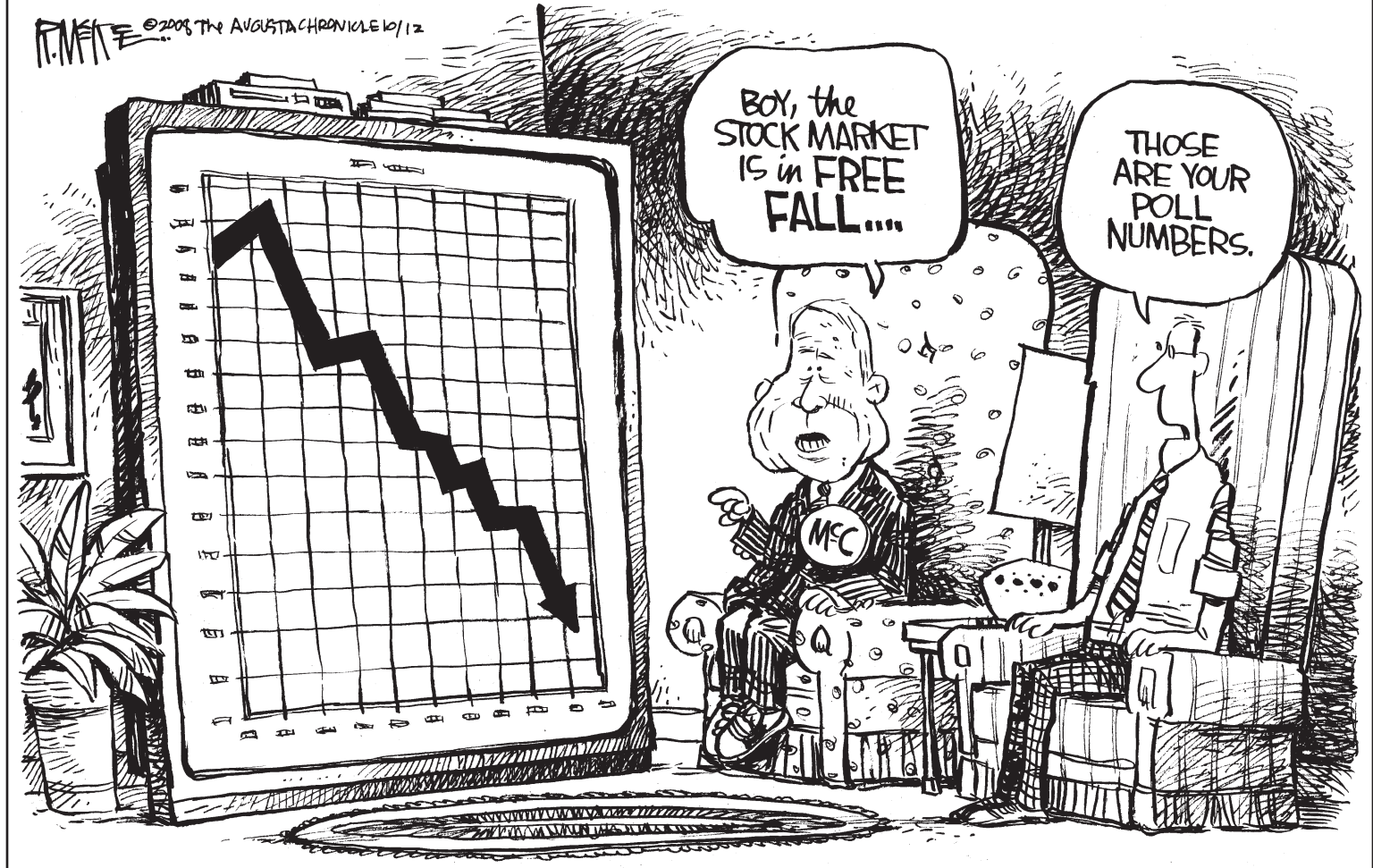
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Saturday program full of happiness

Well it's Saturday afternoon, and here I am typing away in the newsroom. I didn't plan to be writing my column today, but when does life ever go as planned?

I have just come back from the Colby Fun Bowl, where I took some pictures of the Thomas County Special Olympics bowling tournament.

I didn't know I would be attending the event until Friday afternoon. My initial reaction was typical of someone who is only looking out for himself. My mouth twisted into a frown and I muttered something about not being able to sleep in.

My boss, Steve Haynes, tried to cheer me up by telling me I would not have to get there until 10 a.m. as opposed to the tournament's starting time at 9 a.m. This made me feel a little better, but I was still a little sad to have my plan of doing absolutely nothing on Saturday thwarted.

Later that night, I started feeling guilty about my selfish mindset. What in the world did I have to complain about? I have a steady job, I live in a town where the majority of the people are kind and considerate, I'm in fairly good health, and I have family and friends that love me. With so many people in the world struggling to get by through no fault of their own, how could I be justified in complaining about anything?



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

tified in complaining about anything?

Disgusted with myself, I decided I was going to get to the bowling alley at 9 a.m., so I wouldn't miss any of the action. Unfortunately, I failed at this miniscule task. I would arrive at about 9:20 a.m. after oversleeping by a half an hour.

I arrived at the bowling alley feeling ashamed of myself. Luckily for me, the kind atmosphere in the room immediately brightened my spirits.

There are not many activities that are as good for the soul as Special Olympics. The unbridled joy of the athletes could make even the grumpiest curmudgeon giddy with happiness. The bright smiles of the volunteers showed they were getting as much out of the day as the athletes.

Today's world is so full of double standards and divisiveness, that when you view something as wholesome and heartfelt as Special

Olympics, it feels like you have experienced something similar to a life-altering religious experience. Watching the athletes compete reminded me that there are still some things in the world that have not been tainted by the darker side of human nature.

The great thing about Special Olympics is that it's a program with no ulterior motives. The only thing it tries to sell is happiness. And not just happiness. It offers an authentic happiness that has nothing to do with material objects. A happiness that is not just permitted to people who share the same race, religion or nationality. A happiness that doesn't make you forfeit a part of your personality to achieve. A happiness that embraces irreplaceable values such as empathy and equality. A happiness that is achieved through giving instead of receiving.

I want to thank all the athletes and volunteers for giving me hope that a better world is possible. Attending Saturday's event gave me a first-hand look at the power of giving and the unbridled joy that comes from it.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Speaking out about candidate's character

Letter Drop

• Our Readers Sound Off

To the Editor:

I'll put my character up against Mike Baughn's anytime!

Baughn's letter to the editor on Friday, Oct. 10, should open (or reopen) the eyes of anyone thinking about supporting him for sheriff.

"Intestinal fortitude," give me a break!

This candidate labels his opponent, Rod Taylor,"arrogant and lacking of self control?"

Do you know the sheriff not so long ago tried to commit suicide?

Yes, I am a concerned citizen and have the intestinal fortitude to speak up, as I am not comfortable living in a county that supports an unstable sheriff.

Steve Lampe
Colby

Using religion subverts constitution

Other Opinions

• Charles C. Haynes First Amend. Center

keep the story alive by continuing to debate every word and image.

In this theology-saturated climate, both Obama and McCain have felt compelled to emphasize their Christian bona fides in the race for the White House — as though the nation is electing a Christian in chief rather than a commander in chief.

McCain has sought to reassure evangelicals in the Republican base that he's on their side. His selection of Sarah Palin is widely seen as having done just that. But now the blogosphere is ablaze with ridicule of Palin as a "religious freak."

Meanwhile, Obama's campaign continues to be plagued by the lie that Obama is a Muslim.

According to a recent Pew Research Center poll, 12 percent of registered voters say Obama is a Muslim and another 25 percent of voters aren't sure about his religion because they've heard "different things" about it. The lie about Obama's faith has been so tenacious that Obama's campaign has resorted to putting "committed Christian" on some of his literature.

Behind many of the rumors and innuendos is the subliminal message that only a "real Christian" is worthy to be president — a message that reinforces the "Christian nation" rhetoric of our culture wars.

Apparently, this false vision of America sells. According to the State of the First Amendment survey released by the First Amendment Center last week, an astounding 55 percent of the American people agree the U.S. Constitution establishes a Christian nation.

Of course, the text of the Constitution does not say such thing: It nowhere mentions God or Christ; it bars any religious test for public office; and it prohibits any law "respecting an establishment of religion."

Under the First Amendment, Christianity has a legitimate role to play in political life (as do all religions). But there is a critical difference between faith as motivation and faith as manipulation. Unlike the civil rights movement — where faith was a key motivation for many in the struggle for social justice — the current God strategy by candidates and their surrogates often uses religion as a weapon to destroy opponents in the name of winning elections.

The Constitution, after all, starts off "We the People" — not "We the Christians."

Charles C. Haynes is senior scholar at the First Amendment Center, 555 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

