

from our viewpoint...

## Improved decorum speech background

No matter what people thought of President Barack Obama's second State of The Union address the atmosphere was much calmer than his first speech a year ago.

Part of the difference, of course, was the request by Sen. Mark Udall of Colorado to have the senators and representatives sit together and not by political party. The evening was marked with many senators from opposite sides of the aisle sitting together and with that the loud applause and boing from the year before was mostly absent.

The experts say this was the most watched State of the Union speech in recent history, and many probably watched to see if the Congress could find a way to behave.

Sixty members of the House and Senate signaled their support for the plan, and members of both houses sat with members of the opposite party. Groups included Arizona's House delegation of five Republicans and two Democrats (with an empty chair for Rep. Gabrielle Giffords), the Colorado delegation sat together as did past presidential candidates John Kerry and John McCain and campaign leaders John Cornyn and Patty Murray.

Legislators wore black-and-white ribbons in honor of the victims of the shooting.

Early in the speech President Obama said, "It's no secret those of us here tonight have had our differences. The debates have been contentious; we have fought fiercely for our beliefs. And that's a good thing. That's what a robust democracy demands. That's what helps set us apart as a nation... Tucson reminded us that no matter who we are or where we come from, each of us is a part of something greater."

Without the rousing clapping and cheering for each specific part of the speech the interruptions were few, but a few things got good responses including a call for a better school program.

President Obama said it was good to have a new sense of purpose for both sides, and said that it was nice to see the members of Congress getting along. He said the real test would be in the future when both sides face the issues and find mutual solutions.

He called for cutting government spending, but at the same time said he did not want to see the government fail to invest in infrastructure and in biomedical research, information technology and clean-energy technology to help the country compete in the global market.

To pay for the investment side President Obama said he was going to ask for an elimination of subsidies to the oil companies. He quipped that based on prices the oil companies seem to be doing fine on their own.

The one obvious split in the chamber came when Obama said he was willing to work with the Congress to improve and make changes to the Affordable Health Care Act, but that he would veto any attempt to repeal the law. Most of those standing to applaud were Democrats who helped support passage of the bill nearly a year ago. He said he would support the elimination of the small business paperwork requirement for 1099's, and that got general applause from both sides.

Following the speech many agreed it had been a more subdued atmosphere, and for some it was they had actually sat and listened to what the President said.

Many comparisons are being made between Obama and President Ronald Reagan who pledged to cut taxes, increase defense spending and balance the budget in his first State of the Union speech.

Opportunities to see if the two parties can work together are coming soon. Those will be the real test of whether things have changed inside the beltway. — Tom Betz



## Kids and their 'smart' phones

Today's kids have the "Smartest" telephones of all time. No debate there. And I invite them to take a trip with me back 60 or 70 years to get some kind of feel for this thing we cherish so openly.

When I was growing up our telephones were thought to be as far advanced as they could ever get. I was born in November of 1934 and probably became aware of telephones when I was around five or six years of age.

Believe it or not, but I remember telephones that allowed you to listen to other people's conversations. Granted, it wasn't the thing to do but the word "temptation" pretty much won out. If they were naming telephones back then, like they do these days, those probably would have been called something like the "Informers." You knew every bit of gossip along your party line.

People with these telephones were assigned rings. Your phone might have three rings if the call was for you, four if it was for the neighbor north, or two if it was for the neighbor south. Etc. When the phone rang in our uncle and aunt's farm home (Ambrose and Adelia Brungardt) we would quickly turn around to watch whoever answered it to see if they were listening in or taking a call for them. At times we were given the phone to briefly listen to the conversation on the other end. Wow, that was always a big deal! The phone consisted of a large wooden box, with two bells on the front along with a protruding thing to speak into. The receiver was on the left and on the right was a crank to get the operator's attention. You needed to do that every time you wanted to make a call.

We didn't have one of those "informers" in our house in town. We had a different kind of telephone. When you took the receiver off the hook a voice would say, "Number please." You would give the operator the number you wanted to call and she did the rest. I remember yet today my Dad's work number was 262 and our home number was 986.

Just when we thought the telephone company could offer nothing more, low and behold they came up with the dial telephone. Yes, a



**tom dreiling**

• time out with td

DIAL telephone. You didn't need an operator anymore, all you did was take the receiver off the hook, listen for a sound, then take your finger and dial the number you wanted. They won't be able to top that....we thought.

Well, fast forward. Today's telephones do too much. Seemingly too much talking just to be talking. And they give you news. They provide weather forecasts. You can exchange pictures with family or friends. Play games. Watch TV. And more. To an older person like me, I just look and shake my head in disbelief. But that's okay I guess, because older people are supposed to exercise and shaking one's head over these advanced technologies would be one form. See, there's a health benefit built in!

The remarkable thing about today's telephone is just about everybody has one and they take it every where they go, kind of like Mary's little lamb. And no matter the age, it seems there's a phone involved. They tell me the first word new babies now say is, "taafone." We've gotta' thank Alexander Graham Bell for the phone and also Graham Crackers.

With today's phones, you determine what kind of available sound or sounds you want to draw attention from a caller. Mine is called "Newage Tone." It's a snappy little thing, grabs my attention, pronto!

Oops, gotta' go! My pants pocket is vibrating (someone is calling). Yes, you can have your phone do all sorts of crazy stuff in your pocket.

End of history lesson on one of our most popular items.

Here are a few things I thought about while relaxing in the recliner with a cup of hot coffee the other morning:

1. Where does President Obama sneak to when he wants to smoke?

2. You can't escape seeing pictures of Sarah Palin. She's all over the place. But the place I hope I never see her picture is....at the post office!

3. Is it just me or have you noticed some awfully loud television commercials? I wonder where the Federal Communications Commission is. If I recall correctly, the FCC established a rule (or whatever it is they establish) a few years back that said commercials can be no louder than the sound coming from a regular program. Helloooooo, FCC!

4. Keith Olbermann has called it quits at MSNBC. Thank goodness. I thought his "Countdown" show had become sarcastically hateful the past couple of years. But don't worry about Keith, he was under a four-year \$30 million contract. He isn't going to starve!

5. Mitt Romney, Ron Paul and Tim Pawlenty were the top three vote getters (in that order) in a straw poll taken at the recent New Hampshire Republican Party statewide gathering. Sarah Palin was tied with two others in fourth place.

I still bet when the smokes clears, Romney will be the party's presidential nominee in 2012. I feel it in my bones.

I am going to begin, in my next column, using some of your comments as they apply to the stuff (oh, how I love that word) I write. If it's OK for me to use your name and city, please let me know; if you'd rather I just use your initials with no city name, let me know. I'm getting some real interesting stuff and would like to share it with all of you. Join the responders. Thanks in advance. And for benefit of my new readers, my e-mail is milehitom@hotmail.com

One of my grandsons asked me the other evening how old I was. I told him really didn't know. He told me to look in my underwear. "Underwear?" I quizzed. "Yes grandpa," he said, "mine says I'm 4 to 6."

Have a good evening!

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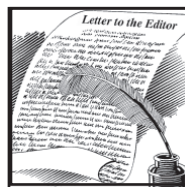
## The Salvation Army thanks you

To the Editor:

On behalf of The Salvation Army and those whom we serve, we would like to take this opportunity to say "Thank You" to all your readers who helped make this another successful Christmas Season.

As always, we are grateful to everyone who donated their time to bell ring throughout the holiday season, as well as the businesses that supported our Red Kettle Campaign. These volunteers and all who helped by filling the red kettles and mailing in contributions have made a huge impact on our efforts.

Because of the generosity throughout the



**from our readers**

• to the editor

community, our neighbors in need are receiving help not just at Christmas time, but throughout the year. Thank you for playing such an important role in the work of The Salvation Army where you live! We are grateful for the generosity of those who give their time and treasures so freely to help people through-

out the community.

If you are interested in donating or volunteering during the coming year, please call 1 (800) 336-4547 extension 368 for more information. You can find out more information about The Salvation Army's service in this and other communities at [www.kansas.salvationarmy.us](http://www.kansas.salvationarmy.us).

May God Bless you!  
Brian Carroll  
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