

Weather, campaigns have lot in common

And now there is calm...after the storm. Political storm, that is. Campaign seasons are like weather patterns: Clear. Cloudy. Mild. Stormy. Hot. Cold. Unsettling. Windy with occasional blowing dirt. And the mid-term 2006 campaign contained all of the above. And then some. It was somewhat of a relief to wake up today and not see a television ad attacking, degrading, deceptively describing, plain out lying, and in some cases bordering on defamation of character in an attempt to win votes. But you won't hear of any lawsuits being filed because this is politics at its worst and an accepted form of roping in votes. Shameful, but it won't ever end. As you know, the 2006 mid-term vote is the forerunner of the 2008 presidential campaign which will include all of the ingredients we found hard to stomach. The 2008 campaign will kick in this week. There are a number of presidential wannabes moving up to the starting line. And if you think the mid-termer was bad, this one looking us in the face will create shock and awe. One of the unfortunate realities of elections is the aftermath — the wounds that are slow to heal. Elections pit neighbor against neighbor, friend against friend, family member against family member. The candidates who lose elections will shake hands with the winners, that's how it's done. But it will take some time for the losing side of an election to even coolly embrace the winning side. Those are different animals to tame. And it's probably a pretty good bet that many of you reading this editorial have experienced the latter. The presidential election in November 2008 seems like a long way off. And it will seem even longer as we get ready to endure more nasty, negative, lying, deceptive television ads. And the wounds of the mid-term vote will barely heal — if at all — before the candidates again start their trek to whatever the office. First up will be John McCain, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Rudy Guillani, Mitt Romney, John Kerry, John Edwards, Joe Biden — just to name a few. And these and the other presidential wannabes will campaign for a year and a half — until a decision on a candidate for each party is made by summer of 2008. Many will be weeded out along the way, and those with the money and machinery necessary to carry on will carry on...and on and on and on. Take a deep breath.

—Tom Dreiling

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appear in the next issue of The Telegram. We will expect letters to be in good taste, and fair in criticism. We will discard any letters laced with profanity, which at times do come across our desk. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue. Questions? Talk to the publisher at 877-6908.

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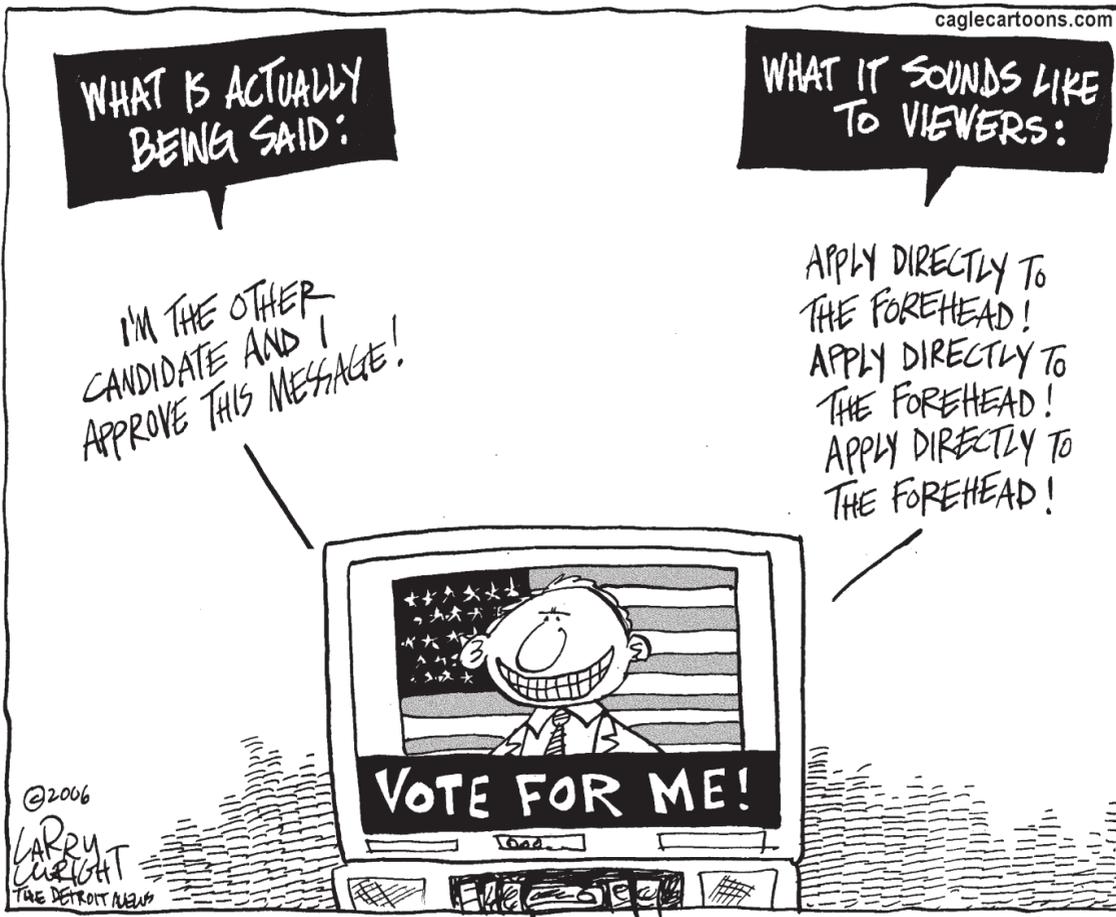
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We proved them wrong, it's done

They said it couldn't be done — but, we did it. I told you Jim Plotts would see to it that we made the move by the promised deadline. Granted, I was mopping the kitchen floor and working my way to the back door as the pheasant hunter was coming in the front door. Notice, I said "hunter" — only one showed up this weekend and as I showed him the kitchen and the coffee pot, his only comment was, "Don't drink coffee, don't cook." Well, alrighty then. I wonder why I worked so hard to get everything spic and span. But, he promised to come back next weekend and bring his friends. No matter one hunter or ten, the end result was the same. We are out of The Sunflower Inn and into our "new" house. The "bones" of the house are actually closer to 110 years old. But, after we gutted it, rewired, insulated and sheetrocked, it is like a new house.

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



Anyone is welcome to stop in anytime. However, don't come unless you are prepared to carry boxes upstairs or to the basement; paint trim; or help hang curtains. We are a long (and I mean very long) way from being settled. Let's just say we are a work in progress. Jim has worked relentlessly on our house for the last two months, but now it's time for him to get back to work for hire. This morning he's headed out to begin a job for his sister. New siding, windows and a roof are in order for her house.

My oldest daughter, Halley, tattled on our seven-year-old granddaughter, Taylor. Halley is staying with Taylor and her family for a while and gets to spend a lot of time with Taylor. Remember "Lick 'em Stix"? It's flavored crystals in a packet with a sugar "stick" you dip in and lick. My kids loved 'em when they were little. Anyway, Taylor's parents were gone and left Halley in charge. Taylor had a grape-flavored "Lick 'em" and, accidentally, spilled the crystals on the carpeting in the middle of the floor of Adam and Kara's bedroom. Not wanting her mother to find the mess, Taylor tried to clean it up herself — with water. The more she rubbed, the bigger the stain became. They say the purple will eventually fade away.

Here's a ride we'll never forget

Wow! I can't think of any other word to describe our ride on the USS Nebraska. It's a little like being in a Tom Clancy movie, from the chatter of the watch standers in the control room to the covered shed at the docks, where warheads can be loaded and missiles changed out away from the prying eyes of Russian satellites, to the stone-faced Marine guards at the gate. Crewmen sleep among the missile tubes, nine to a room, the lucky ones at least. Junior sailors bunk between compressors, under torpedoes or wherever there's space for a mattress and a curtain. Our day started early, 0615 hours, at the motel near the Sea Tac airport where 23 of us, mostly Nebraskans, had gathered for a tour sponsored by the Big Red Sub Club. Drivers from the Gold Crew (a Trident submarine has two full crews, who rotate two or three times a year) drove us clear around Puget Sound to Naval Base Kitsap, where we got a lecture from the public affairs officer and transferred to a bus for another hour's drive north. At the John Wayne Marina, we boarded the Olympic Venture, a Navy patrol boat (PTB-951) for an hour's ride to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, near the Canadian border, where we met Nebraska.

Along the Sappa Steve Haynes



The day dawned gray and wet, a Seattle morning if there ever was one. Most of us braved the open deck, though some crowded near the wheel house or below decks in the tiny galley to get out of the mist. Out in the strait, the weather warmed, the sea calmed and ahead, a gray hump loomed between four escorts — two armed Coast Guard cutters and two small container ships loaded with — get this — boxes of rocks. Sometimes, said the captain, Cmdr. Jeff de Beauclair, an armed helicopter joins the parade. The cutters can ward off any approaching surface vessel and the container ships, one to either side, manned by civilians, are there to take a hit from any missile fired at the sub. With 24 nuclear-tipped Tridents and dozens of warheads, Nebraska is way too valuable to risk coming into port. The patrol boat swings a gangway across to the sub and we walk over. In glass-like seas, it's easy transfer. An armed guard — another post-9/11 precaution — checks our ID against the list, and down the hatch we go. A submarine, even one big enough to house standing Trident missiles, is cramped. To get anywhere, you go up and down ladders, some big enough to be stairways on land, some (like the one leading to the hatch) just vertical. First we had lunch in the crew's mess, which lived up to the reputation of sub food stretching back to my dad's days on a submarine tender in World War II. He always talked about how the subs got steaks and A-1 while his crew got potatoes and hamburger. We had a couple of old submariners with us, and they couldn't stop talking about the differences between Nebraska and the old diesel boats. Those were tiny, cramped, one-level tubes, while an SSBN is more than 40 foot — a four-story behemoth loaded with death. We got to see nearly everything onboard, from the control room to the missile control panel, where Cynthia got to "fire" a test Trident. (The real trigger

is locked in a safe, awaiting the president's order, which except for tests, has never come. Thank God.) From the torpedo room to the auxiliary diesel engine to the control room, with the wheel, diving plane controls and periscopes, we missed only the sonar room and engine room, both still too classified for public view. We got to take pictures of most anything, from the crew bunks in among the missiles to the pharmacy (sick bay) to the galley. Then it was to the bridge, 30 foot straight up a ladder through the sail, really more of a crow's nest than a command station on a modern submarine. The captain has a cushion on top of the sail, the officer of the deck stands by a computer display and sailors man watch holes behind them. But what a view. Cmdr. John Carter, the Blue crew captain, was in his element. The captain let us ride on deck going down the sound and through the floating bridge, then stowed us below for the actual docking — some things there are still secret, it seems. We'd been warned not to rile the Marine guards on the dock with cameras, and the Navy sprinted us out and back to Seattle by ferry. We got home about 2200 hours — a long day. Someone asked what the best thing about the ride was — the electronic gear, the missiles primed to wipe out a quarter of the earth's surface, the fantastic design and awesome size of the sub — but hands down, it was the crew, serious, friendly, polite, studious, highly trained and motivated. It's an elite unit, yes, but a shining example of the U.S. military, very impressive from top to bottom. It was, as they say, the ride of a lifetime. Wow.

Don't forget Friday's the day to give a 'Thumbs Up' to a friend