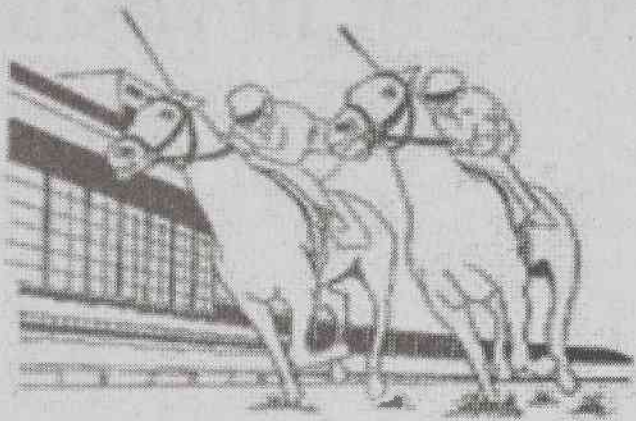


Opinion

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Election 2004



A Day at the races

By Toby Tate
Editor-In-Chief

Aaaaaand they're off! Those are the first words spoken at the beginning of a horse race, and that is something a presidential election is often compared to – a horse race. At the starting gate are dozens of contenders vying for the position of lead horse. Eventually, all will drop back but two, and finally...only one will remain. That one, whoever he or she may be, will not only become dignitary of the most powerful nation on earth, but leader of the free world. We the people will ultimately decide who this one person will be. Many factors should be considered when making this most consequential of choices.

The first things one should contemplate are the differences in the parties. What does the Green party stand for? What is the Reform party platform? What are the fundamental differences between the Democrats and Republicans? There is the Constitution party, the Libertarians, and even the Communist party. There are numerous parties running with many different agendas, and it often becomes difficult to sort it all out. The thing to look for is a platform that comes closest to your belief system. Are you a conservative, tending to hold on to tradition? You may want to vote Republican. Are you a liberal with a more progressive outlook on life? You may want to consider the Democrats. Are you socially liberal but politically conservative? The Libertarians might be for you.

Another thing to think about is the quality of life. Are we better off or worse off with the current administration than we were four years ago? Has the president made good on his promises or is he waffling? Has the president done anything worthwhile to make America safer, stronger and more economically productive, or are we headed down the path to ruin?

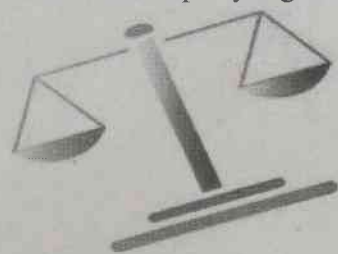
We should also consider the character of the

person running. What has he done in the past that may provide insight into his moral judgment? What is his family like? What type of people would he hire for his administration? Many people may prefer someone who is openly religious and others may prefer someone who is not religious at all. Some may want a person who comes from a political background, while others consider that to be a curse. The voting records of an individual can also be very instructional. Someone who has voted for one thing and then comes out later against that same thing may not be a very dependable decision maker in the face of national and international pressures.

Something else to ponder is the future of the United States. Where does this person want to lead us? They all say they want to take us forward, but what does this mean? What is their vision for the future of America? Does it sound like something you envision for yourself and your children, or does it sound like a place you don't want to live?

These questions and others can easily be answered on the web. The first place to start is the site of the party you're interested in. Truthfully, voters should be familiar with not only their favorite party, but with all the parties in order to be well informed. Over the years, party philosophies have changed, and things may not be the way our parents and grandparents have told us they are. The best knowledge is first-hand knowledge.

To find out where some parties stand on the issues as well as basic doctrines, go to these web sites: For the Democratic Party – www.democrats.org; the Republican Party – www.rnc.org; the Libertarian Party – www.lp.org; the Green Party – www.gp.org; and for the Reform Party – www.reformparty.org.



The Presidency vs. digestive factor: healthy ingredients, healthy politics

By Rene Finkeneller
Columnist

Attempting to stir up the 'political pot' on this campus, I volunteered to write an article for the paper about politics today. However, my first assignment was to give an impartial evaluation of our presidential candidates (Nader excluded). What can I say that hasn't been said on every Sunday morning political show, every prime-time cable talk show, or any talk radio station? If I were to do an honest evaluation of what each candidate brings to the table this year, despite any writing talent I might have, I could not possibly appear to be impartial. When one candidate gets a 20-second sound bite on the evening news, I think, "Yes! I hope my colleagues are hearing this!" and when the other candidate gets a 20-second sound bite, I think "Eck! What a liar! How can people stand to listen to this?"

I think this year's presidential election has less to do with the candidates and more to do with our appetites and what we're willing to digest, and both campaigns know it. They don't have professionals handling their campaigns; they have chefs, working on incredible dishes, appetizers, and sauces. Every photo op, every speech, every wide vs. tight camera shot of a candidate speaking before certain crowds, every press release, every web-site commercial, every TV commercial, are all apart of what I call the "digestive factor".

Some foods appeal to us whether it's dinnertime or during a 4 AM exam cram, while others are only craved during certain moods. Some foods we wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole, no matter how pretty the presentation or what other likeable foods are brought with it. This is what a campaign team is about. The speechwriters, communications directors, fundraisers, and logistics managers are all watching us intently to see when they can prepare the next banquet they have on standby. This election is not about whom is best suited for the job; it's about what kinds of foods we're willing to digest!

An instructor once dished out her political party's junk food to my class. I raised my hand and respectfully began to define each and every ingredient to her recipe and pointed out

why they were incredibly unhealthy for her. After I offered her a grilled-chicken salad, she was not in the mood to consider her food unhealthy, as to my tastes, her argument became a slimy, greasy, chili-cheese hot dog. Some people have become so hooked on their dietary routine, it's a challenge to try something different, and the same is true in politics. For this election, we must ask ourselves "What nutrients are we really getting?"

Here are some current political dishes being offered:

One dish: Appearing to be the voice of free speech, while silencing opponents behind fences blocks away from the facility of the convention. **The other choice:** Believing freedom of speech should be protected, by allowing dissenters to have the streets, and give them discounts at hotels and restaurants while they stalk you.

The dish of the day: 'Red herring', by insinuating educational funds were misspent on a war. Another meal offered: Producing the largest funding of educational plans of any preceding president, but the aroma is currently being masked by the red herring.

A quick junk food snack for the movies: Demeaning a president for finishing a book he was reading to a class of second graders (after having the first attacks whispered in his ear). A quick desert: Declaring talking about 9/11 in your campaign is wrong. The sugarcoated

craving stopped the opponent's chance to cook up some warm soup to tell all that went right after the president actually left the classroom.

The best banquet offered this election: Understanding why a president was sitting with second graders in the first place, understanding that it's not right to panic in front of children in a time of crisis, and the importance of sending children a message that they are important, no matter what else is going on in the world.

And finally, a meal that's been on and off the table throughout the year: A

candidate who has eaten fine, gourmet meals his entire life claims to feel natural at the Wendy's counter. Good for you if you consumed it when it was available. A meal I know the opponent is jealous of: A candidate who came from a fine dining background, but has always chosen backyard grilled steaks and fried chicken, and would invite anyone to his picnic table.

We have a lot to digest. In the end, I hope you uncover the actual ingredients, and make sure you've eaten a healthy meal before you go to the voting polls!

