

## OPINION

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**Enid News & Eagle**

## EDITORIAL

# Reducing deception

► Web site is a good source for checking political claims

Now that both political conventions are over, voters have roughly three months to make their final decisions on the presidential tickets of John McCain-Sarah Palin and Barack Obama-Joe Biden.

Voters now know who the running mates are, and they also know what the party platforms are going to be. Now, it's non-stop campaigning for the candidates, and that will mean non-stop advertising and propaganda. With the addition of the hundreds of blogs that just anybody can write and produce on the Internet, the propaganda and rhetoric pitch will be higher than it ever has been.

Voters will be hearing facts and fiction from both sides and their supporters, and they may be wondering just how to get to the truth. The national media should help voters sort out the realities, but, unfortunately, many of the major media seem to be getting caught up more and more in following the lead of innuendo over fact.

There is an organization, Annenberg Public Policy Center out of the University of Pennsylvania, that sponsors a Web site called Factcheck.org. The Annenberg Center performs research in the fields of political communication, information and society, media and the developing child, health communication and adolescent risk. The policy center's goal is to provide expert analysis that brings these issues into focus.

Factcheck.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit "consumer advocate" for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics. It monitors the factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. political players in the form of TV ads, debates, speeches, interviews and news releases. Its goal is to apply the best practices of both journalism and scholarship, and to increase public knowledge and understanding.

In our opinion, Factcheck.org has been a good source for getting to the truth behind political campaigns and their claims and statements. The site is updated regularly, and the updates are updated if further information or corrected information is found.

We recommend voters use this source for themselves when they are bombarded with candidates' claims. It's important for voters to have the best understanding possible of the claims being made by political candidates, and this is a good source for credible and timely information.



# Summer vacations down on the farm

In 1959, Louise Paine Mardis, a child of the Great Depression, wrote about her experiences growing up in Enid and spending summer vacations on her grandmother Pearl Magdeburg's 80-acre farm near Hennessey.

The late Bob Gray included Louise's lengthy paper in his book "The Fifties: Enid and The Cherokee Strip." The paper provides a down-on-the-farm, behind-the-scenes look at rural and small town Oklahoma after the stock market crash of 1929. Surprisingly there is no bitterness or anger in Louise's writings despite the fact they, and just about everyone else, were dirt poor. There was no television to create discontent with displays of luxuries and sexy, glamorous people. There were no credit cards.

Sometimes Louise would buy a Denver Post newspaper just to read Little Orphan Annie, Dick Tracy and Apple Mary. Her dad would save back a nickel to buy Liberty magazine to work the cockeyed cross-eyed puzzle, or a nickel for the Saturday Evening Post magazine, and that was just about the extent of their 1930s window on the world.

There was no electricity on Grandma Magdeburg's farm. Without even a radio or a telephone, much less Doppler radar and TV weathermen, their grandmother kept an eye on the early summer skies during the tornado season. If it looked as if a storm was brewing she would take everyone to the storm cellar, completely equipped with a rocking chair, lots of shelving and a bull snake. Louise said grandma would not let anyone kill the nonpoisonous bull snake because she said it ate the bugs and spiders. Bull snakes can grow to be pretty big, and they can make a loud hissing sound.



## COLUMNIST

Phil Brown

Grandma would sit in the rocker and sing songs to the eight kids until they all fell asleep. They would sleep on the empty shelves until day-break, when they would go to the house for breakfast. Some mornings she would open a quart jar of canned corn, making a cream sauce to feed the eight children. Louise said no one ever complained.

Louise also remembers her grandmother frequently made bread. If the kids were hungry and couldn't wait for it to rise, she would tear some off and fry it. She remembers her grandmother never complained, never raised her voice or yelled at any of the children. If she was unhappy, she never displayed it. If grandma baked a cream pie, someone would have to go to the hen house and gather some eggs. Louise said she could never put her hands underneath a laying hen — she was afraid of them.

Their home garden was a big part of the food chain. They depended on the fresh vegetables for a large amount of their food needs. Consequently, they all had to hoe weeds in the garden. She said none of the kids ever rebelled or made excuses not to go. At first light Grandma Magdeburg would wake them all up and tell them it was time to go. She wanted to get started before it got too hot. They would work, hoeing in the garden until about 10 o'clock, when the hot sun would tell them it was time to

stop and have breakfast. If there was enough flour, grandma would make biscuits, a big pan of homemade gravy or maybe a big pan of oatmeal. Louise said they ate "with gusto."

The box of oatmeal always included a pretty glass or tea towel. She said after a while her grandmother accumulated a nice collection of glasses and tea towels. Louise remembered the farmhouse floors were covered in shiny linoleum, which Grandma Magdeburg would mop and clean. Louise recalled coming into the house on a hot afternoon and lying down on the cool floor. She said it felt like heaven on earth.

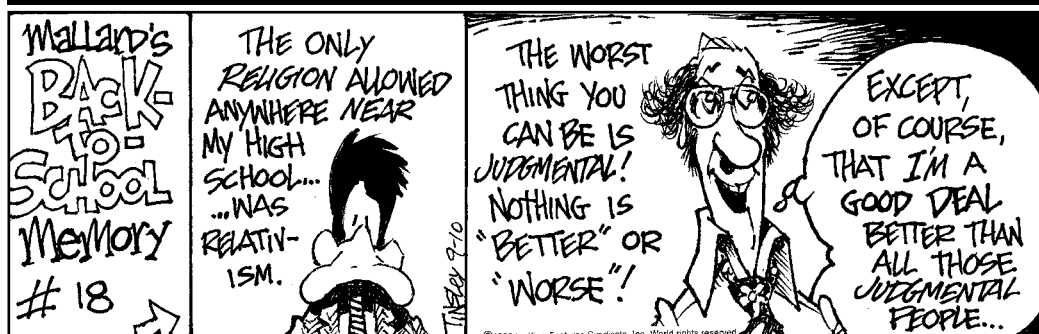
Flies, something we seldom see anymore in our closed up tight and centrally air-conditioned homes, were a common nuisance back in the 1930s — especially down on the farm. Louise's grandmother frequently would give each of the kids a towel and tell them to chase the flies out of the farmhouse. Louise said it was a wonder what a towel could do to chase out flies. In her daily battle with the pesky flies, Louise said her grandmother kept a pie pan in every room of the house with a piece of black paper in each pan. Adding water to the black paper made it poisonous, she said, and it was goodbye flies if they landed on the water.

How did eight kids take a bath without gas, electricity or running water? They got a big tub, filled it with water early in the morning, and let it stand all day in the sun. The sun would warm the water. In the evening they would all get in the tub and scrub and clean. Louise said they all used the same bath water. "Anyway, we thought we smelled better."

Brown is a former managing editor of the Enid Morning News.

## Mallard Fillmore®

By Bruce Tinsley



# Media needs to act as voters' human-resources department

By Cokie Roberts and Steven V. Roberts

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Here we go again. Another woman on the national political scene, another rash of sexist comments and questions. For what it's worth, here's our handbook of what we think is appropriate — and what's not — for the press and politicians to ask of and about Sarah Palin.

Since the country is considering hiring the Alaska governor for a big job, the media should act as the human-resources department, the people who quiz the applicant before she goes before the big bosses — the voters. What would be your reaction if you heard the questions aimed at Palin were coming from a personnel officer?

Women fought long and hard to insist certain queries were omitted from job interviews. "Do you expect to get pregnant?" was one regularly posed, and meant to intimidate, in the bad old days. The only correct answer — "none of your business" — doesn't fly when you're applying for a job.

No one asks male candidates, or job applicants, about their family decision-making. Has

anyone asked whether it's OK for Barack Obama to miss out on a year of his little girls' lives? Of course not. But within minutes after the announcement of the Palin pick, we heard, "Who's going to take care of the children?"

It's none of our business. The Palin family will figure it out the way millions of other families with working moms figure it out. Look, we're not naive about this. We know most mothers take considerably more responsibility for childcare than fathers do — fully 85 percent of mothers in an ABC poll said they were the primary caretakers of their children — but it's also true a majority of mothers work outside of the home and manage.

More decisions that aren't any of our business: When Sarah Palin decided to go back to work after giving birth, and what she did in her last pregnancy. When we were having babies, maternity leave didn't exist, so every mom went right back to work. We fought for the choice to stay home — but it's a choice, not a mandate. And could it possibly be appropriate to question a woman's way to deal with the complications of labor? These incredibly personal issues were part of the conversation in St. Paul last week,

along with discussions about whether Palin's daughter Bristol should marry her baby's father and keep her baby.

Obama's denunciation of any criticism of the teenager quickly cut it off. Still, Palin's handling of her daughter's predicament does raise legitimate questions that get to the issue of judgment. If you know your 17-year-old is pregnant, why would you thrust her into the glare of fierce presidential campaign? It's possible Gov. Palin, like most neophytes in national politics, had no idea how hot it is under the media spotlight. If that's true, John McCain's advisers should have warned her.

Now we've come to the part of the job interview that's not only appropriate but essential. How thoroughly did McCain vet the Alaska governor, did his lack of scrutiny expose her to these questions and does he really believe she is ready to assume the job of commander in chief? Those questions are very much our business.

So are critiques of Palin's policies — including policies that bear on family decisions. Her opposition to abortion and sex education, her slashing of a program to help teen mothers,

all should be subjects for political commentary. It's also fair to point out, if the shoe were on the other foot, the response would be very different. If Sarah Palin were a liberal, feminists groups would be rushing to her defense. And if a liberal candidate went back to work with a brand-new baby and her teenage daughter showed up pregnant — conservatives would lambaste her.

But it's time to stop. Stop asking women questions no one would ask of a man. Don't tell Elizabeth Edwards breast cancer should keep her from campaigning for her husband, and don't tell Sarah Palin young children should keep her from campaigning for herself.

Of course, voters will put all of a candidate's life into the mix when they go into the booth. And they will consider other intangibles like how someone looks and dresses — areas personnel officers know are off-limits. Voters are the big bosses; they can do what they please. But we here in human resources should be more careful.

## Editorial Roundup

By The Associated Press

Excerpts from recent editorials in newspapers in Oklahoma:

## Child care centers need to protect their kids

The Edmond Sun on liability insurance:

With the recent signing of "Demarion's Law" by Gov. Brad Henry, Oklahoma parents may feel a tad bit more secure in leaving their children with a day care.

The law requires all child care facilities "in order to maintain or obtain a license, to carry a minimum of \$200,000 of liability coverage for each incident of negligence that leads to any injury to a child that occurs while the child is on the premises or in the care of the child care facility."

Three-year-old Demarion Pittman's life was irrevocably altered the day in August 2007 a child care worker left the young boy in a hot car for several hours after an outing. The child suffered extensive brain damage and his medical costs already have climbed past the \$1 million mark.

His case brought out the state Department of Human Services did not require child care facilities to carry liability insurance. It's an almost unheard-of oversight in this litigious age.

House Bill 2863 by Rep. Mike Shelton is a great start in rectifying this situation for all Oklahoma parents who must use child care facilities.

But Oklahoma Foundation for Consumer & Patient Rights recently brought up this point: Why don't legislators extend the same legislation to nursing homes?

"When it comes to child care centers and nursing homes, a person's age determines whether they can be mistreated without financial consequences," stated Jeff Raymond, executive director of the nonprofit consumer advocacy group. "How can that possibly be right? Why wouldn't we offer the same protections to our elderly, who need just as much care and assistance?"

We agree with Raymond. He notes a bill with similar requirements for nursing homes passed out of the Senate last year but was killed in committee in the House.

As Demarion's case clearly shows, if something tragic happens, medical costs can mount quickly. The \$200,000 liability insurance for day cares is a good start, but we have to ask the state why our children and seniors are worth so little?

We believe businesses should be required to carry \$1 million in liability insurance. These days it doesn't take much to reach those heights in medical costs after a tragedy.

## Do you want to speak out?

Letters to the editor are welcomed.

However, because of space limitations, they must not be more than 300 words in length. Letters exceeding 300 words will be returned. Letters must be signed by the writer.

Please print your name above or below your signature. Include your name, address and daytime phone number.

Send to: Letters to the Editor, Enid News & Eagle, P.O. Box 1192, Enid, OK 73702.