

Opinion

McCain VP pick steals Obama spotlight

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As the polls began to tighten and the conventions came approaching, the Obama camp foresaw an insurmountable opportunity to leave John McCain and his precarious campaign flailing in the dust once and for all.

Barrack Obama's riveting speech at the 2008 Democratic Convention last week was (at the time) seen as a mastery of ethos and pathos that captivated the 38 million Americans watching and managed to reduce the almighty media mogul Oprah Winfrey to a mere rubble of tears.

Not only did he master his predictably rhetorical staple that has catapulted him to the forefront of the Democratic Party, but he offered something that remained to be seen up until then: specifics.

In his speech, he outlined the meaning of "change" as he saw appropriate. No, it wasn't change from politics as usual, as Obama

continually touts in appearances throughout the country and campaign commercials. But it was change from the last eight years, from the ever so despised Bush administration. Liberal change. The same policies, programs and additional spending the left has been peddling for years.

As far as domestic policies go, Obama's promises to "invest" in our future are liberal speak for a more bloated government whose "good intentions" threaten to create more problems than they solve.

For example, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society an extension of John F. Kennedy's War on Poverty, an amalgam of additional government spending in healthcare, education and welfare, has not done much at all to alleviate poverty throughout the country, yet it has cost taxpayers billions in the form of Medicare, Medicaid and urban housing development.

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A different state in Pa.

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Fall is among us and it's the start of yet another school year, and I would like to personally welcome all the new students here to Capital College, especially those who like me have come from lands far, far away. Whether you are from another country or simply another state, welcome to "Pennsylvania Strange."

I have only been in this beautiful state for a couple of months and have noticed that strange things go on in this state that do not happen anywhere else, at least anywhere I have been.

With that being said, I think it's important to inform you that I have done some traveling and have lived at some point in time on the West Coast, in the Midwest, in the South and in the South East. Notice I did not mention the North East. This is my first venture in this area but I still believe that most of the strange things I am going to tell you about are indeed isolated to "Pennsylvania Strange."

First off, Pennsylvania is not even known as a state but instead a commonwealth. Yes, you

now live in a commonwealth.

"What is the difference?" you might ask. Good question.

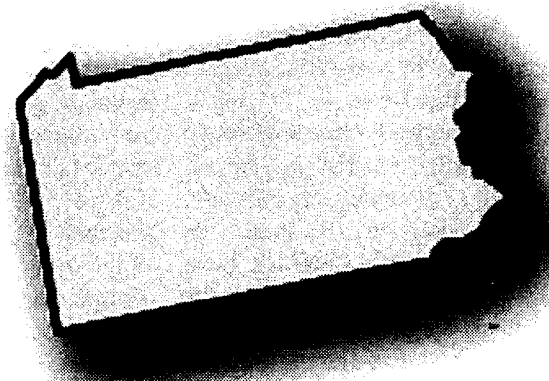
After hours and hours of research, I have finally found the answer. The difference between a state and a commonwealth is absolutely, positively nothing. It's just a matter of preference.

There are four commonwealths here in the U.S.: Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Massachusetts.

Remember I said most of these things will be isolated to "Penn Strange?" Well, I probably lied.

Now for those of you who have to drive around these ridiculous roadways, be very careful. Many of you who learned to drive in other states know that when merging onto a freeway, you must accelerate to the speed of traffic to make a smooth transition from on-ramp to freeway. This is rarely the case here in "Penn Strange."

I remember my first merger. It was a looping onramp and I was



accelerating out of the turn to get up to speed. I was looking over my shoulder and checking my mirrors for where traffic was. Judging distance and adjusting speed, I had my timing down and was going to pass smoothly right in between a semi and a compact car when my eyes came around that curve and caught glimpse of a car at a complete stop just yards ahead of me.

My first reaction was to slam on the brakes but I knew I would not stop in time, so I stomped on the skinny pedal, veered my Jeep onto the shoulder, blew the doors

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SEPT. 11: A look at where we are now

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video of the collapse of the towers — the actual smoke, the crumbling — is so painful it is almost never aired, and when it is, as it was in a montage at the Republican National Convention, it is utterly halting.

No one will forget. But when is it OK to move on?

For the people who were left behind, left without a spouse or a child or a parent or a friend on that day, it is a very real question, something to turn over in their minds every day.

For some, seven years means enough time to pick up, sometimes to pack up, to start anew.

Cathy Faughnan's husband, Christopher, a 37-year-old bond trader, was killed in the trade

center. She was 37 then, too, and remembers thinking she was too young to be a widow for the rest of her life.

Now she is 44. Within two years after the attacks she moved back to her home state of Colorado, and has since been remarried, to a widower she met in New York shortly after Sept. 11.

She does not like to watch TV coverage of these anniversaries. Her family remembers Christopher in other ways. September also means the start of college football, and they go to cheer his beloved Colorado Buffaloes once a year.

This year, for the first time, she took the three children she had with Christopher — Siena, Juliet and Liam, who are now 14 and 11 and 9 — to ground zero, where steel from the rebuilding now pokes above street level.

At the visitors center across

from the pit, they saw the pictures of thousands of people who died when the youngest of them was just 2 years old.

"I think that was the first time it really maybe hit them how many people died," their mother says. "I saw them with their mouths open."

For others, seven years is an instant.

One morning last month, Diane Horning was watching a webcast of the federal government's briefing on the mechanics of the collapse of Building 7 at the trade center complex.

A half-hour later, she saw a television report speculating on the vice presidential prospects for Giuliani and was outraged: "He can't put two words together without talking about my son's death."

Her son was Matthew Horning,

26 years old, killed in the north tower. Tiny bits of his remains were recovered from the site and from the Staten Island landfill where a million tons of debris and human remains were taken.

The years have not lessened her anger. She is appealing the dismissal this summer of a lawsuit that would require the city to move the material at the landfill to a separate burial plot.

"I just can't stop," Diane Horning says. "I need my son to be treated with dignity. He has been treated like garbage, and I can't imagine a mother sitting back and saying, 'You know, it's OK.'"

Seven years also means some people say to her that she is "obsessed."

Exactly how much the nation has changed since Sept. 11, 2001, is a matter of perspective.

"There were economic changes,

psychological effects," says Alfred Goldberg, who retired last year as the Pentagon's chief historian, and who points to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

He says he believes the tragedy of Sept. 11 was compounded by the national response, and perhaps by an exaggeration of the threat posed by al-Qaida. "We are in many ways a very changed nation because of those attacks," he says.

And while that is indisputable in a broad sense, it is a point bitterly contested by some of the people most directly affected.

For Sarah Arnold of Orlando, Fla., this Sept. 11 will not be an anniversary she cares much about. It will be one year and 21 days since her only child, a son named Britt, was killed by an improvised explosive device in Iraq.

She says she feels a kinship with