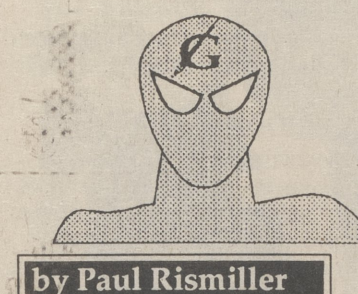


Ghostwriter



by Paul Rismiller

It's taken me longer than ever before to come to my decision about the eventual winner of this year's presidential election. This is mostly due, I believe, to the early, zombie-like tone of the Dole campaign, and the slippery nature of the incumbent.

When I was attending Laurel Park Elementary in Reading, PA, I disagreed with almost all my classmates about who would be the winner of the Humphrey-Nixon race in '68.

I picked Nixon and turned out to be correct, not because I knew anything about politics at such a young age, but because I paid attention to what the adults around me, voters & non-voters alike, were saying.

I've picked the winner of every presidential election since then, even when I voted for, and sometimes even worked on the campaigns of the losers. And my methods haven't changed since I was 10.

I simply listen to people talking. And the people I've overheard talking, while they aren't thrilled with Bob Dole's candidacy, and some express concern with his age, actively loathe Bill Clinton.

They aren't buying his Dick Morris-inspired "triangulation" strategy...

They were actively insulted with the talk at the Democratic convention that Clinton will "fix" the Welfare Reform act he signed after his re-election...

They were appalled by the promise-a-mile train trip to Chicago (someone figured out that Clinton promised to spend \$2 million a mile)...

He's fallen and he can get up . . . Bob Dole will win in November

And no one, even the few Clinton backers I've talked to, believe these absurd 20%+ poll numbers...

I've mentioned media bias more than once before in this column, and it's getting thick out there. One local daily newspaper has been bending over backwards to an almost laughable degree in an effort to show Dole's a dead duck.

What these bright lights fail to understand, is that such nonsense tends to create a backlash. That's why C-Span, PBS, and, to a lesser extent, CNN coverage of the conventions creamed the networks - people wanted to hear what the speakers had to say, not what the mainstream press thought about it. (As an aside, I watched the conventions on PBS, and I must say, they did an excellent job. They stuck mostly to the speakers, and when they did have panel discussions, they were balanced, restrained, and best of all, short!)

It's obviously an uphill fight for Bob Dole, taking on not only the incumbent, but the press, the late night talk show hosts, the Hollywood liberals, the unions, etc., etc.

But Bob Dole is a fighter if nothing else. He is a man of high honor, and despite hearing otherwise from press and pundits, character *does* matter. (Clinton may not have any convictions - but his friends do - federal convictions.) And in his wife, Elizabeth, (the anti-Hillary) and his running mate, Jack Kemp, Dole has two potent weapons.

He also has a lot of frank and file Fraternal Order of Police members hopping mad at their national lodge for endorsing Clinton/Gore. Not to mention members of the Armed Forces who can't stomach their Commander in Chief.

But when it comes down to the wire, it won't matter if Bubba has a steamer trunk full of endorsements, a 20 point lead in the Gallup poll, and a forged note from God.

Bob Dole will be the next President of the United States of America.

And as his first official act, I'd like to see him stick that pen he always carries into the neck of our very own Congressman, Paul Kanjorski. "Like horses, we should take (the Republican Congress) out and shoot it," said Big K. (Where's a whacko bunny-hugger when you need one?)

Nice talk from an arrogant spendthrift who enjoys backroom deals (such as the mysterious "Earth Conservancy") and goofy projects (inflatable dams indeed!) If Kanjorski's ego gets any bigger we can use it to stop up the Susquehanna, and save the taxpayers millions.

The crack came after the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee accused the Clintons of a massive cover-up in Travelgate.

True to form, the Demagogues, er, Democrats, screeched "McCarthyism" and stomped out. And if the Republican Congress is so bad, Big K, why is your President claiming credit for their accomplishments? Hum?

It was such a blast writing about the 30th Anniversary of *Star Trek* in my last column, but any break from politics is a relief, particularly during presidential election season.

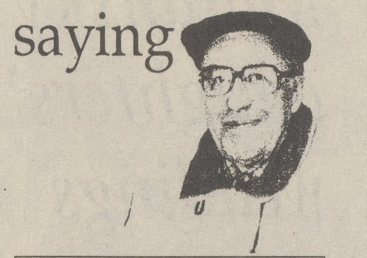
After writing about Kanjorski, Richard "My eyes should be brown" Gephardt, Leon "the Weasel" Panetta, David "B.S." Bonior, and of course, the Big Bubba, I can't help but feel *soiled*.

And speaking of soil, it wasn't an accident that Bill Clinton transformed 1.7 million acres of coal rich land in Utah into national monument land in a ceremony held at the Grand Canyon in Arizona. No accident, because the folks in Utah are righteously P.O.'d at the Prez for this land-grab.

It's also no accident that Utah happens to be solidly Republican.

But he wouldn't do that...would he?

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

CEN-TE-NAR-I-AN - noun - person who is 100 years old or more. The best known American to reach this pinnacle was comedian George Burns. Not your normal centenarian, he used to get younger as he grew older, and a nation rooted for him to make it.

It may be a misnomer to call him a comedian. After starting out in vaudeville as a combination of hooper-singer-actor, he then became a "straight man" to a comedienne named Gracie Allen.

Actually his show biz career began at the age of eight, when he sang in a quartet at a Presbyterian church. His sense of humor was by then fully developed, for he told his mother, "Ma, I've been a Jew for eight years and I never got anything. I was a Presbyterian for one day and I got a watch." Burns always added a kicker: "Three days later, the watch stopped. I became a Jew again."

The Burns and Allen duo was able to adapt to the changes in entertainment media and were hugely successful in vaudeville, then radio, then TV. Burns himself, after Gracie retired for health reasons, went on to be even more successful as an Academy-award winning movie star and a top headliner in TV and night clubs. He also authored a number of best-sellers.

Of his late-in-life triumphs he said, "By the time I found out I

Centenarian George Burns - one tough act to follow

had no talent, I was too big a star to do anything else."

Gracie Allen had an improbable comedic talent, and her combination of sweetness and daffiness immediately endeared her to audiences. Burns recognized this early on and had the smarts to sublimate himself to feeding Gracie lines and let her get most of the laughs.

To the present generation, used to the hip and rapid repartee on modern sitcoms, the audiences who made Burns and Allen such smash hits in the 20s and 30s would seem to have been rather easy to satisfy.

Would, for example, this bit of typical dialog from a Burns and Allen script, send today's audience into howls of delighted laughter? (It did back then.) Let's see: GEORGE: This family of yours. Did they all live together?

GRACIE: Yes, my father, my uncle, my cousin, my brother, and my nephew used to sleep in one bed and my -

GEORGE: I'm surprised your grandfather didn't sleep with them.

GRACIE: He did. But he died and they made him get up.

Or this:

GEORGE: Did the maid ever drop you on your head when you were a baby?

GRACIE: Don't be silly George, We couldn't afford a maid. My mother had to do it.

After this got a laugh, they would pause, and George would give the audience that dead-pan look of his and the laughs would start all over again. This was smooth, polished material, and

got them \$300 per week when that was really big bucks.

After Gracie passed on, Burns floundered for awhile, lost without the only true love of his life. To continue in show business he had to forget 30 years of feeding straight lines to his partner of a double act. He had to become a solo comedian, and breaking in his act in 1959 at the Sahara Hotel in Vegas, he was not exactly a smash.

But that didn't last. In the next decade, and the one after that, after being the oldest person to have triple by-pass surgery, Burns became a top movie star with the "Sunshine Boys," "Oh God!" (which made over 100 million) and "Oh God! Book Two."

He went on to become a single headliner all over, and a big part of his act was the "patter" songs he would always slip in. They were fascinating, so superbly done with so much of the Burns charm, that one was hardly aware of the words. Sort of "spoken to rhythm" more than sung, here is typical favorite:

"Oh, I forgot the number of my house the last time I went out/I forgot the number of my house, so for hours I roamed about/So I've unscrewed the number from the door and I've got it here tonight/All I've got to find is the door that it belongs to/Then I'm all right."

So...maybe we were easily pleased, but I'm glad I lived during the reign of this great centenarian. They say science is making it possible for there to be more of them each year.

But they won't ever make another one like George Burns.

Q: Where do you find the most Back Mountain news each week?
A: Only in The Dallas Post.

LIBRARY NEWS

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Back Mountain Memorial Library has received grant money to purchase new reference materials through the Wilkes-Barre District Center. Books have been purchased in the areas of Law, Medicine, Science, Business and Ready Reference.

The new titles include the following: Purdens-labor laws, domestic relations and deeds and mortgages. Barron's Guide to Law Schools; Directory of Foreign Manufacturers; Black's Medical Dictionary; The Consumer Protection Manual; World Wide Chamber of Commerce Directory; Hallwell's Film Guide; Franchise Annual; Best's Key Rating Guide;

Handy new reference books are now available at library

Property Casualty; Patients Guide to Medical Tests; Federal Health Information Source; Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons; The New Child Health Encyclopedia; The Complete Guide for Parents; and Hazardous Chemicals Desk Reference.

The Back Mountain Memorial Library is a member of the Wilkes-Barre District Library Center. Other libraries throughout Luzerne County received grant money as well. Another addition to the library's reference department is The Britannica Encyclopedia on CD-ROM. This purchase was made possible through memorial donations.

New books at the library: "Cadillac Jukebox" by James Lee Burke is a novel of the powerful and the powerless in the New South--To the people of Iberia,

Aaron Crown's ways are the stuff of "poor white piney-woods folklore".

"Turnaway" by Jesse Browner is the story of an unchartered island between the Bronx and the tip of Manhattan. It is inhabited solely by an elderly German-Jewish doctor and his young ward, Elias. A shipwreck occurs.

"Manhattan Nocturne" by Colin Harrison is the story of Porter Wren, a columnist for a New York City tabloid. He digs through the detritus of New York's most horrid murders and sensational crimes, looking for a new twist.

"Biggest Elvis" by P.F. Kluge is about another King, another Graceland, another chance...a dozen years after Elvis Presley's death in Memphis, a man galvanizes the sailors and bar girls at the U.S. Naval Base in the Philippines.

PSU observatory open for eclipse Sept. 26

Here's your last chance this century to view a total lunar eclipse! The phenomenon will take place Sept. 26 beginning around 8 p.m. To learn more about this event, and to get a good view, the Penn State Wilkes-Barre Campus invites the community to come to the Friedman Observatory on the campus in Lehman that evening beginning at 7:30.

For more information call the campus at 675-9278.

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Dallas Soccer Club to hold craft show Oct. 6

The Dallas High School Soccer Club will host its annual Fall Craft Show Oct. 6 at the Dallas Senior High School, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. More than 100 vendors from Pennsylvania and New Jersey will sell various crafts including semi-precious gemstone jewelry, needlework, candles, ceramics, potpourri, quilts, stencilled lampshades, woodcrafts, hand-made dolls and homemade candy.

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