

From the porch

# Astonishing times

By BRADLEY A. MARTIN  
My nose is usually buried so deep in the various events of Hickman County that it's usually hard for me to keep up with details of happenings on the state, national or world level.

Like editors at the 1,800-some-odd other weekly newspapers in America, I never have to leave the place where I live in search of information with which to fill this thing up every seventh day. Hometown news is why weekly newspapers in this country are doing well, despite the general gloom-and-doom of our big brothers and sisters in the cities.

But even a local gopher like me has had to pull up and pay attention to what's been going on at the national level for the last few weeks.

Seems like the pace of news began to step up last month, when Sen. Barack Obama filled the baseball stadium in Denver to give his nominating speech. No sooner did that spectacle fade than this one came rushing at us: Republican nominee John McCain picked the unknown governor of Alaska as his vice presidential running mate.

No one knew her; the media's question box overflowed; the Republicans thought Sarah Palin was under attack; and we all started learning about Wasilla and moose and the rest of the 49th state at a level far beyond what we thought we'd ever have to.

A similar political buzz occurred four years ago when Obama spoke at the Democratic convention in Boston, when John Kerry was nominated. No one knew him, either, though he's benefited from a couple of books, service in the U.S. Senate and a long primary race against Sen. Hillary Clinton.

It's all been astonishing. Just when we were getting used to the idea that the Democrats would nominate a black man or a woman for the nation's highest office, here comes a POW hero and his surprise running mate.

One way or another, a glass ceiling will break on Nov. 4.

How do we get to election day from here? Cage the attack dogs, please, and try to listen. Best chance for that is during the debates.

What I will be looking for are assurances that we have a candidate that will talk to others and listen; now, I know such assurances aren't worth much. President Bush promised to "change the culture of Washington," though at the time I didn't get

the impression that he was going to go for excessive executive power, uncompromising proposals and secret torture policies.

So far, I've heard Obama pledge to talk to other world leaders before commencing with threats and attacks. That's a mighty first step, one we need desperately. The world is too tightly tied for us to be running around like a bully..

At a time when bureaucrats and lobbyists make substantial change extremely difficult at the national level, it seems to me that conversation is perhaps the only catalyst that remains toward the pursuit of happiness.

In the last week, the big media spotlight has moved on because something more imminently notable has happened: The financial wizards are in trouble, and markets are teetering. Lenders are overextended in the quest for loans and more profit.

Heck, even here in Centerville, I continue to see signs advertising real estate with absolutely no down payment. That's simply reckless. If folks can't down-pay, they're not ready to buy. Now long ago I saw a report about a lease-to-own auto company that made money even with a high rate of default — profit was built in even as its customers went under. They knew it would happen; they didn't care.

And here we now are. "Bail them out," is the call. Last Thursday, President Bush called the two major presidential candidates in to help formulate a plan that seemed to be in the \$700 million . . . sorry . . . \$700 billion range. And there were signs that Congressmen might delay their own campaigns long enough to work out a solution. Maybe they've already come to an agreement as you read this.

It's all unbelievable. Hurricane Ivan? The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? Not hearing much about them.

Last Tuesday, I heard a brilliant approach. It came from Allan Meltzer of Carnegie Mellon University during a discussion on the News Hour with Jim Lehrer. His take:

If you must provide money to stabilize these companies (he didn't think it was necessary), loan it to them and require them to pay it all back — with interest. Even better: no dividends, no raises, no new perks may be declared until it's all paid back.

Same way these companies treat you and me, right?

It'll be painful, but maybe they'll listen.

# Opinions



## Tremendous music

I have one word . . . whew! What a festival! This year's Grinders Switch Music and Arts Festival was probably the greatest.

On the suggestion of Damon Wherry, our sound technician who has done such a good job for the past few years, I asked that the stage be moved to South Central Avenue and the Chamber agreed. On Friday afternoon, Hugh Bennett Productions moved in this year's stage, a 20-by-20. Just perfect for what we needed. Incidentally it was raining when they put the stage up and continued to rain all night. But on Saturday, Mother Nature was in a much better mood. The weather was just what we needed.

As for the opening ceremonies, they turned out great! Thanks to the local and state dignitaries that come out to speak each year. A special Thank you goes to the HCHS Jr. JROTC and Major Kenneth Bell who come out each year to present our colors. Also, to the Hickman County Scarlet Regiment for their great performance. A big thanks to the EHHS Band of Blue for their first appearance at the festival. Thanks to my good friend, KIX 96 owner/general manager Steve Turner for your support of the broadcast time.

I would also like to thank all the entertainers who performed at this year's event. I will not start to mention them individu-

ally because you can bet I would leave someone out and I do not want to do that. A special thanks to the ladies of the Clay Harris Theatre, you definitely kept me on my toes to say the least. Eugene, I now have enough soap, and Barbara and Teena, that was a great rendition of Satin Sheets but I didn't do it!

Thanks also to the Hickman County government and the Hickman County Commission for providing some financial support to help pay for the stage rental.

And last but not least, thanks to my wonderful wife, Sheila for her assistance all day long! She has to put up with my endless stream of phone calls, my whining about this and that, and all of the time I spend working towards the next year's event. Thanks to the Hickman County Chamber of Commerce, for asking me to continue doing this each year; to Damon Wherry, John Hudspeth, Lee Smith and all of their support staff for making things much easier by providing such great sound each year, and to David Faassen for his work over the years. Nancy Roland, not much more I can say except, you are the greatest! Looking forward to the 2009 GSMAF!

MICKEY BUNN  
GSMAF Entertainment Coordinator  
c/o 3795 Highway 100  
Centerville

## The power of a rumor

Last week many people in our community were shocked at the news of the terribly sad and senseless death of another young person from Hickman County. Heartfelt condolences go to the friends and family of that young man.

Unbelievably, a rumor was quickly started that another young man with the same first name had died under terrible circumstances. I was 3,000 miles away when the rumor reached me that my son was dead. This caused senseless agony to many people until they found out the truth, that he is still alive and well. In the meantime, caring friends were devastated at the horrible news.

Rumors have been known to ruin people's lives. Gossiping teachers have prevented children in troubled circumstances from being encouraged to be successful students. Christian congregations have been known to reject people who would like to worship with them. A few unethical law en-

forcement officers have been overheard telling stories about incidents that should not be discussed in public. Opportunities are withheld, simply based on what people have "heard."

Perhaps we do it because we want to be certain that "they" aren't "us." It keeps us separate. It makes us feel like we are better than "them," and that nothing like that could be said about us.

I would just like this to be a reminder to all of us, especially myself, that if we must pass on gossip, to think first of the long reaching ramifications and results of our willingness to believe bad things about people. We might want to question what our true intentions are when passing on negative rumors. We might then decide to change our habit of gossiping to a more uplifting exchange of goodwill.

Peace.  
ANTONIA MEADORS  
2726 Trace Creek Road  
Centerville

## County Fair was just right this year

I would like to commend the 2008 Hickman County Fair volunteers for the excellent job they did this year.

On the motocross night, the stands were packed, and the races went on well after dark. On Friday, the demolition derby returned and once again brought in a full house.

On Saturday evening, the tractor pull made its first appearance in several years. This event did not necessarily draw in a record-breaking crowd, but there were many pullers there from across the state with a few from out of state.

In my opinion, these are the types of revenue events that we need to have instead of trying to bring in big-name celebrities such as Blake Shelton.

In spite of our recent advancements, we are still a rural county, and what better to please a county such as ours than racing, smashing cars together and watching tractors drag a sled?

CHET BROWN  
413 Woodland Heights Road  
Centerville

## A good reunion

I have just returned home from having attended the Hickman County High School Class of 1946 reunion. The generosity of my sister-in-law, Frances Meeker, and hospitality of Donald Luther and Joe Harper enabled me to go.

Being with so many of my classmates, their spouses, my family members and other old friends has been wonderful.

My daughter, who lives in Oklahoma, keeps in close touch with her mom in Louisville, Ky. I do also. Beth told me yesterday, "Mom said every time you called from Centerville, you sounded like a kid in a country store."

Twenty-four of our classmates have passed away. Of course it was sad to learn they are no longer with us. Some others are in poor health or had reasons for not attending, but we had a good turnout.

I consider it the highlight of my year so far.

Sincerely,  
JAMES WILBUR MEEKER  
233 5th Ave. S., Apt. 404  
Kent, Wash. 98032

## A plan for college

By DALE SIMS  
Tennessee Treasurer

The State of Tennessee is working to promote to every Tennessee child and family a clear path to help put the goal of higher education and getting started on college savings within reach.

To accomplish this goal, the State of Tennessee has partnered with the State of Georgia to endorse the "Path2College 529 Plan" to help make college savings a little easier for more Tennesseans.

Georgia's "Path2College 529 Plan" can give Tennessee parents, grandparents and others a tax-advantaged way to save for their kids' college tuition and other qualified expenses — such as room and board, books and fees — that can be used at all qualified colleges in Tennessee or nationwide.

The great news is that any earnings in a Path2College 529 Plan account grow federal income tax-free, and withdrawals for qualified higher education expenses are also federal income tax-free.

I hope you'll visit [www.path2college529.com](http://www.path2college529.com) or call 877-424-4377 today to get more information and to put your kids or grandkids on the path toward a college education.

## Letters To The Editor

All Letters To The Editor must bear the NAME, ADDRESS, SIGNATURE and PHONE NUMBER of the writer; the phone number will not be published, but used for verification purposes only. All letters should be typewritten, if possible; if not, legibly handwritten. The editor reserves the right to edit any letter for length, good taste or legal reason. Anonymous or unverifiable letters will not be published.

## Politics in charge now

Politics are ruling everyone's lives. Just watch TV!

My mother's rule was "If you stay out of another one's marriage, religion and politics, you will stay out of trouble 95 percent of the time."

I stay strictly out of my children's marriages and religion but it is getting harder to stay out of their political arguments. I have always voted for the person I feel most qualified to lead. I feel opinions are like backsides, everybody has one.

My oldest son is a rabid Democrat, and my daughter is a conservative Republican. Both came to visit recently when my husband had a heart attack and bypass surgery, and life got tricky. My daughter said, "Don't mention John McCain or Sarah Palin, as Bill froths at the mouth."

My admiration for Governor Palin has nothing to do with the Republican Party but what she has done for Alaska's citizens. Having formerly lived and worked in Washington State for 30 years, I am well aware of ties between the two states. Washington also has a female governor, but to my knowledge has done nothing noticeable. No other governor has returned \$1,200 to every man, woman and child in their state.

My point is that politics shouldn't mess up families and lives as no matter who is the next president we will still have the most do-nothing Congress in 110 years. There will be no change or reform.

E. LEE HOOVER  
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