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Opinion February 13, 2008

Campaign surprises; a cause we support Mike Dougherty



The battle between "Obamafans" and "Clintonians" is getting heated, judging by what is available for reading on quick online surf of political Web sites and blogs.

Those who hope to see a Democrat in the White House in 344 days or so need to remember that showing vitriol toward the Democratic opponent in the campaign for the nomination won't do any candidate on your side any good.

The Republicans of the rightwing persuasion who claim to have such a gag-invoking distaste for John McCain in February will somehow have overcome it when it is time to board the latest "swift boat" river cruise in October. All of the quotes we're hearing or reading now, such as "I'd rather have Hillary than McCain" will somehow have been forgotten when Karl Rove comes out of hibernation in the fall to lead the latest hatchet job on Barrack Obama or Hillary Clinton.

I haven't observed as much going on in that regard among Arkansans, but I did notice Max Brantley of the Arkansas Times being called a few names regarding his alleged bias toward Hillary Clinton's campaign on a popular political blog that his employer maintains on the Internet.

Meanwhile, former Gov. Mike Huckabee continues to surprise people with his victories and staying power in the GOP campaign. He's not the one they were betting on to be the thorn in the side of the frontrunner.

In fact, if you remember what the political landscape looked like in the fall, people were shaking their heads and wondering what had happened to the McCain campaign. In the case of Huckabee, it was a time before he had received the "Chuck Norris kick" and the "Rick Flare bounce." If someone had told you that the McCain and Huckabee would be the last two standing on the GOP side, you would have taken the opportunity to bet the house. You would be homeless by now, but you would have taken that bet then.

This campaign has continued in its ability to surprise, so why do the cable network political pundits insist on making predictions, when they haven't gotten one right yet?

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AnySoldier.com is one of those great ideas that should have been publicized long ago.

According to the Web site, Sgt. Brian Horn of LaPlata, Md., a member of the Army infantry with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, was in the Kirkuk area of Iraq in 2003 when he started the idea of Any Soldier to help care for his soldiers. He agreed to distribute packages that came to him with "Attn: Any Soldier" in his address to soldiers who didn't get mail.

Horn later completed a tour in Afghanistan and is now home, but AnySoldier.com continues larger than ever. Brian's sister, Svetlana, is with the Army in Iraq.

"Any Soldier Inc. started in August 2003 as a simple family effort to help the soldiers in one Army unit; thus, our name," the Web site states. "Due to overwhelming requests, on 1 January 2004, the Any Soldier effort was expanded to include any member of the Armed Forces in harm's way."

Horn's father, Marty, and his mother, Sue, both former MPs in the Army, have helped him grow the effort into one that has expanded each year of its existence.

A reader told the newspaper about it. It seems that family, friends and co-workers have adopted members of the military to help with "CARE" packages and other items.

What I like about it is that the organization seeks a wide range of assistance, from monetary donations and packages to simple letters to soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and Coast Guard members. In fact, some of the soldiers who serve as "distributors" in the program say that a letter is the most desired thing most soldiers can receive.

In simple terms, the group has "recruited" volunteers serving in the military to accept packages or letters addressed to "Any Soldier" and distribute them to guys or gals in their unit who don't receive much from loved ones back home.

It's a wonderful idea and a project in which it doesn't cost much to participate. It gives everyone a chance to show their support for our men and women representing us overseas.

Visit the Web site and read all about it.

Mike Dougherty is the Editor the Saline County Voice. His column appears weekly.

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