

## The Party Line:

I heard my favorite line of the year so far. It was in response to the current thinking in some circles that five years in a torturous prison molded John McCain into presidential material. The humorist, Jon Stewart, was wondering if the prison run by the United States at Guantanamo should therefore be considered a leadership training program. I can just see one of the detainees, after his release, returning home to run for the top job in say Afghanistan or Pakistan. "Vote for me, I spent five years in the Gitmo Marriott."

It's uplifting to know that we are contributing to the ongoing stability of our allies by training young men to assume the mantle of leadership. What was true for John must also be true for Jabar. Prison camps turn fighters into statesmen. Personally, I'm more inclined to think that five years of isolation, torture, starvation and fear would be more likely to produce negative results in the victim. We're not talking about whether McCain is a hero or not. We're talking about whether he should be the next President. Regardless, it's nice to know that Rumsfeld and Cheney and Gonzalez had their eyes on the future of other democracies when they built Gitmo and then legalized torture. In our little corner of Cuba we're training the leaders of tomorrow.

The Republican convention was the source for a lot of good lines. I'm still smiling and shaking my head at the incredible gall of Mitt Romney telling us that his party will put an end to the undue influence of the "Eastern Elite". Mitt Romney IS the Eastern elite. In the dictionary under both Eastern and Elite there is a picture of Mitt. He's posing in a group shot with the Cabots, Bushes, Kennedys and Rockefellers. Mitt's the guy holding up 'rabbit ear fingers' behind the head of Daddy Bush. Yup, that's Mitt, the zillionaire populist. Mitt, the good neighbor who buys the factory you work in, breaks it apart and sells it off, firing you and your mom. My kind of Everyman.

And how about that Sarah Palin? She uses her catchy line about community organizers not having 'actual responsibilities'. Did you know that without community organizers there would be no eight hour workday, no child labor laws, and no shelters for battered women? Let's see now, who did more for her community, Jane Addams or Sarah Palin? It's not even close. Does she really include censoring books and firing the librarian as the 'actual responsibilities' of a small town mayor? Maybe if she becomes this big country's vice president she could preside over actual book burnings. Oh joy! I don't know

about you but I don't want our 'Second in Command' telling us what we can and can not read. Imagine this outspoken opponent of Big Government getting Big Government into the business of controlling what ends up on your night table. Do you think she'd be for censorship if Hillary were doing the censoring? Not.

It's too bad. Just when it was becoming a possibility that the two presidential candidates might present differing, interesting energy policies for us to look at, here come the culture wars again. "They are bad; we are good, vote for us." Rick Davis, who manages the campaign for McCain said it all when he opined "This election is not about issues." What he goes on to talk about is that the campaign is all about the 'image' of the candidates. Sell your team as strong, plain outsiders and you've got a real shot to get them elected regardless of what's troubling the country. Issues are for thinkers, image gets votes. None of the candidates from either party is a political outsider. They are insiders of the highest order. You don't get nominated if you're not in the club. It can't happen.

And then there's Rudy. There will always be a Rudy. He's kind of like that little dog that lives down the block barking at you as you walk by. He just doesn't know how to do anything else. It's what he does; bark. Rudy's big line was, "Drill, baby, drill." Profound in its simplicity and utterly useless except to get the choir to stand up and cheer. "Drill, baby, drill." That's it, that's what he gave us? Did he stay up late to write that? Here's the guy who finished umpteenth in the primaries (and deservedly so) revving up the faithful (who soundly rejected him) pitching for the party. Maybe he's hoping for that new Cabinet spot, Secretary of September 11th.

There are so many catch phrases, so little substance. So many diversions, so little discussion. We are being treated as if we have the attention span of a gnat. We are being spoken to like we are six year olds. The campaign has done its research and they've decided that's who we are. Oh well. That's the way it goes when the line that works best is the party line.