

From: Dick Bernard dick\_bernard@msn.com  
Subject: P&J#1564 At Barack Obama Jan 19 2008 FEB. 2, 2008  
Date: February 4, 2008 at 6:42 AM  
To: Dick Bernard dick\_bernard@msn.com

DR

As is obvious from attachment #1, I wasn't the coolest 'fashion plate' in line with 20,000 others waiting to see Barack Obama on Jan 19. But, hey, it's winter in MN, and I didn't want to mess my good coat with all those campaign buttons, and I did have to walk several blocks to get in line, and I expected I'd have to wait a couple of hours outside, rather than in the skywalk over Hennepin Avenue, overlooking that steak house that I've heard so much about Fogo de Chao. (There were long lines outside, too. I just got lucky and picked the correct one.)

P&J Jer John Martin (at right in #2), a volunteer par excellence, worked the Obama event from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., along with Michael Johnston and many others.

Barack himself talked for almost an hour, and gave everyone more than their money's worth...well, it was free... but I'm sure he raised a lot of money yesterday afternoon.

I had decided to assess Obama's event based on the young people in evidence. A lady behind me - the one who took the photo - suggested that 'young' is 18-30 in age. Her daughter was along with her.

On that criteria, Obama's crowd was very, very well supplied with young people, but not exclusively. We were a diverse lot in all ways. If Barack can keep the young energized, he will be very formidable in the months to come. I asked a kid near me in line if kids these days are talking politics, and she assured me that yes, they were, and seriously.

Obama is an incredible orator, but you all already know that.

I have heard all manner of spell-binding orators over the years, and they always move and inspire, each in their own ways. They can motivate for good, or for ill. There were no 'flat spots' in Obama's presentation. It was powerful. I had to remind myself that it was only a stump speech, only one part of the political process.

Seasoned campaigners know that a campaign is an often brutal process, and that the only two destinations that ultimately matter in the presidential campaign are the final nomination by their party, and the results election day. Everything else is groundwork. Obama's stop in Minnesota was productive, but it was just a stop. There are over seven months to the Democratic Convention, and nine to the election itself, and in electoral politics, those are light years away. It is pretty obvious that his local political apparatus - critical to success - is impressive and well organized.

In Target Center on Saturday afternoon were 20,000 people, less than one per cent of Minnesota's population.

If most of them went away pleased, which I think is certain, many of them will go to work in Obama's behalf.

If those enthusiastic young people I saw on Saturday can keep up their energy level, they can make an immense amount of difference at the caucuses on Tuesday, and down the road.

I'll be at my caucus Tuesday night, and again I'll note who shows. I rarely miss these local exercises in democracy.

And I'll keep paying attention to the fascinating divergence of views about the candidates, on the various networks I get my information.

We don't all think alike....

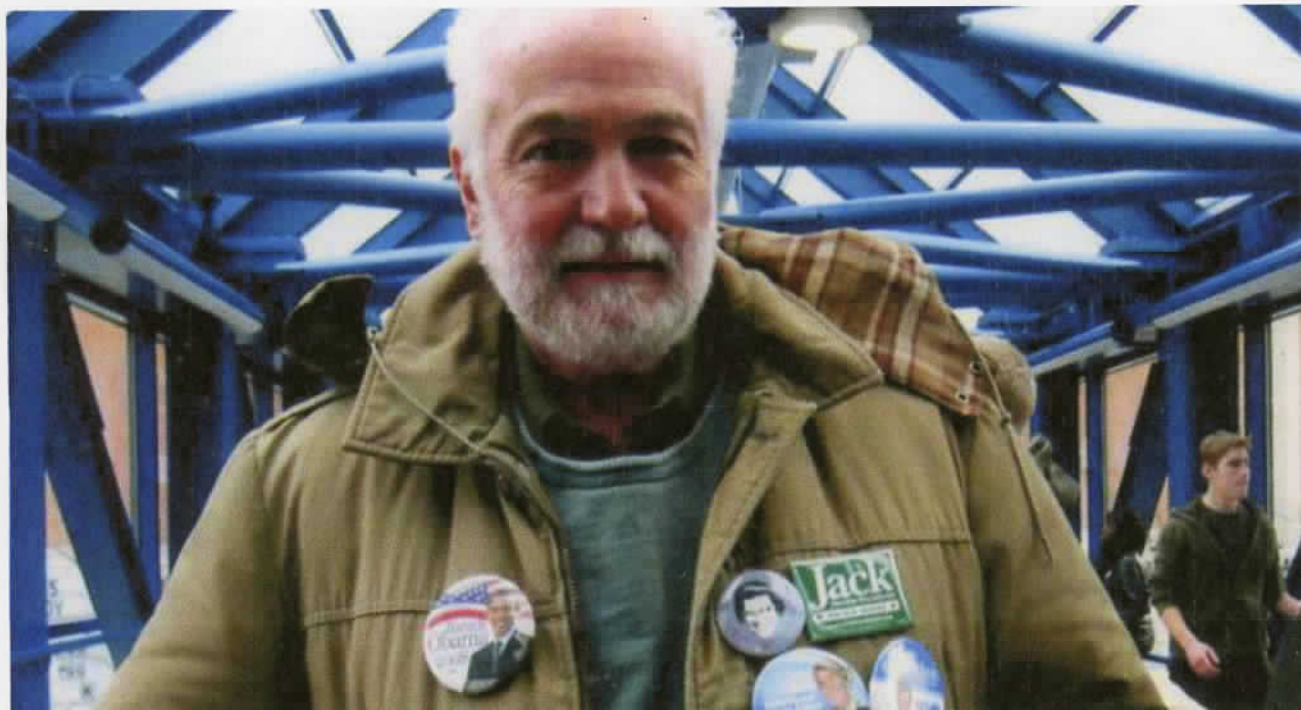
Outside the Target Center was a solitary protestor, a woman with a small sign, which seemed to question Obama's ties to "Zionist lobbyists". I have no idea what exactly her issue was, but it testifies to the power of individual witness - at least this person actually saw her sign, and wondered. Can anyone help?

...

Sunday afternoon, I had thoughts of making the trip back to see Hillary Clinton as she made a campaign stop at a local college, but we went to Charley Wilson's War instead. It's a good message movie, about how an American Congressman covertly helped take out the Russkies in Afghanistan in the 1980s, but saw how we managed to screw everything up afterwards, if one takes time to hear the message which is evident from the very last text line in the film, from Charley Wilson himself: something like "we always f--k up the end game".

I'm sure many who see the film, see only commy-fighting heroics in the shady and totally covert dealings of Wilson and the CIA back then - he and his associates could care less about niceties of law and openness of government a la Dick Cheney of today - but there was apparently a little more to Cong Wilson than met the eye.

For those who haven't seen the film: then-Cong. Charley Wilson managed to put together about a billion govt \$'s, essentially invisible even to lawmakers, to fund anti-Soviet actions in Afghanistan in the 1980s. After the war, he couldn't put together a paltry million \$'s for schools in Afghanistan (part of "the end game"). That frustrated him. To me, that was the message of the movie, hopefully caught by some who liked the war part.





From: **Dick Bernard** dick\_bernard@msn.com  
Subject: P&J#1566 "Super Tuesday"  
Date: February 6, 2008 at 3:52 PM  
To: Dick Bernard dick\_bernard@msn.com

DR

I'm guessing I've heard from everyone who has an interest in responding to last night, so here 'tis. Thanks.

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Yes, I "gotta get a life"...I got curious, yesterday, about the age U.S. Presidents were when they assumed the presidency.

My time to run is definitely past: Here they are since 1901: Teddy Roosevelt, 42; Taft, 51; Wilson, 56; Harding, 55; Coolidge, 50; Hoover, 54; FDR, 50; Truman, 60; Eisenhower, 62; JFK, 43; LBJ, 54; Nixon, 55; Ford, 61; Carter, 52; Reagan, 69 (THERE'S HOPE - not much); GHWB, 64; Bill Clinton, 46; the Decider, 54. (At the end of this P&J, I list the rest of the bunch....)

Funny how they seemed so old back when I knew 'em as a kid.

If elected, McCain, 71, would be the oldest President ever elected, older even than the Gipper. You can bet that this point will be whispered.

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#### CAUCUSING:

I've attended precinct caucuses for years. Our particular caucus location for the last several years has been a junior high school a 15 minute drive from me, just off I-94.

That's 15 minutes on a normal day.

Tonight it took almost an hour to drive to the location, most of that time spent in the last half mile jammed bumper to bumper on the freeway and the exit ramp, and then another 15 minutes to walk to the school from my car which I had to park on the shoulder of the road.

The time spent had everything to do with the precinct caucus attendance, which was HUGE.

My caucus location was teeming with young people. The young guy who serves me coffee most mornings at my local Caribou was there, volunteering for Al Franken. It is nice to make occasional unexpected connections like these.

I cast my ballot - for Hillary Clinton; registered to become a delegate to the next level - an important step, as the next level is where the state delegates are selected. We left early as Cathy needed to get home for some phone calls. It was a long chilly walk back to the car, then home.

Why my vote for Hillary? More on that in a later post.

(The presidential vote in Minnesota last night is simply a straw poll of those who actually registered at the caucus. It reflects who showed up. Nonetheless, it will be interesting to see the results.)

I got a sense, last night, that people in my area are wanting their country back. This was a school full of serious looking people. I'll hope their commitment sustains itself, and in fact grows.

For myself, I'll be proud to support whoever ends up as the nominees.

More on my impressions at the end of this post.

From: **Dick Bernard** dick\_bernard@msn.com  
Subject: P&J#1568 Why I voted for Hillary  
Date: February 8, 2008 at 5:37 AM  
To: Dick Bernard dick\_bernard@msn.com

DR

This is one of mine I hope you'll take a moment to read.

Pro or Con responses will go into a future mailbag. (There will be a 'mailbag' following this one, then I may give you a break for the weekend!)

#### Why did I vote for Hillary, and Why am I inclined to support her?

There are no simple answers to those questions, whether answered by me, or anyone else. It is a complex matter. But I can provide some clues, with some data I find significant:

1. No less an authority than archconservative William (Bill) Bennett pronounced on CNN yesterday afternoon (Feb 7), that while he had serious reservations about John McCain as the Republican nominee, he would back him because McCain had an American Conservative Union rating of 82, while Hillary Clinton had a rating of 9. (If those numbers are incorrect, it's Bill Bennett or American Conservative Union who's lying, not me! [www.acuratings.org](http://www.acuratings.org) is where you can check. On this list, which ranks lawmakers performance through 2006, MN Senator Mark Dayton had a ranking of 11, and Norm Coleman a rating of 75. Obama's ranking is 8. Most conservative: DeMint (SC) 98; most awfully liberal, Ted Kennedy of MA, 2).



2. The same afternoon of Feb 7, a letter came from a good friend, a Catholic Priest friend who's now in El Paso TX saying he's now "on board w/the Obama campaign. Clinton has never repented for her support of the [Iraq] war...." He was talking, I suppose, about the October, 2002, resolution on which she voted 'aye'; and on which my own Senator, Paul Wellstone, wavered until almost the last second before voting 'nay' (I know the circumstances on the latter, since I was on the way to banner at Wellstone's office that fateful October afternoon and on arrival there found nobody banner. I learned after I got home that he had declared he would vote against the resolution. At the time, I was very new to the Peace movement, and nobody was keeping me in the loop about what was happening (they still don't, too often!). Of course, that vote was strategized by the administration and Republican leadership to take place in very close proximity to the 2002 mid-term elections. It's easy research to find out what happened that Nov.)

Clinton was in her second year in the U.S. Senate when that vote occurred, and representing her state of New York. Her vote apparently didn't hurt her standing with her home state folks - her constituents...she was easily reelected in 2006.

If folks take time to recall, Bush's approval ratings were still stratospheric then, and they were stratospheric because of his WAR rhetoric and planning, and the politically massaged aftermath of 9-11. It's useful to think back to those times. Hillary Clinton's constituency was and is in New York City and State, where the worst of 9-11 happened, and it's hard to imagine any other vote from her at that time, however ill advised one might think it was in hindsight. I wouldn't expect her to 'repent', either. (When I became a peacenik, October 2001 and the bombing of Afghanistan, 94% of Americans approved of the bombing. Talk about being in the minority.)

3. I have mentioned more than once that in my own assessment of the candidates stated positions, Kucinich clearly was most in synch with my own personal views (40), while Edwards, Clinton and Obama were quite positive and a virtual tie (29, 28, 28), with Huckabee and McCain almost tied far down the list (12, 11), and Romney almost a no-show (4). (In my listing, Mike Gravel came in at 29 also. Thompson, Hunter, Guiliani and Tancredo were at the end, with 3, 2, 2 and 1 respectively. [www.myelectionchoices.com](http://www.myelectionchoices.com))

This assessment had lots of issues, and lots of position statements from all the candidates, not labeled by candidates, so I don't know in which areas I was most in synch with Clinton or any candidate, but it was useful for me in trying to figure out the general positions of the potential candidates for the most complex and difficult job in the world.

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Debate rages on this network and others about Clinton, and mostly it has been pretty negative towards her. It was an act almost like 'coming out' to mention that I was going to vote for Hillary on Tuesday! "What will they say?" I suspect I was/am not at all alone in the big camp of folks who think Hillary is okay, and her own person, too.

I haven't and won't rate Hillary based on her years as first lady; nor did I rate her based on Bill, though I admit to being puzzled why even Bill has been made out to be such a liability. Best as I recall, he was very popular with the American people even after the impeachment, and through the end of his term, and most people would take the 'Bill days' of the 90s in a minute over what we've endured in the last 7 years.

Clinton ended his term, as I recall, with still very high approval ratings. He still is popular here, and around the world.

But the notion has been planted (and accepted) that, somehow, that this is a bad couple, in almost any way someone wants to define 'bad', and this includes many assessments from the Left. So be it. Could the description be a 'spun' one? Are we witnessing how the Politics of Division and Character Assassination works, directly and/or subtly? From BOTH poles of the ideological spectrum?

Hillary Clinton seems to have both the stamina and the backbone to endure the brutality of the campaign trail. This is some important evidence to me that she has what it takes to be chief executive of the United States, by far the most complex job on earth (if one takes time to be engaged in the complexity - Bush didn't. "The Decider" decided and in the process we have become a country governed by a ruler not a President.) Even as first lady, Hillary was molded by and initiated into the vicious crucible of Washington politics with the Health Care reform dilemma early in Bill's first term. She's criticized for not achieving the goal; I rarely hear she (and Bill) complimented for trying....

Add to the complexity of governing a monstrosity like our democracy is, the almost certain extraordinarily difficult situations and circumstances that we are entering after this disastrous eight years, and I puzzle as to why Hillary or anyone for that matter would want to be President. FDR may prove to have had a cakewalk in comparison.

That Hillary Clinton is a woman has never caused me to wonder about her ability to lead. My career representing teachers (still basically a female profession), long ago rid me of the business of sex role stereotyping, if indeed, that ever was a serious issue for me.

As I prepare to click 'send' on this, I have one last thought, from overnight. Hillary (and the others) are cursed by the 'Liberal' label as if it is the mark of Satan himself. This has been one of the most successful anti-marketing campaigns in our history. I commented on 'liberal' at a disenchanted conservative's dinner table a while back thusly: "I'm definitely a Liberal, but if you truly want Conservative government, where people carefully handle your money, and are Compassionate in the process, you'll elect Liberal every time. We're careful with our fellow citizens money." Liberals in my experience are, by and large, careful with the dollar (sometimes 'cheap') because they've had to be; and they tend to be, I think, more truly compassionate and understanding of other points of view. There could be worse qualities. The best 'Compassionate Conservatives' are, really, Liberals. (I know plenty of truly Compassionate Conservative Republicans...these folks are, by their own admission, out of power even in their own party, and trying to figure out how to regain some of the deserved stature and respect they had in the past.

We'll see what happens these next months. Keep talking.