

PERSPECTIVES

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Laugh Now VOTE LATER

The presidential candidates aren't talking about the issues, so the public can only laugh

Sixteen months from today, on the first Tuesday of November, 2000, the United States will elect its next president, from a list that includes Al Gore, Bill Bradley, George W. Bush, John McCain, Elizabeth Dole, Lamar Alexander and Steve Forbes, among others.

Can't you just sense the excitement? Scanning over those likely ballot choices makes me want to call for a Constitutional amendment, one which would grant Bill Clinton four more years in the White House. He may be sleazy, he may be crooked and he may weep more than any leader should be allowed, but Clinton also keeps this country entertained.

Maybe some of us more than others, but what stimulating behavior can we truly expect from a President Gore, or, egad, a President Forbes? Former New York Knick Bill Bradley may be able to whip each and every one of us in a game of H-O-R-S-E, but it's highly unlikely that he can rise above his blandness to give us S-M-I-L-E-S.

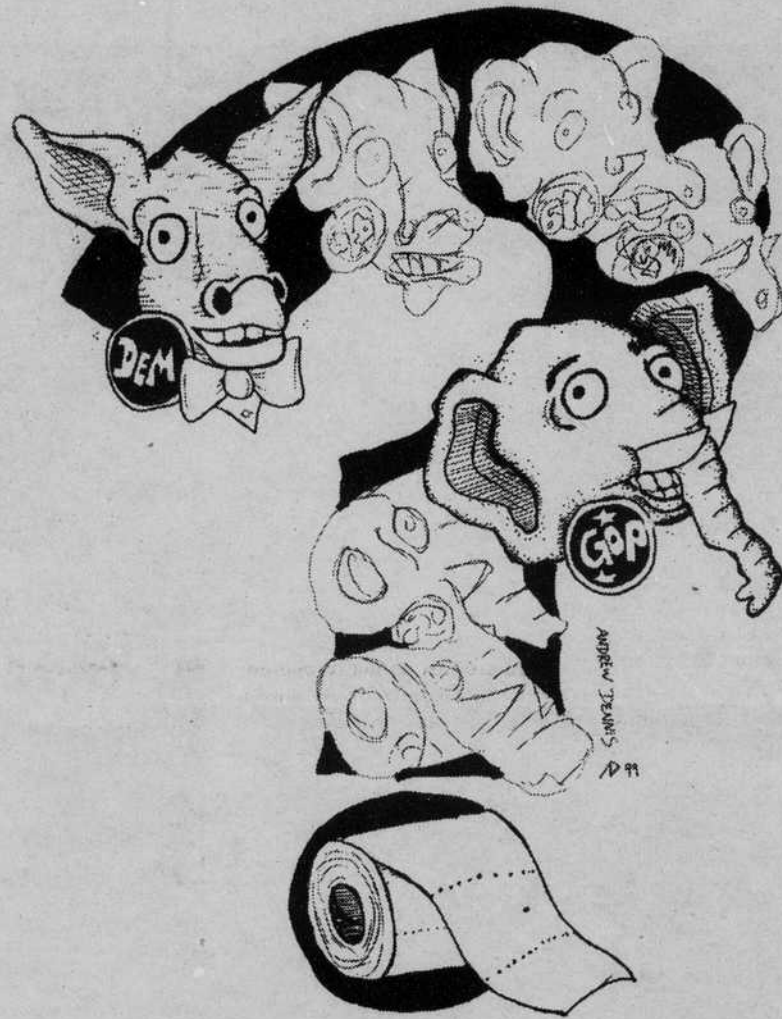
Most pundits are practically conceding the next presidential race to Bush, the son of our 41st president. A CNN/USA Today poll released last week showed 59 percent of those polled would give Bush the Republican nomination. Other polls have the Texan leading comfortably overall when people are asked to choose between him and Gore, the likely Democratic contender.

Politics run deep in the Bush family, with another clan member, Jeb, holding the governor's office in Florida. But comedy? Not unless you consider George W.'s term "compassionate conservatism" a rib-tickler.

Opinion



Jack Clifford



How about Arizona Sen. John McCain as president? He's been quoted as saying that as President, "you may disagree with me often, but I will never embarrass you." Where's the fun in that? Anyone for Lamar Alexander? Well, he is from Tennessee, which is kind of a funny state. The more serious readers out there are

probably thinking that this commentary is just tissue-paper quality. The highest office in our land shouldn't be a place for buffoonery, you argue, but instead should command respect and honor. OK, let's play it your way for a bit. Take any of the leading candidates and list three campaign pledges he or she has

made. Other than the national anthem, what does this group of politicians stand for? Sure, it's early in the race, but these men and one woman are out there on the trail, raising big bucks for next year's battle. In fact, Bush will be in Portland on Wednesday for a fund-raising dinner that is expected to generate about \$200,000. If you're a contributor to the cause, what exactly are you getting for that donation? Who knows — because Bush has been pretty mum on his platform to this point.

Oh wait, he has promised to bone up on his foreign-policy knowledge, so that next time he's asked he won't mix up Slovenia and Slovakia. Then there's Gore. He, of course, has to drag Clinton's lame-duck butt through the next year or so, and voters aren't cutting the vice president any slack, even though his boss' boo-boos shouldn't be his as well. So, other than Clinton's misdeeds, what is it about Gore that people like or dislike?

Yes, he's boring. And we do know that he's pro-environment. He wrote a whole book on the subject, for God's sake! Gore must be serious about the Earth, right? But what are his main points?

Does he call for the elimination of all cars by the year 2025? No one knows, because so far, he's not talking specifics, just platitudes.

Maybe I'm just too cynical about all of this. Then again, eight years of the Bill and Hillary (and Monica and Gennifer and Paula ...) Show can put a crimp in one's political beliefs.

Sure, deep down I want a worthy, honorable and respectable person to run this country. I also want the candidates to let me in on what they plan to do with that all-important position.

Until they start to speak up and give me the goods, though, I'm pulling for Dan Quayle.

Just for laughs.

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Editorial Cartoons

