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PAH!

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It Was A Very Good Sneer

by Mark Morelli

My mother spoke. I couldn't respond right away.

"Are you sure?" I asked. "Because if you're right, then this is all over."

It wasn't Katie Couric. It wasn't Brian Williams. It is on on these long walks with the dog that I talk about news and politics with with my mother, an avid CNN viewer. So it was perfect that my mother broke the news to me. Pennsylvania and Ohio went for Obama.

She said, "I'm pretty glad something like this happened in my lifetime. It could've been Hillary, too. Either one of them would have been great. But not Sarah Palin." That 81-year-old longed to see barriers broken by the those who deserved the honor, not one who was plucked from the chorus line at the last minute only to hit center stage and spew either bile or gibberish.

She's a Democrat, the widow of a union man. My father was a 40+ year member of the United Food and Commerical Workers International Union, a voice for fair pay and benefits for workers and retirees. Others may rail against unions, but we who were raised in union households understand that the humanity of labor unions far outweigh the excesses and has long made me vote for candidates in the party who supports unions.

My mother is an immigrant who met my GI father in World War II, an experience they rarely talked -- at least in front of their three sons -- in their 52-year marriage. Having suffered through war firsthand, my mother detests the bring-'em-on chicken hawks of the Bush administration who liked to dress up in war paint made from somebody's else's blood.

I understand my mother's excitement. She'd seen a lot in her life. On the other end of the spectrum, my two daughters were anxiously awaiting the results, too. When I got home from the dog walk, ecstatic tenth-grader Olivia cried out, "He won! He won!" When Obama had said *give back to your community and we'll help you go to college*, he was not only speaking to my daughter, he was inviting her to sacrific for her nation. Throughout most of their lives she and her friends have witnessed politics as childish name calling and finger pointing. During one TV debate, she watched McCain and said, "He's acting like a 5th grader." Meanwhile, here's Obama, inspiring positive citizenship not merely with rhetoric, but with dignity and repose in the heat of campaign, with reserve and patience in the face of sad lies and desperate distortions,

1988 - How it Began

What prompted me to start this whole thing -- - PAH! -- was the desire to express my disapproval of the election of George H.W. Bush.

I was also learning how to use Macintosh computers.

Anyone could use an IBM Selectric to protest the nomination of the dim Dan Quayle, admonish the cheap tactics of Lee Atwater, dry heave at Vice President Bush's patronizing tours through flag factories.

But to properly express my bottomless despair, my blistering diatribes would appear in -- this would show 'em! -- Abadi MT Condensed Extra Bold punctuated by Zapf Dingbats.

As one who tapped out his first story on the Underwood manual my father used while a student on the GI Bill,

did not take the bait. Even sweeter, Obama promoted a platform of sensible diplomacy and fair shakes for the middle class that we can get behind. Everybody wants a smart, instructive, inspirational leader. Kids especially. "I get to vote for him next time," Olivia said with anticipation. Now that's a civics lesson!

Earlier, I had promised my fifth-grader Julia that she could stay up late to watch the election returns. "Even if it's midnight?" she asked. Of course, I said. Such enthusiasm! Months earlier, Julia and I [braved the cold](#) to watch Obama speak. During the homestretch of the campaign, we all volunteered a little at Obama campaign headquarters, stuffing envelopes, painting signs for rallies, assembling yard signs, whatever was needed. My girls witnessed the inner workings of a campaign, that politics was about sitting around the table doing seemingly menial work that could change the community, the world even, as much as it's about dorky or scary TV ads.

So Julia followed the election night results, calling out which states went to Obama, which to McCain, arguing with my wife over which state had more electoral votes. Julia said Pennsylvania. My wife said Ohio. Julia won. Now that's a civics lesson!

I conclude this 20-year-run with *PAH!* in harrowing times. We're all a little -- or a lot -- scared of the severe economic downturn. But nobody I know thinks we'd have been better off with McCain and Palin trying to harness these ill winds, and so we are cautiously hopeful that the right man is poised to captain the boat.

I'm glad for my mother, who turns 82 just days after Obama's inauguration, and who will shortly thereafter begin tending to her spring garden just as the new president breaks ground on his.

I'm glad for my children, who cannot yet vote but have already proven themselves to be active citizens.

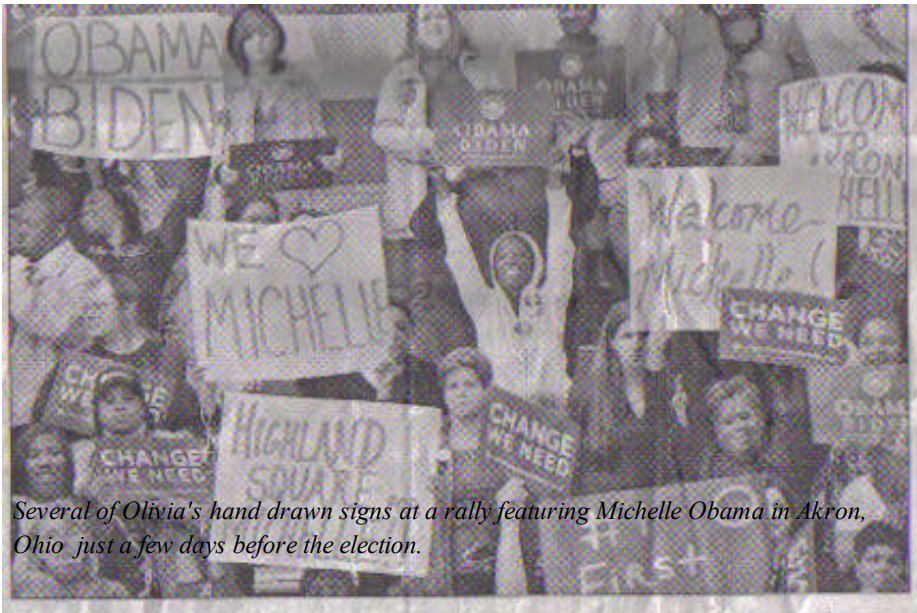
I'm glad for my wife who shares with me the dream of intelligent leadership that doesn't curdle every newscast with arrogance and malprops and psychotic chutzpah. I'm glad for the America that has revealed itself in the majority of voting Americans who value diversity, intellect, dignity and inspiration in our national character.

I have never experienced American moments in times that are so trying in which hearts are filled with hope.

this word processing jazz was amazing. I had always been a writer, but this added an entirely new dimension to it, like one day having my run-of-the-mill morning shower being interrupted by Nastassia Kinski telling me to scootch over and stop hogging all the hot water.

I was also studying how in colonial America the use of cheap pamphlets helped to stir the masses and support the revolution. So on November 17, 1988, I churned out a one-age sheet of corny jibes and pinned them up on bulletin boards at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. Within five minutes, an ROTC student saw one, snorted in disgust, and tore it down.

Thomas Paine couldn't have been happier than me at that moment. I don't think I've written anything since that has excited anybody to such action. And to tell you the truth, what I wrote wasn't so firebrand anyway. The prospect of being denied a Michael Dukakis presidency can only muster up a sugar burst of, say, two minutes of revolutionary rabble rousing, and so what the ROTC student tore down, to my chagrin in hindsight, was just lame-o shtik that was



Several of Olivia's hand drawn signs at a rally featuring Michelle Obama in Akron, Ohio just a few days before the election.

outdated even then.
Check it out:

From PAH! #1:

November 17, 1988

President-elect George Bush was roasted by the legendary Friar's club last night. On hand were the biggest names in politics and humor from the past and present, including Mark Russell, Art Buchwald, Morris Udal, and the Gipper, Ronald Regan, playing himself as the Master of Ceremonies. reagan warmed up the crowd by calling Mr. Bush "not only the son I never wanted, but the son Nancy never knew she gave birth to." The great communication then relenquished the dais for other Friar Club notables such as Alan King ("is this a cgiar, or a Bush grandchild?") and George Burns ("what's so big about Bush as president? In my burlesque days, bush was king!"). The highlight of the evening came when rubber-faced comedian Charlie Callas performed a hilarious 35-minute send up of Bush getting lost at a Yugoslavian state funeral, climaxing with a bantomime entitled "Thousand Points of Light" done to the music of "Sendin the Clowns," and performed by Dean Martin and the Ding-a-Ling Sisters. Special guests in the audience included form Massachussets prison Willie Horton and his

*guest Jessica Hahn.
vice President-elect
Dan Quayle was
refused admittance
because he could not
produce a proper
photo ID.*

