

Ready, aim, litigate: Gun ordinances now under fire

By STEVE BERG

Thursday's historic Supreme Court's decision clarified the keeping and bearing of arms as an individual constitutional right apart from any military connection. But it left unclear the ways in which governments can attempt to control the spread of guns within the community.

The Second Amendment right is not absolute, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote in his majority decision. Governments can, for example, make it illegal for felons and the mentally incompetent to buy and possess guns, he suggested. And there might be certain "sensitive" places, presumably schools, where guns could be prohibited. The licensing of firearms is presumably still acceptable, and might include classes on safety as well as background checks and registration logs of guns and owners that police find useful in solving crimes. Machine guns might not be an appropriate form of protection for one's home. Ordinances against concealed guns might be OK.

But these and other restrictions on gun rights will now be tested in the courts. Scalia suggested that Americans should expect a flurry of litigation to sort out these matters case by case.

"Since this case represents this court's first in-depth examination of the Second Amendment, one should not expect it to clarify the entire field," he wrote. "And there will be time enough to expound upon the historical justifications for the exceptions we have mentioned if and when those exceptions come before us."



REUTERS

Plaintiff Dick Heller outside the U.S. Supreme Court.

Gun lobby sees vindication

The nation's powerful gun lobby hailed the 5-4 decision and announced its intention to immediately challenge various local and state gun control laws in hopes of lifting restrictions.

"This is a great moment in American history," said Wayne LaPierre, head of the National Rifle Association. "It vindicates individual Americans all over this country who have always known that this is their freedom worth protecting."

The specific case under review was the District of Columbia's ban on handguns enacted in 1976. The ordinance allowed homeowners to keep shotguns and rifles but required that they be kept not fully assembled or with trigger locks. That was too restrictive for the court's conservative majority. The effect of the D.C. ordinance was to render a firearm inoperable "for the purpose of immediate self-defense," the court said.

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Dancing with the universe



JIM WALSH

The video was downloaded to the web on Saturday, June 20, 2008. By Sunday, it had 500 hits. By Thursday, it was everywhere — embedded on Facebook and MySpace pages and flooding email inboxes and translating into millions of viewers, thousands of comments, and official “gone viral” status.

But this one is no YouTube vanity trip. This one feels important, necessary, and artistic; it’s a concrete manifestation of the change that the world’s leaders have been preaching at a time when the human race could use a little pick-me-up, a little jig in its step.

“Pretty cool, huh?” said Matt Harding, when it was suggested to him that, for the first time in history, someone — he — got the entire planet dancing together to the same song.

‘The best movie of 2008’

To wit: “Dancing 2008,” by the video-game designer turned video-maker Harding, is a thing of such unbridled joy and connectivity that one film critic, Erik Lundegaard, has already dubbed it “the best movie of 2008” on his blog. And why not? Times-infinity planetwide goose bumps can’t be wrong.

“I hadn’t even had a chance to sit down and look at until yesterday,” said Harding, a 31-year-old native of Westport, Conn., Thursday by phone from his home in Seattle.

“I finished the trip at the beginning of June. I got home, then we had to record the music, and we shot the last clip in Seattle, and then I had about 10 days to edit the thing and get it done.

“It wasn’t until yesterday that I finally had a quiet moment to sit down and watch it and sort of try to understand the response it’s been getting since I put it up. It’s been really amazing.”

The sum effect of “Dancing” is just that, especially when coupled with the ephemeral music created by Harding’s friend Gary Schyman and sung by Palbasha Siddique, a 17-year-old native of Bangladesh who will be a senior at Minneapolis

Southwest High School this year.

‘People are making ring tones out of it’

“It’s crazy,” said Siddique, who lives in Northeast Minneapolis with her mother and brother. “Right now it’s number one on amazon.com in the soundtrack [category], and number six overall, so that’s a really big accomplishment, because even “American Idol” is number nine right now. I just never knew this would turn out so incredible. People are making ring tones out of it. Everyone on Facebook is adding me, and I had no idea there are so many Bengalis in our community, and they have all heard the song.”

“Dancing” has its roots in two previous Harding-dancing videos, which were similar — if lesser — Internet sensations in which Harding danced alone. The videos caught the attention of Stride gum, which helped finance Harding’s travel and production budget.

In the FAQ section of his website, Harding writes, “In 2007 Matt went back to Stride with another idea. He realized his bad dancing wasn’t actually all that interesting, and that other people were much better at being bad at it. He showed them his inbox, which, as a result of his semi-famousness, was overflowing with emails from all over the planet. He told them he wanted to travel around the world one more time and invite the people who’d written him to come out and dance too.”

Over the course of 14 months, Harding traveled to 42 countries and, simply, filmed himself dancing with folks. Now he has a publicist to help him field interview requests. And to think it all started in Hanoi, when a friend suggested, “go do that stupid dance you do and I’ll film it.”

He just kept dancing

“It started off as a goof; and then I just kept doing that on the trip I was on,” said Harding.

“I started collecting [videos of himself dancing] as mementos. There was no higher thought to it than the person who brings a T-shirt or a stuffed animal and takes pictures of themselves everywhere

they go. It just happened to be that dancing has more of a profound meaning to people.

“[On] the first videos I danced alone, but when I went to Rwanda it was by far and away my favorite clip of that [previous] video. It was so much more fun to dance with other people.

“I’m not much of an extrovert, so it would have been hard to go up to people and say, ‘Will you dance with me?’ So the second video created an opportunity to find people. My girlfriend (Melissa Nixon) produced it for me, and everywhere we went, we organized these big events where we’d dance.”

And what exactly does he call that step he’s doing?

“I call myself the human metronome, because once the people start running in, I’m just this thing keeping the time in the background,” he said. “When you watch it, your eye shifts to all these different people doing these crazy things. I’ve found that everybody sort of gravitates to the same things, from clip to clip. You see the guy in Stockholm on the far right, you see the girl in Poland with her hand on her skirt — all these little nuances that are fun.”

When it came to the accompanying music, Harding and Schyman knew they didn’t want to weigh down the footage with cheesy lyrics or over-the-top sentimentality.

“We were talking to a very popular musician who was interested in singing on it, but it didn’t come together and we ended up kind of stuck,” said Harding. “We were really struggling with lyrics: How do you write lyrics for a video like that without it being clichéd? And I said to Gary, ‘What if we did it in a foreign language?’

“And he brought up this poet, Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian poet who won the Nobel Prize, and I went looking through his poetry and found this “Stream of Life” poem that talks about life and being and dance, and I thought, ‘This is perfect.’ So we had the lyrics, but we didn’t have someone who could sing it in native Bengali.”

Looking for a singer

Enter Harding’s girlfriend, Nix-

on, a recruiter for Google who set out to find a singer. In short order she stumbled upon Siddique, whose father is a brigadier general in the Bangladesh army, and whose family settled in Northeast Minneapolis when Palbasha Siddique was awarded a scholarship to MacPhail Center for The Arts. A singer her entire life (she recorded her first CD when she was 7 and sang “God Bless America” before a Twins game when she was 11), Siddique studied at De La Salle High School and transferred to Southwest last year when she was accepted into the International Baccalaureate program.

At the moment, she is one of the most heard singers in the world. She is forming a band and releasing a new CD next week. She intends to study at Harvard Law. She is, in other words, on fire.

“I’m not on fire yet,” she laughed. “I want the whole world to know me one day. It’s just not there yet, but it’ll get there.”

“With God’s help,” said her mother, in the background.

As it turns out, God must work for KFAI-FM, the Minneapolis-based community radio station where Harding and Nixon first heard Siddique’s archived voice, which suggests the Bangladesh-Minneapolis soul sister of Pakistani mystic/singer Sheila Chandra.

Interviewed about war in Bangladesh

“I was being interviewed on a show about the war in Bangladesh, which my father is fighting in,” says Siddique. “For some reason, the woman asked me to sing four lines from a song, and so I did, with no background music or anything. The video quality of it was so bad I asked the [program engineer] not to upload it. But he did, and it’s good after all, because that’s how Matt found me.”

Harding flew Siddique and her mother to Los Angeles to record the track, and paid her \$1,000.

Harding is reluctant to put into words what the video’s “message” is, other than “it’s just people dancing ... so it’s very simple, and very complex.”

Not to mention unprec-edented.

St. Paulites are named to U.S. Olympic glamour boat



JAY WEINER

There's something about rowing. I'm not exactly sure what it is.

But there's a purity to it. There's an environmental beauty to it. There's surely a rhythm to it. Dare I say, there's an elitism to it that is soothing to us elitists who grow tired of the scratching, spitting and swearing of baseball.

Matt Schnobrich — from the heart of St. Paul, right near the College of St. Catherine's — cringes at the notion that his sport is hoity-toity, but understands what I'm talking about.

"Historically, rowing is something that's always been reserved for Ivy League schools and the Oxfords and Cambridges of the world, and to its detriment," Schnobrich told me last week over cups of coffee at a Philadelphia café.

He's lived in the City of Rowerly Love for four years now, pursuing what he officially earned this morning.

The most glamorous of Olympic boats

Schnobrich, 6-foot-5, 205 pounds, with a lean body despite devouring 6,000 calories a day, was named to the most glamorous of all Olympic boats this morning by USRowing's coaches. It's the men's eights. And Schnobrich will have a seat in it in Beijing come next month.

Incredibly, a second St. Paulite was named to the men's eights, too. That's Micah Boyd, who grew up in the St. Anthony Park section of St. Paul and went to St. Paul Central and then the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He, too, has been training in Philadelphia.

Philly is a town that has 10 boat club houses on what's long been known as Boathouse Row. The houses sit along the Schuylkill River that runs right through center city Philadelphia. True Philadelphians — I grew up there and emigrated to Minnesota 30 years ago — call it the "Skookool."

There, when I was growing up, the fair-haired lads from Penn and private boat clubs, like Vesper and Penn A.C., and the suburban Quaker- and Episcopal-run prep schools would row their sculls ... that's before the working-class colleges, like Temple, got into the act. Women, too.

"For a long time, people associated rowing with guys on the shore with sweaters around their necks and polo shirts, and women in funny hats," Schnobrich said. "Rowing's begun to reach out."

Even to a guy from that little ol' football factory, St. John's University in Collegeville. He didn't pull an oar until he was a freshman there in 1997.

Twice-a-day training in Princeton

Now, 11 years later, he trains twice a day in Princeton — about 45 miles north of Philly — while, up until recently, working 35 hours a week as an environmental engineer.

He wanted the eights spot on the Olympic team bad. Schnobrich and rowing partner Josh Inman had won the pairs boat Olympic berths two weeks ago. That was cool. He was happy. But it's not the centerpiece event.

When asked about making the eights, he wrote to me in an email: "Really excited ... very excited, and there is huge potential for this

group in Beijing."

He's thinking medals, with the Germans, Canadians, New Zealanders and Brits sure to be in the way.

What always sticks with me about rowing is how spent these athletes are at the end of their race. I know, marathoners collapse. And weightlifters push every limit. And NBA players expend tons of energy. And World Cup soccer players sprint many, many miles in a 90-minute game. Every endurance, power and speed athlete exhausts him or herself.

Nothing more hard-working than a rower

But there's something about the rowers, at the end of their 2,000 meters, all eight of the folks in the boat, bent over, their waists like hinges, gasping for air, feeling the pain. For as elitist as its roots, there is nothing more hard-working than a rower.

Thirty-five to thirty-eight strokes per minute, for 5-and-a-half minutes. Repetition. Team-work.

"You feel the burn after you're forty-five seconds into it," he said, and then there are five more minutes to go. "Your arms, your legs, your back, your lungs. It's definitely a full body activity."

Schnobrich, the son of two long-time 3M employees, knew none of this 11 years ago when, after playing soccer and cross-country skiing at St. Thomas Academy, he wandered onto the Saint John's campus and was told by a dorm counselor that there was a rowing team on the lovely, isolated, Stearns County campus.

He tried it on Lake Sagatagan.

Idyllic mornings on the lake

"No motor boats, cool mornings, steam on the lake," Schnobrich remembered. "It was idyllic."

It was fun.

Two weeks into his career, Schnobrich and the Johnnies' novice crew headed to a regatta in Elkhart, Ind., only to find themselves up against teams from Northwestern, Notre Dame, Purdue and Michigan. Big boys. Real rowers.

Overwhelmed, yes. But also, he said, "It was intriguing. I could go to a small college like St. John's and compete against Division I schools. There were no boundaries, except for speed, of course."

His team didn't finish last that day — but only because two boats didn't show up.

"DNS," he said, meaning those other competitors, "Did Not Start."

"We beat 'em," he said, straight-faced. "We had no lofty goals and no big shoes to fill."

But, alas, Schnobrich dived into rowing, creating his own lofty goals. During college summers he started competing at the Minneapolis Rowing Club on the Mississippi. Upon graduation from St. John's, he took it more seriously. While earning his master's in engineering at the University of Minnesota, some veterans at the Minneapolis club urged him to try the East Coast rowing scene.

He did. Within a year, he was part of the USRowing elite system. Soon after, he was on a series of world championship teams, in pairs and fours.

But never the eights. Not until today.

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Joel Kramer, CEO and editor

Ready, aim, litigate: Gun ordinances now under fire

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"I'm thrilled I am now able to defend myself and my household in my home," said Dick Heller, the gun owner who sued the District of Columbia after it rejected his application to keep a handgun at his home.

Minnesota's anti-gun lobby seemed unimpressed by Thursday's decision. "If anything, this decision should put gun owners' fears about gun regulation completely to rest," said Heather Martens of Citizens for a Safer Minnesota. "It doesn't change our efforts to ensure that guns stay out of the wrong hands."

But many gun control advocates criticized the ruling. Most troubling was the court's rejection of their interpretation that gun rights pertain only to military purposes. This has been an enigmatic point in law for more than 200 years. The amendment's 27 words are these:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Scalia said that a militia was only one example of a broader and more complete pre-existing right.

The dissenters

Justice John Paul Stevens disagreed and said in his dissent that when the Second Amendment is "most naturally read" it gives people "a right to use and possess arms in conjunction with service in a well-regulated militia, no more than that."

He accused the court's majority of judicial activism in selectively removing the militia clause. They have claimed "a far more active judicial role in making vitally important national policy decisions that was envisioned at any time in the 18th, 19th or 20th centuries," Stevens wrote.

Editorialists chimed in. The traditionally conservative Chicago Tribune blasted the decision. "Repeal the Second Amendment. No, we don't suppose that's going to happen any time soon. But it should," the paper said. While the nation's founders were brilliant, they could have used an editor on the awkward Second Amendment. The Tribune said:

"If the founders had limited themselves to the final 14 words, the amendment would have been an unambiguous declaration of the right to possess firearms. But they didn't and it isn't. The amendment was intended to protect the authority of the states to organize militias. The inartful wording has left the amendment open to public debate for more than 200 years. But in its last major decision on gun rights, in 1939, the [court] unanimously found that that was the correct interpretation."

A New York Times editorial said: "Thirty-thousand Americans are killed by guns every year — on the job, walking to school, at the shopping mall. The [court] all but ensured that even more Americas will die senselessly, with its wrongheaded and dangerous ruling."

Scalia declared "the right to

bear arms for nonmilitary uses, even though the amendment clearly links the right to service in a 'militia,' the Times noted. Indeed, one interpretation of the ruling could be that we've now all been placed into an armed militia, whether we like it or not.

In that light, Justice Stephen Breyer, one of the four dissenters, called the decision "potentially dangerous" and outlined his belief that cities should be given wide latitude in attempting to control guns in high-crime areas.

Two lawyers, appearing on PBS' "News Hour," amplified the discussion. R. Ted Cruz, the former solicitor general of Texas, said that consistency is important in reading the Constitution. "We can't read the First Amendment as protecting important rights, we can't read the Fourth Amendment as protecting important rights, and because we don't like guns ignore the Second Amendment," he said.

Peter Nickles, attorney general for Washington, D.C., called the decision "simplistic" and emphasized that no constitutional right is absolute. The First Amendment, for example, protects free speech, but not enough to yell "Fire!" in a crowded theater or put pornography on your website. Under the Second Amendment, a high-crime urban area must have reasonable latitude to regulate guns, he said.

Chicago's restrictive gun ordinance figures to draw the next wave of court attention. Even as the Supreme Court's decision

was revealed, gun enthusiasts filed a lawsuit against it. The effort was not only legal but political, given that the likely Democratic presidential nominee, Sen. Barack Obama, is a Chicago resident.

Sen. John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee, quickly pounced on the issue. "Today's ruling ... makes clear that other municipalities like Chicago that have banned handguns have infringed on the constitutional rights of Americans," he said in hailing what he called "a landmark victory." He accused Obama of flip-flopping on the issue and again painted him as an elitist who, during the primary season, had made a comment about bitter working class Americans clinging to guns and religion.

Indeed, Obama, generally a gun-control supporter, seemed to neatly sidestep the question. He said he's "always believed" in the right of an individual to bear and keep firearms at home. But that shouldn't stop high-crime cities from trying to keep streets safe by controlling the trafficking of guns, he said.

While the gun issue is unlikely to become a huge wedge in the campaign (most gun rights enthusiasts probably support McCain anyway), Obama's softer position could hurt him in some western and southern states (Nevada, Montana, Georgia, etc.) where he has a chance to win.

Steve Berg can be reached at sberg@minnpost.com.

Justice John Paul Stevens disagreed and said in his dissent that when the Second Amendment is "most naturally read" it gives people "a right to use and possess arms in conjunction with service in a well-regulated militia, no more than that."

Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at salbright@minnpost.com.

THE DAILY GLEAN

The Timberwolves pass the Mayo with Love

By DAVID BRAUER

The Timberwolves draft slippery USC guard O.J. Mayo — to universal cheers — and trade him for UCLA forward Kevin Love, to mixed reviews. The Rake's Britt Robson really likes the deal, which is salary-cap favorable to Minnesota and includes Memphis sharpshooter Mike Miller. The PiPress's Tom Powers goes medieval on Kevin McHale's posterior. Sid Hartman admits "the media" were fooled; he means "me." Sid dutifully gushed about Mayo online, then had to rewrite.

Thursday, the Supreme Court established an individual right to bear arms, but Minnesota's gun restrictions shouldn't change, AP's Joshua Freed writes. That's the view of a U law prof. The head of a Minnesota anti-gun group finds a silver lining: because a gun ban is now constitutionally prohibited, that eliminates the slippery-slope argument against limits such as gun-show background checks. Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson supports the decision.

Riffing off a National Journal story, the PiPress's Rachel Stassen-Berger explores the close ties between U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman and his campaign svengali, Jeff Larson. Coleman employed Larson's wife; Larson rents his Capitol Hill basement — with 10-foot-square bedroom — to Coleman ... who apparently doesn't always pay his rent on time. Both men say there's nothing improper; Larson isn't a lobbyist and no taxpayer bucks are involved. The backscratching looks weird but the Journal finds no impropriety.

Day Two, Ford plant resurrection: the Strib's Dee DePass quotes state economic development commissioner Dan McElroy saying that, even in the best case, the facility won't stay open permanently. That's according to a Ford official, McElroy says. One local expert says an extension wouldn't cost billions like a plant retooling would, and the Ranger

truck remains profitable.

Has it come to this? Some paved county roads are reverted to gravel, KARE's John Croman reports. Four percent of county engineers have used this tactic to counteract funding shortfalls; 70 percent say road quality has declined in the past decade, according to a survey by progressive think tank Minnesota 2020. Ninety percent say higher funding from this year's transportation bill isn't enough; they want an indexed gas tax and wheelage tax, two things the Legislature couldn't pass.

Yikes: "A decomposed body was found hanging from a tree in Brooklyn Center" on Thursday. KSTP's Mark Albert says it may be that of a 41-year-old man who allegedly beat his wife to death with a hammer. Two teens found the body. More freak-beat crime news: A Hennepin County inmate allegedly bit another prisoner's eyelid off during a fight last week, the Strib's Abby Simons reports.

Sad, sad tale of a Somali "peacemaker" who was shot and killed in Brooklyn Center early Wednesday. Mohamed Jama was probably breaking up a fight outside a hotel where Somali basketball players were staying, the Strib's Jim Adams writes. Jama coached basketball, was a homeless outreach worker and a mentor. Police believe there's no link to drugs or gangs, but they haven't found the shooter and need the public's help.

St. Jude Medical has begun implanting brain pacemakers to treat severe depression. Kicking off a study, two men received the electronic stimulation devices in Chicago, the PiPress's Christopher Snowbeck reports. Fascinating detail: Little Canada-based St. Jude apparently owns "intellectual property rights for the use of neurostimulation" to a specific brain part known as Brodmann Area 25.

I love this trend piece: Cafeterias are "buying more local produce, cooking entrees in smaller

batches and switching to reusable kitchenware" to cut costs amid high food prices. The Strib's Emma Carew looks at a Fairview hospital cafeteria as an example. It dropped tomatoes because they cost as much as the hamburger; lemon slices for tea are gone; Oriental chicken was nixed because of pricey mandarin oranges. Now you get Grilled Chicken Caesar salad. Relative nutrition? Unclear.

Both dailies prepare the public for Saturday's 7:30 a.m. demolition of a 570-foot Xcel Energy smokestack in St. Paul. The 36-year-old structure's collapse is a very visible sign of progress: The plant's May switchover to natural gas has eliminated mercury emissions and cut sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide by more than 96 percent, the Strib's Patrick Lee writes.

Although I'm sure you can write a "struggling nonprofits" story at any given time, MPR's Tom Robertson focuses on high demand and shrinking resources for rural charities. State support is declining, counties have cut some support in half and private donations are falling dramatically. Meanwhile, demand at one food shelf is up 11 percent in the past six months and energy costs are climbing relentlessly. Satellite offices in far-flung rural regions are closing because of gas prices, and because volunteers are quitting to find paying work.

MPR's Tim Post offers an in-depth look at a rural methane digester. It makes energy from cow poo — 200 cows produce the equivalent of nine barrels of oil a day. It's helliciously expensive — the digester costs half a million bucks — but virtually eliminates fecal odors and could be more economical for co-ops. The state's first digester, now eight years old, produces enough power for 70 homes.

It's a small thing, but a Twin Cities car received the Midwest's first mass-produced plug-in battery. Twin Cities Business's Christa

Meland says Denny Hecker technicians put the Hymotion L5 battery in a Toyota Prius. (Reminder: stock Priuses are gas-electric hybrids; this one now is electric only.) The client: Hourcar, a local car-sharing service that's growing fast.

The PiPress's John Welbes says Northwest is canceling three international routes, including a Minneapolis-Paris route it started just 11 weeks ago. The airline is headed toward a 9.5 percent route cut by fall, when the Paris flights stop, but the route will resume next March.

GOP Convention roundup: The PiPress's Jason Hoppin says California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger will rent out the Guthrie Theater for a 1,000-person "Welcome to Hollywood" party. The Strib's Herón Márquez Estrada notes Twin Cities bar owners are spitting the bit over \$2,500 permits to serve until 4 a.m., but "elite" spots will likely pony up. Amid all the protest-permit flak, St. Paul has approved 16 lottery-winning groups for actions at downtown parks, Minnesota Independent's Paul Demko reports.

Are you ready for a \$1 billion Vikings stadium to move forward? The Business Journal's Don Muret writes that the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission will issue stadium Requests for Proposals to contractors and architects in July. They want an architect and builder in place before legislative beseeching next January. Proponents argue that having construction ducks in a row could speed building and — even from a high height — reduce inflationary costs.

Nort spews: Twins complete their third straight three-game sweep of National League clubs with a 4-3 win over San Diego; Justin Morneau's bat was the key. San Diego Sore Loser here, with a fitting photo here. The world's best women golfers defeat Interlachen; Pat Hurst and Ji Young Oh lead at 6 under. And the Minnesota Lynx moved to 8-6 with an 80-76 win over Sacramento.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Coleman ad, Jeune Lune, health care articles spur discussion

A recent post on Sen. Norm Coleman's new campaign ad featuring domestic bliss struck a chord with many MinnPost readers, along with such topics as the demise of Theatre de la Jeune Lune, real estate fraud, what to do about people with no health insurance and a call for government regulation from a surprising source.

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Aaron Landry was among almost a dozen people commenting on Eric Black's June 20 Political Agenda post, "Coleman's new TV ad features - Mrs. Coleman":

Good observation on the ring shot. Also, I've been enjoying the back and forth between some bloggers and the Coleman campaign regarding how it wasn't filmed at the same time - Mrs. Coleman looks superimposed the entire time, especially in the long shot where the proportions seem off, and the lighting is a bit of a giveaway.

From Gail O'Hare:

For years the Coleman marriage has been rumored to be "in name only." This spot appears to be an effort to shore up his image as a dutiful hubby who even obeys the little woman. Instead, the falseness and phony coziness screams distance. Gag.

From Mike Griffin:

As I would point out to film analysis students, technically speaking, the camera does not zoom in on Laurie Coleman's left hand. There isn't a zoom used, but

a simple cut to a separate close-up shot of her left hand wrapped around the coffee mug, her ring prominently displayed.

There is no narrative, or logical-sequential, reason for this shot to have been inserted into the ad. As part of the narrative action of the ad's mini-story it is a non-sequitur. But it does serve the purpose of effectively drawing the viewer's attention to her hand and ring.

It is a common practice in film editing to create such an otherwise unrelated association between shots. So, it is no stretch, in fact pretty obvious, that the shot was made and "edited in" precisely for that purpose. It cleverly and, because of the relative brevity of the shot subtly, reaffirms the domestic relationship between Norm and Laurie that the campaign wants to promote. (Technical analysis free of charge.)

From Sheila Ehrlich:

I happened to catch the ring shot last night ... gave me the best laugh I've had in some time! I don't think Al Franken could have scripted or shot this ad any better himself. And I hate to disappoint Ms. Rath, [campaign communications director Erin Rath] but I'm one "left-wing liberal, Al Franken" supporter who doesn't blog and isn't a conspiracy theorist either. Anyone taking odds on how fast this will be off the air?

From John E. Iacono:

Having jarring elements in an ad keeps people's attention, in my experience. If the intention was to present a kind of "corn pone" ad that would make people laugh

without being acerbic I think it works. People will remember it.

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Casey Selix's Wednesday post, "Plight of the Uninsured: What would it take to solve it?" the first in a planned series on health-care policy, drew several comments:

From Gerald Abrahamson:

This issue has been analyzed and discussed on the AARP message boards for some time now. It boils down to the desire of the people and the govt to get the most care for everyone at the lowest cost. That means changing to a Single Payer-Universal Health Care system of covering most medical expenses rather than private insurance. Private insurance could be bought to cover additional, optional, choices, but the major expense of private insurance would be gone. Just cutting out the paperwork required for X insurance companies and replacing them with one form would save an estimated \$1000/person per year in premiums. Then, eliminate the 30+ percent gross profit margin built into any premiums ... that reduces costs by another \$500-\$1000+/person per year. Then medical costs go down because doctors and hospitals get paid for everything they do - with virtually no uninsured being given free treatment. So, no need for a hidden markup to cover the cost of those who can't or won't pay, because everyone has health insurance and can pay.

... The quality of care under universal coverage is better than under the private system because

the medical staff do not have to pinch pennies and thus put your life at risk to make a profit.

They are then free to do what is needed to get the job done and do it as efficiently as they needed. Medical need (within reason), not cost, determines what treatment is given.

An excerpt from Bernice Vetsch's comments:

In Minnesota, Senator John Marty has introduced a tax-supported single-payer plan (SF 2324) that would provide health care, preventive care, dental, mental, eyeglasses - everything necessary to good health - to every person in Minnesota while costing less than what we now spend. ... Nationally, John Conyers has several times introduced HR 676, the national version of the Minnesota plan. ...

Our system is now, in effect, managed by the insurance and drug companies that benefit from it. Much of the insurance companies' profit comes from denying coverage wherever possible.

Administrative costs are about 31 percent of dollars spent, while Medicare's costs are between 2 and 3 percent. ... Single-payer is NOT socialized medicine. Patients have complete choice of providers, who are all private, but only one insurance company/payer - the government. Our police and fire departments are "socialized;" all cops and fire fighters are government employees and all answer our calls to 911.

Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at salbright@minnpost.com.