

letters



Resident deserved praise after fire

Two weeks ago The Amherst Bee ran a front page story about the fire in the building containing the Lion's Mane and apartments. The sub headline put the blame for the extent of the fire on the person who called in the fire and who alerted the other occupants.

In the article itself, the fire chief implied that the only reason the fire caused such extensive damage was due to the delay in calling in the fire. This, despite the mention in the article of the many crannies and hidden

spaces and, more importantly, the fact that the alarm in the business was not hooked up to a central alarm system.

Certainly that oversight was far more important to a delay than the actions of the occupant. If there had been a connection to the central system, the alarm would have alerted the fire department immediately.

Even more enraging than the attempt to blame the one who called in the alarm was the absence of certain facts that must have been known to the fire chief, and I would assume, the reporter.

The occupant did not react  
*(Please turn to page six)*

McCain-Palin ticket has people talking

Thanks to the magic of e-mail and the wonderful resources that are available to us on the World Wide Web, a newspaper columnist such as myself working with an early deadline because of the Labor Day holiday is never short of material, especially when it comes to all things political.

It was just a matter of a few minutes after last week's breaking news that Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin had been selected as John McCain's running mate before I began to receive messages from friends, family members, co-workers and of course, faithful readers of this column.

Yes indeed, it seems as though everyone has an opinion about the choice of Palin to be GOP candidate John McCain's choice for vice president.

Here are some of the knee-jerk reactions that I received:

- "Wow! Dan, I didn't see that coming. Holy cow! I really don't know what else to say. I had to do a quick search of her to make sure I knew a bit about her background. Wow! Shocking!!!"
- "Who is Sarah Palin?"
- "Horrible decision. Do the Republicans just want to give up now and name Obama president? What are they thinking? I don't get it. She has virtually no name recognition, she certainly doesn't have enough experience and she's way too young. Bad call by the GOP."

• "What a great day for our country. Dan, this is history in the making. What a tremendous decision by McCain and our party's leaders. Do you realize what kind of message this sends to all women? The Republican Party gets it and realizes paying attention to women and giving them a choice is the way to acquire their money, their interest and ultimately their vote. Great work by John and Cindy McCain. They just clinched a victory. Can't wait to see McCain and Palin be sworn in come January."

• "Dan, what do you think? I'm stunned. I've been studying up on the VP candidates for about two months now and I just didn't see this coming. Totally out of left field. Talk about a shocker. Talk about stealing the show from Obama following his speech in Denver. Gov. Palin will help the Republicans be victorious in November."

- "McCain is an idiot. His campaign was moving

along smoothly and then he screws this up. Write in your column that Obama easily, and I emphasize easily, wins by double digits in November. The GOP blew it."

• "I've never heard of the woman. Dan, what qualifications does she have? I read on CNN's Web site that she was runner-up in the Miss Alaska competition. Governor of Alaska? Big deal. They say Obama has no experience, but what sort of track record does this chick have?"

• "I see that Palin is a lifetime member of the NRA. That's good enough for me. Plus, let's admit it ... she's good looking!"

• "Palin and Biden. That debate won't mean much but I think it will be quite entertaining!"

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Speaking of readers of this column, some of you may recall that yours truly labeled Palin as my "dark horse" for McCain's running mate about five months ago.

Just to refresh your memories:

"Here are a couple more names to scribble down in the margins of your notebook as possible VP material —

Florida Gov. Charlie Crist, Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty and Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin.

"Who is Palin? She's my dark horse for the race, although certain media outlets are starting to tout her as the quiet front-runner to serve as McCain's running mate.

"The first female governor of Alaska, the mother of four is an NRA member and an active outdoorswoman. A marathon runner, she once served as the chair of the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

"Substantially younger than McCain, she is pro-life, against gay marriage, favors capital punishment and supports the right to bear arms.

"Her stance on family values could sway conservative voters, which might be just what McCain is looking for."

*(Daniel Meyer is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers of Western New York. Comments on this column can be sent care of this newspaper or via e-mail to: meyersmusings@gmail.com. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)*



DAN MEYER

Political Columnist

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Fighting video violence in New York State

Rising concern over the level of violence in video games and on the Internet prompted the consideration in the state legislature this year of two bills that many advocates consider important in dealing with these concerns.

One measure, designed to give parents greater control over games played on video consoles, passed both houses of the legislature and was signed by the governor. The other, dealing with videotaped acts of violence passed in the Senate, but is something I will continue to fight for in the Assembly.

The video game law has three key features. It requires gaming devices sold in New York State to have the equivalent of the FCC's highly successful V-Chip that allows parents to control programs that children watch on television.

Specifically, a mom or dad could block a game's objectionable content with a click of a button.

The new law also establishes a 16-member, governor-appointed Advisory Council on Interactive Media and Youth Violence.

This will be an expert panel charged with issuing reports to the governor on the progress of anti-video-violence initiatives, the relationship between interactive media and youth violence, and review of the nation's existing video-game ratings system, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), in order to suggest updates to its standards and categories. The law also prohibits the sale or rental of a video game at a retail store in our state if its ESRB rating is not clearly displayed on the packaging.

Another aspect of video violence is the emergence of videotaped scenes of brutality, often by teenagers. Earlier this year, the Senate passed legislation to establish the act of "unlawful violent recording" as a felony, after several recent high-profile cases shed light on the recent practice of posting violent videos to content-sharing sites like YouTube and a dramatized story was recently featured on the popular television show "Law and Order."

Unfortunately, legal recourse to violent videos featuring criminal acts by an individual or group is very limited. Law enforcement, civic and parents' organizations can ask that content providers scrub these videos from their Web sites, but cannot prosecute the perpetrators as aggressively as we could "real-life" criminals.

New technologies continue to pose new challenges as both lawmakers and law enforcers scramble to keep up with some of the more sinister ways in which technological tools are used.

Whether it's issued like video violence or identity theft, or a variety of ways that technology can be used in ways it was never intended, it is important that we stay vigilant and make sure that the courts, the cops and parents have the law on their side when it comes to protecting their kids and their families.

To help you protect your children from dangerous Internet activities, please contact my local office at 634-1895, or via e-mail at [hayesj@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:hayesj@assembly.state.ny.us), to request "A Parent's Guide for Computer Safety" brochure.



JAMES P. HAYES

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