

# Star quality

Politics has turned into game where personality, celebrity reign



I used to halfway like Jesse Ventura.

Last year, when he "shocked the world" and got himself elected governor of Minnesota, there was a part of me that felt invigorated with a fresh hope for the future of grassroots politics.

Granted, most of me felt that the people of Minnesota had gone plain nutso, but there was that little part that had to admire Ventura's mixed bag of straight-shooting, no B.S., don't-like-it-kiss-my-grits populist politics.

But now I've got a beef with "the Body" or "the Mind" or whatever the Sam Hill he calls himself.

Not so much with him personally, I guess (although I do believe he and a majority of Minnesotans are still a bunch of crazies), but with what he has done to accelerate America's already eerie fascination with celebrities and politics.

Thanks in part to Ventura, it seems now that every two-bit celebrity in possession of a lame-brained political ideology thinks he or she can run for elected office and win.

The most recent shining example is Mr. Warren Beatty.

Most famous for "Dick Tracy," "Bulworth" and his dalliance with Madonna, Beatty is deliberating a run for the Democratic nomination for the presidency of the United States.

Now let me tell you something: If any Beatty's going to run for president, it dang well ought to be Ned Beatty.

I know I'd vote for the guy. Any dude who can survive what he went through in "Deliverance" without going criminally insane has demonstrated the mental toughness and security in his own masculinity needed to lead this great nation.

That being said, what makes Warren think he can become president of the world's only super-power?

It can't be his political beliefs. Ideologically, the guy's a dead horse. On most issues, he's just to the left of Mao Tse-tung.

While that may endear him to a various assortment of pinko campus radicals and burnt-out ex-flower children, it won't fly with the majority of the American public.

So what is it then? Because he's famous? He's

a movie star? He hasn't killed anyone?

Unfortunately, with the state of American electoral politics being what it is today, that might just qualify him.

Heck, it could win him a nomination.

Well, probably not.

Still, the simple fact that someone like Beatty is seriously considering a run says something about how low the standards for candidates in this country have become.

In fact, judging by President Clinton's strong showing of support in national polls last year during the impeachment process, one of the biggest things going for Beatty may be the whole fooling around with Madonna thing.

Americans love philanderers. They don't care for politicians. But they can't get enough of philandering politicians, as long as they're Democrats.

You read me? Beatty's in a win-win-win situation here.

Plus, if he should decide to run, Beatty faces some severely charisma-deficient competition.

Al Gore and Bill Bradley are deathly boring candidates. All they ever want to do is talk about taxes, Social Security, health care, yadda, yadda, yadda.

On the other hand, Warren Beatty was Clyde of "Bonnie and Clyde," he was "Mugsy," and he's got a famous crazy sister.

Politics in our great republic has increasingly become more about fanfare, image, style and sound bite.

Issues, policy statements and "that vision thing," as referred to by former President George Bush, appear to have taken the back seat.

We can look at the George W. Bush juggernaut as an example of that.

The junior Bush is blowing every other candidate, Republican and Democrat, out of the water in current polls in spite of the fact he never tells anybody where he stands on anything.

Don't get me wrong, I don't hate the guy.

I think he's done a good job in Texas. It's just that currently nobody's made him address any real issues. He's relying on his rock-star-like popularity because he can.

Let's face it. Bush is all image: a combination of charisma, looks, his famous name and those nifty little 15-second "compassionate conservatism" sound bites.

I was at the Iowa Straw Poll. I saw how people reacted to Bush.

Wherever he went, he was mobbed by adoring fans and autograph-seekers. I saw a chick ask him to sign her boobs. (OK, maybe not. But it really wouldn't have surprised me).

Bush is the guy to beat because he's a celebri-



ty, not because of brilliant articulations on foreign policy or the future of Social Security.

It's not good for politics, but it's what the game has become. And in the process, candidates who actually have ideas and aren't afraid to express them get thrown to the wayside.

An example is Steve Forbes.

The guy's got more ideas than India's got Hindus. In my opinion, he has some of the best ideas for the future of this country.

But unless about 12 people currently running

for the presidency die within the next few months, Forbes probably won't become President. Why not?

It's that celebrity thing. He doesn't have its cherished qualities. He's kinda goofy-looking. He's rather dry. His dad was never president. He's never played pro basketball or rassed in the WWF.

So what's a guy with a solid position on Individual Retirement Accounts to do? Ask Jesse Ventura, I guess.

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# Out of this world

Sandwich-making job provides frog-raising, alien-watching experiences



That's right. I work at a deli. The Sandwich Factory at 816 P St., to be exact. I put in the address in case, god forbid, my bosses actually do read this condemning confession that could put me on their hit list for eternity.

I'm not on their hit list yet, but I've seen it, and Keith, Tonya and their only daughter, Stacy, had better watch out.

People come from all over the world to praise me and tell me what a great sandwich-maker I am. I would hate to think all my friends are "friends" based on the "free-food" code of ethics in which I operate.

I like to think they adore me because of my fun-lovin', free-spirited aura, which I can't seem to get rid of these days.

There's nothing I cherish more than friendships based on free stuff, not even those formed on trust, honesty, or, god forbid, sex. Yeah right, who really has a relationship based on sex? Step forward,

liar. Your libido is probably as big as my 3-Meat Combo sandwich, which, despite the name, isn't a very big sandwich.

I would never think of giving away free food if:

A) I wasn't hooked up with various other "Haymarket Delights" (no, her name isn't Sarah).

B) my bosses weren't so strange.

No, really, I think at times they are aliens. It's not only the spaceship they fly around in and the slime that oozes under their feet (which gets a little old to clean up), but also just what they say sometimes. Pure alien talk, I'm tellin' ya.

If you don't think words mean very much in today's society, read on. Or work with me a few days.

One time, long, long ago in a galaxy known as Earth...

They (meaning Bob and Sandy - aka my bosses - aka Zorak and Melfy, their alien aliases) told me the reason I hadn't gotten a raise in a year is the fact that I didn't wear a hat to work.

If I may be so bold as to quote her:

"People see that you don't wear a hat, and it grosses them out. We probably lose a customer a day, and that adds up to about \$100 a month. That's your raise."

Here's the breakdown: Start wearing a hat, and you'll get a raise. Logic, unreasonable.

Oh well. I broke down, started wearing the hat and got a raise. Submissive, yes. Highly intelligent, no.

I know I have a tendency to blow things out of proportion, unimportant things at that, but blowing unimportant things out of proportion is what I'm all about. Ah yeah.

Anyway, I went to work in the recent past and was greeted by their smiling faces. As I wondered what antics I would be exposed to next, they showed me the new "hot dogs" they had ordered.

"Oh, new hot dogs?" I replied, thinking this was heaven in my mouth as I tasted one of the new treats. Then Sandy had to take this whole scene one step further and say, "Yes, but they are special. They are made out of ostrich meat."

I tried very hard not to gag at that moment, but it was inevitable.

Oh well, just one more innocent animal that has seen the insides of my stomach.

Don't worry, I read somewhere that ostriches don't have brains, or feelings or moms. I'm kidding. I'm only trying to feel good about my carnivorous roots.

There are several great qualities about them, however (Bob and Sandy,

not ostriches.)

Unfortunately, their love for the 1997 movie "Godzilla" and Bob's answering machine rendition of Jimmy Swaggart saying, "They're out on the range rounding up cattle, but leave a message, ya hear?" are not the ones that stand out.

There are two items they have given me over the years that will live in my memory forever. In fact, one of them will probably live in my house forever.

OK, I will let the cat out of the bag, or should I say let the "frog" out of the bag, since that's what one of the objects in question is.

It's true. About a year ago, they gave me a test-tube frog for a present. I think they brought the thing back from their home planet, but it is quite a unique gift, I must say.

I mean, I don't know anyone else who has a pet that must live in bottled water to stay alive. (I think he even prefers Evian, the bastard.)

This thing, which I call "Supper," is so dumb and ugly that it makes me feel good about myself every morning. I have to drop food pellets on top of Supper's head right between his eyes because he can't eat food off the floor of his tank. Eyes on top of the head suck!!!

Bob and Sandy (I mean Zorak and Melfy) told me that I could flush it down the toilet, but I just can't do that to

another living thing. Even if it don't do nothin' but eat, poop and plan massive deconstruction of the universe through my living room.

It seems harmless enough, but maybe Supper does have some sort of mind control over me because I accidentally, perhaps simply out of stupidity, ordered another one. Their trickery to have me help them breed a new existence sure didn't take long.

The other object in question is pretty rad as well. It is a beer mug with the two Budweiser lizards on top. If you push a button on the handle, they say, "The Budweiser lizards, we could've been huge."

They presented it to me on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday saying now that I was "old enough" they would let me have something like this. It was really a sweet gesture, and now I had a Budweiser mug to replace my worn out baby bottle.

All in all, it's a pretty great job. I have a sandwich named after me, and I've made some great friends.

Jeff, you're my favorite. Bob and Sandy keep me on my toes, and sometimes my toes and fingers.

I hate those days, but they are few and far between. So if anyone wants to come in and see me, my bosses, the monkeys or to get free food, I'd be more than happy to be rude to you. I mean, to see you.

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