

# VIEWPOINTS

# You can't make this stuff up

Sometimes, I wish I had the writing talent and warped sense of humor of Dave Barry.

I'll admit sometimes the topics of this column are rather boring and stale, especially when they deal with political issues. But, let's face it.

Most of the time, politics is, well, boring and stale.

And sometimes, it's just plain weird.

Let's end 2013 with a look at some of the oddest political moments of this past year, as reported by NBC News, in the words of the men and women who brought them to you.

**"I knew that by putting something out as a tweet that I deleted that the press would see it, and if they could read something into what was an innocent tweet about how hot Cyndi Lauper was as a performer, that it would get the press's attention, and it did in a monster way."** — Rep. Steve Cohen, D-TN, April 12.

Cohen had a tumultuous year. He was the center of a Twitter scandal in February after sending eyebrow-raising tweets to an attractive young model, only to reveal that he believed the woman was his biological daughter. (Paternity tests later proved otherwise.) Cohen's hastily-deleted tweets to "Time After Time" crooner Cyndi Lauper similarly sent reporters looking for answers. Cohen said that's exactly what

## BETWEEN THE LINES



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he intended, insisting that this "tweet and delete" ploy was the most effective way to promote an upcoming documentary about Memphis music.

**"I will eat them anywhere. I do so like green eggs and ham. Thank you, thank you, Sam I Am!"** — Sen. Ted Cruz, R-TX, Sept. 24.

Texas Senator Ted Cruz reads two bedtime stories to his daughters at home and likens Obamacare to "Green Eggs and Ham."

Cruz needed a lot of material to fill his famed 21-hour speech against Obamacare. In addition to a Darth Vader impression and some praise for White Castle hamburgers, Cruz read from the children's classic "Green Eggs and Ham" by Dr. Seuss. He said he was reading the story his young daughters, but amateur Seussologists were quick to point out that the message of the children's tale is to try new things before declaring one's dislike for them.

**"The most shocking part of the story was learning that there is a vegan strip club in Portland."** — Cory Booker spokesman Kevin Griffis, Sept. 25.

It's no secret that former Newark, NJ Mayor Cory Booker really enjoys Twitter. But his compliment-swapping with a 26-year-old stripper (with a very NSFW Twitter profile) earned him the attention of the national media. The svelte employee of Portland's "Casa Diablo" club — which does, in fact, exclusively serve vegan food — admitted in interviews that she had a "slight crush" on the ambitious politician but said she initiated the G-rated contact. His campaign's tongue-in-cheek response helped mitigate the damage, and Booker was elected to the U.S. Senate in November.

**"We're glad Poland Spring was close at hand for Sen. Rubio last night at his moment of need for refreshment."** — Poland Spring statement, Feb. 13.

It wasn't what Sen. Marco Rubio, R-FL, said during his response to the president's State of the Union that got him in, er, hot water. It was his poorly-timed lunge for a bottle of water off-screen in the middle of an otherwise eloquent speech about conservative values. The Poland

Spring company, delighted at the "cameo," joined in the fun.

**"I know that this has been some of the conventional wisdom that's been floating around Washington that somehow, even though most people agree that I'm being reasonable, that most people agree I'm presenting a fair deal, the fact that they don't take it means that I should somehow, you know, do a Jedi mind meld with these folks and convince them to do what's right."** — President Barack Obama, March 1.

For a president often popularly compared to Spock, Obama really doesn't have his sci-fi facts straight. Even folks who are far from fluent Klingon-speakers had to scratch their heads at Obama's assertion that only some kind of "Jedi mind meld" could help change Republicans' minds about sequestration cuts. The White House embraced the mashup of Star Trek and Star Wars, launching a web site that played off of Obama's mistake, but nerds fumed.

**"It's hard to take you seriously."** — NYC mayoral candidate Anthony Weiner, to a British reporter, Aug. 8.

"I just have a feeling I like stepped into a Monty Python bit," Anthony Weiner said as a British journalist questioned him about his campaign to become New York City mayor.

He then offered to present an impromptu weather forecast.

Anthony Weiner's would-be redemption story turned into a can't-tear-your-eyes-away political car crash as his bid for New York City mayor disintegrated in scandal. His campaign rallies often ended with heckling and ridicule from voters familiar with his sexual pseudonym "Carlos Danger." Voters had a hard time taking Weiner seriously, as it turned out; he placed fifth in the Democratic primary.

**"For every one who's a valedictorian, there's another 100 out there who weigh 130 pounds — and they've got calves the size of cantaloupes because they're hauling 75 pounds of marijuana across the desert."** Rep. Steve King, R-IA, July 18.

King's not known as a warm and fuzzy speaker, and this comment about children brought to the country illegally prompted heated condemnation from the highest levels in his party. King stood by his remarks, saying he had seen such drug mule activity during visits to the Mexican-American border. We can't help but believe that Vermillion's own Ben Nesselhuf, campaign manager of King's Democratic opponent, Jim Mowrer, views Rep. King as the gift that keeps on giving.

## PLAIN TALK POLL RESULTS

How would you describe your holiday spending this year?

The same as last year.	13
Less than last year.	13
More than last year.	4
<b>Total Votes</b>	<b>30</b>

To participate in the Plain Talk's weekly poll, log on to [plaintalk.net](http://plaintalk.net).

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Plain Talk encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the Plain Talk will accept no

letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Mail to: Letters to the Editor, 201 W. Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069, drop off at 201 W. Cherry in Vermillion or e-mail to [david.lias@plaintalk.net](mailto:david.lias@plaintalk.net).



# Just an average Joe in a very big story?

*"And ye, beneath life's crushing load ... who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow ... rest beside the weary road ... and hear the angels sing!"* — Lyrics from "It came upon a midnight clear" by Edmund Sears

When Christians the world over celebrate the birth of Christ, we sometimes experience God moments of speechless enchantment. The glow of twinkling lights through long winter nights, the familiar chorus "all is calm, all is bright, sleep in heavenly peace" stirs in us either a complete fullness or a total emptiness. Such dueling sensations are hard to grasp, let alone explain.

In every last strand and string of Christmas, there exists a push-pull which can be delightfully inviting and at the same time dangerously overwhelming. No matter how much money we spend to celebrate, we can't seem to achieve that certain merriness

## MY STORY YOUR STORY



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the frenetic pace of wrapping and unwrapping Christmas, maybe we should count to 10 and remember what the holy family endured: Mary (having a baby out of wedlock), Joseph (not the biological father) and the Christ child (no vacancies in Bethlehem and born in a stinky stable). The story of Jesus' birth was not a flawless manger scene that was imperviously cast with Hollywood characters.

We also have a tendency to be overly impressed with Bible

everyone is wishing us.

I think striving for an unrealistic picture of perfection is why so many people experience depression around the holidays. When we are all caught up in

figures — so much that we just can't see ourselves fitting into the Biblical mix of things.

In his translation of Holy Scripture, titled "The Message/Remix," Pastor Eugene H. Peterson says when we see ourselves as uninvolved observers of God's work, we disqualify ourselves. "Our unimpressive, very ordinary lives make us outsiders to such a star-studded cast. ... We conclude that we are somehow not religious and thus unfit to participate in the big story."

But, look again. Throughout Bible times, God did not choose members of the in-crowd. He selected ordinary people. Some were outcasts, others weak, a number defiant, still others disobedient and almost all were fearful.

From Daniel to David, Ruth to Esther, from John the Baptist to Paul, God steadily and quietly worked through these ordinary everyday characters.

What about Joseph — an unsuspecting bystander in the Salvation story, an average Joe who at the news that his soon-to-be betrothed was with child, became fearful and prepared to run for his life. He did not give into his fears, but instead paid attention to those God moments leading to birth of a baby king (Matt. 1:20 and Mark 2:13-23).

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "We gain strength and courage and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face ... we must do that which we think we cannot."

Like Joseph, we too are afraid. We fear crimes against us. We fear injury and disease. We fear loss of love and livelihood. When in reality, the greatest threat we face is overlooking God's actions in our lives, missing those God moments, not noticing the God things happening all around us — all because we are too distracted, too busy, too self-focused, too afraid to notice ... too

unworthy. Mother Teresa, made famous through her selfless serving of the poor in India, once said, "We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. ... We need silence to be able to touch souls."

From Ruth to Mary, from Job to Jonah, down through the ages from our grandparents, parents, to you and me — God is steadily and quietly working through us to bring about God's will in our families, throughout churches, among neighbors, between enemies — around the world. This is where the real action is!

Let us remember. We count. What we do counts. How we respond to God's still quiet voice counts.

Sh-h-h.  
Listen.  
God is working among us.

Source: "The Message/Remix" by Eugene H. Peterson