

# Political Penguin

By Duane Plank

Just when President Obama was presumably getting ready to kick back on the couch, turn on the NBA playoffs on his plasma TV and rest-up a little after a tumultuous first 100 days in office, this nasty swine flu epidemic/pandemic reared its ugly and deadly head.

The President has chosen to refer to the flu as H1N1 virus, which emerged in Mexico and San Diego late in March. Some had referred to the virus as the "Mexican" virus, but that didn't go over too well with... well, especially Mexicans. But how do you think the swine feel? You know, people like Ponzi schemer Bernie Madoff, who bilked thousands of folks out of somewhere in the neighborhood of \$65 billion and now sits in jail. Hey, Bernie, you ever see the flick *Shawshank Redemption*?

Madoff apparently lived by the Michael Douglas/Gordon Gecko mantra made famous in the classic old school movie *Wall Street*: "Greed is good." How's that been working out recently?

Feel badly for some of the folks the slime ball Madoff bilked, but in reality, aren't we supposed to read the fine print when we invest? Do a little research of our own before handing over our retirement moolah to a supposed investment icon? If it looks too good to be true...

In this capitalistic society currently running amuck, shouldn't we pay greater attention to the credo "Buyer beware?"

So did you see where ancient Senator Arlen Specter, representing the Keystone State of Pennsylvania, apparently had a "senior moment" and decided to switch parties, jumping to the Democratic side of the aisle? The 79-year-old Specter had become so disgruntled with his Republican Party that the veteran public servant decided to jump ship and align himself with the Obamaites on the left.

Of course, according to those in the know, Specter had little chance of winning the Republican primary prior to the 2010 elections, so it appears that the one-time Presidential candidate was making a pre-emptive strike before being tossed aside by the party of Ronald Reagan, which certainly appears to be in disarray.

Specter's defection, along with the presumed victory of comedian Al Franken in Minnesota, which may be finalized in the next five years or so, will give the Demo's 58 seats in the Senate. And with the liberal leanings of Independents Joe Lieberman of Connecticut and Bernie Sanders of Vermont, the party in power now wields a whole lotta power.

The veteran now-Democratic Senator hit the road on Sunday, appearing on a couple of the network TV news shows. Like any smart politico, he wanted to get his message out front and center before allowing the bloggers to run wild with their half-truths and innuendo. Unlike this column, which is nothing but the facts, ma'am.

Said the flip-flopper Specter, explaining his party hopping: "There is more than being re-elected here. There's the factor of principle. The GOP Party has gone far to the right since I joined it under Reagan's big tent."

Gee, you think? Kowtowing to the arch-conservatives and allowing the Religious Right to seemingly take control of the Party doesn't seem to be working out all too well for the Republicans, does it? So Specter, like a little kid on the playground, decided to take his ball and go home. Or go over to the winning side. Seems like the wily Senator is a bit of a front-runner, doesn't it?

The Republican hierarchy, of course, was none-too-pleased with Specter's defection. Said Senator John Ensign, who represents the folks from the great gambling state of Nevada: "We want to make sure that Senator Specter is no longer in the United States Senate after the next election. We are going to work very hard to make sure that happens."

Just keep the zealots from the Religious Right out of the fray, and you may have a shot at sending Mr. Specter packing.

President Obama was, of course, pleased to add Specter to the team, and to tally up vote number 60 on most issues for the Democratic side of the aisle. Calling Specter "one tough hombre," the Prez shockingly said that he would support Specter in the Pennsylvania Democratic primary down the road.

So why is Specter's party hopping a big deal, you ask? Well, now the Demo's, who were already the runaway leader in the clubhouse, have another leg up in actually passing their style of legislation when it comes to divisive issues like health care reform, climate change, immigration and other hot-button programs.

By the way, did the Governor from our Great Bankrupt State, good-old tax and spend Arnold, ever officially change parties, or is he still considered a Republican? Tell me again why we ousted Gray Davis? Something about a budget crisis? The Governor sure is doing a bang-up job with that one, isn't he?

And President Obama received some more good news late last week when it was announced that U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Souter, the 69-year-old Democrat masquerading as a Republican, would step down from the bench this summer.

Apparently Souter was not a huge fan of spending his work week hanging out in the nation's capital, and yearned to return home, permanently, to New Hampshire.

Here's a quote from the hard-working Souter: "When the term of court starts, I undergo a sort of annual intellectual lobotomy and it lasts until the following summer, when I sort of cram what I can into the summertime."

So Souter is saying that he puts his brain on autopilot during his October to June court term, and then wakes up in the summer? Yeah, it is probably time for the man to move on.

Souter was appointed to the bench in 1990 by President Bush, and was supposed to champion conservative causes. But Souter quickly starting siding with the liberals and has been a reliable vote on all of the issues recently decided by the court, including abortion, civil rights, and religion.

Those who think they are in the know are touting a woman to replace Souter. The current gender scorecard for Supreme Court justices: Men 8, Women 1.

Not a bad week for the President, huh? But his Chicago Bulls did get sent packing by the Boston Celtics. •

# How Well Do You Know Your Town's History?



1922, the Pier and Pavilion after its completion. The Manhattan Beach Development Company finished the work on the pavilion at a cost of \$15,000.

By Jan Dennis

(Abridged from *A Walk Beside The Sea* by Jan Dennis)

From its very beginning, the Manhattan Beach Development Company ("Company") was very involved in the city. On November 4, 1921, it sponsored a "monstrous" booster celebration for the town. A week later, it announced plans to create a villa city with 420 lots. The houses were to be four- or five-room bungalows with hot and cold water, hardwood floors and stucco walls painted white. The color, City officials said, shall be "the prevailing color for the wonderful city of Manhattan Beach." This location, south of Manhattan Beach Boulevard between Crest Drive and Valley Drive, is now referred to as a "walk street" area.

The following was taken from promotional

material the Company circulated: "From careful, conservative estimates this venture alone was expected to net 8 percent on the total capitalization of the company. Although building permits of over one-half million dollars have already been issued, Manhattan Beach is sadly in need of many commercial structures; such as stores, garages, auto accessories, gasoline stations and banking facilities. Enterprising home-seekers and progressive citizens will find many lucrative opportunities waiting."

The Company owned the 3,100 feet of ocean frontage extending from First Street to Thirteenth Street, excepting 200 feet frontage at the pier. It built a \$10,000 bath house, which had a capacity for 360 bathers to rent lockers and change clothes. It also owned a

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