

Well, my little experiment seems to be working. Ever since I decided to tune out on politics for a while, it's as if a two-ton boulder had been lifted from my chest.



Don't get me wrong – I won't be going the 'pure fluff' route on you, like some know-nothing, care-nothing airhead. (Though several of you *have* asked me, rather wistfully, why I never write about lipstick anymore.) I've simply decided to put politics in its proper perspective for the time being. Reading about it, thinking about it, and blogging about it daily had become all-consuming. *Nothing* should be

all-consuming, but this particular obsession is *really*

unhealthy. Especially for someone of my temperament. As one conservative reader wrote in an email recently, "You're just too gentle a soul for this, aren't you?" The fellow was urging me to buck up and "grow a pair," as it were, and he didn't exactly throw out "gentle" as a compliment; but in reality, he was right. My sense of fair play runs deep and my feelings are easily hurt. I don't flourish in an environment where people consistently mangle the truth, ditch the good manners their mamas taught 'em, and refuse to extend respect – or even humanity – to anyone not of their tribe. From the sneering intellectual arrogance of the Olbermanns to the loud, proud idiocy of the Hannities... the lines have never been etched so deeply in the sand, and I can't get behind either of them.

So I'm glad to be on break. Whether that break is temporary or permanent I've yet to determine. I still care about the things I care about, and haven't quite given up the notion that I have something to say about them. But for now, feeling two tons lighter is no small blessing. To celebrate, I think I'll rave instead of ranting this time around. Won't that be refreshing?

Incidentally, while the country may be going to hell in a hand basket, there is much to rave about here on the homefront. Don't believe me? Read on...

First, I want to rave about my friend **Karen Harvey**, who has an astonishing exhibit of photographs hanging in the USCB gallery through October. Karen lost her mother to cancer last spring, and that loss has informed her work profoundly. She has burrowed deep into her grief *and*

her faith transforming her pain into a thing of beauty as only the artist – and one who accepts grace – can. It's a wonder to behold, and I'm very proud of her. Go see these pictures! (And for a preview, see page 14.)

I must also rave about **Beaufort Performing Arts, Inc.**, headed up by Bonnie Hargrove, who had the audacity to bring an act like the

East Village Opera Company

to USCB last week. I had the privilege of attending this thrilling performance, and if you did not, I'm so sorry for your loss! EVOC boldly goes where you've never seen (or heard) anyone go before, performing classical arias, both beloved and obscure, as full-fledged rock anthems, using modern instruments and plenty of

post

modern attitude. This may sound like blasphemy to you purists out there – of both opera *and*

rock – but trust me when I say this unlikely marriage does both genres proud. Imagine

Pavarotti's signature aria "Nessun Dorma" performed by U2 in their Red Rocks period, and you begin to get the idea. EVOC's keyboardist and spokesman, Peter Kiesewalter, told us at the outset, "We're dedicated to preserving the integrity of this music, but we believe that, were Verdi and Puccini and Mozart alive today, they would be using these instruments." Then the band set out to convince us that great music is timeless and transcendent. They made

me

a believer.

Challenging offerings like this bode well for the future of **BPA, Inc.** Bravo!

I really need to send out a rave to **Eve Sibley**, too. I've only met Eve through email correspondence, but she has put together something so fantastic that I know she must be fantastic. Eve is the director of

World Food

Garden,

an

organization dedicated to bringing back the Victory Garden. She says, "During WWI and WWII, 40 percent of produce was grown in small gardens at home, and it's time to bring that figure back. World Food Garden has launched

Worldfoodgarden.org

for gardeners and small farmers to promote a modern Victory Garden movement throughout the world by encouraging anyone with a little land, a rooftop, a balcony or terrace to start a vegetable garden. It's time to begin cultivating lifestyles that are not vulnerable to downturns in the economy. Our aim is to provide a gathering place for those who garden and those who wish to learn to work the earth to grow their own food."

Sibley suggests that when considering Worldfoodgarden.org, people think of it as a Facebook to save the planet. Though she's concerned for the entire earth, Eve lives right here in the Lowcountry. To read all about her brilliant idea, brilliantly executed, see page 23.

And while we're restoring the planet, let us not forget about the culture. Next month, USCB's Beaufort campus will be the site of a lecture series appealing to any of you out there who, like me, are worried sick about the decline of Western Civilization. **The Ralph McInerny Center** will stage two lectures: the first will be given by syndicated columnist and author

Maggie Gallagher,

and addresses the question,

"Does Marriage Have a Future?"

The second will be presented by

Ralph McInerny,

himself, and asks

"How Do Ordinary People Know Moral Principles?"

McInerny is past president of the American Catholic Philosophical Society and the author of many academic works, as well as various detective novels, including the Father Dowling mystery series. The Ralph McInerny Center for Thomistic Studies is a project of cultural renewal that aims at making the classical and Christian intellectual traditions fruitfully converse with contemporary culture, in such areas as bioethics, legal theory, economics, political theory, literature, science, and sociology. The eventual goal of the project is to establish a new international university.

Intellectual stimulation? With a moral and spiritual underpinning? This is me raving, y'all! For more info, see the ad on page 21.

And I would be remiss were I not to rave about the return of **Charles Wadsworth** and his wonderful

F

estival Series

to USCB next month. Believe it or not, this world class chamber music series is entering it's 30th season! What's even more unbelievable is that Wadsworth, that most gracious and eternally youthful host, is soon to celebrate his 80th birthday and retire. After this season, he'll be handing the series over to cellist Edward Arron, in whose capable hands I have no doubt it will continue to thrive. But you don't want to miss the final season of Charles In Charge. The Festival Series is near and dear to my heart. Back in my single days, I used to usher in exchange for admission, then sit there hanging on every gorgeous note, marveling at my great good fortune. Thanks for the memories, Charles.

(For more information about the USCB Festival Series, see our story on page 31.)

And on a more personal note... a special rave to **all you readers** who've been so kind and supportive during my recent, very public, pity party. Some of you have encouraged me to keep fighting the good fight, while others have simply seconded my emotion. One loyal reader, sensing I needed some serious moral support, mailed me a set of twelve scholarly lectures on the writings of C.S. Lewis, which I am currently listening to in my car. Some folks send flowers, others send balloons.

Natal

ie Eades of St. Simon's, GA,

sends C.S. Lewis. Bless you, my dear! He was just what I needed. I shall return the CDs forthwith.