

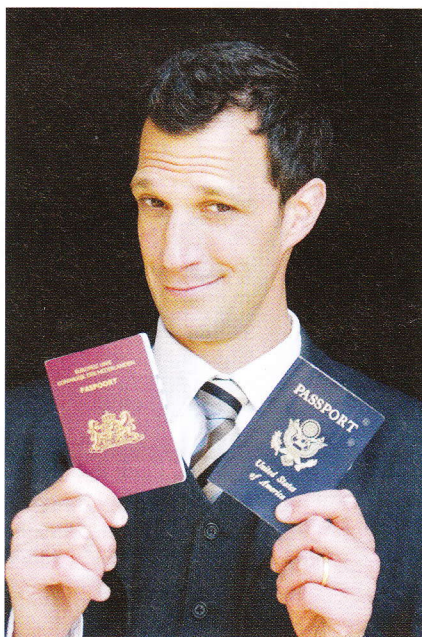
All hail the undecided voter

NL-based US comedian Greg Shapiro gives commentary from his two-man show 'Bye-Bye Bush' on the recent US elections.

Battleground States. Swing Voters. The Undecideds. The 2008 Presidential campaign was the longest in US history, with the biggest contrast in candidates imaginable. The people who remained undecided until the very end are either remarkably impartial...or remarkably dense. Yet, these are the very people who just determined the next President of the United States.

Barack Obama is incredibly popular in Nederland. He's also popular in Europe, Canada, and other places that don't get to vote. The people who do vote are Joe Sixpacks, Joe Plumbers, and Hockey moms. They may not warm up to John McCain, but then Sarah Palin sure sounds like one of them, and she used to be a beauty queen, so she looks good on TV! These details may sound trivial, but don't forget, we're talking about America.

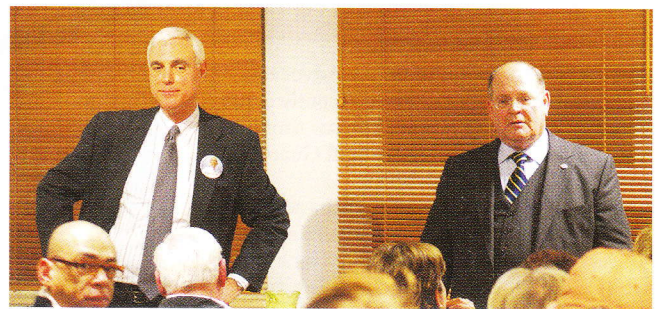
America doesn't have a Royal Family. There's no Prince William or Princess Maxima to distract some attention away from the politicians and let them do their job. In America, the President is on the front page as well as the entertain-



Greg Shapiro

ment page, the celebrity gossip page, and the scandal page. And – since Bill Clinton – it's all the front page.

Also, America is the country that invented the 24-hour news cycle. The President is not just some distant figure in a faraway office. The President is increasingly present: on your TV, your newspaper, your computer screen. He's in your house, he's the face you wake up with! And a lot of Middle America is still uncomfortable with the idea of waking up with a black man saying 'Mmm, those are lovely pajamas.' Fortunately, undecided voters are just as uncomfortable with grandpa saying the same thing.



Eyes on America

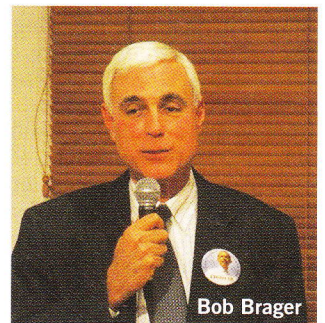
By Heather Tucker

September 25th and October 9th saw The American Book Centre in Amsterdam playing host, as part of its 2008 Voter Assistance Programme, to an event at the front of many Americans' minds.

As the longest campaign in the world drew to a close, a three-hour session entitled, Obama or McCain: The Voters Decide, was organised to allow Americans residing in the Netherlands the chance to voice their opinions, get help with voter registration and ask questions about the upcoming elections.

Bob Bragar, Chair of Democrats Abroad Netherlands, and Warren Proctor, Chair of Republicans Abroad Netherlands, were the main speakers, discussing their candidate's positions on issues and answering questions from the audience.

The main discussions began with questions submitted by Americans, in advance of the event, allowing the speakers

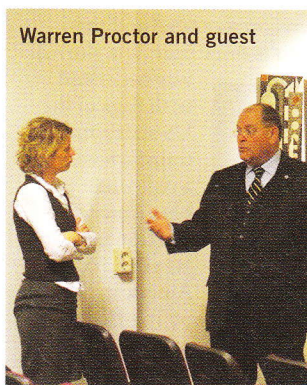


Bob Bragar

time to prepare, research the topics and consult with state-side campaign offices. The later portion saw the chair opening the floor to further questions from the audience on new topics or to re-visit previously-raised issues.

Popular topics included the environment, green energy, the economy, education, the electoral process and the role and position of the United States in relation to the European Union. The majority of questions were focused on the more general topics surrounding what it was like to be a voter abroad and barriers that Americans living abroad face. The event was rounded off with a question-and-answer session.

There was a good turnout and the audience was well prepared with questions. The event chair, Donna DuCarme did an excellent job of keeping people on topic and redirecting conversations that, had we not been in the company of such civilised folk, could have quite easily resulted in fist-fights in the middle of the floor.



Warren Proctor and guest