

WOLFSON VAN WINKLE

I'm grateful for this [Howard Wolfson column](#)—for his willingness to wax poetic about the guy who beat his candidate.

For me, the presidential campaign began in a crowded Iowa hall, where I saw a man my age lift up a daughter around my daughter's age and tell her that one day she could be president. Last week things came nearly full circle, when I saw another man my age lift up another child and say the very same thing.

But I find his description of the Hillary bubble even more evocative.

For many of us who were part of the Clinton campaign, Sen. Barack Obama's appeal was something we understood only in the abstract – data in polls, faces at a televised rally.

Most of us never heard him speak in person. At work 14 hours a day in the war room, we focused on his perceived faults and deficiencies. Our time was spent sharpening and advancing arguments. Skepticism was critical to our efforts. Insulated from Obamamania, I met few Obama supporters and distanced myself from the ones I knew. I lived this way for 18 months.

From the outside, our loss may have seemed inevitable for months, but inside the campaign we simply kept going.

[snip]

Once we ran out of states and the campaign ended, we were like Rip Van Winkle. We awoke to a world transformed by political currents we had stood against. There was the neighbor in an Obama T-shirt getting the morning paper. Every parked car on the street bore an

Obama bumper sticker. Had they been there along, or did they pop up overnight?

I'm not surprised by Wolfson's description of the impenetrability of the bubble—it was always clear he wasn't aware of his surroundings. But I am curious why their oppo guys—the young kids wandering around after Obama with a camera—could never communicate this message to the campaign. I am curious why Wolfson distanced himself from his friends who supported the Obama campaign. Wolfson was [studiously polite](#) when Richardson endorsed Obama—couldn't Wolfson have used that as an opportunity to understand this excitement? I know it's important to assess a campaign from hard data—but does that excuse ignoring the qualitative impressions as well (though, arguably, Obama didn't get the qualitative appeal of Hillary to working class voters until just recently).

Mostly, though, Wolfson could be speaking for the McCain campaign, which seems to be in a similar bubble. I'd love to have someone from the Obama campaign ask Wolfson about this comment—and ask how to use that realization against McCain.

Then came Thursday night at Invesco Field. During the campaign, we scoffed at events like this, mostly because we were not capable of producing them. A cross section of voters waited for hours to enter the stadium and take their seats. As one friend put it, it looked more like an American convention than the convention of any particular political party.

After all, McCain's celebrity attacks (which presumably must be toned down now that he's running with Ms. Veep Congeniality?) were compensation for the fact that McCain has to bus supporters in to fill out a 15,000 person Veep announcement. And much as McCain once (before he

flip flopped) believed in a sane immigration policy, his events are growing whiter and older from an already lily white base.

I'm grateful for Wolfson's poetry in this column. It ought to be a signal to Obama's folks to ask him for advice about vulnerabilities inherent to the bubble.