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Blogging Through The Obama Years

Richard Miner
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Heading toward the presidential election in November 2012, it is interesting to reflect upon the broad use of online media, and particularly social media, by both major political parties' campaigns. During the 2008 presidential election, it was widely acknowledged that the Obama campaign made superior use of digital communication technologies.

Richard Miner's *Blogging through the Obama Years* does not specifically address candidate Obama's online dominance or his administration's use of the Internet, but Miner could not have written it without feeling that influence. The book is a testament to the forum that online communication provides to anyone who wants to take advantage of it.

Miner, who is retired from a career in computer software, decided to blog about politics and the state of the country in early 2007 and continued to do so for the next five years, primarily, he says, to "become a better informed citizen than I used to be." His book is a compilation of his blog posts organized into chapters, each with an introduction that allows him to reflect on what he wrote, which is a nice touch.

Included are chapters on democracy, large government, the place of the United States in "the new world order," the middle class, health care, education, the bank bailout, and gun control. Given recent cases of gun violence, the last chapter, simply titled "Guns," is chillingly appropriate. The author, who demonstrates an understanding of the Second Amendment, lobbies for national gun-control laws that are similar to laws enacted in his home state of New Jersey: "Sounds to me like the opportunity to stop the VT [Virginia Tech] shooter ahead of time would have been improved if all states adopted NJ gun laws, or if we had similar national requirements."

While Miner acknowledges that he is just an ordinary citizen, his ability to express his views in writing is admirable. He is no less informed or less skilled than many self-appointed political commentators. He is an unapologetic progressive Democrat who, at times, mercilessly lambastes conservative Republicans, in particular the Tea Party. Any reader with strong political leanings one way or the other should be prepared for the author's subjective slant.

Blogging through the Obama Years basically presents one man's opinion and offers a snapshot of a national political environment that was divisive in 2008 and remains so today, four years after the election of President Obama. If nothing else, the book reminds readers that the political landscape hasn't changed very much.
BARRY SILVERSTEIN (September 10, 2012)

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