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Republican presidential candidate John McCain won the backing of Kansas Senator Sam Brownback Wednesday. And just when you thought McCain's campaign couldn't sink any lower. I'm told the two discussed this arrangement on the CheapTalk Express.

Michael Hayne, New Jersey



Laugh Lines

A new blog from the editors of the Week in Review with original features and funny stuff from all over: laughlines.blogs.nytimes.com

IDEAS & TRENDS

Go On, Bold Couch Potatoes, Click Into the Unknown

By NEIL GENZLINGER "Fifty-seven channels and nothin' on." Bruce Springsteen sang back in 1992, but nowadays that number is laughably low. If you still live on the mainstream end of the remote, the writers' strike that has paralyzed some of television's most popular shows may be the incentive you need to go searching in the triple-digit reaches of the cable- and satellite-dish world. It is a realm of the odd and the obscure and the low budget. But hey, at least it's something different to stare at mindlessly while your favorite show is in reruns.

Here's a guide:



IF YOU ENJOY "24" on Fox YOU SHOULD TRY "LA Ink" on TLC WHY On "24," Jack Bauer and the Counter-Terrorist Unit in Los Angeles enjoy torturing confessions out of people, a practice that often involves long, ominous-looking needles. On "LA Ink," another Los Angeles-based organization also makes frequent use of needles: Kat Von D's tattoo parlor. (Note: Fans of "CSI: Miami" should check out "Miami Ink" for the same reason.)



IF YOU ENJOY "ER" on NBC YOU SHOULD TRY "Pit Crews" on Rush HD WHY "ER" involves lightning-fast efforts to fix human beings. "Pit Crews" involves lightning-fast efforts to fix race cars,

speedboats and such. "We follow the split-second decision-making and intensity that comes with being part of the crew," the show brags. Stat!

IF YOU ENJOY "Late Show With David Letterman" on CBS YOU SHOULD TRY "Deep Sea Detectives" on the History Channel WHY The Letterman show has a long-running bit called "Will It Float?" that involves throwing something into a tank of water and seeing if it floats. The History Channel program examines real-life stories of ships that, well, didn't.

IF YOU ENJOY "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" on Comedy Central



YOU SHOULD TRY "Shooting USA" on the Outdoor Channel WHY If Mr. Stewart isn't around to take pot shots at every target in sight, you'll be in almost as good hands with Jim Scoutten, "America's most-watched firearms reporter." The show has profiles of marksmen, coverage of shooting championships and a segment called "Sighting In," described as "the newest products demonstrated and explained."

IF YOU ENJOY "King of the Hill" on Fox YOU SHOULD TRY "Ace of Cakes" on the Food Network WHY The animated Fox comedy about a blue-collar Texas family has little in common with the Food Network show, where a man named Duff Goldman and some odd friends bake themselves silly. But an ace always beats a king.



IF YOU ENJOY "Ghost Whisperer" on CBS YOU SHOULD TRY "Most Haunted" on the Travel Channel WHY Jennifer Love Hewitt on the CBS show and the "Most Haunted" team both spend a lot of time talking to the dead, or trying to. The "Most Haunted" folks do it by visiting Europe's spookiest buildings.

IF YOU ENJOY "Cavemen" on ABC YOU SHOULD TRY Jewelry Television, on which jewelry and gemstones are hawked day and night WHY If you buy the idea that insurance ad campaigns make good sitcoms, you'll buy anything.

CORRECTIONS

An article last Sunday about the recent de-emphasis of privacy in architectural design misidentified the program headed by Sherry Turkle, a psychologist who commented on the significance of glass towers. She is the director of the M.I.T. Initiative on Technology and Self; she is not the director of the Program in Science, Technology and Society, though she is a member.

Because of an editing error, an article on Oct. 28 about changes in French and British attitudes about the United States carried an incorrect dateline. The article was written in Brussels, not Madrid.