

CNN Viewers Saw the Human Side of Ted Cruz

There haven't been many single events in the Republican presidential race that I've thought could potentially make a difference in the overall outcome, but Wednesday night's CNN Ted Cruz Town Hall is one of them.

It's not that there was a ton of heavy policy discussed or that Cruz made some sort of a breakthrough with a pithy statement or idea. As was true with John Kasich's and Donald Trump's forums the previous two nights, there was very little nuts and bolts campaign material to be found.

The real value in Cruz's program was showing his "human" side, which is something we don't often get to see. In the Republican debates, on the cable news shows and in the evening news, we're shown "politician Ted" who's best known for being intense, wonky and sometimes confrontational.

That's the Ted who is depicted as not having any friends in Washington and isn't likable. Donald Trump mentions it often, "No one likes Ted Cruz."

I myself have heard numerous times over the past year when talking with people about Cruz, "I agree with most of what he says but I just don't *like him*."

Just last Sunday I was conversing with a friend, and he said "I don't know about Cruz, he's too slick."

I'm sure the whole country wasn't watching on Wednesday night, but it's a shame if they weren't.

The program started off with the usual 15-minute Q & A session with Ted and host Anderson Cooper alone on stage.

Cooper immediately asked Cruz for his thoughts on Trump's

quotes about the system being rigged and how the Cruz campaign was stealing the election with his delegate operation. Pretty standard stuff, nothing new or notable.

It appeared to me that Cooper doesn't like Cruz much and Ted doesn't like Anderson either. Fair enough. It was a civil exchange.

Probably the most interesting part of the opening segment was a series of questions and follow-ups regarding the possibility of having Marco Rubio join Cruz on a "unity" ticket.

Cruz wouldn't completely dismiss the possibility but said it was too early to talk in such definite terms. Showing his "human" side, Cruz did relay a funny story about his and Rubio's friendship, concerning a text Marco sent him about a news article on Cruz's time in the Supreme Court.

Ted talked about how the news piece involved his time as a law clerk, particularly mentioning a Supreme Court case on Internet pornography. Ted relayed Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's funny reaction to seeing what it really involved, so Rubio texted Ted, "Holy Cow, you watch porn? Our oppo researchers missed that."

It was a funny moment. The contentious campaign season doesn't seem to have ruined the Cruz/Rubio friendship. That's a good thing.

The tone of the program changed after a short break when Heidi Cruz joined them on the platform. The first few minutes felt a little tense as the audience sized up Heidi, the woman made famous recently with Donald Trump's tasteless tweets and the "my wife is better looking than yours" social media wars prior to the Wisconsin primary.

Heidi quickly got to work on dispelling the notion that husband Ted is anything other than a dedicated man who wants to help the country. They both talked a little bit about

having their young daughters on the campaign trail and relayed some stories about how they first met.

Heidi made a point to say, "Ted is an incredible listener—I want all voters to hear that. Because he really has many, many qualities and thoughtfulness is at the top of the list."

It was sweet. There is genuine affection between the two of them, and it's easy to believe they're best friends.

We also learned that Heidi grew up in California without a TV set, and she doesn't do Twitter, which helps insulate her from the nastier side of the campaign. Ted on the other hand, does work on Twitter and is a follower of Donald Trump of all things.

Cruz said, "You could sit in the woods alone, and you could still hear Donald's Tweets."

For the last segment of the program, daughters Caroline (turning 8 today, wants a Build a Bear party) and Catherine (5) joined Ted and Heidi. Caroline is quite precocious for her age, with articulation and facial expressions to match.

When asked who they'd like to invite to the White House if they get there, Heidi said the girls would love to have Taylor Swift over. (I wonder if they know she supports Hillary.)

Ted revealed that *The Princess Bride* is his favorite movie and also gave an excellent overview of the movie *Amazing Grace* and how legendary British anti-slave trade crusader William Wilberforce inspires him.

All in all, it was a very effective evening for the Cruz family. Both Heidi and Ted admit that they don't cook, but I can definitely see visiting them in their home and feeling comfortable with them. They seem like a very happy and successful family, ready to bring some good ideas to the Executive Branch.

In the end, the media will probably say the Cruz forum was all about *The Princess Bride*, Internet porn and Build a Bear, but it really was a lesson in exposing the human side of Ted Cruz that hasn't been seen much on the campaign trail.

I think most people would see a lovely family who would represent the country well. Cruz may have taken a step forward in making the dream come true on Wednesday night.