

BRILLS

CONTENT

SHAKE-UP AT
CNN

PLUS: A DEAR
TED LETTER

**GORE ON THE PRESS
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**SCRIPTING THE LINES
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**J. EDGAR HOOVER VS.
THE MUCKRAKER**

**THE MULTIMEDIA
ONCOLOGIST**

**SUICIDE OVER
A STORY**

**ANATOMY OF AN IDEA
BY ARTHUR
SCHLESINGER JR.**

50 HIGH-IMPACT
MEDIA PLAYERS WHO
(FAMOUS OR NOT)
SHAPE OUR WORLD

The Influence List 2000

NOVEMBER 2000
US \$3.95/CAN \$5.95

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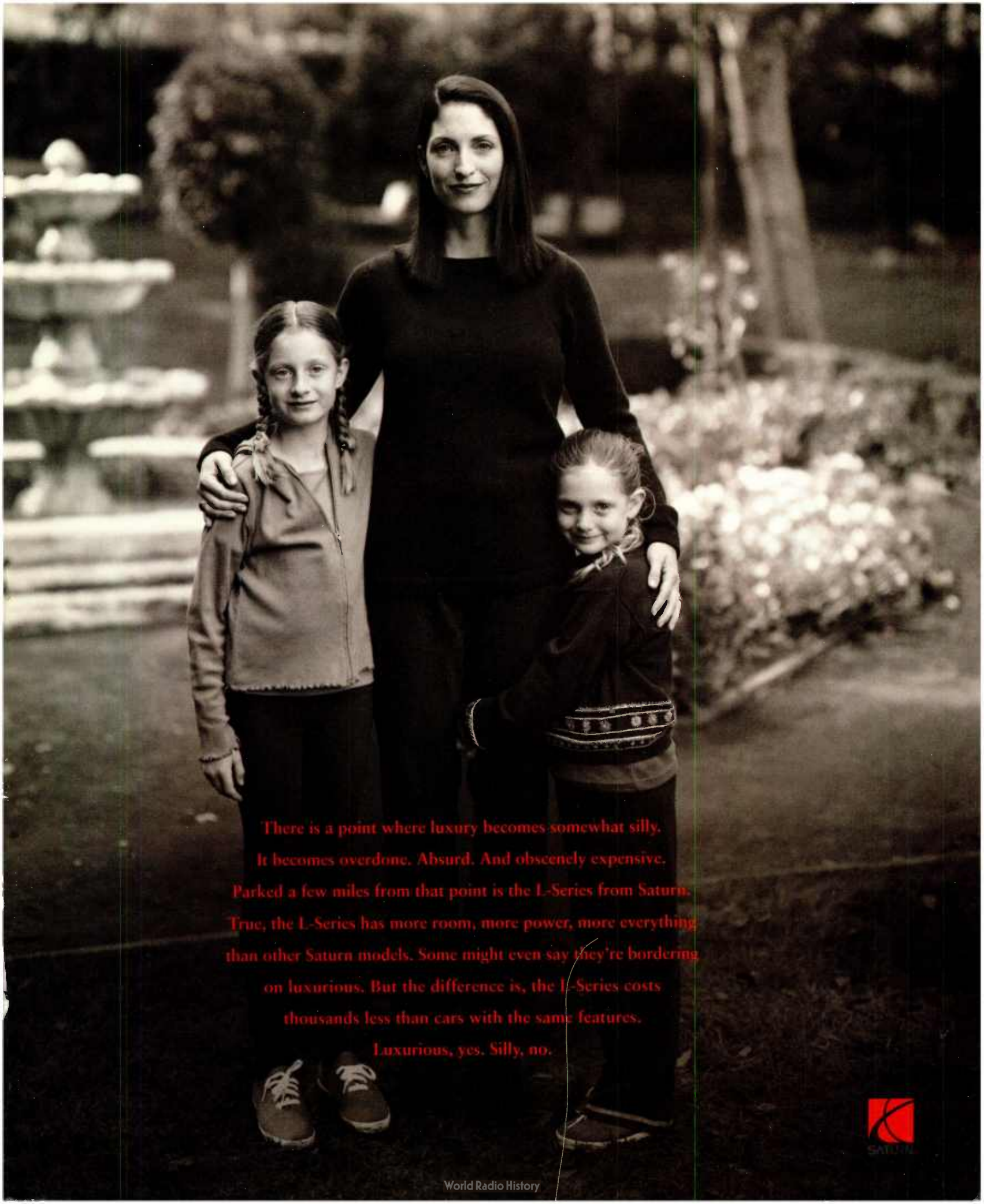
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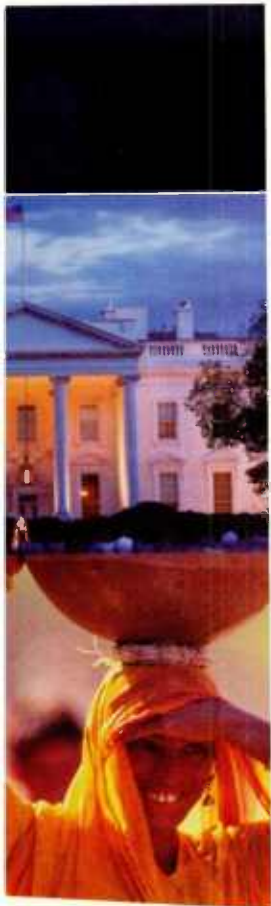
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A black and white portrait of an elderly African American man, Lewis Niblack, looking slightly to the right. He is wearing a striped dress shirt, a patterned tie, and a dark, textured vest. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his facial features against a dark background. The word "Dignity" is written in a white serif font in the upper right corner.

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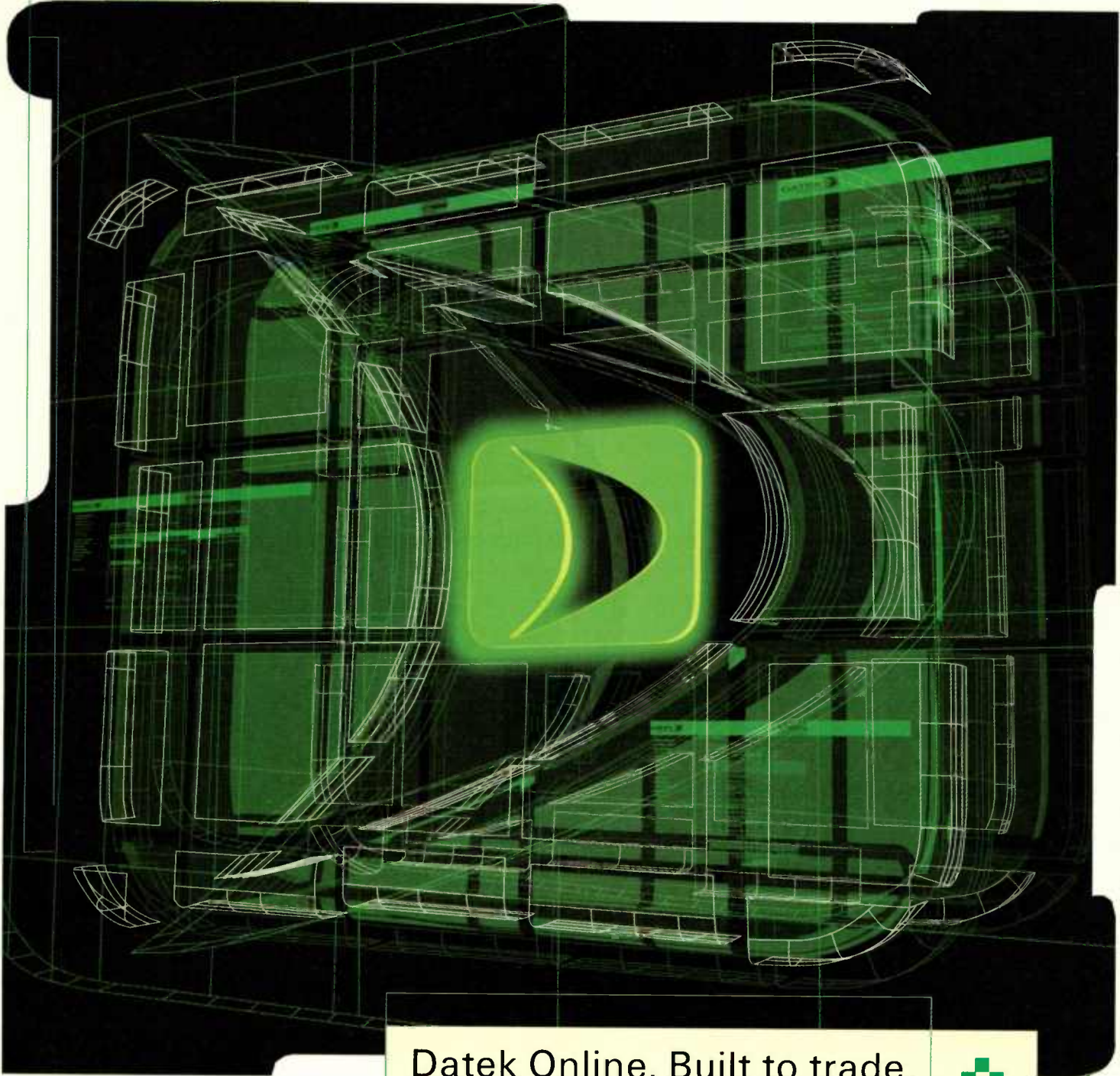
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UNDER THE INFLUENCE

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Every issue of a magazine is the product of a list—a roster of stories that the editors hope is greater than the sum of its parts. This month, we present an even more explicit example—our second-annual Influence List, a highly opinionated and completely subjective rundown of the 50 people (well, 51, but you'll have to turn to page 102 for the story behind that story) who over the past year have most influenced the content we consumed. They are a mix of the über-known and unknown. Some have had influence for years but added to it in 2000 (say, Oprah Winfrey and Tim Russert, two of last year's three returnees). Others merit your attention for the first time (if you've never heard of El Cucuy and Xana Antunes, remember that you met them here first).

Our roundup should not be mistaken for other magazine "power" lists. Power, we like to think, differs from influence—and can derive merely from holding a job, regardless of one's performance in it. For instance, Leslie Moonves, the president and CEO of CBS Television, makes our 2000 list for his hands-on decision to produce the American versions of *Survivor* and *Big Brother*. His network counterparts may be just as powerful, but this year they weren't as influential. And although many writers have brought us important nonfiction books over the past 12 months, David Brooks, in his meditation on middle-class mores, coined a term, "bobo" (short for "bourgeois bohemian"), that may well, along with "yuppie," become a staple of the cultural vocabulary.

Because this magazine focuses on nonfiction content—pulling back the curtain on the media to deliver the stories behind the stories and the people who tell them—don't look for many financiers or Hollywood studio executives among these 50. Ours is an eclectic group of content influencers who, I think it's safe to say, have never appeared on the same list before—and probably never will again. Years from now the issue should give readers a vivid snapshot of this particular media moment.

There's a great tradition of listmaking in maganedom, and over the past few years it has become an epidemic. There's a reason for this. Readers love reading them (*People* magazine's "25 Most Intriguing People" issue is traditionally its top seller every year), editors love editing them (how else can a bunch of overcaffeinated polymaths sit around and play God over people far more powerful and influential than they are), and publishers love publishing them (because advertisers love them, too—in 1999, the number of ad pages in the most well known list issues printed by *Entertainment Weekly*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *People*, *Premiere*, and *Vanity Fair* exceeded their six-month average ad-page count by 30 percent).

It may have all started in 1955, when an editor at *Fortune* named Edgar P. Smith suggested that the magazine publish the list of the largest U.S. companies it had been compiling and using internally for story ideas. And so the *Fortune* 500 was born. In 2000, *Fortune* published ten lists in ten different issues, ranking everything from the best companies for minority employees to the most powerful lobbyists in Washington. (Curiously, although last year's *Fortune* 500 issue sold 17 percent more copies than the magazine's average for 1999, its "Most Powerful Women in American Business" list sold 28 percent fewer copies.)

And the list goes on: *Entertainment Weekly* publishes an annual power list, as does *Premiere*. Then there's the *Forbes* 400, which since 1982 has ranked the richest people in the country and spawned ten other annual lists at the publication. And not only pop-culture and business magazines have gotten into the act: Even *The New Yorker* has become less list-averse and last year published "20 Writers for the 21st Century," its career-making tally of the best new voices in American fiction.

I could continue, but I assume that most readers' enthusiasm for lists does not extend to reading a list of lists—unless, of course, it does, in which case there's a new quarterly magazine called *List*, which is just that.

DAVID KUHN



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CONTENT

Al Gore at an August rally in Burlington, Iowa. Like the rest of his campaign, Gore's press strategy is carefully scripted and, the print media contends, often impersonal.

**"THERE'S THIS
SENSE OF 'WHAT AM I,
CHOPPED LIVER?'"**

**NEW YORKER STAFF WRITER
NICHOLAS LEMANN, DESCRIBING
THE ATTITUDE OF DAILY CAMPAIGN
REPORTERS COVERING GORE.
PAGE 104.**

See page 104.

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**COVER
STORY**

Our second-annual Influence List favors those who actually create something—whether they pen columns, host radio programs, write books, moderate news shows, run websites, or in other ways shape content. Meet the chosen 50 players—from a Latin drive-time deejay to the man who green-lighted *Survivor*—who this year have transformed the media culture, or at least their part of it.

102 PLUS: Making room, on the occasion of his retirement, for No. 51: Charlie Peters, the founding editor of *The Washington Monthly* and a longtime influencer of contemporary journalism. **BY TIMOTHY NOAH**

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Many in the print media have found Al Gore's press strategy—all cool calculation—frustrating. And judging by his recent *Brill's Content* interview, it won't change soon. **BY SETH MNOOKIN**

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How *Deadline*, the latest vérité drama from *Law & Order* creator Dick Wolf, captures journalism in a way real newspapers usually can't.

BY AUSTIN BUNN

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BY JIM EDWARDS

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Facing its lowest ratings in at least a decade and the Time Warner-AOL merger, CNN ousts its U.S. network president. What kind of journalism will thrive in the company's digital future?

BY ANN WOOLNER

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Relying on anonymous sources, Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* reported that a local TV personality was being investigated for harassing women. The suspect—who hadn't been charged—killed himself, and many readers blamed the paper. Now evidence has emerged that could exonerate him.

BY KIMBERLY CONNIFF

"HAVING PERHAPS THE SOUL OF A HACK, I HAVE NEVER BEEN BOTHERED BY WRITER'S BLOCK."

PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR., PONDERING HIS LIFE IN LETTERS AND THE 50-YEAR LEGACY OF *THE VITAL CENTER*, HIS SEMINAL ARTICLE AND BOOK. AN EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT FROM HIS NEW MEMOIR BEGINS ON PAGE 50.



Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. on NBC, circa 1960. His reflections on politics and the media, page 50.

COLUMNS

28 REWIND

Dear Ted Turner: With CNN's ratings down and its corporate future uncertain, here's how you can protect your legacy. **BY STEVEN BRILL**

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A new show on Court TV airs real confessions from real criminals. But shorn of context and humanity, it ends up feeling strangely unreal. **BY ERIC EFFRON**

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Fifty years after his seminal *Vital Center* was published, Arthur Schlesinger ponders why the title has endured in the political and media lexicon.

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BY MIKE PRIDE

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BY GREGORY CURTIS

82 FACE-OFF

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BY JONAH GOLDBERG AND JEFFREY KLEIN

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Since skepticism is a virtue, you should be asking these ten questions as you read, watch, and surf.

BY MICHAEL GARTNER

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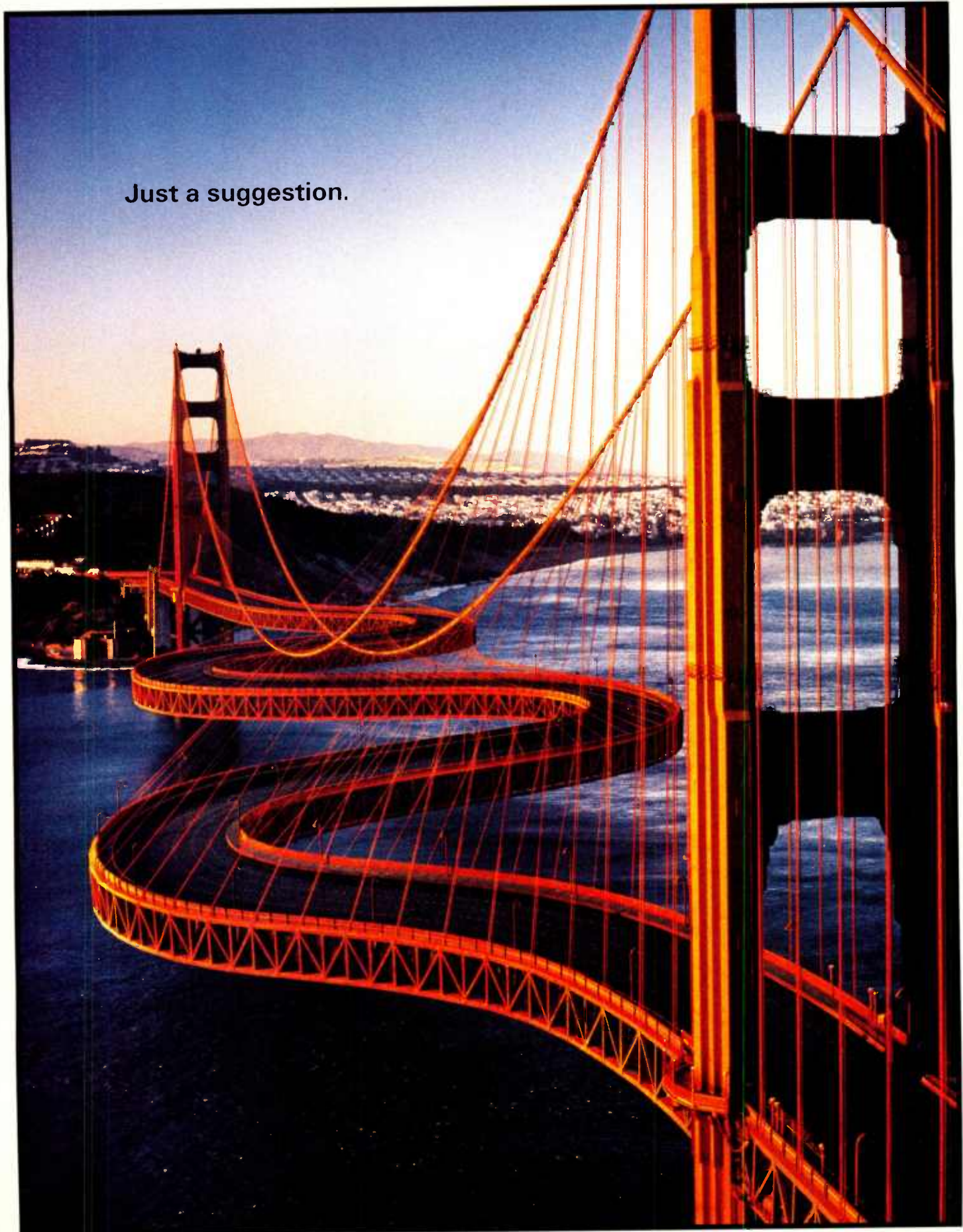
O.J. Simpson's recent lawsuit reveals how journalist Lawrence Schiller (who directed the upcoming mini-series of his book on the O.J. trial) gained Simpson's confidence, then may have betrayed him.

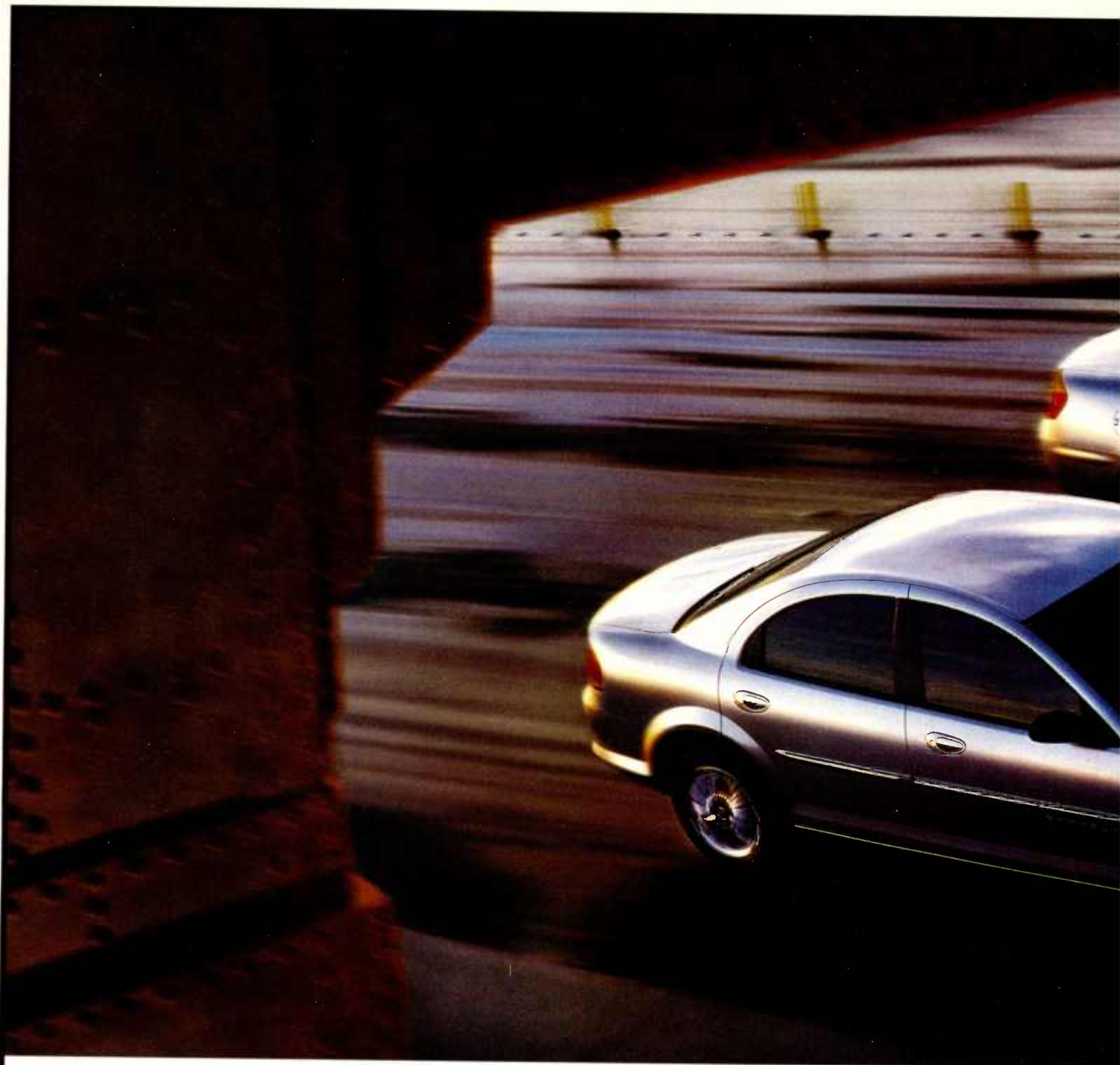
PLUS: Steve Jobs thinks different about his biographer; the hip-hop awards you never saw; and more.

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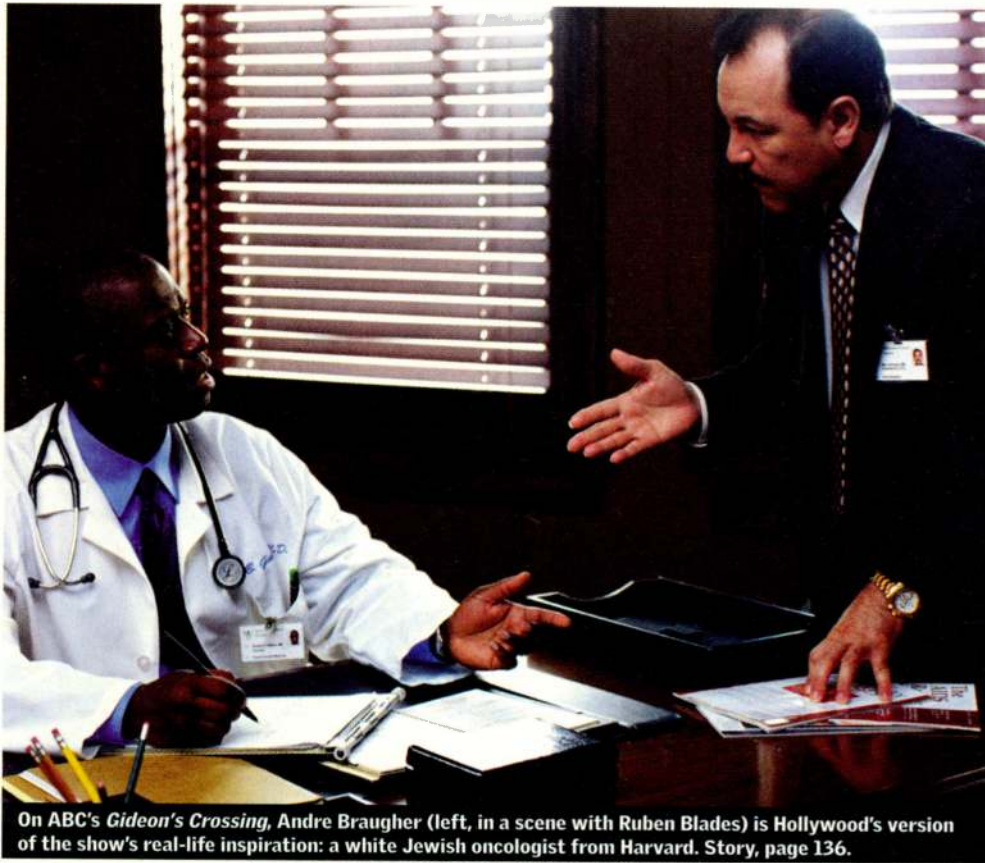
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A LITERARY AGENT DIAGNOSING THE CASE OF DR. JEROME GROOPMAN, A HARVARD MEDICAL PROFESSOR WHOSE WRITING WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR ABC'S NEW HOSPITAL DRAMA, *GIDEON'S CROSSING*. CREATORS, PAGE 136.



On ABC's *Gideon's Crossing*, Andre Braugher (left, in a scene with Ruben Blades) is Hollywood's version of the show's real-life inspiration: a white Jewish oncologist from Harvard. Story, page 136.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Accuracy

Brill's Content is about all that purports to be nonfiction. So it should be no surprise that our first principle is that anything that purports to be nonfiction should be true. Which means it should be accurate in fact and in context.

Labeling and Sourcing

Similarly, if a publisher is not certain that something is accurate, the publisher should either not publish it, or should make that uncertainty plain by clearly stating the source of his information and its possible limits and pitfalls. To take another example of making the quality of information clear, we believe that if unnamed sources must be used, they should be labeled in a way that sheds light on the limits and biases of the information they offer.

No Conflicts of Interest

We believe that the content of anything that sells itself as journalism should be free of any motive other than informing its consumers. In other words, it should not be motivated, for example, by the desire to curry favor with an advertiser or to advance a particular political interest.

Accountability

We believe that journalists should hold themselves as accountable as any of the subjects they write about. They should be eager to receive complaints about their work, to investigate complaints diligently, and to correct mistakes of fact, context, and fairness prominently and clearly.

DEPTS.

131 BOOKS

The strange—and sometimes demeaning—reality of the screenwriting life in Hollywood. **BY RICHARD SCHICKEL**

Dusting off a bookshelf's neglected treasures. **BY GEOFF DYER**

PLUS: Steven Brill reviews a new biography of Robert F. Kennedy; the King of horror gets a makeover; and more.

136 CREATORS

How a cancer specialist at Harvard parlayed his day job into multimedia—and Hollywood—success. **BY ELIZABETH ANGELL**

139 SOURCES

From thousands of books, magazines, websites, and TV shows, the finest down-home Thanksgiving recipes. **BY LARA KATE COHEN**

142 INVESTIGATORS

Journalist Larry Matthews has been barred from arguing before a jury that his suspicious activities were constitutionally protected reporting—and that he wasn't trafficking in child pornography. Now he faces prison.

BY JOSEPH GOMES

148 TOOLS

With a wireless connection, personal digital assistants can surf the Web from just about anywhere. But beware: The gadgets offer unreliable service.

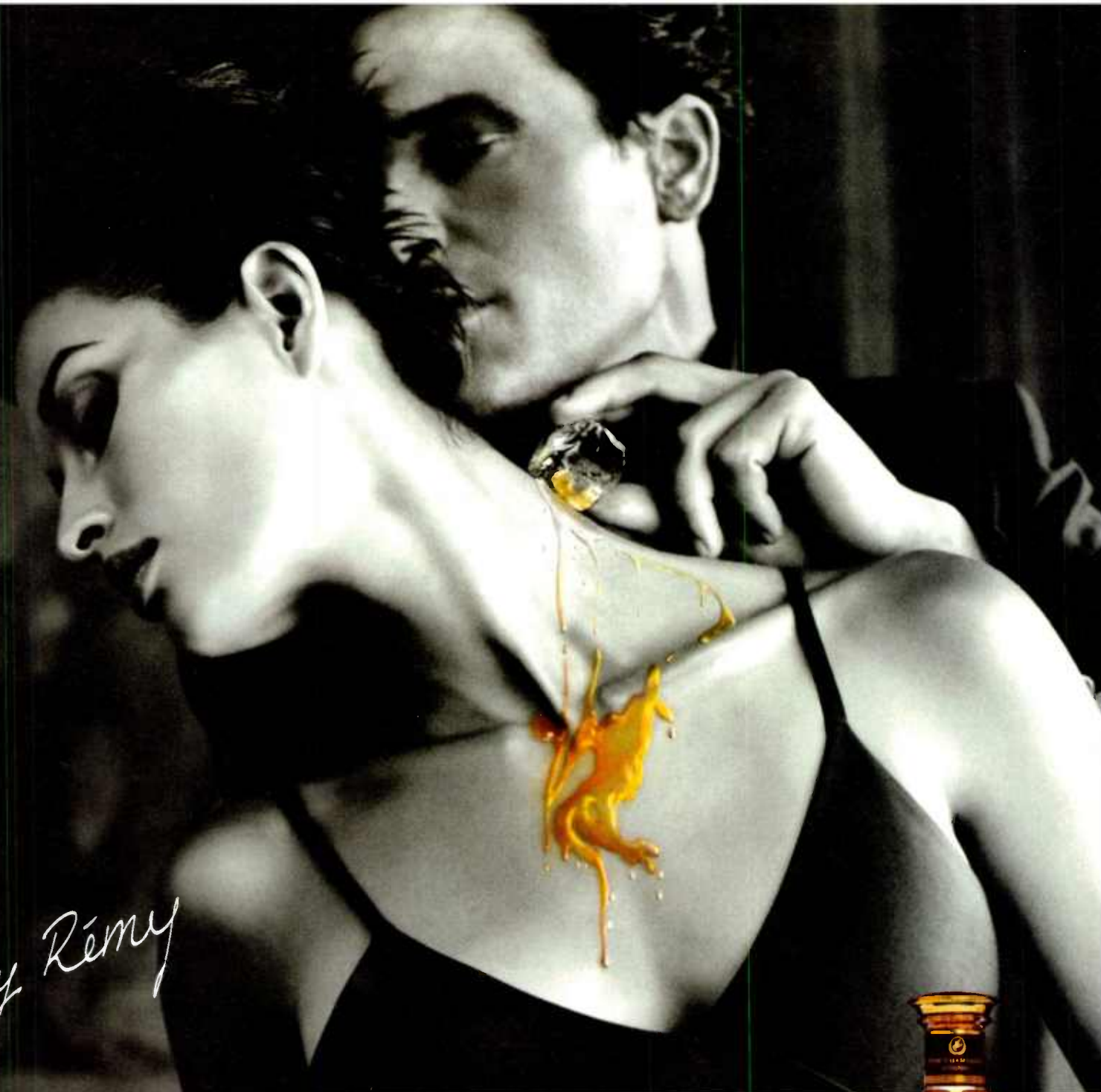
BY JOHN R. QUAIN

168 KICKER

Let Steve Kroft—or at least Al Roker—change your life with their inspirational best-sellers. **SATIRE BY FRANK CAMMUSO**

AND HART SEELY

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4. Our corrections policy should not be mistaken for a policy of accommodating readers who are simply unhappy about a story.
5. Information about corrections or complaints should be directed to CEO Steven Brill. He may be reached by mail at 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020; by fax at 212-332-6350; or by e-mail at comments@brillcontent.com.
6. Separately or in addition, readers are invited to contact our outside ombudsman, Michael Gartner, who will investigate and report on specific complaints about the work of the magazine. He may be reached by voice mail at 212-332-6381; by fax at 212-332-6350; by e-mail at mgartner@brillcontent.com; or by mail at 5315 Waterbury Road, Des Moines, IA 50312.

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THE BUSH BEAT; THE AP DEFENDS ITS PULITZER; AND FACING OFF OVER MEDIA BIAS

ALARMING

"The article by Seth Mnookin "The Charm Offensive" [September], about press attitudes toward George W. Bush when contrasted with its attitudes toward [A] Gore, should alarm the populace. It means that the press has no credibility when covering what is a grave moment in our history. The loss of an authentic, ethical mainstream press renders the public ignorant of what our choices in this election really are.

I would hope Mr. Mnookin would do another fine article on the press and Gore. It would be an eye-opener.

THE REVEREND JACK HOLMAN,
TOMBALL, TX

SPELL IT OUT

"Senior writer Seth Mnookin, in "The Charm Offensive," quotes [Boston Globe correspondent] Curtis Wilkie: "When suddenly you step on your d--k and retreat, then people are going to write, 'Well, he screwed up.'"

Why not spell it out? Is the word just too potent to be exposed to view? Did you fear that your readers would be so appalled and horrified at actually seeing it that hordes of them would immediately cancel their subscriptions? Or, worse, write nasty letters to the editor? Or were you afraid of polluting the minds of those children who might scan the magazine eagerly each month, in search of the naughty bits?

Mnookin presumably used the quote because he thought it punchy, descriptive, or otherwise appropriate for his article. Why, then, did he draw a cloak of prudery over the very word that made it so?

HOWARD LEONARD, NEW YORK, NY



SHARE THE BLAME

According to Katie Roiphe ["Didion's Daughters," September], one of Joan Didion's "most dubious legacies" is having given writers a way to talk about themselves while seeming to talk about the culture at large; it is a legacy to which, judging from Roiphe's first two collections of essays, she owes an enormous debt herself. Yet rather than recognize how Didion has influenced her own writing, Roiphe [cites] a number of women essayists, making them out to be little more than graceless copycats, while notably excluding herself from the herd. So if Didion's legacy is indeed dubious, and her work worn trite as a result of lesser imitators and their imitations, surely Roiphe deserves to share in the blame.

Writers may always be selling somebody out, but selling somebody out does not make one a writer.

SARI GLOBERMAN, NEW YORK, NY

COMPROMISING INTEGRITY

"So Steven Brill claims Contentville.com has no "involve-ment in or influence over" Brill's

Content? Then what of the two "Behind the Book" [Books] features in September's issue? I read through the articles, only to find they are "excerpted from contentville.com, where the full text can be found."

Let's get real—this is journalism manipulated into a shamelessly transparent plug for the website. If the full article is important enough for me to read, then give it to me. If not, then don't give me any not-so-subtle suggestions about where to go. Of course, excerpting isn't such a bad practice in theory. But it seems more than a tad suspicious that we're directed toward Contentville. Will Brill's do this for other online sites as well—pointing us toward *Salon.com* or the *Drudge Report*? Somehow I can't imagine that happening.

Until it does, I have no choice but to assume that the journalistic integrity at Brill's has been compromised.

CHRISTOPHER NALLS, EL PASO, TX

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

In your August 2000 issue, the 11th page is a full-page ad for the TNT [Turner Network Television]

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program *Nuremberg*, and in your Stuff We Like section, discreetly tucked at the end, is a write-up ["*Nuremberg*"] of the same with a reasonably large publicity shot. Although one does not necessarily influence the other, it certainly is the kind of thing that raises conflict of interest antennae.

JENNIFER GODWIN,
MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA

Editor's note: Because the editors have no idea what ads are being sold at the time stories are being assigned, we have no way of controlling this occasional appearance of a conflict.

GROSSLY UNINFORMED

Seth Mnookin's use of The Associated Press's much-lauded No Gun Ri investigation as a poster child for what your magazine thinks is wrong with the Pulitzer process ["Eyes Off the Prize," September] is grossly uninformed and deceptive.

It perpetuates the distortion that one former soldier, Edward L. Daily, who did not appear until the 61st paragraph of our story, was somehow crucial to its central finding: that a mass killing of civilians took place at the hands of American soldiers in the early days of the Korean War. Daily was the seventh of a dozen former GIs cited who described the events at No Gun Ri.

The AP's report was based on previously classified documents and more than 40 eyewitnesses, including both Korean survivors and soldiers. And what of the Korean survivors? They don't even exist in your story. And yet, to make the case against the Pulitzer process, you say that Daily's changed status "called [AP's] winning entry into question." This is absurd. Indeed, after Daily's account was questioned, Army spokesman Maj. Thomas Collins said, "This doesn't change anything. Ed Daily is just one guy of many we've been talking to."

When questions about Daily began to surface, AP's reporting team reviewed military records and questioned Daily at his home, where he provided documentation

to support his contention he had been with the relevant Army unit.

The reporting team accepted that, pending the Pentagon's determination of his standing. Indeed, the very week the Pulitzer Board met for its final deliberations, the Pentagon was interviewing Daily for the first time.

Later, when AP editors became aware of concerns regarding Daily, we prepared stories responding to all questions and submitted a review to the Pulitzer Board. When Daily was willing to talk again, we reported his acknowledgment that military records indicated he could not have been at No Gun Ri.

Of course, the ultimate distortion is your bunching the Daily issue at No Gun Ri with the Pulitzer Prize to Janet Cooke, who invented a child, and the finalist status of Patricia Smith, who was accused of fictionalizing her columns.

A journalism review ought to be able to distinguish between fiction material and a multi-sourced story with questions about one self-described witness.

AP continues to report developments regarding No Gun Ri and awaits the findings from the Pentagon and South Korean investigations now under way. In a preliminary official finding, Korean investigators said they had compiled a list of at least 175 victims. We encourage you and your readers to go to the AP's No Gun Ri coverage on [The WIRE](http://www.wire.ap.org) at [wire.ap.org](http://www.wire.ap.org) and view our entire story at "Project Archive."

KELLY SMITH TUNNEY, DIRECTOR,
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS,
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seth Mnookin responds: Although numerous sources continue to argue about the veracity of The Associated Press's No Gun Ri dispatch, one thing is not in dispute: Months before the awarding of the 1999 Pulitzer Prizes, members of the AP No Gun Ri team had documentation that Edward Daily was not at the alleged massacre site. The AP neither submitted that information to the Pulitzer Board nor filed a correction to its story. Indeed, no AP follow-up on Edward Daily existed until two

other news organizations—*U.S. News & World Report* and *Stripes.com*—wrote lengthy stories detailing that Daily could not have been at the alleged massacre site. For Ms. Tunney to write "Later, when AP editors became aware of concerns regarding Daily, we prepared stories responding to all questions" is a neat semantic sleight of hand; as she surely realizes, this sentence could be true only if, in fact, the AP researcher and reporter working on the No Gun Ri story did not share the information they had regarding Daily with their superiors.

Finally, to claim that Edward Daily was a minor source in the AP's dispatch is not accurate. Regardless of where he was quoted in the piece, Daily was one of only two named sources who claimed that the alleged No Gun Ri massacre had been ordered by Army superiors.

In regard to Ms. Tunney's objection to being lumped together with Janet Cooke and Patricia Smith, she's correct in saying that the situations are different: Janet Cooke and Patricia Smith made up characters; the AP did not tell its readers that information it had printed was false. Both offenses seem, to me, to be indefensible.

WATCHING THE LAYOUT

Michael Gartner had to be thrilled to be identified as a "Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist" at the bottom of page 139 ["Report from the Ombudsman," September], right after the completion of Seth Mnookin's piece critical of the Pulitzer awarding process and, by implication, the award itself. Nice attention to layout.

ALEX RAWLS, NEW ORLEANS, LA

WHAT ABOUT NAPSTER?

*In your recent article on teen com-



Cracks in the Pulitzer Prize

CORRECTIONS

In "Of, By, and For the...Media" (Notebook, October), because of a fact-checking error, we misidentified Donald Graham as *The Washington Post's* editor. He is the publisher.

In "Exorcising the Exorcist" (September), we misspelled the Latin term *Dominus vobiscum* and mistakenly translated it as "Lord, be with us." The term means "Lord, be with you."

In "Mapping Out the Campaign Air War" (Notebook, September), we mistakenly wrote that the Nielsen Media Research designated market area in Paducah, Kentucky, covers parts of Illinois, Ohio, and Missouri. In fact, it covers parts of Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

In "Eyes Off the Prize" (September), we mistakenly ran a photo of Joseph Pulitzer's son, who bears the same name.

In "Pundit Scorecard" (Notebook, October), we inaccurately calculated Michael Barone's average. It was, in fact, .595.

puter gurus ["The Rise of the Teen Guru," August], I was surprised and disappointed to see no mention of the potential for abuse inherent in Napster [Napster.com]. I would expect you, as a media watchdog magazine and as members of the media yourselves, to be seriously concerned about the widespread copyright infringement facilitated by Napster, the apparent lack of moral culpability felt by its creator, and about the potential implications for all artists, writers, etc., who value the ownership of their intellectual property. I'm 24 and still hold the old-fashioned notion that I shouldn't steal things that don't belong to me—nor should I facilitate this theft by others.

ELIZABETH ELMORE, CHICAGO, IL

MUTATING MYTHS

"Enjoyed the article "Exorcising the Exorcist" [September]. It's hard to believe that an incident with this so-called haunted 14-year-old Mount Rainier boy has erupted into a series of novels, articles, and movies.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 166]

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SPARED

As fire swept through southeast Washington state, a photographer spotted a house that had—somehow—escaped destruction

Electrician John Leonard had seen a number of big range fires in the 25 years he'd lived outside Benton City, in southeastern Washington. But none of them had ever come this close to his home. The blaze rushed through the area in late June, burning down his barn, wiping out a quarter of his trees, and charring all but two acres of his land. Leonard was at home with his wife and son as the wall of fire enveloped his property. "The fire moved too fast," he says. "By the time they were giving the message to evacuate, it was here." Leonard's sprinkler system—and luck—kept the family safe.°

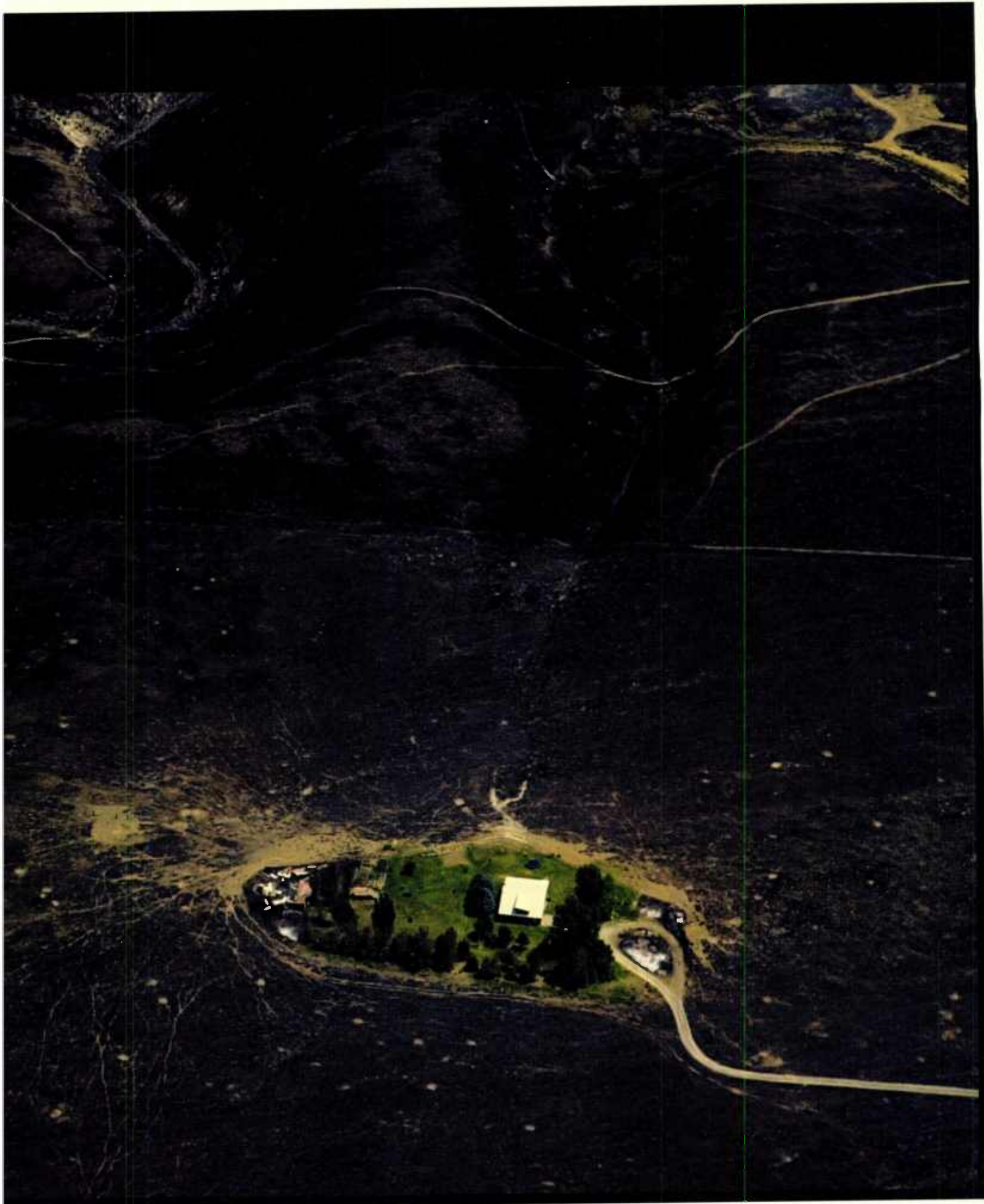
Photographer Jason Millstein, 29, then an intern for Spokane's *Spokesman-Review* and now a staff photographer at *The Palm Beach Post*, would make Leonard's home an emblem of this year's ferocious fire season. Sparked by a car accident on June 27, the fire spread quickly, at one point covering 20 miles in just an hour and a half. Two days later, Millstein and *Spokesman-Review* reporter Ken Olsen headed for the fire's most dangerous area in a chartered Cessna, a cloud of smoke closing in on the nearby Hanford nuclear reservation.

Hanford, which stores 177 tanks of liquid nuclear waste and many barrels of uranium metal, was nearly in the fire's path. The journalists circled over the Hanford site several times as fire-fighting helicopters and slurry bombers dropped water and clouds of fire-retardant material. Millstein opened the plane window and stuck his 400mm telephoto lens into the heated air. "When you open the window you feel like you're going to be thrown out of the plane," Millstein says. "It's such a small plane that in order to shoot below you, you have to ask the pilot to turn the wing vertical to the ground. Then you have to stick this 400 out the window, but it's so long...[and] very difficult to steady, and you've got the turbulence coming off the thermals from the fire." As the men flew southwest out of the cloud of smoke, they spotted some houses. "Sure enough, out of the horizon was this poor little home that looked like it had barely gotten out unscathed," Millstein says. His photo of Leonard's house wound up on the front pages of *The Washington Post* and *The Seattle Times*. Leonard, meanwhile, began removing his dead trees.

STEPHEN TOTILO

Photograph by Jason Millstein/*Spokesman-Review*





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Know Thy Stuff.

dear ted turner,

With CNN's ratings down and its corporate future uncertain, the network's founder should do something bold to nurture and protect his legacy. **BY STEVEN BRILL**

R.E. Turner
Vice-Chairman
Time Warner Inc.

Dear Ted: Elsewhere in this issue is another of those articles about CNN that must make you crazy. You know, the stuff about ratings being down; about the audience being cannibalized by competitors in the 24-hour cable-news arena, one of which (MSNBC) clearly seems willing to go down-market to snag eyeballs; about the ouster of top news guy Rick Kaplan; and about how CNN is now about to become an even smaller subsidiary within a larger, publicly held company, AOL-Time Warner. As the article points out, the new folks in charge will be focused not on pushing the journalism envelope further, but on boosting ratings while also slicing and dicing CNN's stuff into digitized, "repurposed" little pieces so that they can improve earnings and profit margins every quarter in order to please a bunch of stock analysts who don't have a fraction of your brains or guts.

The very idea of CNN being a small subsidiary of anything, let alone being an operation that doesn't continue to stretch with shows like that *Cold War* documentary series that you personally conceived, let alone being dependent on the approval of small-minded Wall Street suits, must be maddening. You more than anyone else must appreciate that CNN was not only a world-changing idea but continues to be a world-changing force—the one dependable brand name in news that reaches every corner of the globe instantly.

I was watching CNN the other day and thinking about just how really good and important it is. Your *Democracy in America* series on presidential campaign issues; Jeff Greenfield's Friday-night political specials; the *NewsStand* shows; the international reporting from places the networks and MSNBC or Fox will never get to or care about, and, of course, your staple of covering breaking news whenever it happens—all of it is just so damn good and so important. And the really interesting thing about it all is that it's hardly a charity. I'm surprised that you don't remind people—that you don't scream at them as only you can—when they question CNN today as a business that CNN is the only national or international television news organization on the planet that actually makes money report-

ing the news. As you know, the broadcast networks' news divisions make a profit because their magazine and feature shows make more than their daily news operations lose; you've shown the world that a news operation can make money on its own. Last year, CNN—not all of Turner Broadcasting with its TBS, TNT, and Cartoon Network, *but just CNN*—had nearly \$300 million in cash flow. That's pretty good.

The "problem" is that in business it's not enough to have a good business; the business has to keep getting better, especially if it's part of a publicly traded company. Public companies always have to make more each year; that's how their stock goes up.

Which has to make you scared that the new regime that will run CNN and will fight, as they should, to keep profits growing, will ultimately compromise what you built.

Of course, you can simply take all the money you got first from selling your company to Time Warner and now from having your resulting stake in Time Warner sold to AOL and live happily ever after on the ranch in Montana. But, to put it mildly, you're not that kind of guy, are you? After all, you're the one who decided three years ago, after doing the Time Warner deal, that you were going to change the world by donating a cool billion bucks to the United Nations. Well, Ted, that's where you blew it. If you really wanted to change the world, or at least

secure something great for the world as it hurtles toward globalization, you should have taken that billion and maybe added another billion and bought back CNN and donated it to a trust that would own and operate it under explicit guidelines. You could have declared that CNN, your gift to the world, is too important to be trusted to people ultimately worried about what stock analysts think.

But you still might be able to do that. You're now worth at least \$7 billion, mostly in Time Warner stock. My guess is that a high, high price for CNN would be \$6 billion, or 20 times current cash flow. In fact, if you believe all the stuff about its earnings being so threatened, that's an outrageously high price. (Remember also that when you sold the whole company—TNT, TBS, CNN, the Atlanta Braves, the Cartoon Network, Turner Classic Movies, etc.—to Time Warner in 1996, they paid only about \$7.5 billion. Four years later, they would in effect have everything else, including the more profitable TBS and TNT, for just \$1.5 billion.)

So here's what to do: Try to buy back 75 percent of it from AOL-Time Warner for that \$6 billion, meaning you're valuing 100 percent of it at

**YOU SHOULD BUY BACK
CNN AND PUT
EDITORIAL CONTROL
INTO A TRUST THAT
BECOMES YOUR LEGACY.**



Will CNN founder Ted Turner sit and watch as the world's only brand name in news is whittled down, or will he use his money and mettle to save it?

\$8 billion. (You want to let them have a 25 percent stake so they feel involved and can benefit from an upside if there is one.) It's a price they should not turn down; in fact, with all the regulatory concerns about how much the new AOL-Time Warner would dominate content, a deal to shed some of that content would have a side benefit for them. However, because CNN is such an important global brand, they no doubt see it as so strategic that they wouldn't want to sell it at any price. So use that fabulously creative mind of yours to figure out how they can preserve those strategic benefits. For example, sign a 100-year agreement to license CNN onto AOL and AOL-TV, with some kind of split of the ad revenue. Agree to have CNN do joint programming with Time, Inc. magazines the way they do now. You can figure this out. The important thing, though, is that you put editorial control of CNN into a trust that becomes your legacy. You'd run the trust until you die or retire, and then the trustees would pick a new leader who'd report to them.

I know you're thinking that stuff like trusts and charities are ridiculously bureaucratic and often lazy. Well, figure out ways to give incen-

tives to those who run the trust and to its employees—from Wolf Blitzer to Larry King to the typical field producer; set up a bonus system for both economic performance and journalistic performance. Make it so that CNN is run by people who won't let it go to seed but who also won't spend every waking moment struggling to maximize profit and eyeballs, no matter what the eyeballs are watching. Again, you're the guy who invented CNN and a lot of other stuff; you and some creative lawyers can figure out how to set up a trust that keeps CNN healthy as a business but takes it off the treadmill of having to do better at the bottom line every year or, as is the case today, risk being seen as a loser. In fact, maybe you can have your lawyers look at what remains to be paid out in the U.N. gift (you're doling out \$100 million a year over ten years) and find a way you can shift that over to this project and give the U.N. a passive interest in the new, and newly preserved, CNN.

The basic point is simple, Ted. You've created something that is too important not to be preserved. Someone with your ego should leap at the chance you may have right now to save it for all time. Go for it. ■

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REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

Since skepticism is a virtue, you should be asking the following ten questions as you read, watch, and surf. Plus: sputtering sentences, pithy quotes, and more on a pollster's credentials. **BY MICHAEL GARTNER**

This is not necessarily about *Brill's Content*.

It's an essay on how to read any magazine or newspaper, how to watch any television news show, and how to assess any information from the Web.

It could save you time. Here are ten simple questions to ask as you read, watch, or surf.

Question 1: Is she getting paid? Every time there is a major event—a crisis, an election, a war, the tragic death of a celebrity—the networks and the cable networks bring in “experts” to explain and expound.

Some of these people are paid; some aren't. And that makes a difference. If a person is getting paid, that person has a real reason to be a little more outrageous, a little more outspoken, a little more outlandish—and, therefore, a little less believable. The paid person wants to be controversial because she wants to be invited back—to make more money—and she knows that controversy works. Americans will listen to you whether they love you or hate you, but not if they are bored by you. These experts want to be on for the money, for the ego, for the prestige—and for bigger speech fees. They don't necessarily want to be on to serve the public.

By and large, the networks and the cable networks don't tell you which of their “guests” are being paid and which aren't. But you can figure it out, usually. If someone is back day after day, he or she is probably on the payroll. Sometimes it's a lawyer, sometimes a professor, sometimes a retired general. They are usually more glib, more opinionated, and more forceful than the nonpaid guests.

They are also more to be doubted. If you think the “expert” you are watching is being paid, be skeptical—as this magazine advises on its cover—or switch to VH1 and watch something more interesting.

Question 2: Who posted it? Just because information comes from a computer doesn't make it true. Many people think a printout guarantees accuracy and truth. A computer is a gossip and a liar if the person who put the data in it is a gossip and a liar. Computers are machines, not filterers weeding out chaff or editors seeking out truth. (An aside: Adlai Stevenson once said that editors were people who separated the wheat from the chaff—and then printed the chaff.) Computers make no distinction between fact and fiction.

Some websites are terrific—especially the websites of government agencies. (Plug: I like Contentville, too.) They are filled with useful information that helps you lead your life and lets you check out claims made by politicians and others. Other sites are awful—full of propaganda and bias and bad information. Learn whom you can trust and whom you can't.

And don't rely on the Web exclusively for your news. These days, all those medical sites on the Web let a person self-medicate—and you can self-medicate yourself to death. Sometimes you need to see a real doctor to

help you. It's the same with news. You can delude yourself if you self-newsicate on the Web. Sometimes you need a real editor to guide you.

Question 3: Who said it? This column got into the issue of anonymous sources two months ago, and there's no use belaboring it. (The column apparently did little good. A story on *Details* magazine in the September issue of *Brill's Content* [“Looking for Glory in *Details*,” Creators] quoted, among others, “an editor who worked on *Details*,” “a Condé Nast insider,” “a former men's magazine editor,” “a journalist who has worked for both Fairchild and Condé Nast,” “a former *Details* editor,” “former and current employees,” and “one Fairchild insider.”)

If you come upon an anonymous quote—especially a negative one about someone—in a news article, newspaper, or newsmagazine, quit reading. At that point, the article loses credibility. If you get to a “fact” that is attributed to an anonymous source, wonder: from what side, with what bias? Anonymity has no place in newspapers and little place in magazines, including this one.

Question 4: What was the question? In stories about polls, stop reading or stop listening if the report doesn't give the wording of the question, the size of the sample, and the date of the poll. The wording can determine the answer. Read it yourself to determine whether it is biased or straightforward. Look for the sample size, and especially the sample size in the subquestions. Some of these have margins of error of 10 points or more, which makes them meaningless. The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press's polling operation is one of the best. A June political poll on voter participation questioned 2,174 adults, and its margin of error was +/- 2.5 percentage points. And, the poll cautioned, “[i]n addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the finding of opinion polls.” Finally, remember that a poll reflects people's views as of the moment they were polled, not as of the day you read the report.

Question 5: What is the answer? If an allegation is made in a story or a television report, is the reply there? Look for this in every story—in politics, in crime, in zoning, in business. A reporter shouldn't be a stenographer. She should be a fact gatherer and truth squad. Think about it. The names of newspapers and magazines reflect what the job of a newspaper or magazine is, and you've never heard of a newspaper called *The Stenographer* or *The Regurgitator*. There are *Tribunes* or *Clarions* or *Mirrors* or *Newsweeks* or *Posts* or *Gazettes* or *Heralds* or *World Reports*—or, simply, *Content*. (My own favorite is a weekly in Linn, Missouri, called *The Unterrified Democrat*. My favorite newspaper motto, as long as we're into this, comes from the *Aspen Daily News*. It advises: “If you don't want it printed, don't let it happen.” And the *Daily Herald*, near Chicago, says: “Our aim: To fear God, tell the truth and make money.” Presumably it's in the same order every day.)

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Question 6: Why should I believe you? Don't pay attention to opinion pieces—columns or editorials—that don't have facts. Editorial writers, columnists, and commentators need facts. Make the argument and persuade me, but don't preach to me or shout at me or lecture to me. If you start reading columns or editorials that don't have facts to back up the opinions, stop reading. It's the same with TV commentators.

Example: Read "Face-Off" in the September issue of *Brill's Content*. Jeffrey Klein uses facts and polls and reports to make his case that ratings, rather than political biases, are what influences political coverage. Jonah Goldberg, on the other hand, has a fact or two but relies more on sweeping statements, such as "[a]fter eight years, the press is bored with Gore and doesn't trust him, and neither do the rest of us."

Incidentally, how come Mr. Klein was identified in the Contributors column in the August issue, but Mr. Goldberg wasn't? And how come Mr. Goldberg was identified in the September issue but Mr. Klein wasn't? Are we supposed to remember for two months who these guys are? (Mr. Klein, in case you've forgotten, used to be at *Mother Jones*; Mr. Goldberg is with *National Review Online*.)

Question 7: How can I believe you? I saw you, Mr. Reporter, on a talk show last Sunday, and you were espousing your opinions and spouting off about this and that, and now I see your byline on a straight news story in the newspaper or I see you giving a supposedly straight report on television. How do I know it's fair, because I know you hate this person or that issue? If a reporter—in contrast to an editorial writer or a moderator or a columnist—is a regular guest on TV talk shows, don't read his stuff or listen to his reports. Reporters must rely on their credibility, and to be credible they must keep their opinions to themselves.

Question 8: Do Americans really believe this or say that? Ignore "man on the street" interviews or focus-group stories that purport to speak for a state or the nation. There's nothing magic or scientific about a focus group. It's just a bunch of people like you and me. In this age of polling, don't fall for anything that purports to give the views of a town or a state or a nation or a world. Focus-group stories are valid only if they are used to flesh out the findings of a poll, as Frank Luntz's focus group did in his September story ["Reality Talks," Public Opinion] in *Brill's Content*. (And thanks, editors, for reminding us that Mr. Luntz's "political clients are predominantly Republican." Next time, you might want to add: Three years ago, the American Association for Public Opinion Research determined that Mr. Luntz had violated its ethics code by refusing to disclose how he had reached certain conclusions in reports about his GOP clients. And in August of this year, the Polling Review Board of the National Council on Public Polls officially criticized Mr. Luntz for implying during the political conventions that the opinions of focus groups he had organized were akin to results of scientific polls. "There is nothing scientific about these focus groups," the Polling Review Board said. "They are more akin to a parlor game than to a public opinion poll.")

Question 9: Are the words loaded? Read carefully, and listen carefully, for words can be subtly persuasive. I "say"; you "allege." My pals are my "associates"; yours are your "cronies." My weird uncle is "eccentric"; yours is "crazy." My cousin is a "courtesan"; yours is a "hooker." My children "sow wild oats"; yours are "juvenile delinquents." Remember back in the long-ago days of Monica Lewinsky? Congressman Henry Hyde, who was so indignant about the behavior of the president, turned out to

have a few things in his closet, too. Was it marriage-wrecking adultery? No, it was a "youthful indiscretion." He was, I believe, in his forties at the time. I believe the affair lasted several years and wrecked a marriage.

Did you read that article in the September issue of *Brill's Content* on *New York Times* reporter Alex Kuczynski ["Smart Alex"]? Here's how four of the quotes were attributed: "contends gossip columnist Liz Smith"; "Kuczynski maintains"; "Kuczynski insists"; and "Bradley contends." Other people "said" or "added" or "recalled." "Contend" and "maintain" and "insist" are eyebrow raisers, words that make you stop and wonder what the writer is trying to tell you. "Say" or "add" or "recall" are just neutral words.

So be alert.

Finally, Question 10: Do you really care? Just because it's a big headline doesn't make it important. Just because it's leading the nightly news doesn't make it important. Decide for yourself what is more important and then seek it out—Lewinsky vs. Kosovo, *Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire* vs. Irish Peace Talks, Bush on Breast Cancer vs. McCain on Campaign Finance Reform. (And there's a loaded word, "reform." My changes are "reforms"; yours are "loopholes.") You can be the judge of what is news. In fact, you must be the judge, because in this age of instant news the gatekeepers—editors and producers—have left the gates wide open. Now you have to be sophisticated enough to ask yourself the ten questions editors and producers ask themselves each day—questions that try to determine fact from fiction, that try to catch the bias and straighten the slant, that try to coax out every facet of every story.

It's not as simple as it looks.

"SOMETIMES THE CHAIRMAN IS ACTUALLY SPUTTERING," Calvin Trillin wrote in his usual droll way in his usual droll column ["A Little Too Cool," *The Wry Side*] in September's issue of *Brill's Content*. And he added parenthetically, "You occasionally read about people sputtering, but witnessing an actual sputter is rare, even in a daydream."

A couple of generations ago, a news editor named Bill Kreger was the keeper of the flame at *The Wall Street Journal*. He was wonderful and crusty and as fine a teacher as any young newspaper person could ever hope to work for. About once a week, he would run across a sentence that ended, "he sputtered" or "he grimaced" or "he laughed."

He'd gruffly call the reporter over to the newsdesk.

"Sputter me this sentence," Mr. Kreger would say.

Or "Grimace me this sentence."

Or "Laugh me this sentence."

Then he'd change the copy to say, "he said."

Quotes—whether they're chuckled or smirked or said—can wreck a story if they're long or boring or tiresome. But a pithy quote is something to put on the refrigerator door to read over and over again. There were two great ones in the September issue. Here they are again, in case you missed them or forgot to clip them out.

In that story on Alex Kuczynski, John Fox Sullivan, the publisher of the *National Journal*, is quoted as saying, "My dog could cover media for the *Times* and it would be read."

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 156]

Michael Gartner is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and lawyer who has edited papers large and small and headed NBC News.

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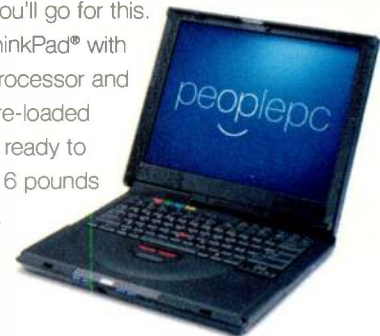
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untrue confessions

A new show on Court TV brings us real confessions by real criminals from real cases. But shorn of context and, somehow, humanity, it all feels strangely unreal. **BY ERIC EFFRON**

"A spectacle of human abjection." "Sordid." "Unsettling." "Essentially voyeurism."

The critics sure have been tough on *Confessions*, Court TV's new half-hour show, which consists of edited (and starkly graphic) videotapes of real-life confessions from convicted murderers, rapists, and other felons. But the quotes above aren't from the critics—they come from Court TV's own promotional materials hyping the show, which premiered in early September.

The critics' outrage actually started before the show even aired: In an editorial, *The New York Times* called it a "rank appeal to prurience and the thrill of violence, motivated by the network's desire for an audience-grabbing hit." *Newsday's* Marvin Kitman found the show to be "unprecedented in the history of lowering the standards of the medium. A bizarre, perverse offshoot of reality TV." *Newsweek* simply pegged it "the most disgusting, exploitative television show of the century—maybe of the last century, too."

Clearly, this was one new show worth checking out.

I would have been eager to watch it anyway, because of a former affiliation with Court TV and this column's abiding interest in how news and journalism blur into commerce and entertainment. So on the night of the premiere, I popped some popcorn, gathered the kids around the tube, and settled in.

Okay, I'm kidding about the popcorn and kids. I'd sooner let my kids watch *Sex and the City* before I allowed them anywhere near this show. The program consists of the videotaped confessions of the worst creeps you can imagine describing the most sordid details of their heinous crimes. "I goes for the finger, took one ring off, took the bracelet off. Then I took the watch, which I did not keep. John, all of a sudden, he wants to get sexual...My motive was just to get the money and leave. That's my motive. John had made love to the lady. I eventually grabbed the coat and left. Was that enough for you?" Those are the words of Steven Smith, the first star of the new show, who after his 1989 confession was convicted of raping and murdering a New York doctor. As the segment ends, text on the screen informs us that Smith was sentenced to 50 years to life, and that there was never any evidence that "John" existed. The two segments that follow are even more gruesome.

It is tempting to just ignore *Confessions*, like many of us manage to do with much of what's on television. Life is short, and the remote

control is around here somewhere. But there's something about the criticism of the show—and Court TV's response to the criticism—that reminded me of the debate that has raged around the very idea of putting aspects of the criminal justice system on TV. And that made it impossible for me to ignore.

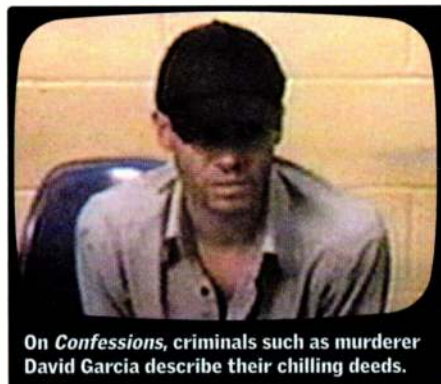
A few years ago I worked on two policy-related Court TV shows in Washington (as an offshoot of my job as editor of the weekly law newspaper *Legal Times*), and though I was never directly involved in Court TV's core programming—civil and criminal trials—I had a personal stake in and connection to the debate. The network was founded by my boss then (and now), Steven Brill (who is no longer affiliated with Court TV), and I was sometimes called on to defend the notion that the public had the right to see its court system in action, for better or worse, and that it wasn't exploitation to try to build a private commercial network around government proceedings. Some of the trials were lurid and some of the material (Charles Manson's parole hearings come to mind) struck me as creepy, but I felt we were on the side of truth and justice—literally—and that many of our critics simply were elitists.

So now comes the disdain over *Confessions*, and the Court TV response has a familiar ring. In an op-ed piece in *The New York Times*, Henry

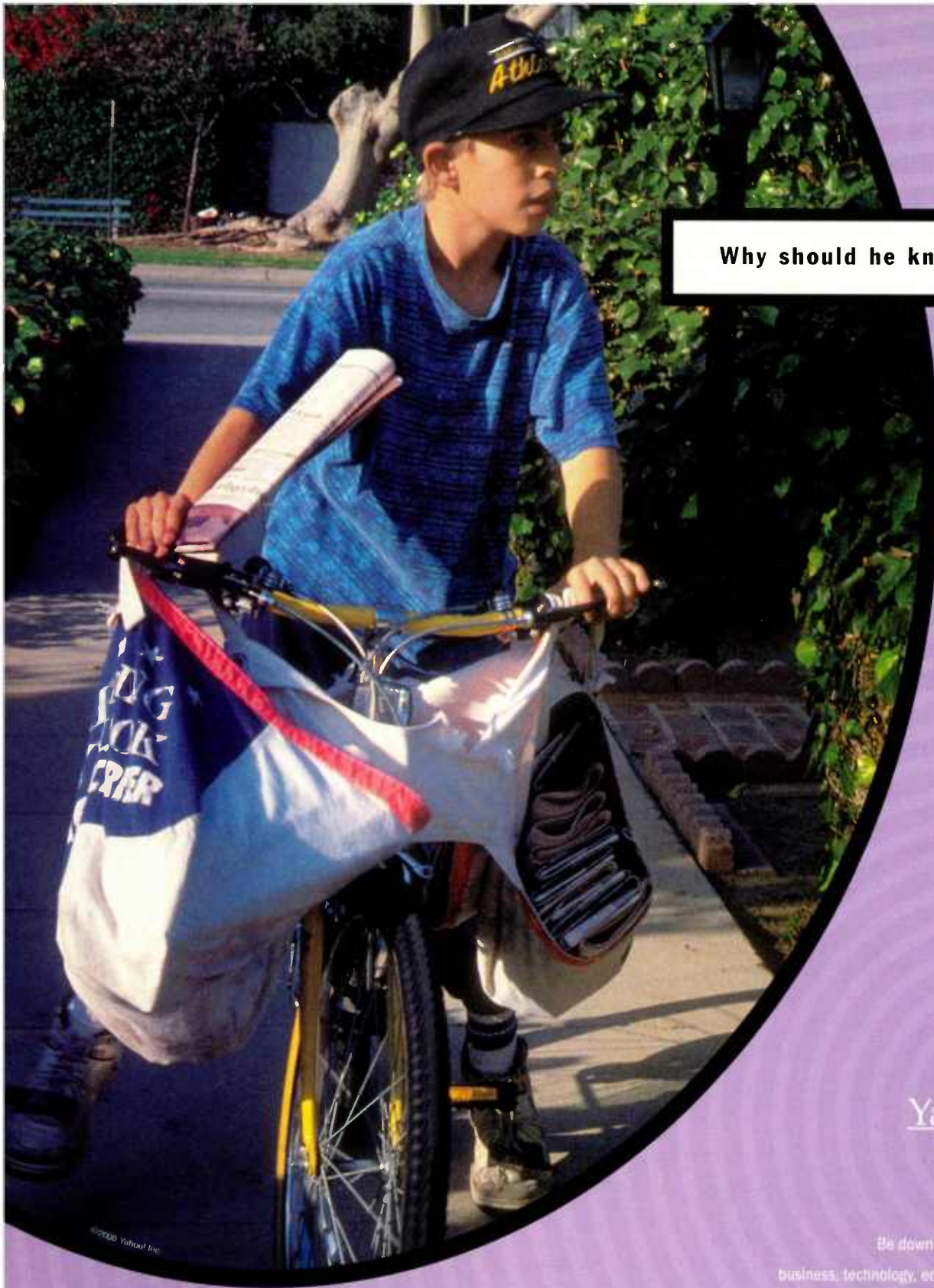
Schleiff, the network's chairman and CEO, argued that the show "reveal[s] a part of the criminal justice system—the confession—that has not been seen to this degree before...and it fuels legitimate debate about issues like capital punishment and the usefulness of confessions."

The confessions are, in fact, real. Then again, so were the trials Court TV covered in the old days, which many critics were also offended by. The difference has to do largely with context. Delivered as they are, disembodied from the rest of the justice system, with no sense of the law, or of the defense, or of the police tactics, or even of the victims' lives, these confessions feel disconnected—not just from the rest of the system but from humanity. Schleiff's arguments simply prove that high-sounding rhetoric can sometimes be true and sometimes just be rhetoric. The court system, with its failings and its complexities, its juggling of rights and law and politics, deserves as much scrutiny as the media can muster. But *Confessions* doesn't scrutinize or analyze. There are no issues here, just horrible people saying horrible things. ■

Editor's note: As Brill's Content was going to press, Court TV, citing public "concerns and complaints," announced it was canceling Confessions.



On *Confessions*, criminals such as murderer David Garcia describe their chilling deeds.



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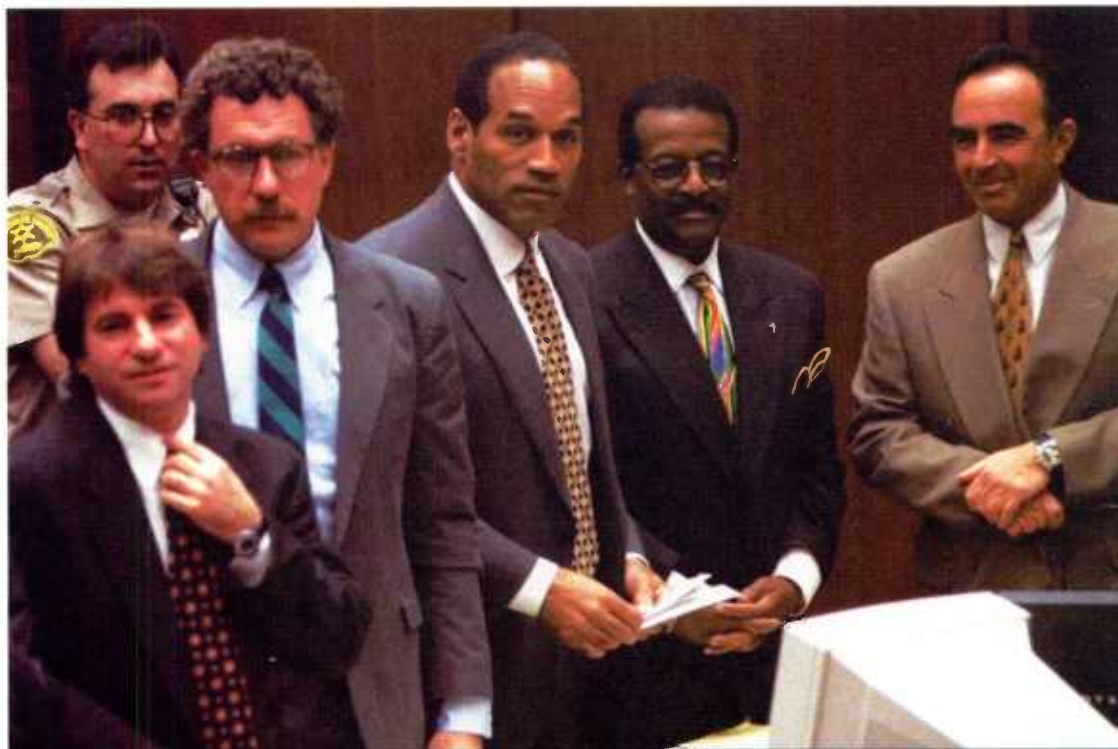
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NOTEBOOK



O.J. Simpson and his legal team during his murder trial in 1995. From left: Scheck, Neufeld, Simpson, Cochran, and Shapiro.

THE JOURNALIST AND THE JUICE

DREAM TEAM NIGHTMARE

On the evenings of November 12 and 15, CBS will broadcast *American Tragedy*, a two-part mini-series dramatizing the O.J. Simpson trial as seen from inside the Dream Team's defense war room. Ving Rhames, Ron Silver, and Christopher Plummer will star, and the script was written by Pulitzer Prize winner Norman Mailer. In broadcast-TV terms, these are big guns.

As is perhaps fitting, given that *American Tragedy* is about lawyers, Simpson filed suit on August 15 against the film's director, Lawrence Schiller—who wrote the book of the same name upon which it is based—as well as against his former attorney Robert Kardashian, to prevent *American Tragedy* from airing. According to Simpson, Mailer's script makes use of conversations about Simpson's defense—originally reported in Schiller's 1996 book—that are protected by attorney-client privilege. Simpson says Schiller got much of the material for *American Tragedy* (both the book and the film) by interviewing Simpson's defense attorneys

under false pretenses: He had promised Simpson final approval over the manuscript but never showed it to him. The eight members of Simpson's defense team whom Schiller interviewed for *American Tragedy* confirm that they talked to Schiller about Simpson's double-murder trial on the understanding that Simpson would see the manuscript.

Simpson's suit is unlikely to succeed. A trial date had not been set at press time, but on September 6 a Superior Court judge in Los Angeles denied Simpson's request for an injunction to halt production of *American Tragedy*, declaring that the case has little merit. But the suit offers a revealing look at how one reporter gained the intimate confidence of his subject—a murder suspect—only later to face accusations of betraying that confidence to get his story.

Schiller is a veteran true-crime journalist. He is best known for his collaboration with Norman Mailer on 1979's *The Executioner's Song*— [CONTINUED ON PAGE 38]

ON THE RECORD

"The press is the most jealous mistress of all."

—REPUBLICAN STRATEGIST NELSON WARFIELD COMMENTING ON THE MEDIA'S FICKLE TREATMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, ON SEPTEMBER 13

Verbatim

FIRST INSULTS

When George W. Bush called *New York Times* reporter Adam Clymer a "major-league a--hole" in front of an open mike at a Labor Day rally, it caused a minor furor. Presidential or not, slurs against journalists have a long and, naturally, well-reported history. Here, a few highlights.

LARA KATE COHEN

TRUMAN: "Someday I hope to meet you. When that happens you'll need a new nose, a lot of beefsteak for black eyes, and perhaps a supporter below." To Paul Hume, a music critic who had given his daughter a bad review.

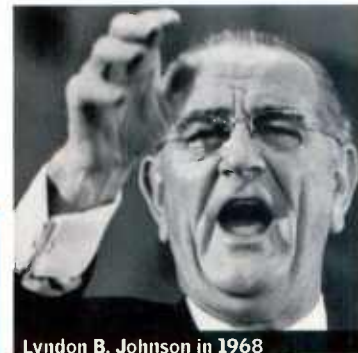
JOHNSON: "See him? You don't have to see him; you can smell him." To Haynes Johnson, when asked if he'd seen Robert Novack.

NIXON: "Then there's that son of a bitch Daniel Schorr. Well, we could always say it was for national security." To an aide, regarding the wiretapping of a member of the so-called enemies list.

REAGAN: "If [columnist] Drew Pearson ever comes to California, he'd better not spit on the sidewalk."

BUSH: "How would you like it if I judged your career by those seven minutes when you walked off the set in New York? Would you like that?" To Dan Rather, referring to Rather's infamous refusal to go on the air.

CLINTON: "[He'd] have delivered a more forceful response...on the bridge of Mr. Safire's nose." Via spokesman Mike McCurry, after William Safire called Hillary Clinton "a congenital liar."



Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968

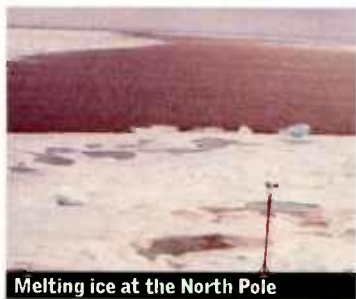
O.J.: REED SAXON; POOL/AP PHOTO; LBJ: AP PHOTO

Evolution

COMEDY OF AN ERROR

When *The New York Times* reported on its front page this summer that the "North Pole is melting," global warming suddenly seemed real. David Letterman took notice and incorporated the apocalyptic news into his talk-show routine. So when the *Times* issued a correction ten days later, explaining that polar ice in fact melts every year, Letterman lashed out at the newspaper. Here's how the story, and Letterman's jokes, evolved.

ALLISON BENEDIKT



Melting ice at the North Pole

1 "An ice free patch of ocean about a mile wide has opened at the very top of the world, something that has presumably never before been seen by humans and is more evidence that global warming may be real and already affecting climate." (*The New York Times*, August 19)

2 "I've got a bone to pick with The Weather Channel...I read in *The New York Times* that the polar ice cap has melted. Not a damn word about it on The Weather Channel...It's like the biggest weather story in the history of man." (*Late Show with David Letterman*, August 28)

3 "A clear spot has probably opened at the pole before, scientists say, because about 10 percent of the Arctic Ocean is clear of ice in a typical summer. [Also], the lack of ice at the pole is not necessarily related to global warming." (*The New York Times*, Correction, August 29)

4 "I'm at home, screaming at [The Weather Channel]: 'You morons! The polar ice cap has melted through—send a crew up there.' [But] now today, *The New York Times*—hard for me to believe they're still in business—[ran a correction]. It's a wonder we haven't been sued by The Weather Channel." (*Late Show with David Letterman*, August 29)

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37] Schiller researched and reported the book—which told the story of executed murderer Gary Gilmore. He began working on *American Tragedy* in late 1995, but he had laid the groundwork for the book throughout Simpson's murder trial, which lasted from January to October of that year. Schiller joined Simpson's inner circle by ghostwriting his 1995 jailhouse dispatch, *I Want to Tell You*, after which Schiller developed what for a journalist was an unusually close relationship with Simpson and his lawyers, going so far as to do pro bono work for the defense—Schiller listened to hours of taped interviews with Los Angeles Police Department detective Mark Fuhrman and isolated snippets of Fuhrman's racist language for use at the murder trial. Simpson and Schiller were so close, in fact, that Simpson arranged for Schiller to sit in the section of Judge Lance Ito's courtroom that had been reserved for family members.

In April 1995, according to Simpson's suit, Schiller and Simpson made plans to write another book together, this time about the trial itself. That book never found a publisher, but Schiller apparently stuck by his friend Simpson nonetheless. Schiller told *Vanity Fair* in 1996 that after Simpson's acquittal in October 1995, Schiller sold snapshots he'd taken at the post-acquittal party to tabloids and turned over \$640,000 of the proceeds to Simpson.

Schiller's success at earning Simpson's trust made him ideally situated to write the definitive account of the trial. At some point during the trial, Schiller approached Jason Epstein, then the editorial director at Random House, with a proposal for the book that would eventually become *American Tragedy*. (Epstein cannot recall a precise date; Schiller declined an interview for this article.) Epstein says he agreed to buy the book.

Schiller enlisted Simpson attorney Robert Kardashian's help in researching *American Tragedy*—Kardashian was credited in the book's acknowledgments as being the primary source, and Schiller told *Vanity Fair* that he had paid Kardashian an hourly fee for his help, though he wouldn't say what that fee was. Documents filed in Simpson's suit show that when he learned near the end of his trial that Kardashian was helping Schiller, Simpson began to worry about what Kardashian and other members of his defense team might reveal about the case. He sent two memos to his defense team, first in October and again in November, insisting that they preserve his attorney-client privilege.

In late November, according to affidavits filed in the suit, Schiller set about trying to interview other members of Simpson's Dream Team—Barry Scheck,

Alan Dershowitz, F. Lee Bailey, et al.—for *American Tragedy*. After his initial attempts were rebuffed, Schiller went to his friend Simpson to ask him to give the lawyers permission to talk. In late 1995 and early 1996, according to his suit, Simpson agreed, on the condition that he could review the manuscript before publication.

Schiller says in his response to Simpson's suit that no such agreement ever existed. But Simpson's former attorneys are unanimous in their support of Simpson's account. Eight members of the defense team—everyone except Johnnie Cochran and Robert Shapiro, neither of whom talked to Schiller—filed detailed affidavits saying that they consented to be interviewed by Schiller only because of the understanding that their former client would have final approval over the manuscript before it was published. Scheck's declaration is typical of the rest: "[Schiller] agreed that any publication would be reviewed by Mr. Simpson," he wrote, "and that any privileged or confidential information would be deleted unless Mr. Simpson gave express authorization...."

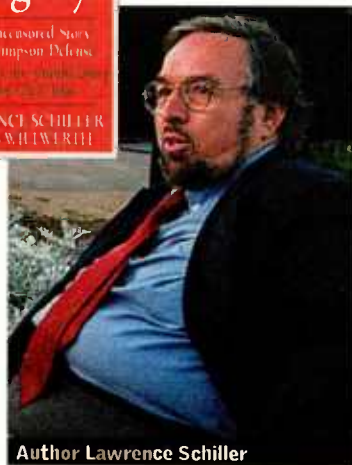
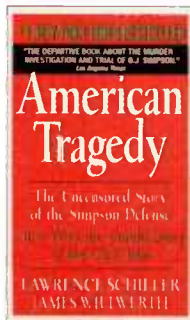
According to six of the lawyers, either Simpson himself or his attorney Peter Neufeld, who represented Simpson in the dispute over the book, told them it was okay to talk to Schiller because Simpson would be able to change the manuscript. Three of Simpson's lawyers had an incentive to help Schiller: In an affidavit responding to Simpson's lawsuit, Schiller says he paid attorneys Shawn Chapman, Robert Blaiser, and Carl Douglas a total of \$22,500 for their interviews.

American Tragedy hit bookstores in October 1996, revealing such insider tidbits as Simpson's failing a lie-detector test before the murder trial. Simpson never got to vet the manuscript, despite Neufeld's repeated attempts between June and October 1996 to persuade Schiller and Kardashian to turn it over. In September 1996, Neufeld says, Random House attorney Kelli Sager notified him that Simpson would not be allowed to see the book before it was published. The only reason that Simpson didn't sue Schiller when the book was published was that he was too busy defending himself in the wrongful-death case, says attorney Terry Gross, who is representing Simpson in the suit against Schiller and Kardashian.

Whatever the outcome of Simpson's suit, one person has already been punished for his role in *American Tragedy*: Robert Kardashian. In 1996, the State Bar of California initiated disciplinary proceedings against Kardashian for his conduct in the Simpson trial. The complaint stemmed from Kardashian's participation as a source in *American Tragedy*. In July, Kardashian entered into a settlement with the Bar and agreed not to practice law for two years in exchange for closing the case and sealing the file.

Schiller returned three calls but said he was too busy editing the mini-series to speak to *Brill's Content*: "My deadline is more important than yours" were his words before he referred queries to his attorney.

JIM EDWARDS



Author Lawrence Schiller

SCHILLER EVEN DID VOLUNTEER WORK FOR SIMPSON'S DEFENSE.

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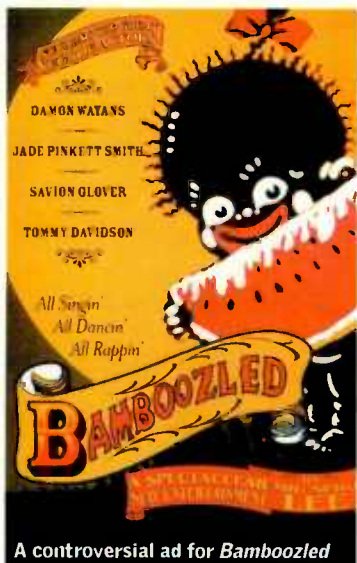
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Gimmick



A controversial ad for Bamboozled

SHOCK VALUE

In August, a cartoon of a black man with exaggerated lips wearing a top hat appeared in magazines and on posters in New York and L.A. advertising the fictional "ManTan Minstrel Show." Readers were directed to stepnfetchitpictures.com, a website that listed the show as part of a fake television schedule for a fake television network.

The ad and the website were actually a teaser campaign for a new film, *Bamboozled*, a satire directed by Spike Lee about a TV executive who creates a blackface minstrel show in hopes of getting fired. Instead, the program becomes a big hit.

Another ad for the film—which *The New York Times* refused to run—features stereotypically racist "pickaninny" imagery: a black child eating a slice of watermelon. "We know they're arresting, we know they'll be disturbing, but we feel this is the right way to go about promoting this film," says Lee. Art Sims, the CEO of 11:24 Design Advertising in Los Angeles, which created the campaign, says the ads were not intended to shock and insists they shouldn't be offensive. "We're a mature society now....People who are concerned about it should come see the movie and then they'll understand what it's about."

JULIE SCSELF

PROGNOSTICATIONS

McLAUGHLIN, YOU'RE CUT

PUNDIT SCORECARD

Eleanor Clift of *The McLaughlin Group* leads the pack in our latest installment of the Pundit Scorecard—wherein we check up on the accuracy of the weekend pundits' predictions—boosting her score up a few points to a respectable .644 average. But Clift's efforts haven't been able to pull her team out of second place. Despite *The McLaughlin Group's* slight uptick this month, the show still lags behind *The Capital Gang's* formidable



WINNER
Eleanor Clift

.609 team average—even though *The McLaughlin Group All-Stars* dominate when it comes to individual track records. Five of our top ten pundits—Clift and her colleagues Clarence Page, Tony Blankley, Lawrence O'Donnell, and Michael Barone—hail from the MC6 (as the show is known to diehard fans). So how come they're not on top? Now, we here at Pundit Scorecard are mindful of the fact that our role is to cover the news, not to advise newsmakers. But it's hard to watch talented players like Clift and Co. languish in second place when a very simple tactical maneuver could vault them to the top: Cut John McLaughlin.



DEADWEIGHT?
John McLaughlin

Despite his bluster, and the fact that he practically invented prognosticative punditry, McLaughlin brings to his show a dismal .492 average—meaning he's better suited to calling a coin toss than an election. With Papa John's numbers out of the picture, *The Group Formerly Known as McLaughlin* would hit No. 1 with a bullet—a commanding .614 average, leaving *The Capital Gang* in the dust.



LOSER
George Will

Okay, okay. We're aware that a few technicalities could stand in the way of executing our little plan, namely the fact that it is, after all, John McLaughlin's show. But hey, the Knicks have been Patrick Ewing's show for 15 years, too. Perhaps McLaughlin could be persuaded not to handle the ball so much—his role could be reduced to just moderating and hollering, and he could excuse himself from the trademark "Predictions" segment. It wouldn't send the show to the top right away, but it would stanch the bleeding and allow Clift and her colleagues to work their punditry without McLaughlin's airballs bringing down the average.

Next month, our double-secret plan to create a pundit super team: the three-way trade. JOHN COOK

PLAYERS			
1	Eleanor Clift, <i>MG</i>	(139/216)	.644
2	Al Hunt, <i>CG</i>	(83/131)	.634
3	Clarence Page, <i>MG</i>	(8/13)	.615
4	Robert Novak, <i>CG</i>	(65/107)	.607
5	Margaret Carlson, <i>CG</i>	(39/65)	.600
6	Tony Blankley, <i>MG</i>	(99/166)	.596
7	Lawrence O'Donnell, <i>MG</i>	(28/47)	.596
8	Michael Barone, <i>MG</i>	(75/126)	.595
9	Kate O'Beirne, <i>CG</i>	(29/49)	.592
10	George Stephanopoulos, <i>TW</i>	(98/166)	.590
11	Sam Donaldson, <i>TW</i>	(37/64)	.578
12	Mark Shields, <i>CG</i>	(24/42)	.571
13	Cokie Roberts, <i>TW</i>	(34/61)	.557
14	Morton Kondracke, <i>BB</i>	(86/160)	.538
15	John McLaughlin, <i>MG</i>	(91/185)	.492
16	Fred Barnes, <i>BB</i>	(79/164)	.482
17	George Will, <i>TW</i>	(35/78)	.449

BB: *The Beltway Boys*; CG: *The Capital Gang*; MG: *The McLaughlin Group*; TW: *This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*
Covers predictions made between August 2, 1998, and September 3, 2000



TEAMS		
In first place once again: <i>The Capital Gang</i>		
1	<i>The Capital Gang</i>	(240/394) .609
2	<i>The McLaughlin Group</i>	(440/753) .584
3	<i>This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts</i>	(204/369) .553
4	<i>The Beltway Boys</i>	(165/324) .509

Scores based on total predictions made on each show

ON THE RECORD

"Well, it's a better picture."

—GEORGE W. BUSH, GIVING THE REASON FOR HIS DECISION TO BEGIN APPEARING IN MORE INTIMATE SETTINGS WITH VOTERS, AT A NEWS CONFERENCE ON SEPTEMBER 7. A CAMPAIGN SPOKESPERSON SAID BUSH PLANS TO VISIT COFFEE SHOPS AND CAFETERIAS.

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Media Diet



Randy Barbato (left) and Fenton Bailey

POP GO THE FILMMAKERS

Randy Barbato and Fenton Bailey are best known for their documentaries about over-the-top characters, such as Tammy Faye Messner (formerly Bakker) in the recent *The Eyes of Tammy Faye*. The two are currently at work on a documentary on the history of surveillance. This fall, their pop history countdown show *20 to 1* airs on VH1. We asked Barbato to describe the duo's eclectic media diet.

KAJA PERINA

WHAT DO YOU READ RELIGIOUSLY?

The "Hot Property" [real estate] column in the *Los Angeles Times*. It's so significant because in L.A., buying and selling property is the way to gauge which celebrities are up and which are down. "Calendar" is supposed to be entertainment news, but the real entertainment news is "Hot Property."

WHICH TV SHOWS DO YOU LIKE?

We're obsessed with the British version of *Big Brother*—it makes our *Big Brother* look like someone's little sister. People were taking their clothes off the first night. It's really scandalous. We're also obsessed with [WB family drama] *7th Heaven*, because it's the 21st-century version of *The Brady Bunch*. We're equally obsessed with [WB teen drama] *Popular*, because it's the 21st-century version of *Dynasty*.

WHAT ABOUT NEWS PROGRAMS?

We love the Los Angeles local news—CBS at 11. It's a daily staple of our diet. We watch it for entertainment.

MAGAZINES?

We're pretty obvious with magazines: *Wired*, *New York*, *The New Yorker*, *Fortean Times* [a magazine about strange phenomena], *Bizarre*—it's like *Weekly World News* but with lots of X-rated pictures. We read *Vanity Fair* on long international flights.

ELECTION POLLS

BLOCKING THE EXITS

On November 7, we may see the closest presidential election in decades. With some electoral suspense for a change, the media's exit polls will become particularly interesting and newsworthy. In the early afternoon—when the first round of exit-poll results is released to 100-odd media organizations—just about everyone in the national press corps will know whether Bush or Gore is leading, and nearly every Washington politician and staffer will know, too. But the public will not. You won't hear the television anchors tell you who won until much later in the day, and you won't see this scoop on your favorite come-to-us-first news website.

Back in the beginning of February, during New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation presidential primary, *Slate* deputy editor Jack Shafer broke a taboo of modern journalism and became the first reporter who intentionally published exit-poll results for a state while its voting booths were still open. He set off a small furor, with threats of lawsuits, worries he'd harm democracy, and charges that exit polls would be ruined forever. Most people, though, are fairly confident the republic will stand. The real question is: What will happen to exit-poll results this November?

The controversy dates from Ronald Reagan's landslide elections in 1980 and 1984. The networks proclaimed him victorious long before West Coast polls had closed, and politicians worried that the news had discouraged West Coasters from voting and thus influenced the electoral process. In 1985 the presidents of the three network-news divisions promised Congress they wouldn't announce election outcomes for a state until its polls had closed.

Since then, the big three have banded together to form one exit-polling consortium. It's now called Voter News Service, and CNN, Fox News, and The Associated Press are also members. Another 100 or so media outlets buy VNS's data, making the combine the primary source of exit polls in the country. And VNS continues to honor the news-division presidents' pledge to Congress.

"Our membership agreement specifies that people won't release results until polls have closed," says VNS executive director Bill Headline. Although that's observed superficially, reporters and commentators are well aware of who will win while they're on the air, and they tend to give broad hints about who that will be.

Shafer says he is offended by those hints and that he wanted to expose the hypocrisy behind them. *Slate* is not a VNS member or subscriber, which means

Shafer got his numbers the way a good chunk of the political-media complex does: Other reporters told him. It also means he's not contractually bound by the embargo VNS imposes on its members and subscribers. His New Hampshire dispatch came at about 4:30 in the afternoon, and in it he laid claim to the high ground. "The self-censorship the media practices on exit polls is based on the idiotic and condescending notion that only members of the media can be trusted with this precious information," he wrote.

Shafer went on to publish early exit-poll results for two more primaries. Then VNS threatened to sue *Slate*, and the online magazine relented. *National Review Online* stepped into the breach, publishing exit-poll numbers from the next primary, in Virginia. A lawyer's letter soon arrived, and *National Review* decided it

wasn't worth fighting. By then it was time for Super Tuesday, and Matt Drudge posted polling data at drudgereport.com. "God bless that little chowderhead," wrote Shafer in *Slate*.

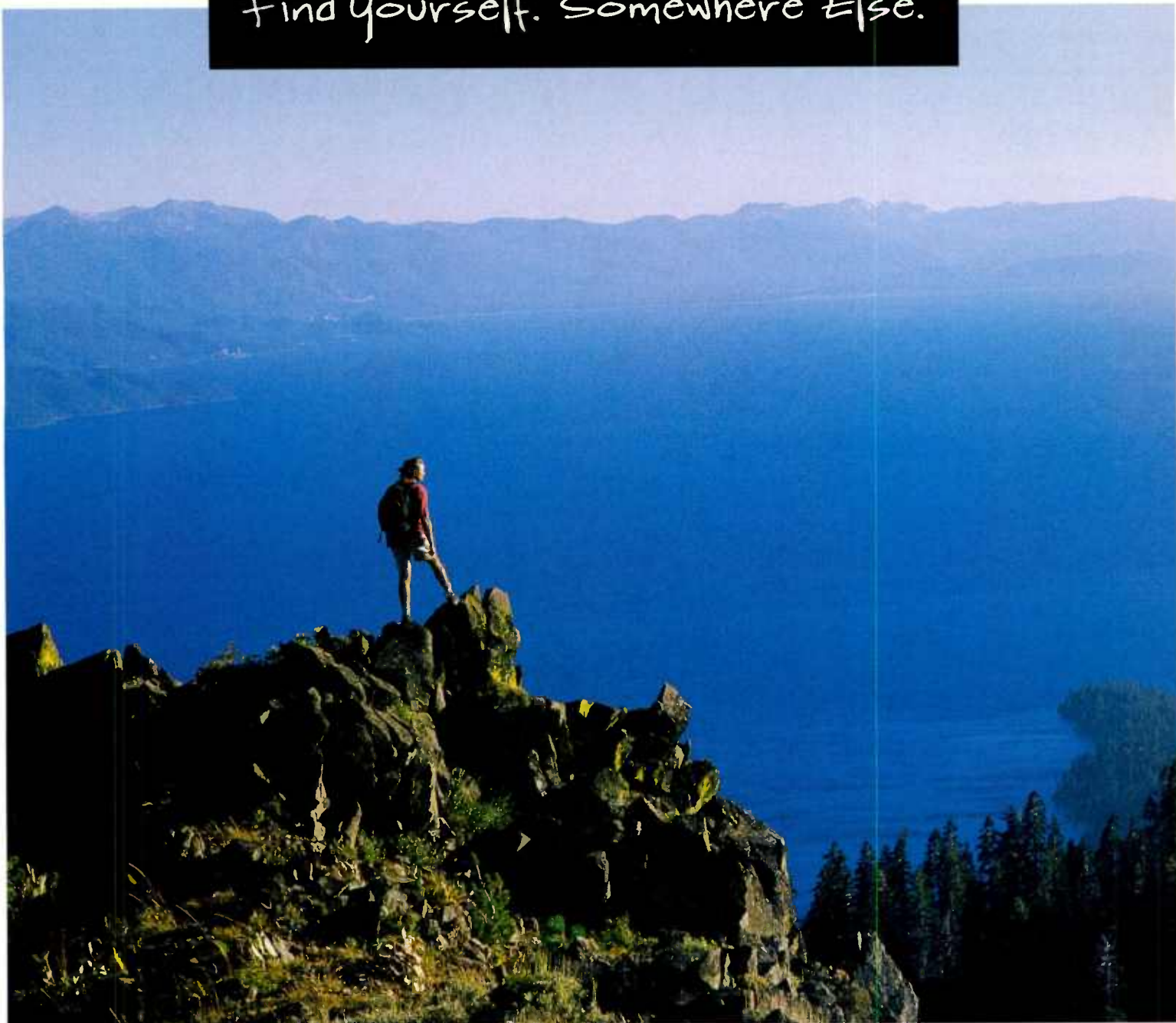
After Super Tuesday the primary races were essentially over and the issue receded. But it promises to come up again as Election Day approaches. VNS won't specify how it might beef up security. (For some primaries, it delayed releasing early data to stop—unsuccessfully—the flow of poll results to outsiders.) "It's our intention to notify the world out there again that this information is proprietary and it's ours and we'll do what we

have to to keep it that way," says Headline. And if the numbers get out regardless, which seems inevitable? "We hope there'll be some sense of responsibility in the Internet world," he says.

And that might well be enough, if only because nobody wants to start a legal battle with VNS. Will *Slate* consider publishing exit-poll numbers again? "No," Shafer says simply. *National Review Online*? "We're going to be revisiting this whole issue," editor (and *Brill's Content* contributor) Jonah Goldberg says—but without anything really changing, it's tough to see why the conservative magazine would reach a different opinion. How about *Slate's* arch-competitor, *Salon*? "We decided not to do it in the primaries," says Washington bureau chief Kerry Lauerman, "and we're not planning to do it in the fall." The fledgling Voter.com, working hard recently to get publicity? Nope—they're VNS subscribers and thus embargo-bound, says spokesman Michael Bustamante. That leaves, again, that chowderhead Drudge. He wouldn't reply to requests for interviews, but his friend Goldberg thinks he's a likely contender. "I would be shocked, knowing Drudge like I do, if he doesn't do it—particularly if it pisses people off." **JESSE OXFELD**



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Clutter

FALL FASHION: AD IT UP

Whether you savor the deluxe ad inserts in *W* or curse the perfume strips in *Vogue*, one thing is certain: There's no shortage of noneditorial clutter in September's notoriously mammoth fall fashion magazines.

But how much clutter, exactly? We measured.

All told, the four magazines we looked at boasted a whopping 1,532 pages of advertising. Below, a clutter breakdown.

ANNA SCHNEIDER-MAYERSON

ELLE

Ad pages	336
Edit pages	216
Subscription cards	3
Ad inserts	9
Gatefold ads	0
Perfume strips	1
Ad/Edit ratio	3:2



HARPER'S BAZAAR

Ad pages	294
Edit pages	158
Subscription cards	4
Ad inserts	8
Gatefold ads	0
Perfume strips	1
Ad/Edit ratio	2:1



W

Ad pages	318
Edit pages	216
Subscription cards	3
Ad inserts	13
Gatefold ads	1
Perfume strips	1
Ad/Edit ratio	3:2



VOGUE

Ad pages	584
Edit pages	218
Subscription cards	3
Ad inserts	26
Gatefold ads	12
Perfume strips	4
Ad/Edit ratio	3:1



Ad-pages total includes inserts, gatefold ads, and perfume strips, but not subscription cards. Ad/Edit ratios were rounded.

SILICON VALLEY FUND-RAISING

AN EDITOR'S CAMPAIGN

Tony Perkins is doing what a lot of wealthy and powerful people do during a presidential campaign: He's getting behind a candidate. Perkins, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, thinks George W. Bush is the man for the job. He has donated \$1,500 to Bush's campaign, and he occasionally invites his network of friends and colleagues to attend Bush fund-raisers.

But along with being one of Silicon Valley's most ardent Bush supporters, Perkins happens to be the editor in chief of *Red Herring*, an influential magazine that covers the high-tech economy. And he has asked many of the people and companies his magazine writes about to donate to the Bush campaign. Perkins says that in the past 18 months, he has sent half a dozen e-mail messages to 5,000 friends and colleagues—most of whom are members of the Silicon

Valley community *Red Herring* covers—inviting them to Bush fund-raisers. (Perkins later told *Brill's Content* that he has sent only two such messages in the past year, and that one of them went to only 100 people.)

Perkins's practice of seeking political donations from the network of people *Red Herring* covers is unusual at best, running a risk that some might feel pressured to support Bush out of fear of negative coverage—or in the hopes of favorable coverage—in Perkins's magazine. "I would be very worried about soliciting money from anyone that you cover," says Marshall Loeb, a columnist for CBS MarketWatch.com and former editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review*. "You don't want to give the appearance that you're asking for a favor."

Although there is no evidence that Perkins has ever used his power as editor of *Red Herring* to strong-arm potential contributors, his magazine makes him an important figure in Silicon Valley whom many are eager to please. "People kiss my ass all day long," Perkins says. "But my entire franchise collapses the minute people question our editorial integrity." So does he see anything wrong with asking the people his magazine covers to pony up cash for Bush? "Many people in my position contribute to campaigns and support candidates," he says. When pressed, Perkins says only, "We can all

pretend we live in a pure world, but in the final analysis, as a journalist...you are judged based upon your record of telling it like it is."

Brill's Content contacted a handful of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs to ask about Perkins's support of Bush; all said they did not believe that giving money to Bush would affect how *Red Herring* covers their companies. A founder of a software firm who asked not to be identified says: "I don't think there's anything morally wrong with [Perkins's fund-raising strategy]. But I don't think it's a great business decision if his goal is to sell magazines," because it might alienate readers.

Perkins's boosterism extends beyond fund-raising. He has promoted Bush on CNBC's *Hardball*, where he is a frequent guest; at meetings and conferences; in his



George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, at a California fund-raiser

weekly online column, *The Red Eye*, and in his monthly column in *Red Herring* (in which he once wrote, "For those readers interested in attending a fund-raising lunch...feel free to e-mail me"). Perkins helped secure a lengthy interview with Bush in the December 1999 issue, which included a disclosure of Perkins's support for Bush. (The October 2000 issue contains an interview with Al Gore.)

Perkins says he has been vocal about his support for Bush, and assertive about asking his Silicon Valley peers to join the campaign, for the same reason he started *Red Herring*—to make an impact. "I could either choose to be an armchair commentator, sitting at home and telling my fiancée everything that I think," says Perkins. "But I want to change the world."

ELIZABETH ANGELL

SYNERGY QUIZ

In the nesting-doll structure of corporate ownership, it gets hard to keep track, sometimes, of who owns what—and which companies does that subsidiary own, anyway? Match each of the conglomerates in the first column to its subsidiary in the second column, and then further identify, in the third column, a subsidiary of the subsidiary.

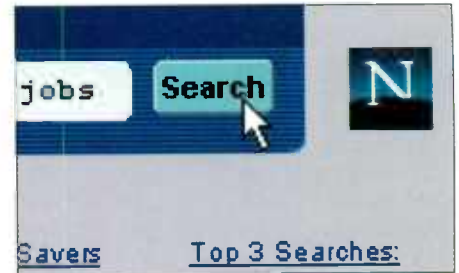
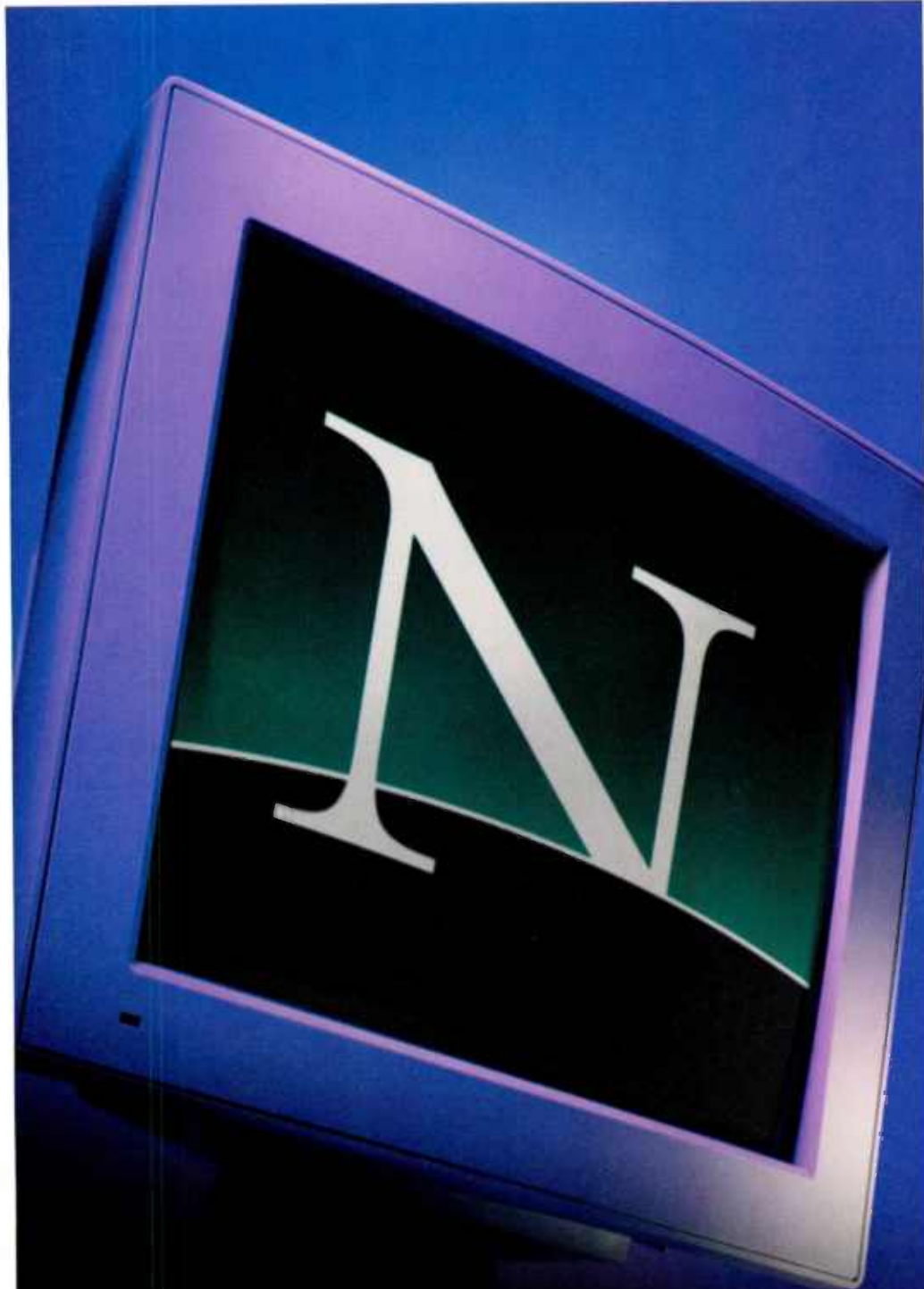
JOSHUA NUNBERG

CONGLOMERATE	SUBSIDIARY	SUB-SUBSIDIARY
Lycos	Ticketmaster	Hotbot
Sony	Rainbow Media	DirectTV
Cablevision	Hughes Electronics	The Bravo Channel
General Motors	Wired Digital	Game Show Network
USA Networks	Columbia TriStar	Citysearch.com

ANSWERS: Lycos: Wired Digital; Hotbot: Sony; Columbia TriStar: Game Show Network; Cablevision: DirectTV; Ticketmaster: Citysearch.com (50%); The Bravo Channel: General Motors; Hughes Electronics: DirectTV.

BUSH: ERIC DRAPER/AP PHOTO

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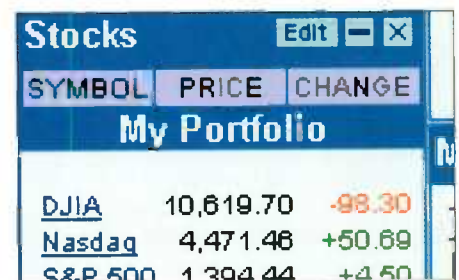
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World Radio History

Reality Check QUIET RIOT

It's a question that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is unlikely to face: What should you do when your awards extravaganza dissolves into a near riot and is stopped by police? For UPN and *The Source's* Hip-Hop Music Awards, which aired on UPN in August one week after the show's taping was cut short by a brawl, the answer was to edit the footage so that the show seemed as if it had come off without a hitch.

With only 5 of the evening's 10 awards presented before the violence began, the show's producers salvaged the scheduled broadcast of the event by shooting five additional awards segments and stitching them together with the pre-fight footage of the August 22 ceremony. The result was a pastiche of real and faked footage that looked, aside from an introductory speech by rapper Mos Def that obliquely addressed the violence, like one continuous show.

The program that aired featured, for instance, images of cohost Busta Rhymes on stage announcing awards that hadn't been given out. Since the winning artists didn't appear in the reshot segments to take the stage and accept those awards, the show's producers simply played portions of the winners' music videos to a soundtrack of audience applause.

The program's strangest moment came when Rhymes and his cohost, actress Mo'Nique, closed the show. Mo'Nique joked with Rhymes and the audience, which was shown reacting, before saying, "We are out of time; we just want to say good night to everyone." At that point in the actual ceremony, of course, the audience had long since left the building.

UPN declared the show a success. Almost 5.3 million viewers watched the awards—UPN's best ratings on a Tuesday night in nearly three years, the network said. **JIM EDWARDS**



Busta Rhymes at the *Source* awards

PULLING STRINGS

FIGHT THE POWERBOOK

On August 8, Steve Jobs, the cofounder and CEO of Apple Computer, phoned Peter Olson, the CEO of Random House, to complain about a book. According to a Random House spokesman, Jobs told Olson that *The Second Coming of Steve Jobs*, by Vanity Fair contributing editor Alan Deutschman, was a "hatchet job." He also said that Broadway Books, the Random House imprint publishing the biography, had not secured the rights to the cover photograph. "Why did Steve Jobs even know what's happening with the book jacket?" Deutschman asks.

The question speaks directly to a modern media phenomenon. Public image has become mightier than the mighty, which lends the printed word more power even at a time when book publishing barely rates a flicker in the glare of the new gilded age. At the same time, the lowly author is as vulnerable as ever—perhaps even more so in an increasingly consolidated entertainment world. Call it the "bigfoot effect."

"Prudence would say 'Never explain, never complain,'" says Stuart Applebaum, spokesman for Random House, the book unit of Bertelsmann. "Whenever the subject of a book complains to a publisher and the word gets out, it never fails to whet the appetite for the larger readership to read it." So, come mid-October, readers will learn that Jobs at times bears little resemblance to the stars of Apple's "Think Different" campaign—Gandhi, Thomas Edison, Rosa Parks. Indeed, it may make some people think differently about Jobs.

"People who are immensely successful and powerful find it exquisitely frustrating not to be able to control what is said about them," says Peter Osnos, publisher and chief executive of PublicAffairs.

THE LOWLY AUTHOR IS AS VULNERABLE AS EVER TO THE "BIGFOOT EFFECT."

Whether the powerful subject of a book is able to prevent publication outright or merely gum up the works depends on factors ranging from global business concerns to personal pique.

When DreamWorks SKG mogul David Geffen agreed in 1996 to cooperate with *Wall Street Journal* reporter Tom King on an official biography, he gave him eight interviews and full access to his social and business circles. According to *The New York Times*, Geffen called King in October 1997 and informed him that he would no longer grant interviews to the writer. Geffen had reportedly begun hearing specifics about King's line of questioning and didn't like what he heard. This March, Random House published *The Operator: David Geffen Builds, Buys, and Sells the New Hollywood*, which revealed Geffen's savvy and brutal business tactics. Geffen was not pleased.

With Jobs and Geffen—or Apple and DreamWorks—the publisher's business interests did not get in the way. But that could happen less often as the imperatives of



Steve Jobs called biographer Deutschman's book a "hatchet job."

global *keiretsu* displace the sandbox politics that have traditionally ruled publishing circles.

It was business that got in the way when HarperCollins, the book division of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, canceled plans to publish former Hong Kong governor Chris Patten's clear-eyed book about Asian politics. According to press reports at the time, Murdoch was trying to persuade the Chinese government to accept programming via his Star TV satellite.

Another high-profile cancellation involved Little, Brown's unauthorized biography *Undressed: The Life of Gianni Versace*, by freelance writer Christopher Mason. The book had made it all the way to galley proofs when the publisher stopped the presses about a month before its scheduled July 1999 publication. The Versace family had opposed the book from the beginning and reportedly threatened legal action. Little, Brown allowed Mr. Mason to keep his entire advance, a reported \$500,000.

And in May, onetime *Village Voice* writer Jimmy McDonough filed a \$1.8 million civil fraud suit against singer Neil Young for withdrawing his permission for the publication of an authorized biography.

This kind of about-face wasn't an issue with Jobs; he refused to cooperate with Deutschman, who was more than a little unsettled by the call from Silicon Valley. Broadway Books took it in stride—Deutschman says his editor and publisher called with words of support: "We're not going to change so much as a comma."

ELIZABETH MANUS

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID WONG

**You found 117,982 matches for “ancient wonders.”
How do you get here?**



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ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA

"the Vital Center"

Half a century after his seminal article and book, the author's concept of a political center endures. In this exclusive excerpt from his forthcoming memoir, the historian reflects on a phrase's life in the political and media lexicon. **BY ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR.**

In April 1948 *The New York Times Magazine* published a piece of mine under the title "Not Left, Not Right, But a Vital Center." The article began by arguing that the traditional linear division into right and left, adequate to the political simplicities of the nineteenth century, did not fit the complexities of the twentieth. On the linear conception fascism and communism were polar opposites, one on the far right, the other on the far left. Yet in basic structural respects—a single leader, a single infallible ideology, a single party, a single mass of disciplined followers, a merciless secret police, a fear and hatred of political and intellectual freedom—fascism and communism clearly resembled each other more than they resembled anything on the line between them. Similarly the constitutional right and the democratic left had more in common than either had with fascism or communism.

This dilemma drove DeWitt C. Poole, who had been American chargé d'affaires in Moscow during the Bolshevik Revolution and whom I had known as chief of the Foreign Nationalities Branch of the wartime OSS, the forerunner of the CIA, to an inspired suggestion. Right and left, he said, should be conceived in terms not of a line but of a circle, with the extremes—fascism and communism—meeting at the bottom. You can then look at the circle in two ways: with respect to property, fascism and the constitutional right were side by side against communism and the democratic left; with respect to liberty, the constitutional right and the democratic left were side by side against fascism and communism.

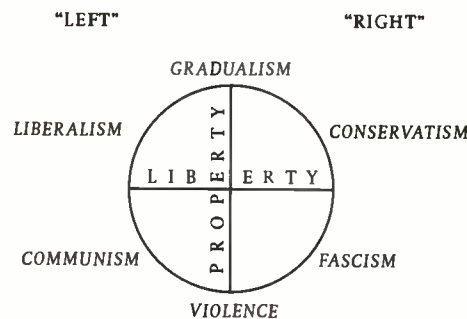
The times, I argued, called for an alliance between the non-Communist left and the non-fascist right. "Hope for the future surely lies in the revival of the Center—in the triumph of those who believe deeply in civil liberties, in constitutional processes and in the democratic determination of political and economic policies." The epigraph was from Yeats's "The Second Coming" (less of a cliché in 1948 than it became later):

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity...
And what rough beast, its hour come round
at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?



Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. on the roof of 79 Champs-Élysées, Paris, October 1944



A graphic depiction of the "vital center" of politics

phrase encapsulated my point in locating liberal democracy between the extremes of communism and fascism.

THE *TIMES MAGAZINE* article led to a book and also provided its title. The responses to the *Times* article emboldened me to put the Vital Center in a larger context, setting forth both its historical underpinnings and its relevance to contemporary perplexities. Because I had been brooding about these questions my mind was full to overflowing, and I wrote the book in six months; it was published in the fall of 1949 by Houghton Mifflin. *The Vital Center*, I noted in the foreword, was not designed to set forth novel or

COURTESY OF ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR.



Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., by David Levine

Levine

World Book Online



Schlesinger with President-elect John F. Kennedy, January 9, 1960

startling political doctrines. It was intended rather as a report on the enterprise of reexamination and self-criticism that liberalism had undergone in the preceding decade. The leaders in this enterprise, I noted, had been the wise men of an older generation. But its chief beneficiaries were my own contemporaries, and its main consequence, I thought, was to create a new and distinct political generation.

The moment seemed ripe for a redefinition of liberal democracy. Mid-century liberalism, I thought, had been "fundamentally reshaped by the hope of the New Deal, by the exposure of the Soviet Union and by the deepening of our knowledge of man." (My consciousness not having been sufficiently raised in 1949, I used the word "man," according to the custom of the time, as shorthand for "human being." My apologies.)

My generation had been brought up to regard human nature as benign and human society as perfectible. Evil was a theological superstition. Educational and institutional reforms would do the job of social salvation. These were the premises of goodhearted, hopeful American liberalism in the style of John Dewey. In 1939, a renowned political scientist, Charles E. Merriam of the University of Chicago, could write, "There is a constant tendency in human affairs to the perfectibility of mankind." This proposition, seen in the baleful light of Hitler and Stalin, appeared shallow and shaky. Obviously human nature had dark depths beyond the reach of conventional liberalism.

I wrote *The Vital Center* in the second-floor study of our Irving Street house in Cambridge. I have always written at home (except for my memoir of the Kennedy administration, *A Thousand Days*). Poets, novelists, playwrights, drawing their art out of their unconscious, can write any-

where. Historians require their notes, their files, their books, their familiar surroundings.

Having perhaps the soul of a hack, I have never been bothered by writer's block, nor am I unduly distracted by noise. Asked years later to describe her father, my daughter Christina wrote, "My father's self-confidence and power of concentration have always impressed me. When we kids were little, he wrote his books with all of us screaming around him. I used to play in the wastebasket while he typed." True: before Christina, I stowed the twins in a wastebasket by my desk and wrote my pieces for *Life* and *Fortune*. I did not mind the clamor of children and never closed my study door to the life of the household.

IF I WERE WRITING *The Vital Center* today, I would tone down the rhetoric. From time to time there is too much hortatory lushness.

I would not greatly modify the analysis of the grounds of the totalitarian appeal. I would, however, disown my flirtation with the mystical theory of totalitarianism popularized by George Orwell and Hannah Arendt. This theory must have been much in the air in the late Forties because *The Vital Center* came out the same year as Orwell's *1984* and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* followed in 1951.

Orwell's vision was of a society absolutely controlled by absolute power using absolute terror to remake the human soul. His *1984* was not about incremental evolution from the welfare state into the total state. It was about a shattering discontinuity, a qualitative transformation, an ultimate change of phase. Orwell carried the inner logic of Nazism and Stalinism to the end of night. In so doing, he encouraged

the theory of totalitarianism as unitary and irreversible, obliterating all autonomous institutions in society and reconstructing the human personality itself.

Now that we know far more about the inner workings of Hitlerism and Stalinism, it seems clear that the totalitarian states—while quite as cruel as Orwell and Arendt (and I) supposed—were far less effectively monolithic than we believed; that the totalitarian project of remaking human nature was far less feasible than we thought; that totalitarianism in the pure and complete sense was inherently unattainable; and in consequence that totalitarian states were not unchanging and unchangeable. The totalitarian state can indeed persecute, torture and kill. But “human nature” proved too stubborn, deviant, recalcitrant and—dare one say?—courageous to surrender to total transformation.

Totalitarian states were simply not the foolproof, leakproof tyrannies of 1984 and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. They were vicious but chaotic despotisms riven by internal feuds and hatreds. They were inefficient in their use of labor and in their allocation of resources. They practiced systematic and appalling barbarities; but so have despots done through the ages, if never on so large a scale. Totalitarian states, far from achieving, as I thought in 1949, a radical break in social organization, were hardly more than Tartar courts equipped with modern technology and ideology. They were Tartar courts too in their tribalism. I had the sense in *The Vital Center* to detect the rising conflict between Russian hegemony and the varieties of national communism and to foresee the Sino-Soviet split. And I also had the sense to warn against obsessive anticommunism: we must not permit ourselves, I wrote, “to become the slaves of Stalinism, as any man may become the slave of the things he hates.”

HEINEMANN BROUGHT OUT *The Vital Center* in Great Britain in 1950 under the title *The Politics of Freedom*, with a generous introduction by Malcolm Muggeridge, the famed English critic and wit. The question the book addressed, Muggeridge wrote, was how to counter totalitarianism without adopting totalitarianism’s methods. Schlesinger, he said, was “one of the most acute minds in contemporary America,” a judgment he would later repent. My old friend Charles Wintour, editor of the London *Evening Standard* (and father of the editor of today’s *Vogue*), wrote me that he feared the Muggeridge introduction might discourage readers whose views were closer to my own; “he seems too anxious to make the point that an individual of right-wing views may read the book without committing a sin.”

The American reviewers were mostly tolerant. Some were comfortably enthusiastic; book reviews at the time were more widely-read, perhaps, and certainly provoked a greater deal of political and sociological debate within the press and among writers, historians, and critics

than today. Judge Jerome Frank in the *New York Post*, then a New Deal paper rather than the right-wing scandal sheet it is today, called *The Vital Center* “a profoundly searching book...Every decent American owes it to himself and to our democratic society to read this book.” Jonathan Daniels, the liberal North Carolina editor, a son of FDR’s old boss in Wilson’s cabinet and himself a veteran of both FDR’s and Truman’s White House, wrote in the *Saturday Review*, “It seemed to me one of those books which may suddenly and clearly announce the spirit of a time to itself.” Henry Steele Commager in the *New York Herald Tribune*, August

Heckscher in *The Reporter*, Robert Bendiner in *The Nation*, Mary McGrory—now a columnist for *The Washington Post*—in *The Washington Star*, were comparably friendly. Joe Rauh in the *Harvard Law Review* was warmly sympathetic, but thought (correctly) that I conceded too much to the Truman loyalty program, Truman’s sweeping program to identify and disclose supposedly disloyal government workers.

Some reviewers were angry. The ever reliable Herbert Aptheker denounced “The Schlesinger Fraud” in the Communist monthly *Masses & Mainstream* as “a program groomed to the needs of a ruling class seeking war and fascism.” In December 1949 Aptheker and I held a debate at Yale. Neither of us persuaded the other of anything.

According to Ben Bagdikian in *The Providence Journal*, I denied “the Left a legitimate existence in American politics.” The philosopher Abraham Edel, in the short-lived, soft-on-communism *New York Daily Compass*, accused me of “abandoning liberalism” and underwriting “the present state of capitalism.” Sebastian

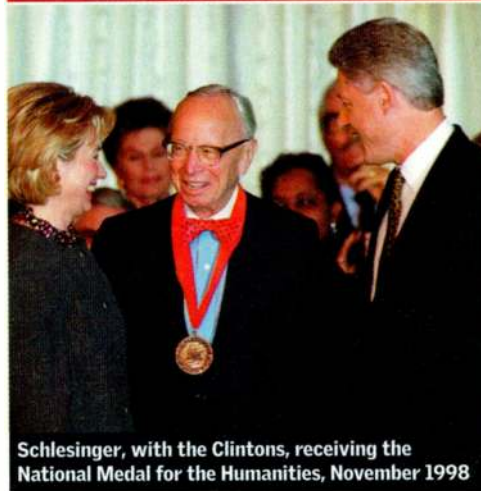
Barr in the fellow-traveling *National Guardian*: “*The Vital Center* might be defined as a small island of opportunism entirely surrounded by hot air.” Dr. Melchior Palyi in the *Chicago Tribune*: “Supercilious and sophisticated [Colonel McCormick’s reformed spelling] but platitudinous editorializing takes the place of logical and historical analysis.” Clinton Rossiter, the Cornell political scientist (and later a good friend), regretted in *The Review of Politics* that I had written “a book as unoriginal, loose, and glib as *The Vital Center*” and predicted that I would end up as the American Harold Laski.

The book was a mild success at the time. It has been reprinted in 1962, 1988 and 1998.

A RUM MOMENT in the afterlife of *The Vital Center* came when the work was charged with contributing to the triumph of Abstract Expressionism in painting. In his 1983 book, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, Serge Guilbaut, a French art historian at the University of British Columbia, exposed the dastardly plot by which Vital Center liberalism and the Truman administration conspired to use Abstract Expressionism as a weapon in the Cold War.

The New York school of painting became, Guilbaut wrote, “a symbol

IF I WERE WRITING
THE VITAL CENTER
TODAY, I WOULD TONE
DOWN THE RHETORIC.



Schlesinger, with the Clintons, receiving the National Medal for the Humanities, November 1998

of the fragility of freedom in the battle waged by the liberals to protect the vital center." Against the boring Soviet "socialist realism," Abstract Expressionism "offered the exuberant Jackson Pollock, the very image of exaltation and spontaneity. His psychological problems were but cruel tokens of the hardships of freedom. In his 'extremism' and violence Pollock represented the man possessed, the rebel, transformed for the sake of the cause into nothing less than a liberal warrior in the Cold War." By refuting European myths of American philistinism, the New York school appealed to European elites and served American purposes in the struggle with the Soviet Union.

Guilbaut's argument seems a very long stretch. Abstract Expressionism is a style for which the author of *The Vital Center* had (and has) minimal sympathy. As for President Truman, he dismissed avant-garde painting as "ham and eggs art." The painters themselves were in the main studiously apolitical and nonideological, dedicated to art for art's sake. Nonetheless, according to poet and critic David Lehman in 1995, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* was in wide use as a college textbook.

THE COLLAPSE OF FASCISM left communism as the only game in town and the concept of the vital center between the totalitarianism of the right and the totalitarianism of the left lost its vitality. Then the subsequent collapse of communism gave the center fresh currency, but in a new and different context.

In the Nineties, after nearly half a century, *The Vital Center*, or at least the phrase, had an unexpected revival. "What this nation really needs," President Bill Clinton said in August 1993, "is a vital center, one committed to fundamental and profound and relentless and continuing change." "We proclaim," he said on the night of his reelection in 1996, "that the vital American center is alive and well." In a press conference two days later: "Our people voted for the ideas of the vital American center." August 1997: "In these past months, we have seen how the politics of the vital center can work to make progress on many of our most difficult problems." January 2000: "We restored the vital center, replacing outmoded ideologies with a new vision."

The revival, moreover, had a bipartisan tinge. In 1996 Newt Gingrich, then Speaker of the House of Representatives, an author of the briefly famous Contract with America and an all-purpose Republican firebrand, startled R. W. Apple, Jr., of *The New York Times*, not to mention *The Vital Center's* author, by quoting with approval the following sentence from the book: "The conservative must not identify a particular status quo with the survival of civilization, and the radical equally must recognize that his protests are likely to be as much the expressions of his own self-interest as they are of some infallible dogma"—a plea for humility that neither Gingrich nor I have always observed.

President Clinton evidently added "American" to place his vital center in a domestic context. My vital center had been in a global context—liberal democracy against its mortal international enemies, fascism to the right, communism to the left. It was not immediately clear what Bill Clinton meant by the "vital American center." Conservatives hoped that he meant the "middle of the road"—the position preferred by cautious

politicians who want to alienate as few voters as possible. In my view, the middle of the road is definitely not the vital center. It is the dead center.

President Clinton's view? He certainly adopted a middle-of-the-road strategy: "triangulation," as his onetime strategist Dick Morris called it. But I think he was also saying that the United States faces novel problems that the American people must meet without reference to the shibboleths of the past. He had tried variations on the phrase before. "This is a time of such profound change," he said in April 1995, "that we need a dynamic center that is not in the middle of what is left and right but is way beyond it....I want us [Democrats and Republicans] to surprise everybody in America by rolling up our sleeves and...working together."

What was the "profound change" remodeling American life? In a December 1996 press conference, President Clinton recalled the time a century before when "we moved from the farm to the factory" and "became primarily an urban manufacturing country." Today, he suggested, we were undergoing a parallel mutation compelled by the shock of a "new basis of economic activity, knowledge and information and technology."

President Clinton understood that America, and indeed the whole developed world, was undergoing a structural transformation as profound as the shift two centuries ago from a farm-based to a factory-based economy. Americans

at the end of the twentieth century were experiencing an even more traumatic shift, from a factory-based to a computer-based economy. This shift was more traumatic because the Industrial Revolution extended over generations, allowing time for human and institutional adjustment. The Computer Revolution is far more dynamic, far more compressed, far more drastic, in its impact. Because no one can foresee its consequences for human society and the human mind—so Bill Clinton seems to feel—the digital challenge renders the familiar division between left and right obsolescent. His vital center, if it means more than political phrase-making, presumably aims to establish a new framework for the computer age.

Such a framework is the great underlying challenge of this year's presidential election. We are hurtling into the uncharted waters of the computer age, and we cannot predict what twist or turn will next spring out of our laboratories. Vice President Al Gore, even if he did not invent the Internet, has had a long immersion in its mysteries, and a long concern about its implications; he defends the public interest in the management of the world of the Internet. Governor Bush means well, though he seems to think that the market can resolve the problems of the computer age, and would turn the Internet into the digital equivalent of HMOs.

The future bears down implacably on our leaders and ourselves. Let us never forget Henry Adams's great aphorism. The president of the United States, Adams wrote, resembles the commander of a ship at sea. "He must have a helm to grasp, a course to steer, a port to seek."

Whom will the voters trust to take the helm in the uncharted waters lying darkly ahead? Who gets to define the vital center? ■

IN THE NINETIES,
AFTER NEARLY HALF A
CENTURY, THE VITAL
CENTER HAD AN
UNEXPECTED REVIVAL.

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WHAT THE INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLERS ARE SAYING...

Our 49 Independent Bookstore Affiliate Experts have been looking at what's hot, what's over hyped, and what's gotten the most surprising buzz lately. Here are some of their recent observations and opinions.



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**HARRY W. SCHWARTZ
BOOKSHOP**
MILWAUKEE, WI
History

Reading the slyly titled anthology *Mama's Boy: Gay Men Write About Their Mothers*, **A Different Light's** Richard Labonté finds that these diverse essays provide honest, moving glimpses of the love-threaded tapestries of contemporary family life.

Christian Waldbauer of **Boulder Bookstore** finds Jonathan Kirsch's *King David* to be as much a thrilling narrative as an in-depth study of a celebrated man, calling it a penetrating psychological and biographical portrait.

Michael Fraser of **Joseph-Beth Booksellers** discusses Sarah Caudwell's mysteries, in which young lawyers not only try cases but also gossip, torture each other intellectually, and solve murders.

In the novel *Beautiful WASPs Having Sex*, Dori Carter lobs one-liners right and left as she deftly captures the bizarre culture and strange rituals of showbiz, according to Cheryl Barton of **Just Books**.

Staying Street Smart in the Internet Age, by Mark H. McCormack, suggests that the Internet hasn't changed customer

relations all that much: Regardless of the bells and whistles, businesses still have to win one client at a time and then keep them. Karen Pennington at **Kepler's Books & Magazines** thinks this old-fashioned business sense never goes out of style.

Narrated in conversational prose that is by turns breezy, halting, speculative, and exhilarating, Paul Eddy's novel *Flint* reads like the insider account of a hard-bitten veteran reporter in a smoky bar in Tangier, according to The Partners of **Partners & Crime**.

Jenny Feder of **Three Lives & Company** urges readers to pick up André Aciman's *False Papers*, a book so ardently alive that even if you read only a bit of it, it will live vibrantly in your soul.

Drew Phillips at **Warwick's** discovers that Andrew Harvey's *A Journey in Ladakh: Encounters with Buddhism* brilliantly links Tibet's landscape to its culture and religion.

RECENT COMMENTARY FROM ONE OF EXPERTS:



Dan Blask

CURRENT TITLES IN HARDCOVER NONFICTION BY DAN BLASK AT HARRY W. SCHWARTZ BOOKSHOP

If you like eclectic nonfiction, check out *One Good Turn: A Natural History of the Screwdriver and the Screw*, by Witold Rybczynski. At 163 pages, it's a breeze to read, and Rybczynski's writing style instructs and charms without wasting words. The impetus behind this book was a request by *The New York Times Magazine* for Rybczynski to come up with the best tool of the millennium. He is the ultimate expert on tools, having built his own home from the ground up (save the installation of electricity, the comprehension of which, he says, has eluded him since childhood). Rybczynski faithfully relates the history of the screw and such screwdriver innovations as the streamlining of screw sizes.

Perhaps you're thinking that although screwdriver talk can be amusing in moderation, 150-plus pages is excessive. Well, Rybczynski doesn't spend the whole buck-fifty on Phillips heads and flatheads. The first third of the book is devoted to tools Rybczynski considered writing about but either decided against or discovered to have predated this millennium (believe it or not, the drill, the chalk line, and the plane all go at least as far back as the Romans).

Harry W. Schwartz Bookshop has been an influential presence in Milwaukee since 1927. My boss, David Schwartz, believes the book has soul and an ethical center—which is likely the reason many of us got involved with books and most certainly the reason many of us are still engaged in bookselling.

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RECENT PROFESSORS' PICKS

Two of our newest Academic Experts make their picks.

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, AUSTIN

Professor's Picks on
**COMPASSIONATE
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BENJAMIN DISRAELI, *Sybil* (1845)
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB, *Poverty and
Compassion: The Moral Imagination
of the Late Victorians* (1991)

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Reaching the Poor in Your Community with
Church-Based Ministries That Work* (1997)

JAMES L. PAYNE, *Overcoming
Welfare: Expecting More From
the Poor and From Ourselves* (1998)

DEANNA CARLSON,
*The Welfare of My
Neighbor: Living Out
Christ's Love for the
Poor* (1999)

ELAINE SHOWALTER
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Professor's Picks on
**FEMINIST CRITICISM AND
WOMEN'S WRITING**

SANDRA M. GILBERT AND SUSAN GUBAR,
The Madwoman in the Attic (1979)
HERMIONE LEE, *Virginia Woolf* (1997)
**ELIZABETH ABEL, MARIANNE HIRSCH, AND
ELIZABETH LANGLAND (EDS.)**, *The Voyage
In* (1983)

NINA BAYM, *Woman's Fiction, 2nd edition* (1993)
DIANE PRICE HERNDL, *Invalid Women:
Figuring Female Illness in American Fiction
and Culture, 1840-1940* (1993)

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Manifestos* (City University of New York); **JAMES CHAPMAN**,
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"Loosely stitched together by
5 million missing dollars, Tim
Dorsey's novel *Hammerhead Ranch
Motel* includes cops busting cops,
TV weather dogs, and poor Johnny
Vegas, who time and time again
tries and fails to lose his virginity."

BARBARA THEROUX
FACT & FICTION

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WHAT THE CONTRIBUTING EDITORS ARE SAYING...

Our Contributing Editors are accomplished, demanding readers and thinkers. Here's what they've been reading and thinking lately.

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Maybe Bill Gates isn't so bad: **Peter T. Glenshaw** reads some magazine articles and learns that new millionaires have made philanthropy a hands-on experience.

David Brown offers a Hollywood insider's critique of *American Rhapsody*, Joe Eszterhas's treatise on political sleaze.

Larry Fink spends time "reading" pictures—searching for the energy and meaning within photographs—and learns what's really going on with George W. Bush, Lil' Kim, and those

sexually explicit Gucci ads.

Laura Ingraham watches *Survivor*, observes the Democratic convention, and reads about the hidden struggles of the inner city—only one of the three gives her hope for the future.

A visit to an exhibit on the history of lynching gets **David Isay** thinking—and reading—about Ida B. Wells and the different manifestations of group violence.

John Scanlon enjoys the adventures of an old-fashioned New York-style detective in Scotland through the mystery stories of Ian Rankin.

Amid the modern trend for shocking and provocative poetry, **Genevieve Field** takes comfort in the graceful and lyrical work of Marisa de los Santos.

From intra-ethnic slang to the Republican convention, **Ilan Stavans** charts the rise of Spanglish in American culture and politics, comparing it to black English and Yiddish.

Cristina Mittermeier reads Jane Goodall's memoir and Mark Hertsgaard's environmental manifesto and tackles a big question: Is there hope for the future?

The food, the wine, the attitude—**Robert Bookman** gives a rundown of the best guide books for a trip to France.

Wendy Kaminer considers the popularity of scientific pipe dreams like snake oil and perpetual motion, and our culture's prickly attitude toward intellectuals, and discusses what it all means for the presidential election.

And it's **Harold Bloom** versus the world, as the author explains why the *Harry Potter* phenomenon is nothing to celebrate.

RECENT COMMENTARY FROM ONE OF OUR EXPERTS:



Christine Vachon

WHAT CHRISTINE VACHON IS READING NOW

I'm shooting a film, and whenever I'm shooting I try to distance myself a little from the film's subject, because I want to see the story unfold as if I knew nothing about it. So it's a perfect time to indulge in one of my biggest guilty pleasures, which is reading what I call "woo-woo" books. These are books by psychic writers like Sylvia Browne and James Van Praagh, which, on a pedestrian level—and by that I mean that the concepts are very literal—address what happens when we die, and what our place is in the sort of cosmic world.... On a more basic level of appeal, who doesn't want to be the one in the room who lost someone named Fred, when Sylvia Browne or James Van Praagh, or some guy on *60 Minutes*, says, "I see a man in blue trying to talk to you. His name is...Fred?"

Christine Vachon's first release from her Killer Films production company was *Office Killer*, directed by artist Cindy Sherman. Vachon has also produced *Velvet Goldmine*, *Happiness*, and, most recently, *Boys Don't Cry*. Vachon was also a co producer of *Poison, Safe*, and *Kids*. Upcoming productions include a feature adaptation of *Jeanette Winterson's The Passion*; *Whit Stillman's* version of the novel *Red Azalea*, by *Anchee Min*; and *John Cameron Mitchell's* film adaptation of his off-Broadway production, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*.

"Malcolm Boyd really can write a prayer—he is to prayer what Shakespeare is to the sonnet."

FRANK DEFORD
ON *RUNNING WITH JESUS*
BY MALCOLM BOYD

WHAT THE MAGAZINE EXPERTS ARE SAYING...

Contentville's Magazine Experts explain what's going on each month in the magazines they cover. Here's what some of them have said recently.

VISIT THE EXPERTS

Contributing Editors

Magazine Experts

Independent Booksellers

Academic Experts

"Fashion magazines have been scooped. They've lost their niche market, and their news pool is now dipped into by virtually every form of media: the same runway shots appearing in venue after venue, the same Prada bowling bag featured around the globe."

ELAINA RICHARDSON
FASHION

Susan Burton discovers that even *American Cheerleader* cares about biased reporting—the magazine's media watchdogs issue a thumbs-down to the *Haverhill Gazette* story that scoffs, "Most of the rug rats in romper rooms across the country could execute the maneuvers at this camp."

Everyone has an opinion on the presidential race: Clinton's former senior adviser **Rahm Emanuel** peruses the different kinds of candidate coverage that have appeared recently, from *Business Week*'s economic comparison to *The New Yorker*'s buzz-worthy Gore profile.

The Kursk submarine disaster attracted a huge amount of media attention—but what really happened? **Timothy Ferris** studies Tom Clancy's *Newsweek* analysis and other incisive articles to focus on Russia, submarine warfare, and the nuclear threat we face in today's post-Cold War era.

Renowned former hacker **Kevin Mitnick** combs computer magazines and discovers that cyberbegging is the

latest way to ask for spare change. Also: how to protect yourself from computer viruses and whether or not online gambling is just a sucker's game.

The models may be thin, but fall fashion issues are putting on the pounds. **Elaina Richardson**, former editor of *Elle*, looks at this season's juggernauts and analyzes why so many consumers are getting their style tips elsewhere.

Sure, the name may be catchy, but what about the content? **John R. Quain** zooms in on the launch of "insistently hip" *Grok*, an *Industry Standard* spin off and the latest technology rag to contend that cyber geeks have become Hollywood-cool.

Even spiritual magazines get caught up in the spirit of the political season. **Winifred Gallagher** rounds up the offerings, such as the *Shambhala Sun* profile of Jerry Brown and the *Sojourners* investigation into the alarming rise of "virtual hate."

Napster: Is it revolutionary or is it stealing? **Marketplace** commentary editor **Martha Little** sifts through the coverage, pro and con, and helps confused readers draw their own conclusions.

OUR MAGAZINE EXPERTS

SUSAN BURTON
TEEN

ELIZABETH CROW
WOMEN'S AND PARENTING

KATE DE CASTELBAJAC
BEAUTY

DR. EZEKIEL EMANUEL
HEALTH

RAHM EMANUEL
POLITICS

TIMOTHY FERRIS
SCIENCE

WINIFRED GALLAGHER
RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

MATTHEW GOODMAN
COOKING

STÉPHANE HOUY-TOWNER
FASHION

**THE STAFF OF
MARKETPLACE**
MONEY AND FINANCE

KEVIN MITNICK
COMPUTERS

KEITH OLBERMANN
SPORTS

CHEE PEARLMAN
DESIGN

JOHN R. QUAIN
TECHNOLOGY

DANIEL RADOSH
ENTERTAINMENT

ELAINA RICHARDSON
FASHION

MICHAEL SEGELL
MEN'S

RECENT COMMENTARY FROM ONE OF OUR EXPERTS:



Keith Olbermann

OFF THE RACK WITH KEITH OLBERMANN

In the last month, nearly every mainstream sports publication has offered a long paean to at least one of three sportsmen: Lance Armstrong, Kurt Warner, and Tiger Woods. Armstrong is invariably presented as not merely the world's top bicyclist but also its top cancer survivor. No article about Warner can resist retelling his rise from Iowa supermarket stock boy to Super Bowl-winning quarterback. And Woods, of course, is Babe Ruth, Michael Jordan, Jack Nicklaus, and Jackie Robinson all rolled into one.

Not once has any of these profiles addressed any of these athletes' visits to the moral middle ground. Each man has received his multimillion-dollar ticket into the world of advertising, each is a member of the union that includes television commercial actors, and each has happily ignored that union's strike—one that has sent tens of thousands of extremely underpaid actors onto picket lines and into penury.

Keith Olbermann is host and executive producer of the cable program *The Keith Olbermann Evening News* and host of baseball coverage on Fox. He has written on sports and politics for *Time*, *Rolling Stone*, *Playboy*, *USA Today*, *Baseball Weekly*, *The New York Times*, *the Los Angeles Times*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Brill's Content*. He is the author, with *Dan Patrick*, of *The Big Show*.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KARIN BAER

BEHIND THE CONTENT

A SAMPLING OF CONTENTVILLE'S LATEST EDITORIAL FEATURES

BOOKS

OPEN ON MY DESK Whether creating a historical novel or a biography of Alfred Hitchcock, authors must read to write. Find out what writers Kevin Baker and Patrick McGilligan are reading for their next books.

THE MOVEABLE FEAST Contentville's book-party columnist recounts two lively celebrations for two late, great authors: Joseph Heller and F. Scott Fitzgerald

DIARY OF A BOOK SCOUT Our industry spy tells us that women are all the rage these days, with publishers eager to snatch up a novel featuring "a raving, wedding-obsessed lunatic" and a nonfiction account of a female private eye in New York City.

CRITICS' CHORUS A breakdown of who loved and who loathed Joe Eszterhas's *American Rhapsody*

THE CONTENTVILLE AUTHOR Q&A To coincide with the release of *The Bridegroom*, Ha Jin answers the 17 questions we always ask.

WHEN READING IS NEW Children's book author and NPR commentator Daniel Pinkwater describes *Barn Cat* as a rare thing: a counting book so beautiful that it towers over the rest.

THE LAST WORD Frederick Reiken, author of *The Lost Legends of New Jersey*, contemplates two inspirational forces: place and memory.

FREDERICK REIKEN An excerpt:



"Because all of these landmarks and visual memories were the precise seeds that gave rise to my novelistic impulse, I had avoided Livingston, to some extent, for fear that seeing the town as it is now might cause the landscape to lose some of its larger-than-life quality. Upon returning there last August, however, I immediately found that the archetypal quality was still present. In fact, the memories felt enhanced, almost holographic."

ONLY AT CONTENTVILLE From an essay originally given as a lecture by André Aciman to a literary "outtake" from George Saunders's collection, *Pastoralia*, a menu of genre-defying pieces of writing you'll find online only at Contentville

BOOK NEWS Daphne Merkin ruminates on our culture's fascination with the darker side of celebrity and its insatiable appetite for tell-all memoirs such as Margaret Salinger's *Dream Catchers*.

LITERARY WANDERER Literary adventurer Geoff Dyer discusses the haunting presence of Books Not Yet Read, found on every reader's bookshelf.

MAGAZINES

THE CONTENTVILLE EDITOR Q&A Behind the scenes with Dino Gan, editor of *A. Magazine*, and *High Times* editor Steve Hager

THE NOUVEAU NICHE A rundown of newcomers to the niche-magazine scene

LAUNCH OF THE MONTH Reports on magazines so new that the ink on their pages is still wet

DISSERTATIONS

DISSERTATIONS DECONSTRUCTED Mark Oppenheimer on Martin Luther King Jr.'s dissertation "A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman"

THE CROSS

FASCINATED BY HALLOWEEN?



Located in the upper left corner of Contentville.com, the Cross-Content SearchSM finds children's books, archived articles, speeches, dissertations, and TV transcripts about this spooky holiday. If you type in "Halloween", and click on the "GO" button you get the following results:

BOOKS

Barney's Trick or Treat by Bernthal, Mark S.
Barney's Halloween Party by Dudko, Mary Ann
The Simpsons Forever!: A Complete Guide to Our Favorite Family...Continued by Groening, Matt
[Click for full list](#)

ARCHIVES

Scaring up share for Halloween holiday, Discount Store News, Apr. 3, 2000
SFA's Halloween Promotion Boosts Snack Sales!, Snack Food & Wholesale Bakery, Mar. 1, 2000
The Haunted Pool, Parks & Recreation, Feb. 1, 2000
[Click for full list](#)

DISSERTATIONS

Scripts and Personal Narratives Told by 7-Year-Old Children with and without Language Disorders, Pecora, Marian West
The Effects of Arousal and Group Presence on the Altruistic Donations of Halloween Trick or Treaters, Endresen, Karen Westford
'First Persons': A Collection of Short Fiction, Lyon, Kenneth Dana
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MAGAZINES

BOOKS

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DISSERTATIONS

CONTENT SEARCHSM

At the heart of Contentville is the Cross-Content SearchSM, which draws from hundreds of thousands of books, magazines, doctoral dissertations, magazine-article archives, speeches, *New York Times* archives, even transcripts of TV shows. Below are two good examples of how the Cross-Content Search works.

BASEBALL FEVER COMES TO CONTENTVILLE



Look for the new biography *Joe DiMaggio: The Hero's Life* available on October 17, and find other items from the diamond, such as Lou Gehrig's farewell address to his fans and the Last Will and Testament of Joseph P. DiMaggio. If you type in "baseball" and click on the "GO" button, you get the following results:

SPEECHES

Address given following the radio broadcast of "War of the Worlds", Welles, Orson, Oct. 30, 1938

TRANSCRIPTS

World News This Morning, Nov. 3, 1999
CBS Morning News, Nov. 1, 1999
Saturday Morning, Oct. 30, 1999
[Click for full list](#)

HARD-TO-FIND BOOKS

Ghosts, Witches, and Things Like That by Hunt Roderick, 1984
Winter's Eve by Belting, Natalia Maree, 1969
Halloween: A Fantasy in Three Acts by Werner, Ken, 1981
[Click for full list](#)

BOOKS

A Prayer for Owen Meany by Irving, John
Fair Ball: A Fan's Case for Baseball by Costas, Bob
All Century Team by Vancil, Mark
[Click for full list](#)

MAGAZINES

Baseball Digest
Sporting News

ARCHIVES

Where Are They Now?, *Baseball Digest*, June 2000
Former Cub Infielder Bobby Sturgeon Remembers Sharp Feuds Of 1940's, *Baseball Digest*, June 2000
Rookie Scouting Reports on Former Stars, *Baseball Digest*, June 2000
[Click for full list](#)

DISSERTATIONS

The Relationship Between Athletic Team Psycho-Social Environment and State Anxiety, Ewees, Khaireldin Ali Ahmed
The Metafictional Novel: A Comparative Study, McDonough, Matthew J.
Bunt or Swing Away: An Examination of Community Decisions to Invest in Major League Baseball Spring Training Facilities, Swoboda, Dale Patric
[Click for full list](#)

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Minnesota Twins v. Minnesota MLB Antitrust Case, Apr. 29, 1999
Last Will and Testament of Joseph P. DiMaggio, May 21, 1996
Federal Club v. National League MLB Antitrust Original SC Decision, May 29, 1922
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SPEECHES

Testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, Robinson, Jackie, Jul. 18, 1949
Lou Gehrig's farewell address to his fans, Gehrig, Lou, Jul. 4, 1939
On the punishment which should be given to eight Chicago White Sox, Prindeville, Edward, Jul. 29, 1920
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TRANSCRIPTS

Good Morning America, Sep. 7, 2000
The 700 Club, Aug. 31, 2000
The Early Show, Aug. 25, 2000
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HARD-TO-FIND BOOKS

GI Had Fun by Schacht, Al and Murray Goodman, 1945
Rhubarb by Smith, H. Allen, 1946
Prospect by Littlefield, Bill, 1989
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EDITORIAL *

Professor's Picks on Life in Brooklyn, Craig Steven Wilder, May 23, 2000
Professor's Picks on the History of Baseball, G. Edward White, May 23, 2000
Current Titles in Young Adult, Catherine Donaghy, Jun. 12, 2000
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*Articles commissioned by Contentville to help you decide what is and isn't worth reading—FOR FREE!

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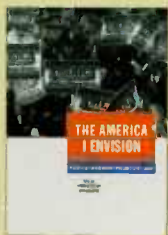
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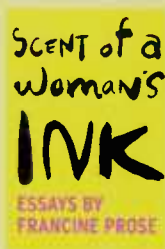
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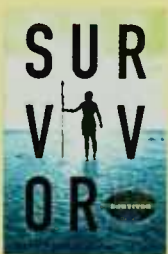
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A political thriller from David Baldacci, best-selling author of *Absolute Power*.

UP, SIMBA!



David Foster Wallace, author of *Infinite Jest*, turns his wit to the subject of our political system in this essay—published as an original e-book—describing his week on the road with Senator John McCain's presidential campaign.

CHAPTER ONE

Sometimes the best way to judge whether you'll enjoy a book is to read the first chapter. It helps you get a feel for the style and voice of the author. To that end, Contentville has made available the first chapters of more than 5,000 titles, including those here from recent books of note. We hope you enjoy them as much as we did.

- THE BEAR AND THE DRAGON by Tom Clancy
- PURPLE CANE ROAD by James Lee Burke
- IN A SUNBURNED COUNTRY by Bill Bryson
- THE BLIND ASSASSIN by Margaret Atwood
- DRIVING MR. ALBERT: A TRIP ACROSS AMERICA WITH EINSTEIN'S BRAIN by Michael Paterniti
- THE SELECTED LETTERS OF REBECCA WEST by Rebecca West
- THE PRINCE OF TENNESSEE: HOW AL GORE MET HIS FATE by David Maraniss and Ellen Nakashim
- INNOCENCE by Jane Mendelsohn
- STELLA IN HEAVEN: ALMOST A NOVEL by Art Buchwald

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the joy of Cutting

There's nothing quite as satisfying as taking the trimmers to overgrown copy—even, *gulp*, when those dispensable words are your own. **BY CALVIN TRILLIN**

Not long ago, an editor at *Time* told me that a column I'd just written was a few lines too long for the space it had to fit into, and she offered to do the necessary cutting.

"You would be robbing me of one of my great pleasures," I said. "I love to green."

She replied that, as it happened, greening was one of her own great pleasures, as well as one of her great skills. "I am known here as the Queen of Green," she said.

I assured her that if I were still a staff writer at *Time* rather than a contributing columnist whose status would have been expressed in the construction business in Kansas City as "dog-ass subcontractor," she would not be considered the paramount green royal. I would. As a greener, I am an ace, I told her, and proud of it.

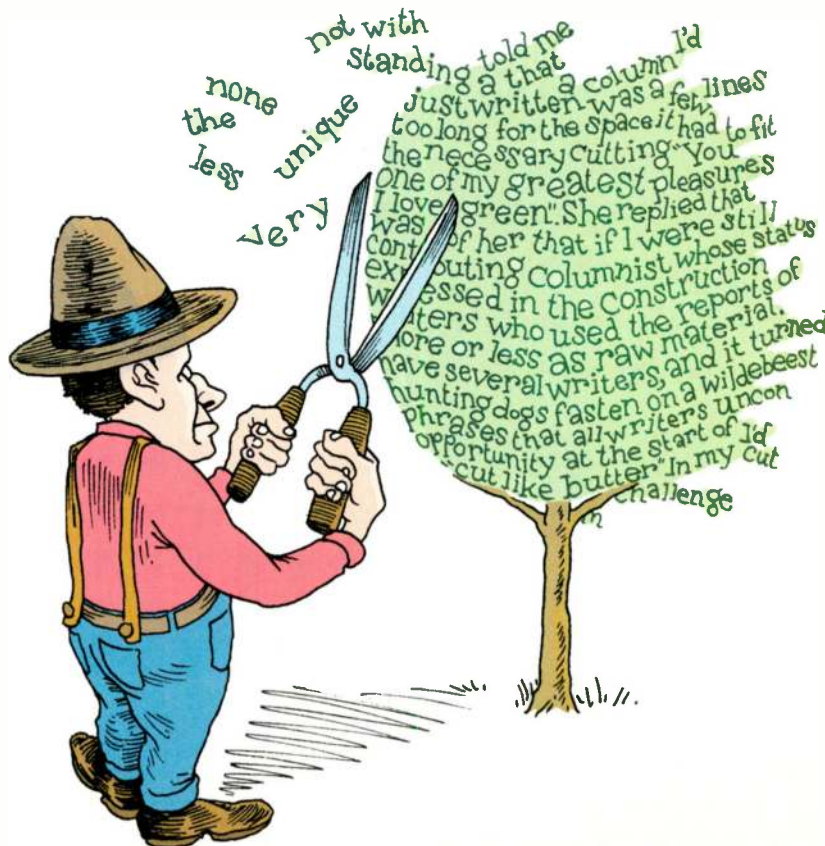
At *Time*, cutting copy has been called greening for as long as anyone can remember. I don't know when the color became a verb, but by the time I had spent a couple of years on the staff, in the early sixties, it was common to hear sentences like "You have to green eight from the White House story." ("Eight" meant eight lines; in greening, lines have always been the unit of measurement.) This was in the days when *Time* was still operating under a system known as group journalism: The magazine, which was rigidly divided into sections such as Foreign News and Education and Show Business, was produced in New York by anonymous writers who used the reports of equally anonymous *Time* correspondents more or less as raw material. My moments in the greening big time came when I worked in National Affairs, one of the sections large enough to have several writers, and it was my turn to be the late man for closing. The late man greened the entire section.

As I sat at my desk in an eerily quiet building on Sixth Avenue, a copyboy would, every so often, bring me a typescript that had my assignment scrawled across the top—"Green 6," say, or "Green 10." I would set to work. First, I'd look for the lines that had only a word or two on them—the lines typesetters call widows and the lines greeners fasten on a way a pack of African hunting dogs fasten on a wildebeest yearling that has wandered from the herd. Then I'd probe around for the words and phrases that all writers unconsciously use as padding for the delivery of their thoughts. Then, if I still hadn't made my quota, I'd look for some place where a line or two could be saved by removing a sentence whose point was made, more or less, someplace else in the piece. I found all of this enormously satisfying. As if the pleasure of greening were not enough in itself, the late man had the

opportunity at the start of the next workweek to greet his colleagues with remarks like "Had to green 18 lines from that 50-liner of yours on Senator Long. No problem. It cut like butter."

In my greening mode, I would have indicated cuts on the typescript with a pencil that actually wrote in green. The term "greening" came from the fact that changes in copy were color coded. A change indicated in red pencil was mandatory; it had to be made to correct, say, a grammatical error or a factual inaccuracy. To the people charged with the final step of putting the issue to bed—transferring last-minute corrections, squeezing the copy into the space allotted—green denoted an optional change made strictly for space.

About 3 in the morning, I would find myself—the late man—the only person left on the editorial floors except for a couple of technical people. The editors, including the one who'd had his brutal way with my copy, had gone home. Emboldened by the power of being the last person



TONY MILLONNAIRE

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awake, I would interpret the greening function rather broadly. I'd find that the best way to cut a couple of lines in one of my own stories was to remove some clunky sentence of the editor's that had made me shudder when he added it. I tried to see to it that my pieces were as close to the way I wanted them as I thought I could get away with. Eventually, the printer in Chicago and I would agree that the presses could begin rolling. Only then would I leave the building. The next Monday, I'd pick up the issue and my stories would have been changed yet again. I have no idea how that happened. Certain that no human being could have had access to the copy, I thought of the perpetrator as a sort of spirit. Sometimes, on slack days at the beginning of the workweek, I'd occupy myself by taping signs on office walls: "Beware of the Phantom Diddler."

**ANY WRITER
MIGHT DO WELL
TO POLISH A
PIECE UNTIL IT'S
PRECISELY TO HIS
SATISFACTION,
AND THEN SEND A
NOTE TO HIMSELF
SAYING "GREEN
14" OR "GREEN 22."**

After I left *Time* for *The New Yorker*, I found that I missed greening. At some point, a friend of mine who still worked at *Time* made an arrangement with the management to green a good part of the magazine all by himself, trading an all-night greening marathon for an extra day off. "If you ever need some help, don't hesitate to call," I'd often say to him. "I never have much to do between 2 and 9 A.M. on Saturday anyway."

When I signed on to do a column for *The Nation*, in 1978, I was delighted to hear that I'd be writing for a precise space. That put me back in the greening business, although the *Nation* copydesk was unfamiliar with the term. I saved the originals of my columns, thinking I might want to put back what I'd cut if I ever did a collection. When I did a collection, though, I didn't put back a word. What do I conclude from that? Although I hate to say this within earshot of editors, many of whom already seem to have difficulty understanding that every single word I put on paper is indispensable to the story and perhaps to American letters, it just may be that everything I write could use a little greening, space problem or no space problem. It has occurred to me, in fact, that any writer might do well to polish a piece until it's precisely to his satisfaction, and then send a note to himself saying "Green 14" or "Green 22."

John McPhee, who also was a writer at *Time* in those bygone days, does something similar in a renowned course he teaches in nonfiction writing at Princeton. He hands his students a dozen or so passages of unidentified published writing, with instructions next to each passage like "37 lines; green 9." When I visited his class some years ago, he told me he'd tried using a passage of mine one year, but it hadn't worked out.

"What seemed to be the trouble?" I asked.

McPhee smiled. "Not enough of a challenge," he said. "It cut like butter." ■

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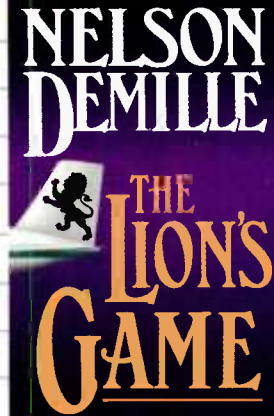
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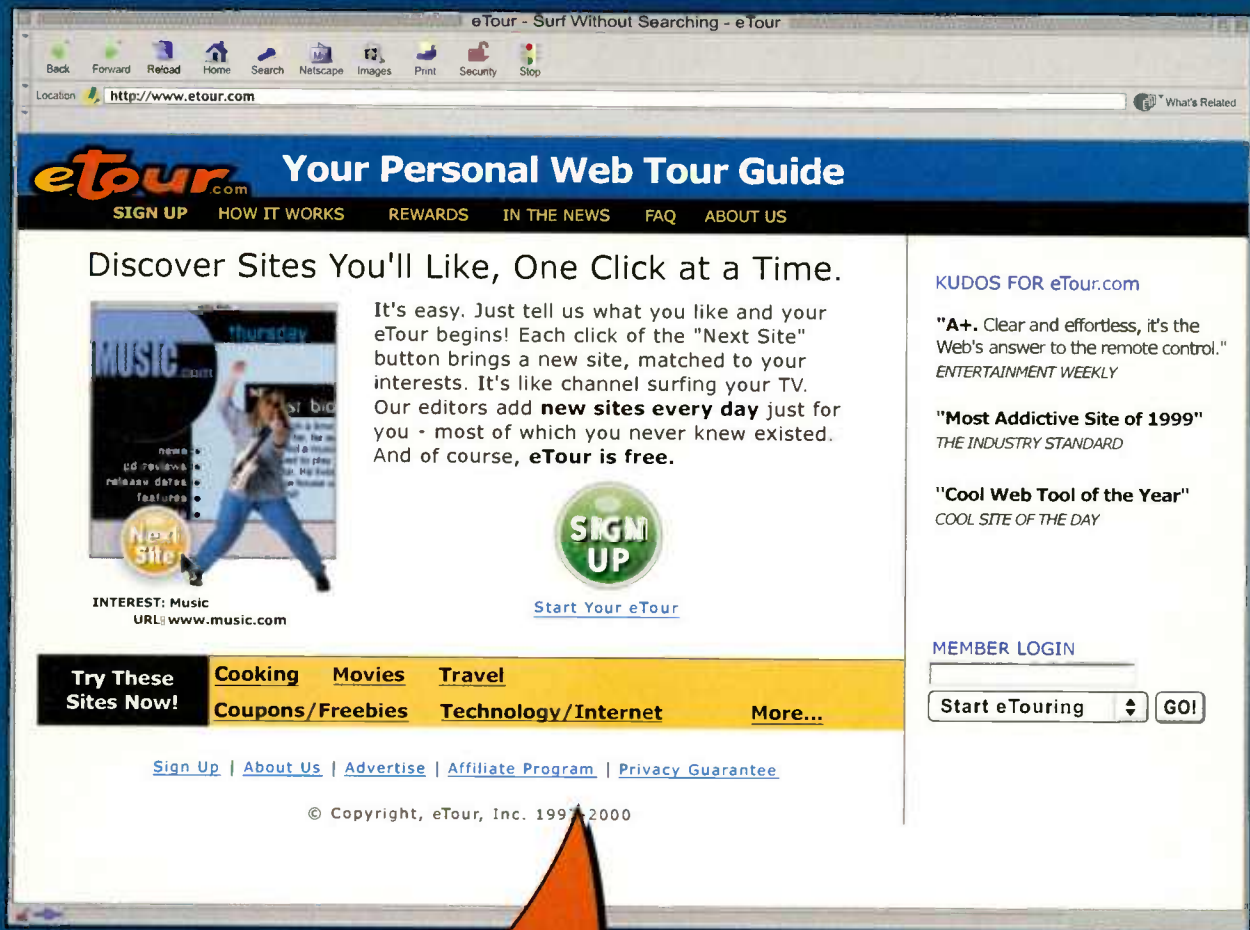
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primary colors

As editor of a daily in New Hampshire, I had a front-row seat at my state's primary—and it gave me a view of the candidates that is only now coming into full focus. **BY MIKE PRIDE**

With the election nearing, it's supposed to be presidential prime time, but I feel like I'm watching reruns.

As editor of the *Concord Monitor*, the daily newspaper in New Hampshire's capital, I'm a believer in our state's presidential primary. Because candidates generally visit the *Monitor* to meet with our editorial board, we have access to these politicians that few newspapers our size do. Although the primary's results might not always match the outcome of the November election, they do foretell the direction of the campaign. This year is no exception. What we saw of Al Gore and George W. Bush in New Hampshire last winter is being played out on the national stage today. The events of that campaign might feel like ancient history, but they've given me a valuable perspective and illuminated how Bush and Gore confront unexpected challenges.

Both Gore and Bush faced tough competition in our primary. The way they handled adversity shaped their candidacies—Gore's for the better, Bush's for the worse. Gore showed himself to be a relentless street fighter, not pretty but effective. Bush ran as the anointed one, seeking to capitalize on his name and money, but voters saw through it.

Months later, after the conventions, Gore seized the initiative while Bush stumbled trying to figure out just what he stood for and quickly found himself on the defensive. I followed these developments from a distance, but as I did, I couldn't help reflecting on what had happened in New Hampshire months before. This I had witnessed—and commented on—from up close.

The *Monitor's* sharpest appraisal came last January in an editorial headlined "Virtual candidate." In it, we said that Bush's handlers had run a campaign aimed at keeping him out of harm's way. This had robbed him, we wrote, of the one opportunity he would have during his presidential run to mix it up with real people, answering their questions and addressing their concerns.

As it turned out, the editorial robbed the *Monitor's* editorial board of its one opportunity to interview Bush. The morning it ran, a Bush handler called to cancel the candidate's meeting with us.

I regretted this—but I expected it. Writing the editorial had been a matter of choice. We could either say what was on our minds or stifle it and preserve our date with Bush. *Stifle*, that wonderful verb Archie Bunker used, should not be in an editorial writer's vocabulary, espe-

cially when it comes to voicing political opinion.

I've come to see this episode as an early sign of the Bush candidacy's problems. Bush didn't need to come to the *Concord Monitor*, but he needed New Hampshire. Had he engaged the primary on its own terms, he would have learned to state his principles and policy initiatives in ways that resonated with the public. He would have been better prepared for the rock 'n' roll of a general election campaign against a more experienced adversary. And he would now know himself better.

Instead, Bush's handlers turned him into a bubble boy. He had the most-seasoned political hands in the state, but they overprogrammed his campaign. They didn't get him to New Hampshire often enough, and when he was here he spent too much time in controlled, friendly locales. From my perch at the *Monitor*, I know that a candidate can afford to make mistakes in the New Hampshire primary campaign but only if he has built up a reservoir of good feeling by engaging the public. Bush never did. "The events his campaign holds continue to guard him from the public," the *Monitor* wrote last January.

John McCain's huge victory in the primary may turn out to be exactly what the Bush camp

Virtual candidate

► The Bush team offers only lame excuses for his effort here.

Gov. George W. Bush has spent less time in New Hampshire than any major non-incumbent presidential candidate in recent memory. The events his campaign holds continue to guard him rather than open him to the give-and-take of the lifeblood of the Hampshire primary, what is most troubling about Bush's weakness that the people around are making such excuses for it. Sen. Judd Gregg, long Bush adviser, "John McCain appears to be running for president in New Hampshire." This

Editorials
primary. This state is the one place



The editorial that cost a visit; Bush in New Hampshire but not at the *Monitor*

said it was at the time: a bump on Bush's road to the White House. But if Bush loses to Gore, I think it will be because he never figured out what hit him in New Hampshire. In 114 open meetings in town halls and high-school gyms all over the state, McCain made a compelling case for campaign finance reform—namely, that citizens were alienated from politics because big money was drowning out their voices. But McCain's achievement in our state was not necessarily to win people over to his issue. The real case he made was for himself.

This was brought home to me three weeks before the primary, when my publisher took me to a chamber of commerce lunch at which McCain was the speaker. At my table, the guests were mainly real estate brokers, many of them wearing McCain stickers. They liked him, they said, because of his character, his experience, his military background. They thought they could trust him to do the right thing. Not one mentioned campaign finance reform. They simply saw in McCain what they wanted in a president—someone they could trust, someone with the courage of his convictions, someone their kids could look up to.

The day after the luncheon, I was on a panel with Tom Rath, a Bush adviser and a veteran of New Hampshire Republican political wars, discussing politics and the media. By this time, McCain and Bill Bradley had been to the *Monitor* for two editorial board interviews each, Al Gore for one. We had interviewed Steve Forbes, Gary Bauer, and Orrin Hatch. But Bush kept putting us off. During the panel discussion, Rath complained that the horse-race coverage of the New Hampshire campaign was drowning out the substance. No one, he said, wanted to hear about Bush's education proposal.

"Bring him by," I said. "We'll ask him about it."

Later that day, the campaign called and scheduled an editorial board interview for the following week.

Before that day came, Bush's handlers tried to lower expectations. Anyone could see that McCain had caught the wind and that Bush's distance from the public had been a mistake, but Bush's campaign tried to spin it otherwise. When Bush did come to the state, he favored visits to corporate headquarters over open meetings with voters. Rath defended this practice, saying that businesses "are the new town halls." Bush's highest-profile New Hampshire backer, U.S. senator Judd Gregg, carped that "John McCain appears to be running for president of New Hampshire."

This spinning made us mad. Our editorial board interview with Bush was five days away, but we could not let these statements go unanswered for even one day. Rath and Gregg had long praised the New Hampshire primary as the last holdout against the day when money and television ads could buy the presidency. Now, in the service of their candidate, they were disparaging the very notion behind the primary: that even in the Internet age, a direct connection between the people and the president remains vital to the republic.

The next day, the *Monitor's* editorial "Virtual candidate" made these points. Hours later came the call canceling Bush's visit.

Where it counts, maybe Rath and Gregg were right. Bush's organization and money—and McCain's mistakes—did carry Bush to the

nomination. In retrospect, he didn't need to win the primary. But win or lose, that campaign presented him with an unparalleled chance to sharpen his points, his image, and his claws. Had he done these things, he would have been a far more formidable candidate from the start.

There was another race in New Hampshire last winter, and I wonder if it was not the decisive event in this year's presidential campaign. At the *Monitor*, we saw that Bradley's challenge to Gore was strikingly similar to McCain's maverick run against Bush. Like Bush, Gore was the establishment favorite. Initially, Bradley gave Gore nightmares. In Bradley's appeal to idealism, he was just as alluring as McCain was on the Republican side.

Gore saw this and reacted to it. When he came to the *Monitor* to meet our editorial board last November, he had just shaken up his campaign staff and moved his campaign headquarters to Nashville. It was time, as he put it, to act like a candidate rather than a vice president. We were skeptical, of course. We've seen firsthand that campaign overhauls often herald a candidate's death spiral.

Although our interview with Gore reassured us that this wasn't the case, it disturbed us for other reasons. On the plus side, of the

dozens of presidential candidates we had interviewed over the years, Gore might have been the best prepared for the presidency. He had a detailed understanding and a solid, reasoned position on every issue we threw at him. He wasn't as eloquent or expansive as Clinton, but he was well spoken and solidly grounded.

Still, I had never before squirmed so much during a candidate interview. This includes talks with Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan, whose positions are polar opposites of the *Monitor's*, and even Steve Forbes, who visited us last December a few hours after I had a root canal. Gore can be warm and personal—I've seen it—but he wasn't that day.

Bradley scared him, but Gore was soon out pounding away at the specifics of his opponent's proposals and meeting with the voters. He answered every question, sometimes staying after the cameras turned away and the reporters lost interest. Secret Service protection made it harder for him to get around than for other candidates, but clearly he understood and acted on the notion that the way to win the New Hampshire primary was to go straight to the people. Bradley's challenge foundered, and Gore won the primary.

Although our editorial board initially had a soft spot for Bradley, we wound up endorsing Gore. It was a classic battle of head vs. heart. Often at election time we face such a dilemma in our editorials. We can't let go of the principles we espouse daily, but we've got to be pragmatic, too. It is, I think, the same choice voters make.

I gave up my front-row seat on presidential politics months ago, but even now I still hear echoes of what happened in New Hampshire. When Gore says that he may not be the most exciting politician around but that he will work hard every day if elected, I believe him because of what I saw here. And when, in spite of his charm and pluck, Bush comes off sounding like an amateur, I know why that is, too. Instead of mixing it up with the public and duking it out with a formidable opponent last winter, Bush ducked the one primary money couldn't buy. ■

HOURS AFTER OUR
EDITORIAL APPEARED,
THE CALL CAME
CANCELING BUSH'S VISIT.

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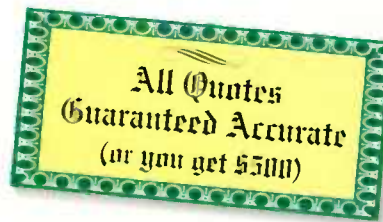
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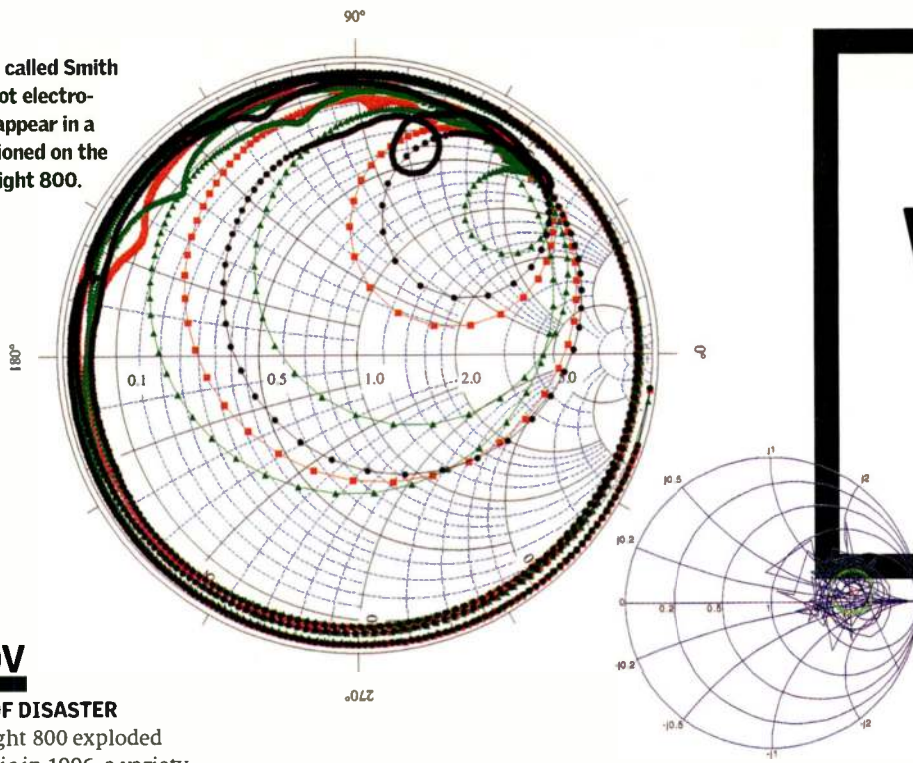
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These diagrams, called Smith charts, which plot electromagnetic data, appear in a report commissioned on the crash of TWA Flight 800.



NTSB.GOV

THE SCIENCE OF DISASTER

When TWA Flight 800 exploded over the Atlantic in 1996, a variety of theories about the cause of the crash sprang up. Some of the explanations were mundane (a passenger's laptop caused an electrical spark in the gas tank), some were outlandish (a meteor crossed the flight path), but all of them were motivated by the human need to make sense of the world, particularly when that world—in a momentary and apparently meaningless spasm of combustion—sends 230 people to their deaths. It falls to the National Transportation Safety Board to restore order, both literally and figuratively, in the aftermath of such a disaster. The NTSB's website represents rational inquiry at its most admirable.

In August, the agency released its findings on the cause of the TWA crash—a short-circuit in wiring near an empty fuel tank—the results of a four-year investigation encompassing a bewildering array of reports, laboratory tests, and interviews. Visitors to the NTSB's website can read detailed final reports on other air disasters, download video re-creations from flight-data recorders, and search a database of thumbnail accounts of more than 44,000 accidents. The library of information is shot through with reassuringly crisp and bureaucratic language, on occasion rising to poetry—an engine explosion, for instance, is described as the "liberation of debris."

JOHN COOK

NTSB reports are online at ntsb.gov.

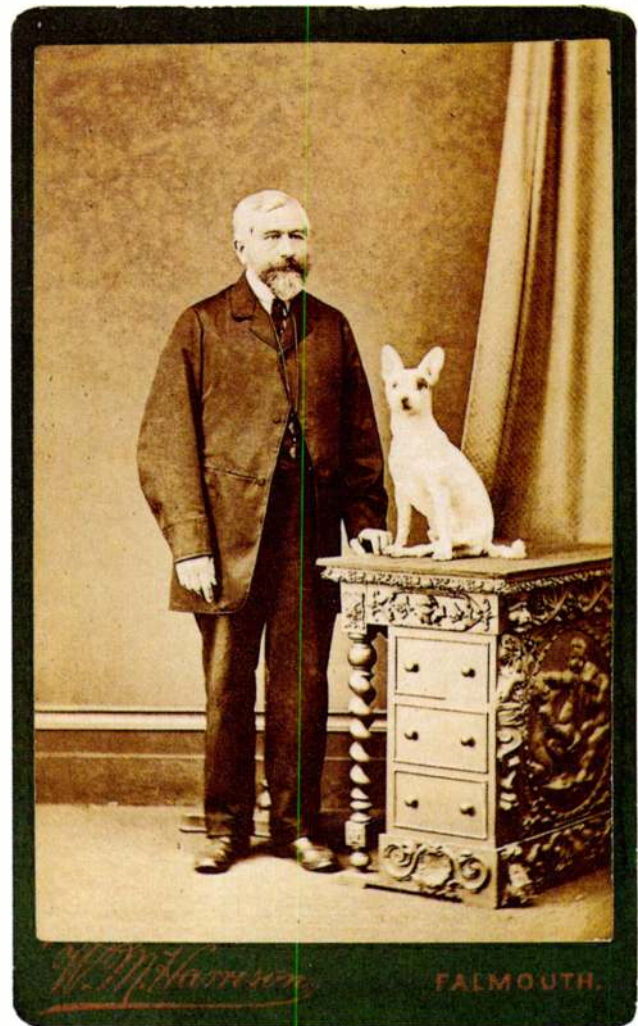
PRINCE AND OTHER DOGS

CANINE PORTRAITS, 1850–1940

As a genre, dog photography seems rather too ordinary for extended contemplation. But not to Libby Hall, author of *Prince and Other Dogs 1850–1940* (Bloomsbury, November). Hall, an American living in London, began collecting formal dog portraits in the 1960s, and the book reproduces a small part of her archive. The grainy black-and-white pictures encapsulate the history of both photography and dog ownership. Hall says this slim volume captures "not only the passion we have for dogs, but also the fleeting transience of life."

The increasing popularity of photography during the 19th century meant that more people of all classes had their dogs documented on film. Most of the portraits in *Prince* were taken in studio settings, with the dogs often seated on chairs and other furniture. Hall started her unusual collection when she saw a junk shop throw away old photographs. But "about 20 years ago, people stopped throwing them away," she says. "Gradually they became more collectible and expensive, unfortunately. I just went on buying them."

JOSEPH GOMES



Owner and pet in an undated photograph from the new book *Prince and Other Dogs*

STUFF WE LIKE



The scientific method: filmmaker Michael Apted

ME & ISAAC NEWTON

DOCUMENTARY ON SCIENTISTS

The main character in Michael Apted's new documentary, *Me & Isaac Newton*, isn't anyone who

appears in the movie but the spirit of scientific investigation itself. Three years ago, Apted's documentary *Inspirations* examined the creative drives of seven artists, including David Bowie and Roy Lichtenstein. In *Me & Isaac Newton*, Apted tries to understand just what motivates seven scientists.

Ashok Gadgil, an environmental physicist, recalls pondering a

spinning top as a child in India. Patricia Wright, a primatologist, remembers marveling at her monogamous pet monkeys while she, a single mother, raised her child. The scientists' work is varied: One tries to sanitize water in the developing world, another to

annihilate cancer, and yet another to understand the mind.

But as Apted presents these diverse personalities, a common trait emerges: Each desires to know hidden truths. Wright's voice speaks for the others when she says of the lemurs she studies—although she could just as easily be referring to particle physics—"I know that there is something that is happening, that is there, and I have just kind of a sixth sense for it." The study of science infiltrates every aspect of their lives. Michio Kaku, for example, a theoretical physicist, ponders gravity and inertia even as he ice-skates. Out on the ice, he says to Apted, "It's just me and Isaac Newton."

STEPHEN TOTILO

Me & Isaac Newton opens in November.

STRATFOR.COM

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ONLINE

Last November, a largely unknown intelligence service predicted that Philippine president Joseph Estrada would be forced out of office. The report fed rumors of a coup that swirled around Manila and caused the Philippine stock market to take a spill.

So which government was stirring up trouble? It wasn't a government agency at all—it was Stratfor.com (for "strategic forecasting"), an "open-source intelligence" website that posts free daily analysis of world events. The nearly two-year-old site doesn't rely on spies for its scoops. Instead, the staff of Stratfor.com—many of whom are 20-somethings, of course—surf the Web for free but overlooked information. The site has made a number of prescient calls, including the weak performance of the euro and the rise of Vladimir Putin, the Russian president.

The site does have a habit of viewing the world through a Tom Clancy-esque lens, and some of Stratfor.com's bolder predictions have not panned out. Russia, for example, has yet to attack Georgia, and President Estrada is still just that.

Stratfor.com's analysis is sharp, and its coverage of obscure yet important topics is remarkably comprehensive. How many other sites take a stab at explaining the resurgent guerrilla war in the Philippines, why North Korea is being ignored by its neighbors, and how the IMF is on the verge of a fundamental shift in strategy—all in one day?

ERIC UMANSKY

STUFF WE LIKE ABOUT ISSUES

STATELINE.ORG

LOCAL POLITICS ONLINE

In a few short weeks, the political horse races will draw to a close. For many of the pundits handicapping the final stretch, Stateline.org is a valuable source of local, state-by-state political information. Launched in 1999 by the Pew Center on the States, the site aims to provide policy analysis and a digest of the goings-on in state capitals. "We were finding initially that our target audience was statehouse reporters," says Stateline's managing editor, Gene Gibbons, "but now we're finding we're building a much wider audience—civic activists, corporate relations officers...and, in more and more instances, just regular citizens." With an online staff of 9 and roughly 30 stringers in state capitals across the nation, Stateline.org offers stories sorted by state or issue and has a weekly e-mail newsletter summarizing the

latest articles. A recent addition to the site, *State Elections 2000*, discusses the issues relevant to state and national elections this November. Gibbons says the site was launched to fill the void caused by cutbacks in press coverage of state capitals. In addition, there has been an increase in power and money flowing unchecked into the state capitals and away from the Beltway. "The policy stories we do," Gibbons adds, "tend to get short shrift in mainstream news."

JOSEPH GOMES

WE'VE GOT ISSUES

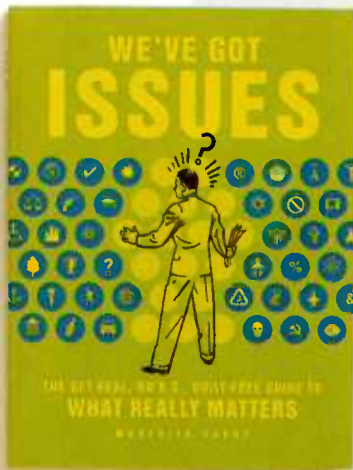
BOOK ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

It's time for Gen X-ers to set aside their obsession with "start-ups, hedge funds, broad-band, plug-ins, digital, IRAs, and 401(k)s" and get involved in politics. Or so argues 27-year-old Meredith Bagby in her compact book, *We've Got Issues: The Get Real, No B.S., Guilt-Free Guide to What Really Matters* (PublicAffairs, August). Written, Bagby tells us in her introduction, while she drank "lots of venti halfcafs" at Starbucks, the guide covers social issues in a generation-specific way. Rich with informal lingo and neologisms

("tax moola," "Social Insecurity," "Neglection 2000"), the book doesn't talk down to readers and may even hold an MTV-trained attention span.

Despite its casual tone, *We've Got Issues* is full of facts, figures, and intelligent arguments about why "the slacker generation" should get off the couch, log off the Web, and pay close attention to politics. "The greatest injustices in America today are being waged against younger generations," Bagby writes. She gives many examples of economic, environmental, and educational policies she believes will have long-term consequences for young people and should not be ignored. The book is a call to arms, but Bagby has no illusions that it alone will be enough to inspire a generation. That "will really take a dynamic leader who speaks to us," she says—someone, she supposes, like Jesse Ventura.

JOSHUA NUNBERG



A new book by Meredith Bagby urges "the slacker generation" to get political.

NAPOLEON

DOCUMENTARY ON THE EMPEROR

So Napoleon was short and liked to pose for portraits with his hand tucked inside his shirt. That he was also a micromanager and an assiduous teeth-brusher are some of the lesser-known facts one learns from David Grubin's four-part documentary, *Napoleon*. At the height of his power, the so-called little Corsican upstart was emperor of the country he'd cursed as a child and the ruler of more than 70 million people. The film is narrated by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David McCullough and charts Napoleon's rise and fall primarily through period art (paintings, etchings, and political cartoons) and film footage of European landscapes and battlegrounds. Grubin includes historical reenactments but rarely shows elaborately costumed actors; battle scenes tend toward impressionistic shots of marching legs and polished bayonet tips. More than anything else, *Napoleon* is a moving portrait of a man of indomitable will who fought battles by day and wrote seductive letters to his wife, Josephine, at night, and whose genius in battle was matched by his genius in crafting his own legend. "Everything on earth is soon forgotten," Napoleon wrote, "except the opinion we leave imprinted on history."

EMILY CHENOWETH

Napoleon airs on PBS in November.



A 19th-century painting of Napoleon, by Robert Lefevre, shown in a new documentary series



A meditation on gold, from a book of letters about color written by John Berger and John Christie. The men also decorated their envelopes (inset).

CADMIUM RED

A BOOK OF CORRESPONDENCE

Art historian John Berger and filmmaker John Christie do their utmost to sustain the lost art of letter-writing in their new book, *I Send You This Cadmium Red...* (Actar, November). The two Englishmen have collaborated before on handmade editions of a few of Berger's novels and on the BBC photography series *Another Way of Telling* (Berger is the author of the classic *Ways of Seeing*). For their newest project, they collected their letters to each other. In them, they write about work, children, and music, but mostly, they write about colors.

I Send You This Cadmium Red... reproduces handmade books that Christie sent to Berger. With his note about mother-of-pearl, for instance, Christie bound photographs of shells and of his pregnant wife sitting by the sea. Berger's response—rumination, really—begins by describing a motorcycle trip through the French countryside that made him think of the painter Gustave Courbet. "Light on water and water eroding the rock surfaces. This was landscape to him," Berger wrote in his letter, which included a friend's watercolor of river stones.

The last letter in the book notes the limits of language, finally, in describing beauty. Writes Berger, "Aesthetics are better practiced than discussed."

ANDY YOUNG

LINDA COHN

ESPN ANCHOR

Linda Cohn doesn't want you to like her just because she's a woman in the predominantly male world of sports journalism. She thinks enthusiasm and talent are what have taken her to what is arguably the apex of sports broadcasting, ESPN's *SportsCenter*, the network's flagship program. And although Cohn is pleased that other women now cover sports, she doesn't believe that gender should ever excuse those who are underqualified: "I don't want to hear a woman doing some singsong over highlight tapes," says Cohn, whose witty commentary is peppered with



Linda Cohn

sports bravado.

"I started in the eighties, when women doing sports was still a new idea," says Cohn. "You had to do cartwheels blindfolded and look good while you were doing it." Her perseverance paid off when ESPN hired her as a regular cohost of *SportsCenter* in 1992. And Cohn hasn't been relegated to covering the WNBA or women's tennis matches. "I would definitely complain if I saw some kind of pattern emerging. What I am about is sports," she says.

Cohn credits her time as the goalie of her high school's otherwise

STUFF WE LIKE

all-male hockey team for her ease in sports culture. "I got comfortable being the only girl," she says. Cohn writes her own material and gets favorable reviews from a mostly male audience. "Guys always say, 'I don't know if you're going to take this the right way, but I never took sports from any woman before you,'" she says. "To me, that's the ultimate compliment." **LARA KATE COHEN**

RETURN OF THE WOLF

NATURE DOCUMENTARY

Since 1965, National Geographic Specials have covered everything from great whales and chimpanzees to Mount Everest and the Mojave Desert. Over the years, the series has been broadcast on the major networks and on PBS, where 12 original installments will air over the next two years. In the first, *Return of the Wolf*, filmmaker Bob Landis documents the saga of one wolf pack from the moment it is reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park—from which the predators were expelled by ranchers and hunters more than 60 years ago. Landis worked closely with a Park Service

biologist overseeing the program and spent two years observing the wolves' acclimation to their new home in the wild. He filmed fierce hunting scenes and conflicts with other packs, documenting the complex relationships among these highly social animals.

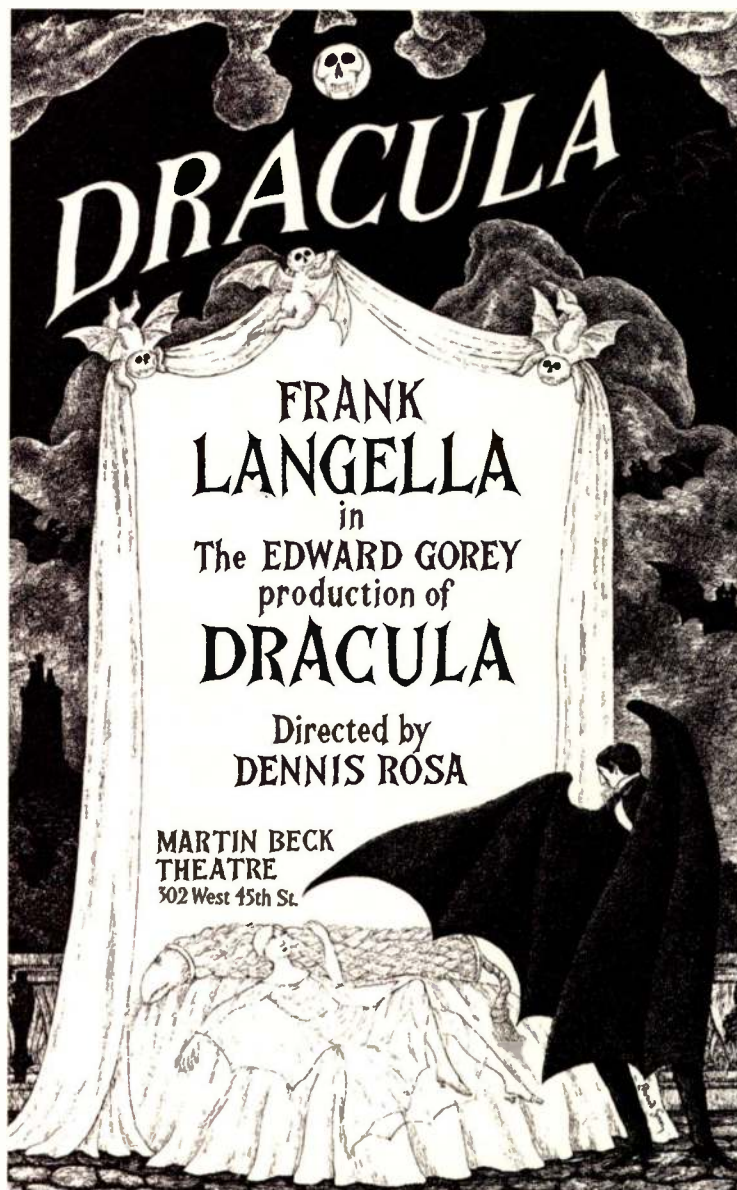
JULIE SCELFO

Return of the Wolf airs on PBS in November.

THE STRANGE CASE OF EDWARD GOREY

AN ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHY

His mission in life, he said, was "to make everybody as uneasy as possible, because that's what the world is like." Edward Gorey, the master of unease, is quoted extensively in Alexander Theroux's new monograph, *The Strange Case of Edward Gorey* (Fantagraphics,



A typically haunting Gorey illustration, from a new biography of the artist

September). With copious drawings by the macabre author-illustrator, the book is a collection of personal observations made by Theroux over the 25 years of his friendship with Gorey, who died last April.

Gorey's tales—with such titles as "The Hapless Child"—were seldom cheerful, but they were always darkly funny. "Curtains are ominously pulled against intrusion," Theroux writes, describing a typical Gorey scene. "Legs protrude from ghoulish hedges. Topiary threatens." Like the subject matter of his books, Gorey was eccentric, known for his flamboyant fur coats, his bushy beard, and an aloof demeanor. Theroux, an attentive friend, offers a look at the private Gorey. We learn that he wrote the text of his books before he illustrated them, that he preferred the company of cats to

humans—felines can't speak—and that he was obsessed with both the New York City Ballet and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The little things Theroux mentions do the most to sketch Gorey's character: He claimed to hate Christmas; he boasted he could cook anything, as long as no one complained about how it looked.

The book is short, fewer than 100 pages, guaranteeing—appropriately—that much about Gorey remains unexplained and enigmatic.

STEPHEN TOTILO

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A wolf on the move in a new nature documentary

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the end of the trail

After 19 years in the saddle, the editor of *Texas Monthly* steps down—and here recounts how he managed to build an award-winning magazine, with its own peculiar editorial recipe, far from Manhattan’s media elite. BY GREGORY CURTIS

I think the worst memory is the fish. It was early 1983, and I was still new in my job as editor of *Texas Monthly*. I had fired one art director but had yet to hire a replacement. I didn’t believe in market studies or reader polls as aids to creating covers, and I still don’t. I thought that experience and instinct were better guides, and I still do. The trouble was that I had little experience and I was too confused for my instincts to come to the surface.

That February we produced our 10th-anniversary issue. Had I had the good sense to create a celebratory cover? I had not. On newsstands across Texas, horrified shoppers had seen a photograph of a shirtless man in an executioner’s hood holding a syringe. “The End,” the type read. “Eyewitness At the Execution.” The issue sold only 44,000 copies at a time when we were averaging 48,000. Not good.

So in March, in an attempt to lighten the mood a bit, I had a cover published that showed the head of a reclining woman supported by two male hands rubbing shampoo into her hair. The cover line was “Lyndon Johnson, Hairdresser.” There really was a man whose name really was Lyndon Johnson and he really was a hairdresser. I thought the absurdity of the line would carry the day. However, except for his name, he was utterly without interest. Sales dipped to 40,000. Even worse.

Texas was in the midst of a craze for eating redfish in April, and I thought it would make a good subject for our cover. I chose a cover line that read “The Redfish Rustlers.” When that issue arrived on readers’ doorsteps, they saw a photograph of a menacing man in a black cowboy hat with a red bandanna masking the lower part of his face. He was wearing a yellow slicker and holding open one side of the slicker to reveal two silver redfish hanging on hooks. Most readers couldn’t understand it, and those who somehow did understand that this was a story about illegal marketing of redfish simply didn’t care. That issue sold 33,000, the worst in four years.

Selling on the newsstand is an inexact art. Nothing is certain except for one thing: If you want to sell magazines, never, ever put a dead fish on your cover. And I put two.

INTENTS AND PURPOSES

I became editor of *Texas Monthly* in January 1981 and remained there until I resigned last June. The first issue had appeared in February 1973. I was on staff as a writer, having been rescued from hippiedom in San Francisco by William Broyles, my friend and college

roommate at Rice University in Houston, who was the magazine’s first editor. Michael R. Levy, the founder and publisher, had worked briefly selling ad space for *Philadelphia* magazine, but none of the rest of the original staff had ever worked at a magazine. We made it up as we went along—and it worked. Today, with a circulation of 300,000, *Texas Monthly* is a respected publication that operates nicely in the black.

The quality of a magazine depends on many things. Certainly some of them have to do with money. But the soul of a magazine, the force that seems to have collected all of these story elements and put them between two covers, has to do with its intent. Our intent was to make *Texas Monthly* a magazine for Texans that could be judged against the finest magazines in the country. I’m convinced that that intent is why we became a success.

Creating a magazine in Austin, Texas, was ever so slightly different from creating one in midtown Manhattan. We had to discover and nurture our own writers and editors rather than find them in a large publishing community. We had to get by, somehow, without the intense daily gossip and conversation about our profession that exists only in Manhattan.

It was an interesting post from which to see the magazine world—informed yet distant, like a nonresident member of a private club.

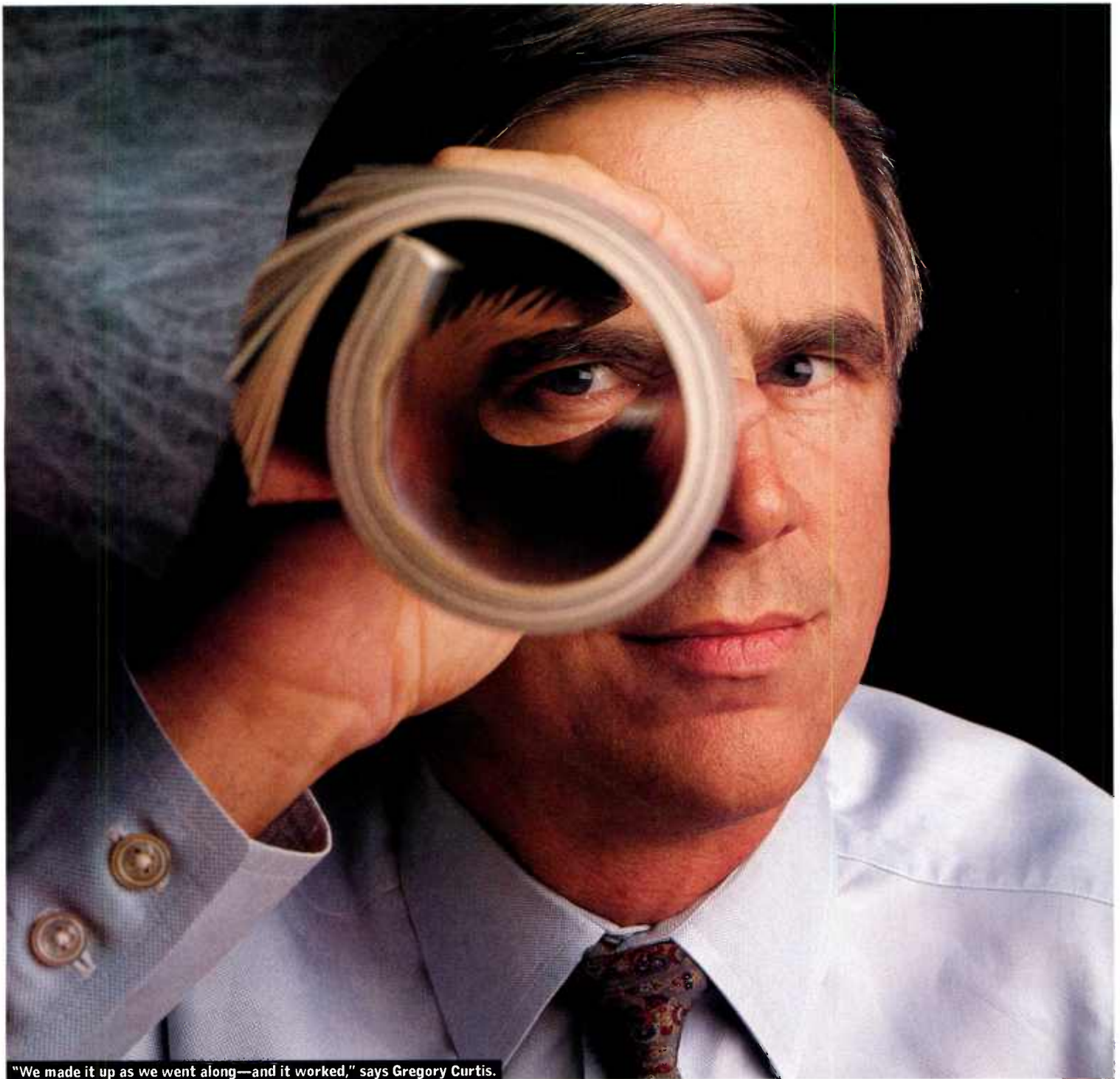
Of course, being a Texan is itself like being a member of a private club. I grew up in Kansas City, Missouri, but I was born in Texas because of my father’s posting during World War II. When pressed on the subject, which as editor I was from time to time, I could truthfully claim to be a native Texan. And it was a claim I was proud to make. I don’t like everything I see in Texas, but I’ve always been at home here. I like

the friendliness and all the easy gab and the big orange sky at sunset. I’m a slightly atypical Texan, perhaps: I don’t have a Texas accent, and although I like horses, I ride English rather than Western. But I think that vantage point helped me edit a magazine about Texas because I was seeing things slightly from the side rather than head-on.

NOTHING IS CERTAIN IN PUBLISHING EXCEPT FOR ONE THING: IF YOU WANT TO SELL MAGAZINES, NEVER PUT A DEAD FISH ON YOUR COVER.

TAKING COVER

I spent more time worrying about covers than anything else. That’s as it should be: The cover is the single most important page of a magazine. I learned to pay attention to the sales figures as a generally reliable indication of the urgency with which our audience regarded a particular issue. When we sold well, it was usually easy to know why. When Selena was murdered, we had her on the cover shortly afterward, and the



"We made it up as we went along—and it worked," says Gregory Curtis.

wholesalers couldn't keep the issue in stock. But figuring out why issues didn't sell was harder. When an apparently sharp issue with an attractive cover didn't sell, I was often left wondering if we had chosen the right cover story but hadn't found the best cover presentation—or had we chosen the wrong story altogether, or was there just no story anywhere in Texas that month that was going to sell very much? Celebrity murderers, where are you when we need you?

Part of the challenge was that we had a different formula from most general-interest magazines today, which is to say that we had no formula. We were a throwback to what general-interest magazines used to be. That was both our strength and our weakness because we had to reestablish ourselves in the consciousness of the reader in a new way each month. Every month was a guessing game, and when we guessed wrong, we lost big.

There was an editorial formula we could have used that would have solved our newsstand problems. In the eighties, I listened in terrified fascination, as if a surgeon were teaching how to perform a lobotomy, to a city magazine editor explaining that he had no choice but to put a yuppie couple on the cover of every issue. "The yuppie couple wants a weekend getaway. The yuppie couple looks for the best hamburger," he said. "You can even do serious issues: The yuppie couple buys a gun for fear of crime." When those issues were on the stands, he said, "sales went through the roof." They may have, but I hated yuppie-couple covers—all those phony-looking models trying to express surprise or pleasure or fear. Most of all, I hated making our magazine look like all the other city magazines in America. Fortunately, our publisher didn't want that kind of magazine, either, and I rarely resorted to those covers. You don't see yuppie-couple covers quite so much anymore. Even the phrase sounds

dated. But city magazines still rely on the same mainstays of cover stories—"Weekend Getaways!" "Best Doctors!" "Cheap Eats!" "Summer Fun!" There is nothing wrong with any of these stories in themselves. It's their repetition year after year that is enervating. Any magazine that knows that every June its cover is going to be "Summer Fun!" is brain-dead.

In national magazines today, editors try to use celebrity in the same way and for the same reasons that city magazine editors used to use the yuppie couple. And I think celebrities as a selling device is starting to feel just as dated. The rationale is that the celebrity lures more readers into the magazine; the serious stories are likely to be read by more readers than if a celebrity were not on the cover. Well, okay, I guess. And I certainly never hesitated to put a celebrity on the cover when it made sense. But the nuances of celebrity are different here in Texas. We once ran a fetching photograph of Farrah Fawcett with a lot of hair and a lot of leg—followed the next month by a photograph of an elderly Lady Bird Johnson in a long green dress standing in a field of bluebonnets. Farrah sold well, but Lady Bird outsold her by almost 4,000 copies. Willie Nelson has consistently sold well; then again, to my surprise, Lyle Lovett has tanked twice.

What bothers me is the unthinking addiction to celebrity covers, which is as brain-dead as relying on "Summer Fun!" each June. When a magazine is frankly about celebrity, then that's fine. It puts its product on display just as an automobile magazine puts a car on the cover. But when a magazine is about a lot of other things besides celebrity, couldn't a lot of other things be on the cover as well?

BOOM AND BUST

It used to be that Texas's economy ran counter to the rest of the country's. During the seventies, when OPEC sent oil prices higher and higher, it depressed the national economy while putting booster rockets on Texas's. The 1973 debut of *Texas Monthly* coincided with the euphoric boom that would last almost a decade. We started slowly, but after a few years, we were selling so many ads that it was hard to produce enough stories to keep up. In November 1981 we published a 340-page issue that contained 13 separate stories of varying length; I once wrote a story of more than 18,000 words.

I became editor the year oil prices began to drop: By 1983, Texas had become a disaster area. All the bank loans, shops, restaurants, apartment buildings, and office towers that were built with the expectation that oil prices would continue to rise failed one by one. Our revenue shrank and then shrank some more. For several years we had to tell the staff there would be no raises. I was faced with creating a magazine with roughly half the editorial pages to which our readers had been accustomed.

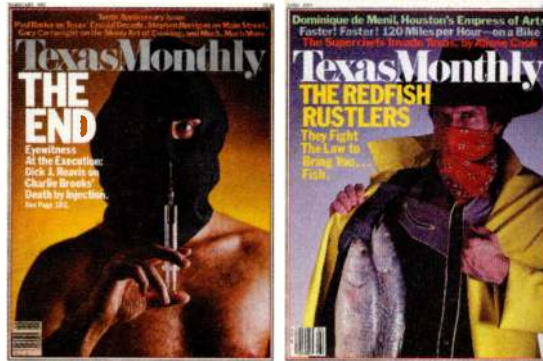
To my surprise, this turned out to be a blessing. Obviously, I ran shorter and fewer stories. As the pages shrank I ran pieces shorter still. I tried to make room each month for at least one longer story, but the rest I really had to squeeze into the space available. Nearly always, though, the stories were improved by cutting, by being made to say what they had to say and then not one word more. Space in the magazine became precious. It couldn't be wasted. Trying to keep peace among the writers jockeying for space was a management challenge, but less so as it became apparent that the stories were better now that the discipline made for sharper thinking and superior craftsmanship. Most important, the readers liked it better. They could actually finish an issue before the next one arrived. As the old cliché says, we left them wanting more.

The greater challenge was to edit a magazine in the midst of an economic plunge. We had to show in our pages that we knew what was happening in Texas. There was no choice but to deliver bad news in some fashion month after month. But a magazine is like a friend who shows up regularly on your doorstep. The surest way to spoil that would be for the friend to insist on talking about nothing but gloom and woe. What made this situation even harder was that unique stories about the economic depression were a challenge to find. Every success story is different, but every failure has the air of, well, failure. Once we had chronicled the rise and fall of a Texan buoyed during the boom and shattered during the bust, there was no point in doing the same story about someone else. The poor economy created a social depression as well. There were fewer new ideas, new businesses, new dreams. People just hunkered down.

So we did a lot of personal essays. We wrote about the past. We explored the back roads and byways of rural Texas that were less affected by the bust. We ran a cover giving our solution to the problem of cutting \$1 billion out of the state budget. We ran a cover of a woman in a fur coat reclining on a packing crate in the middle of a grand but empty room with the headline "Lifestyles of the Rich and Bankrupt." The story explained how rich people could go bankrupt and still maintain their high-flying lives. We explained how to feign surprise when your credit card is refused at a store. It was fun, and the stories were good. Still, when I look back at those issues, I see a darkness between the lines that reminds me of a sad time in Texas.

TEXAS STORIES, NEW YORK STORIES

The most common question I have been asked by magazine editors from New York is "How do you find enough to write about in Texas?" I usually mumble a few platitudes—about big state, bigger-than-life



The infamous covers of February and April 1983

IT WAS AN INTERESTING
POST FROM WHICH TO
SEE THE MAGAZINE
WORLD: INFORMED YET
DISTANT, LIKE A
NONRESIDENT MEMBER
OF A PRIVATE CLUB.

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people, clash of cultures, and so on—but I have never been comfortable about my answer or the question itself. It slightly offends my local pride. After all, I've never heard anyone ask the editor of *New York* magazine if it was hard to find enough things to write about in New York. I always thought that someone with a real understanding of magazines would have stood the question on its head and asked, "Don't you feel lucky that you know exactly what your magazine is about?"

Magazines are about either a person or a subject. *Playboy* is about a person: the man who reads *Playboy*, as the magazine's ads say. *The New Yorker* is about a person; *New York* is about a subject. This fundamental polarity is why these two magazines with such similar titles are so different. And *Texas Monthly*, of course, is about a subject. Generally speaking, it's easier to stay on track editing a magazine about a subject than about a person. Your subject can change in ways you don't notice or understand, causing you to lose touch, but at least the subject is tangible. Staying in tune to the consciousness of an imagined reader—*The New Yorker*, the man who reads *Playboy*, Ms., and so on—is much more difficult. If the consciousness changes, where are the signs that say why or how? During the past ten years or so in Texas, empty office buildings have filled up and cranes and construction crews have arrived to start building new ones; it didn't take a genius to see that Texas was changing.

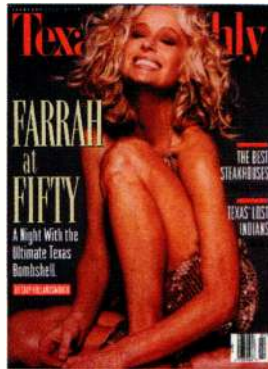
And, if you edit a magazine about a subject, you can rely on a huge amount of communal knowledge. There is a whole vocabulary of names and phrases—Shiner Bock, Bill Hobby, the Marfa lights, I35, Goliad, hook 'em horns—that don't need to be explained to a *Texas Monthly* audience. More than that, conversance with this local vocabulary is essential.

MANNERS

In August 1985, a Delta Air Lines flight crashed as it was about to land at the Dallas/Fort Worth airport. One of the first people on the scene was a photographer who worked for the police department in a suburb of Dallas. His credentials had gotten him through the police lines. He wrote a short but rather moving account of his experience trying to find and help survivors and sent it, unsolicited, to me. I bought it. Then, two days before the issue was to go to the printer, he called. The police chief had returned from vacation, found out about the story, and told the photographer that he would be fired if the story was printed.

I pulled the story. It never crossed my mind to do otherwise. There wasn't any information in it that made it worth fighting for, nothing that would justify putting someone out on the streets. A few days later *The Dallas Morning News* ran an article about our not publishing the photographer's tale. I didn't think anything about it until I received 20 or more calls and letters from people who had read the item, and they all carried the same message: that the media were usually unbearably arrogant and didn't care about the lives of ordinary people, but this time, the media did the right thing. The calls and letters meant a great deal to me.

Despite the inconvenience to the magazine staff, I've never hesitated



The February 1997 issue

when circumstances like this have arisen. Too often, the media confuse being tough with being heartless. Just because you have the right to publish something doesn't mean you have the obligation. I know this well, because I've been heartless myself and regretted it. Early in my career I wrote a story that referred in passing to "a rather plain woman in a styleless blue dress." I got a letter from a man who said that woman was his wife and was not plain and did not wear styleless clothes. He went on to ask just who did I think I was, and where were my manners? I've never forgotten it. He was right. Why hadn't I just written "a

woman in a blue dress"? The husband's rebuke has affected my writing and my editing ever since. I despise cheap shots. I despise the unthinking, often gleeful publication of embarrassing information. I've published phrases, paragraphs, and whole stories that I wish I hadn't. I've also left a lot of things out, and I've never, ever been sorry.

MY LAST TRIP TO THE WELL

Willie Nelson has been on the cover of *Texas Monthly* four times; so have Ross Perot, George W. Bush, and Lady Bird Johnson. We continue to feature them because our readers continue to be interested. Our April 1973 issue had a cover story about barbecue; in May 1997 we ran another cover story about barbecue. The issue sold prodigiously, and the story was nominated for a National Magazine Award.

Yet the Texas of today is not at all the Texas of 1981, when I became editor. For years I routinely checked the price of oil each morning—the price directly affected the magazine's business. Although gasoline prices are back in the news today, it has been a decade or more since I even thought about the price of oil: In 1981, after all, there was no Dell Computer Corporation in Austin or Compaq Computer Corporation in Houston. Through the pages of the magazine I tried to record the history

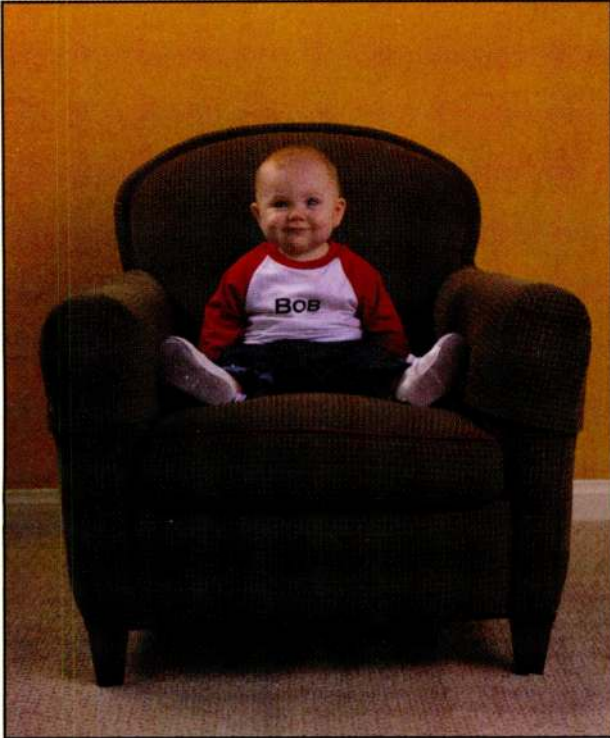
of two decades that included the final moments of the oil boom, the entire oil bust, and the rise of technology as the leading economic force in Texas. In those same years Texas changed from a firmly Democratic state to a firmly Republican one. And there have been other changes in the society, in the balance of power between the races, in the way the state looks and sounds. Those changes may be the very reason our readers continue to adore Willie, barbecue, the King Ranch, Texas Aggies, high school football, Lady Bird, the

Alamo, and any other traditional facet of the Texas soul. They're reliable fixtures amid all the change.

Those are all stories the magazine should continue to tell. But I knew it was at last time for me to move on when I realized I had told those stories as well as I knew how. After 19 years as editor, I left knowing how much I would miss my job, how empty and confusing it will be the first time I see an issue I had nothing to do with. It will feel like not being able to recognize an old friend. But I know this is the right time. Every editor wonders how to know when it's time to leave. My answer is this: when the repetitions become merely repetitious. ■

**I'VE PUBLISHED PHRASES
AND EVEN STORIES
THAT I WISH I HADN'T.
I'VE ALSO LEFT A LOT
OF THINGS OUT, AND
I'VE NEVER BEEN SORRY.**

PROFILE



NAME: Bob

AGE: 8 months

HEIGHT: 28"

WEIGHT: 24.5 pounds

HOME: Seattle, Washington

IQ: 140

LANGUAGES: Six (English, French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin)

MARITAL STATUS: Single

LIKES: Warm milk, free Internet service, baseball, ponies and long stroller rides in the park

DISLIKES: Dirty diapers and wet willies

HOBBIES: Bongos, stamp collecting, pigeon racing

FAVORITE COLOR: Red

LUCKY NUMBER: 34 (My buddy Shaq's number)

NICKNAME: Bobaloo

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Al Gore is campaigning on a platform of “the people, not the powerful.” The press is confused.

they're out of touch

JEFFREY
KLEIN
ARGUES

A funny thing happened on the way to the election: The candidate whose political obituary was being drafted by reporters (e.g., *The Economist*, which wrote that “defeat seems to hover in the air” around Gore, or the *National Journal*'s preconvention lead: “Al Gore is in trouble”) decided to campaign as an economic populist. Gore's message—he's “for the people, not the powerful”—immediately connected with both his base and swing voters but not with the media. They missed the story. Even after Gore's convention speech, the networks, pundits, and newsweeklies didn't see his surge coming. *Time* magazine headlined its downbeat story “His work cut out for him, Gore comes swinging out of Los Angeles....But Bush may have the advantage with the swing voters.” Even liberal stalwart Eleanor Clift worried that “Gore has a complicated task. He's got to rally the faithful and reach out. I'm not sure the speech did it.” By Labor Day, of course, that speech had launched Gore to a 10-point lead, according to one *Newsweek* poll.

The reason the press corps was blindsided by the success of Gore's new strategy has less to do with politics than it does with economics. As top-tier journalists have made more money and gained higher status, they've lost the feel for the aspirations and resentments that swing average voters, and they can't understand the appeal of Gore's populist message to those voters. The press has a proud progressive history of advocacy for the people, particularly the powerless. Many reporters still lay claim to that muckraking heritage, but these days, it's usually a pose meant to win style points or prizes. The average journalist has more sympathy for a convicted killer on death row who just might be innocent than for an ordinary family ordering the macaroni and cheese special in a suburban diner. Pontiacs don't win Pulitzers.



To make the grossest generalization: The typical journalist is a social liberal and an economic conservative. He's pro-choice and favors gay rights. But he wonders if macaroni might be a hill town in Tuscany, and he can't get his head around the fact that the median hourly wage in the United States today is less than it was in 1973. Most journalists have little to gain from the microeconomic programs proposed by Gore. The upper middle class has its own way of getting health insurance and prescription drugs, just as it could get out of the draft during the Vietnam War. Few veteran journalists need programs today to help their kids get a junior college degree—their progeny are aiming for Columbia or Northwestern or Stanford, where they have legacy status.

In contrast to the elite press corps, the middle and lower middle classes are culturally conservative and economically liberal. Pundits misunderstand this streak of economic liberalism because these classes often rail against the government. When times are bad, they toss the president out because they feel he's let the government become a tool of the elites. That's what happened to George Bush père. By the end of the Reagan-Bush years, with the tax burden reduced for the rich, the average family was earning less per hour than it had at the beginning of the Reagan era. Swing voters didn't need to turn on the tube to discover this news—and they wouldn't have seen the story there, anyway.

G. Pascal Zachary, who covered business for *The San Jose Mercury News* in the late eighties and for *The Wall Street Journal* through the nineties, describes this tone deafness to the concerns of the working class as a sort of journalistic Stockholm Syndrome. “Business journalists now think of themselves as peers of the people they're writing about,” Zachary says, hastening to add that his opinions are his own and not the *Journal*'s. “A decade ago, they were much more adversarial. Now they think they might go into business with them someday, or ask them for capital. They identify with financially successful people on a personal level.” Thirty years ago most journalists were economically illiterate; today many have literally followed the money and become one with the new economy.

Don't get me wrong. I don't for a minute think that a victorious Gore will usher in a populist era. The corporate interests he demonized in Los Angeles bankroll him. These backers aren't fazed by Gore's populism—they'll have ample opportunity to dilute it if he wins.

Even so, within the context of our democratic oligarchy, the two candidates have put forth different agendas. Under Bush, will average Americans get a tax rebate-and-switch? Under Gore, will they get the economic protection he's proposing? The media's responsibility is simple: Clarify the real differences. Then get out of the people's way. ■

who's got the power?

JONAH GOLDBERG ARGUES

Al Gore says that he will fight “for the people, not the powerful.” I doubt that this latest slogan will pierce the media’s armor of cynicism. Our vice-president was raised and groomed like one of the *Boys From Brazil* to be president; he was the second highest official in the (at least) second most dishonest administration of the 20th century; and he has reinvented himself more than half a dozen times. Knowing all this, it’s extremely unlikely the press will be swept up by Gore’s less than soaring rhetoric.

Now, on the opposite page, my buddy Jeffrey Klein is—I’m told—berating reporters for having grown too complacent with their mutual funds to fight for the “people over the powerful” as they should. It’s a valid point. The press doesn’t go in for much of the muckraking of yore. The difference between us is that I don’t think it ought to.

The liberal nostalgia for the days when journalists were crusaders out to smite the malefactors of great wealth is about as quaint and irrelevant as my longing for the days of really hot stewardesses. The simple fact is that corporations are not bastions of reaction or exploiters of the common man anymore. Today there is a vast and elaborate alphabet soup of regulatory agencies—FCC, FEC, SEC, ICC, FDA, etc.—and enough legislation to fill a million phone books making sure that corporations play nice.

I’ll leave it to Jeffrey to attack the press for apostasy in not fully embracing antiquated economic ideas. From my perspective, what’s more interesting is the shocking degree to which Gore and the media share anachronistic ideas about who counts as “the people” and who merits inclusion in the ranks of “the powerful.”

They may not have been fat, tuxedo-wearing, cigar-smoking white guys out of a Thomas Nast cartoon, but the crowd cheering Al Gore at the Democratic National Convention represented

entrenched interests—teacher’s unions, the Teamsters, trial lawyers, the NAACP, et al.—as much as any Getty or Mellon would. Still, you won’t see many exposés in *The New York Times* about how those powerful forces are holding back poor people and minorities. By looking in only one—rightward—direction for villains, the press has allowed a whole coalition of interests to become just as invested in the status quo as the robber barons were a century ago.

How else to explain the fact that Gore shouts “Never!” at the prospect of touching affirmative action, Social Security, Medicare, and any number of other programs that liberals championed eons ago but could use a little progressive-style reform these days? The irony of a politician who promises “revolutionary

change” while shouting “Never!” at every turn seems lost on the press.

Indeed, the media seem to interpret their role as defenders of “the people” to be defenders of the interests of high-income liberal activists and academics. Take school vouchers, for instance—another idea that prompts screams of “Never!” from Al Gore and his friends in the teacher’s unions. Vouchers are supported by vast numbers of average inner-city families but not by the powerful forces who make up Al Gore’s coalition. Imagine how clearly the press would see this issue if the parties were reversed and it was Jesse Helms trying to deny private-school scholarships for poor black kids.

Indeed, when journalists buy into the conventional wisdom of crisis-industry profiteers, they end up perpetuating the stereotypes they think they’re crusading against. My favorite recent example of this liberal condescension appeared recently in *The New York Times*, which on April 1 ran a front-page story that took seriously the notion that heroin-dealing in some minority neighborhoods isn’t such a bad thing and that perhaps the cops shouldn’t fight it so aggressively. In other eras, the media rightly denounced the failure of police to maintain order in minority neighborhoods. The idea that black victims aren’t worth a cop’s time is vile.

But according to reporter David Barstow, the NYPD—by cracking down on the drug trade in one neighborhood—risked “mindlessly impos[ing] the mores of Mayberry on what is a classic rough-and-tumble Brooklyn neighborhood.” Imagine if the *National Review* suggested that cops should take it easy in “rough-and-tumble” neighborhoods because it’s simply part of the local culture to sell heroin.

I, too, believe that the press is supposed to defend the people over the powerful. In the earlier part of this century, this role required journalists to work against the interests of their own employers. These days, it requires them to work against the interests of their friends, not to mention their own mindless allegiance to things as they are. ■



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Some of the key players in *The Fortune Tellers*, Howard Kurtz's gossipy new book about Wall Street and the media, give their take on his take on them.

Wall Street has taken on nearly mythical proportions in the media and in popular culture. On television, TNT's new drama *Bull* and Fox's *The Street* depict investment bankers and financial reporters as cool, powerful, even sexy. Much of the news coverage, meanwhile, seems caught up in itself and the excitement and headiness of a bull market. In his new book, *The Fortune Tellers: Inside Wall Street's Game of Money, Media, and Manipulation*, Howard Kurtz, *Washington Post* reporter and CNN host, shines a spotlight on the financial journalists and their growing influence on the stock market. Here's what three of the players—Christopher Byron, a tough reporter whom Kurtz calls a rebel; James J. Cramer, who is depicted as a childish but manic genius; and the sardonic Mark Haines, who comes across in the book as being on a mission to make business news accessible to the average Joe—have to say about Kurtz's book and his description of them.

CHRISTOPHER BYRON, columnist, Bloomberg News and MSNBC.com



My only quarrel with Howard Kurtz's portrait of me is that he had the temerity to point out my comb-over—though there are those who tell me it is so obvious as to be visible from the Hubble telescope, so maybe Howie is not that astute an observer after all.

The Fortune Tellers is a wonderful book—it is accurate and it is true. I know nearly every person he wrote about, and I know the world they inhabit, because I inhabit it too. And on that basis I can say that he got it right. In this book's pages is a full-frontal portrait of how business news is gathered and reported these days. It ain't a pretty picture, but so what; it's a picture that needed to be published, a story that needed to be told. For the most part, what now passes for business journalism is so conflicted and corrupt as to be utterly sickening. Howie's book is a docudrama of the spectacle.

My only frustration was with his last chapter, which needed to be stronger. By page 302, the author had earned the right to outrage, and there could have been more of it. The problem with business journalism in

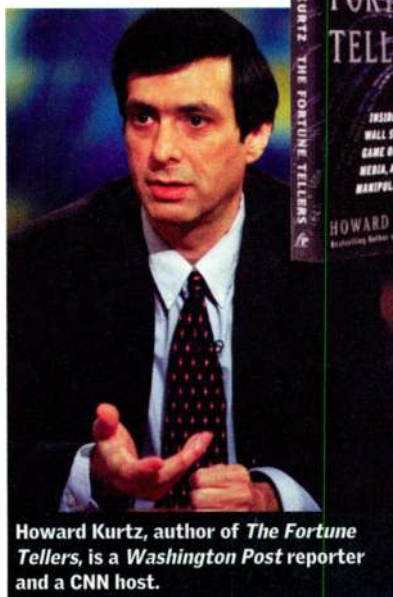
2000 is not the backdrop of backbiting and petty jealousies against which our collective efforts unfold. The same might be said of politics, or the arts, or the administration of the Church of England. People are people wherever you find them, and journalists are no exception. The problem with business journalism is one of human nature, but one that almost no one in our line of work wants to bring up because it shows us at our basest and most craven: namely, that 18 years of a super bull market on Wall Street has turned the journalists who practice the craft into cheerleaders for their subject matter. We have become no different from a group of not very good sportswriters—only instead of panting over Tiger Woods's latest eagle, we've ginned up phony tensions over opening-day pops in IPOs and who's going to be next week's post-pubescent dot.com zillionaire. This isn't reporting; it's shilling for sell-side investment banks on Wall Street.

What's worse, we have as a group become so blinded by the dazzle of rising stock prices—so driven by the hunger to get in on the action ourselves—that we no longer see the damage done to our professional integrity and credibility when the most visible and loud-spoken among us champion grotesqueries such as the notion that it's okay for a journalist to invest in stocks he writes about because doing so helps him understand the markets better.

That is pure crap, and we all know it. But where are the voices willing to say so? Where are the J-School deans who should be publicly scoffing at such rubbish? Where are the TV anchors and commentators? For the most part what you hear is silence.

Toward the end of *The Fortune Tellers* appear these words: "Conflicts of interest are hidden in broad daylight. Analysts bang the drum for a company's stock while lobbying to win the firm's investment banking business, and almost no one raises a fuss or bothers to point out the connection. Money managers blanket the airwaves to tout stocks in which they are 'long,' or feed positive items on these stocks to financial columnists, and almost no one dismisses this as blatant self-interest. The media's willingness to play along with this insider game is nothing short of appalling."

That is what *The Fortune Tellers* really chronicles: the abdication of journalism from its constitutionally



Howard Kurtz, author of *The Fortune Tellers*, is a *Washington Post* reporter and a CNN host.

protected role as America's fly on the wall at the feed trough of capitalism. I'm glad someone had the nerve to write it all down.

JAMES J. CRAMER, cofounder, *TheStreet.com*



Howard Kurtz got it right. He listened. He watched. He saw. I gave him unlimited access and he used it. The result was everything I could ever ask for a reporter to get right about me.

I made a calculated bet. I've always thought that I have nothing to hide. Many people think I do because I run a so-called secretive hedge fund. But I figured that by giving one of America's toughest journalists the run of the place, I would demystify the process of how I make money in the market.

Unfortunately for me, I gave him the run during my first bad year ever in the stock business. Even though I recovered in the following year, the picture Kurtz got of me was one of crisis and strife. I feuded with my best friend, fought with a CEO of a company I founded, tossed hand grenades at two networks, and almost lost two businesses I had worked hard to create. Kurtz and I got more than I bargained for.

That said, I liked it. I liked it because I have had so many brushes with reporters from all media over the years and most of them didn't get the subtleties of what I am about or what my business is about. They got the market stuff wrong, routinely. Other than Kurt Andersen's novel *Turn of the Century* I have never seen as accurate a depiction of trading as in *The Fortune Tellers*.

And Howard is basically right about the media and the market. Most of the time people don't know what is going on at that minute in the market. Most of the journalists are portraying noise as clearly delineated sound. But he is wrong if he thinks all commentating is created equal. Fortunately, I have a long-term track record. That record would indicate to anyone involved in this business that although I may not be able to "tell fortunes," I can make them, over time.

MARK HAINES, anchor, CNBC's *Squawk Box*



I like Howard Kurtz. I like his book *The Fortune Tellers*. It is well written and accurately captures the facts and the atmosphere of its subject matter. Unfortunately, it also makes accusations that miss the mark.

First, what Howard is right about: In general, the financial media do not hold the "experts" accountable for prior prognostications that proved to be less than accurate. I can afford to concede that point because I think that even Howard would admit that *Squawk Box* is an exception to that rule.

Our program folds, spindles, and mutilates analysts and seers alike. I also agree that the financial media usually fail to point out the relationships between analysts' recommendations and the billions of dollars those analysts' firms stand to make from those recommendations.

But Howard complains that the financial media report rumors. He seems to think that when a given stock or market is moving dramati-

cally because of a rumor, we should leave our viewers in the dark as to why. If the president were to take action because he had heard a rumor, would the networks report the action but not the reason for it? I don't think so.

They don't face that dilemma because the world they cover does not usually work that way. Ours does. So we report it and we make sure it is clear that rumor is the animating factor.

Howard also complains that guests sometimes recommend stocks they own and therefore stand to benefit financially from their statements. That should come as a surprise only to those who have the common sense of a cheese sandwich. Why would a money manager research a company, come to the conclusion that its stock is an opportunity to make money, and then not buy it? Of what value would his or her opinion be if he or she was unwilling to risk real money on that opinion?

Wall Street is a cold, uncaring, greedy place. Viewers and readers of the financial media must use their heads. If you are unwilling or unable to think about what you read or see, then watch the Cartoon Channel and skip to the sports section of your newspaper.

MARK HAINES ARGUES THAT VIEWERS WHO CAN'T HANDLE RUMORS SHOULD "WATCH THE CARTOON CHANNEL."

HOWARD KURTZ responds:

I'll yield to Chris Byron in the outrage department. My approach is to report like crazy, lay out the facts, offer my analysis, and let people make up their own minds.

I'll say this for Jim Cramer: Whatever his excesses—and I paint a warts-and-all portrait—Cramer is an honest man who owns up to his mistakes, unlike many all-knowing and all-seeing Wall Street gurus. When he bought America Online stock right after the Time Warner deal and lost a bundle, he wasn't shy about saying so. When he picks a fight with someone and concludes he was wrong, he fesses up as well.

Although Mark Haines is a terrific anchor, our disagreement on the reporting of rumors—viewed with disdain by every other part of the news business—is fundamental. Obviously, if a stock is dropping 50 points, that needs to be reported immediately. But it is irresponsible to rush on the air with half-baked and quarter-baked explanations without having the facts nailed down. Not long ago, CNBC reported what it called an unconfirmed rumor that Microsoft may have settled its federal antitrust case, then announced soon afterward that the company had knocked down the rumor. Viewers would have been better served if the network hadn't used its megaphone to amplify that kind of meaningless Street chatter. At the same time, Haines's program was one of the few financial news outlets to resist the temptation to trumpet a damaging press release about the company Emulex—which briefly devastated the company's stock but turned out to be a hoax.

Although *Squawk Box* indeed treats Wall Street analysts with great skepticism, even Haines's show finds itself obliged to trumpet the daily upgrades and downgrades of these highly paid hotshots. But what many journalists fail to do is to provide some kind of scorecard—to tell viewers weeks or months later that, for example, eToys fell 95 percent after Merrill Lynch's Henry Blodget recommended it. By then the media are panting after the next day's allegedly hot information. ■

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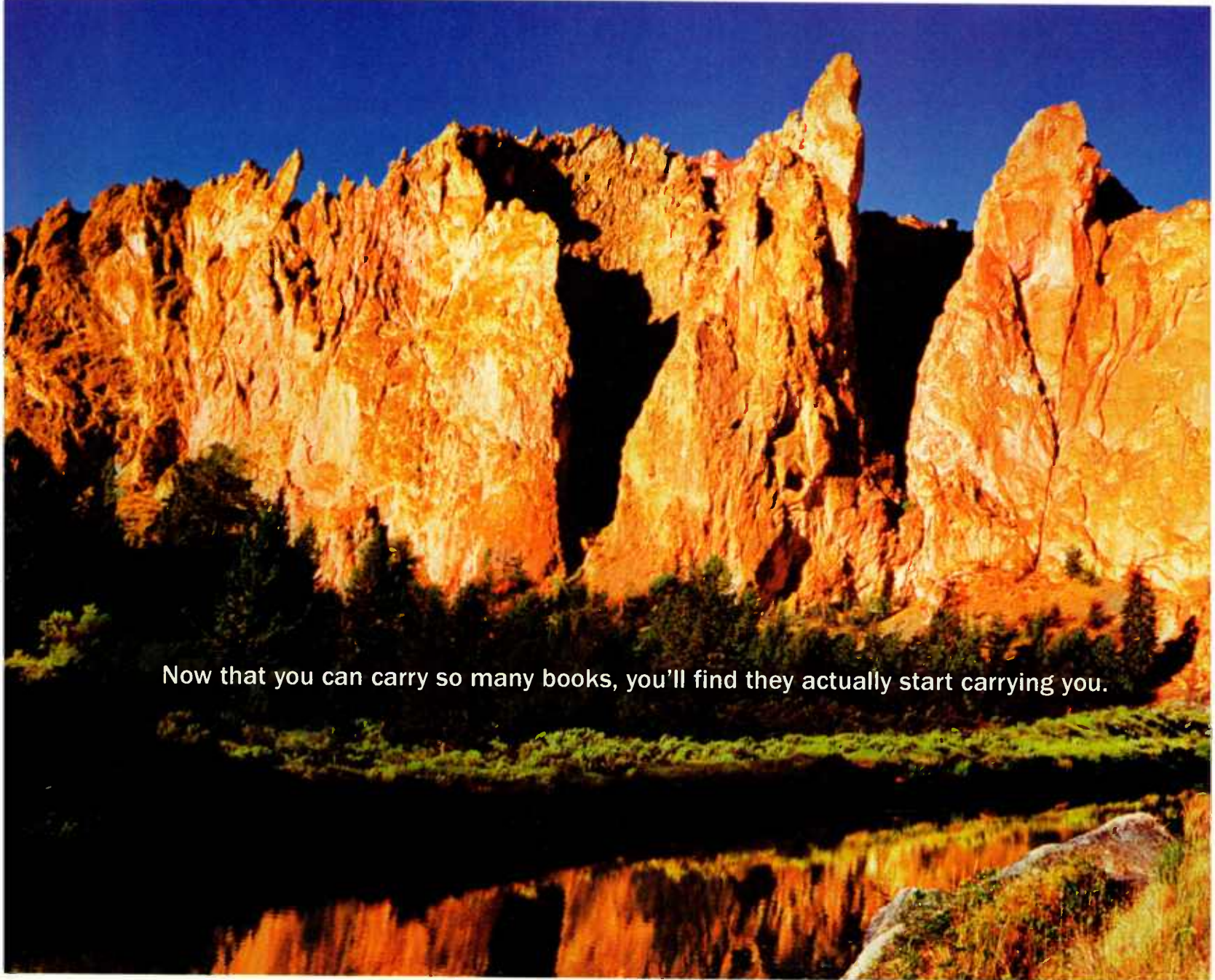


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THE INFLUENCE LIST 2000

It may be easiest to explain our second-annual Influence List by telling you what it's not: It doesn't rank the most powerful people in the media world from one to whatever. Power is simple to quantify—you just tote up who gets the biggest paycheck, employs the most people, sells the most product, or posts the biggest profits. And one can have power but not influence. We're interested in something ineffable, something a bit harder to identify—the sort of power that has less to do with the job one has than how one does it. Specifically, we looked for 50 people who have had a direct impact on the content we've consumed over the past year. We considered two criteria in assembling this list. First, we sought people whose day-to-day work involves the creation of something we read, watch, talk about, or listen to. Second, we didn't let fame get in the way. You will find some famous names here, but only because they did something this year to increase their influence. And in many cases, we went for the unobvious choice—someone less known, but probably not for long. It's an unorthodox roster that skips far more usual suspects than it includes. Unorthodoxly, we present it in no particular order.

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OPRAH WINFREY

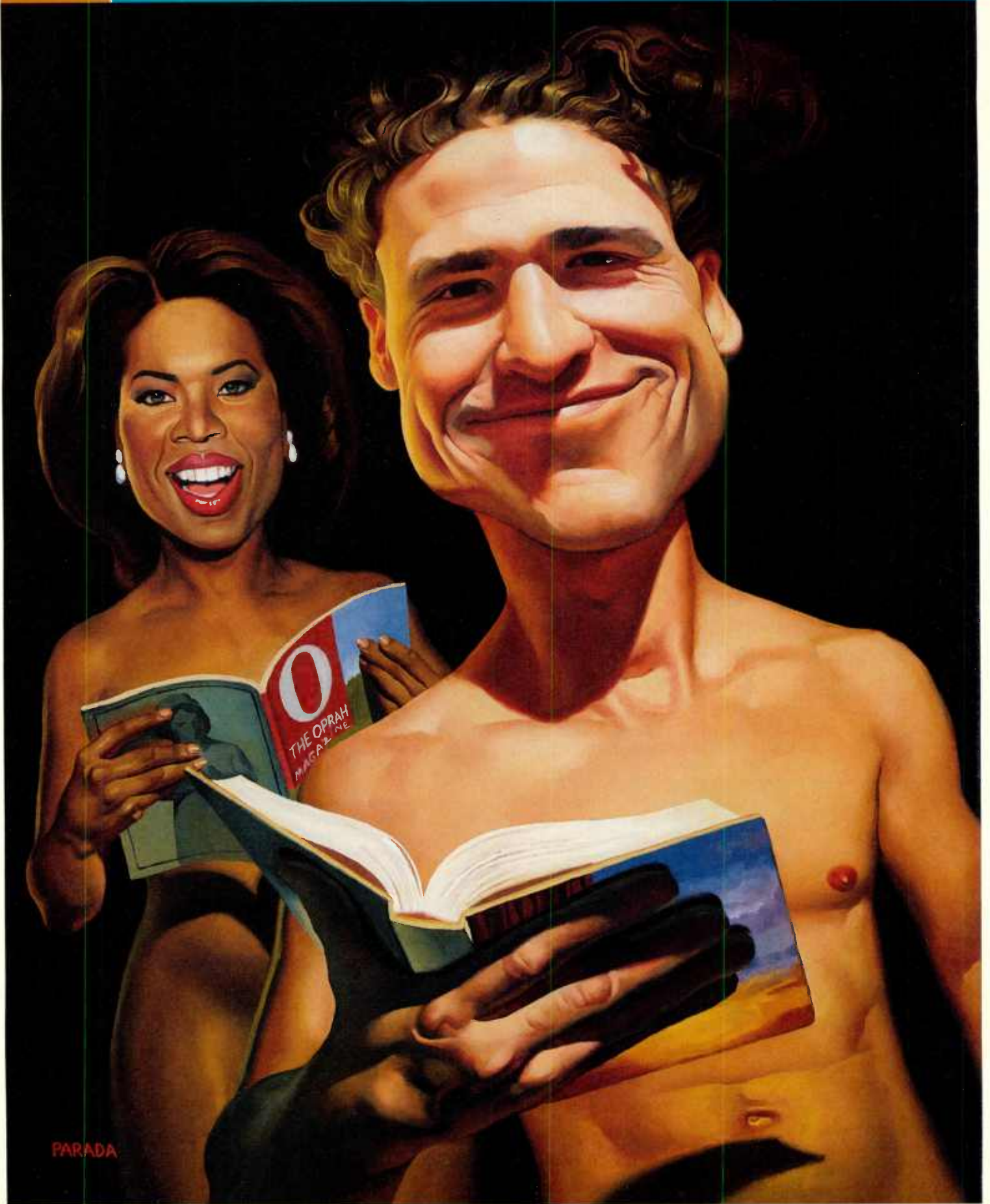
CHAIRMAN, HARPO, INC.

SHE is the Queen of Sharing, whose life—on her TV show and in the tabloids—is an open book (and she, more than any other celebrity, gets people to open books). **BUT** she's been at it for years, and others have made an art and a business out of multipurpose branding (did someone say *Martha?*). **THE DIFFERENCE** is that her show is back on top in the ratings and that **THIS YEAR**, the endlessly self-revealing Winfrey launched *O, The Oprah Winfrey Magazine*, which sold out its first run of 1.1 million copies and has featured her on every cover since. **WHICH MEANS** that Winfrey has proved that if your audience feels that it knows you, it'll follow you anywhere.

DAVE EGGERS

AUTHOR, A HEARTBREAKING WORK OF STAGGERING GENIUS

HE is the 30-year-old ultra-self-aware author whose wrenching memoir shot to the top of the best-seller lists. **BUT** though he has commodified irony better than anybody else in the hipsteratti, isn't his shtick wearing thin? **THE DIFFERENCE** is that people are just jealous that he can carry off such an aggressively sardonic attitude while laying bare his family's intimate and painful history. **THIS YEAR** Eggers signed a reported \$1.4 million contract for his book's paperback rights and used his "I hate the mainstream so it loves me all the more" strategy to start a publishing house, named after his acclaimed literary magazine, *McSweeney's*. **WHICH MEANS** Eggers is like the cool high-school kid everybody emulates—while he pretends not to care.



FLOYD NORRIS**CHIEF FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENT, THE NEW YORK TIMES**

HE was once quoted as saying that market reporters should stop relying on Wall Street analysts as sources and become their own experts. Perhaps that's why **THIS YEAR** his reports have contained information you can't get anywhere else. **BUT** these days there are more stars than ever in the financial news field. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Norris isn't part of the crowd that simply regurgitates press releases and quotes self-promoting analysts. **WHICH MEANS** that even though the newspaper era is supposedly waning, this newspaperman's influence is on the rise.

CHRIS HENAO, DAVID RAZIQ, AND ANNA WERNER**PHOTOJOURNALIST, INVESTIGATIVE PRODUCER, AND INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER, KHOU-TV**

THEY are the investigative unit at KHOU-TV, the Houston CBS affiliate, which broke the story in February of **THIS YEAR** that some Firestone tires on Ford Explorers are deadly. **BUT** others had looked into the story as well. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that even the government has credited KHOU's series (the first of which was nine minutes, unusually long for local TV news) for prompting the recall of more than 6 million tires. **WHICH MEANS** that this Texas station has proved that local television news isn't necessarily too frothy for the big stories. Even Ford chief executive Jacques Nasser said Werner and her cohorts "deserve a medal."

**HENAO, WERNER, RAZIQ: The KHOU-TV team****VINCE MCMAHON****CHAIRMAN, WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION ENTERTAINMENT, INC.**

HE has turned a carnival of body-slammng melodrama into cable's No. 1 show. **BUT** he's lost some key advertisers for his lowbrow approach. And isn't this whole thing so 1990s? **THE DIFFERENCE** is that

no cast of characters is in greater demand than the WWF superstars who **THIS YEAR** found their books twice atop *The New York Times's* best-seller list and themselves everywhere from *Saturday Night Live* to the Republican National Convention. Viacom put up \$30 million to woo the WWF away from USA Networks while NBC bought half of McMahon's upstart football league. **WHICH MEANS** that McMahon—who once told Wall Street investors who were cool on WWF stock to "kiss his ass"—is good at more than just *playing* a power-hungry boss every week on WWF's TV show.

DAVID BRADLEY**OWNER, NATIONAL JOURNAL GROUP INC. AND THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY**

HE owns a string of publications ranging from the intellectual *Atlantic Monthly* to a juicy political must-read website called *The Hotline*. **BUT** he's no journalist—just a guy who made a fortune with a health-care consulting company. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that as his media holdings have grown—and rumors circulate that they'll grow even more—he has become a key Beltway media mogul. **THIS YEAR**, a free, limited version of *The Hotline* landed on AOL. And Bradley put his imprimatur on *The Atlantic Monthly*—which he bought from Mortimer Zuckerman in September 1999—by allowing newly installed editor Michael Kelly to overhaul and redesign the 143-year-old magazine. **WHICH MEANS** Marty Peretz is watching closely.

SORIOUS SAMURA**FREELANCE JOURNALIST**

HE'S the Sierra Leonean journalist responsible for the acclaimed documentary *Cry Freetown*. **THIS YEAR**, when the film aired on CNN, it catapulted Sierra Leone into the international spotlight with its controversial and graphic depiction of rebel forces overrunning the country's capital. **BUT** Samura is not the only reporter turning out compelling stories from Africa. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Samura's film placed him firmly at the forefront of

ROWLING: Her book sales inspired the N.Y. Times to create a new list.**J.K. ROWLING****AUTHOR, THE HARRY POTTER BOOKS**

SHE went from being a single mother on the dole to Britain's highest-paid woman in only three years. **BUT** lots of people write popular children's books. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Harry Potter, boy wizard and the star of Rowling's planned seven-book series, is a hit with adults as well. At press time, Rowling's books on Harry's adventures at the Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry have dominated *The New York Times* best-seller list for a combined 218 weeks. So, **THIS YEAR**, for the first time in the paper's history, a separate list for best-selling children's titles was created. **WHICH MEANS** that Rowling has forever changed the game in book publishing.

MARK HAINES, DAVID FABER, AND JOE KERNEN**HOST AND REPORTERS, SQUAWK BOX**

THEY are the personalities behind CNBC's kickoff program, a low-key, sometimes wacky introduction to the day's business news that owes more to *Monday Night Football* than to *The Wall Street Journal*. **BUT** haven't we had enough of CNN's "Money Honey" and her pals? **THE DIFFERENCE** is that *Squawk Box* has proved financial news equals entertainment. The *Squawk Box* troops intersperse hilarious banter

Africa's nascent independent media—helping define their news for the rest of the world. **WHICH MEANS** that his next film (working title: *Serious Samura's Africa*) should have a considerable impact—which is probably why Liberian dictator Charles Taylor had Samura and his crew arrested and tortured when he learned the filmmaker and his camera had arrived in the country.

JOEL STEIN**STAFF WRITER AND COLUMNIST, TIME**

HE showed up at *Time* three years ago and had a sufficiently meteoric rise that by the end of 1998 he was given the honor of filling in for Calvin Trillin (who arrived at *Time* in the early sixties) on Trillin's weeks off. **THIS YEAR** he's become a bona fide celebrity journalist: He had an admiring profile in *The New York Times*, a slyly anonymous turn as *Vanity Fair's* "Calendar Boy," and a stint as a model for Tommy Hilfiger in *W* magazine. **BUT** young and talented writers aren't hard to find, and self-deprecating humor isn't all that new. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Stein has done it at *Time*, a newsweekly whose readers are more accustomed to sober news coverage and *Men of the Year*. **WHICH MEANS** that other magazines may soon allow their writers to indulge their fascination with body hair too.

Even the government credits KHOU's investigation for jump-starting the recall of more than 6 million tires.

with dead-on observations about the stock market. **THIS YEAR** people didn't watch only when their portfolios were blooming: Ratings spiked when the NASDAQ took a dive last April. **WHICH MEANS** that the extraordinary popularity of all-you-can-watch financial news may be more than just a passing fad.

SHELBY BONNIE

CEO, CNET NETWORKS

HE is the man in charge of the leading online source for technology-product reviews, where millions of Americans go for advice. **BUT** should we care about a company that rates products—and has something of a reputation for not being critical enough? **THE DIFFERENCE** is that **THIS YEAR** Bonnie engineered the acquisition of Ziff-Davis, the granddaddy of media companies covering technology, and its Internet subsidiary, ZDNet. Ziff was a shell of its former self when CNET made the estimated \$1.6 billion purchase; the company had spun off its magazines and its cable-TV arm. **WHICH MEANS** that CNET, with Bonnie at its helm, will be *the* place most Americans go online to get the deal on the tech stuff they want to buy.

DAVID SEDARIS

AUTHOR, ME TALK PRETTY ONE DAY

HE reads autobiographical essays on National Public Radio that people quote around the watercooler. **BUT** he's something of an odd, squeaky-voiced eccentric with a decidedly twisted take on everyday life. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that he's tapped into something in our collective psyche and become a best-selling author with mass appeal. **THIS YEAR** his collection of essays, *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, instantly landed on *The New York Times* best-seller list and as of press time had been there 16 weeks. **WHICH MEANS** that Sedaris not only talks pretty; he writes pretty too.

MICHAEL DAVIES

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE

HE's the British executive producer who imported the staggeringly popular game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* to our shores, reviving ABC-TV's faltering prime-time lineup. **BUT** game shows with huge cash prizes are everywhere this year. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that the 34-year-old Davies, a former tour guide for Universal Studios, was in the vanguard, pitching the British game show to skeptical network brass back in 1998. **THIS YEAR,**

Millionaire has been a ratings monster—worth a reported \$4.5 billion to ABC—and Davies's production company, Diplomatic, has documentaries and dramas in the works. **WHICH MEANS** that *Millionaire* is not his final answer.

GARRY WILLS

AUTHOR, PAPAN SIN: STRUCTURES OF DECEIT

HE is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and respected historian,

renowned for focusing a critical eye on the hallowed cultural and historical institutions—Abraham Lincoln, John Wayne, John Kennedy—we hold most dear.

THIS YEAR Wills scaled new heights of productivity, scoring unlikely best-sellers with three books released, amazingly, within a year: *Saint Augustine*, a biography of the fourth-century bishop; *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of*

Government, an examination of anti-government movements; and *Papan Sin: Structures of Deceit*, an unsparing look at the Catholic Church. **BUT** some critics have dubbed *Papan Sin* reactionary. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Wills, a Catholic layman and apparent political iconoclast, follows his own agenda. **WHICH MEANS** that Wills sparked a national discussion about religion remarkably free of political mudslinging.



BONNIE: If you've researched a tech product online, you've probably visited one of his sites.

BONNIE: GAIL HALABAN/SABA



THE TITANS | Leslie Moonves and Robert Pittman

| Illustration by Scott Lauman

LESLIE MOONVES**PRESIDENT AND CEO, CBS TELEVISION**

HE's the top dog at the summer's top network, which not so long ago was stuck in third place in the ratings race. **BUT** as he's taken control of a greater swath of the CBS empire, he's also boosted the Eye's fortunes. **THIS YEAR** Moonves reaped the payoff from one of the great TV-biz decisions of all time: In 1999, he swung the deal to produce the reality TV show *Survivor*, which on August 23 drew a staggering 52 million viewers for its finale. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that he didn't just green-light a successful television show—he launched a cultural phenomenon. **WHICH MEANS** that our TVs are filled with knockoff reality programs trying to imitate the same formula. Ugh.

ROBERT PITTMAN**PRESIDENT AND COO, AMERICA ONLINE; CO-COO-DESIGNATE, AOL TIME WARNER**

HE founded MTV, then ran Six Flags and a few other businesses for Time Warner, then left to run Century 21 Real Estate before landing at AOL, where he quickly fixed the Internet juggernaut's ballooning customer-service and marketing problems, consolidating his power base as COO in the process. **THIS YEAR** he helped bring together old and new media when his company negotiated a deal with media behemoth Time Warner. **BUT** many others were involved in that transaction. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Pittman has made himself a critical player, set to supervise many of the Time Warner executives who frustrated him when he was there before. He'll now have operating authority over Time Inc. (the magazine powerhouse) and Turner Broadcasting (including CNN) as well as the

all-important, cash-flow-rich cable systems company. **WHICH MEANS** that he's now the chief toll collector on the information superhighway.

NICHOLAS LEMANN**STAFF WRITER, THE NEW YORKER**

HE has been a reporter for 20-odd years, writing for *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Texas Monthly*, and *The Washington Post*. He's also written several books, including last year's *The Big Test*, about the history of American meritocracy. **BUT** in all that time, Lemann never covered a presidential race. **THIS YEAR**, as a *New Yorker* staff writer, he finally boarded the campaign plane, and the results were buzzy, definitive profiles of Al Gore and George W. Bush. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that he ignored the horse-race questions and delved into the candidates' psyches. **WHICH MEANS** that as he prepares to assume a leading role at *The Washington Monthly* next year—after founding editor in chief Charlie Peters retires (page 102)—everybody's talking about his insights into the candidates, including, probably, the candidates themselves.

RENAN ALMENDARÉZ COELLO**RADIO PERSONALITY**

HE's El Cucuy (Spanish for "The Bogeyman"), a Spanish-speaking deejay with the No. 1 drive-time radio show in California. **THIS YEAR** his ribald show on KSCA-FM, which already has about 1.3 million listeners in 11 markets, is aiming for syndication in New York and Miami. **BUT** plenty of radio personalities have that kind of national appeal, namely Howard Stern, to whom he is most often compared. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that in L.A., Coello has twice Stern's audience. **WHICH MEANS** that if this Honduran's show can win over the large Caribbean population

MITCHELL: She leaped from high-stakes cable to highbrow PBS.



in New York and Miami, he'll rise from a national voice for the Spanish-speaking community to a huge force in American radio.

PAT MITCHELL**PRESIDENT AND CEO, PBS**

SHE started as an on-air TV personality in Boston, moved on to a variety of network jobs, and spent the last seven years at Turner Broadcasting overseeing original programming for CNN and TBS. **THIS YEAR** she made a surprising leap to the presidency of PBS, America's 347-member-station public-television powerhouse. **BUT** she's used to chasing high ratings and ad dollars, not quietly educating while seeking viewer donations. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Mitchell is bridging the gulf by importing network-TV strategies to the highbrow world of PBS. **WHICH MEANS** that things might soon look different to "viewers like you."

KEN SUNSHINE**PUBLIC-RELATIONS CONSULTANT**

HE's a maestro image maker, representing such mega-celebs as Leonardo DiCaprio and Barbra Streisand. **BUT** most flacks have at least one A-list client. **THE DIFFER-**

ENCE is that Sunshine marries the worlds of politics and entertainment—witness DiCaprio interviewing the president for ABC News and Sunshine's orchestration of Hillary Clinton's well-timed appearance at his synagogue. **THIS YEAR** he's in high demand: running PR for Streisand's farewell concerts while working on Clinton's Senate campaign. **WHICH MEANS** that there's a lot more Sunshine ahead.

ANDY UZZLE**PHOTOGRAPHER, NEW YORK POST**

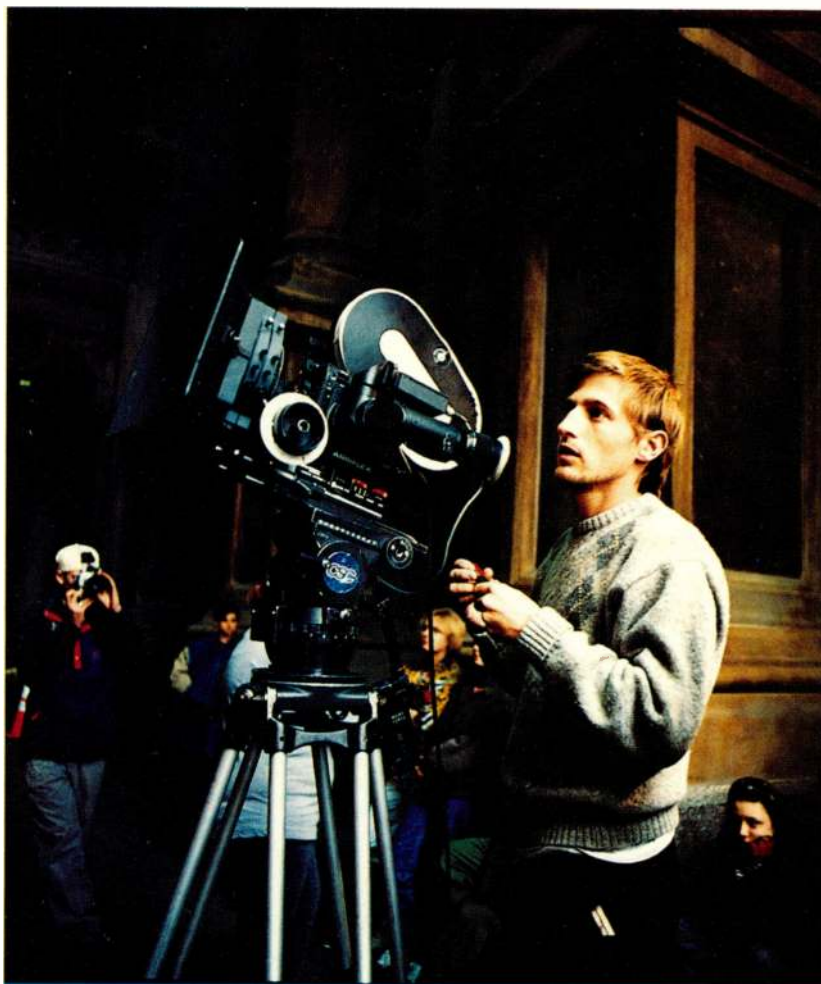
HE's a tabloid photographer who shoots crime scenes and absorbs punches from irate demi-celebs. **THIS YEAR** he took the first shot of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his "very good friend" Judith Nathan, probably hastening the end of Giuliani's marriage and altering the course of New York politics. **BUT** Hizzoner and Nathan had been seen in public before. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Uzzle's photo gave the "serious" press permission to write about the relationship, which forced the mayor to confront the issue publicly. **WHICH MEANS** that Rick Lazio owes Uzzle a thank-you note.



MITCHELL PHOTOGRAPH BY: KATE SWANK; EL CUCUY: ANNIE WELLS/LOS ANGELES TIMES



EL CUCUY: In L.A., he has twice the audience of Howard Stern.



JONZE: The filmmaker picked to direct Gore's convention documentary

SPIKE JONZE

DIRECTOR

HE was the directing wizard of music videos in the 1990s and is one of the most-sought-after TV-commercial directors around (last year he also broke out on the big screen with the hyperimaginative *Being John Malkovich*). **BUT** there are lots of good directors, and Jonze isn't even the only one called Spike. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Jonze has taken his skillz to politics, and **THIS YEAR** Al Gore enlisted him to create a no-frills, handheld camera documentary for the convention showing the vice-president hanging with his family. He also directed clever Levi's commercials showing people trying on their jeans in dressing rooms. **WHICH MEANS** that Jonze has shown America two things long outside public view: the inside of department store dressing rooms and Al Gore relaxed.

DAVID PECKER

CHAIRMAN, CEO, AND PRESIDENT, AMERICAN MEDIA

HE is the boss of the company behind America's favorite supermarket tabloids—*The National*

Enquirer, *Star*, *Weekly World News*, etc. **BUT** does anyone really take that garbage seriously? (Yes.) **THE DIFFERENCE** is that he is on a mission to make his flagship publication, *The National Enquirer* (circulation 2.1 million), respectable. Take his ad campaign, which promises "No Elvis, No Aliens, No UFOs." And **THIS YEAR** he acquired his main rivals, *Globe*, *Sun*, and *Examiner*, giving him dominance on the checkout line. Then Pecker launched *Mira!*, the Spanish version of *The National Enquirer*. **WHICH MEANS** that being unable to read English isn't a good enough reason not to know the story behind the Anne Heche/Ellen DeGeneres breakup.



Fuller has coached a generation of readers through first-kiss anxiety and marital-sex doldrums as editor in chief of five women's magazines.

LARRY MAKINSON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR RESPONSIVE POLITICS

HE is the chief wonk of the non-profit Center for Responsive Politics, the folks who bring you the hard numbers behind nearly every campaign finance story, which, however dry they might be, can still cause a candidate to stumble. **BUT** the Federal Election Commission also releases campaign finance data. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that without the CRP, reporters would have to learn how to do math and slog through the numbers on their own. **THIS YEAR** you'll have trouble finding a money-and-elections story that doesn't cite Makinson and his minions. **WHICH MEANS** no candidate will be throwing fund-raisers at Buddhist temples any time soon.

JAMES WOOD

LITERARY CRITIC

HE's the enfant terrible of literary criticism—wrestling with John Updike and Philip Roth in *The London Review of Books* and *The New Republic*, where he's been a senior editor since arriving from the U.K. five years ago. **BUT** canonical insouciance is a common trait in young critics (Wood is only 35). **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Wood possesses the intellect and stylistic panache to match the literary lions he critiques. **THIS YEAR**, Wood's reviews were in demand as never before—he's writing for *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* book reviews and for *The New Yorker*. **WHICH MEANS** that Wood should have no trouble anticipating his own critics when his first novel is published, in 2002.

BONNIE FULLER

EDITOR IN CHIEF, GLAMOUR

SHE's coached a generation of readers through first-kiss anxiety and marital-sex doldrums as editor in chief of five women's magazines (including *Marie Claire* and



FULLER: In-demand editor

Cosmopolitan, where she succeeded the legendary Helen Gurley Brown) with a combination of practical service pieces, frank talk about sex, and killer cover lines. **THIS YEAR** Fuller's rise continued: Under her tenure, *Glamour's* circulation hit 2.1 million. **BUT** the sexification of magazines is hardly a bulletproof formula for success—after all, the raunchier *Details* failed. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Fuller strikes a chord with American women so powerful that competing magazine empires battle for her talents. **WHICH MEANS** that Fuller is likely to have a glamorous job for years to come.

IRA GLASS

HOST AND PRODUCER, THIS AMERICAN LIFE

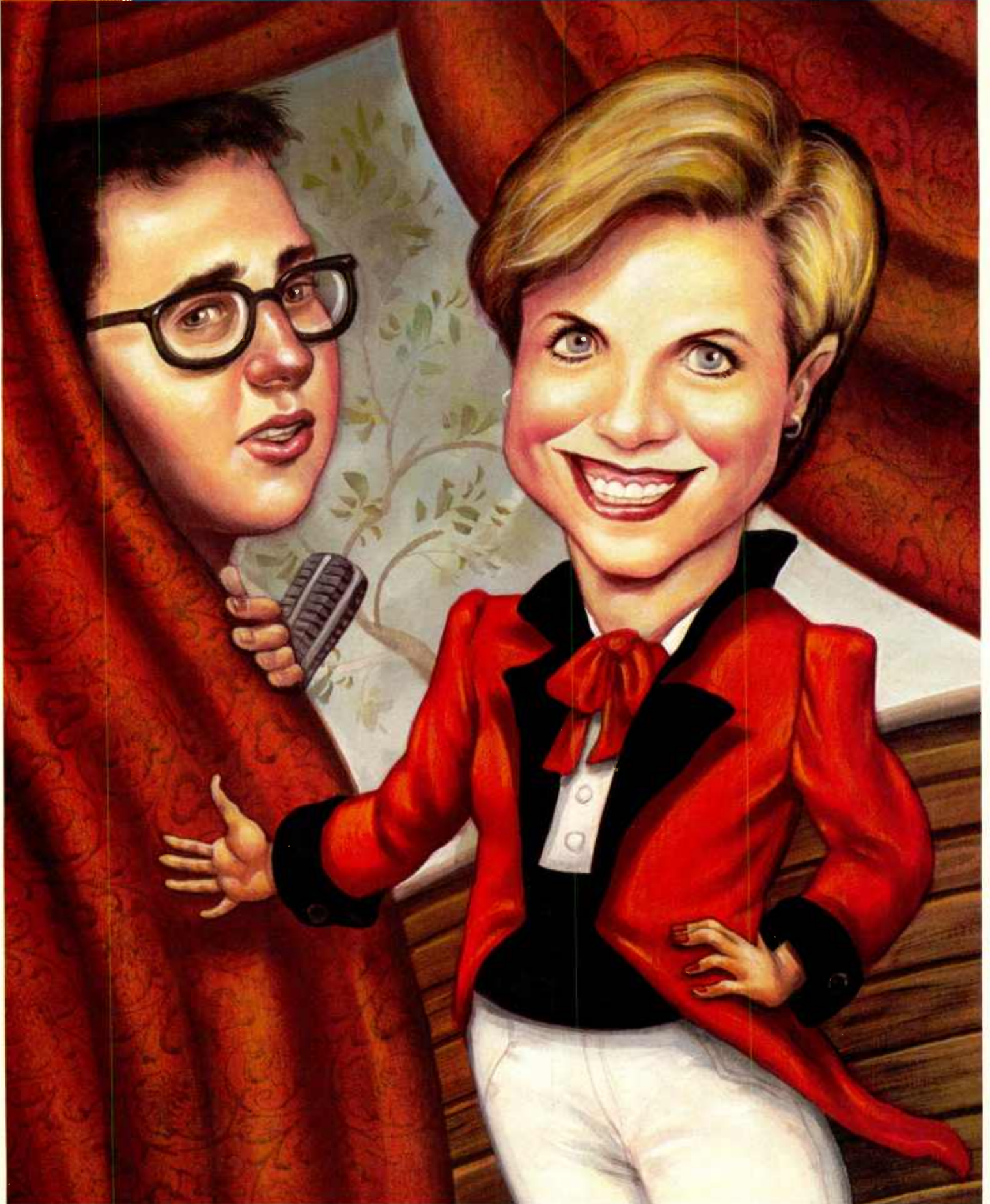
HE is the host and force behind an entrancing public-radio show, holding listeners rapt each week with moving stories about ordinary lives and events that in his hands become extraordinary. **BUT** there are lots of public-radio celebs, from Garrison Keillor to the *Car Talk* guys. **THE DIFFERENCE**, as *Salon* noted, is that because of Glass, "Americans are once again arranging their schedules to hear a radio show." **THIS YEAR** he boosted his audience to 1 million, up 20 percent from two years ago. He'll meet some of those fans when he takes his show on the road to New York, Los Angeles, Boston, and Chicago for live broadcasts. **WHICH MEANS** that his *American Life* is making our American lives a little richer.

KATIE COURIC

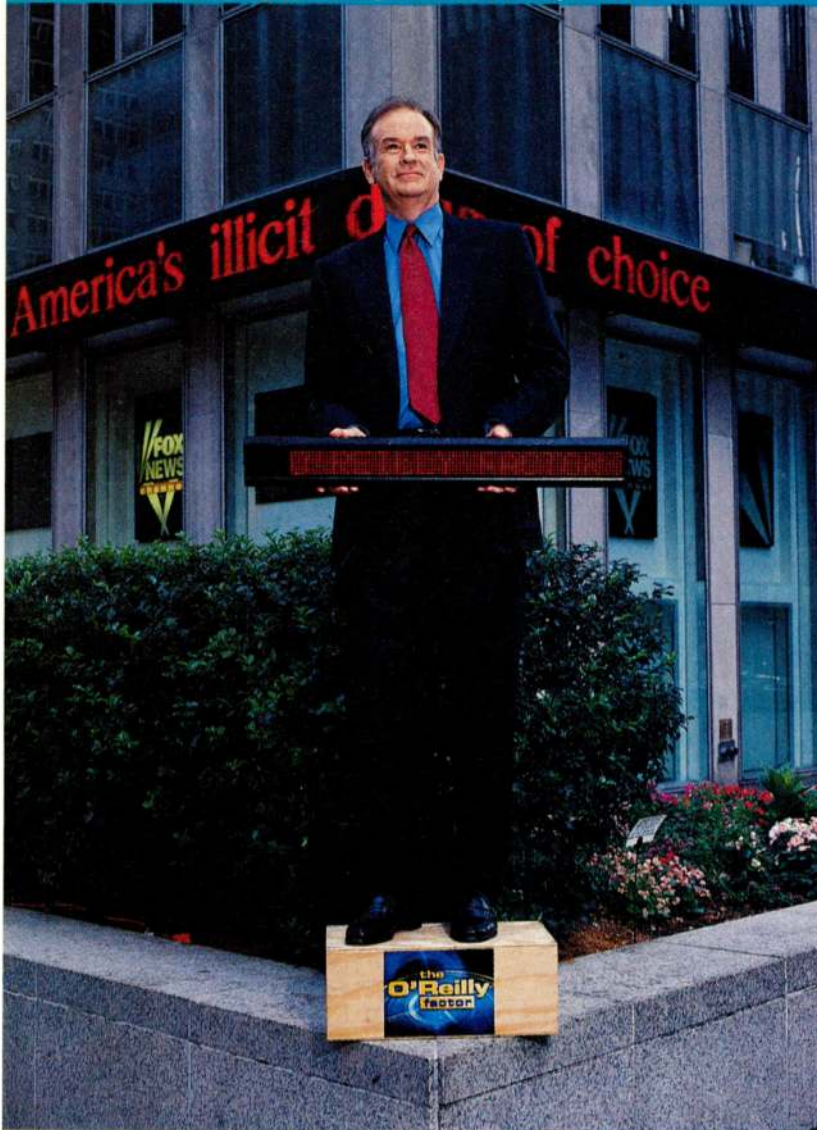
CO-ANCHOR, NBC'S TODAY; CONTRIBUTING ANCHOR, DATELINE NBC

SHE's there when we wake up every morning, cheery and smart and funny—a vision at that precaffeinated hour. **BUT** so are the formidable Diane Sawyer and the fledgling Jane Clayson. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that no one connects with us better, at least according to Nielsen Media Research, which has put the *Today* show ahead of its competitors for more than 275 weeks among adults ages 25 to 54—often drawing more viewers than *Good Morning America* and *The Early Show* combined. **THIS YEAR** we grew even closer when she bared her intestine for NBC's cameras to raise awareness of colon cancer, which claimed her husband. And this month the *Today* show expanded to three hours. **WHICH MEANS** that there's no such thing as too much Katie in the morning.

JONZE: SYLVIA OTTE



O'REILLY: The cable news guy standing tall outside his "spin-free zone"



O'Reilly is a dogged interviewer who isn't satisfied with guests' pat answers or recycled talking points.

BILL O'REILLY

ANCHOR AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, THE O'REILLY FACTOR

HE's a loudmouthed cable-news talking head. **BUT** aren't those guys' egos bigger than their audiences? **THE DIFFERENCE** is that he's not just a blowhard: He's a smart guy and a dogged interviewer who isn't satisfied with guests' pat answers or recycled talking points.

THIS YEAR his style is paying off: In August viewership was up 46 percent from a year earlier.

WHICH MEANS that it's getting harder for public figures to avoid his self-declared "spin-free zone."



DAVID BLACK

OWNER, THE DAVID BLACK LITERARY AGENCY

HE is one of the most important nonfiction literary agents in the country and the force behind *The New York Times*'s best-seller list's longstanding chart-topper, Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie* (150 weeks and still going strong). **BUT** although Black started cultivating literary nonfiction narratives long before they became the genre du jour, there are many agents plowing those fields. **THIS YEAR** book editors will be combing the submission piles for more real-life accounts of natural disasters and unexpected friendships.

THE DIFFERENCE is that although Black knows how to ride a trend, he also has a real eye for talent: Along with Albom, he's made book writers out of journalists Alex Kotlowitz and Melissa Fay Greene.

WHICH MEANS you can bet that

after hours, newsrooms are full of journalists secretly toiling over manuscripts, hoping that they will be treated to some of Black's magic.

DAVID MAYS

FOUNDER, PUBLISHER, THE SOURCE; PRESIDENT, THE SOURCE ENTERPRISES

HE is the man behind the most trusted brand in hip-hop news. **BUT** other music magazines have larger circulations. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that a whopping 80 percent of *The Source*'s circulation comes from newsstand sales—an extraordinary sign of robustness in the magazine world. Mays offers unapologetic coverage of hip-hop's rougher elements, and he's an indie success story, having begun the publication as a one-page newsletter 12 years ago when he was a Harvard undergrad. Today the brand includes a sports magazine, a TV production company, and, **THIS YEAR**, a website that reported 1.6 million hits after the broadcast of *The Source*'s hugely popular Hip-Hop Music Awards. **WHICH MEANS** that Mays is a Source of information for millions.

SELENA ROBERTS

SPORTS REPORTER, THE NEW YORK TIMES

SHE is the architect of baroque, metaphor-packed sports prose comparing the movements of NBA players variously to skin-sticking vinyl, beanstalks, and the stripe around a candy cane. **BUT** for all her stylings, Roberts has nowhere near the audience of Peter Vecsey and Peter Gammons, who dominate basketball and baseball coverage on TV. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that sports journalism has a print heritage that boasts such names as A.J. Liebling and Damon Runyon, and right now it is Roberts's prose

that's capturing attention. **THIS YEAR** the *Times* praised her writing style in its newsletter to subscribers, even while criticism of her florid language appeared almost weekly on *Slate*. **WHICH MEANS** that Roberts, like the Knicks she covers, will continue to provoke and inspire.

BILL HILLSMAN

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER AND CEO, NORTH WOODS ADVERTISING

HE is the man who put Ralph Nader's exclusion from the presidential debates on the map with that MasterCard-spoof TV spot ("Finding out the truth: priceless"). **BUT** he lives in Minnesota, and there are lots of ad firms with bigger clients and more money. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Hillsman's unconventional ads get noticed; he dreamed up the political ads that helped Governor Jesse Ventura win his tight race and recently advised Warren Beatty on his presidential tease. **THIS YEAR** MasterCard International sued him (unsuccessfully) over the Nader spot—protesting that he had misused its "priceless" theme—and a mountain of free publicity for Nader followed. **WHICH MEANS** that as an adman, Hillsman is pretty priceless himself.

MERRILL BROWN

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND EDITOR IN CHIEF, MSNBC.COM

HE runs the leading source of news on the Web, MSNBC.com, which beats out the competition, from CNN.com to ABCNEWS.com. **BUT** haven't we learned that journalism on the Web is doomed to financial failure? **THE DIFFERENCE** is that somehow Brown and his team keep those eyeballs glued to the screen for breaking news. **THIS YEAR** MSNBC.com was the leading online news provider for the second year in a row. On Tuesday, July 25, when the Air France Concorde

ROBERTS: A N.Y. Times sportswriter who doesn't forget to write



O'REILLY PHOTOGRAPH BY: NICOLE ROSENTHAL; ROBERTS PHOTOGRAPH BY: CAREN LEVY

crashed, more than 3 million unique users visited MSNBC.com. **WHICH MEANS** that if Web journalism becomes a survivor, then Merrill Brown will be its Richard Hatch.

HENRY FINDER

**EDITORIAL DIRECTOR,
THE NEW YORKER**

HE is a stealth key player at the country's most storied magazine, a leader among the small coterie that runs the place. **THIS YEAR** that coterie has made the Tina Brown-era *New Yorker* its own. **BUT** there are, of course, others in that ruling group, other influential editors—all working under the talented, suave, and Pulitzered top editor, David Remnick. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Finder is a masterful idea man who uses his keen intellectual weather vane to turn unobvious subjects into Zeitgeisty articles we discuss with our friends. **WHICH MEANS** that this Youngish Turk—he's 35—could be a firm hand on *The New Yorker's* tiller for some time to come.

TUCKER CARLSON

**STAFF WRITER, THE WEEKLY
STANDARD; CONTRIBUTING
WRITER, TALK; ANALYST, CNN**

HE is the young George Will, complete with bow tie, who turns up just about everywhere—writing for *The Weekly Standard* and *Talk*, opining on CNN, and popping up on assorted other networks to weigh in on hot political issues. **BUT** pundits aren't usually exciting. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that he's won the establishment's respect at the tender age of 31. **THIS YEAR** he was detained in Vietnam while on assignment for *Talk*, and was tapped to host a new show for CNN, a sort of *Capital Gang* for 20-somethings. **WHICH MEANS** that it may be only a matter of time before he replaces Will on the back page of *Newsweek*.

STEPHEN KING

**AUTHOR, SCREENWRITER, AND
E-BOOK SELF-PUBLISHER**

HE is one of the best-selling authors of all time and—26 years and more than 30 novels after *Carrie*—has redefined the horror genre. But King can still throw the book industry for a loop. **THIS YEAR**, in the midst of his recovery from a shattering car accident, he electrified the book world with the March publication of his astonishingly successful digital novella, *Riding the Bullet*. **BUT** after his less-than-spectacular follow-up—

CARLSON: The blonde, brainy, and bow-tied pundit at home in Washington, D.C.



ROGER AILES

**CHAIRMAN AND CEO,
FOX NEWS NETWORK**

HE runs the scrappiest of the cable news networks and has sent CNN and MSNBC scrambling to protect their share of the viewing public. **BUT** FOX News is still just a cable network. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Ailes has parlayed his network's scrappy style and un-left stance into a winning for-

his first independently published serial e-book, *The Plant*—publishers loudly reassured themselves that they were still relevant. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that once King made the term "e-book" a household word, he declared on his website, "We have a chance to become Big Publishing's worst nightmare." **WHICH MEANS** that there are more twists ahead in this tale.

mula, nearly beating CNN's ratings on several nights of **THIS YEAR's** GOP convention. That's no mean feat when you consider that the Time Warner property has been around five times as long and set the standard for 24-hour TV news. **WHICH MEANS** that since Rupert Murdoch now has a viable news franchise, *The Simpsons* won't be his most recognized TV property much longer.

CARLSON PHOTOGRAPH BY: JOSHUA PAUL; ANTUNES PHOTOGRAPH BY: ANNE KATRINE SENSTAD; HOLTZMAN: JASON SCHMIDT

ANTUNES: The top editor at the *New York Post*



Everyone follows the *Post's* lead on entertainment and gossip.

XANA ANTUNES

EDITOR, NEW YORK POST

SHE started at the *New York Post* only five years ago, and helped turn its business section into required reading for media and entertainment professionals. **THIS YEAR** she was named editor of the 437,000-circulation tabloid. **BUT** it's just the *Post*, after all, and it's often full of mistakes—along with scoopy articles. *The New York Times* doesn't want to touch. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that stories in the *Post* end up all over the media landscape a few days after they appear, since everyone follows its lead on entertainment news and gossip. **WHICH MEANS** that the rest of us will have to learn to pronounce her name: SHAW-na an-TOON-ess.

DAVID BOIES

PARTNER, BOIES, SCHILLER & FLEXNER

HE wears Lands' End suits and black sneakers to court and made the nearly unprecedented decision to leave the Manhattan white-shoe firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore—where he won cases for everyone from IBM to CBS—for his own practice in Armonk, New York. **BUT** that makes him just another highly paid—if remarkably successful—trial lawyer. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that although he can charge some-



thing like \$700 an hour, he chooses cases he thinks can make a real difference. **THIS YEAR**, he won the Justice Department's first round against Microsoft, and when things got serious, Napster hired him to fight off the Recording Industry Association of America. **WHICH MEANS** that he's doing no less than shaping our relationship to the Web.

JONATHAN WEBER AND JOHN BATTLETT

EDITOR IN CHIEF, CEO & PRESIDENT, THE INDUSTRY STANDARD

THEY have created a publishing juggernaut in less than three years, proving that a little media startup from San Francisco can make the New York publishing world sit up and notice. **BUT** are they just cashing in on the tech-magazine trend that's been buoyed by a boom in advertising? A fizzle in this explosive economy could signal the end of an era for *The Standard* and its ilk. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Battelle—who hired Weber, who packed the magazine and website with A-list journalists—promoted the hell out of the *Standard* brand and **THIS YEAR** launched a European edition and a monthly called *The Industry Standard Grok*. **WHICH MEANS** that Battelle and Weber have figured out that even a saturated magazine-reading audience will welcome a new publication if it's smart and timely.

JOSEPH HOLTZMAN

EDITOR IN CHIEF AND ART DIRECTOR, NEST: A QUARTERLY DESIGN OF INTERIORS

HE is the eccentric editor of an interior design magazine that shuns conventional good taste in favor of the impossibly high-concept: In its pages, furniture doubles as installation art and the cramped bunk room of a Navy submarine gets the same worshipful treatment as a country manor. **BUT** *Nest* has a circulation of just 75,000—*House & Garden's* is 722,000—and hasn't *Wallpaper* already staked its claim as the leading "alternative" shelter magazine? **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Holtzman makes people—including editors of more mainstream shelter mags—think, rather than just fantasize, about interior design: For him, it has deep, elusive meaning and is about more than wealth, taste, or luxury. **THIS YEAR**, *Nest* won a National Magazine Award for general excellence, bringing Holtzman new visibility. **WHICH MEANS** that his obsessive quarterly may change the way we feather our own nests.

DAVID BROOKS

AUTHOR, BOBOS IN PARADISE

HE works at *The Weekly Standard* and contributes to *Newsweek*, NPR, and *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. **BUT** he's not just a Beltway scribe. **THIS YEAR** he wrote a best-selling book about America's upper middle class. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that his book coined the instantly adopted pop-culture term "bobo," which stands for "bourgeois bohemian"—former-hippie Boomers trying to square their ideals with their wealth. **WHICH MEANS** that "bobo" may come to define this decade as "yuppie" defined the 1980s.

TIM RUSSERT

MODERATOR, NBC'S MEET THE PRESS; HOST, CNBC'S THE TIM RUSSERT SHOW; SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT AND WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF, NBC NEWS

HE may have an aw-shucks, boy-from-Buffalo persona, but he's really the sharpest political interviewer out there, rightly hailed as the master of the follow-up question. **BUT** he faces tough competition: No one matches ABC's Sam Donaldson for sheer bellicosity, and CBS's Bob Schieffer is a true *éminence grise* of the Washington press corps. **THE DIFFERENCE** is Russert's ability to keep politicians on the hook as they try to wriggle off, which has

made the 52-year-old *Meet the Press* a can't-miss political show and left longtime ratings leader *This Week* in the dust. **THIS YEAR's** presidential campaign has given Russert an even bigger stage on which to practice his craft. **WHICH MEANS** that at least through Election Day, NBC's Sunday morning is must-see TV.

JON STEWART

ANCHOR, COMEDY CENTRAL'S THE DAILY SHOW

HE turned this summer's conventions from merely an opportunity for reporters to kvetch about the rapidness of it all to a showcase for how to make fun of politics. **BUT** politicians are easy targets, right? **THE DIFFERENCE** is that rather than going for the cheap laugh, *The Daily Show* tucks a knowing kernel of truth inside every joke, slyly going for the jugular: "Bush, back from winning the 'legs and heels competition' at Daytona Spring Break, recommended a reprieve for a death row inmate for the first time, after finally finding the rubber stamp marked 'reprieve.'" **THIS YEAR**, *The Daily Show* has proved itself the perfect chronicler of the presidential-campaign spectacle. **WHICH MEANS** that no matter how seriously the candidates take themselves, Stewart and his crew will make sure that we don't.

HOLTZMAN: The maverick shelter magazine editor in his kitchen





**FRANK BRUNI AND
KATHARINE Q. SEELYE**

**BUSH AND GORE CAMPAIGN
CORRESPONDENTS,
THE NEW YORK TIMES**

HE combines a novelistic eye with a deft writing style, making his dispatches on George W. Bush read more like literature than copy written on hurried deadlines. SHE has a keen appreciation for the absurdities of political life, picking up on trenchant details about Gore that other reporters overlook. **THIS YEAR'S** election, unlike the last several, has been a real race. **BUT** as more and more news outlets compete, individual reporters—especially print reporters—become less important. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that *The New York Times* still drives national political coverage. **WHICH MEANS** that these two writers affect how other reporters frame their stories—and perhaps even who wins the election.

HARRY KNOWLES

**ENTERTAINMENT JOURNALIST AND
FOUNDER, AIN'T-IT-COOL-NEWS.COM**

HE is one of Hollywood's most feared critics, with spies who leak scripts, photos, and prerelease reviews to his website, which is visited by thousands of movie buffs and studio execs daily. **BUT** a Roger Ebert thumbs-up and a Leonard Maltin four-star rating still have

more influence in mainstream America. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that the 28-year-old Knowles terrorizes the big studios by posting reviews based on purloined screenplays and violates the rules of etiquette observed by PR-compliant entertainment media. **THIS YEAR** the hysteria Knowles has caused was powerful enough for director Ron Howard to give him an exclusive first look at *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. **WHICH MEANS** that for as long as Knowles isn't charmed into playing the game, you can find him living in Austin with his dad.

BILL JOY
**CHIEF SCIENTIST,
SUN MICROSYSTEMS**

HE is one of the chief technical architects of the computer age and has been called a software genius. **BUT** does he belong on a media influence list? **THIS YEAR** Joy wrote a piece for *Wired* that created a deafening buzz and spawned a book deal. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that it wasn't a vanity column by another Silicon Valley type who thinks his genius earns him the right to write. "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us," 11,147 words long (not counting footnotes), cited everyone from Michelangelo to Kurt Vonnegut and warned of the potential danger of technological advancements.



JOY: He looked into the future and didn't like it

This from a computer scientist who helped shape the Internet. **WHICH MEANS** that Joy didn't just give us a glimpse of the future—he may have changed its course.

JOHN HUEY

MANAGING EDITOR, FORTUNE

HE is the man behind one of the country's premier business magazines. **BUT** with financial news available any hour of the day, who cares about a 70-year-old biweekly? **THE DIFFERENCE** is that *Fortune* is a master at making business sound sexy and exciting. **THIS YEAR** Huey and Co. launched the new-economy magazine, *eCompany Now*, Time Inc.'s answer to *Fast Company* and *The Industry Standard*. **WHICH MEANS** that when rumors fly that Huey is a top candidate for the post of editor in chief at Time Inc., people won't snicker and say, "A business guy?"

JIM ROMENESKO

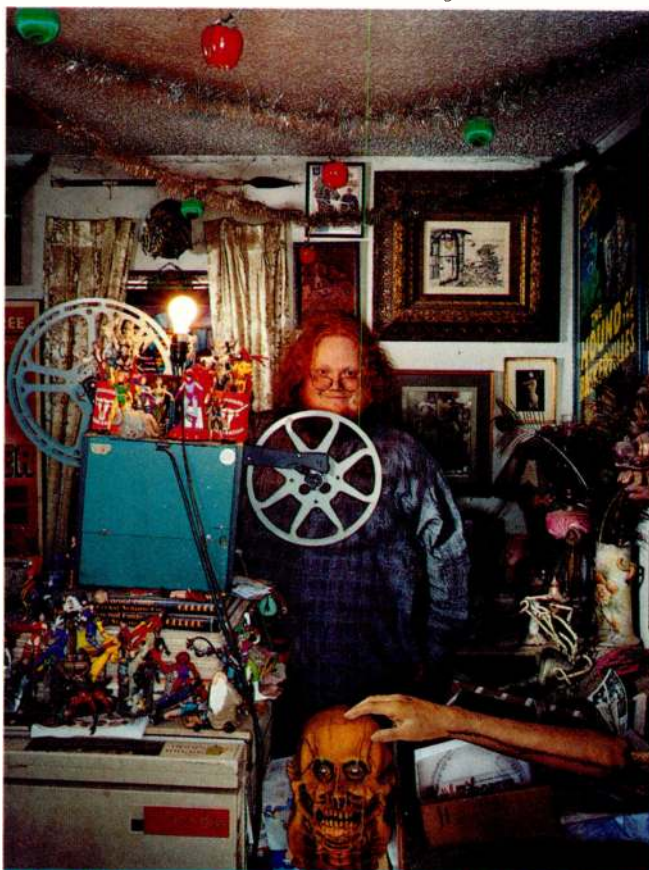
**EDITOR, JIM ROMENESKO'S
MEDIA NEWS**

HE runs a no-frills website that does little more than link to other news outlets' articles. **BUT** he's not just a middleman; his site is the go-to source for news about the news, media coverage of the media. **THIS YEAR** the site became the town hall for the press—the place where journalists went to read and report news of and on their own—and feuds among journalists often played out on his letters pages. **THE DIFFERENCE** is that Romenesko works far from the maelstrom, rising in Evanston, Illinois, at the crack of dawn to sort through and compile his coverage for thousands of insiders who need their daily fix and end up following his leads. **WHICH MEANS** he'll link to the Web version of this feature. Right, Jim?



COORDINATING
EDITORS
Heather Maher
Eric Umansky

WRITTEN BY
Jesse Oxfeld and
Elizabeth Angell
Luke Barr
Jim Edwards
Joseph Gomes
Kaja Perina
Julie Scelfo
Stephen Totilo
Hanya Yanagihara



KNOWLES: Hollywood's most feared critic lives in Austin, Texas

51

CHARLIE PETERS
**THE PETERS
PRINCIPLE**

BY TIMOTHY NOAH

Was there ever an American magazine whose size was so out of whack with its influence as *The Washington Monthly*? For 31 years, the *Monthly*—which in terms of staff size, salaries paid, and copies sold can be described only as puny—has played an enormously important role in American journalism. Now, as Charlie Peters, the founding editor in chief, prepares to retire next year, let's pause to take his measure.

Before I proceed, you should know that the 73-year-old Peters is my mentor, as he has been to roughly two generations of journalists, including Pulitzer Prize-winning author Taylor Branch; *Atlantic Monthly* writer James Fallows; *USA Today* columnist Walter Shapiro; *New Yorker* writer Nicholas Lemann; *Fortune* writer Joseph Nocera; *New Republic* writers Gregg Easterbrook and Michelle Cottle; Jonathan Alter and Jon Meacham of *Newsweek*; Matthew Cooper of *Time*; Jason DeParle, James Bennet, and Amy Waldman of *The New York Times*; Katherine Boo and David Segal of *The Washington Post*; and no fewer than four of my colleagues at *Slate*. *Monthly* alumni are a clannish (some say cultish) bunch, united by our admiration for Peters, who continues to publish—though he seldom pays for—our scribbles. If it's objectivity or measured praise you seek about him, look elsewhere. I adore the guy.

The Peters editing method is easy to parody but hard to describe. Essentially a shy man, he tends not to interact directly with writers; usually, he'll dictate changes to one of the two editors who work under him. When a story is written with a particular lack of urgency and passion, Peters may call in the writer (or, more likely, an editor) for what *Monthly* staffers dub the "rain dance." This begins

JOY: DAVID STRICK/CORBIS OUTLINE; KNOWLES: DAN WINTERS

with Charlie mumbling about a few points he wants the writer to consider, and ends with his bellowing and banging his fist into his palm. (It is alleged, though I've never seen it, that Peters jumps up and down during these sessions—hence “rain dance.”) Editors get the largest dose of Charlie’s management style, which tends to blend editorial assessments with his acute perceptions about their character. “You have an instinct for the capillaries,” Charlie told me shortly after I joined up. The words ring in my ears to this day.

“He created something wonderful,” says Peters’s Columbia University classmate Jason Epstein, himself a cofounder of *The New York Review of Books*, which over the years has shared more than a few writers with the *Monthly*. Russell Baker, who sat on the *Monthly*’s editorial advisory board until his employer, *The New York Times*, told him the *Monthly* was a “competitive organization,” adds, “I’ve always said he’s one of the great editors in a class with [Time founder] Henry Luce and [former *New York Times* Sunday editor] Lester Markel.” (Then, as now, the *Monthly* was on the brink of insolvency; when Baker told Peters that the *Times* viewed him as competition, Baker says, Peters was “very flattered.”)

Easterbrook, Peters, and Alter at the *Monthly*, 1981

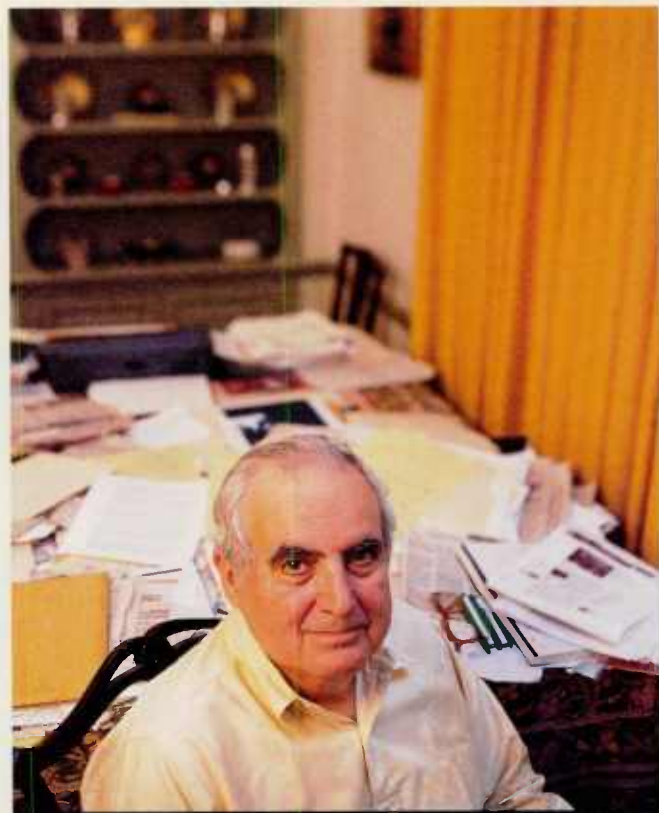


At the *Monthly*, Peters created a new kind of journalism that became a staple of newspaper and magazine reporting. The late Richard Rovere of *The New Yorker* likened it to “systems analysis,” though that makes it sound dull when in fact the *Monthly* hews a bit to the sprightly tradition of such 1960s “New Journalists” as Tom Wolfe and Gay Talese. Where Wolfe and Talese were trying to give readers a gut-level feel for the culture, the *Monthly* seeks to make vivid the culture of bureaucracy in government and other organizations that shape contemporary life. Peters is “a pioneer in what you might call institutional journalism,”

says Nicholas Lemann, “or what the Pulitzers now call ‘explanatory’ journalism.” The *Monthly* examines the work of obscure bureaucrats to shed light on how idealistic impulses to make the world a better place are often thwarted. Lemann, who is trying to arrange financing to keep the *Monthly* going when Peters departs, has employed this method to particularly good effect: His 1991 history of the War on Poverty, *The Promised Land*, shifted perspective from the stories of individual black families who migrated north after World War II to the stories of various Washington policy spats over how to improve life in the new black urban ghettos, then back again to the black families living there.

Because Peters takes a critical view of Washington—he calls its bureaucracy a “lethargic, self-protective monster”—some *Monthly* readers have concluded, erroneously, that he is contemptuous of the federal government. In fact, Peters is a fervent believer that a strong national government, when managed effectively, can achieve great things. “In the long run,” says Taylor Branch, “he’ll be remembered as a positive idealist about the role of government in democratic society...His criticisms are savage because his hopes and expectations are so high.”

Peters’s notions about how to restore big government to its New Deal golden age are a grab bag of mostly practical-minded principles that his friends and followers, with tongue only slightly in cheek, call “the Gospel.” Among the Gospel’s tenets are that public-employee unions are too powerful, that violent criminals belong in prison, that the U.S. should maintain a strong but lean defense, and that able-bodied people on welfare should work. Although none of these positions is inconsistent with current Democratic party orthodoxy, they were back in the 1970s and 1980s, when Peters’s magazine began spouting them, and when Peters



Peters, here at home, calls bureaucracy a “self-protective monster.”

coined the term neoliberal to describe them. The word, and the ideas, acquired currency among Democrats after Walter Mondale’s 1984 presidential defeat.

Peters was not a journalist when he founded the *Monthly* in 1969. He was a former West Virginia state legislator who’d come to Washington to work for the Peace Corps, where he was director of evaluation. Peters had been told not to respond to petty complaints but to figure out whether individual Peace Corps programs were well managed and worth having in the first place. “He pulled no punches,” recalls Sargent Shriver, then the Peace Corps director. “I relied upon him because he was smart, fearless, honest, and accurate.” Peters set to work commissioning field reports that combined journalistic sensibility

with rigorous policy analysis; to write them he called on established writers like *The New Yorker*’s Rovere and the occasional novelist (Mark Harris, author of *Bang the Drum Slowly*, and Fletcher Knebel, coauthor of *Seven Days in May*, both signed up), as well as journalists and lawyers he hired as employees. Eventually, Peters decided to start a magazine so he could deploy evaluators to take on the entire government.

Now, with his departure imminent, he and his wife, Beth, have embarked on a new project: raising money from foundations and private individuals to fund journalists and academics who want to write books and magazine and newspaper articles explaining how government decisions succeed or fail. The Gospel will continue to be heard, within the *Monthly* and without. ■

THE CHARLIE PETERS INFLUENCE LIST: a selection of his accomplished alumni

JONATHAN ALTER *Newsweek*
JAMES BENNET *The New York Times*
TOM BETHELL *The American Spectator*
TAYLOR BRANCH *Author*
MATTHEW COOPER *Time*
MICHELLE COTTLE *The New Republic*
JASON DEPARLE *The New York Times*
GREGG EASTERBROOK *The New Republic*
JAMES FALLOWS *The Atlantic Monthly*
PAUL GLASTRIS *White House speechwriter*
MICKY KAUS *Kausfiles.com*
MICHAEL KINSLEY *Slate*

NICHOLAS LEMANN *The New Yorker*
SUZANNAH LESSARD *Author*
ARTHUR LEVINE *U.S. News & World Report*
JON MEACHAM *Newsweek*
JOSEPH NOCERA *Fortune*
JOHN ROTHCHILD *Fortune*
JONATHAN ROWE *Author*
DAVID SEGAL *The Washington Post*
WALTER SHAPIRO *USA Today*
SCOTT SHUGER *Slate*
AMY WALDMAN *The New York Times*
ROBERT WORTH *The New York Times*

PETERS: PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNA CURTIS; DIANA WALKER

LIVE BUT NOT IN PERSON

Al Gore is always on guard—as he demonstrates in an interview with *Brill's Content*. The pencil press is frustrated by the formality, but Gore couldn't care less. By Seth Mnookin

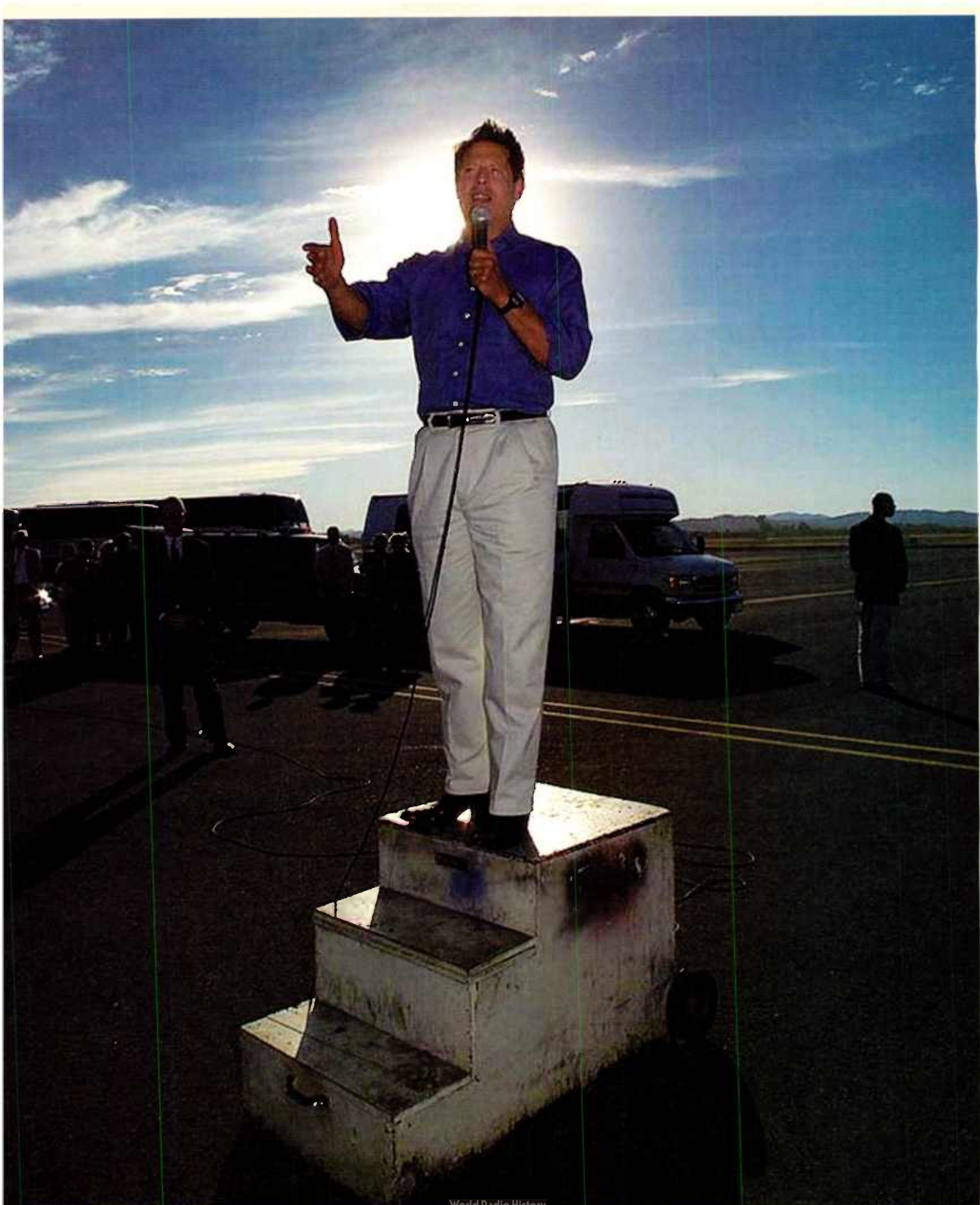
IT WAS ANOTHER NIGHT FLIGHT on Air Force Two after another long day of campaigning, another long day during which Vice-President Al Gore hadn't made any headway against his rival for the presidency, Governor George W. Bush of Texas. In the months between the primaries and the conventions, it seemed as if there were nothing Gore could do to make himself more appealing to the American people. When it came to issues—health care, social security, the economy—the polls showed that a majority of the country agreed more with Gore's positions than his rival's. But when it came to personality, these same polls found, Bush was the winner hands-down. And in this election year, with the nation at peace and the economy humming along, it seemed as if the public's impressions of the candidates—their cachet, their charisma, their leadership abilities—could trump policy.

Gore made his way back from his private cabin to the rear of his military jet, where ten or so members of the traveling press corps sat bleary-eyed. Despite all the ink spilled about Gore's lack of magnetism compared with Bill Clinton, Gore's presence in a room is accompanied by a shock of electricity. It's a jolt that comes with the office, a jolt magnified by a presidential campaign. After all, there are thousands of people around the country—campaign aides, fund-raisers, advance men, policy gurus, party flacks—whose lives are dedicated to seeing Al Gore get elected to the most powerful office on earth. And so when Gore entered the press's first-class cabin in the rear of Air Force Two, the Secret Service agents stiffened. The flight attendants perked up. And the press corps fell into position.

On this night, Gore was ruffled. His hair was tousled, and the top button of his shirt was unbuttoned. His tie was undone, his shirtsleeves rolled up. Recalling that night, Diana Walker, a photographer for *Time*, says, "The vice-president is

Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore speaks about the environment to a crowd of supporters at the airport in Eugene, Oregon.

MIKE NELSON/AFP



Gore's instinct to make sure any public representation of him is carefully thought out and weighed for pros and cons is much bemoaned by the press corps.

a handsome man....It was late, he looked exhausted....he just looked totally relaxed, and I hadn't seen him look like this." Walker was working on a "behind-the-scenes" spread for *Time*, the nation's largest-circulation newsweekly. But as Walker raised her camera and began to focus, Gore put up his hands, palms facing Walker, and shook his head. "Oh, no, no," she remembers him saying. "Please, no cameras." He offered instead to go back to his private cabin and comb his hair, do up his tie, button his shirt.

This instinct of Gore's—to make sure any public representation of him is carefully thought out and weighed for pros and cons—is much bemoaned by the press corps. The frustration is felt most acutely by the written press, which relies on unscripted encounters to round out its dispatches. And this frustration is heightened because Gore, with his candidacy, is highlighting the continued decline in the importance of the printed press in daily campaign coverage, a decline that is especially stark when compared to the ever-increasing impact of television. Indeed, since the conventions, when Gore's time on television increased exponentially, the vice-president has pulled even with, and then ahead of, Bush in the race for the presidency.

On that night, Walker was later told that it wasn't her camera the vice-president was trying to avoid but the one being hoisted by a television cameraman who stood up behind Walker as she began to focus. On television, a segment of Gore looking disheveled would have conflicted with the visual message he wants to project: that he is a strong leader, that he is indefatigable, that he is poised to take control of the country. Whatever the case, Walker never got her picture. Her missed shot was a loss even Gore campaign aides rued. "He looked sexy," said one staffer. "It was just the kind of shot that makes him look more human, the kind of picture we want out there." Walker remembers thinking to herself, "Gee, if only he knew that this is part of who he is, and if our job is to try and show what kind of person he is, every opportunity where I see him looking slightly differently from the way he looks in front of the mikes and lights is something I'm interested in....So, yeah, I was really disappointed that I wasn't allowed to shoot." This same scenario was played out again on Gore's riverboat cruise down the Mississippi following the Democratic convention. At one point, Gore lounged on the upper deck of the boat, shoes off, feet splayed over the railing. This time, it was Walker's *Time* colleague Chris Morris who was not allowed to shoot.

What Gore doesn't seem to realize, or else is unable to internalize, is that these candid shots make the vice-president more appealing to press and public alike. Wearing khakis and denim isn't enough; people want to learn what Gore is like when he's away, as Walker says, from the mikes and lights. They want to know about Gore's policy and his politics, sure. But they also want to know about him as a person.

Like many other men of his generation, Gore was shaped by his service in Vietnam. For Gore, the six months he spent as an Army reporter started him on his journalism career, which lasted until his first run for Congress at 28. And like many other men of his generation, Gore didn't have a lot of say in how the war was to shape him. "I really didn't set out to become a reporter," he tells me during an interview. "I never reported for any of my school



Above: Gore talks with reporters aboard Air Force Two during a flight from Tallahassee to Albuquerque in late August. Opposite: *Tennessean* reporter Gore (right) and the paper's chief photographer, Bill Preston, work in 1974 on an investigative piece about a local councilman.

publications....In some ways, it was the result of a random decision made by some young lieutenant in the induction center." That lieutenant, in Newark, New Jersey, assigned Gore to the newspaper of the Army's engineering command near Saigon. Gore spent about five months reporting from Vietnam; some of the articles he sent back to his wife were reprinted in his hometown newspaper, *The Tennessean*. "When I got out [of the Army], I literally had no earthly idea what I was going to do with my life. The only thing I knew for sure was that I would never go into politics," Gore says. Upon returning to Nashville, Gore had lunch with the editor of *The Tennessean*, John Seigenthaler, a friend of Gore's father. "At lunch [he] offered me a job, and I had no other way to pay the rent, so I took the job and I ended up staying there five years."

Gore worked at *The Tennessean* from 1971 to 1976; he started out covering cops, then light features and municipal government, and finally investigative work and editorials. The largest story of his journalism career was a 1974 sting operation in which the shaggy-haired Gore worked with local authorities to nail a councilman in the act of taking a bribe. At the trial, the councilman's lawyers said their client had been entrapped by *The Tennessean*, and the councilman was eventually acquitted. Years later, both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* wrote that friends said the young reporter was devastated; soon afterward, Gore began writing unsigned editorials.

Gore's career as a writer did not end when he quit *The Tennessean* to run for Congress; over the years, he has continued to write for a number of publications, most notably *The New Republic*, which is owned by his onetime Harvard instructor and friend Martin Peretz. Gore's best-selling book, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*, is also largely a reported effort; the senator was voracious in his research and

PHOTO: BILL LEASLEY/CORBIS SYGMA



wrote the book himself. In his work, one can sense a love of words and of writing, a passion that doesn't often come through when the vice-president is discussing politics. Take an essay on ecology in the 75th-anniversary issue of *The New Republic*. In a couple of pages, Gore touched on Einstein's theory of relativity, cubism, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Archduke Ferdinand, and the Ford Model T. He paraphrased Santayana and quoted Tolstoy's *Ivan Ilych*. Indeed, Gore seemed like the type of person I could have a great conversation with.

I first approached Chris Lehane, Gore's always-easygoing spokesman, in late June requesting a meeting with the vice-president. I had just come off a long, wide-ranging discussion (for a *Brill's Content* story) with Governor Bush, a discussion that had been easier to schedule than a trip home to see my parents. Lehane referred me to Mattis Goldman, who schedules Gore's interviews.

After two months of negotiations, a date, or rather a three-day time span, was set during which the interview was to take place. To be safe, I decided to travel with Gore for the entire time. After spending Monday, August 28, trailing Gore from Tallahassee to Albuquerque, I got a call from Goldman on the morning of August 29. Goldman also talked with my editors and told them that he had heard I was working on a story about several Gore reporters traveling with the campaign. If that's what my questions involved, Goldman said, the interview was off. My editors assured Goldman that I wanted to talk to the vice-president about the years he spent as a journalist and how they affected his work as a politician. Still, Goldman insisted on seeing the piece, which was to be published on this magazine's website within a week. To settle the stalemate, my editors

and I decided to post the article online immediately. Goldman then agreed that the interview could proceed. He requested a brief biography and asked if I had "any sense" of the questions I wanted to ask. My responses were given to the vice-president the next morning as part of his daily briefing book.

By this time, I was growing wary of the interview, fearful that the campaign team assumed I was out to nail Gore. I also felt like I was being manipulated. After being told I had an interview, Gore's campaign staff was trying to dictate the questions I was allowed to ask.

On August 30, about an hour before the interview was scheduled to begin in an empty classroom at Portland State University in Oregon, I was told to sit outside a curtained-off hallway being guarded by Secret Service agents. One aide called me out of the filing center. Another aide walked me up a single flight of stairs and past a trio of guards.

Julia Payne, yet another Gore press aide, sat in on the interview, as did Frank Hunger, Gore's brother-in-law and increasingly com-

mon campaign companion. When I walked into the room, I stuck my hand out and said, "Good to meet you." Gore made a crack about how we'd met before and asked me if I'd forgotten him. I was confused; I'd flown on Air Force Two a couple of times, but I had never been introduced to Gore. He was trying to connect with me personally, but his effort only highlighted the lack of connection. I stammered out a response, then sat down for the interview.

Gore was sitting on one side of a table; there was a single seat on the other side of the table for me, and Payne and Hunger sat behind me. Gore was tanned, wearing an olive green button-down shirt and gray patterned slacks. During the interview—which lasted for 15 minutes, 50 seconds—Gore frequently leaned back in his chair, scrunched up his eyes, and stretched his arms out behind his head; more than once, he yawned. Gore did not seem at ease; instead, he came across as someone who was trying his best to appear comfortable. I started out with what I thought was a juicy softball. Here are several passages from that interview:

Q: Because of the unique role you're in, if you had to give advice now to your old colleagues at *The Tennessean* about covering politics or reporting in general, what kind of advice would you give them? What have you learned from being a politician that would help you on the other side of the fence?

A: Oooh. [Twelve-second pause.] Uh, well I think the press corps does a good job today by and large, and I'm not sure they need advice from me. The profession has evolved and matured in ways that I, that make it hard for me to really give advice to journalists today. I think, you know a lot of the changes are good. Some of them are bemoaned by the press corps, by the press, by the journalists themselves, but by

Gore would not be able to make print reporters feel used if not for the continued decline in the importance of the printed press, which is especially stark when compared to the increasing impact of television.

and large I think that the press corps does an excellent job, and they're underappreciated.

I tried again.

Q: You talked a little bit in the first question about that some reporters bemoan some of the aspects of journalism today. If you had to pick one thing that you thought was the biggest problem with journalism, what would that be?

A: [Five-second pause.] Um.... [Three-second pause.]

Q: Too aggressive?

A: I think a lot of reporters don't get the support they deserve from their news organizations. [Eight-second pause.] And I'm not sure I know what the reason for that is—I think the focus, the focus on the bottom line in many news organizations now works to the disadvantage of the newsgathering function. And I think the emergence of new kinds of media such as cable TV news, 24/7, has an impact on the self-perceived role of print journalists. Where millions used to await the arrival of the morning newspaper on their doorstep to find out what news had transpired in the previous 24 hours, now, they can flip on the TV, or boot up and access the Internet, and they know the raw facts and the latest bulletin long before the newspaper gets to their front door. And I think that has pushed some of print journalism much more toward analysis than newsgathering.

There it was: the decline of the newspaper, the growing importance of television. I decided not to ask Gore about the specific impact it had on his campaign—that seemed like a good way to scare him off—so I tried to open up the question.

Q: Is that a good thing?

A: Well, I think that it's like all the rest of this, both good and bad. I think it's mostly good because you get more value added, but I think that it brings new temptations to inject subjective, to introduce subjective speculation into the heart of what would in the old days have been a "just the facts ma'am" report. And the one thing I learned from my experience as a journalist that has been helpful to me in understanding journalism today is that in many ways it's just like any other job. People are making a living and feeding their families, and they need certain things to be able to do their job well. They want to do the right thing. There are reporters who are really excellent, at the top of their game, and there are others that are not as good, just like anything else.

At this point, I started to feel desperate. Instead of giving me any semblance of nuance or personality, Gore was telling me that journalists were people, too, and that some were better than others. It seemed to me there were any number of different angles Gore could have explored that would have been interesting without being controversial or politically dangerous: the role of the printed press in a democracy, how the vice-president himself viewed the relationship between print and television when he worked as a reporter, even what his favorite news outlets were. Instead I got a carefully parsed response, spoken in tones so slow as to be soporific.

This was my one chance during this campaign cycle to get the vice-president to talk about what I assumed was a nonthreatening topic, and I was blowing it. I knew Gore was smarter than his answers; I also knew this was not shaping up to be an interview around which I could build a profile.

Q: Okay. I guess my last question is, that people often say the media just reflect what people want to read, in covering scandals as opposed to covering more substance. Is that something that you see, and as someone who's been on the substance side creating policy and as someone who's been on the journalism, the journalistic side, what do you think of that sort of tension between giving the public what they want to read and giving them what's good for them, for lack of a better term.

A: [Laughs to himself.] Oh, I think newspapers have always done both, and each publication or outlet makes its own judgment on the proper mix, and I'm not capable of second-guessing.

Q: But if you were an editor how would you make those kinds of decisions?

A: Well I think there's a, I think there is a bigger market for substance and old-style journalism than is commonly acknowledged. I think there are an awful lot of people out there who are tired of the local news philosophy described in the saying "If it bleeds, it leads; if it thinks, it stinks." And there are some local TV stations that are reacting to the evolution of public opinion and the surfeit of armed-robbery broadcasts by refocusing on [sigh] significance [sigh] and meaning. I think you're going to see more of that in the future. [Five-second pause.] Okay? Thank you very much.

Payne was on her feet, ready to escort me out to the hall, where I was met by another aide and hustled downstairs. I thought back to what David Maraniss, a *Washington Post* reporter and coauthor of the recent Gore biography *The Prince of Tennessee*, had said on CNN about his experiences with the vice-president: "We interviewed him six times...and four times it was just boilerplate answers, infuriating. He wouldn't give us anything really about him. Twice it was terrific. And I just think it was how he was feeling that day, what else had gone on, whether he'd been prepared and briefed. He's always more comfortable if he knows what's coming. But it was totally, to us, unpredictable."

By now, anecdotes like this come as a surprise to no one. So famously reserved and cautious is Gore about revealing more of himself than necessary that it's become a joke both on and off the campaign trail. "He's always put a lot of emphasis on dealing with himself in a dignified manner," Lehane said the day before the interview, sitting on a Pan Am plane chartered for the members of the press corps who didn't fit into Air Force Two's ten-person media cabin. Lehane, who notes that Gore—a senator's son—has grown up in the public eye perhaps more than any other presidential candidate in history, says, "Whenever you've been in the public spotlight for that long you have a sense that what is private is private, and he's very conscious of that."

Lehane's spin, like most spins, has a foundation in truth. Gore has exhibited a lifelong ambivalence toward the public, an ambivalence that has been heightened because Gore has lived, as a *New York Times* book review of *The Prince of Tennessee* puts it, "A Life on Page 1." (In the



Gore preparing for a photo shoot in South Carolina during the presidential primary season this past winter

book, Maraniss and Ellen Nakashima recount a story about how Gore's father, then a congressman from Tennessee, told his local newspaper, "If I have a baby boy, I don't want the news buried on an inside page." As was his father's wish, the news of Gore's birth was on the front page, with the headline "Well Mr. Gore, Here He Is, On Page 1.")

The awareness that his life was likely to be chronicled in the nation's newspapers has resulted in an often frustratingly formal public self. Gore has a sense of propriety concerning public appearances that can be jarring. Take an example from April 1989. Gore's 6-year-old son, Albert, had been hit by a car and spent nearly a month in Johns Hopkins hospital, in Baltimore. Part of the boy's spleen was removed to stem internal bleeding, and he spent weeks in a full-body cast after returning home. On the day Gore came to take his son home, the younger Gore was dressed in a jacket and tie; an Associated Press photo of Gore carrying his son out of the hospital shows them both with their tie knots tightened.

Situations like this—where Gore's formality is likely to make him less appealing to the press and public alike—abound. Gore seems constitutionally incapable of playing a part in public. His wariness of

the spotlight is as much a part of his character as is Bill Clinton's astonishing ability to emote on cue. Al Gore is not a good actor, nor is he good at pretending to like people he doesn't care for. Watching him try to force a human connection can be painful. It's the sight of a man straining to achieve something that's antithetical to his nature.

Perhaps because of this, Gore seems to approach interactions with the press as a kind of sum-total game. Gore seems to be thinking: What are the benefits of talking to this reporter? And what are the disadvantages? Nicholas Lemann, a staff writer at *The New Yorker* and the author of a recent profile of the vice-president, says this attitude comes across as offensive to the press: "In life, it always hurts to be treated in an instrumental fashion," or to be nakedly viewed as a means to an end. "If you go to a singles bar, it's the difference between saying, 'What's your sign?' and 'What do you think my chances are of being able to have sex with you later?'" says Lemann, who spent a few days traveling with the Gore campaign for his profile of the vice-president. Lemann says he thought that daily campaign reporters who were covering Gore felt themselves "to be performing a function for the campaign. There's this sense of 'What am I, chopped liver?'"

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Scripts On Deadline

Law & Order creator Dick Wolf takes on newsroom culture in his new show, *Deadline*. With former journalists on the writing staff and a scrupulous eye for details, *Deadline* interprets journalism in a way real papers usually can't. **By Austin Bunn**

As you exit the East Broadway subway station of the F train—the last station in Manhattan if you're heading to Brooklyn—you first pass a row of modest storefronts, crammed with phylacteries, menorahs, and mezuzahs for sale. On the sidewalk, a bossy Asian matriarch herds a pack of kids around you as they angle north toward Chinatown. Two blocks south, in front of a giant housing project, an industrious homeless man with a shopping cart laden with recyclables rumbles by you on his way to the waterfront. This is the far Lower East Side, and it's about as unglamorous and unpretentious as Manhattan can be.

If you continue straight, you're on South Street, which nearly borders the East River. The giant stone stanchions of the Manhattan Bridge stand to your right, looming over the squat, tan-colored *New York Post* building. Hearst's *Journal-American* operated from this address until the paper folded, and the *Post* set up shop in the late 1960s. Though the paper is still inked and printed here, the *Post* editors and reporters moved in 1995 to mid-



The fictitious New York Ledger

town, an area noticeably lacking Torah outlets or abandoned lots of broken glass and concrete. So by all accounts, 210 South Street should be quiet at 11 A.M., long after the *Post*'s early-morning printing. It's not. The soul of the paper may have moved on, but a doppelgänger has moved in.

On the fourth floor, in the old newsroom, a new paper is being produced: the *New York Ledger*, a *Post*-knockoff tabloid. But this paper will never be more than a front page. The *Ledger* is more of a dramatic idea than a publication. It's the brainchild of Dick Wolf, the auteur behind TV mainstay *Law & Order*, and this bustling newsroom is only a facsimile designed for *Deadline*, Wolf's next big gamble.

Deadline, the hour-long newspaper drama debuting this month on NBC, stars Oliver Platt as Wallace Benton, a dogged, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist in a bow tie and three-piece suit who pens a column called "Nothing But the Truth." He's the type of mythologic journalist whose face is emblazoned on the sides of buses in *Ledger* ads, who takes his Bushmills naked and recalls the pioneering reporter Jimmy Breslin—if only because in Hollywood shorthand there are no columnists besides Breslin, says Robert Palm, one of the show's executive producers. "We like to think of him [Benton] as Breslin, but

without the blue-collar, Irish, a-shot-of-beer cliché." The affable, thoughtful Platt has still another model in mind. "Wallace likes to think he's Murray Kempton," he says, referring to the deceased *Post* columnist and Pulitzer winner, "but he's flattering himself."

The show costars Hope Davis as feature writer Brooke Benton, who is also Wallace's estranged wife; Lili Taylor as the socially arrested gossip columnist Hildy Baker, a nod to the "Hildy" of newspaper comedy *His Girl Friday*; Bebe Neuwirth as editor Nikki Masucci; and Tom Conti as publisher Si Beekman (think S.I. Newhouse Jr., whose Advance Publications Inc. owns Condé Nast). The scripts are peppered with newspaper dialect for veracity: "filing" stories, "write-arounds" (profiles written when you can't swing an interview with the subject), the *Amsterdam News*, and a dig at Flight 800 disinformationist Pierre Salinger. The repartee is rapid-fire. The paper is scrappy yet noble. And judging by the knotty plots, Wallace's "truth" is never exactly simple.

With four shows in current production—the perfectly engineered *Law & Order*, now on contract for production until 2003 (making it one of the longest-running dramas on television), the more lurid *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*; the new *Arrest & Trial*; and the wisecrack *Deadline*—Dick Wolf is practically a one-man television studio. He pitches, writes, and has his hand in editing and casting, and by next season it's a good bet he'll have another idea

Deadline is produced in part by Studios USA Television, a division of USA Networks Inc., whose chairman and CEO is Barry Diller, a limited partner in this magazine's parent company.



Above: Actors Christina Chang and Oliver Platt play journalists in *Deadline*, the new NBC drama conceived by Dick Wolf (below left), who created *Law & Order*. Below right: Co-executive producer Robert Palm, a former journalist, on the *Deadline* set.



WOLF: ROGER KARNBAD/CELEBRITY PALM: PHOTO BY ROMAN BARRETT

in the hopper. It's tempting to cast Wolf with the Midas touch, but he has also alchemized lead: Remember the ninja-cop show *Nasty Boys* or the good cop/bad cyborg pairing of *Mann & Machine*? Wolf is not so much flawless as he is creatively relentless, and, as *Deadline* makes evident, he is a fastidious reader of the news.

Wolf's recent hits are in fact kindred spirits of a particularly journalistic mind. Anyone who watches his shows knows the sensation of watching a trademark Wolf story line, the uncanny feeling that you know the crime already. Perhaps it's a celebrity caught flagrante delicto in a car with a prostitute. Or the upper-crust 20-something man who beats a woman to death after rough sex in Central Park. Or the massacre of the employees at a fast-food joint, an incident that serves as the catalyst for *Deadline*'s debut episode. (Incidentally, Wolf anticipated by five months the real-life murders of five Wendy's employees in Queens, New York, last May in the pilot script. "We had the same story down to the same number of victims," he says. "It actually gave me a bad turn when I woke up that morning and saw the headlines.")

This is Dick Wolf's "ripped from the headlines" technique at play, an inventive extrapolation of tabloidese. Wolf uses the *New York Post* the way the *Post* uses the world—as an engine for stories. "In 1988, when I pitched *Law & Order* to Brandon [Tartikoff, then the head of NBC], he asked me, 'What is the bible?'" says Wolf. (A "bible" is a show's play-book.) "I said, 'The front page of the *New York Post*.'" (With *Arrest & Trial*, Wolf's other new offering this season, the echoing is even more explicit: In addition to dramatic reenactments of crimes, the show uses interviews with the actual people involved as well as news footage.) But as Wolf wants to make clear, this isn't plagiarism. "To anyone who watches *Law & Order*, it's obvious we steal the headline but not the body copy. Ninety-seven percent of the crimes prosecuted in life don't have a moral mystery in the second half."

Just as 97 percent of the incendiary headlines we read don't help us make sense of the places where we live. If the string of Wolf's successes with audiences suggests anything, it's an endorsement of his intuition that newspapers are incomplete. Crimes play out



On *Deadline*, Hope Davis plays a *Ledger* reporter, and Tom Conti is the publisher.

over weeks; prosecutions and convictions come months or years after capture, if at all. Newspapers can keep track of these developments, but too often, we're lost after the front page. What remains is the visceral scenario, the act itself but not the consequences. Dick Wolf, his producers, and his scriptwriters know this and go to work right in the gap.

If the *New York Ledger* has Nikki Masucci (Neuwirth), *Deadline* has Robert Palm. Arch and supremely occupied, Palm is *Deadline*'s showrunner—the person responsible for overseeing the script production and the daily management of the show. His office, along with those of the rest of *Deadline*'s staff, is also on the fourth floor of the *Post* building. From the elevator bank, the set occupies the left side, and the production offices are on the right. Two hemispheres: one half creative mind, one half kill-your-darlings.

Raised in Connecticut, Palm, 51, came from a family of journalists and "grew up with ink in my blood." His mother worked as a reporter for the now defunct *Hartford Times* and *Bridgeport Herald*. His father worked in advertising. His sisters also became reporters. When he was a kid, there were "millions of papers in the house."

Palm started at *The Hartford Times* and ended up by the mid-eighties at *The Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. "I loved writing, but I didn't have that taste for the jugular that makes a good daily reporter," he says. After pitching a show idea to Brandon Tartikoff at a softball game,

Palm swung a writing gig on *Miami Vice*, where he met Wolf, who was the showrunner. By the early nineties, Palm was heading *Law & Order* for Wolf, and last year he launched *SVU*. By winter, he had penned *Deadline*'s pilot episode with Wolf. He sees scriptwriting for Wolf—who makes authenticity a priority—as analogous to reporting. "Writing a one-hour drama is very much like being a journalist in that, while you're not on the phone interviewing people and getting primary sources, you function the same way: You are researching quickly and you are writing to deadline. My own favorite glib difference is that instead of getting in trouble for making up quotes, you get rewarded for good dialogue."

In addition to Palm, two other of the show's seven writers have worked as professional journalists: Yahlin Chang, who worked for *Newsweek*, and Chris Mundy, formerly a senior writer for *Rolling Stone*. Palm hired them both. And because *Deadline*, like Wolf's other shows, is not only news-based but also issue-based, most of the writers—including the non-journalists—do reporting to ensure credibility. Just like journalism, says Mundy, "if you don't know the subject you're going into, you're going to look stupid in front of millions of people." Willie Reale, a playwright and one of the show's executive story editors, says the reporting is painless. When people hear that he's calling from a television show, "they talk easily," he says. "It's like I'm the dentist—they open their mouths immediately."

Occasionally, the digging has to go deep.

For a possible upcoming episode, Chang has been investigating the legal controversy over women jailed for using drugs while pregnant. "I went into NEXIS [the news database], into the magazine archives, and downloaded 100 articles on women's rights, pregnancy, and drug use," she recalls. But the sum total of the journalism failed her. "I read them all and yet had no better understanding of the issue."

She decided to report the story for herself: "I did a Web search and found a great law review article written by the program director for The National Advocates for Pregnant Women." I've known Chang personally since we both worked on our college paper together (and also at *Newsweek*, where we worked in the arts section), and I've never seen her read a legal brief, much less pore over one. She admits that it's unprecedented. The morning we spoke, she'd had an 8:30 breakfast with the Advocates' program director. In preparation, she opened the "*Newsweek* drawer" in her desk, took out her tape recorder, and slapped in a tape with an old interview on it to record the conversation. But when she finally sat down with the director, she never turned it on. The formalities of journalism just got in the way of the story. "I took notes," she says, "but I was mostly just listening."

To be sure, *Deadline* is entertainment and these stories are fiction, even if inspired by worldly events. "There is not some mandate that I have to go out and interview everyone representing all sides," says Chang. "There is no mandate that I have to interview anyone at all." There is no presumption of objectivity—except that the same principles that shape good news stories presumably also make good conflict. "In journalism, it's called fairness. From our side, it's called drama," says Palm. "A one-sided argument is not very dramatic. When we tackle real issues or topical stories, we do have a responsibility to be even-handed in the way that daily papers also have to be."

It gets noticed. *Law & Order*, beyond the many Emmys it has accrued, won a silver gavel award from the American Bar Association for its portrayal of the law. It also has some of the highest "pull-out" rates by advertisers. According to a *Los Angeles Times* editorial written by Wolf, NBC lets its advertisers review its shows' subject matter. An episode of

Law & Order about the bombing of an abortion clinic caused advertisers to yank \$500,000; another one on assisted suicide for AIDS victims resulted in a \$350,000 loss. "Now advertisers have come to realize that it delivers a platinum audience," says Wolf, "and they cut us a little more slack in terms of topicality and contentious issues. That's a credit to the network. In all the time that I've been at the network, nobody has ever told me not to do a story. Which is a comforting zone to be in."

Deadline will also try to be as relevant as possible and runs the same risks. When the writers first met, Palm and Wolf offered up 13 possible plots for them to choose from, and half were based on news events, says Mundy. (Only about half of the 13 have actually been written.) In the pilot episode, Benton, who nailed two men in his column years before for a fast-food robbery and murder, starts having second thoughts when a copycat murder takes place. With the two men days away from oblivion on death row, Benton decides to investigate the murder himself and discovers he "crucified" the wrong men. As with other upcoming *Deadline* plots—on airplane safety and the controversy over vaccines—the story Chang is researching hews close to incendiary, real news. "In early October, a case is being argued before the Supreme

that. You're in a cathedral of journalism."

The four original *Post* main offices—now Wallace's, Brooke's, Nikki's, and Hildy's, along with a conference room—face the reporters' desks, which are piled high with coffee cups and clippings. It's a mess, admits Butler, but an authentic one. Butler had visited many of the city's papers and argues, "One principal element of all newsrooms I noticed was clutter. I'm always going around with a handcart, adding more magazines, mailings, newspapers, [and] printouts to the desks." The exceptions to the *Post*'s layout are understandable architectural revisions. In his research, Butler observed that a lot of the social interaction at the papers occurred in the kitchen, so he converted part of the former art department into a kitchenette abutting the newsroom, which, in a blurring of on- and off-camera, the cast and crew treat as their own.

Wallace Benton's office, overlooking the East River, has its own cache of effluvia: contact sheets pinned to corkboard, a lone fedora, a charcoal caricature of a jowly Wallace, and two random African tribal masks. When I ask Butler about the masks, he says with a laugh, "Let's just say that Wallace has broad interests." Later, Platt offers another explanation: "My sense is that Wallace was a foreign correspondent at some point. When

Wolf uses the *New York Post* the way the *Post* uses the world—as an engine for stories. But, says Wolf, "97 percent of the crimes prosecuted in life don't have a moral mystery in the second half."

Court about a drug-addicted pregnant woman, and it's just one of those topics that has not been covered by the media that much—but it will be," she says. "It's great to discover this stuff before it's out there. That's why it feels like journalism."

The *Deadline* newsroom isn't identical to the way it was during the *Post* era, but it's eerily close. Rick Butler, *Deadline*'s production designer, mined the *Post*'s archive for photos and blueprints of the original newsroom. "It's tremendous to be here," says Palm. "You know how certain ballparks just have a feeling to them? It's like

they were doing the office design, I suggested to Butler, 'Think Peter Beard.'"

It's hard to imagine the creators of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Lou Grant*, *Suddenly Susan*, or Ted Danson's short-lived *Ink* giving so much thought to what belongs on the walls behind their columnists. The idea that Benton might have a background that falls outside the scope of the show—a tenure in Abidjan, perhaps—speaks to the consideration of detail that is going into *Deadline*. The fact that the masks will go unexplained says something about the artistry. "I love the less-is-more approach," says Platt. "I want to leave some stuff mysterious. This isn't a sitcom [CONTINUED ON PAGE 150]"

FBI director J. Edgar Hoover (below right) was convinced that George Seldes (bottom left), editor of the groundbreaking journal of press criticism *In Fact*, was a communist. Hoover and his agents hunted Seldes for a quarter-century in a fruitless bid to prove it. Pictured are pages from a 1941 letter Hoover wrote to Seldes attacking an *In Fact* story.

Federal Bureau of Investigation
 United States Department of Justice
 Washington, D. C.
 July 29, 1944



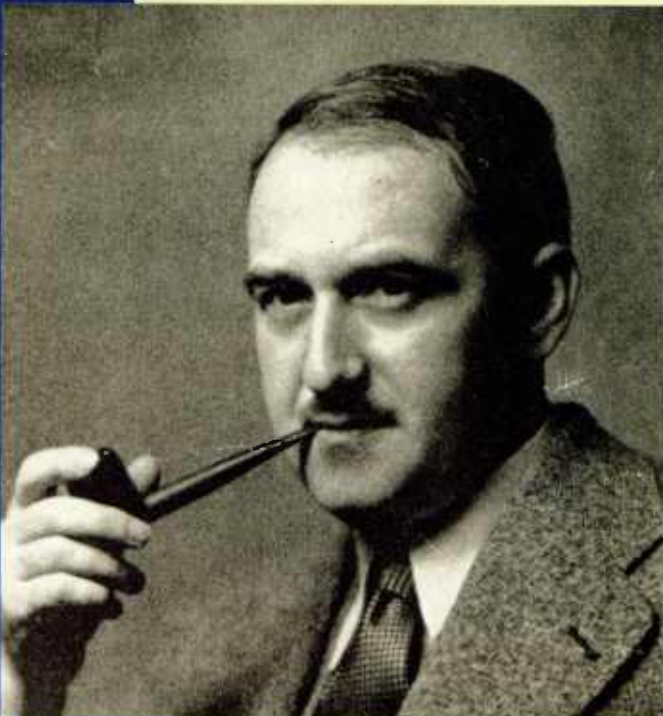
Mr. George Seldes Page 15

May I also make the observation that in the future should you desire to correctly report the activities of the FBI, I shall be very glad indeed to hear from you on specific matters in order that specific activities of the FBI in question may be explained to you if consistent with the public interest, because naturally it would not be possible to give out information of a confidential nature obtained in connection with pending investigations. I have taken you at your word, and as I said, shall observe with interest the action you take.

Very truly yours,
J. Edgar Hoover
 John Edgar Hoover
 Director

Enclosure

Mr. George Seldes
 Editor,
 25 Astor
 New York
 Dear Mr.



JOHN EDGAR HOOVER
 DIRECTOR

Federal Bureau of Investigation
 United States Department of Justice
 Washington, D. C.
 August 27, 1941

Mr. George Seldes
 Editor
 "In Fact"
 19 University Place
 New York, New York

Dear Mr. Seldes:

I wish to acknowledge your letter of July 21, wherein you refer to a letter which I directed to Mr. Thomas A. Murphy. I did state in my letter to Mr. Murphy in response to his request that the May 12, 1941, issue of "In Fact" contained a collection of "lies and falsehoods." I made this statement since I had no other choice in view of the obvious inaccuracies of the statements appearing in "In Fact."

You state that it is your purpose to publish the facts, that you keep your columns open to correction, and that if I will point out "one statement or one word in 'In Fact' which is not true....." you will print a correction. I am not so much interested in a correction as I am in keeping the records straight, and accordingly I wish to advise as follows with reference to the statements appearing in the May 12 issue of "In Fact":

"In Fact" says, "Bridges case seen as opening big gun against labor and civil liberties in preparation for war."

This statement is incorrect inasmuch as the FBI is a law enforcement organization which has for its objective the preservation and protection of civil liberties. It does not inject itself into the operations of the Executive branch. The FBI is charged, however, with carrying out the will of Congress and the instructions of the Attorney General of the United States and the President of the United States. The investigation of Harry Bridges, which resulted in a recent hearing afforded Mr. Bridges, was made on the specific instructions of the Attorney General.

"In Fact" states, "that in preparation for entering the war the majority of American citizens who want peace are being intimidated and harassed by J. Edgar Hoover, who did the same job for Atty Gen'l Palmer in World War I."

Sincerely,
J. Edgar Hoover

The strange but true tale of J. Edgar Hoover's 24-year obsession with veteran reporter and left-wing gadfly George Seldes, the godfather of press criticism. By Jim Edwards

The Journalist and the G-Man



The January 13, 1941, issue of *In Fact*, in which Seldes broke the news that tobacco is deadly ("Tobacco Shortens Life"), a story the commercial press ignored for years

ONE MORNING in 1925, a 35-year-old American reporter named George Seldes nervously boarded the Orient Express in Rome. A correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, Seldes had gotten word before dawn that Benito Mussolini had run out of patience with him. Unlike most of the American press corps in Rome, Seldes was given to naming the Italian dictator's assassins in his dispatches. Fearing for his life, Seldes packed his bags and set off for Paris.

Just as the train approached the French border, it made an unscheduled stop. Italian soldiers boarded and began making their way through the cars, yelling, "Where is Seldes?" The reporter realized that he, like others who had spoken out against Il Duce, was not going to be allowed to leave the country alive. So he barged into a compartment occupied by four British Royal Navy admirals. His introduction: "Gentlemen, if I wasn't about to be killed here on this train, I wouldn't break in on you." If the admirals hadn't pretended that Seldes was one of their party, Mussolini's henchmen might have robbed the world of one of the finest and most influential journalists of the past century. And now, through a Freedom of Information Act request, *Brill's Content* has acquired a stunning cache of FBI files that document Seldes's strange relationship with another nemesis, J. Edgar Hoover, who waged a virulent and often bizarre 24-year campaign to put Seldes out of business—for good.

Chances are you've never heard of George Seldes, who died in 1995 at the age of 104. His name never quite made it into the history textbooks along with such fellow muckrakers as Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell. But Seldes's 42-year career as a reporter and editor, spanning the first half of the 20th century,

changed the face of journalism. As legendary reporter I.F. Stone once put it, Seldes was "the dean and the 'grand-daddy' of us investigative reporters."

George Seldes was the first to report, in 1941, that cigarettes can kill you. It was he who exposed religious broadcaster Father Coughlin as a Nazi. Before any of his competitors, he traced how lobbying groups such as the National Association of Manufacturers manipulate Congress. He was the author of 21 books, including 1935's *Sawdust Caesar*, one of the first biographies of Mussolini. And, most important, Seldes was the first reporter to systematically target his own colleagues: In 1940, he cofounded *In Fact*, a bimonthly newsletter (it would later become a weekly) devoted to the premise that, as Seldes once put it, "the most sacred cow of the press is the press itself." *In Fact* essentially invented the genre of press criticism. Seldes threw open the doors of the newsroom for

the world to see, an act that has resonated through our culture from *The New Yorker's* A.J. Liebling (whose heyday at the magazine began in the late 1940s) to *Network* screenwriter Paddy Chayefsky, from *Inside.com* cofounder Kurt Andersen to *The Insider* director Michael Mann.

"George Seldes was like the trombone of muckraking journalism," *Village Voice* columnist Nat Hentoff told filmmaker Rick Goldsmith in his 1996 Academy Award-nominated documentary, *Tell the Truth and Run: George Seldes and the American Press*, which paid tribute to Seldes for the legacy of *In Fact*. "His voice was so clear, so loud, and so strident, if you like. He took what should be the most honorable term in American journalism—muckraking—and made it work again." Goldsmith's documentary, which featured lengthy interviews with Seldes, including his account of fleeing Italy, was critically acclaimed but has been shown in few theaters.

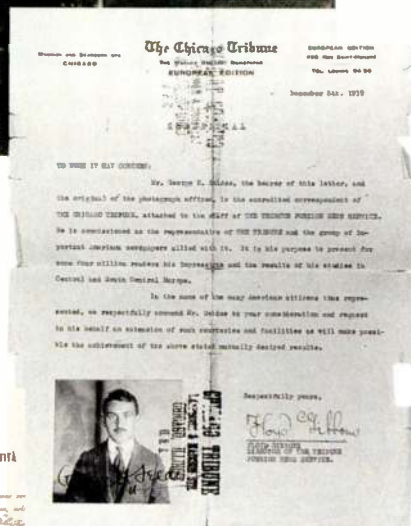
Just as remarkable as Seldes's contribution to journalism, perhaps, is the extraordinary cast of characters that passed through his life.

OPPOSITE PAGE: HOOVER; BETTMAN/CORBIS; SELDES AND DOCUMENTS; COURTESY RICK GOLDSMITH; THIS PAGE: DOCUMENT; COURTESY RICK GOLDSMITH

"[Seldes's] voice was so clear," journalist Nat Hentoff said. "He took what should be the most honorable term in American journalism—muckraking—and made it work again."



Above: Seldes (third from left) interviewing Yugoslavian leader Marshal Tito (far left) in Belgrade for *In Fact* in 1948. Below: Seldes's Vatican press pass from his days in Rome. Right: His *Chicago Tribune* press credentials, dated 1919.



Seldes attended Harvard with John Reed, the author of *Ten Days That Shook the World* and the subject of Warren Beatty's 1981 epic film, *Reds* (in which Seldes himself was interviewed as a "witness" whose recollections were intercut with the film's action). He hung out in Greenwich Village with Walter Lippman; he questioned Vladimir Lenin and wrangled Leon Trotsky into posing for American photographers; he listened to Emma Goldman complain over breakfast about women copying her hairstyle; he watched Isadora Duncan, the libertine pioneer of modern dance, drink her troubles away; he attended D.H. Lawrence's funeral along with Aldous Huxley. His brother Gilbert, moreover, served as editor of *The Dial*, the legendary literary magazine founded by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and published T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. (Gilbert's son, Timothy Seldes, is today one of New York's most successful literary agents, and his daughter Marian Seldes is a highly regarded actress on the New York stage.)

Seldes was at the center of the menagerie—yet he seemed like neither a swashbuckling reporter nor an avatar of high society. With his slight figure and close-trimmed mustache, he looked more like a librarian than the rabble-rouser he was. He was an ardent leftist and antifascist, and his preferred style—on the page and off—was loud,

strident, and indignant. Before Mussolini chased him out of Italy, Seldes was impertinent enough to chastise the dictator in writing for his censorship of the press: "We are required to give facts, to relate happenings, not viewpoints of foreign governments." Seldes concluded his lecture to the leader of the country in which he was a guest by writing, contemptuously, "I hope I have made myself clear."

That sort of unyielding and impolitic righteousness earned Seldes more than his fair share of powerful enemies over the years—he liked to boast, for instance, that his name had been banned from the pages of *The New York Times* after he offended Edwin L. James, its managing editor at the time, by testifying against the paper in a 1934 lawsuit brought by the Newspaper Guild. (There is no direct evidence of such a blacklist, but a *New York Times* spokeswoman confirms that Seldes's name does not appear in the paper's archives after the late 1930s; the earliest contemporary mention of Seldes that *Brill's Content* could find in the paper occurred in 1981.) But by far Seldes's most enduring enemy was FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. *Brill's Content* has obtained a never-before-published record of Hoover's obsession: the FBI's 1,700-page Seldes file. The documents, which consist of FBI memos, case reports, copies of *In Fact*, and Hoover's correspondence relating to Seldes, stand knee-high and tell the story of the unlikely relationship—by turns comical, chilling, seedy, and even poignant—that developed over a quarter-century between the FBI director and the legendary reporter.

In Hoover, Seldes could not have had a more implacable, vicious, or paranoid foe. If Seldes embodied the bookish look of the intellectual leftist, Hoover was the polar opposite. He had the face of a boxer, with a thick neck to match, and was often described as dressing like a dandy—all fine suits and wide-brimmed G-man hats. By 1940, Hoover had been director of the FBI for 16 years and had cemented his power with a vault of secret dossiers on almost every person of public prominence. No tidbit was too prurient, too underhanded, too irrelevant, or too unreliable to be excluded. Homosexuality, alcoholism, sympathies for African-Americans, and—most of all—communist leanings were grist for Hoover's rumor mill, to be logged until they proved useful. He could ruin almost anyone he chose.

Hoover chose Seldes in November 1940, launching a chain of events that would bring together shadowy communists, inept FBI agents, the most powerful gossip columnist in the world, and the Nazi sympathizers who once ran *Reader's Digest*. Hoover's relentless vendetta would span five presidencies and two wars and would wind its way from New York to Texas to Vermont to Mexico to Europe and back again.

Opposite: In *Freedom of the Press*, published in 1935, Seldes documented the influence of big business on news content. He decried censorship caused by advertiser pressure and called for an ethical code for reporters.

FREEDOM of the PRESS

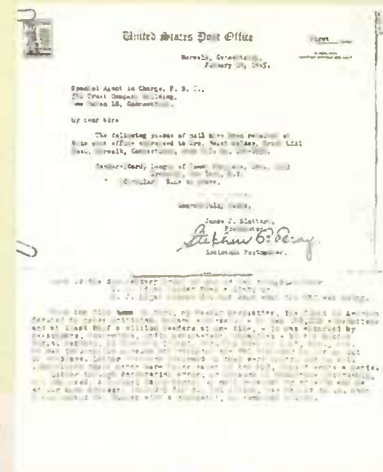


by **GEORGE SELDES**
AUTHOR OF "YOU CAN'T PRINT THAT"

Right: In his later years, Seldes retired to Vermont. Below: Seldes (far right) with General John Pershing (center, with hat) covering World War I as an Army press correspondent. Standing second from right is Edwin L. James, who would later become the managing editor of *The New York Times* and one of Seldes's foes.



Left: A sketch of Seldes by an unknown artist circa 1929. Right: Seldes's proof that the FBI had been monitoring his wife's mail—a memo recording the names and addresses of Helen Seldes's correspondents that a postal employee accidentally resealed into an envelope addressed to her. Below: Seldes (circled at right) in 1922 in the Kremlin with Vladimir Lenin (center), Leon Trotsky (left), and the rest of the American press corps in Moscow.



***In Fact's* subscribers included Eleanor Roosevelt, Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, and every justice on the U.S. Supreme Court—Justice William Douglas bought them all subscriptions.**

George Seldes was probably America's first red-diaper baby. He was born on November 16, 1890, to George and Anna Seldes, radical leftists and the founders of a failed utopian commune in New Jersey called Alliance. The family later moved to Pittsburgh. Seldes dropped out of high school and in 1909, at the age of 18, took a job as a cub reporter with the Pittsburgh *Leader* for \$3.50 a week. He was starstruck, stunned at how easy it was for a young high-school dropout to interview his populist hero, perennial presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, or cover the divorce of one of the world's richest men, Pittsburgh's Andrew Mellon.

In the autumn of 1912, at the urging of his brother Gilbert, Seldes took time off from his fledgling career to study for a year as a "special student" at Harvard, where he met John Reed. By the end of World War I, he was in Europe as an Army press correspondent (in those days, war correspondents were actually employed by the Army rather than by news agencies, and each wore an officer's uniform and followed orders) and worked alongside Edwin L. James, the future *New York Times* managing editor with whom Seldes would later have a falling-out.

After the war Seldes became the *Chicago Tribune's* European correspondent, making headlines in the U.S. in 1923 when he was kicked out of Moscow—where he had been covering the fifth anniversary of the Russian Revolution—for refusing to obey the censorship laws. In 1925, Seldes's Orient Express adventure made headlines again.

By 1929, he was living in Paris and making the scene in the city's café society. It was at a party during his first year in Paris that Seldes met an American student at the Sorbonne named Helen Larkin. She told him that she intended to go to Moscow to work for the Soviets. Seldes tried hard to dissuade her, describing how impoverished the conditions were in Russia at the time. "I don't think I ever want to see you again, Mr. Seldes," she said to him. Three years later, in 1932, they ran into each other at another cocktail party, also in Paris. Larkin had not gone to Russia. They were married within weeks.

Helen and George briefly returned to the States before traveling to Barcelona in 1936 to cover the Spanish Civil War for the *New York Post*. They returned to the U.S. in 1937 and settled in Norwalk, Connecticut. By then, Seldes had already written two books—*You Can't Print That* and *Freedom of the Press*—accusing the commercial press of self-censorship. In 1938, he wrote another, *Lords of the Press*, in which he systematically detailed the conflicted relationships between the owners of America's major news chains and big business, from Harry Chandler, publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, to William Randolph Hearst. In it, Seldes insulted virtually every potential employer he had.

Fortunately, in 1940 Seldes's friend Bruce Minton proposed that they start a newsletter together, to be based in New York City. It would be called *In Fact*, and it would critique the news and highlight the stories that the commercial press ignored. Minton told Seldes he had friends who would raise \$3,000 in start-up funds if Seldes would only



Seldes's *Sawdust Caesar*, published in 1935, was among the first biographies of his enemy Mussolini. Right: Seldes (standing, far right) with the press corps in Rome in 1925.



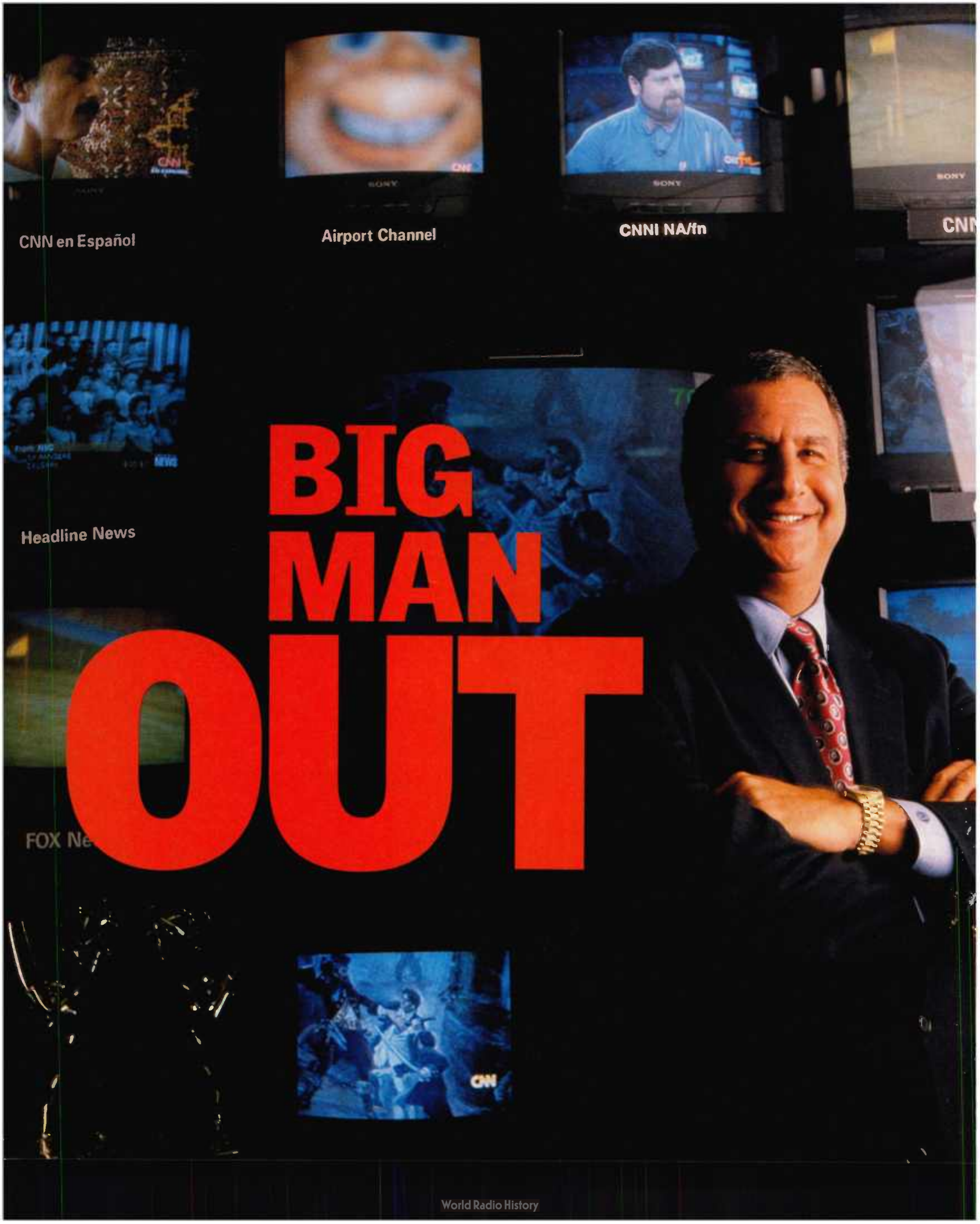
lend his name—which was already famous for his exploits as a journalist in Europe—to the masthead. Seldes agreed.

In Fact was a weekly, four-page news sheet, with two columns of very compact type per page. Its motto was "For the Millions Who Want a Free Press." Victor Weingarten, 84, who was an associate editor at *In Fact*, says, "You could read it in five minutes." The newsletter enjoyed a broad readership, from communists to trade unionists to America's liberal elite. *In Fact* subscribers, of which there were nearly 180,000 at its peak, included Eleanor Roosevelt, several members of Congress, and every justice on the U.S. Supreme Court—Justice William Douglas bought all his colleagues subscriptions, according to Weingarten. Also on the mailing list were such celebrities as Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn.

In Fact's combination of facts and vitriol was pure Seldes. When it broke the tobacco story in 1941—with the headline "Tobacco Shortens Life"—*In Fact* not only reported the results of a Johns Hopkins University study that found shorter life expectancy among smokers but also excoriated the media for having failed to cover it. "The facts...constitute one of the most important and incidentally one of the most sensational stories in recent American history, but there is not a newspaper or a magazine in America (outside scientific journals) which has published all the facts," Seldes wrote.

Reading old copies, one senses the stop-the-presses drama with which *In Fact* was produced. The headlines spin off the page as if they were in a Cary Grant movie: "Sugar Scandal" (Pepsi-Cola hoarding sugar during wartime rationing); "Standard Oil's Treason" (Standard Oil entering into a pact with Nazi Germany to slow down synthetic rubber production in the U.S.); and "Fascist Crackpot" (a congressional committee failing to act on death threats sent to *In Fact* by a fascist organization).

Seldes saw the world in black and white, and his hyperbole sometimes obstructed his reporting. Weingarten remembers that much of his job involved tempering Seldes's rants. "I had to qualify almost everything," Weingarten says. The sentences Seldes submitted would typically begin with something like "This is the [CONTINUED ON PAGE 152]"



CNN en Español

Airport Channel

CNNI NA/fn

Headline News

BIG MAN OUT

FOX Ne



CNN, facing sagging ratings and the looming AOL-Time Warner merger, jettisons its "analog television" programmer, Rick Kaplan, and goes for a remake. What kind of journalism will thrive in the network's digital future? By Ann Woolner

It's CNN's last production meeting on Thursday, August 3, the final day of the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. Inside one of the trailerlike structures that make up the temporary CNN compound, more than 20 producers, bookers, and technicians are seated around a conference table, listening to a large, 50-ish man with closely cropped hair and a thick Chicago accent tell them what CNN will air that night.

Rick Kaplan, president of CNN/U.S. and one of the best-known producers and programmers in television, is running this meeting, running the convention coverage, and, as he has been doing year-round, running CNN's domestic news network. Attentive to both the big picture and the small details, he is going through this evening's meticulously planned program to make sure everyone knows what will happen and when.

"From that, we go back to the booth, Judy [Woodruff] says, 'All right, all that's coming up. Let's take a closer look at tonight's schedule.' We roll the minute....we come out, Jeff [Greenfield] says, 'When we come back, we're going to take a look at the richest campaign ever'....We do commercial one, we roll bumper—so far it's very standard—we roll bumper 35, 'Smoke-Filled Rooms,' out of which Bernie [Shaw] introduces Brooks Jackson's...piece." Kaplan stops to alert CNN's head of public relations, sitting nearby, to a publicity possibility. "Sue Binford, this is a great piece with great reporting, and it's worth calling out to the [news] wires."

Kaplan is upbeat, in charge, and focused, clearly excited about this story while at the same time concerned about the timing of a different one. When he notices that a cue is missing from the typed lineup he has handed out, he insists he'll retype and redistribute it, muttering how he's killed so many trees that his picture is bound to appear on a wanted poster somewhere. Asked how long one segment will last, he says, "That should take us to, I don't know, a bottle of Tylenol."

Of all the people in the room, Kaplan, 53 and a towering 6 feet 7 inches, has the most headaches—with lots more to come before the month is out. CNN is a huge organization, encompassing scores of networks, websites, and news services, but Kaplan heads what most of us think of when we hear the name CNN: its flagship U.S. television network, which celebrated its 20th anniversary this year. And that network has been losing viewers at an alarming rate—it had 33 percent fewer in the first two quarters of this year than last, for example. Nine weeks before the GOP convention, CNN's audience hit its lowest point in at least a decade. For the average hour on May 28, only 158,000 households were watching; the Fargo, North Dakota, market has more homes with TV sets.

Network executives blame a bone-dry news environment and a host of new competition. "CNN was a monopoly for 20 years," says Roger Ailes, the chairman and CEO of Fox News. "They're not used to having to deal with competitors."

The quadrennial political conventions—a sure way to boost viewership for an all-news channel, especially when the broadcast networks are cutting back coverage severely—seem to have come just in time, and CNN and Kaplan are giving it the full treatment. Kaplan, a lifelong political junkie, has seen to it that nearly 300 stories were produced ahead of time—short historical tidbits as well as longer explanatory pieces, to be mixed with reports from the floor, commentary from anchors and guests, live stories, and special convention editions of regular shows such as *Larry King Live*. CNN's sagging ratings and Kaplan's future may have been the

Former CNN/U.S. president Rick Kaplan, who was ousted from his position at the cable giant in August. The network denies that the executive overhaul was related to ratings, but Kaplan says, "If my ratings had doubled, do you think they'd fire me?"

"If I had to pick a last series of specials or last piece of coverage to do in any career," Kaplan tells those gathered for his farewell, "I would have picked these [political] conventions....Of course, if I had known the conventions were my last, I might have scheduled it later."

subject of speculation and gossip within the media throng at the conventions, but Kaplan seems energized. "He's a real maestro," CNN Washington bureau chief Frank Sesno observes.

Yet before the month was out, Kaplan was standing in front of hundreds of CNN staff, many of whom he had hired, and saying goodbye. After three decades in network news—including three tumultuous years at CNN—Kaplan had been reorganized out of his job as president of CNN/U.S., just as its parent company, Time Warner, was poised to become part of the world's largest media company through its planned merger with America Online. "If I had to pick a last series of specials or last piece of coverage to do in any career," he told those gathered for his farewell, "I would have picked these conventions....Of course, if I had known the conventions were my last, I might have scheduled it later."

Kaplan had been recruited from ABC by CNN News Group chairman and CEO Tom Johnson to upgrade what in its early days had been dubbed the "Chicken Noodle Network" and to reverse the ratings slide. He gets credit—even from detractors—for upgrading the quality of CNN's content and look, deepening its coverage, and working to distinguish one show from another. But he spent multiple millions doing it and caused discord internally—while ratings kept dropping and new competitors chipped away at CNN's audience. "Rick's big ideas were Rick's expensive ideas," says a longtime on-air CNN employee. It didn't help that Kaplan, with his direct, New York broadcast-network ways, never quite fit into the idiosyncratic culture of the Atlanta-based cable operation. "Culturally, the divide was so great, they never really were able to mesh. He was always the outsider,"

expected megamerger. "I think we've done deeper reporting," Kaplan told the CNN journalists. "I think you are—you always were—an extraordinary network, and I think these last three years you've shown just how far we can grow.

"And I pray that that continues," he offered pointedly, adding, "and I'm confident it will."

To some, Kaplan's ouster signals an end to big ideas at CNN, an end to the sense that it was going beyond its core product: straight-forward news coverage. In the face of sliding ratings, the network had already been creating a host of new domestic and international channels while grappling with the promise and challenges of the multiple platforms of new media—feeding news onto websites, mobile phones, Palm Pilots, and the like. With the AOL merger, CNN will be speeding up its entry into the world of media convergence to an unprecedented degree, and there's worry within the newsroom that serious journalism can't fit on the tiny screen of a cell phone. Kaplan is a veteran network programming executive, especially talented at producing serious news, so his departure may be an omen to those who want more long-form programming. As one senior producer explained, Kaplan's "not into little snacks of [news] meals for feeding AOL and the Web and handheld devices."

"WE ARE NOT GOING TO DROP BELOW THE STANDARDS that he helped set," says Terence McGuirk, chairman and CEO of Turner Broadcasting System, Inc., eight days after announcing the reorganization that led to Kaplan's departure. McGuirk speaks to *Brill's Content* in his 14th-

floor office at Atlanta's CNN Center, with windows that overlook the city's massive convention center. McGuirk, 49, went to work for CNN founder Ted Turner in 1972 as an account executive at the station that would become the TBS network; today he oversees CNN, TNT, TBS, the Cartoon Network, the sports teams, and the rest of the Turner empire. Now he has been handed the formidable job of leading the reorganization. Although it's true that CNN is making a major thrust toward all forms of news delivery—some requiring headlines and short news bits as opposed to deeper fare—long-form journalism will have a home on its television networks, McGuirk says.

But he suggests that the future CNN will need a different kind of executive running its news operations. "Rick ran CNN/U.S., an analog television business," McGuirk says. "The future of that job is going to be hugely interwoven with the digital activities, so that it's logical to think that possibly the next person who runs that permanently will have some of those skills to be able to do that."

Officials at CNN, Time Warner, and AOL all say the decisions about Kaplan and the restructuring were made within Turner Broadcasting. But McGuirk acknowledges that the impending merger was the impetus for the reevaluation that ended with Kaplan's ouster. When the AOL Time Warner organizational structure was announced in May, the press focused on the diminished role of Ted Turner. Largely ignored, however, was the elevation of McGuirk. Credited with assembling the management team that transformed the last-place Atlanta Braves into

THE GOOD NEWS FOR CNN...	...AND THE BAD
A world-famous, credible brand name with great opportunities for brand extension	So far, brand extension efforts—CNN/SI and CNNfr—have been disappointing
Big news still draws viewers	News drought
Merger with AOL means easy access to 24 million AOL members	AOL merger means a period of uncertainty, greater profit demands; promise of moving people from Web to TV remains unfulfilled
Good demographics means high advertising rates	Domestic competition from MSNBC, CNBC, and Fox cuts into viewership, even during big-news periods
Has proved that a news organization can be profitable	Ratings in a downward spiral

says the employee, as if Kaplan were "wearing an evening gown in the produce department."

Merrill Brown, editor in chief of MSNBC.com, who knows Kaplan, observes, "I don't know whether he tried to change the organization and could not or the organization tried to change him and could not."

Whatever bitterness Kaplan may have felt about his fate, he kept it in check during his farewell address at a hotel adjacent to the CNN headquarters. As he has in numerous press interviews since, Kaplan praised his colleagues and stressed that CNN's leadership is entitled to whatever management team and structure it wants. At the same time, though, Kaplan gave voice, albeit subtly, to a concern that has been raised by his departure—especially coming so close to the

world champions, McGuirk is now, while running Turner Broadcasting, charged with the task of figuring out what to do with CNN.

What he has found, McGuirk says, is a mishmash. "CNN really has grown organically over our 20-year history," he says. "It pioneered everything it's done." But now, with the CNN name stamped onto a host of domestic and international networks and websites, with some 3,000 employees, and with a major merger on the horizon, "[w]e were not structured correctly to run our business," he says.

The reorganization, insists Johnson, who reports to McGuirk, had nothing to do with one particular news executive, nothing to do with ratings. In fact, throughout the summer, even as the network was suffering negative press because of its sagging numbers, executives were saying that although they would naturally like to see the numbers rise, CNN's health and growth did not depend on that.

As it happens, CNN is still reaping huge profits—something no other TV-news operation can claim—the beneficiary of a hot ad market, an affluent viewership, and revenues from cable operators. It is one of the largest news organizations in the world—and the most credible, according to The Pew Research Center—reaching more people worldwide than ever before. And despite its own drop in ratings, CNN still bests its domestic all-news competition. Beyond that, CNN and Turner executives were pleased, they say, with the network's convention coverage and with the way Kaplan ran it.

Still, the flagship network has been bleeding viewers, despite big investments in talent and programming. Its Internet site has been losing market share for years, and two of the spin-off networks—CNNfn, a financial news channel, and CNN/Sports Illustrated—don't even reach enough homes to be counted by Nielsen Media Research, says a CNN spokesperson.

In a telephone interview in July before Kaplan's departure, McGuirk said, "I just don't want CNN to be defined on a ratings basis, because CNN—as a worldwide brand of such importance—is just terrific. And it will survive and prosper." CNN has so many outlets for its products, domestically and abroad, he said, that when one of them slows down, there's no reason to panic. It's tempting to dismiss the implicit assertion that "it's not about the ratings" as merely a bid to make a virtue out of necessity. It's also tempting to explain Kaplan's ouster more simply: He didn't deliver the numbers. But with three all-news networks (CNN, MSNBC, and the Fox News Channel) and a period of peace and prosperity that has yielded a shortage of big news stories, it's hard to imagine any news executive being able to draw the sorts of audiences CNN used to attract even five years ago.

Kaplan was brought in to try. Tom Johnson spent two and a half years wooing him from ABC, where Kaplan had worked for 17 years—as executive producer of *World News Tonight*, *PrimeTime Live*, and, from 1984 to 1989, *Nightline*. Earlier in his career, he worked on one of the

legendary news shows of his time: *CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite*. He brought with him to CNN a pile of awards, including 34 Emmys, 3 Peabody Awards, and 2 George Polk Awards.

In terms of the content marketplace, 1997 was something of a media stone age: MSNBC and Fox News Channel were only getting off the ground, and the Internet was just starting to steamroll through the data landscape as a new, fast news-delivery system. Today, in an era symbolized by the AOL-Time Warner merger, success may be measured not by the number of people who are watching the same



The management roster (left to right): Bob Pittman, designated co-chief operating officer of AOL Time Warner; Eason Jordan, chief news executive of the CNN News Group and president of newsgathering and international networks; Terence McGuirk, chairman and CEO of Turner Broadcasting; and Tom Johnson, CNN News Group chairman and CEO

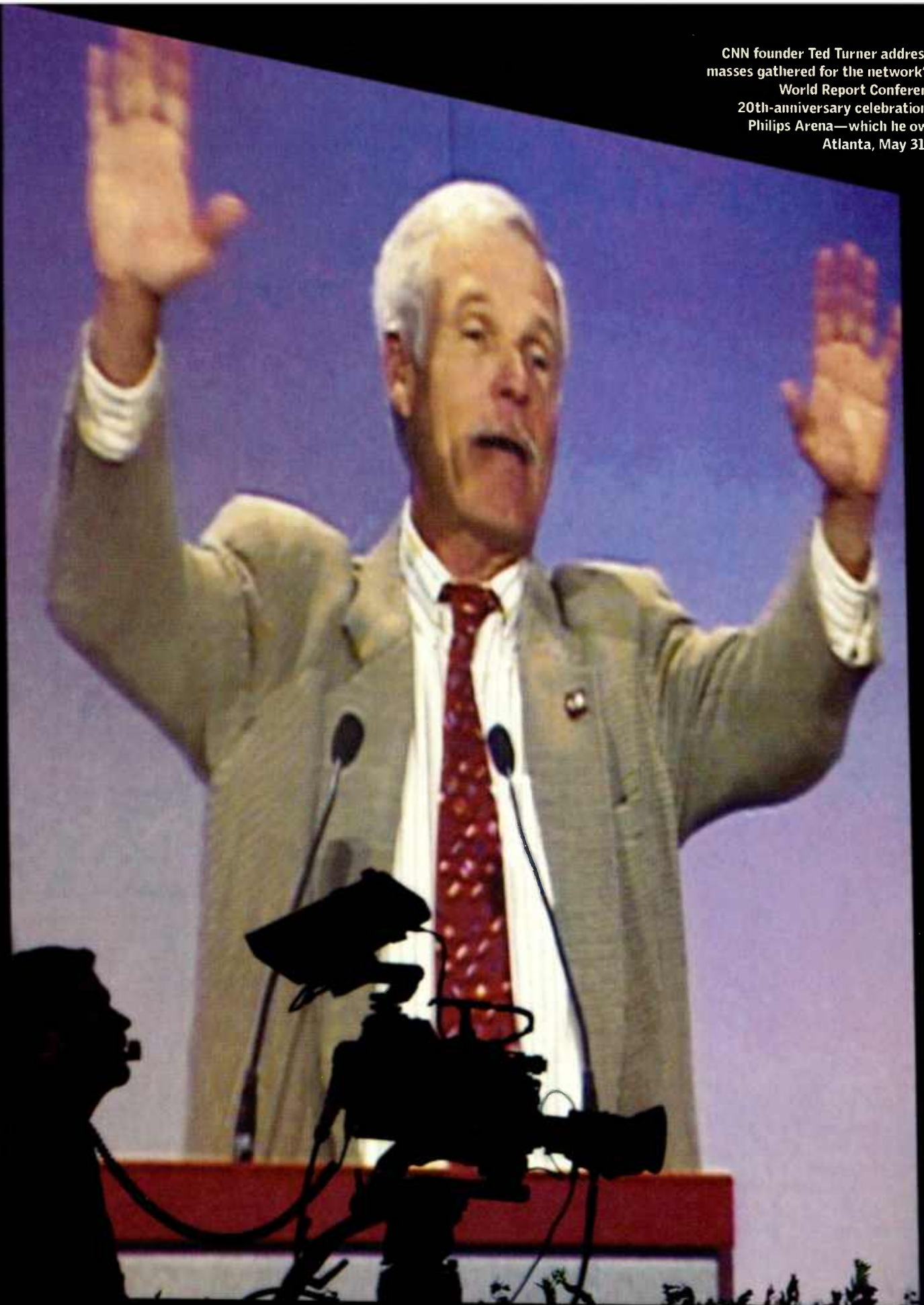
show at the same time (ratings) but by how many times a story can be reused or resold and by how many platforms on which a news product can be delivered (known as convergence).

So it isn't only that Kaplan didn't deliver the numbers; it's that his attempts to do so—better-produced stories, star journalists—were expensive and not necessarily suited to multiple platforms. And since those audiences may not be coming back anyway, why bother?

That's not how CNN officials see the changes. Johnson describes the reorganization as "recognizing that we are about to undergo some profound changes in the marketplace." He details three eras of CNN: the first focused on domestic news; the second—which started with the Gulf War—on globalization; and the third, culminating with the AOL merger, on the Internet.

To enter this era, CNN needed to revamp its bulky corporate structure and more tightly link new media with old. So two new executive positions were created: Jim Walton from CNN/SI now oversees CNN's 15 domestic channels and websites, and Chris Cramer, promoted from president of CNN International, now supervises the 18 international channels and websites. These positions were inserted above the five individual CNN network presidents (of which Kaplan was one), stripping the latter of some degree of authority and blocking their previously direct reporting line to Johnson. Also reporting to Johnson is Eason Jordan, who retains his title of president of newsgathering and international networks but gets an additional title: chief news executive of the CNN News Group. On September 18, CNN named Kaplan's number two, Sid Bedingfield, to a new post—executive vice-president and general manager of CNN/U.S.—which has less authority than Kaplan's position did.

CNN founder Ted Turner addresses the masses gathered for the network's 2000 World Report Conference and 20th-anniversary celebration at the Philips Arena—which he owns—in Atlanta, May 31, 2000.



CNN has been bleeding viewers despite big investments in talent and programming. Its Internet site has been losing market share for years, and two of the spin-off networks, CNNfn and CNN/Sports Illustrated, don't even reach enough homes to be counted by Nielsen.

Instead of focusing solely on their own medium or programs, the thinking goes, news executives will work together to develop content that can succeed in some form or another on the various CNN outlets—from TV to beepers to AOL. Does that mean a diminution of enterprise journalism, the sorts of stories that take time and resources to develop and tell well? Even Kaplan, in a telephone interview ten days after his dismissal, says it's not fair to assume at this point that "what they will try to do is cheapen it or dumb it down."

WITH THE NETWORK ABOUT TO BECOME part of the biggest Internet and multimedia company in the world—a deal with huge potential but also tremendous uncertainties—executives could hardly afford to relax. Starting in June, McGuirk invited groups of CNN and Turner executives, journalists, and marketing specialists to a series of small dinners at some of Atlanta's best restaurants. McGuirk says he wanted to learn what leaders within CNN saw as its problems as well as its potential.

Not dining with his colleagues was Kaplan. Asked about this in August, Johnson said the point of the dinners was to acquaint McGuirk with "all of the CNN key executives," especially those he did not know well. McGuirk already knew Kaplan. Still, there were other CNN veterans invited who did know McGuirk. Throughout CNN, speculation about the precariousness of Kaplan's standing was growing, but he said he wasn't expecting anything dramatic. "I'm not planning to go anywhere," he said on July 21. "We've got a problem with our audience levels, but our product has never been better." But was it a product his bosses still wanted? Out of the dinners the idea emerged for a retreat at the Four Seasons Hotel in midtown Atlanta on July 24, during the week before the GOP convention. There were 30 people in all (including Kaplan), says McGuirk, and they divided into three task forces to assess CNN's structure and future product.

A few days later, at the GOP convention in Philadelphia, Johnson was standing on one of the wooden platforms connecting CNN's trailers and holding a piece of paper with a graphic that depicted CNN's presence at the convention. In the middle, a round, black spot was labeled "CNN Operations Center." Spokes extended out to 14 different CNN news outlets, each receiving convention stories, including CNN International, a collection of networks that reaches 151 million households around the world; the CNN.com family of websites, which claims 6.5 million users monthly; *Headline News*; *CNN Turk*; the German operation, *N-TV*; *CNN en Español*, the Spanish-language network available in the United States and throughout the Americas; and *CNN Radio* and its Spanish-language counterpart.

"People say our audience is down, [but] it's only down here," Johnson declared, pointing—ominously for Kaplan, it would turn out—to the spoke representing CNN/U.S., which reaches 78 million U.S. households. In all its formats, CNN is accessible to 1 billion people around the world, so conceivably millions of people across the planet were able to see or hear CNN's convention stories without ever tuning in to CNN/U.S. and therefore not being counted by Nielsen.

But CNN's U.S. network is the one most closely identified with the CNN brand. So it is significant that CNN/U.S. has been losing domestic

viewers at such a clip, and whatever degree of truth there is to the notion that ratings are no longer the only measure that counts, Kaplan and his crew were feeling the heat.

Though Kaplan had been left out of the brainstorming dinners, at the July 24 retreat he went to work on one of the task forces. In between running the convention coverage in Philadelphia the following week and the Democratic convention coverage in Los Angeles two weeks later, he came up with his own restructuring plan for CNN. He was still in the fight.

Kaplan says that in conversations with McGuirk and other executives earlier in the summer, plans involved giving him more responsibility, not less—including ideas he had for improving CNN Interactive. By mid-summer, the plan was to have Bedingfield also work as number two to Scott Woelfel at CNN Interactive president. The principle, greater coordination between TV and the Web, was the same as the one that would ultimately get the official corporate nod—only in this earlier incarnation, Kaplan was at the hub.

Indeed, in his office in Atlanta a few weeks before the Republican convention, Kaplan had shown *Brill's Content* several prototypes for Web pages, representing one of the keys to the convergence of CNN's future: "show pages" designed to direct CNN.com users to CNN television programs. It's one thing for television viewers to go to a channel's website for more information, but no one has yet figured out how to do the same thing in reverse.

"This is an oil well that hasn't been drilled yet," said Kaplan, making a clear pitch for his role in the interactive future. "The trick is to drive them back from the Internet to television, and the only way you can do that is if your programs are in a sense three-dimensional—meaning that they offer people all kinds of things that enrich their experience."

But later in the summer, the ground shifted. Ratings kept dropping, and CNN's audience for the GOP convention, despite all the work and planning and headaches, was disappointing; CNN barely stayed ahead of upstart Fox News Channel in convention ratings. Perhaps most important, within the strategic planning sessions McGuirk had convened, "there certainly were people who felt strongly that Rick was not a team player in the way a new team was being envisioned," says a CNN senior executive involved in the process who asked to remain anonymous. And being a team player was to become a key qualification for a CNN executive.

A vision of CNN's future was emerging in McGuirk's retreats that didn't fit with Kaplan's style or, for that matter, his substance. Convergence would come to mean erasing the line between television and the Internet. "Rick's vision of CNN was more the grandiose vision of a broadcast network in its heyday than [of] this particular network in an exceptionally competitive environment," the senior executive adds.

In mid-August, just before the Democratic convention, Johnson, the man who'd recruited Kaplan and stood by him in 1998 through the infamous Tailwind story—which claimed that the U.S. military used nerve gas during the Vietnam War, and which CNN eventually retracted—was asked to describe his level of commitment to Kaplan. Johnson praised Kaplan's work, calling

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 158]

OVERKILL

When Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* used anonymous sources to report that Joel Rose, a faded local talk-show host, was being investigated for harassing women, the paper said it was doing the community a service. But then Rose killed himself, and many in Cleveland blamed their newspaper, which fought back. Now DNA evidence has emerged that may exonerate him. By Kimberly Conniff

It was just past dawn on Friday, August 4, but Joel Rose was already awake. As the sun peeked through the maple trees of the quiet, private street in the wealthy Cleveland suburb of Brecksville, where he had lived for more than two decades, Rose told his wife he was going out to get a copy of *The Plain Dealer*, Cleveland's only daily paper. Then he picked up his .38-caliber gun, walked into the woods behind his house, and fatally shot himself in the head.

Rose, a semiretired local television and radio personality from the seventies and eighties, may have already read the newspaper he said he was going outside to pick up—it was found in his living room, next to four suicide notes. The day before, *The Plain Dealer* had published a small story saying Rose's house had been searched by police for unspecified reasons. But Friday morning's story had been more specific. In the bottom-left-hand column of the front page, the article featured a recent photo of the 64-year-old and was headlined "Ex-TV host Rose under investigation in porn case." It reported that Rose was being investigated for "mailing packages containing underwear and pornography to several area women." His home had been searched two days before, the story noted, and county deputy sheriffs had taken a computer hard drive and a typewriter as evidence. Police had also escorted Rose to a hospital for blood and saliva tests so DNA evidence could be "compared with body fluids on the underwear and saliva on the packages' postage stamps." The article attributed the information to "sources familiar with the investigation," none of whom was named. Rose was quoted as saying, "I don't think I would comment" and referred further questions to his lawyer.

The result was that Cleveland heard shocking news twice that day: In the morning paper, the town read disturbing allegations about a local personality, followed in the afternoon by the news of his suicide. Readers immediately flamed *The Plain Dealer* with angry phone calls, letters, and e-mail. Rose hadn't been charged with any crime, many noted, and by

making the investigation public, the newspaper had, in effect, killed him. The paper had turned itself into a convenient outlet for residents to vent their disbelief.

In response, *The Plain Dealer* became defensive and launched an often harsh counter-attack that at times seemed even more reflexive than its readers' reactions. In a series of editorials and columns, the paper reminded readers that journalists are supposed to report facts—and that Rose was a suspect. It is not the paper's fault, editors said, if subjects of articles choose to commit suicide. In answer to an e-mail message from Merle Pollis, Rose's best friend of 25 years, Douglas Clifton, *The Plain Dealer's* editor, sent off a response that



Rose on *The Morning Exchange's* reunion show

read, in part: "I know how I would react to a false accusation of that sort. It would not have been to blow my brains out."

But Rose's guilt is not the primary issue. The paper was drawn, as many other newspapers might have been, to a tantalizing story linking an erstwhile local celebrity to salacious crimes. The sources for the story were vague (none spoke for attribution), and some of the details the paper reported turned out to be wrong. Indeed, evidence has emerged that may exonerate Rose.

FOR NEARLY 15 YEARS, Clevelanders woke up to Joel Rose's acerbic wit on WEWS-TV's popular *Morning Exchange* talk show. The program was the first in the nation to combine a casual coffee-talk format with snippets of news and

Illustration by Cliff Alejandro

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THE PLAIN DEALER

CLEVELAND'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER 35¢ PER COPY FINAL CLEVELAND SATURDAY

Rose under investigation in porn case

By ROSA MARIA SANTANA
 A REPORTER



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became the model for ABC's *Good Morning America*. Rose was a cranky but endearing host who treated his guests to a mix of compliments and criticisms. The show was a fixture in Cleveland for almost three decades before it was finally pulled from the air last year due to low ratings.

After Rose left *The Morning Exchange* in the late eighties, he hosted a variety of local radio shows. One of the most popular was a daily program called *Jewish Heritage Radio* on WELW, which he hosted with Pollis, who played the maverick liberal to Rose's crusty conservative.

**"I know how I would react to a false accusation of that sort,"
The Plain Dealer's editor wrote in an e-mail message to Rose's best friend.
"It would not have been to blow my brains out."**

In the last five years, Rose had turned away from broadcasting to focus on other interests. He helped update the Brecksville police and fire departments' communications system and indulged in a longtime hobby: flying his own airplane and giving flying lessons at a county airport. Most of his friends say they didn't see any evidence of depression or of dissatisfaction with the change in his career. "He was the most peaceful he'd been in years," says Joan Bryden, a former *Morning Exchange* producer and Rose's close friend. (She was also one of his flight students.) But others saw Rose struggling to resurrect a career that had long been waning. One popular TV host says Rose recently begged him, a former protégé, for a job recommendation as a part-time traffic reporter. "He was looking for any way to get back in the business," says the host.

The Plain Dealer stumbled onto Rose's possible connection to crimes in the middle of the summer. Edith Starzyk, an assistant metro editor who has worked at the paper for seven years, was driving to work down a two-lane highway in Brecksville on Wednesday, August 2. She happened to look to the left as she passed a black sign that reads "Glen Valley Drive: Private" in faux gold lettering. The sign leads to a secluded street with elegant, well-maintained homes. It's an exclusive neighborhood, so when Starzyk saw a city police car, three unmarked cars that she says were "fairly obviously police cars," and a sheriff's special unit waiting to turn onto the main road, she was curious. When Starzyk reached the office, she e-mailed another editor, David Kordalski, who'd grown up in one of the houses on the street, to see if he could find out what was going on. Kordalski called his parents, who have lived there for 36 years. "We have no idea what it's about," they told him. "But that's Joel Rose's house."

Suddenly the paper had the beginnings of an intriguing story. At the same time Starzyk e-mailed Kordalski, she asked reporter Rosa Maria Santana, who covers Brecksville, to learn more. The next day's article—the first of the two published while Rose was alive—appeared inside the metro section and hardly provided a clear picture. It revealed that a search warrant had been served at Rose's home but said that "what was being sought or what prompted the search could not be determined." According to Jean Dubail, a city editor at *The Plain Dealer* and the principal editor of the piece about Rose, the paper "briefly" considered holding the article—not because it might be unfair to Rose but because the newspaper was worried that the story would tip off the TV competition. "Then we decided no, there's a search taking place, we'll go with that much and see what happens," says Dubail. (Santana and other reporters referred all questions to their superiors.)

By Friday, the paper was able to put together a front-page story revealing that "sources said" Rose was being investigated for having mailed lingerie and "pornographic magazines and a greeting card with a typewritten message" to "several" unnamed area women. (Later articles reported that at least 20 women, many of whom were "blond and thin" and worked in broadcasting, had received packages. The paper also detailed how the mailings had become more explicit—one contained a vibrator wrapped in lingerie, another a shirt with two holes cut out of the front—and that ten of the women were in therapy as a result.)

Though Thursday's and Friday's stories referred to the warrant and detailed possible charges, including "menacing by stalking and pandering obscenity," the articles didn't note that the warrant was under seal and that, according to editors, no one at the paper had seen it.

Before anyone had a chance to react to Friday's story, Rose had killed himself. Then came the tsunami of criticism. "What you did to Joel Rose is unconscionable," wrote one reader. "You not only destroyed and murdered him, you also ruined his family and all of us who loved him for his radio and television work." Another person left a voice-mail message for Santana, the reporter who wrote the first two stories: "You have blood on your hands."

Many of the readers focused on the paper's decision to report on the accusations before prosecutors had filed charges. "To run this story, based on nothing more substantial than an ongoing police investigation," wrote one, "shows your true tendency towards sensationalistic journalism, the facts of the case obviously being secondary to the seductiveness of 'the story.'"

One of the city's alternative weeklies, the *Cleveland Free Times*, contributed a scathing critique of *The Plain Dealer's* coverage. "Readers were informed about an investigation by mostly unknown authorities on behalf of anonymous victims without a clue as to the investigation's merits," staff writer David Morton argued in the *Free Times's* August 16 issue.

The newspaper fought back. In three columns and two editorials over the next two weeks (one titled "Paper Not Reason For Rose's Death"), editors and writers at the paper said that the decision to publish the story was not influenced by the lurid nature of what one of the editorials



The Cleveland Plain Dealer's editor, Douglas Clifton

termed "petty perversions." Instead, editors argued, the newspaper was simply fulfilling its journalistic mandate. Many people "want to find someone to blame" for Rose's suicide, wrote Sam Fulwood III, a columnist, in one of the paper's first responses to the charges, which appeared in the same issue that reported Rose's death. "This is normal, understandable—and wrong." In the column, Fulwood, who had joined the paper from the *Los Angeles Times* just a week before, went on to say, "The media's *raison d'être* is to discover and publish information....It's precisely what [our reporter] did." Readers crammed Fulwood's voice-mail box and e-mail account with messages—"better than half of them negative," he says.

Fulwood's other rebuttal was less carefully thought out.



Rose (left) on the set of *The Morning Exchange* in the late seventies with cohosts Jan Jones and Fred Griffith

In what seems like a bit of wish fulfillment, he apparently forgot that Rose had never been arrested, let alone convicted. “It was proper for the police and Cuyahoga County prosecutors to identify the person responsible,” Fulwood wrote. “And it was just as proper for the newspaper to report on authorities’ findings.” But authorities hadn’t identified the “person responsible,” only a suspect. Regina Brett, another *Plain Dealer* columnist who had recently joined the paper, made a similar mistake, comparing Rose’s case to that of a local firefighter who (unlike Rose) pleaded guilty to rape. In a staff editorial the day after Rose’s death, the newspaper wondered why Rose had chosen not to wait for the results of the DNA tests: “If [Rose] was responsible for the pornographic parcels, he has forfeited the opportunities for redemption that this life can offer.”

The paper also spent a considerable amount of space detailing what Clifton dubbed “no ordinary crime”—including a nearly 2,000-word front-page story it published a week after Rose’s suicide. However, to some critics of *The Plain Dealer*—including one of Rose’s alleged victims—the crimes did not merit such extensive treatment. One woman, identified only as “Stacy,” told a local TV station, “Joel Rose’s suicide has affected me more than all the stalking packages and letters I have received in the mail.”

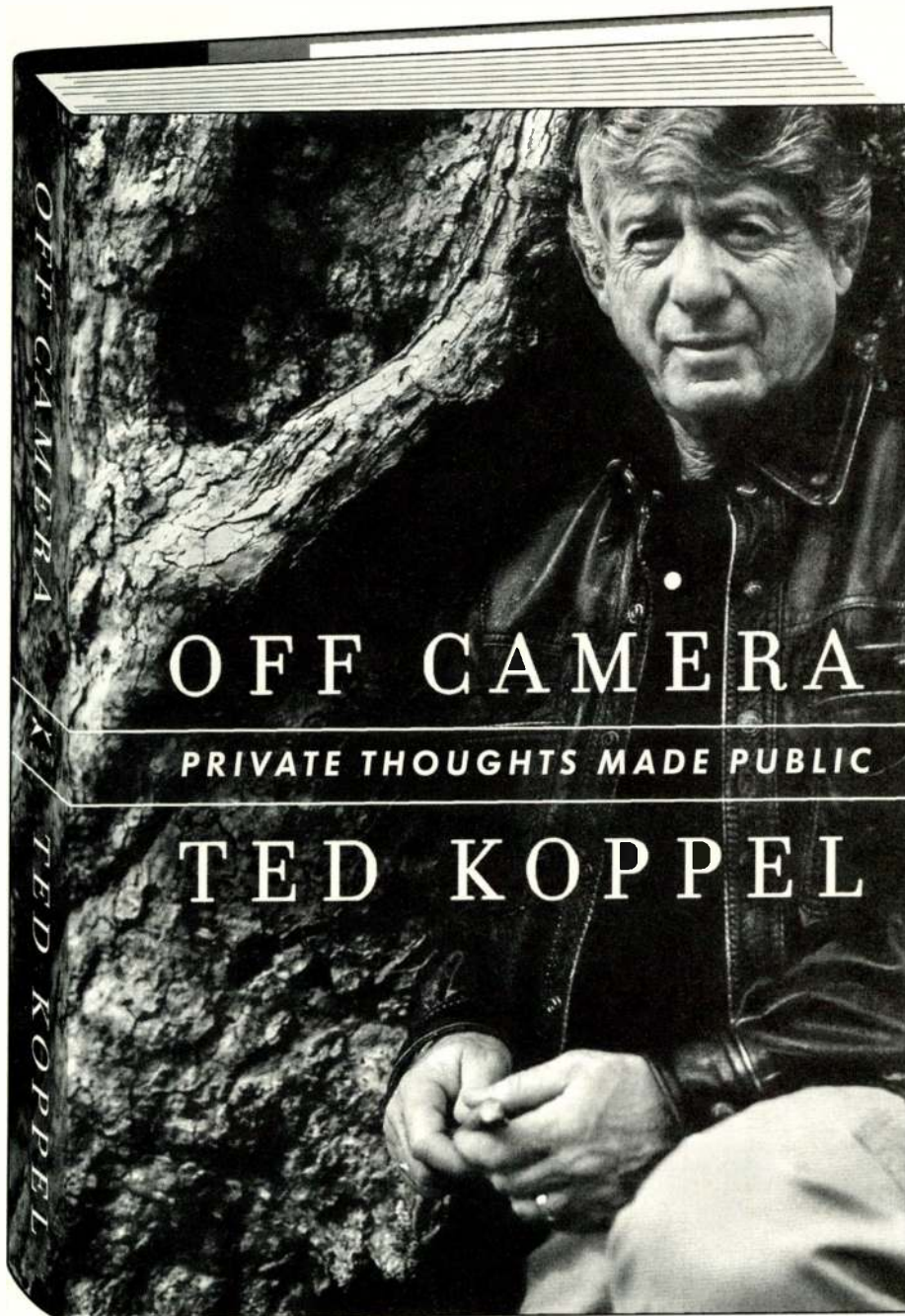
Rose’s friends were stunned by the paper’s decision and its caustic response. “Why is it so important to destroy [Rose’s family’s] life when the rest of these allegations are really [of] prurient passing interest for the public?” asks Liz Richards, one of the original hosts of *The Morning Exchange*. (Rose’s

widow, as well as his son, declined to be interviewed.) Jan Jones, who had cohosted *The Morning Exchange* with Rose for six years, says she knows why. “What if [Rose] were a Kmart worker? It made the front page because he’s a personality,” she says.

After the initial two articles and Rose’s suicide, the paper’s subsequent news stories—which were reported with the help of two additional writers—wrapped more details around the original reporting to provide a more textured account of the investigation. One of the articles described how police had been surveying Rose’s trash and a website he ran—a “bawdy and sometimes racist satire of small-town newspapers” with photos of “scantily clad women.” (The site was taken down the weekend of Rose’s death.)

The paper provided more details about the case, but it also provided conflicting ones, suggesting that the sources for the original stories may have been less informed than the paper says. In the second story, for example, the paper reported that “body fluids” had been found on some of the items in the packages. But in a story nine days later, the paper revealed that “stains on one garment proved not to be bodily fluids, as previously reported.” (The paper didn’t explain what the stains were.) *The Plain Dealer* also repeatedly misreported the length of time police had been investigating Rose: first 2 years, then 4 months, and finally 11 months. Dubail, who edited the stories, explains that “sometimes when you have more than one source, as we did, not everyone is always singing from the same sheet of music.”

At least two other local news outlets were working on stories about Rose before he killed [CONTINUED ON PAGE 162]



“Now, in *Off Camera*, you will get to know the Ted Koppel I know: irreverent, ironical, informative, intimate, sometimes irritable, but always enormously interesting. Whoever thought he would let us inside?”

—Barbara Walters

Ted Koppel speaks off camera!

In his new book, the celebrated television newsman gives us an insider's view of the 20th century's final year, from the Clinton impeachment and the war in Kosovo to the opening dramas of the presidential election.

And, as events trigger memories, Koppel speaks with candor and a feisty wit about his own experiences in the turbulent world of news. Here is the voice we know from *Nightline* reminding us, in entertaining, thought-provoking, and memorable ways, how deeply public events reverberate in our private lives.

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BOOKS

SHOW THEM THE MONEY

BY RICHARD SCHICKEL

Cute title—*The First Time I Got Paid For It...Writers' Tales from the Hollywood Trenches* (PublicAffairs). It's accurate in that the book consists of 54 brief recollections by screen and television writers mainly about the first time they received money for a script. It also, obviously, contains a sexual innuendo—if, that is, you find degradation and humiliation sexy. The majority of these essays find their young and naive authors doing things they don't want to do for short money, no prestige, no creative satisfaction.

Since they have, by now, attained a certain success within their trade and a few of them—such as William Goldman (*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *All the President's Men*), Cameron Crowe (*Jerry Maguire*, *Almost Famous*), and Steven Bochco (TV's *Hill Street Blues*, *NYPD Blue*)—have gone on to somewhat larger fame, they can afford to look back in wryness on their early struggles. The things we do when we're young and dumb—chuckle, chuckle.

A few have genuinely sweet tales to tell. Fay Kanin (*Teacher's Pet* and the Broadway play *Rashomon*), for instance, framed the first dollar she made writing—she had answered an ad in her hometown newspaper, which offered a dollar for folks to recount their “most embarrassing moment.” Goldman is wonderful about the cata-tonic state he was reduced to when a publisher accepted his first novel, *The Temple of Gold*; his roommate had to call family and friends with the good news. Carl Reiner's story has him thinking he was talking about his unpublished short stories with a manufacturer of ladies' pocketbooks, not an editor at Pocket Books, and emerging, stunned, with a \$1,000 advance on a novel, *Enter Laughing*, which in time became both a play and a movie.

The strange—and sometimes demeaning—reality of the screenwriting life in Hollywood • *Best* books give publishers a big boost • Books not read: Writer Geoff Dyer looks at what's gathering dust on his bookshelf • One man's seven days and nights of nonstop television • Steven Brill considers a new biography of Robert F. Kennedy • The King of horror gets a colorful makeover

Writers' Tales From Hollywood

From *The First Time I Got Paid For It...*, five movie and TV scribes on their “first time”



ERIC BOGOSIAN
(*Talk Radio*, *subUrbia*): “I thought I would write a screenplay, everyone would fall in love with it, and in a few months it would get cast and shot...You could say I was a dreamer. You could say I was a fool.”



LAWRENCE KASDAN
(*The Big Chill*, *Mumford*): “Originally the agent thought he wouldn't have much trouble selling my script, so he agreed to represent me. But after sixty-seven rejections, he was getting discouraged.”



PETER TOLAN
(*Analyze This*, HBO's *The Larry Sanders Show*): “My first exposure to the writer's life was *The Dick Van Dyke Show*...I dreamed about having a job where I could laugh all day and tell jokes and then go home to Mary Tyler Moore and maybe get to see her in her underwear.”



CAMERON CROWE
(*Jerry Maguire*, *Almost Famous*): “Life is funny; it's just a matter of editing out the boring parts...or, hell, you can give up and go for a fart joke.”



WILLIAM GOLDMAN
(*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *All the President's Men*): “The first time I ever had a cata-tonic fit was also the first time I ever sold a piece of writing. The two events are more than a little related.”



Such stories have a pleasantly innocent ring to them because the economic stakes are low, the desire to express oneself is pure, and, largely, they are about not writing for the movies or TV. This book (edited by Peter Lefcourt and Laura J. Shapiro, with some proceeds going to the Writers Guild Foundation), on the other hand, carries as its epigraph the familiar quotation from Dr. Johnson: “No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.” This is not necessarily true, but it surely summarizes their theme. To borrow another phrase, these stories establish what most of these writers are. The rest is merely haggling over the price.

I take no satisfaction in that thought. I am

a member of the Writers Guild (I make documentaries), which has excellent health insurance and pension plans. I count among my friends a number of screenwriters who are all people of excellent jest—smart, amusing, terrific company. I freely acknowledge that they do something, professionally,

FACES, COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: VICTORIA AROCHO/AP PHOTO; ALAN WEISSMAN/ZUMA PRESS; JIM COOPER/AP PHOTO; JIM RUYMEN/UP; TERRY O'NEILL

for which I have no capacity.

My problem is that I don't know why they do it. Or, rather, I know all too well why they do it and have trouble accepting the crass truth: It's the money, stupid. Which is better than any writing money in America, unless you happen to be named John Grisham. According to the guild's latest schedule of minimums, the least you can be paid for a high-budget original screenplay is \$88,614, but almost no one works for so paltry a sum. Triple that is the least a practiced writer will get for a script—with fees rising exponentially from there, depending on your track record. Since the typical screenplay is usually only 120 pages long, with lots of white space, it doesn't take long to execute. It's the pitching and kvetching that take the time and energy.

The best part of this arrangement is that the money is guaranteed. Employers have to pay up at defined stages—treatment, first draft, final draft—even if what you turn in is, in their always debatable judgment, useless and they decide to start over with a new writer. The art of screenwriting consists very largely of keeping the discussion open, no matter how idiotic its twists and turns, so you can reach the next point at which you can collect some more dough.

In some ways, this manner of doing business compares very favorably to that of the book writer, who, if he goes astray, will not receive the money due at the halfway point or upon completion of his manuscript and, worse, will be obliged to pay back whatever he has already received. Naturally, he accrues no health or pension benefits from his toil.

Given these circumstances, you can see why some people with a skill for fictional narrative very reasonably choose to write screenplays. Certainly we can understand why people endure

the kind of entry-level hazing this book records. They hope that by paying their dues they will qualify to compete for bigger, brassier rings.

But the process is ugly. One guy finally sells a script to a television series, appears on the set on the first day of shooting, and endures an out-of-control harangue from the star. It turns out, of course, that what he's denouncing is not the script the writer sold but a version of it that the show's staff surreptitiously rewrote. A young woman writes a TV pilot that never gets made. Later, at a Christmas party, hands reach out from behind her, slide up her sweater, and fondle her breasts. They belong to the executive who promised her a deal but never produced her show.

**THOUGH THE MONEY
KEEPS GETTING BETTER,
A SCREENWRITER'S
POSITION WITHIN THE
INDUSTRY NEVER REALLY
IMPROVES.**

Even the success stories contain sadistic elements. A near-destitute writer goes to his agent's office to fire him and finds him, miracle of miracles, negotiating with a studio for the rights to one of his screenplays. He wants \$500,000. The studio has offered \$250,000 but keeps calling back to up the ante. While the writer writhes in anguish, the agent refuses to take these calls. Instead, he engages in excruciating negotiations with his interior decorator about couch fabrics. Later the deal is done—for \$350,000—but a bruising lesson in status has also been taught.

For the truth is that though the money keeps getting better and better, a writer's position within the industry—unless he becomes a writer-director—never really improves; he never has command of the way his work is realized. As a result, it eventually deteriorates to mere craft—all stale moves and fake passion.

This is not an issue anyone takes up in this book, but it is something the reader can discern from the about-the-author blurbs appended to each piece: so many shared credits (indicating the rewriter's hand); so many produced pictures so inconsequential that even a movie reviewer (which I also am) has trouble recalling them; so many assignments coyly alluded to not by title but by the network or studio that paid for them and then did something unspeakable with them.

The practical problem confronting screenwriters is that they traffic in words, not (as directors do) in images. There they sit on the page—infinity, Talmudically parsable. And as every writer, regardless of genre, knows, almost every one he meets believes that he, too, could be a writer—if only he had the time. Or the discipline. Or something. This is particularly true of studio "creative" executives, whose whims, no matter how moronic, are ironclad. It is their money, and since the writers are doing "work made for hire" (to borrow the standard contract's most pernicious phrase), the work is theirs, too—in theory even before it is typed up.

From this remarkable power, all else derives. The studio people know that the cheapest fixes you can make are at the writing stage—before actors, locations, and sets—so as they dither they drain the script of its freshness, often enough of the very impulse that attracted them to it in the first place. They also know, as the writer knows, that the safest decision they can make, the one no one will ever challenge, is not to make the movie. The next safest decision they can make is to fire the writer, who may be an author in his own mind but is never an auteur in anyone else's. So no matter how much experience and prestige a writer acquires, he remains essentially in the same position as a first-time writer—infinity rewritable, instantly dismissable, his only reliable reward (or consolation) being the check.

It perhaps did not have to be this way. There are other ways of bringing scripts into being, ways that permit the writer a measure of control over the finished product, some pride of authorship, some acknowledgment of the reasons besides money that people write—to express an uncompromised idea, some idiosyncratic human truth. One thinks of Jean-Claude Carrière, the great French screenwriter, Luis Buñuel's noted collaborator—not to mention Jean-Luc Godard's, Louis Malle's, Volker Schlöndorff's—whose professional life is about meaning, not money. But this is Hollywood, the American way, and as this book shows us, it is the way they start teaching the kids the minute they step off the bus.

Robert Mitchum once defined success in

BEHIND THE BOOK

BEST OF THE BEST OF THE BEST

This month, Houghton Mifflin will publish two new anthologies: *The Best American Travel Writing* and *The Best American Science and Nature Writing*. The editions widen the scope of an already formidable anthology franchise, begun in 1915 with the publication of *The Best American Short Stories*. The possession and perusal of *Best American* books endow readers with the illusion of multigenre fluency, although reading them can sometimes feel more like a chore than a shortcut. It now seems that there's a collection to suit every interest. Houghton also publishes *The Best American Essays*, *The Best American Sports Writing*, *The Best American Mystery Stories*, and *The Best American Recipes*. Bob Gray, of Northshire Bookstore in Manchester Center, Vermont, says of the *Best American* series, "Customers come in and ask: 'Are they out yet? Are they out yet?'"



THE BUSINESS

The books began to pick up steam in 1986 with the inauguration of *The Best American Essays*, followed by *The Best American Sports Writing* in 1991 and *The Best American Mystery Stories* in 1997. Houghton Mifflin's vice-president and editorial director, Janet Silver, says that *Best American* sales have grown "exponentially" in the past three years. As a whole, the series now sells more than a quarter of a million copies each year. Houghton Mifflin's longstanding success has encouraged a slew of pretenders: Scribner, since 1988, has published *The Best American Poetry*; St. Martin's issues *The Best American Movie Writing*; Little, Brown backs *Best American Gay Fiction*; Touchstone circulates *The Best American Erotica*; Crown cranks out *Best American Screenplays*; out this month from PublicAffairs is *The Best American Magazine Writing*; and proving that—however obscure—every genre has its best, too, Taschen mints *The Best of American Girlie Magazines*. EVE GERBER

Hollywood for me this way: “You don’t get to do better; you just get to do more.” That’s what finally makes *The First Time I Got Paid For It...* such a sad little book and the Writers Guild such a sad—if often impotently angry—little union. Everyone knows there is more to the writing life than money. The guild is always whining for conditions that would aid its members in attaining that state—so-called “creative rights”—and it has yet to make meaningful progress on any of them. At contract time it eventually takes what money it can and runs. For it knows that in the movies a writer is allowed to be only one kind of blockhead—the kind who takes the money and stays. ■

THE ULTIMATE COUCH POTATO

BY JESSE OXFELD



Think you watch too much television? No way can you beat Jack Lechner. Last September he conducted a study: He installed 12 televisions in his New York apartment and spent a week watching all of them from dawn to dusk. Indeed, he usually

watched well past dusk, taking in everything from Katie, Diane, and Mark McEwen in the morning to Jay, Dave, Conan, and Craig late at night. He watched Donny and Marie, Rosie and Oprah, Leeza and Montel—and Tom and Dan and Peter. Lechner recounts the experience in *Can't Take My Eyes Off of You* (Crown Publishers)—and, after only two days, worries whether his TV experiment “hasn’t irreparably altered my brain function.” He was inspired by a 1968 book, *Seven Glorious Days, Seven Fun-Filled Nights*, in which Charles Sopkin chronicled his week watching six channels of the then-cableless medium. The lesson of today? “In a multichannel world,” Lechner observes, “there’s nearly always something worth watching, on one channel or another—and if you don’t agree, then you probably shouldn’t be watching television in the first place.”

Sopkin’s effort was, Lechner writes, “a cherished book of my youth,” but it’s harder to imagine anyone cherishing this new version. It’s quickly apparent that Lechner—who was an executive at Miramax—is a clever and lucid writer, with many cute one-liners. (“Sunday television,” he says, noting pundits’ backgrounds, “is like a perpetual reunion for ex-Nixon staffers.”) But there are fewer deep insights on the state of television today than obvious observations—“the ultimate subject of television is television itself” and “television seems like an infinite series of mirrors, reflecting celebrity as far as the eye can see.” Even so, *Can't Take My Eyes Off of You* is an amusing diary of Lechner’s impressively eye-straining (and sanity-straining) week. ■

BEHIND THE BOOK

ON BOOKS NOT YET READ

BY GEOFF DYER

Sometimes it works like this: You buy a book, take it to a café, begin reading, continue through to the end, and never look back. Or, in a variation on the same scene, the book arrives in the mail, you open the package in a frenzy of expectation, skim its contents over breakfast, start reading in earnest that evening and don’t stop till the last page. Having been bought and read, the book, like one of those creatures that die the moment they have procreated—i.e., served their purpose—goes to its final resting place among all the other books on your shelves.

Except not all those other books are resting in peace, because not all of them have been read. Admittedly, some have acquired an almost impregnable, near-monumental Do Not Disturb quality. These are the books in the Never To Be Read section. *Finnegans Wake* is generally to be found here, in all its unopened canonical glory. Most of the other unread books, however, exist in a less certain area, midway between Having Been Read and Never To Be Read: the Not Yet Read. This is by definition a temporary—or at least a perpetual—category, a kind of limbo in which books are waiting, sometimes interminably, to make the transition to Having Been Read.

Let’s be clear: We’re not talking about that section of a bookstore populated by books you’ve not read—a region so vast and amorphous as to be unmappable. We’re talking about books you own but, for all sorts of reasons, can’t get round to reading. Maybe you bought them because they were cheap, out of print, or enthusiastically recommended. You might have picked them up and tried to read them three or four times, and yet, somehow, they refuse to get read; you want to read them, but you can’t. I want to read Saul Bellow’s *The Adventures of Augie March* (bought after Martin Amis’s introduction to the recent Everyman U.K. edition was published in *The Guardian*), but a kind of readerly impotence—my eyelids droop—takes hold every time I

LITERARY WANDERER

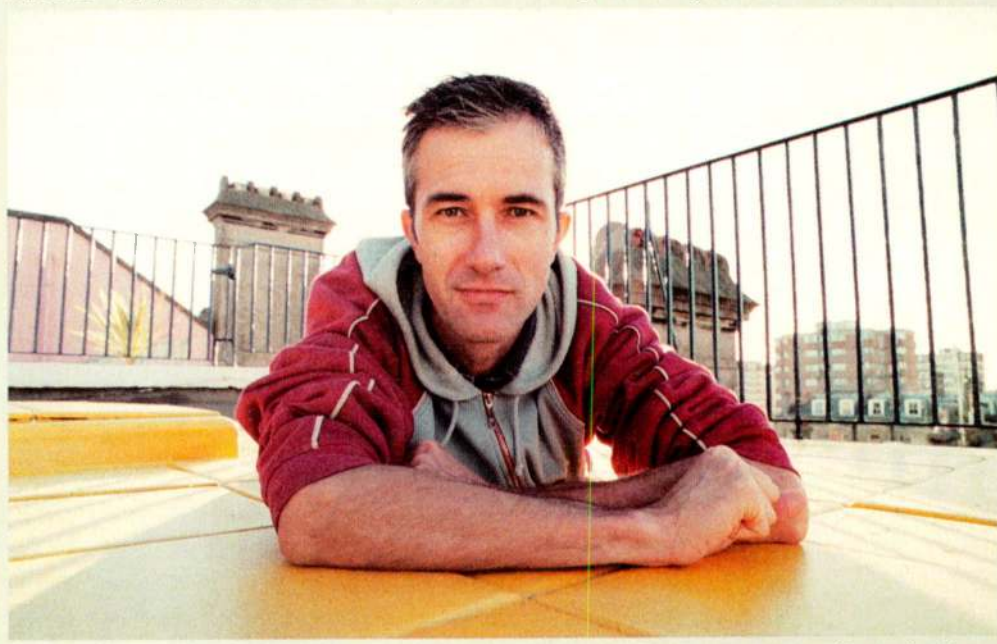
pick it up. Somehow the time is not yet right.

This feeling is far more common with poetry. Friends were always telling me to read Joseph Brodsky. I bought *A Part of Speech* but couldn’t get into it. Years passed. Although I might have done a number of other things during that time, these years seem, in retrospect, to have been devoted primarily to not reading Brodsky. Then one day, on a whim, I started reading *The Thames at Chelsea*, and it happened. Just like that. Suddenly I loved Brodsky. Quite often a single line—in the case of Louis MacNeice it was “And each rich family boasts a sagging tennis net,” from his *Autumn Journal*—provides sufficient leverage to open up the whole book, but why it happens when it does seems arbitrary.

These thoughts are on my mind because I have just read Michael Herr’s *Dispatches*. To be precise I have just read the Picador paperback that I bought 20 years ago. I tried to read it when I was 22, didn’t dig it, and pretty much forgot about it. Then, five days ago, I started to read it. And loved it. Nothing occasioned this. I hadn’t seen a Vietnam film, hadn’t dropped acid, hadn’t read anything about Herr, hadn’t done anything even tangentially relevant. But as I skimmed along my shelves—not even in a looking-for-something-to-read way, just in an admiring-my-collection way—*Dispatches* jumped out at me. I would love to be able to end that sentence with “literally,” but that would be untrue. What is true, however, is that my role in this was almost entirely passive. Something about the book insisted that it be read. After only 20 minutes of reading, the last 20 years melted away.

When people speak of the timelessness of literature, they generally have in mind a book’s capacity to captivate through different eras of history. But there is also a sense in which literature creates a personalized timelessness that is dependent, paradoxically, on the passage of time.

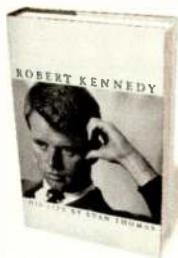
This article is from contentville.com, where more of Geoff Dyer’s “Literary Wanderer” columns can be found.



Writer Geoff Dyer: There are “books you own but, for all sorts of reasons, can’t get round to reading.”

READING RFK

BY STEVEN BRILL



Amid all the depressing signs that journalism is in decline, Evan Thomas's *Robert Kennedy: His Life* (Simon & Schuster) is a reminder of what great journalism can be. Thomas, a *Newsweek* assistant managing editor, is already one of my heroes for his book on legendary D.C.

lawyer Edward Bennett Williams and, with *Time* managing editor Walter Isaacson, *The Wise Men*, the story of the American diplomats who shaped postwar foreign policy. But his Kennedy book is better. Like Robert Caro's epic biography of Robert Moses, which told us the inside story of the development of 20th-century New York, Thomas's wondrously textured RFK biography tells us not only the story of the former attorney general and slain presidential candidate but also much of the story of the McCarthy era, the Teamsters, the John F. Kennedy presidential campaign, the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the civil-rights movement, Lyndon Johnson, J. Edgar Hoover, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and, of course, the 1968 presidential campaign. The book reads quickly, even suspensefully in many places: The narratives of Kennedy's

historic 1966 trip to South Africa; his stormy, sad years as a prep-school runt; his ad-libbed speech from the top of a truck in inner-city Indianapolis the night Martin Luther King was gunned down; his rocky relationship with his never-satisfied father; and his hemming and hawing about whether to oppose President Johnson in 1968 are riveting. But Thomas proves that pace does not have to overrun substance; almost every time a paragraph raises a question that some other source might be able to answer, the reader flips the page and finds that Thomas has gone to that source for the answer. "These people are all now about the right age, in their sixties and seventies, where they were ready to talk," says Thomas. In fact, the author spent four years tracking these people down, though even when he did so he is careful to give credit to other writers who might have gotten to pieces of his story first.

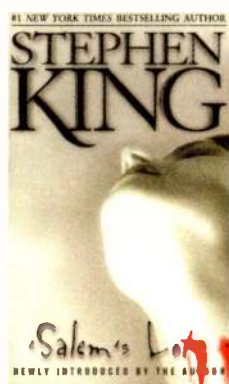
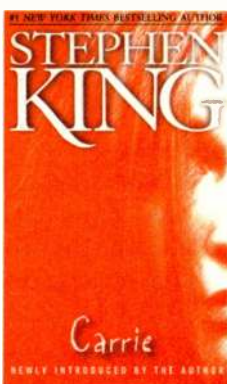
A great example has to do with the phone calls John and Robert Kennedy made following the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.'s arrest at a lunch counter sit-in in Georgia during the 1960 presidential campaign—an intervention credited with helping JFK secure a crucially high turnout among African-American voters. JFK called Mrs. King, while RFK called the county judge who had just sentenced King to four months' hard labor and denied him bail. Thomas quotes another writer's account of how and why the Georgia governor and the judge decided to release King following RFK's call, but he also

reinterviews the governor and others involved himself to get a fuller story.

That RFK call in support of Dr. King, described by Thomas as based on political gut instincts—plus an almost naive outrage that someone would not be given bail in this kind of situation—exemplified what Thomas calls RFK's "parallel instincts that coexisted within him." It's a central and telling theme of the book. Others include Thomas's carefully drawn portrait of an RFK spooked both by J. Edgar Hoover (because the FBI boss had so much information about his brother's philandering with a woman who was also the mistress of mob boss Sam Giancana) and by the specter, following the JFK assassination, that RFK's relentless targeting of both the mob and Fidel Castro might have had something to do with his brother's death.

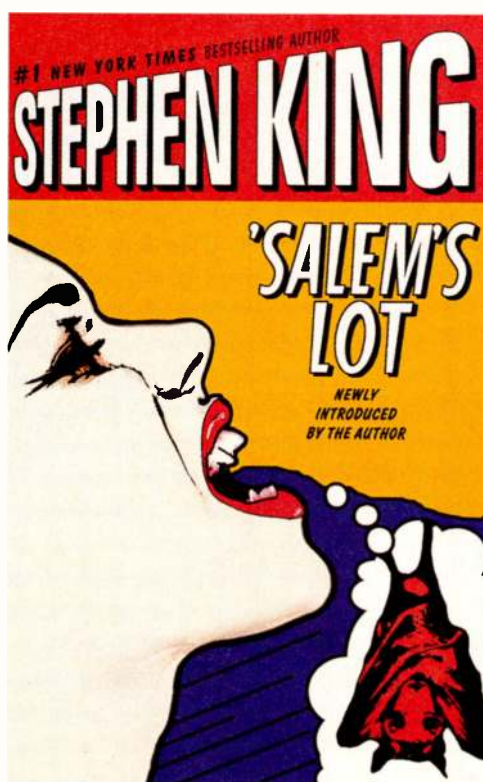
As Thomas makes the rounds of television shows for his book tour this fall, many will recognize him as one of the talking heads who appeared regularly during the Lewinsky scandal. Indeed, he probably won't get a tenth of the TV time for this book that he got for his speculating about Monica and Linda and Ken and Bill. Which is too bad, because *Robert Kennedy: His Life*, among its other attributes, shows the place that real scandal and intrigue can have in public policy and the people who make it—and shows how a real journalist can handle the subject matter in a way that elevates rather than degrades both the writer and the reader. ■

ONE NEW LOOK FOR TWO OLD KINGS



The covers of Stephen King's first two novels, *Carrie* (1974) and *Salem's Lot* (1975), have, in mass-market paperback, traditionally been outfitted with a typical horror look: moody photographs, drops of blood—ghostly, grimly minimalist (above). This month, Pocket Books will reissue these classics in trade paperback format with atypical new covers: campy, Technicolor images (right). The trade format is usually reserved for more highbrow or "literary" works, and these reissues prove that King has transcended the thriller genre and become something of an icon, no longer bound by commercial limitations.

HANYA YANAGIHARA



Here's How to Buy a **PublicAffairs** Fall Book

(or any good book, for that matter)

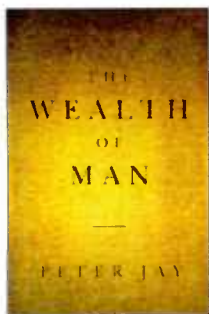
The book business is changing...and it's changing in good ways for people with interests beyond the bestsellers-of-the-moment. Good books like the ones PublicAffairs is publishing this fall sometimes used to be hard to find. But now there are a lot of ways to get the book you want:

1. Ask at any bookstore. All booksellers, small or large, can get you most books in a few days. It helps to know the title and author, but if you don't, ask anyway. A great bookseller can help you find what you're looking for.

2. Phone, fax, or e-mail. You don't have to brave bad weather to get your book. Most stores these days can be reached in any number of ways. Make the trip another time, when you feel like browsing. Today, buy the book.

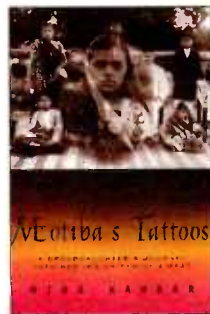
3. Surf the web. There are a burgeoning number of on-line bookstores, each with its own unique character. Just click to order.

4. Contact us. If it's a PublicAffairs book you want, we can guide you to the stores in your area that have it, or that will help you get it. Call us toll-free at 1-877-PUB-1234, or e-mail us at publicaffairs@perseusbooks.com. Here are some of the good books we're publishing this fall. Ask for them!



The Wealth of Man
Peter Jay

September 1-891620-67-3
\$30.00/44.95 Canada



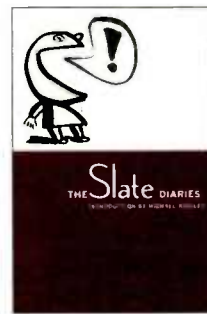
Motiba's Tattoos
A Granddaughter's Journey Into Her Indian Family's Past
Mira Kamdar

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\$24.00/36.50 Canada



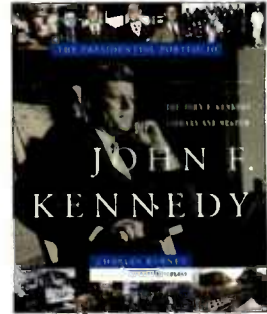
The Last Debate
Jim Lehrer

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\$13.00/19.95 Canada



The Slate Diaries
Introduction by Michael Kinsley

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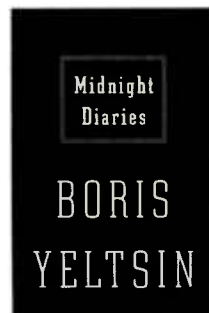


John F. Kennedy: The Presidential Portfolio

History as Told Through the Collection of the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum

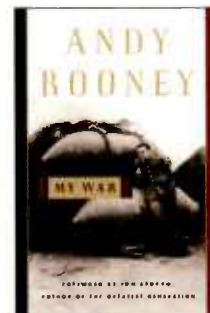
Charles Kenney
Introduction by Michael Beschloss

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Midnight Diaries
Boris Yeltsin

October 1-58648-011-1
\$26.00/39.50 Canada



My War
Andy Rooney
Foreword by Tom Brokaw

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\$20.00/29.95 Canada



The First Time I Got Paid For It
Writers' Tales from the Hollywood Trenches
Edited by Peter Lefcourt and Laura Shapiro
Introduction by William Goldman

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\$24.00/36.50 Canada



The Best American Magazine Writing 2000
From the American Society of Magazine Editors
Edited by Clay Felker

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You Should Have Been Here Yesterday
A Life Story in Television News
Garrick Utley

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HOLLYWOOD HOUSE CALLS

When Dr. Jerome Groopman, an AIDS and cancer specialist, started writing stories about his day job, his career took off in new directions. Now he's the inspiration for the new ABC drama *Gideon's Crossing*. By Elizabeth Angell

If there were a formula for multimedia success, it might go something like this: Write an article (keep it short, because attention spans in Hollywood are, well, short) or a series of articles (better to secure a TV deal to fill those endless hours of prime-time viewing); make it true to life with real characters (fiction is tired—reality is what the American people want); get it published by a well-respected East Coast magazine (you know, one that's read by transplanted New Yorkers who live in L.A. but say they eventually want to move back to New York); and voilà, you're a media phenomenon.

Meet Dr. Jerome Groopman—multimedia oncologist. His first book, a series of intimate portraits about patients suffering from various diseases, was excerpted by *The New Yorker* before it was published and immediately became a national best-seller. He was then offered a staff writing position at the venerable weekly and published his second book this March. Last year, his agent at ICM secured a television deal with a major Hollywood production company, and the resulting show, *Gideon's Crossing*, loosely based on Groopman's first book, debuts this fall on ABC with Groopman as a consultant.

There isn't a guaranteed formula for multimedia success—as Groopman's agent, Suzanne Gluck, puts it: "There's no Tuesday meeting where they decide who becomes a star." But for someone who took up writing as a diversion, Groopman is having a good run. He is an AIDS and cancer researcher by training. His double life as a doctor-writer is unusual, but in an age in which celebrated chefs write best-selling cookbooks and host programs on cable, and newspaper columnists and white-shoe lawyers are regulars on the talking-head circuit, Groopman's career evolution makes perfect sense.

Of course, the transformation from reality to "based on reality" requires adjustments. On *Gideon's Crossing*, Groopman's TV alter ego isn't a married, 48-year-old Jewish doctor but rather a widowed, 38-year-old African-American one played by former *Homicide* lead Andre Braugher. As Ben Gideon, the chief of experimental medicine who treats patients with cancer and other diseases at a large Boston teaching hospital, Braugher makes real what Groopman says he's

wanted all along from his second job: for the public to see what he describes as "the drama and risk that's involved in trying to make medical progress."

Modern Hollywood success is a team effort, and a practicing doctor's national celebrity comes about no differently. Groopman's achievement has been facilitated by an agent, several book and magazine editors, a production company, a television studio, and numerous publicists. Before the television production deals, however, Groopman's supporters were a group of influential friends who encouraged him to write and helped him get his work published. Groopman heads up experimental medicine at Harvard's Beth Israel Deaconess hospital in Boston. He published his first piece in *The New Republic* in 1989, thanks to Martin Peretz, who owns the Washington-based political weekly. Peretz and Groopman met at the Harvard Hillel in the mid-eighties; the doctor had arrived late to a service at the campus Jewish organization and sat awkwardly in front. After the service ended, remembers Groopman, who is a lanky six feet five inches, Peretz approached him and said, "You are enormous. I didn't know they made Jews that big."

GROOPMAN'S SUCCESS HAS BEEN FACILITATED BY AN AGENT, SEVERAL EDITORS, A PRODUCTION COMPANY, A TELEVISION STUDIO, AND NUMEROUS PUBLICISTS.

At that time, Groopman had been practicing medicine for more than a decade, training first as an oncologist and blood specialist and then, in the early 1980s when AIDS was discovered, as a specialist in the treatment of that disease. His debut in *The New Republic* was an account of the spread of HIV to the Soviet Union. The piece

brought his reputation as an AIDS expert to a broad national audience that was just beginning to learn about the disease. Groopman continued to write for *The New Republic* and soon graduated to the op-ed pages of *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, both of which have used him as a go-to guy on medical issues.

By 1996, when Groopman sat down to write more personal pieces about his experience as a doctor, he was a tenured professor at Harvard Medical School, a husband, and a father of three. "Only half joking, I say I had my midlife crisis," says Groopman in his sunny, slightly cramped Boston office, surrounded by pictures of his family. "I'm very much in love with my wife and I don't like sports cars. So I wrote."

Friends to whom he showed the stories were forthcoming with advice about navigating the publishing landscape. Peretz and his wife, Anne, introduced Groopman to writer Maggie Scarf, who helped him secure his agent at ICM, a high-powered talent agency that represents writers as well as actors, directors, and producers. Of his agent, Gluck, Groopman says, "I think she took me on as a charity case."

Groopman's first book, *The Measure of Our Days*, tells the stories of eight patients afflicted with deadly cancers, blood diseases, and AIDS. The pieces deal with mortality and the patients' struggle—with or without the help of their doctors—to decide how hard they want to fight for continued life. "I realized that as a physician, you have extraordinary experiences and you occupy a perch which is unusual," says Groopman. "You have complete, immediate, and intimate access to people's lives from the moment you meet them."

This intimacy is why the stories were so appealing to Viking Penguin, the publisher to whom Gluck sold Groopman's collection. "The person on the street is much more interested in medical issues these days," says Paul Slovak, the vice-president of publicity for Viking Penguin and a 17-year veteran of the company. "[Groopman's book] satisfied a need that people had to know about medicine and to have it given to them as dramatic human stories." Groopman's work also feeds an increased appetite for nonfiction writing. The popularity of such books as *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* and *Into Thin Air* in the mid-nineties sparked a boom in literary nonfiction. The publishing houses know that, increasingly, the reading public wants books with the suspense and narrative drive of fiction but the authenticity of stories that are based on actual events.

The Measure of Our Days made the best-seller lists in several regional newspapers, and Groopman was soon compared with such doctor-writers as Sherwin Nuland, author of *How We Die*, and Oliver Sacks, whose stories formed the basis for the Oscar-nominated film *Awakenings*, starring Robin Williams. Like Nuland and Sacks, Groopman is part of a tradition of doctor-writers. Trained physicians from Anton Chekhov to William Carlos Williams have struggled to bring to a lay audience their wealth of experience with life, disease, and death. Groopman fits neatly into this tradition, and although his work may not be

high literature, the stories are engrossing and easy to read—and have been praised by doctors and critics alike.

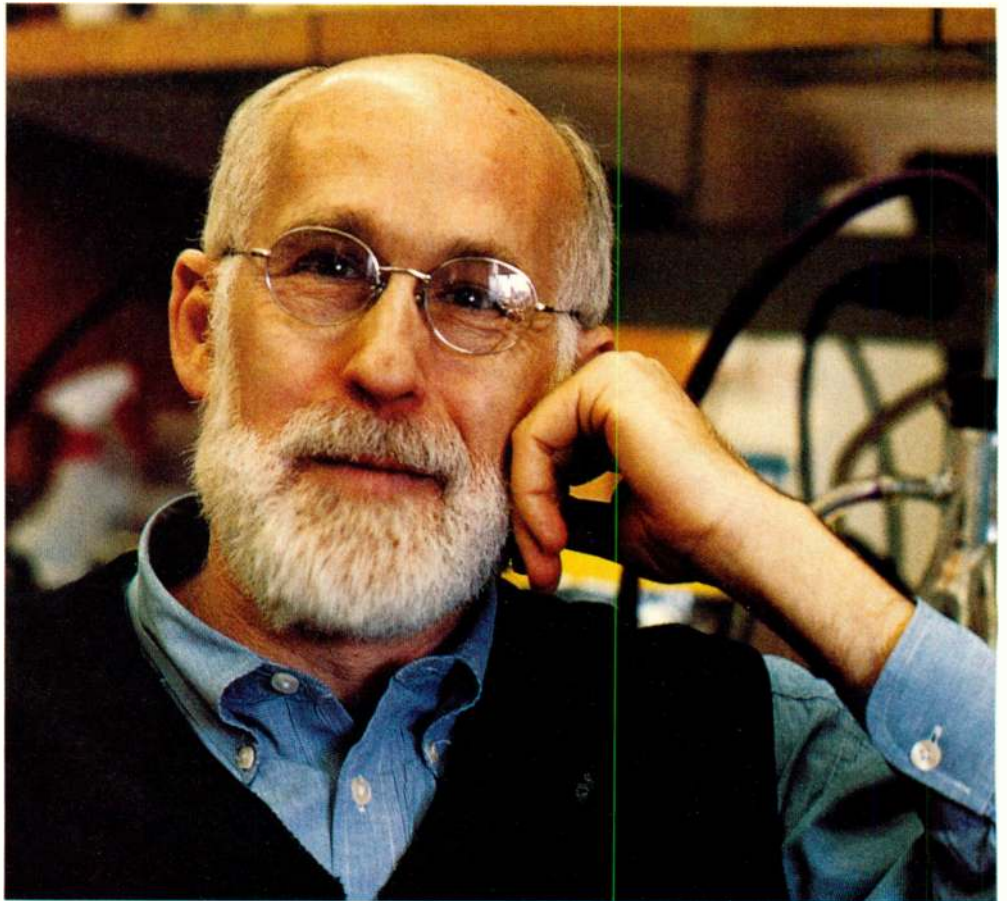
The first chapter of *The Measure of Our Days* ran in *The New Yorker* in September 1997, a month before the book hit stores, priming the market for the unknown writer. Early positive attention from reviewers and a plug from Ann Landers also gave the book a boost. Though Groopman's book never became a *New York Times* best-seller, Gluck says, he did well for a first-time author, and Viking Penguin quickly approved a follow-up. Now, after just four years, Groopman's second career may be more lucrative than his first. Book advances and serial rights for projects such as Groopman's are typically worth more than half a million dollars.

In person, Groopman is as open and engaging as his stories. He has a habit of pulling his chair out from behind his desk to talk to visitors. He leans into the conversation, having mastered the art of paying close attention to people. He is eager to explain the Hebrew proverbs that decorate his walls and quick to show a picture of his mother's family of Hungarian Hasidic Jews. Groopman's self-confidence and ease in a position of authority—both in print and in a laboratory—are quickly apparent. This quality has become more pronounced in his writing for *The New Yorker* and in his second book, *Second Opinions*, which deals with negotiating the minefields of medical diagnosis and treatment. In his first book, it is the struggling patients who are the heroes, no matter the outcome of their battles. In *Second Opinions*, it is medical science, with Groopman as its agent and defender, that wins the day.

Hollywood has been eager to embrace Groopman, too. The publishing world's appetite for narrative nonfiction is dwarfed by that of a ravenous film and television industry. A decade ago, New York City-based film executives and TV scouts looked largely to fiction for cinematic adaptation. But recently, nonfiction, especially magazine articles, has become wildly popular—last year's *The Insider* and *Pushing Tin* and this summer's *Coyote Ugly* were based on magazine pieces. TV has followed this nonfiction trend. "A lot of the genre stories that used to sell on television—women-in-trouble and what have you—have lost their vogue," says literary agent Todd Shuster. "Producers have been looking for more reality-based pieces."

Once Gluck had secured Groopman's publishing contracts, she and her Los Angeles counterparts at ICM sent his work to what she calls "several high-end producers." Having a piece in *The New Yorker* not only earned Groopman a prestigious credential but helped him catch Hollywood's wandering eye. The book found an eager developer in Paul Attanasio, a writer-producer. Attanasio, a former *Washington Post* film critic who created the television series *Homicide*, first saw Groopman's writing when his wife, Katie Jacobs, showed him that first *New Yorker* piece. That story eventually became the basis for the pilot of *Gideon's Crossing*, and Attanasio and his wife serve as executive producers of the series.

Attanasio hopes *Gideon's Crossing* will reflect



Jerome Groopman is a consultant to *Gideon's Crossing*, which is based on his writing.

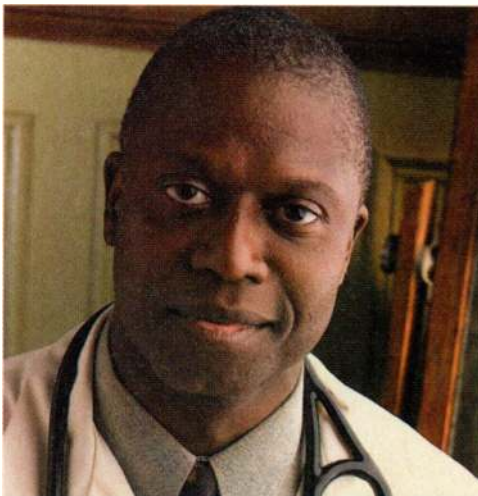
the single-minded intensity of its lead character rather than the frenetic energy of NBC's *ER* or the political maneuvering of CBS's *Chicago Hope*. "The show is about the human drama of illness and the intimate relationship between doctor and patient, which can be as compelling as gunneys racing through hallways," says Attanasio, who received an Oscar nomination for his screenplay for *Quiz Show*.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether *Gideon's Crossing* will take root the way *ER* has over the past six seasons or go the way of *Wonderland*, a

hospital drama that aired only two times last spring before it was canceled. But networks and television producers are still betting on the appeal of programs such as *Gideon's Crossing*. "I think the reason that physicians at Harvard are flying to Beverly Hills to consult on a show is that the audience will only respond if it feels like it really happened, if it has that grit and that believability," says Shuster.

Groopman has been signed on as a consultant, a common practice for shows that hope to strike a chord of authenticity. NBC's *The West Wing* hired former White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers, and for a brief moment, *Wonderland* employed Dr. Robert Berger, a psychiatrist at New York City's Bellevue Hospital ["A New TV Drama's Resident Script Doctor." *Notebook*, May]. In that position, which pays a stipend of anywhere from \$25,000 to \$100,000 a year, Groopman will consult on scientific and medical issues and help develop story lines. To reinforce the reality of *Gideon's Crossing*, Groopman will also be an important part of promoting the series. The show's publicists plan to book him on as many television and radio programs as he can endure, and he recently flew to Pasadena to participate in a press tour with the cast and executive producers.

Groopman is an important asset to the show—he is ABC's proof that *Gideon's Crossing* is authentic. And ABC executives are hoping Groopman's talent for diagnosing the media zeitgeist is what they need to get the viewer's attention—and keep it. ■



Andre Braugher (above) plays the lead character, modeled after Groopman (top), on the program.

The merger was sealed
after tense negotiations.

The merger was sealed
after three margaritas.

EATING THEIR WORDS

From foie gras to roasted beaver, the options in American cooking are endless. Here are the best media sources for whipping up a Thanksgiving feast. By Lara Kate Cohen

Say what you will about American cuisine, but even at its worst, it leaves a strong impression. In his book *American Dish*, culinary writer Merrill Shindler quotes the 19th-century French philosopher Comte de Volney: "I will venture to say that if a prize were proposed for the scheme of a regimen most calculated to injure the stomach, the teeth and the health in general, no better could be invented than that of the Americans."

Although some might argue that apple pie is still, sadly, our signature dish, our cuisine has changed along with the face of the American population, bringing other culinary influences, such as Mediterranean, Asian, African, and Latin cuisines to the table. With that most American of all American holidays, Thanksgiving, around the corner, *Brill's Content* sought out sources for the finest recipes in down-home American cuisine—among thousands of books, magazines, websites, and television shows—straight from the culinary experts who know it best.

BOOKS

JOY OF COOKING

By Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker
(Plume, 1997, revised, softcover, \$16.95)

It's difficult to imagine a time when *Joy of Cooking* wasn't an American staple. Printed in 1931 in the midst of the Depression, the book was initially self-published by Irma Rombauer, with help from her daughter. They created a cookbook so inclusive it could teach someone who had never set foot in a kitchen how to cook a three-course meal. With thousands of recipes augmented by myriad charts and tables (on nutrition, the metric system, and other topics) and even more diagrams (from how to properly set a table to

the cuts of a side of beef), *Joy* leaves few facts uncovered. When you find that your culinary skills have advanced beyond the recipe for stuffed chicken your mother used to make, delve into the more exotic American dishes tucked into these pages, such as roasted beaver tail or stuffed squirrel served with walnut ketchup.

THE NEW MOOSEWOOD COOKBOOK
By Mollie Katzen
(Ten Speed Press, 2000, revised, \$19.95)

"A child of the '50s and '60s, I was raised on Minute Rice, Campbell's soups, Velveeta cheese, and frozen vegetables," Mollie Katzen writes in the introduction to her kitchen classic. "To be [a vegetarian] was looked upon as a cross between an eccentricity and an affliction."

Culinary times have undoubtedly changed since then, in no small part due to Katzen's own efforts. First printed in 1977, *Moosewood Cookbook* was based on the dishes that Katzen and her friends were serving at their Ithaca, New York, restaurant. Its first edition was a spiral-bound book that Katzen handwrote and illustrated. The revised *Moosewood* maintains Katzen's personal touch, with reproductions of her whimsical drawings and recipes typeset in a font modeled on her own handwriting. Katzen's philosophy—that the vegetarian should never feel deprived—animates *Moosewood*; it can be followed even on a carnivorous holiday like Thanksgiving, for which you can make stuffed squash, mushroom moussaka, a carrot purée, and no-fault pumpkin pie.

CHEZ PANISSE CAFÉ COOKBOOK
By Alice Waters
(HarperCollins, 1999, \$34)
In 1971, Alice Waters and friends

opened the doors of Chez Panisse, a Berkeley, California, restaurant, and helped to launch an American culinary revolution. With her emphasis on locally produced, farm-fresh ingredients, Waters is often credited with bringing regional cooking into the forefront of American haute cuisine. Based on the recipes from the café that sits above Chez Panisse, this cookbook bears Waters's signature with its ingredient-driven, elegant approach to cooking. She instructs cooks to pay attention to the seasons and encourages visits to the farmer's market before deciding upon a menu. Although recipes like "shaved foie gras and rocket salad" might intimidate the less experienced, and some of the ingredients—such as sand dab, a form of local sole—may be difficult to find, Waters's inimitable style is charming.

BARBECUED RIBS, SMOKED BUTTS AND OTHER GREAT FEEDS

By Jeanne Voltz
(Alfred A. Knopf, 1990, \$22)

For some, barbecue is a summer outdoor activity. For food writer Jeanne Voltz and her circle of friends, it's akin to a religion. This revised definitive guide to all things barbecue (it was first published in 1985 as *Barbecued Ribs and Other Great Feeds*) devotes much ink to the intricacies of flame temperature and varieties of fuel (from hickory to cherry wood) before moving on to hundreds of recipes. The book includes barbecue recipes from across the country—spit-roasted, salsa-smothered, honey-glazed, and Texas-

barbecued—and specific instruction for fish, chicken, lamb, turkey, and "beasts and birds," as Voltz calls them. ("What could be more American than grilling venison or antelope steaks...over a fragrant wood fire?" she asks.) She couples these recipes with traditional "go-alongs," side dishes like corn bread and grits.

USA COOKBOOK

By Sheila Lukins
(Workman Publishing, 1997, \$19.95)

For her latest endeavor, *The Silver Palate* coauthor Sheila Lukins trained her culinary eye on American fare. To research the material, Lukins toured pineapple groves in Hawaii, ate wild boar in Texas hill country, and managed to procure the celebrated cheesecake recipe from Junior's restaurant in Brooklyn.

Lukins draws a vivid portrait of American cuisine, giving deserved attention to breakfast and lunch (gingerbread buttermilk pancakes and Maine scallop rolls are two standouts), meals that other books tend to skip over.

The book also includes colorful historical information such as "Amber Waves of Grain," a two-page spread that details rice by growing region and the flavors that best enhance each type. (Long-grain rice, native to the heartland, is often joined by slab bacon or ham bone.) With a flair for the comprehensive (Lukins offers eight versions of potato salad, including a "lone star classic" sweetened with pickle relish), *USA Cookbook* is an important American addition.



American cuisine has changed along with the face of the American population.

THE STORY THAT CAN'T BE TOLD

Journalist Larry Matthews has been barred from arguing before a jury that his suspicious activities were constitutionally protected reporting—and that he wasn't trafficking in kiddie porn. Now he faces prison. By Joseph Gomes

It is a humid spring day in Washington, D.C. The streets are packed with the tourists who flock to the nation's capital every year at this time. Larry Matthews sits in a Starbucks not far from the National Public Radio building, where he works as a producer. He stirs his coffee, detached not only from the quiet bustle of the customers around him but from the events that have engulfed his life. He is a trim, unassuming man with burst capillaries around the corners of his nose and crow's-feet. "I think I misjudged how volatile this issue is," he says. "It really is something that you just can't talk about." Dressed in a lime polo shirt and khaki pants, Matthews seems harmless, which, given what he stands accused of, is disconcerting. "I just rue the day that it ever dawned on me that this could be a story that I should work on," he says. "I had no idea that anything like this could happen."

On December 11, 1996, the FBI raided Larry Matthews's home. Seven months later, he was indicted on six counts of transmitting and nine counts of receiving child pornography over the Internet. Unless the Supreme Court this fall decides to hear the case and overturns the decision rendered by Judge Alexander Williams Jr. and upheld by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit—an outcome that is highly unlikely—Matthews, 57, will spend 18 months in a federal prison as a convicted trafficker of child pornography.

For Matthews—whose award-winning career as a journalist stretches over more than 30 years—the trouble began in 1995. At that time, he was a business reporter at a Washington, D.C., news radio station, WTOP. There he produced a three-part story on child pornography and the Internet.

Matthews left his job at WTOP in January 1996 to freelance for, among others, Maryland Public Television and NPR. When his freelance work slowed down that summer, he turned his attention to a story on child pornography that, he says, was to be an outgrowth of his WTOP series. It was a piece Matthews hoped would establish him as a writer. "I've always had this thing," says Matthews, "that somehow, some way, I am going to get an article in *Esquire*."

The FBI first targeted Matthews in the spring

of 1996. The agents were part of a task force dubbed Innocent Images, designed to identify and arrest individuals sexually exploiting children over the Internet. At about that time, America Online suspended Matthews's account because he tried to create a screen name allegedly called SugarDad4yFem. He used online names such as Mr. Mature and Daddyspans. He engaged in sexually explicit conversations with young girls, receiving offers from some for illegal trysts at hotels across state lines. Many times, it turned out, these "young girls" were FBI agents, posing as minors, trying to lure men into stings. From July to December, the FBI documented about 160 illicit images either sent from or received by Matthews over the Internet.

UNLESS THE SUPREME COURT OVERTURNS THE JUDGE'S DECISION, LARRY MATTHEWS WILL SPEND 18 MONTHS IN A FEDERAL PRISON AS A CONVICTED TRAFFICKER OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY.

"He was [in chat rooms that catered to pedophiles] all the time," says Jan Miller, an assistant U.S. attorney who prosecuted the case. "Basically, he came to [FBI agents'] attention because they couldn't ignore him."

Matthews has never disputed the essential facts in his case; rather, he is defending his right as a journalist to have access to the pornographic material as part of his research for a freelance story. Although Matthews may be a pedophile, it is plausible that he was researching a story about child pornography. He is contesting the fact that the court never allowed him to invoke the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of the press so that a jury could determine if that should trump the law.

Before his trial began, the prosecution made a motion in February 1998 that Judge Williams eventually granted. The motion essentially barred Matthews from using the First Amendment as a defense. Prosecutors argued that the language of the child pornography statute does not allow for the transmission of child porn over the Internet, no matter what the motive. "Although freedom of the press is vital to this country and freedom of speech is vital to the survival of the democracy," says Miller, "journalists cannot have the right to choose what laws they will follow and what laws they won't follow when they're pursuing a story."

Columbia University journalism professor Stephen Isaacs argues that journalists sometimes need to break the law to make the public aware of a serious problem. Others are more hesitant regarding Matthews's tactics. "Sometimes when a journalist breaks the law in pursuit of a story it also...[perpetuates] a problem," says Keith Woods, who teaches ethical decision making at The Poynter Institute, a school for professional journalists. "Child porn is regarded in this country as a fairly heinous crime. Whenever a journalist delves into that level of reporting...there's a danger not only to the journalists themselves but to the franchise as well."

Judge Williams's decision in the Matthews case rested primarily on the language of the statute—the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act—which states that you need know only that you are downloading child porn for the action to be illegal. Motive is irrelevant. Once Matthews began sending and receiving pornographic images of minors over the Web, he was breaking the law. Equally important in Williams's decision was his interpretation of legal precedent: The handling of hard-core child porn under these circumstances is not protected by the First Amendment. The benefit to society of Matthews's newsgathering, in Williams's opinion, did not outweigh the harm of transmitting and disseminating child pornography over the Internet.

In response to the ruling, Matthews entered a conditional plea of guilty. This allowed him to bypass a criminal trial and file an immediate appeal. He had hoped the circuit court would overturn Williams's decision.

The American Civil Liberties Union and The Reporters Committee For Freedom of the Press rushed to Matthews's aid. "What Matthews did should not be a crime, period," says Arthur Spitzer, a regional legal director for the ACLU. But since it is a crime, Spitzer argues, a "person should be able to explain to a jury [what his intention was]." Spitzer says the charges against Matthews could and should be dismissed by a jury because the statute is unconstitutional when applied to a reporter's newsgathering activities. Kenneth A. Paulson, executive director at The Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to free speech, argues that although child pornography on its own may have no inherent value and as such is not protected by the First Amendment, the act of gathering information about child pornography as a subject

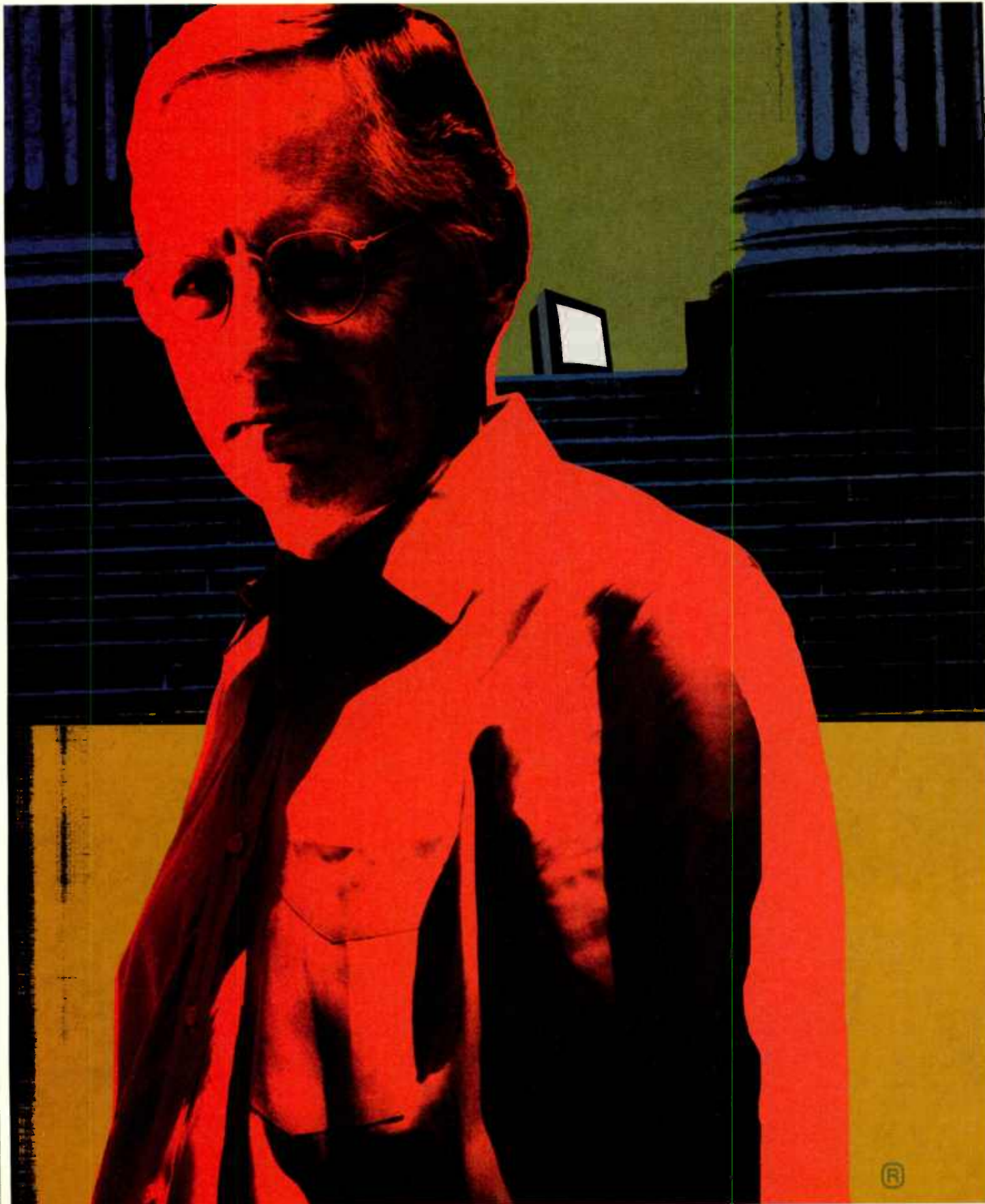


ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN RITTER/PHOTO BY RICHARD PACE

Larry Matthews says that when he began working on his freelance story, he didn't know the shape the article would take.

of journalistic inquiry does have value, and therefore should be protected. "The decision makes child pornography a special category of crime," says Lucy Dalglish, executive director at The Reporters Committee For Freedom of the Press. "It forecloses anybody doing any research on that issue."

Both the ACLU and The Reporters Committee For Freedom of the Press filed briefs on Matthews's behalf. Organizations such as the Radio-Television News Directors Association & Foundation, The Society of Professional Journalists, and National Public Radio also signed the brief filed by the Reporters Committee. But on April 13, 2000, the Fourth Circuit upheld Judge Williams's ruling. Matthews has since appealed to the Supreme Court, which, as this issue went to press, was scheduled to decide as early as September 25 whether to hear his case. If the high court declines to review the conviction, Matthews could begin serving his sentence immediately.

MATTHEWS SAYS THAT WHEN he began working in earnest on his freelance story about child pornography and the Internet, he didn't know the shape the piece would take. It was the summer of 1996, and on a typical day, he says, he would get up at 3 A.M. to broadcast reports for a syndicated morning business-news program called *First Business*, return home at 7, and take a nap before driving his son to swimming lessons. The afternoons were spent doing research on either his laptop or desktop computer.

During his online research, he says, he became intrigued by the policing of child porn on the Net, what the FBI was doing, and how it was doing it. "I don't think [FBI agents] feel comfortable with [people knowing] what they're doing," says Matthews. "They don't want people to know they're [online] saying that 'I have taught my daughter to give [oral sex].'" Matthews says he was struck by the number of undercover agents online and their aggressive tactics, and he even questioned whether these agents were guilty of entrapment. "I mean, I would get e-mails from these people purporting to be 14-year-old girls blistering me: 'You're just another old man. You can't get it up. You never show up for meetings. Nobody ever shows up. You better show up.' I mean, it's like, wait a minute, this is not giving somebody an opportunity to commit a crime; this is like haranguing them to."

When Matthews first went online and said he was a reporter—which he maintains he did about six times—the chat rooms would empty out. He says he constantly had to change his screen name because others were suspicious of him, often accusing him of being a cop. The only way he could gain access to the clandestine culture, he claims, was to convince others he wasn't there to arrest them. "If I went in and said, 'Hi! My name is Larry Matthews. I'm a reporter working on a story,' these rooms would empty. I mean, nobody would talk to me." He gained the trust of chat-

room participants, he says, by sending and receiving images depicting children in sexually explicit situations. He says he received such an enormous amount of illicit e-mail that he would spend almost 15 minutes every day deleting the material that accumulated in his mailbox. Most times, he says, he never even opened the messages; he occasionally would just forward them along to chat-room participants. "I didn't save the pictures. I didn't want to save the pictures," he says. "I didn't want these things around. I didn't print them. I didn't do anything where I would ever have access to them again."

MATTHEWS CLAIMS HE TOLD THE FBI DURING ITS SEARCH OF HIS HOME THAT HE WAS WORKING ON A STORY AND THAT AT LEAST TWO AGENTS WERE AWARE OF HIS ACTIVITIES.

The FBI had been watching Matthews for the better part of the year. According to Matthews, vague messages from the FBI were left at his old work number asking him to contact the agency. Not realizing that he was under suspicion for criminal behavior and not knowing whom to contact at the FBI, Matthews says, he ignored these messages until, finally, in September 1996, John Mesisca, an FBI agent, left a message asking Matthews to contact him. Matthews obliged. They set up a meeting, ostensibly to discuss Martha4U, a woman prostituting her 8- and 13-year-old children online, of whom Matthews had made the FBI aware in 1995. (Matthews continued to inform the FBI about Martha4U for the duration of his research.) Their conversation concerned mostly Matthews's online activities. In a report that eventually became part of the sentencing memorandum, Mesisca wrote that Matthews planned to "write a story about the Cyberworld." Matthews says that he felt he clearly expressed to Mesisca his intention to write about child pornography on the Web. Mesisca never told Matthews that what he was doing was illegal.

Matthews continued his research unfettered until December 11, 1996. It was, as Matthews recalls, a cold, gray day. He was out Christmas shopping for his son while his wife at the time, Molly, was at work. She returned home before him to make lunch and found the FBI waiting with a search warrant. She quickly called her husband's cell phone. In conducting their search, the authorities found no pornographic magazines or printed images of children—telltale

signs of pedophilia. According to the court documents, the FBI found two undeleted images of nude girls on Matthews's computers. He had erased all his online conversations and all other images because, he says, the images did not interest him. The FBI, though, was able to retrieve a great deal of Matthews's discarded material through a process that reconstitutes deleted images from a computer's hard drive.

Matthews claims he told the FBI during the search that he was working on a story and that at least two agents were aware of his activities. FBI agent Patricia Ferrante and police detective Manuel Rodriguez, the individuals in charge of the search, maintained that Matthews never said anything about working on a story. Their report, however, is confusing. On the first page they wrote that Matthews "advised that he is not currently doing a story on child pornography." But on the final page they wrote, "Matthews stated that 'in his mind' the conversations he had with law enforcement representatives included that he was trading child pornography because of the story he was working on." Five months later, the FBI submitted another report intending to clarify its earlier statement. They had meant to say that Matthews had traded pictures online for research on his 1995 story and that "he was not currently doing a story on child pornography."

Exactly what Matthews told the FBI is unclear. "That, of course, is a question for the jury," argues Spitzer of the ACLU. "The jury might decide it's implausible. That's what juries are for."

A jury has never had that opportunity: During pretrial proceedings, the prosecution succeeded in barring Matthews from using the First Amendment as a defense, so he made a conditional plea of guilty. This allowed him to expedite an appeal of Judge Williams's decision and strike the guilty plea if the ruling was overturned. Having entered the plea, the next phase was the sentencing hearing, a precursor to the round of appeals. During this hearing, the defense brought out character witnesses and a journalism expert in the hopes of reducing his sentence.

"I'm totally supportive of his position and believe in his innocence," says Molly Matthews, who is now his ex-wife. Matthews's first wife also protested his innocence to the court, and emphasized his sensitivity. "We had three children together, one of which is a female," wrote Jane Matthews in a letter. "When she was 5 or 6 years of age, he felt he should no longer be involved in her evening baths. He felt she needed to be afforded the privacy due her as a young girl."

Jim Russell, general manager at public radio's Marketplace Productions, has been Matthews's friend and colleague for 25 years. "I've known him to be a very decent, compassionate, gentle guy," he says. "Not to suppose I know his sexual interests, but I just don't find it credible."

AMERICA'S PREMIER CONSERVATIVE WEBSITE

NATIONAL REVIEW

online

National Review Online is the web's premier site for political opinion. Updated continuously, 24 hours a day, NRO is a must-read for journalists, political junkies, and culture mavens because it offers immediate coverage and superior analysis of the issues everyone is talking about.

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"National Review's Richard Lowry, John J. Miller, and Ramesh Ponnuru are using the web to create a national alternative newspaper which publishes early and often."

—The New York Times

"National Review's website tries to be the Internet's smart, hip, conservative voice, and it often pulls off this complicated task with great verve."

—The Christian Science Monitor

"Most online versions of print magazines are place mats—a logo stamped over a table of contents. A busy-bee exception is nationalreview.com, the bratty cyber-twin of the conservative weekly founded by William F. Buckley Jr."

—Vanity Fair

"Quick-off-the-mark nationalreview.com ... ranges from serious conservative opinion-slinging to rambling disquisitions on 'Star Trek' ... While most media outlets essentially try to clone themselves on the Internet, National Review has created a split personality—with pop culture as the hook for drawing readers who may not be addicted to politics."

—Washington Post

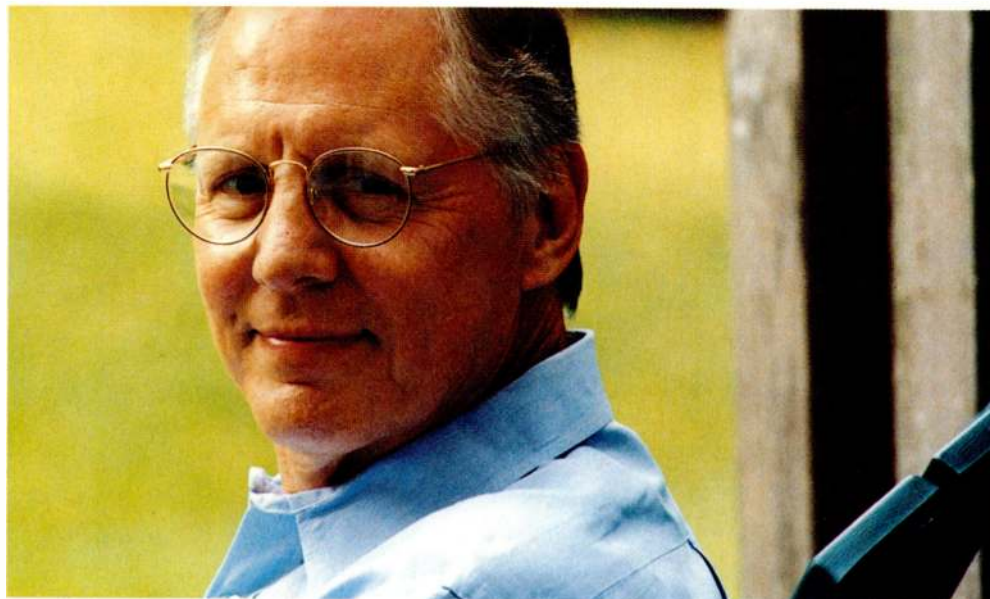
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Matthews's peers offer anecdotes as evidence of his investigative zeal, unorthodox techniques, and journalistic integrity. "He was a really aggressive reporter," says Michelle Dolge, his former managing editor at WTOP. "He worked damn hard and threw himself into his work." His stories ranged from riding around all night with D.C. police to living on the streets as a homeless man for three days. In 1982 Matthews won the prestigious George Foster Peabody Award for a piece he did about Vietnam War veterans for the Washington, D.C., radio station WMAL. Says Len Deibert, his news director at WMAL: "It was a masterful piece of work."

Dr. Lanning Moldauer, a psychologist brought in by the defense, examined Matthews. According to a brief filed by Matthews's lawyer, Moldauer concluded that "Matthews exhibited no psychological inclination to have sexual relations with...[minors]." It also said that Moldauer "found no indication that he had a prurient interest in the images which he transmitted and received on the Internet." The prosecution declined to conduct an examination of its own, and Moldauer's conclusions were accepted by the court.

Although the prosecution didn't need to depict Matthews as a pedophile and had to show only that he received and disseminated the images over the Internet to make its case against him, Matthews's lack of a story outline, notes, or a letter of acceptance from an editor did not help his cause. And Judge Williams questioned how trafficking the images enhanced his research for an article about the FBI entrapping pedophiles. But it is certainly not unusual for a freelance journalist to research a story before committing the idea to paper or proposing it to a magazine editor. Nor is it unheard-of for a journalist not to take notes. Matthews, a radio journalist used to taping his reports, contends he has never been much of a note taker. He'll jot down a note here or there, he says, maybe a question he wants to explore, but generally that's all. "I never knew him to be a great note taker," says Deibert. "He could tell a story and use tape magnificently, though." Matthews had taken three pages of notes, but his lawyer, Beth Farber, misplaced them and was unable to produce them during the sentencing. She has since recovered them. The notes, she says, amount to vague questions about a possible direction for the story. They are not a detailed account of his daily research or notes from interviews, which, Farber maintains, was what the judge wanted.

Beyond the paucity of notes and the absence of a letter of acceptance from an editor is Matthews's reliance on the Internet and the image of him hunched over his console day after day, conducting lewd conversations in cyberspace and trading obscene pictures of little girls. But had Matthews been less reliant on the Internet—had he accumulated the printed images themselves, the transcripts of his conversations, or pornographic magazines—he could have been accused of collecting the inappropriate material. As Farber asserted in her brief to the Court of



Matthews didn't deny he was sending and receiving child porn and said it was in service to his story.

Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, "Agents commonly use what is known as a 'pedophile profile' as part of an affidavit in support of a search warrant. The essence of the profile is that pedophiles are known to hoard child pornography and to treasure their collections." She added, "Contrary to the profile, no images of child pornography or graphic conversations were found during the search of Mr. Matthews's house."

What's more, Matthews says, he felt he had full disclosure with law enforcement officials. Miller, the assistant U.S. attorney on the case, confirms that Matthews had been in contact with the FBI at least four times in 1995 and once more in 1996. "I gave them every indication that I knew they were [on the Internet]," says Matthews. "I never had a fear that cops would come after me."

DURING PRETRIAL PROCEEDINGS, THE PROSECUTION SUCCEEDED IN BARRING MATTHEWS FROM USING THE FIRST AMENDMENT AS A DEFENSE.

Supporters have suggested that being a freelancer might also have hurt him. "It's easier to go after a freelancer," says Dalglish of The Reporters Committee For Freedom of the Press. Unorthodox as Matthews's investigative techniques seem, they are not unique. "Reporters do [undercover work] all the time," says Isaacs of Columbia University. "It's part of what you need to do."

While Matthews and his counsel say they are guardedly optimistic when assessing whether the Supreme Court will take up their appeal,

legal experts and many of Matthews's supporters are doubtful. The Supreme Court typically hears cases where the law is vague or is in need of clarification. The courts, they argue, have been fairly consistent when it comes to journalists' breaking the law in pursuit of a story. "I would just be surprised if the court wanted to take this one up," says Dalglish. "It's lacking a classic split [among the circuit courts]." Paulson of the First Amendment Center also speculates that the subject matter might make the case less appealing as a backdrop for a First Amendment debate, both to the Supreme Court and to Matthews's fellow journalists. Says First Amendment attorney Floyd Abrams, "If one were choosing a test case for the press, one wouldn't choose a subject such as [child pornography]. There's no doubt that such a case touches some hot buttons."

BACK AT THE STARBUCKS, Matthews shakes his head. "I know their job is to make me look as bad as possible," he says of the prosecution, "but this is absurd." There are only a few patrons at the coffeehouse, all occupied with various conversations, but still Matthews feels obliged to speak in hushed tones. When the blasts of a fire truck rumble by or the music swells, his voice becomes strained, and as that sound dies away again his voice lingers over the quiet. He is embarrassed as he looks around.

In the aftermath of his arrest and conviction, his future as a journalist has been compromised and his second marriage has ended in divorce. Some observers view Larry Matthews's story as a cautionary tale for other journalists—and one that makes it far less likely we'll be reading many stories in the press about law enforcement and child porn. As Matthews takes his last sip of coffee, he leans forward and whispers, "When the government comes after you like this, it causes most of your life to cave in...financially, emotionally. There's just a lot you have to deal with." ■

[your coupons]



[your yellow pages]



[your calendar]



[your classes]



[your groups]



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THE WHOLE WEB IN YOUR HANDS

With a wireless connection for your personal digital assistant, you can surf the Web from just about anywhere. But early adopters, beware: The gadgets also offer small screens, slow connections, and unreliable service. By John R. Quain

People may be taking this Internet thing a little too far. Witness the recent legal machinations in the Ted Binion murder case in Las Vegas, during which defense attorneys moved for a new trial because, they claimed, one juror had used a Palm handheld computer to get online news reports about the case during the trial. Apparently, some people just can't seem to put away their toys.

Since wireless Internet access is being hyped relentlessly, I decided to check out some mobile Internet gadgets. These personal digital assistants (PDAs) with wireless connections are usually heavier than Web-enabled cell phones (see "Cell Phones Go Online," Tools, March), but they also have larger and more readable screens. One device is a wireless modem that lets Palm users check out the news; another lets you use a Pocket PC with your cell phone to surf the Web from just about anywhere—even the jury box.

FOR THE PALM

OmniSky's Wireless Internet Service is a package deal. For \$299 you get the OmniSky Minstrel V Wireless Modem, which piggybacks onto a Palm V organizer and contains its own rechargeable battery and collapsible antenna. The \$329 Palm V is the svelte silver model that just about all of today's time-pressured executives seem to have tucked inside their jacket pockets.

Usually, setting up an add-on gadget such as the OmniSky modem is a frustrating experience, but I was able to load its software, clip on the modem, and get online (without wires) within about 15 minutes. For the OmniSky modem to work, you must also sign up for the company's wireless service. That costs \$39.95 a month for unlimited Web surfing.

What you get for the money is access to your existing e-mail account (you don't have to acquire yet another address) and the ability to read the text from any website. I say "read the text" because the Palm V has a monochrome screen, making it impossible for you to see the iridescent graphics that adorn most websites. OmniSky conveniently includes a list of websites in about a dozen different categories tailored to the Palm's screen. You'll find financial advice at TheStreet.com, for example, and news at Yahoo!

Getting your e-mail on the Palm and being able to visit any website are distinct advantages. Palm Inc.'s \$399 Palm VII, which comes with its own built-in wireless modem, doesn't provide them. The Palm VII's service (\$45 a month for unlimited usage) relies on a relatively slow 9.6-kilobits-per-second (Kbps) system. By contrast, OmniSky connects you to the Net at 19.2 Kbps. Not exactly greased lightning but definitely fast enough for text-only news.

One drawback to the OmniSky modem is that it adds weight and bulk to the otherwise skinny 4-ounce Palm V. Attaching the modem brings the unit's weight to about 8.5 ounces. (The Palm VII, with its built-in wireless modem, weighs 6.7 ounces.) Of course, you can always unhook the modem if you want to travel light, but that sort of defeats the idea of having Internet access wherever you go.

So can you surf the Web from anywhere? Well, not really. The service is only as good as the

network on which it depends. In this case, the OmniSky package uses AT&T's CDPD (cellular digital packet data) network, which covers a little more than half of the country. Still, that will get you a wireless connection to the Internet in most major cities, including Boston, Miami, New York, and San Francisco. Unfortunately, like cellular calls, the wireless Web connection has a tendency to break down in crowded urban areas. In New York City, I found error messages and interrupted Web surfing to be habitual problems.

THE POCKET PC

If you're not among the legions of Palm users, there are other handheld options. Several companies offer more expensive PDAs that have color screens, use Microsoft's Windows-like Pocket PC software, and can be turned into a wireless Web browser.

I used my \$499 Hewlett-Packard Jornada 545 and Socket Communications's Socket Digital Phone Card to get online without wires. The Socket kit costs \$129, and in order to turn it into a wireless modem, you'll need a data-capable cell phone.

Because there are no cell phone standards to speak of in the U.S., when you buy the Socket kit you have to be specific about which cellular carrier and model of phone you have for the device to work. One end of the Socket connector plugs in to the Compact Flash (Type I) slot on a Pocket PC; the other plugs in to the cell phone. Socket supports several popular models from Ericsson, Motorola, and Nokia, as well as from Qualcomm, which is what I used.

You also must be able to get data service from your cell phone carrier. The kit uses CDMA and GSM data services, which means it will work, for example, on Sprint PCS, Verizon, and VoiceStream. AT&T customers, however, are out

of luck. I used the Sprint service, which can get you to the Internet at speeds of up to 14.4 Kbps. Unlike the flat-rate monthly fee for OmniSky's service, your bills will vary depending on the per-minute rate you're charged by your cellular service (usually it's comparable to the cost of making a phone call).

Although it sounds like an awkward setup, I had no trouble connecting the Jornada organizer and cell phone via the Socket cable. The PDA recognized the connection, and all I had to do was enter the requisite log-in, password, and dial-up numbers for my Internet service provider. Once the cell phone was on, tapping the "connect" icon on the Jornada's screen dialed up the Web.

All Pocket PCs come with a mini-version of Microsoft's Internet Explorer, allowing



The Palm V with OmniSky's wireless modem

you to surf conventional websites without being stymied. The color screen is reasonably crisp and clear, so photos and graphics pop up faithfully on-screen. The Socket arrangement also allows you to access your usual e-mail account.

But as with the OmniSky unit, going wireless with a Pocket PC means going slow. Pictures can take several minutes to appear. And although the Jornada has built-in sound capabilities (unlike the Palm V), forget about streaming video or audio.

The browser adjusts Web pages designed for computer screens so that they fit on the Jornada's playing card-size screen. You can change the font size, for example, so that text is more legible. However, I had to make compromises: I switched to a medium-size font for the *New York Times* website and Yahoo!; but for other pages, like ABCNEWS.com, I had to change back to a small font size. Also, some sites' frame designs didn't work well on the screen. Yahoo!'s mail section, for example, was nearly unreadable, which forced me to scroll across the screen horizontally, one word at a time. Some sites, however, like the ineluctable Amazon.com, have specially designed pages to work on the Pocket PC organizers.

Although you have to carry around the Socket cable and your cell phone to surf the Web wirelessly, this arrangement does offer some advantages. The Jornada's screen, for example, is sharp enough to let you read a long article or

electronic book without eyestrain. I usually carry a cell phone anyway, so that didn't seem to be an extra burden, and unlike some portable modems I've tried, the Socket kit didn't devour battery power.

ARE WE WIRELESS YET?

With so many wireless options being pushed at consumers, it's hard to choose the solution that will work for you—assuming wireless Internet access is something you want. For better or worse, by the time you read this, there will be even more options for wireless connectivity. Hewlett-Packard and Novatel together plan to release a wireless modem that should resemble the OmniSky model reviewed here. Meanwhile, Palm has announced a \$50 Mobile Internet kit that will enable owners of older Palms to get online using a cell phone as a modem. And OmniSky is working on a wireless modem for the Handspring Visor.

So is the wireless Web inevitable? According to a survey by NetSmartAmerica.com, 72 percent of people who visit newspaper websites own a wireless device, which means there may be a market for Internet news on the move. And the popularity of Palm computers continues to spawn programs we didn't know we needed—such as a wireless software application that lets you check prices on eBay and make bids. For the time being, then, it looks as though there's no stopping early adopters—or



Hewlett-Packard's Jornada 545 with the Socket kit

fidgety jurors. For the rest of us, the pricey gadgets, spotty service, and steep monthly fees mean that the wireless Web may have to wait. ■

Live But Not In Person

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 109] Gore's traveling press never felt more like chopped liver than during a two-month stretch—from late February to late April—when the vice-president didn't hold a single press conference. Gore was repeatedly criticized for his refusal to talk with reporters, especially when Gore's approach was contrasted with Bush's, who had become so intimate with members of his press corps that he had developed nicknames for many of them. As Julie Mason, who has covered both Gore and Bush for the *Houston Chronicle*, puts it, "There's just something about [Gore] that is kind of off-putting....There's a sense with Bush that he's more like you and certainly seems to try to find common ground. Gore doesn't seem to have that quality." Recently, some commentators have been speculating that Gore's lack of interaction with the press is a result of his difficulty in playing a part. On a CNN show that addressed Gore's relationship with the press, Bernard Kalb put it this way: "Was Gore's reticence in not meeting the press due to the difficulty he may have had about the need to mislead the press about politics in general?" *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen thinks this could be the case. Talking about Gore's chilly relationships with some members of the press, Cohen says, "Gore has a hard time acting like he likes you if he really thinks you're an a--hole." (Bush has no problem smiling while cutting someone down under his breath, a particular skill he demonstrated at a Labor Day rally when an open microphone caught the grinning and waving presidential candidate referring to *The New York Times*'s Adam Clymer as a "major-league a--hole.")

It's not just Gore's shyness, or a Machiavellian sense of purpose with the press, that makes him seem transparent when it comes to

his carefully scripted public statements and appearances. Another important factor is that Gore, and by extension his campaign, is practicing "message management" to an unparalleled degree for a U.S. presidential campaign. Message management is widely regarded as having been first articulated, and perfected, by Michael Deaver, who helped plan Ronald Reagan's successful bid for the presidency in 1980. "Message management...has to do with the belief that you couldn't say something once; you have to keep repeating it," Deaver says. "And in order for that to work you couldn't allow other messages in, and the only way to control that was to control the access and control the events."

That's not to say that Gore always feels, as his aide Lehane puts it, that "what is private is private." Gore will draw back the curtain on his personal life, but those times can best be understood through a prism of a single-minded devotion to a greater purpose. It's message management writ large. Gore's 1992 and 1996 convention speeches—dealing with his son's accident and his sister's death from lung cancer, respectively—are frequently cited examples. So was this year's center-stage make-out session with Tipper, a kiss that has now been analyzed as much as Bill and Hillary Clinton's fleeting moments of physical affection have. (Writing about *The Kiss* in *The National Review*, John O'Sullivan asked, "I wonder how they did the focus group on this?")

A tightly controlled message is especially frustrating for print reporters because it highlights a decline in the importance of the printed press. Gore has been aware of this decline and shift of power toward television for some time. In his 1969 Harvard College thesis, he wrote that "television started to take over the role of newspapers in America" as early as 1955. "[T]he reporter saw his traditional role rapidly disappearing," Gore wrote. "The words he used to diligently transcribe were heard by the country and digested before he could

Live But Not In Person

make his way out of the conference.”

Thirty-one years later, the nation's newspapers still drive the national debate in important ways—ask TV producers or anchors the first thing they read in the morning and they're still likely to name *The New York Times*. But television, now more than ever, has the ultimate power to shape the public's impressions of politicians and candidates, not just in covering news events but by providing friendly environments—from Oprah to Letterman—on which candidates can show off their “human” side. This power can be seen in the reactions to Gore's speech at this year's Democratic convention. For the press watching the speech from inside Los Angeles's Staples Center, Gore's address came off as stilted and weirdly rushed. Gore stepped on his applause lines and, as he often does, paused at the wrong times and raised his voice to stress odd passages. Writing in *The New York Times*, R.W. Apple compared Gore's speech unfavorably with Bush's two weeks earlier, writing that although Bush had boosted his image, “[i]t was less clear how much the Democrat had improved on his image as a plodding, overeager orator and campaigner. Mr. Gore's speech had few rhetorical flourishes or unexpected policy departures and fewer flashes of humor. Speaking more quickly than usual, Mr. Gore poured out a flood of words; sometimes he sounded like a man with his car double-parked.” But within days, it was

clear that people who had watched Gore on television—where it sounded as if the vice-president was speaking over a swell of applause rather than plowing through cheers—responded favorably. The polls taken after Gore's speech showed the vice-president pulling even with Bush for the first time in months.

“The convention exactly sums up the difference between how the press reacts to things and how the rest of the country reacts,” says Alan Schroeder, an assistant professor at Northeastern University's School of Journalism. “There's often a disconnect between what the media conclude and what people conclude through television coverage. The great thing about television is that it lets people check out someone person-to-person, and that often triumphs over media interpretations.”

Indeed, in the weeks following the Democratic convention, as Gore began to get more television coverage, his personality ratings went up. As a *New York Times* write-up of a *Times*/CBS News Poll put it on September 13, “Vice-President Al Gore has shaken the persistent sense that he is not particularly likeable and is now as highly regarded as Gov. George W. Bush on matters of character, leadership and overall personal popularity.” The *Times* seemed befuddled by the shift: “It is not altogether clear what has prompted the more kindly feelings toward Mr. Gore,” Richard L. Berke wrote. “But in follow-up interviews yesterday, many voters who now back Mr. Gore said they were impressed by what they saw at the Democratic convention.” ■

Scripts On Deadline

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 113] where you need to meet my dog and my wacky neighbor in the first episode.”

What Wolf calls, with self-mocking importance, his “trompe l'oeil, cinema vérité” aesthetic comes in part from a strategic co-optation of the shows' own subjects. Where *Deadline* has journalists on staff, one of *Law & Order*'s current writer-producers, Bill Fordes, was once an assistant district attorney. In the same way that Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing* leans on ex-White House consultant Dee Dee Myers and other Beltway hands, Wolf keeps Richard Esposito around “as a gatekeeper.” Esposito, an energetic business and media consultant, worked for more than 18 years as an editor and reporter at the troika of New York's dailies—the *Daily News*, the *Post*, and *Newsday*—before quitting the business in 1995. When the *Deadline* pilot was in the pipeline, Wolf asked Esposito to watch over the plots and scripts and vet them for implausibility.

“I try to help them capture the flow and feel of a news meeting and the metabolism of the paper as it relates to the outside world,” Esposito says. So far, the most obvious liberty the producers have taken is Benton's athleticism—racing from rooftops in Brooklyn to forensic labs to swanky garden parties—but

Esposito considers it a reasonable dramatic concession. Palm defends Benton's larger-than-life personality: “If you did a show about real journalists—and your readers will hate me for this because I was one—it's like doing a show about real cops. The reality, sitting around at their desks on the phone, would be boring,” Palm says. “This is not a show about a guy sitting around getting hammered at [the Upper East Side literary watering hole] Elaine's and then writing at his computer.”

For Esposito, the show's glaring “curiosity” is Benton's Columbia journalism class. In *Deadline*, Benton leads a team of students on his investigations. There's an obvious model here: David Protes, the Northwestern University journalism professor who, with the assistance of his students, has overturned convictions of death row inmates. The catch is

that Protes resents the echoing, as reported in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, and is fighting to force Wolf and his production company to run a disclaimer; Wolf denied that the character is based on Protes. The production is already backing away from using the class in future episodes. “Some students will graduate into interns and reporters,” says Esposito, most noticeably the plucky Beth Khambu (played by Christina Chang), who reports in a sleeveless turtleneck, clutching a fashionable purse, with no pad, pencil, or recording device in sight.

Palm calls Esposito for advice, as does Wolf. Platt, who haunted the *Daily News* for his own research (and whose brother Adam writes for *New York* magazine), calls him from the set for counsel on how he should react to certain decisions. “I could call Richard every day—for the jargon, for the ethics,” Platt says.

Although the plots may be credible, the interpersonal dynamics edge into riskier territory. In the script for an episode about an earnest political candidate with a rowdy countercultural past, *Ledger* publisher Beekman explicitly asks Benton to tow an ideological line—his own. “You're asking me to use my column to serve your political agenda?” Benton asks in the script. Beekman replies, “I'm telling you to do that.”

Robert Palm defends Benton's larger-than-life personality: “If you did a show about real journalists—and your readers will hate me for this because I was one—it's like doing a show about real cops. The reality, sitting around at their desks on the phone, would be boring.”

The comment “sent up a red flag” for Platt and Conti, who plays Si Beekman. Platt balked at the idea that a Pulitzer Prize winner would “roll over as the mouthpiece for the editor.” Esposito counters, “Publishers would do that. Behind every bit of newspaperdom, from the Pulitzers on down, there is the prospect of entertainment, amusement, and profit, and if you ignore them, you're full of s-t. The veil of idealism has a lot of truth to it, but it's not the whole truth.” Platt finally admitted that with Rupert Murdoch owning the *Post*, “it doesn't take too many leaps of logic to think that the publisher might let his opinion be known.” He and Conti played the scene (which has Conti receiving a luxurious massage) but revised the dialogue subtly. When Beekman pressures Benton, the prickly columnist agrees to research

millions of web pages
64,438 usenet discussion groups
3,408 online newspapers
11,228 magazines and webzines
1,001 radio and TV websites
60 newswires
(and growing)

we're watching

Information that used to take weeks to reach a few dozen people now goes to thousands around the world in seconds. And whether the information is true or false, misguided or malicious, it's being seen – and believed – by customers, investors, employees, competitors, journalists, suppliers and bankers. WebClipping.com is the only comprehensive Internet-based monitoring, intelligence gathering and clipping service. We provide relevant, timely and accurate information about you or your company's mention in the online world. Using advanced proprietary searching, verification and database technologies, WebClipping.com helps you meet the Internet monitoring challenge.

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Scripts On Deadline

the politician's past but replies, "With your permission, I'll make up my own mind about the fellow." As Platt says, "We had to protect their integrity as professionals." It's a head-scratching moment when the actor playing a professional can see the principles more clearly—and is more troubled by their absence—than the professionals themselves.

It points to a nostalgia that runs throughout *Deadline*, one that may prove the show's greatest asset but feels like its biggest flaw. Based on the two pilot episodes, the news that breaks in the *New York Ledger* exists outside the television news cycle, the AP wire, or the *Drudge Report*. For a show about deadlines, there doesn't seem to be much of a pressing need for them. And in an era when audiences for New York tabloids are stumbling (gutting each other with massive newsstand price cuts), *Deadline*'s dynamism and celebration of the crusading columnist—as shuffling and bloodshot-eyed as he may be—comes off as somehow innocent of deeper pressures: the need for print journalism to stay relevant in the face of exploding news outlets, to make money after newsstand profits get sliced in half, to find audiences again.

"With this show, we're hoping to show that while journalists might

be venal, cowardly, corrupt people in their private lives," says Palm, "occasionally they rise to heroism." The show will be seen as an earnest attempt to refurbish the reputation of "ink-stained wretches," as Wolf likes to call them. But the romanticism doesn't just apply to the characters. You hear the expression "compressed reality" constantly in the company of the writers and producers of *Deadline*—the need to shorten and intensify the life of the paper and the lives of those who produce it. But this compression means meeting more than the formal demand of a 44-minute window Monday nights at 9.

It's an expectation that the stories we share will find their endings: The shamefaced celebrity with an overactive sex drive won't be charged, the spoiled rich kid with the coke habit and violent streak will get a jail sentence, and the families of the murdered will be avenged. The idea that news has a narrative is one of the most romantic aspects to *Deadline*, but it's wrong to fault Wolf, Palm, and the others for making morality tales from the fragments we read in the paper. Wolf has insisted that his shows are merely entertainment; their appeal lies in the way they engineer closure. We want moral convictions in the second half of an episode because we trust that they are at the heart, but so seldom in the pressured practice, of our news. ■

The Journalist and the G-Man

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 119] worst example of..." It was Weingarten's job to change that to "This is one of the worst examples...." Regardless, *In Fact*'s tone was, like Seldes, consistently left-wing, strident, and aggressive. Seldes was clearly happiest when denouncing people.

On November 25, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's press secretary, Stephen Early, wrote a one-sentence memo to J. Edgar Hoover, preserved in Seldes's FBI file: "Respectfully referred to J. Edgar Hoover for investigation and report." Enclosed was a copy of the 14th issue of the fledgling *In Fact*. Early presumably thought the newsletter merited the Hoover treatment because the lead story was a left-wing polemic against FDR's policies on labor unions and minorities, and it included a swipe at the FBI: "[T]he J. Edgar Hoover outfit...is attacking labor" by infiltrating unions and spying on "practically all liberals, progressives, intellectuals, and non-conformists."

Hoover demanded that his agents investigate Seldes, and they quickly zeroed in on Bruce Minton, who had cofounded *In Fact* and served as its associate editor under Seldes. On January 23, 1941, Hoover's agents filed the first of dozens of FBI case reports on Seldes. The report, revealed here for the first time, concluded that "MINTON is regarded as being a member of the Communist Party at present time. SELDES, although not a Communist of his own admission, is regarded as a close follower of the Communist doctrines." The FBI had only one source for the information: Victor Riesel, a journalist who would become a syndicated columnist for Hearst's *New York Mirror*. Riesel specialized in uncovering mob influence and corruption in the union movement—years later, he was blinded in an acid attack attributed to the mob. Riesel had told the FBI that "the Communist Party purposely furnished the necessary funds to SELDES to start out the publication."

Although *In Fact* was Minton's idea, his time at the newsletter was brief. Seldes thought Minton editorialized too much, and within a year Minton had cut ties entirely from the paper, leaving the enterprise to Seldes. Riesel's statement to the FBI, however, fueled Hoover's belief over the next two decades that the Communist Party had funded *In Fact*, that the party had gotten its money from the Soviet Union, and that Seldes should be prosecuted as an agent of foreign influence (simply being a communist, even in the days of the Red

Scare, was not illegal). The problem was that there was no evidence to support Riesel's claim. Seldes, at this point, had no clue he was of interest to Hoover's FBI.

In its early years, *In Fact* quickly became notorious, as indicated by the volume of letters concerned citizens sent to the FBI asking the bureau's opinion of this new and potentially subversive newsletter. It was not uncommon for members of the public to write to Hoover. They asked his advice, inquired as to whether their neighbor was a communist, turned in their friends as Reds, and occasionally wrote proclamations of innocence if they believed (usually wrongly) that they might be suspected of something. Seldes and *In Fact* triggered a stream of complaints. One person—the name is blacked out in the file—wrote on letterhead from The Pennsylvania State College's architecture department to let Hoover know that he was receiving *In Fact* against his will: "As I did not like the looks of the publication and prefer not to have anything enter my home in which Seldes is connected, I wrote and asked that my name be removed from the publication's mailing list." Apparently it did no good, and *In Fact* kept arriving. "In case of any eventuality I wish to state now that I have never subscribed to IN FACT, nor to any other publication of that ilk." Hoover's reply, included in the file, assured the worried academic, "You may be sure that your letter will be made a matter of permanent record."

In May 1941, the file discloses, Hoover received a note from gossip king Walter Winchell, who often swapped tips with Hoover. It sparked a war of words that would change Seldes's life. Winchell had enclosed a letter from a reader of his column asking Winchell's opinion of *In Fact*. Winchell replied to the reader, a New Yorker named Thomas A. Murphy, that he had passed the query to Hoover. "I am not familiar with Mr. Seldes's publication as I do not see it," Winchell added. (That statement was probably false, as Winchell's assistant was in the habit of passing stories to *In Fact* that Winchell rejected if she thought they deserved to be published.)

Murphy's letter to Winchell concerned a May 1941 *In Fact* article about Harry Bridges, a labor leader the FBI had accused of exhorting the violent overthrow of the government. The article was an inflammatory defense of Bridges and accused Hoover and his agents of conducting an unprincipled campaign against the labor movement with no regard for civil liberties.

Hoover appears to have lost his cool when he saw the letter. He sent a two-page response, a copy of which is included in the file,

directly to Murphy condemning Seldes and his scandal sheet. Hoover wrote that the sources of *In Fact's* information were the Communist Party, "elements of the underworld" (meaning organized crime), and "individuals who have been misled and misinformed." He accused Seldes of publishing "a collection of lies and falsehoods."

What Hoover didn't know was that Murphy, whom Hoover had evidently mistaken for one of his concerned citizen correspondents, was actually an *In Fact* subscriber who had simply asked Winchell, a staunch Hoover ally, for his thoughts on the Bridges story. No doubt surprised by Hoover's angry letter, Murphy forwarded it to Seldes. On July 21, Seldes wrote a challenge to Hoover, preserved in the file. "If you will point out one statement or one word in *IN FACT* which is not true or honestly reported, I will print your correction," Seldes wrote. "You cannot brush off these charges by yelling 'reds.'" The episode was the first indication Seldes had that he was being scrutinized by Hoover.

Before Hoover had a chance to reply, Seldes struck again, on the front page of the July 28, 1941, *In Fact*: "FBI's head, J. Edgar Hoover, writes an angry letter to an *IN FACT* reader [and is] smearing all his critics as reds, criminals or misinformed and ignorant persons."

Seldes, always game for a fight, rankled Hoover with this last broadside. Hoover was incensed, and his anger can be measured in the 15-page, single-spaced memo—typed entirely in italics—that he sent to Seldes on August 27. The letter, which is included in Seldes's file, offered a point-by-point reply to the Bridges story, calling one accusation—that Hoover's regime was so heavy-handed that FBI clerks' visits to rest rooms were timed—"a malicious lie." "I shall now observe with interest the action which you will take since being advised of the facts, and of course, I shall be very glad for you to quote my letter," Hoover told Seldes. "I have taken you at your word." Seldes wrote back to Hoover promising to print an edited version of his letter, but on October 4 Hoover replied: "I must insist that if the letter is published that it be published in its entirety." (The exchange is contained in the file.) Seldes chose to print none of it, a decision he would come to regret.

By the late 1940s, the FBI's investigation had taken on a Keystone Kops quality. Hoover's agents, desperate to please their boss, were frantically following every lead, no matter how silly. In 1950, the FBI noted a bizarre theory from one of its informants that *In Fact* was being used to plant communist moles inside *Reader's Digest*, the largest-circulation magazine in the country and a bulwark of right-wing values. One FBI memo in the Seldes file records this allegation from the unnamed source, who apparently had infiltrated the Communist Party: "[*In Fact*], as I know from discussions in the Politburo, was established to reach a wide group of people, particularly in the educational system, but [copies of *In Fact* were] also planted in the Pleasantville [N.Y.] area in order that its staff and associated Communists might infiltrate the staff of the *Reader's Digest*. The Party leaders considered that a very important task at that time."

But the only discernible "connection" between *Reader's Digest* and Seldes was a 1947 *In Fact* report that named three "fascist" employees at *Reader's Digest*—and a number of U.S. congressmen—who had associated with convicted Nazi spy George Sylvester Viereck during World War II.

Seldes's former colleague Victor Weingarten, who lives in Manhattan and is retired from a career in public relations, remembers the story well. Weingarten occasionally spends time in the midtown office of his defunct PR firm, where he was interviewed by *Brill's Content*. Though he has occupied the office for years, the place still looks like he just moved in. Weingarten also spent 25 years working at the Insti-

tute of Public Affairs, a think tank that advised the federal government on social policy, and served as its president before it closed, in the early 1980s. A signed photo of Richard Nixon, thanking Weingarten for his efforts, hangs on a wall.

In 1943, Weingarten says, the Justice Department ordered a study of Nazi sympathizers in the U.S., including *Reader's Digest* editors, which it decided to keep secret. This did not please its author, a Justice Department official named O. John Rogge, whom Weingarten persuaded to leak the report to *In Fact*. The story came out while Rogge was traveling. His plane made an unscheduled stop in Spokane, and he was kicked off the flight. Then two FBI agents approached Rogge in the terminal, removed him of all Justice Department property, and fired him on the spot.

The episode characterizes the relationship between Weingarten and Seldes—the FBI referred to Weingarten as Seldes's "leg man." "George was in charge of indignation and I was in charge of informa-

In 1950, the FBI noted a bizarre theory from one of its informants that *In Fact* was being used to plant communist moles inside *Reader's Digest*, the largest-circulation magazine in the country and a bulwark of right-wing values.

tion," Weingarten says.

Though he hasn't made an effort to obtain it, Weingarten probably has his own FBI file inside the bureau's vaults. One memo in the Seldes file has a sinister handwritten note from Hoover on the bottom: "Also we ought to get a line on Weingarten."

While the FBI was bungling, Seldes was indignant about the continuing probe against him. In 1945, for example, he wrote to Hoover to complain that his wife, Helen, was being harassed by the Feds: She had been questioned and searched while traveling to and from Mexico, and mail addressed to her at their Norwalk home was being opened at the local post office at the behest of the FBI.

According to bureau memos in the file, Hoover checked into Seldes's claims, and most of them turned out to be true. The FBI had requested that "SIS [Special Intelligence Service] agents in Mexico City" follow Helen while she was across the border, and her baggage had been searched by U.S. customs agents when she returned from Mexico. In addition, FBI agents had searched her hotel room in Fort Worth, Texas, during the trip, finding "negative results except for an empty rum bottle and three empty packages of cigarettes," one memo states.

Hoover's reply to Seldes's allegations, included in the file, was a masterpiece of half-truth: World War II was still raging during Helen's trip, he wrote, and travelers had to put up with certain inconveniences. "[N]either I nor any of the personnel of the Federal Bureau of Investigation can be held responsible for the 'loitering'...of 'native Mexicans,'" Hoover wrote in a September 10, 1945, letter to Seldes. He then went on to reassure Seldes that he was trying to find out whether anyone had been authorized to screen Helen's mail, and if anyone had "you may rest assured that instructions will be issued for the immediate discontinuance of such coverage."

For some reason, Seldes spared Hoover the humiliation he would have faced if Seldes had explained precisely how he knew that Helen's mail was being monitored. The FBI had required the Norwalk post office to record the name and address of each of Helen's correspondents and periodically to mail the information to the New Haven office of the bureau. It appears that a Norwalk postal worker had accidentally dropped one such report into a letter addressed to Helen and resealed it at the post office. The bureau was nonplussed. "Apparently a 'leak' has

The Journalist and the G-Man

developed somewhere in the post office at Norwalk," an internal report in the file states. Oral instructions were issued to stop the mail tap.

Though Hoover's crusade against Seldes was often comically inept, it became increasingly vicious as the Cold War began, and the FBI eventually had a hand in putting *In Fact* out of business.

In January 1948, during President Harry Truman's term, Representative Clare Hoffman of Michigan contacted the FBI, trolling for information about communists that he could use to his political advantage. According to one file memo from the agent who spoke to Hoffman, the congressman "stated he felt called upon to start the new year right by exposing George Seldes of *In Fact*....He would not attribute anything to the bureau."

Hoover sent Hoffman a hefty dossier that summarized what the bureau knew about Seldes. It included an abstract of the 15-page response to the Bridges saga, which had transpired seven years earlier. This was most likely illegal, since at the time the FBI was forbidden to release its files without the consent of the attorney general. Hoffman turned around and read the entire tract into the *Congressional Record*. It contained no evidence that Seldes was a communist but plenty of guilt by insinuation. By leaking the file to Hoffman, Hoover ensured that the red-baiting media—almost all of the newspapers in the country—was at last able to report what the FBI considered to be the dirt on Seldes.

The *Chicago Tribune*, once Seldes's employer and by now staunchly conservative, seized upon Hoffman's allegations. One of its wire service stories was headlined "Seldes Dubbed Goose-Stepper for Red Press"; another was titled "Seldes Lies and Vilifies, House Told; Warned He Has Perverted Mind." *Life* magazine joined in with a feature story: "Dupes and Fellow Travelers Dress Up Communist Fronts." The article was accompanied by photographs of Seldes and other prominent "communists," such as Langston Hughes, Albert Einstein, and Lillian Hellman.

When the innuendo contained in Hoover's investigation was made public, the tide began to turn against Seldes. His liberal subscribers, alarmed at the growing witch hunt, began to cancel in droves. But *In Fact* was also getting pinched by the communist left: In 1948, Seldes had taken a trip to what was then called Yugoslavia and interviewed Marshal Tito for *In Fact*. Seldes was impressed with Tito and publicly supported his split from Joseph Stalin and his push toward "democratic socialism" in Eastern Europe. The pro-Tito, anti-Stalin stories Seldes published angered those subscribers who were actual communists, and the party ordered its members to cancel their subscriptions. "[We were] John Steinbeck leftists," Weingarten says. "We got run down by traffic from both sides."

On October 2, 1950, two years after Hoover's baseless allegations against him became public, Seldes published the last edition of *In Fact*. It consisted entirely of an editorial from Seldes denying that he was a communist and explained that, because of a decline in subscriptions, he had been "forced to announce [*In Fact*] is suspending publication, temporarily."

The suspension, of course, became permanent. In 1950, at the age of 60, Seldes retired to Vermont. At this point, one might reasonably have expected Hoover to give up his crusade and allow Seldes to enjoy his retirement as the man who made it okay to print bad things about the news business (not to mention the FBI). Not a chance.

In July 1953, as the Korean War was ending, Seldes was summoned from Vermont by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations to be questioned by Roy Cohn, Senator Joseph McCarthy's lieutenant. It had been 13 years since the FBI director had targeted the bespectacled reporter, and Seldes was finally able to confirm for Hoover the very "evidence," such that it was, he had sought all along—and to dodge prosecution one last time.

"Are you a member of the Communist Party?" Cohn asked Seldes in a closed session, according to the congressional transcript. The question began a verbal dance that was all too familiar at the height of the McCarthy era. "No," Seldes replied. "Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" Again: "No."

"Do you know any Communist Party members?" Cohn asked. At this point in the transcript, Seldes appears to have become a little flustered. "Well, look, do I know them or—Well, look, for instance—I want to tell you this frankly." The committee chairman chided Seldes for talking faster than the stenographer could type. "I have ulcers and am sort of the nervous type," Seldes joked. "I started a weekly newsletter with another man. His name on the letterhead was Bruce Minton. I swear I had no idea he was a Communist. He was expelled from the Communist Party, I think, 1945....If I know any Communists? I know Bruce Minton [but] I didn't know it until he had left my publication and was thrown out of the Party."

Seldes had received a 4,500-word letter from Minton earlier that year, which Minton called a "confession" and Seldes published in his 1968 book, *Never Tire of Protesting*. The letter, which describes Seldes in glowing terms and exhibits precisely the sort of puffery that Seldes might have railed against in the complacent mainstream press of his day, confirmed that the Communist Party had, through Minton,

On October 2, 1950, two years after Hoover's allegations became public, Seldes published the last edition of *In Fact*. It consisted entirely of an editorial from Seldes denying that he was a communist and explained that, because of a decline in subscriptions, he had been "forced to announce [*In Fact*] is suspending publication, temporarily."

attempted to use Seldes and *In Fact* as a front to popularize communist ideas. But Seldes, according to Minton's letter, had proved too independent and intractable, and when Minton left *In Fact* after less than a year, the party's involvement with the publication ended. "To the horror and disappointment of the Party," Minton's letter read, "Mr. Seldes proved to be beyond the usual methods of persuasion; his integrity, his personal honesty and forthrightness, his convictions were such that the Party was helpless."

Was Seldes really unaware of the Communist Party's connection to *In Fact*? Or was this a clever subterfuge devised after the fact by Minton to clear Seldes with McCarthy? After all, Minton was already living in exile abroad and was facing more than one grand jury investigation in New York for his political activities. He was well situated to serve as a fall guy for Seldes.

"I have no grounds to doubt Minton's account of the beginnings of *In Fact*," says the filmmaker Goldsmith, "nor to doubt that Seldes knew nothing of the intentions of Minton as a Communist Party member."

Seldes's niece, the Tony Award-winning actress Marian Seldes, concurs that her uncle had no clue about Minton. "Knowing my uncle's history, if he said something was true, it was true," she says. Marian, 72, will appear in January in a New York production of Edward Albee's *The Play About the Baby*. "I cannot imagine him bluffing or lying or dissembling." This was, after all, the man who had risked his life to expose Mussolini's death squads.



Technological Darwinism

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The Journalist and the G-Man

Minton was independently wealthy, which may explain Seldes's ignorance of his motives—it would have come as no surprise to Seldes that Minton had ready access to money. Minton used two names: Richard Bransten, his given name, and Bruce Minton, his communist nom de plume; he and his wife, Ruth McKenney, were relatively well known in literary circles as champagne socialists. McKenney, in fact, was the author of a wildly popular collection of *New Yorker* short stories called *My Sister Eileen*, which was made into a 1955 film of the same name starring a young Jack Lemmon. Minton and McKenney were ousted from the Communist Party in 1946 (for “revisionism,” as one FBI memo in the Seldes file put it) after they had turned over most of their money.

Minton met a dismal end. After he left *In Fact* and was kicked out of the party, he settled in England, presumably to avoid the reach of American authorities. In 1955, he killed himself with an overdose of sleeping pills.

Marian's brother Timothy Seldes, a 74-year-old New York literary agent (he owns the Russell & Volkening agency, which represents Nadine Gordimer, among others), does allow that his uncle may have turned a blind eye to Minton's scheme if it meant he could get his own publication. “If Bruce Minton came on to him as a passionate believer” in the mission of *In Fact*, says Timothy, then that, coupled with “George's need for money, made him not think about it. I think he must have suspected.”

Certainly, Minton's influence on *In Fact* was brief and, in the end, negligible. “I've read at least part of every [issue] of *In Fact*,” says Goldsmith, “and they all unmistakably bear Seldes's imprint....It's clear that the paper is Seldes's and not Minton's.”

In 1958, the Bridges story—in which *In Fact* had criticized Hoover for his attacks on labor leader Harry Bridges 17 years earlier—resurfaced. Hoover had written a book called *Masters of Deceit: The Story of Communism in America and How to Fight It*. Seldes had read it and, out of the blue, wrote Hoover a letter, which is included in the file, extending a warm hand of apology through the Cold War frost. “Dear Mr. Hoover: You may (or may not) remember me: when I was editing and publishing *In Fact*, a weekly newsletter, we had some correspondence and I have frequently thought of it,” Seldes wrote. He congratulated

Hoover on the book and then raised the subject of the Bridges story and Hoover's long response to the allegations: “It was my intention to publish it with a rebuttal by the man who wrote the article [a researcher who joined *In Fact* after Minton left] but he ‘resigned,’ and nothing else appeared. I may say that in my 49 years of journalism this failure to set the record straight is the only item that fills me with regret.”

The apology to Hoover for not printing his letter in full, after the FBI had hunted him for nearly 18 years, was typical Seldes. He'd spent ten years holding the press accountable when it was unfair, and he did not let himself get away with the lapse on the Bridges story. On the advice of his colleagues, Hoover did not reply to the letter. “Though Seldes now feigns friendship for the Bureau, it is believed that he might in the future utilize a letter from the Director for his own personal advantage,” one FBI functionary concluded in a memo contained in the file. Hoover added in his own scrawl, “I agree.”

Later that same year, Seldes wrote to Hoover again, this time to request his permission to reprint something that Hoover had once said in a book Seldes was writing, *The Great Quotations* (which was, as its title suggests, a collection of quotations). The FBI had an internal debate, chronicled in file memos, over whether it should reply. The agents concluded, as before, “that the attached letter from Seldes not be acknowledged.” But then Hoover changed his mind. “On 12-4-58 the Director advised [his agent] that Seldes' letter should be acknowledged.” Hoover replied, “Thank you for your letter....The quotations which you attributed to me are accurate, and I appreciate your courtesy in giving me the opportunity to confirm them.”

But that was as courteous as Hoover was prepared to be. The FBI kept tabs on Seldes and his wife for six more years, going so far as to monitor their European vacations. On December 1, 1964, 24 years after it had been opened, the final memorandum in the file reads: “The case is being returned to Closed status.”

On November 16, 1990, George Seldes made headlines when he announced on his 100th birthday that he was finally getting rid of his 70-year-old typewriter, a Royal manual. *The Nation* sent a reporter to ask him why. He figured he'd already written everything there is to write, he replied. Timothy Seldes rescued the typewriter upon which every missive to Hoover had been written, in addition to some of the biggest stories of the century. It sits in his New York office today. ■

THE OMBUDSMAN

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32] And in that terrific little piece by Mimi Sheraton—an investigative report about recipes, of all things [“Twice Cooked,” Notebook]—this was the end:

“And after looking through [David] Ruggerio's book, [Giuliano] Bugialli nominated three more recipes he says Ruggerio cribbed from him. ‘He did it all in a very stupid way,’ said Bugialli, ‘changing only a tiny ingredient. He is also stupid to suggest roasting a hen for the chicken with bread crumb sauce. It must be a rooster.’”

He chuckled.

The editors respond: Michael Gartner is completely right about the subtle use of words. When we say “contend” instead of “explain” we are doing it on purpose, to signal to readers that we're especially skeptical. As for our lack of identification of both Jonah Goldberg and Jeffrey Klein in the Contributors notes, from this point forward we'll include both their bios consistently because their political and ideological backgrounds are relevant to their opinion columns.

Frank Luntz responds: Mr. Gartner neglects to inform readers that more

than a dozen reporters personally attended at least one of the Instant Response party convention sessions criticized in his column (they were not traditional “focus groups”). These reporters and 20 of their colleagues felt that the sessions were sufficiently reflective (notice I did not use the word “representative”) of swing voters to report the results.

Mr. Gartner also does not tell readers that the collective reaction of these carefully selected Instant Response participants more accurately reflected public reaction to the two conventions than many of the career pundits. Imagine that: The people themselves are more indicative of public opinion than those paid to analyze it. I wish Mr. Gartner had taken just 90 seconds out of his busy day to call me before repeating unjustified criticisms.

One reason Americans so distrust the press is the perception that the news they are given is distorted. Coincidentally, it's this distortion that led to Mr. Gartner's “resignation” from NBC News after the *Dateline* General Motors Corporation fiasco.

Michael Gartner responds: Mr. Luntz's response does not even remotely address the issues raised by his colleagues or by this column. ■

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Big Man Out

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 125] him “a brilliant producer and one of the most creative television news executives in our profession.” But he did not directly answer the question.

Finally, a week after the Democratic convention, on August 27, the Sunday before Labor Day weekend, the second and final retreat was held. Kaplan attended the event, which was held again at the Four Seasons in Atlanta. There was a working dinner, and presentations were made that night and into Monday, August 28.

McGuirk, Johnson, and Steven Heyer, president and COO of Turner Broadcasting, took the various ideas that had been presented, melded them into their own, and then selected the people they wanted for the newly created slots. There was no slot for Kaplan. But there was a new job, titled CNN Networks/USA president, which went to CNN/SI president Jim Walton. McGuirk says he’d planned to make public all the changes the following week, but having made the key decisions, he needed to inform those involved. He called Kaplan to his office at CNN Center.

“When they ran through the names, I’m not there,” Kaplan relates. “I really like Terry, and I really like Steve Heyer, and I really respect them.” McGuirk, he says, “was very pained. I knew he had thought long and hard” about the changes. “This wasn’t petulant; this wasn’t a casual decision he’d come to. I said, you’ve got a right to do it. You’ve got a responsibility to do it. You need to be comfortable with your team.”

McGuirk describes the conversation the same way. “We all observed Rick through the conventions and from his history here....He’s a brilliant executive producer,” McGuirk says, adding that he told Kaplan he could work at Turner Entertainment, at Time Warner, or at any number of places within the company, but nothing interested him. “Rick just thought it would be best for him to leave.”

By that afternoon, word of Kaplan’s departure had spread throughout CNN. Kaplan sent out an electronic memo inviting hundreds of CNN staff to a noon meeting the following day in a conference room in the Turner-owned Omni hotel, next door to CNN Center.

“They have important plans for CNN,” Kaplan told those at the gathering, “and they need to have a team around them that’s comfortable and that they can work with, and that they think would be best for the company....I’m a big boy, and I understand the business.”

The question going forward is whether that “business,” arguably the most important news organization in the world on the cusp of dramatic change, can bring itself into the new communications age in a way that preserves its journalistic integrity and still satisfies its new owners and stockholders.

Executives say they are committed to preserving CNN’s reputation for responsible journalism and have no need to resort to cheap sensationalism to boost ratings. Indeed, they say, incentives go the other way, since convergence and AOL mean that the CNN brand can be stamped on more venues and platforms—and therefore the brand must not be cheapened.

Even before the AOL deal, CNN had been fighting audience fragmentation through what is known as brand extension, inventing networks—such as CNN/*Sports Illustrated* and CNNfn—developing new websites, and extending the famous CNN name.

“We are re-creating CNN for the digital era,” says Johnson. And the endless talk about domestic ratings, he adds, looks silly against CNN’s multi-arm enterprise, poised to gain access to AOL’s 24 million members. In a joint interview with *Brill’s Content* eight days after the reorganization was announced, McGuirk and Johnson kept returning to this

theme: CNN has a great reputation and an excellent product, but it was stuck in an antiquated structure that made it difficult to mesh old and new media. They were respectful and even complimentary of Kaplan, but they were also clear that in this new environment, a leader with such a singular focus on television wasn’t the answer. “This could no longer be about any one single executive or about any one channel,” says Johnson. “We really needed to have teamwork.”

KAPLAN HAS BEEN CALLED A LOT OF THINGS by his supporters (such as “creative” and “driven”) and by his detractors (“dictatorial” and “egotistical”), but “team player” appears on neither list.

“Rick is an incredibly talented producer. He was perhaps the most talented producer at ABC,” says a former ABC executive. Kaplan was known for his big ideas. As executive producer of *Nightline* during the height of apartheid in South Africa, for instance, he took the show to Cape Town and Johannesburg and managed to get South Africa’s foreign affairs minister, R.F. “Pik” Botha, to talk with anti-apartheid leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu—on the air.

“[Kaplan] is a brilliant executive producer,” McGuirk says, adding that he told Kaplan he could work at Turner Entertainment or Time Warner or at any number of other places within the company, but nothing interested him. “Rick just thought it would be best for him to leave.”

Kaplan also has what the former ABC executive calls a “huge personality,” and such a personality is what CNN executives figured they needed in 1997 when they brought in Kaplan. CNN’s ratings were in a downward spiral, and the programming, though solid and respected, was neither inspired nor inspiring. CNN was looking to raise viewership without cheapening its reputation, and Kaplan, with his moxie and experience, was seen as the guy who could do it.

Tamara Hamilton was a Washington-based associate producer for CNN who had been at the network for six years when Kaplan came on. During his first weeks on the job, Kaplan gathered the Washington bureau CNN staff—some 300 people—for a meeting in the 11th-floor newsroom, and there was a “sense of hope that they’d finally hired somebody from the outside who has the vision and the know-how to get us on the map,” says Hamilton, now a press officer in the U.S. Department of Energy.

Once at CNN, Kaplan immediately made waves. The network had always touted its straightforward, no-nonsense—if fairly generic—on-air news readers, but Kaplan told the anchors he wanted them to become larger than life. He got rid of several old-timers, moved others into positions of less responsibility, and brought in such ABC talent as Jeff Greenfield, Willow Bay, and Judd Rose (who died in June). But “one hour was pretty much like the last,” Kaplan recalled in July, “and this hour will be a lot like the next.” Why should viewers make an appointment to see any of the shows, he asked, if they can’t tell them apart? He introduced news specials and oversaw 100 hours of live, global millennium coverage, as well as the 2000 political conventions. He revamped the program lineup and brought more hard-news programming to the weekend schedule. But sometimes his big ideas ran counter to journalistic instincts, as well as to the CNN culture. Kaplan wanted to make CNN’s nightly 8 o’clock newscast an important show and would often hold stories so that they would break on that program. This irritated reporters, who understandably wanted their stories to get on the air as soon as possible.

Many of Kaplan’s unhappiest moments at CNN involved the Sunday-night magazine show, now called *CNN & Time*. When he arrived at CNN, the show—then called *Impact*—was drawing substantial ratings by cable standards; as high as a 1.3 average rating, an audience of about 932,000, according to Nielsen.

WHAT THE MEDIA ISN'T TELLING YOU

About Bertelsmann's Hidden Nazi Past In an exposé trumpeted coast to coast, *The Nation* revealed that Bertelsmann - the largest book publisher in the U.S. - has carefully hidden its stalwart complicity with the Third Reich.

About the Secret History of Lead

In an exhaustive special report, *The Nation* showed how General Motors, Standard Oil and Du Pont colluded to make and market gasoline containing lead - a deadly poison - although there were safe alternatives. Abetted by the US government, they suppressed scientific evidence that lead kills. Still sold in countries all over the world, leaded gasoline continues to poison the planet.

About The Wall Street Journal

Contrary to its self-assessment as "the world's most important publication," Gore Vidal noted for *The Nation* "just how unknown this cheery neofascist paper is to the majority of Americans."

About Arts Funding

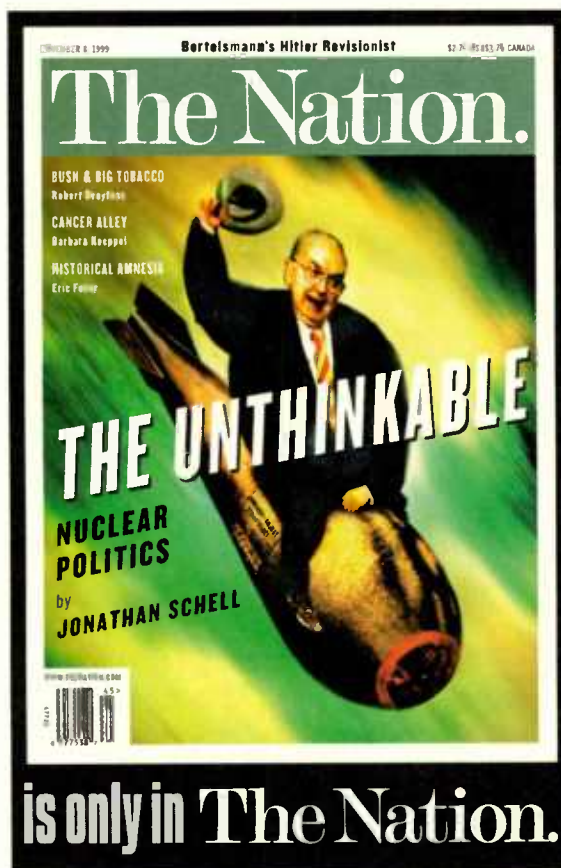
As columnist Katha Pollitt wrote, "the right-wing attack on the National Endowment for the Arts is playing to a small, if ferocious, constituency. Contrary to stereotype, Americans like the arts, and the more access they have to them, the more they like them."

About The Battle in Seattle. "Seattle was indeed a milestone of a new kind of politics. Labor shed its nationalism for a new rhetoric of internationalism and solidarity. Progressives replaced their apologetic demeanor of the past twenty years with confidence, style and wit."

About The Battle Beyond Seattle.

As William Greider put it in his debut as *The Nation's* national affairs correspondent, "Arrogance designed the WTO; arrogance will doubtless defend it. In the meantime, the WTO can serve as a splendid rallying point for popular resistance."

About The F.B.I. An intensive investigation for *The Nation* turned up everything from slovenly casework to massively skewed priorities. Example: Number of convictions for health and safety violations against employees in a single year: one. Number of telephone taps: 1.3 million.



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Big Man Out

The revamped show under Kaplan's watch debuted with the Tailwind fiasco, and many current and former staffers say the show hasn't found its journalistic footing since. The larger idea was to marry CNN with the journalism of the magazines that joined CNN corporately via the Time Warner-CNN merger in 1996. Some see the show's troubled legacy, including its unfulfilled promise of synergy, as emblematic of Kaplan's own problems: *CNN & Time* has proved to be controversial and expensive, and ratings are down. Now, three years later, after several title, time slot, and leadership changes, it has lost at least 40 percent of the audience it once had. To this day Kaplan praises the quality of the show and blames the poor ratings on the daunting Sunday-night competition, which now includes *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, *The Practice*, and *Sex and the City*. He also notes that the program's ratings drop was only slightly worse than the network's overall slide.

OLD HABITS DO NOT DIE EASILY, and even as CNN officials are working to figure out their future under AOL Time Warner, their past ratings successes are never far from view. An oblong graph in red and blue hangs on a wall in Johnson's office in CNN's Atlanta headquarters. Titled "Charting the Course of Human Events," the graphic is not a time line of world history; it's a chart of CNN ratings from 1989 onward. The occurrence of a "human event" is indicated by the spikes that surge upward every now and then, towering over the bumps and peaks that form a steadier line along the bottom. A 1989 spike is labeled "San Francisco Quake." In 1995, a spindly peak is the "Oklahoma City Bombing." But the tallest spike, and by far the thickest (meaning it lasted many days), shows up in 1991. It's labeled "Desert Storm."

The fact that CNN is still closely, perhaps permanently, identified with its revolutionary coverage of a war in real time says a lot about the falloff in viewership and about the network's inability to break through to audiences during news droughts. Except for the Al Gore-Ross Perot NAFTA debate on *Larry King Live* in 1993, which drew nearly as high a rating as did the peak of Desert Storm, the big audiences come only when big news breaks—such as the O.J. Simpson verdict or the crash of John F. Kennedy Jr.'s plane.

When a big story hits, CNN still usually beats its cable competition by a long shot. But its audiences are smaller than they used to be, thanks to MSNBC and Fox News, and also because the broadcast networks are now more prone to go live.

Still, events like the political conventions are cause for news-hungry audiences to seek out CNN. CNN's usual audience size did double and even triple on some of the eight nights of the two conventions this year, but that's compared to its dismal ratings all summer. And for all of Kaplan's energy and expertise, CNN's GOP convention coverage essentially tied with Fox News's in households whose cable systems get both Fox and CNN. In sheer numbers, CNN did draw more viewers during the Republican convention: According to Nielsen, an average of 1.1 million households watched each of the four Republican nights, while Fox News averaged about 744,000. But CNN reaches 78 million homes in the United States, compared with Fox News's 51 million, so in terms of ratings, they both reached 1.4 percent of their potential audience. Though CNN's troubles are clear: For the GOP event, CNN drew 25 percent fewer households than it did for the 1996 Republican convention. Though the network rebounded for the Democratic convention, it still reached 10 percent fewer households than it had for the same event four years ago.

Nobody at CNN has complained publicly about the convention ratings, and again, officials say their decisions about Kaplan and the reorganization had nothing to do with audience numbers. But Kaplan finds that hard to believe. "If my ratings had doubled, do you think they'd fire me?" he asks.

AOL'S TAKEOVER OF Time Warner is expected to be consummated sometime this fall; the joint company had a market capitalization value of \$235 billion in early September. Officials at AOL decline to discuss their thoughts about CNN, saying that to do so would be inappropriate prior to the merger. (Consumer groups' complaints about the concentration of media power the combination represents have gotten the ear of U.S. and European regulators—who must sign off on the deal—so there's a degree of skittishness about the issue within the company.)

But the AOL Time Warner corporate structure announced in May has Turner Broadcasting's McGuirk reporting to Bob Pittman, AOL's president and chief operating officer. Pittman, who will be AOL Time Warner's co-COO, declined interview requests by *Brill's Content*, as did AOL chairman and CEO Steve Case, who will be the chairman of the new company's board.

Case has said that AOL would not give preferential treatment to Time Warner properties in choosing which content to make available to its members, telling attendees at a CNN 20th-anniversary luncheon in Atlanta in June that the merged company "will be committed to offering people the broadest choice of the finest content available—regardless of who produces it." Case has also said that the merged company "will be just as committed to building on the legacy of journalistic integrity that has made CNN and Time Inc. the world's most trusted sources of news."

Still, CNN executives already talk of the upcoming merger in terms of the access to the online market it will provide. And the reorganization, including Kaplan's ouster, was very much formulated with AOL in mind.

CNN executives already talk of the upcoming AOL-Time Warner merger in terms of the access to the online market it will provide. And the reorganization, including Kaplan's ouster, was very much formulated with AOL in mind.

"We are fashioning two separate strategies at this point on how we take the CNN brand forward," McGuirk said in the September interview. "Part of it will be within the AOL world and how we weave throughout, how you experience CNN in the AOL world"—a nod to AOL's desire to keep its members within its own shell. Then, McGuirk went on to explain, there's the Internet beyond AOL, for which "there's going to be a different strategy that will involve many of the assets of AOL Time Warner coming together and forming some new things."

Rick Kaplan won't be there to figure out what those "new things" should be, but they'll probably be more adaptable to multiple uses—and cheaper—than the high-profile television journalism he was trying to create. "We are going to get back to the roots," McGuirk declared. "Raw journalism happening as fast as we can get it on the air, as it happens," insisting that producing quality journalism drove the process—that this is not a retrenchment. Kaplan himself says, "If quality is not what you're predicting, you'll be wrong."

But to some skeptics (and Rick Kaplan fans), the company line looks like a way of saying that it's not worth spending a lot of money in a futile attempt to drive up ratings. Live news, after all, is relatively cheap. It is ironic, though, that just as CNN is moving into the center of the media universe in its most modern and sophisticated incarnation, it's banking on the basic, fast, live news that CNN was known for in the beginning, when its nickname was the Chicken Noodle Network. ■

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Overkill

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 129] himself, but they decided to hold off when they couldn't confirm the allegations. Kathy McGee, senior executive producer for news at WEWS Channel 5, says her station started looking into the story after *The Plain Dealer* ran its vague first piece about the search of Rose's home, but decided their sources weren't adequate. According to Kathy Williams, news director at WKYC, the local NBC affiliate, her station, "like other stations, [was] tipped to the story." But, she says, "it wasn't researched enough to put it on TV." After *The Plain Dealer's* first story, Douglas Weiner, the criminal division chief at the prosecutor's office—which had sealed the search warrant for Rose's house—says he urged a TV producer against following up on the piece. "You've got to be very careful," he told the producer. "You don't want to be paying your lawyers \$250 an hour." Besides *The Plain Dealer*, no other news outlet covered the investigation until after Rose committed suicide.

Cleveland has been a one-paper town since 1982, when the century-old *Cleveland Press* went out of business and sold its subscription list to *The Plain Dealer*, a part of the Newhouse media empire since 1967. Since then, the paper has battled against a reputation for mediocrity. Its coverage, lacking competition, was perceived as soft.

When Douglas Clifton, 57, was hired away from *The Miami Herald* a year and a half ago to become *The Plain Dealer's* editor, many in Cleveland thought he would turn the paper around. The *Herald* had won four Pulitzer Prizes during Clifton's eight-year tenure as executive editor, including the top prize for investigative reporting in 1999 for a series on voter fraud in Miami's mayoral election. (*The Plain Dealer* has won one, in 1953, for editorial cartooning.) Clifton, who served as an artillery officer in Vietnam, has a reputation as a demanding, ethical editor, and he quickly established his authority at *The Plain Dealer* by firing some veteran employees. He also published hard-hitting investigations, hired a writing coach, and bolstered the masthead with reporters and columnists from high-profile newspapers. "I think [*The Plain Dealer*] has been an underachieving newspaper," he told the *Columbia Journalism Review* this January, six months after he arrived. "I need to inject energy into the place and make it clear that this is a culture where good enough isn't good enough."

Even some of the paper's longtime critics credit Clifton with improving it. Both the *Cleveland Scene* and the *Cleveland Free Times*, alternative weeklies, have run a number of stories noting the paper's newfound habit of aggressive reporting on city hall. Mary Rose Oakar, a former Ohio congresswoman who settled a libel suit last year against *The Plain Dealer* (for a series of stories in 1992 that accused her of placing two "ghost employees" on the House Post Office payroll), agrees that the paper has improved. But, Oakar says, "they still don't have the quality that shows the community they care about it."

During an interview in mid-August, two weeks after Rose's suicide, Clifton reclines into his office couch, his arms casually propped on the edges. In response to the suggestion that the paper's columns and editorials about Joel Rose had an arrogant tone, Clifton grins—apparently he's heard this question before. "I don't know how you would react in such a situation," says Clifton. "But if a totally groundless charge was being made against me, it wouldn't be 'no comment.' It would be 'Are you kidding?' It would be 'I had nothing to do with this, and if you publish word number one about it, you'll be sued tomorrow, and the prosecutor would be sued, and every cop who's involved would be sued.' I would have some kind of vigorous, robust denial. That didn't come."

Though Clifton seems to dwell on the question of Rose's guilt, the issues are more complicated than that. As Fulwood, one of the paper's columnists, says, "*The Plain Dealer's* goal wasn't to find out who committed the crime, but to report that Rose was under investigation."

Clifton argues that newspapers publish details about ongoing investigations all the time—a sentiment echoed by a second wave of readers who wrote letters to the editor in the paper's defense. "If you leaf through pages of newspapers selected at random, I bet you could find 4, 5, 6, 10 cases where a person doesn't hold public office, and hasn't been charged with a crime, but there are reports about it in the newspaper," says Clifton. Think Marv Albert, he says. (Incidentally, Clifton helped to break the story on Gary Hart's affair with Donna Rice, staking out the presidential candidate's house with *Miami Herald* reporter Jim McGee.) Clifton says the paper's staff did debate whether or not to run the story. "Contrary to what the public would love to think," says Clifton, "we don't put stuff in the paper without discussing it. And fairness is always an issue."

Rich Oppel, the editor of the *Austin American-Statesman* and president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, doesn't see anything wrong with *The Plain Dealer's* coverage. "We know there's some risk" when newspapers use anonymous sources to write about ongoing investigations, says Oppel. "But there are circumstances where that is warranted." His example is Watergate, where accusations were made against a public figure based on anonymous sources and major crimes were uncovered as a result. The key, adds Peter Bhatia, the executive editor of *The Oregonian* and head of ASNE's ethics and values committee, is to have complete confidence in your sourcing and make sure you've got the story "pinned down."

"He was a benign, gentle, happy-go-lucky, avuncular guy....it's the two faces issue, the hypocrisy issue," Douglas Clifton says. Had Rose been a "totally anonymous person about whom no one knew anything," he concedes, "we probably would have waited a day or two."

But others point out that even when a news organization is convinced its sources are solid—as *The Plain Dealer* claims its were—the impact of the story on the person involved should also be a factor. "You have an obligation to your [readers]...and a First Amendment obligation to telling the truth," says John Lansing, the general manager at Cleveland's WEWS (where Rose previously worked) since 1997. "But you also have an obligation to minimizing harm." One way to do that, says Lansing and other journalists, is to write the story but hold off on naming the suspect until charges are filed. That way, the community will still be informed about the investigation, which could cause more victims or people with knowledge of the crime to come forward. (Dubail says nearly a dozen victims of similar crimes have come forward since the paper published the stories about Rose.)

In the end, Clifton acknowledges that it was Rose's celebrity—however diminished—that landed him on the front page on Friday, August 4. "The element of what makes a story a story first, and what makes it a page one story, are complicated and situational," begins Clifton. "In this case there was this guy; he was well known and had a public persona. He was a benign, gentle, happy-go-lucky, avuncular guy....it's the two faces issue, the hypocrisy issue." Had this been a story about a "totally anonymous person about whom no one knew anything," Clifton finally concedes, "we probably would have waited a day or two."

Five days after Rose's death, more than 200 people crammed into the parish hall of a modern Catholic church in Brecksville. Although Rose was Jewish and his wife, Lois, was Methodist, she had chosen the understated low brick building for a private, nondenominational memorial service. Many of the guests were on-air

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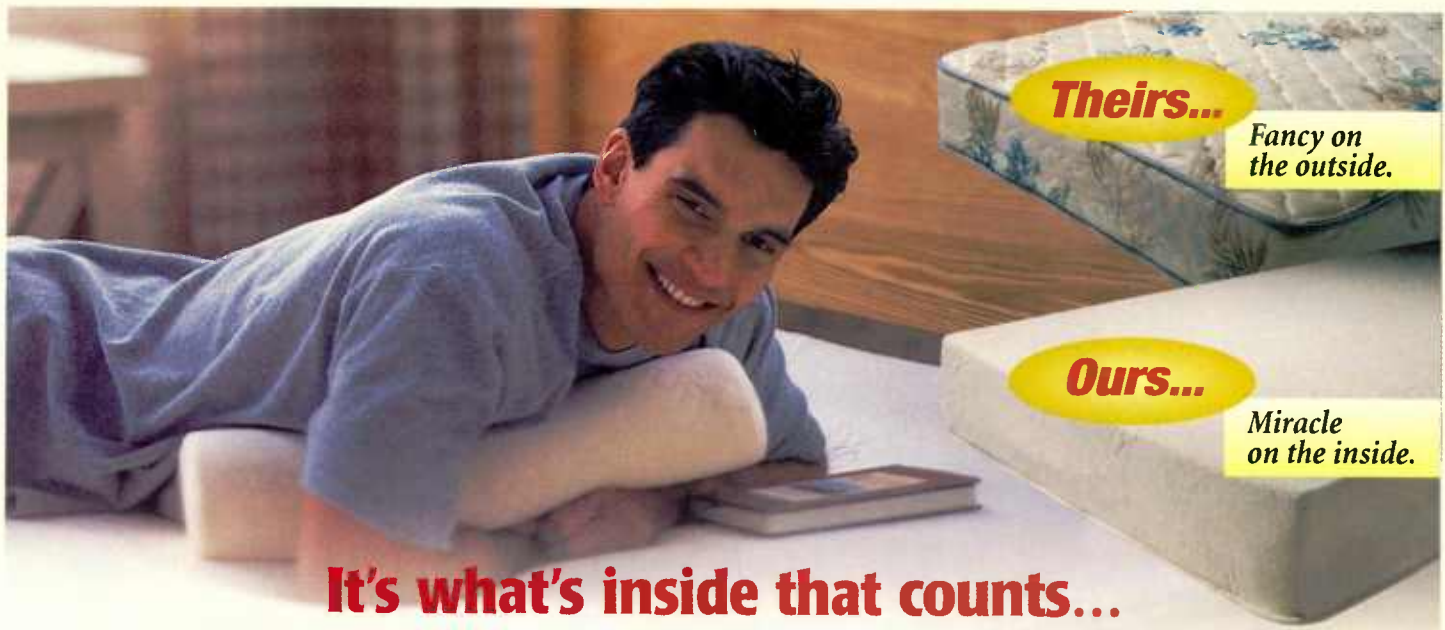
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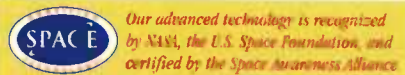
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personalities or behind-the-scenes players in Cleveland broadcasting; others were Rose's personal friends.

After people had engaged in awkward chatter for a few minutes, Lois Rose stepped to a small podium in the corner, made a nervous appeal for people to eat the cookies and punch, and asked if anyone would like to talk. A handful of friends took the stand to share stories about Rose. One of the most emotional speakers was Dennis Kancler, the Brecksville police chief, who had been Rose's friend for more than 20 years. (Because of their friendship, Kancler says, investigators kept him at a distance from the case.) The room was silent as Kancler stepped in front of the microphone and said, according to several people who were at the service, "We're gonna shake this thing out. I've had a lot of experience in law enforcement, and it doesn't look like they've got this one." (Kancler declines to confirm or deny his comments.)

On August 16, the Rose saga took another turn. Less than two weeks after *The Plain Dealer* had reported on the Rose investigation, the paper once more broke news on the case. Again citing "sources familiar with the investigation," the article's headline revealed: "Evidence, Rose DNA Don't Match." The story also reported that the typewriter retrieved from Rose's home is not the same machine that typed the messages in the mailings.

The subhead to the article, running nearly as large as the headline, let readers know the paper might still be vindicated: "Former Radio-TV Personality Is Not Eliminated as Suspect." The piece quoted police chief Kancler saying Rose had left him a suicide note, in which Rose had written, "The DNA will prove my innocence." (Of the three other suicide notes, the paper reported that Rose wrote one to the

Brecksville mayor—which, the mayor said, also denied the allegations—and two to family members. None of the notes has been made public.) Reporters also interviewed James R. Wooley, a former assistant U.S. attorney general, identifying him as one of the "area's top experts on the use of DNA in criminal cases," who said the results prove only that Rose "can't be connected to that piece of evidence....It just means the guy didn't lick the stamp." His analysis was followed by a quote from one of the still-unnamed victims: "He was a very brilliant man. Couldn't he have had a friend [lick the stamps]?"

The prosecutor's office is continuing the investigation, as new DNA is collected from packages received by the women now coming forward. Asked if there are any other suspects in the case, Weiner, the criminal division chief, responded: "We're not closing any doors."

Despite the new information, the paper stands by its decision to run the story. But Regina Brett, the columnist who had compared Rose to a convicted rapist, is no longer convinced. "When he fired a bullet into his temple on August 4, many—myself included—thought it sounded like the gavel of a guilty verdict," she wrote on August 18. "Now I'm not so sure."

Brett says she has also reexamined how the paper first reported the story. "The journalist in me said he's a public figure, and this was a crime that was terrorizing a bunch of women. If that was made public, there'd be more women coming forward," says Brett. "But that [result] could have been met if his name hadn't been used....The key is: Should we have named him when we did? That's the only thing debatable at this point. It doesn't even matter how we got this story. But did we need to name him?" ■

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LETTERS

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22]

Mutating myths have been going on since the dawn of man. The reason that legends like this grow is because mankind wants to believe. Pure and simple. *Brill's Content* was once again an excellent read!

PAUL ROBERTS, ELK GROVE, CA

THANKS FOR SPEAKING FOR ME

In "Playing Favorites" [Face-Off, September], Jonah Goldberg writes, "After eight years, the press is bored with Gore and doesn't trust him, and neither do the rest of us." Well, thank you, Mr. Goldberg, for speaking for me since I'm obviously too stupid to speak for myself. I had no idea I didn't trust Al Gore, but I sure am glad you had the foresight to put your words in my mouth.

Goldberg's opponent, Jeffrey Klein, hits the nail right on the head: Conservatives don't want "fairness in media"; they want the media to make them look good and the other side look bad, period, and anything less is shameful "liberal bias."

DOUG GILLET, DECATUR, GA

EASY EXPLANATION

The September Face-Off regarding liberals inhabiting the media is easily explained by one of the truisms of American politics:

The richer you are, the more likely you are to vote Republican.

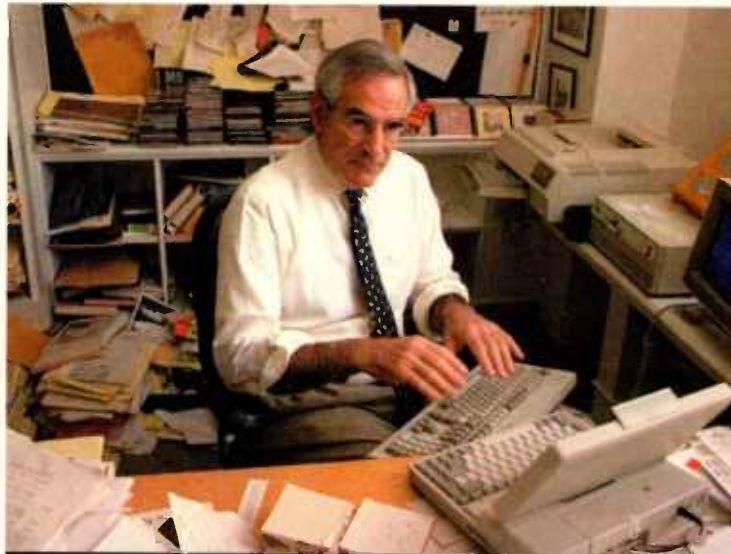
The higher the level of education you have, the more likely you are to vote Democrat.

Therein lies the rationale for the political leanings of the generals, the media superstars and talk-show screamers, as opposed to the foot soldiers, whose entry into the field requires a college degree but who don't generate the big bucks.

JERRY UTTER, DANIA, FL

MEDIA BIAS

"I am writing about the Face-Off in your June edition concerning allegations of media bias in favor of the "gay agenda." The problem, of course, is finding an *objective* way of measuring objectivity, or an *unbiased* way of measuring bias.



Author David Halberstam has reissued his classic book, *The Powers That Be*.

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the secular media have an overwhelming bias in favor of a "gay agenda" that consists of demands not just for tolerance but for complete acceptance and affirmation of homosexuality, in moral, social, religious, political, legal, and economic terms. What is stunning is that so many in the media (Robert Scheer in particular, Andrew Sullivan to a lesser extent) seem genuinely unaware that this is a bias at all, because they not only agree with the "gay agenda" but have accepted its claims as presuppositions of fact before any discussion even begins. Sullivan tells Jonah Goldberg to "get some better arguments." I would suggest instead that the "objective" media give equal time (and equal respect, not mocking condescension) to the arguments on both sides, and then let the American public decide which are better.

PETER SPRIGG, CLIFTON PARK, NY

HALBERSTAM'S HABIT

"David Halberstam's "The Powers That Were" [Rewind, September] met my expectations for the quality of his writing. What really caught my attention, though, was the picture of him at work in his

office. As one who repairs, sells, installs, and teaches computers, it was very gratifying for me to see him using 10-year-old computer equipment.

Thank you, David, for not chasing technology, as it won't help such superb journalism.

JOSH VIOLETTE, SANDWICH, MA

APPLES AND ORANGES

The September 2000 Notebook contains an item headed "Coverage: House of Gore" with a bar chart of the number of stories in various publications regarding "Bush/drugs" and "Gore/landlord." In every case but one, the disparity was great; but, then, it would be when comparing apples and oranges.

What you have compared is stories about allegations that Bush had used cocaine and stories about Gore's property manager failing to manage his property properly. In the one, Bush is directly involved. In the other, Gore is not only *not* directly involved but probably had no knowledge of the situation.

JESSE COOK III, CHARLESTON, SC

INDEFENSIBLE BEHAVIOR

"Regarding "Spice Girls on the Bus" [Notebook, October], let me get this

straight: Seth Mnookin discovered that many people—including other reporters covering Gore—agree that the coverage of Gore by Katharine Seelye, Ceci Connolly, and Sandra Sobieraj is unpleasant in tone or "beyond adversarial." But, Mnookin says, "[i]t's hard to see what the big deal is."

Really? What Mnookin seems to be trying to put across—in the pages of *Brill's Content*, no less—is that it somehow doesn't matter that reporters for some of our highest-profile news venues (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Associated Press*, respectively) have a perceptible bias against the candidate they are covering—a bias so perceptible, in fact, that talk about it is "pervasive" enough to warrant an article in your watchdog magazine!

Mnookin can try every shuffle in the book. He can pretend—by using the least persuasive examples—that Bob Somerby's potent demonstrations of these women's relentless negativity turn on mere trivialities. He can say that Seelye and Connolly "have made only one notable mistake," even if it was a doozy, the notorious Love Canal misquote that unfairly dogged the Gore campaign for months. He can call the women's critics sexist. He can claim that the editorializing, slanting, and recontextualizing that many people see in these women's work doesn't really exist. Finally, desperately, he can attempt to blame the negative slant—which doesn't exist?—on Gore himself, and his supposed distance from his "intense" reporters.

One wonders why presidential candidates should have to kiss [up to reporters] in order to get fair and disinterested treatment by the press—and why *Brill's Content* would endorse that notion by publishing this lame defense of three women whose sneering journalistic behavior has been indefensible.

JUDITH GREER, MOUNT PLEASANT, SC

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4 TEN THINGS I WISH I'D KNOWN — BEFORE I WENT OUT INTO THE REAL WORLD, by Maria Shriver. (Warner, \$19.95.) Life lessons. (†) 18

Maria Shriver's *Ten Things* had been a New York Times best seller for 18 weeks on September 3, 2000. Will other TV journalists be inspired to take pen in hand?

November 5, 2000

THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Best Sellers by Award-Winning TV Journalists

This Week		Weeks on List
	ADVICE, HOW-TO AND PLATITUDES	
1	TUESDAYS WITH MORLEY , by Steve Kroft. (Randomthoughts House, \$19.95.) An award-winning journalist recalls life lessons from his cantankerous, aging mentor. (†)	2
2	GO AWAY, I'M BUSY: DEALING WITH WORKPLACE HARASSMENT , by Morley Safer. (St. Martians Press, \$26.) The cantankerous, award-winning journalist comes to grips with a relentless, in-house stalker. (†)	1
3	THE CENTURY THUS FAR , by Peter Jennings. (Milk it Press, \$50.) The award-winning anchor takes a wistful look at events that changed the world over the last 10 months. (†)	70
4	SEVEN THINGS I WISH I'D KNOWN BEFORE I MARRIED MY FIRST SIX WIVES , by Larry King. (Doubledate, \$12.95.) Wife lessons from the award-winning talk-show host. (†)	42
5	TEN THINGS I'VE HEARD WHEN ALAN TALKS IN HIS SLEEP , by Andrea Mitchell. (Bull Paperbacks, \$8.95.) Financial tips from the award-winning wife of Alan Greenspan. (†)	10
6	CHICKEN PARMIGIANA FOR THE SOUL , by Al Roker. (Cook Books, \$22.95.) Inspirational recipes from the award-winning weatherman. (†)	5
7	INTO DEAD AIR , by Paula Zahn and Jon Krakauer. (Pinnacle, \$19.95.) A first-person account of CBS's failed yet award-winning <i>Early Show</i> . (†)	11
8	THE FOXIEST GENERATION , by Tom Brokaw. (Gawk Hardcover, \$35.95.) The award-winning NBC News anchor looks at youth and likes what he sees. (†)	68
9*	COKIE AND STEVEN ROBERTS' BIG BOOK OF PUPPIES , by Cokie and Steven Roberts. (Alpo, \$19.95.) A whimsical look at the award-winning couple's favorite young dogs. (†)	317
10	THE 50 BEST DEALS AT WALT DISNEY WORLD , by Diane Sawyer. (Buena Vista, \$29.95.) The award-winning investigative reporter recounts her most grueling undercover assignment. (†)	50
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12	BEING BARBARA WALTERS , by Barbara Walters (as told to Barbara Walters). (HarperWalters, \$9.95.) Life lessons about Barbara Walters from the award-winning Barbara Walters. (†)	4

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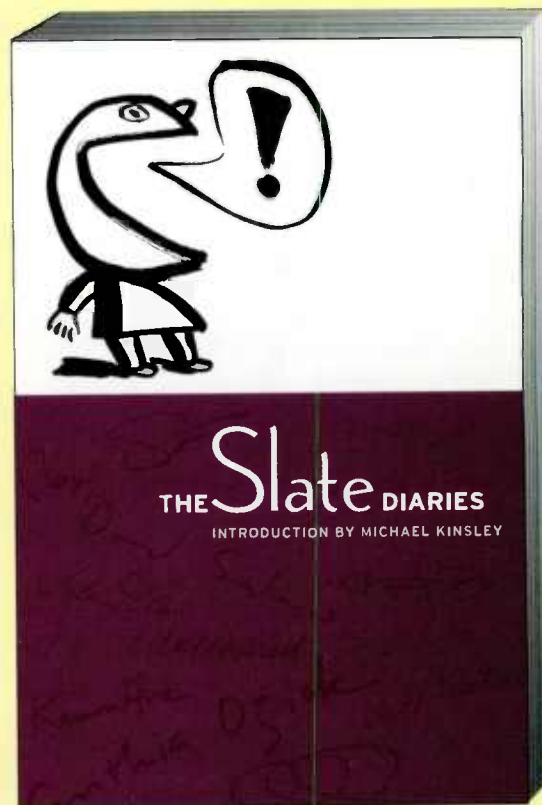


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