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BLIND SPOTS:
What the Pulitzer Jurors Ignore

THE TRUE STORY BEHIND *THE EXORCIST*

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THE NEW YORK TIMES'S "IT" GIRL

EXECUTION TV

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DIDION'S DISCIPLES

DAVID HALBERSTAM ON THE POWERS THAT WERE

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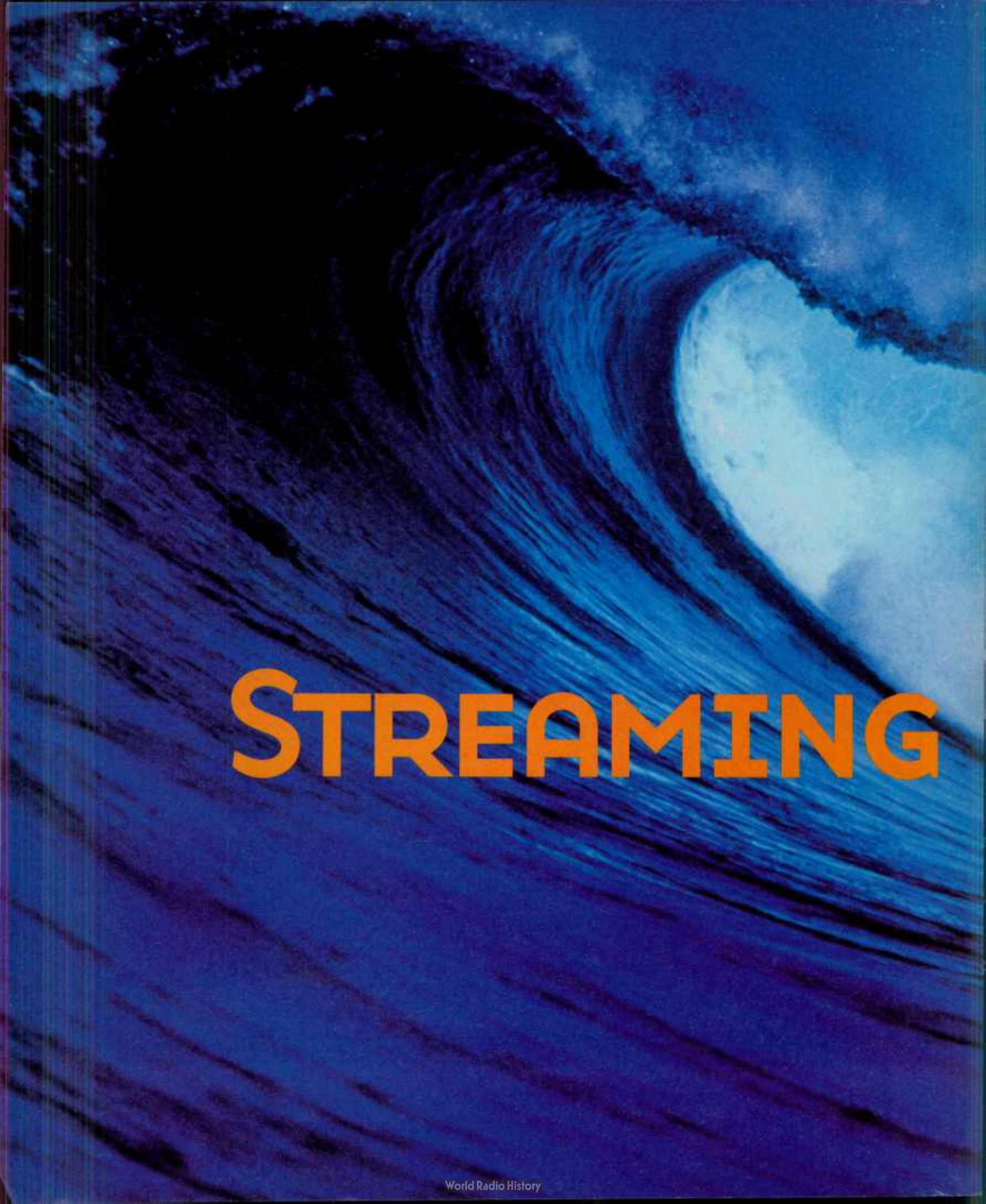

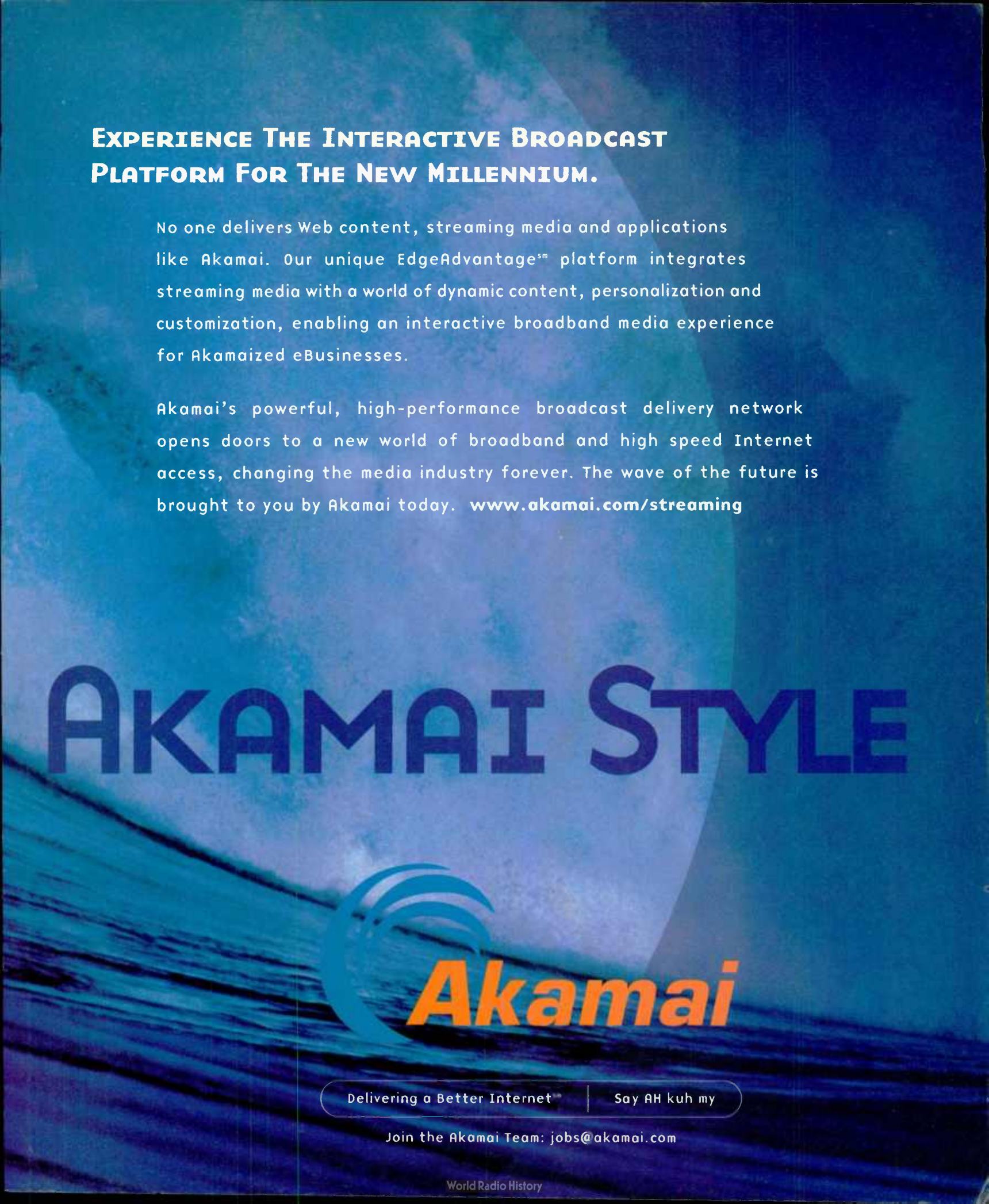

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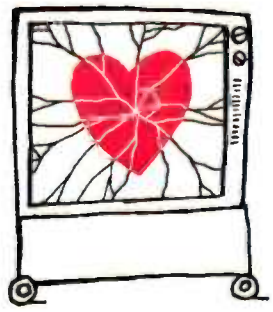
WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

On page 70 of this issue, the pollster Frank Luntz presents the results of a focus group about the media conducted on behalf of this magazine and MSNBC.

That only 2 out of 20 who participated in the group had "positive" feelings about the media hardly shocked me. But it did make me wonder: Why do smart people, so dependent on the media—so *addicted* to the media—have such a complicated relationship to it? We're moving beyond even the love/hate dynamic that has been true for some time. Something has changed.



Over the years, the media—the companies that control it and the individuals who work for them—have become more powerful (or, some might argue, more ubiquitous, which brings its own kind of power) and therefore more resented. Combine that with the fact that members of the press aren't held accountable in the way that, say, doctors and lawyers and even politicians are and you have a handy recipe for distrust and ill will. Directly and indirectly, this issue diagnoses the problem.

Senior writer Seth Mnookin's piece on page 104 reports on how the Pulitzer Prizes, the Nobels of journalism, are awarded. It will come as no surprise to hard-bitten cynics that when judging its own, the press can be less scrupulous than it is when judging others—and more likely to give its peers the benefit of the doubt. What's striking about Mnookin's story is the rebuff he gets from Pulitzer administrator Seymour Topping in response to the question of why Pulitzer judges don't seek comment from those who've been written about in nominated pieces before awarding a prize.

Journalism is about getting comment from both sides, and the person or people best equipped to identify holes in a story are the subjects themselves. The judges can always ignore what they hear, but why not at least check? One reason is simple arrogance, an obliviousness to what the rest of the world thinks of journalists: that they believe in getting both sides of the story—except when they're on one of those sides.

This issue also contains stories that show how inescapable—and frustratingly powerful—the press is and why the rest of the world might resent it. On page 76, Mnookin (we keep him busy) reveals how even George W. Bush has had to kowtow to the men and women in the back of the plane to keep his recent momentum alive.

Bush's "charm offensive" is working—for now—in contrast to Al Gore's arm's-length approach, which, as I write this, appears to be hurting him with the press. We'll never know what Bush really thinks of the reporters he jokes with, teases, and knows by name, nickname, and favorite sports team—just that he's calculated that they have the upper hand at the moment.

In her critical essay on page 100, Katie Roiphe points out the ubiquity of the press and its cultural sway—in the person of the seminal journalist and essayist Joan Didion. Roiphe makes the case that Didion has influenced multiple generations of journalists—and, in turn, multiple generations of newspaper and magazine readers across America. Since many of these writers are part of the group that sets the cultural agenda, they subliminally affect how we see ourselves and our society. So Didion's writing about the culture has shaped the culture of writing, a solipsism that perhaps readers, but few journalists, may have noticed.

On page 86, Emily Eakin explores another cultural construct brought to you by the media: our understanding of exorcism. Over the years, as Eakin explains, the subject has been defined not only by the Catholic Church or historians but by journalists, a novelist, Hollywood, television networks, and those who write about them. Her piece tells the story of how a real-life event has been reimagined in various media incarnations to become our collective consciousness.

No wonder some of Luntz's participants are suspicious. For his next focus group on the media, he should invite Elaina Richardson, the former editor of *Elle*. She recently resigned to take over Yaddo, the august arts colony, and her peers' coverage of her resignation surprised her. On page 68, read a journalist's memoir of her own media hazing. DAVID KUHN

CONTRIBUTORS

KIMBERLY CONNIFF, a staff writer for *Brill's Content*, covers magazines.

EMILY EAKIN is a contributing writer at *Lingua Franca* magazine.

MICHAEL GARTNER, *Brill's Content*'s new ombudsman, has been page-one editor at *The Wall Street Journal*, editor and president of *The Des Moines Register*, and president of NBC News.

JONAH GOLDBERG, a contributing editor to *Brill's Content*, is a syndicated columnist and the editor of *National Review Online*.

DAVID HALBERSTAM is finishing a new book on what Bosnia and Kosovo tell us about American politics and policy.

GAY JERVEY, a senior correspondent for *Brill's Content*, wrote the May cover story about CBS's *The Early Show*.

FRANK LUNTZ, president of The Luntz Research Companies, has supervised more than 400 surveys worldwide. His political clients are predominantly Republican.

PETER MAASS has contributed to *Talk*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Republic*, and *The New Yorker*. He is the author of *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War*, his memoir of covering the war in Bosnia.

SETH MNOOKIN, a senior writer for *Brill's Content*, covers politics and the press.

ELAINA RICHARDSON, the former editor of *Elle* magazine, is now the president of Yaddo, the artists' community in Saratoga Springs, New York.

KATIE ROIPHE is the author of *The Morning After* and *Last Night in Paradise*. Her next book, a novel, will be published next year.

KATHERINE ROSMAN, a senior writer for *Brill's Content*, most recently profiled *The New York Times Magazine*'s Lynn Hirschberg.

ROBERT SCHMIDT, a senior writer for *Brill's Content*, covers politics and is based in Washington, D.C.

MIMI SHERATON is the author of 14 books, has been a food critic for *The New York Times*, and has written for *Vanity Fair*, *Food & Wine*, and *Vogue*.

SCOTT MENCHIN

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Creative Director
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Managing Editor Elizabeth Helfgott
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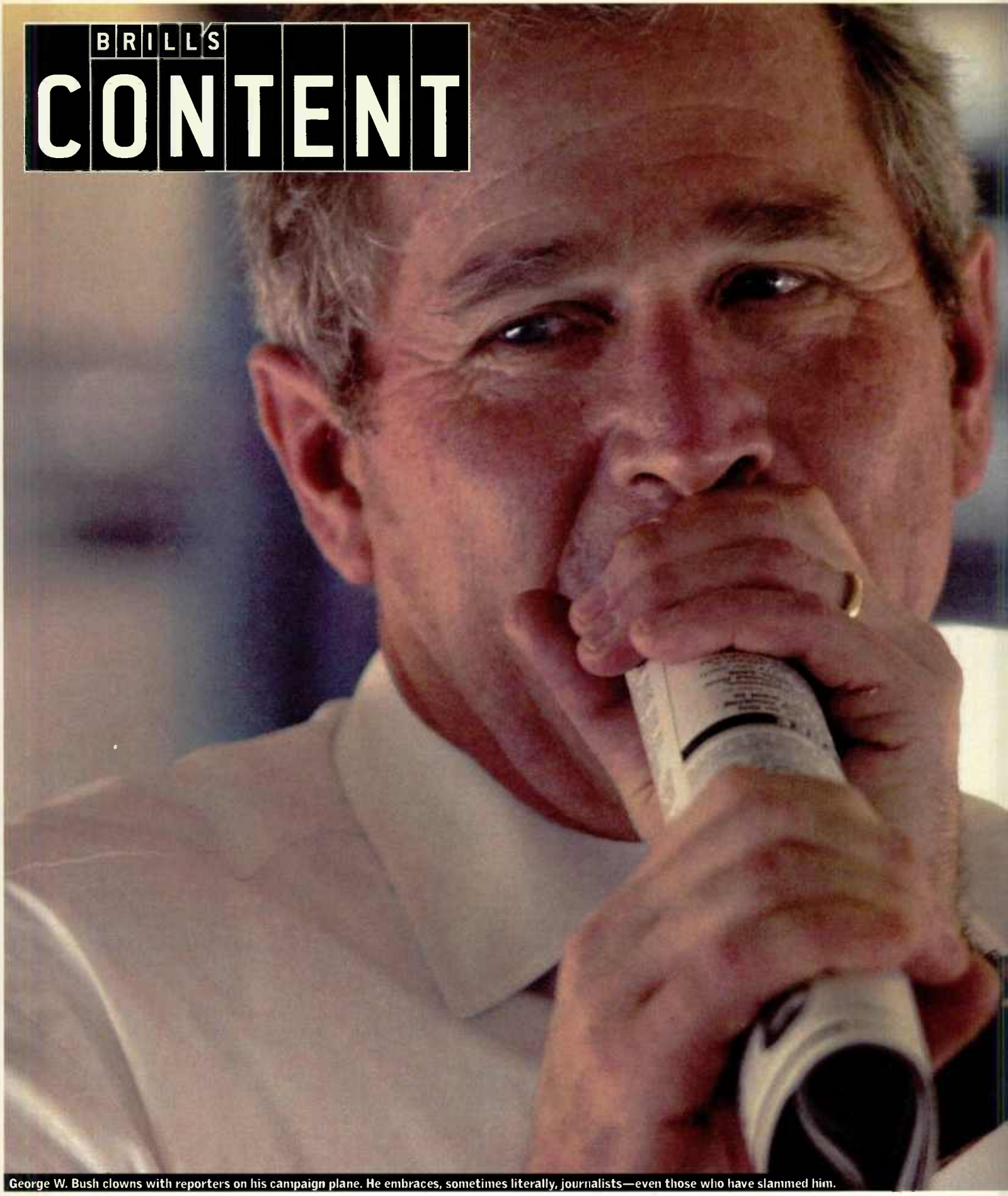


George W. Bush clowns with reporters on his campaign plane. He embraces, sometimes literally, journalists—even those who have slammed him.

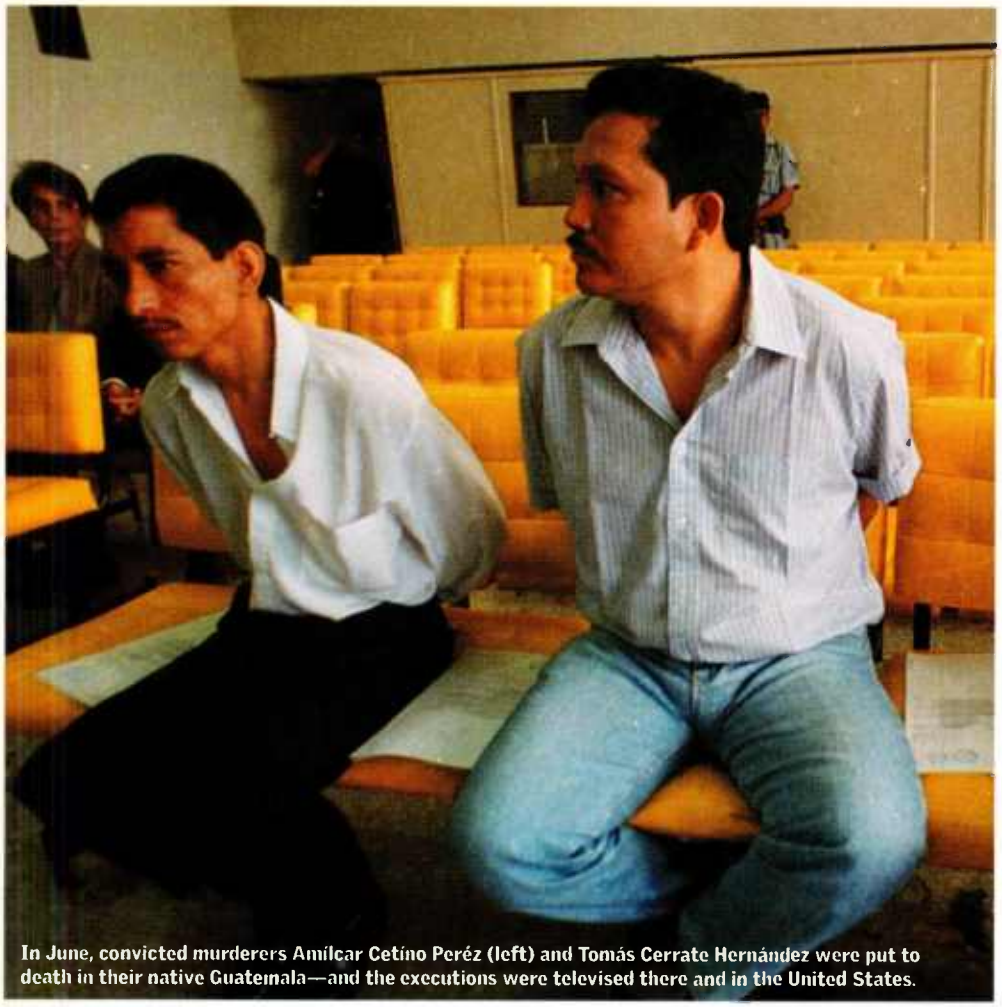
ERIC DRAPER/AP PHOTO

SEPTEMBER 2000
VOLUME 3
NUMBER SEVEN

COVER: BROOKS KRAFT/CORBIS SYGMA

"IS IT NEWS TO WATCH AN EXECUTION LIVE? SHOULD [VIEWERS] SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE? YES. IS IT EXPLOITATIVE? VERY POSSIBLY."

TOM ROSENSTIEL, DIRECTOR OF THE PROJECT FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM, NOTEBOOK, PAGE 33



In June, convicted murderers Amílcar Cetino Peréz (left) and Tomás Cerrate Hernández were put to death in their native Guatemala—and the executions were televised there and in the United States.

L TO R: MYNOR DE LEÓN/PRENSA LIBRE; SCOTT MENCHIN

UP FRONT

COLUMNS

Recipe rustlers, Notebook, page 42

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BOOK-JACKET DESIGNER CHIP KIDD ON THE RESURGENCE OF THE COMIC BOOK AS A NARRATIVE MEDIUM, BOOKS, PAGE 111

A peek at the forthcoming graphic novel *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*, by artist Chris Ware

DEPTS.

BRILL'S CONTENT

WHAT WE STAND FOR

1 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.

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

JIMMY CORRIGAN: THE SMARTEST KID ON EARTH (PANTHEON BOOKS, 2000). BY CHRIS WARE

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LETTERS

CORRECTIONS POLICY

1. We always publish corrections at least as prominently as the original mistake was published.

2. We are eager to make corrections quickly and candidly.

3. Although we welcome letters that are critical of our work, an aggrieved party need not have a letter published for us to correct a mistake. We will publish corrections on our own and in our own voice as soon as we are told about a mistake by anyone—our staff, an uninvolved reader, or an aggrieved reader—and can confirm the correct information.

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@brillscontent.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 MGGartner@aol.com; or by mail at 5315 Waterbury Rd., Des Moines, IA 50312.

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Brill Media Holdings, L.P., the parent company of this magazine, has recently entered into an agreement in which NBC, CBS, and Primedia (a large magazine company) will participate as limited partners in an Internet business to be run by Brill Media Holdings. Although the two ventures are separate and these media companies by contract specifically disclaim any involvement in or influence over this magazine, there is nonetheless an indirect connection between the magazine and these companies. Any complaints about perceived bias by the magazine in favor of NBC, CBS, or Primedia should also be directed to Mr. Gartner.

A DEATH IN AFRICA; ONE *LIFE* STORY; AND DOUBLECLICK DEFENDS ITS PRIVACY POLICY

NO THANKS FOR THE COMPLIMENT

Throughout my career I have been passionately opposed to discrimination against gays. I have been even more passionately opposed to anti-gay violence. I see these as human rights and civil rights issues—nothing more and certainly nothing less. I have never written about the so-called gay lifestyle nor have I taken a position on gay marriage. So I cannot understand why Andrew Sullivan ["It's About Civil Rights," Face-Off, June] would write, "If you read only Frank Rich in *The New York Times* and Richard Cohen in *The Washington Post*, I can understand why you might get the impression that, according to the media, everything-gay-is-good and everything-anti-gay-is-bad." That statement is simply not true—but I forgive Andrew because he is gay.

RICHARD COHEN,
THE WASHINGTON POST

WHO WATCHES THE WATCHDOG?

It is commendable to be a "watchdog" over the press. But who watches the self-appointed watchdog?

It seems you are biased in favor of promoting respectability to the deviant lifestyle of same-sex conduct [Face-Off, June]. You give a page to those who favor society declaring same sex conduct [as] only an alternate to family life and a page to those who hold homosexual conduct as deviant and harmful to family life. And then you give Andrew Sullivan, an active homosexual, a page to rebut the pro-family position. It is two pages to one.

It seems to me, to be fair, you should have included a response by a pro-family advocate, such as Richard J. Neuhaus.

THE REVEREND HAROLD DREXLER,
DUBUQUE, IA

YOU MISSED A BIGGIE

Let me comment on "The Essential Bookshelf" in the June issue [Summer Reading]—well, you missed a biggie! How could you include Ben Bradlee's gratuitous pinings on his own career at *The Washington Post*—and totally ignore Ben Bagdikian's *Media Monopoly* (in its sixth edition this year)? Talk about *real* media coverage—now, that is a classic!

JULIET BEGLEY, HONOLULU, HI

DISTRESSED

Under "The Essential Bookshelf" there appeared the following item: *All the President's Men*, by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward (1974): "The legendary book that brought down the Nixon White House...."

I challenge you to cite a single reputable source that assigns any major credit to *The Washington Post* and its young reporters for the downfall of Richard Nixon.

It is distressing that a magazine that claims to be dedicated to promoting accuracy and accountability in the news media should contribute to perpetuating this myth. The saga of Deep Throat and the "dynamic duo" made for an exciting Hollywood movie, but as to the real story of Watergate, it is nothing more than a footnote.

CHRISTOPHER COONEY,
WASHINGTON, DC

SHOW ME THE NAMES

In his "Dead Man Writing" [The Wry Side, June], Calvin Trillin writes, "I would guess that there is nobody in the New York publishing world who can't name someone—at least a celebrity but probably a journalist or even a novelist—who doesn't write his or her own books; the only people kept ignorant of such information are the book buyers."

Are the readers of *Brill's Content* to be kept ignorant as well? I can understand why Mr. Trillin might not want to name them; some of the nonwriting writers or their ghosts may be friends, or friends of friends, and he might be violating

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LETTERS

personal confidences to reveal their names. But can't *Brill's Content* assign a disinterested reporter to track down those rumors, verify them, and publish them? I, for one, would like to see the names.

TOM GALLY, YOKOHAMA, JAPAN

APPALLED

"I was appalled by Dianna Cahn's statement in "Hearts In Darkness" [June] that because our batch of Nairobi-based correspondents "had never lost anyone before" we had to "stick our hands in the fire all over again to realize it was hot."

Only the most insensitive, unobservant journalist could be unaware of the dangers inherent in covering wars or of simply working in Africa.

Sadly, since Cahn's article was published our circle of friends has suffered another tragedy. And I assure you that our grief over the death of Myles Tierney did not make it any easier to cope with the killing of our colleague and friend Miguel Gil Moreno de Mora, as well as Reuters writer Kurt Schork, in Sierra Leone, on May 24. [For more on the deaths of Gil Moreno and Schork, see "Deadly Competition," page 96.]

I was relieved, however, to read that Cahn belatedly found "greater reverence" for the stories and people she covered in Africa.

KARIN DAVIES, NAIROBI, KENYA

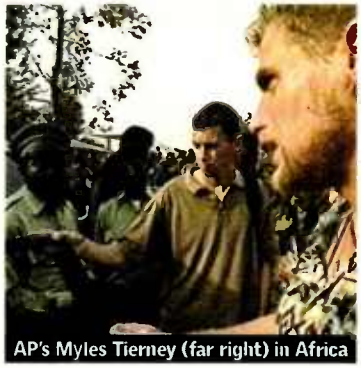
STRIKE A BALANCE

"Although Dianna Cahn writes movingly about the life and death of cameraman Myles Tierney, her article raises larger questions about how the African continent is covered—and not covered—by most Western journalists.

Beginning with her essay's clichéd echo of Conrad, Cahn (and *Brill's Content*) delivers yet another catalog of "Dark Continent" imagery: war, disease, poverty, chaos, death.

As anyone familiar with Africa knows, the continent is a gold mine of stories about music, art, architecture, city life, and the people who make these things happen.

When crises do strike Africa, cover them. But give us other



AP's Myles Tierney (far right) in Africa

African stories too. The integrity of journalists and their employers hinges on striking this balance.

MARK ZIMMERMANN, MITO, JAPAN

ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT READS

"I was a colleague of both Dianna Cahn's and Myles Tierney's, and "Hearts In Darkness" was one of the most difficult reads I have ever had to endure. Cahn manages to exploit both Tierney's tragic death and the suffering of the people of Sierra Leone in order to cast herself as some sort of bargain-basement Isak Dinesen.

Imagine that: In a land where thugs hack the limbs off children because of the way their parents vote, Dianna Cahn gets to be part of the story because, well, the heart knows what it knows. (The story's title is borderline racist, by the way.) It was especially appalling to read this in an issue of *Brill's Content* that rightly scores those colleagues of John F. Kennedy Jr. who exploited his death.

RON KAMPEAS, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

RECOMMENDATIONS

"In "Strike Up the Broadband" [Tools, June] John R. Quain recommends software to protect computers from hackers. I recommend a cheaper and better route:

a.) Go to the Shields Up area of Steve Gibson's excellent website (www.grc.com). Read about computer security and make the changes to your dial-up connection. Then run his tests to see how well your computer is hidden.

b.) Download the freeware Zone Alarm to act as a firewall.

c.) Back to www.grc.com to retest your computer, and then it should be safe from hackers.

d.) Then download the IDCIDE cookie blocker freeware from www.idcide.com and you won't have sites tracking your movements through the Internet.

This is a much cheaper (and better IMHO) alternative to Mr. Quain's recommendations.

STEPHEN DAVIS, PLEASANT HILL, CA

MAKES ME SICK

Jonathan Alter's article ["The Joys on the Bus," Talk Back, June] makes me want to vomit. During his interviews on the *Imus in the Morning* show, Alter has always spoken his bias as being in the tank for Senator John McCain. His lengthy article sheds little news.

LARRY DOUGHTY, BREWER, ME

LIVES CAN BE RUINED

"In regard to "The Notorious L.A.T." [Notebook, August], journalists must be absolutely sure that the story that they are gathering is absolutely correct because lawsuits can develop and people's lives can be destroyed. If, in spite of journalists' best efforts, a story is found to be false, a retraction should be issued immediately. There also needs to be more effective, responsible communication between journalists and editors to avoid any speculation of complicity or incompetence and to maintain and foster integrity. A reporter would not want his life in ruins, and he or she should afford the same respect to others.

BARRY JACOBS, PHILADELPHIA, PA

MEDICINE IS NOT SO SIMPLE

"As a new subscriber to *Brill's Content*, I was a bit disappointed when I opened my first issue to the article "Bitter Pill" [June] regarding *Los Angeles Times* writer David Willman's coverage of the diabetes drug Rezulin. Willman is clearly not a writer experienced in medical matters. He presents the entire controversy surrounding Rezulin as a stark black-and-white question: Take Rezulin and you'll probably die; don't take Rezulin and you'll live.

Rezulin was the first of an

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 140]

CORRECTIONS

In August's "Out Here" column, due to an editing error, we incorrectly reported that the New Hampshire Executive Council would be holding Chief Justice David Brock's impeachment hearings. The New Hampshire House of Representatives' Judiciary Committee held those hearings.

In June's "Sleeping With the Enemy" [Media Lives], staff writer Julie Scelfo incorrectly referred to Dow Jones Newswires reporter Kirsti Hastings as Kirsti McCabe. Due to an editing error in the same piece, we inaccurately referred to *Asiaweek* as a "business newsmagazine." It is a general-news magazine.

In June's "Hearts In Darkness," writer Dianna Cahn incorrectly reported that five journalists were killed by a mob in a 1993 incident in Somalia. In fact, four journalists were killed in that incident.

In June's "Summer Reading" section, we inaccurately referred to *All the President's Men*, by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, as the "book that brought down the Nixon White House." It was Woodward and Bernstein's reporting in *The Washington Post*—on which the book was based—that was widely credited with helping to force President Richard Nixon out of office.

In June's "Southern Exposure," a family history of the Jackson, Mississippi, *Clarion-Ledger*, we mistakenly reversed the photos of former editor Rea Hederman's uncle, Thomas Jr. ("Mr. Tom"), and his father, Robert Jr. ("Mr. Bob").

In June's "Blow Up," senior correspondent Abigail Pogrebin mistook *Folio* magazine for the magazine-trade newsletter *Folio: First Day*. In the same story, Richard Blow was quoted as saying about *George* magazine contributor Douglas Brinkley, "It wasn't working for us." In fact, Blow said, "He wasn't working for us."

In May's "For *The Early Show*, It's Getting Late," senior correspondent Gay Jervey inaccurately referred to Lisa Birnbach as the author of *The Official Preppy Handbook*. Birnbach edited the book.

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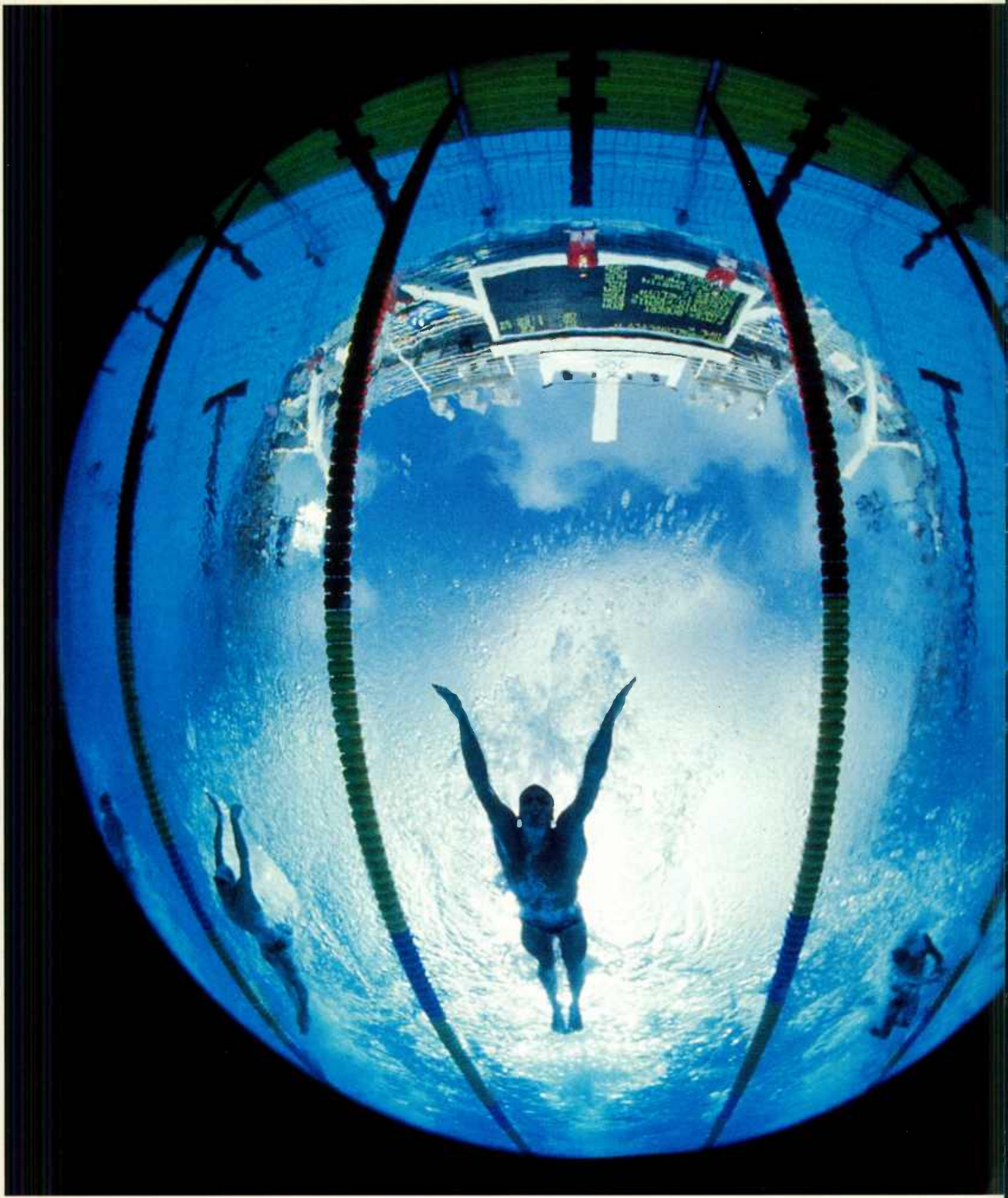

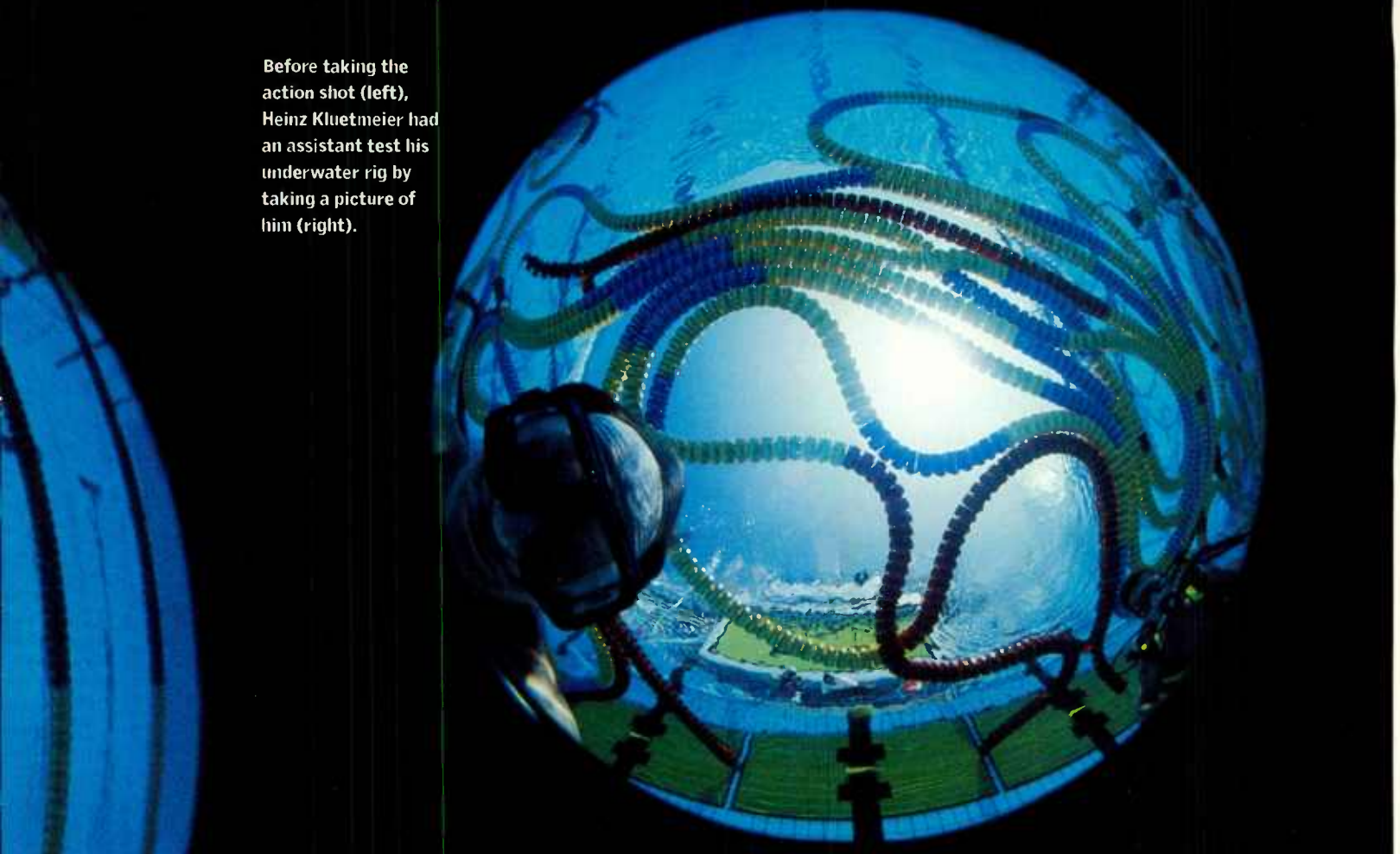

Before taking the action shot (left), Heinz Kluetmeier had an assistant test his underwater rig by taking a picture of him (right).

A STROKE OF BRILLIANCE

Shooting swimmers at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, *Sports Illustrated*'s Heinz Kluetmeier brought new meaning to the term *pool photographer*.

Though a competitive swimmer in high school, Heinz Kluetmeier never expected to end up in the main racing pool at the Summer Olympics. But that's exactly where Kluetmeier—a *Sports Illustrated* staff photographer bound in September for the Summer Games in Sydney—found himself on the sixth day of the 1992 Games, in Barcelona. It was the 11th Olympics he was covering for the magazine, and, this time, he wanted to try something different: shooting a race from the bottom of the pool. Using a fish-eye lens to capture a fish-eye view, Kluetmeier gave *SI* readers a shot that was a first not only for him but for the Games as well.

He chose the 200-meter men's butterfly for the "great shapes" of the swimmers and took the safe bet that American Melvin Stewart, a dominant competitor at the time, would win. Prior to the gold-medal race, Kluetmeier set up a remote camera in the lane to which Stewart was assigned. (The Olympic photo chief had given him written permission to take an underwater shot.)

Working in water meant he couldn't use the usual wireless remote. He ran a wire from the camera on the bottom of the pool to the side, where he could trigger the shutter with his foot while snapping more traditional action photos with a handheld camera.

But Kluetmeier was nearly prevented from taking the picture. An Olympic official accosted him as he jumped into the water to set up his equipment. "I'm in the pool, camera in my hand," he says, "ready to hold my breath with goggles on, looking like a refugee from *The Graduate*," when the official told him he couldn't put his camera in the pool. She relented after he offered to stand poolside at race time with his swimming trunks on under his clothes, ready to retrieve the camera if the swimmers objected.

It took Kluetmeier two dives to the bottom to get his camera positioned just so. For testing purposes, an assistant snapped a photo of him at work in the water (above).

When Stewart and the other swimmers leaped from the starting blocks, they had no idea that the camera was set up below. Kluetmeier took this picture just before the racers completed the first length of the pool, before the water began rippling, blocking the light from the sky. As Kluetmeier expected, Stewart swam over the camera on his way to winning the gold.

STEPHEN TOTILO

Photograph by Heinz Kluetmeier/*Sports Illustrated*

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the powers that were

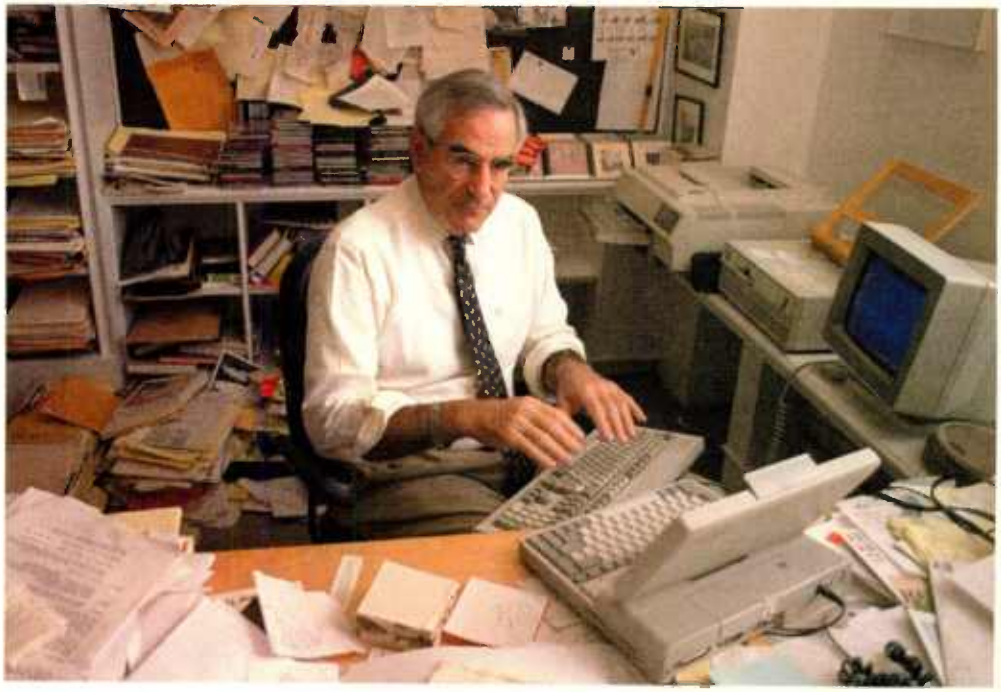
The Powers That Be shaped the way we view media. Twenty-one years later, the author finds the industry transformed, but not for the better. BY DAVID HALBERSTAM

Just as I sat down to write the new introduction to *The Powers That Be*, my 1979 book chronicling the rise of modern media, the owners of the Tribune Company (whose holdings include the *Chicago Tribune*) bought The Times Mirror Company (the parent company of the *Los Angeles Times* and several other papers) for $8 billion. The dollar figure was the thing that excited most people in the profession, as well as most lay readers. The deal was big news in most American newspapers: a smaller paper that was part of a large media organization swallowing up a company that owned a bigger paper. What was rarely mentioned in the coverage of the merger was the matter of excellence: The *Trib*, a paper of good but hardly great quality, was buying one that was, in almost all journalistic ways, of superior quality. For today's *Chicago Tribune* is a good newspaper, and it has some fine reporters. But nonetheless, the paper gives off the feeling of an ownership whose passion is for its stock, not its readership nor the news it is reporting. These owners have carefully figured out the precise return on investment needed to keep stockholders happy and have adjusted the quality of the paper accordingly—that is, journalism adjusted to economic needs rather than economic needs adjusted to journalistic ones.

The energy level exhibited by the *Tribune* back in the mid-eighties is gone. Back then, another ownership team had turned the paper from an almost scandalous past—a rich regional paper whose isolationism and Neanderthal politics had made it something of a national joke—to one of the nation's best non-national newspapers. Now, my strong sense is that the current *Trib* ownership believes that the future in communications lies elsewhere, in television, perhaps, or in the Internet. It seems to be going through the motions with its flagship paper, doing just enough to sustain something of an honorable reputation but operating without genuine passion or purpose.

The *Los Angeles Times*, while still a better paper than the *Trib*, has long since slipped from the higher level of excellence it enjoyed in the sixties and seventies. While the talent on the staff of the *Times* at the time of the sale to the Tribune Company was still exceptional (just a notch, I believe, below that of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, and perhaps at a level with *The Wall Street Journal*), the paper was becoming increasingly corporatized and leaderless at the top. A number of its best reporters had been quietly leaving for other jobs over the last five years. A new publisher had been brought in from a large food conglomerate to maximize, if possible, the stock. His reign was not a happy one; it was marked by a series of blunders, verbal and tactical, and he was soon known by the staff as "the cereal killer."

The sale of the *Times*, and the loss of the clear purpose that Otis Chandler (whose family had owned the paper for generations) and



MARK LENNIHAN/AP PHOTOS

Author David Halberstam revisits *The Powers That Be* and finds a "sad" new chapter.

others in management had set, seemed one more melancholy note to journalism at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. When I started to write *The Powers That Be* in the early seventies, journalism, both print and television, seemed at a high-water mark. I began the book after writing about Vietnam, and then after watching Watergate from the sidelines; I was impressed that in both of those transcendent political struggles, the adversaries had not been the president and the opposition party, or the president and the Congress, but rather the president and the media.

Why and how that happened struck me as a worthy topic for a major book—in effect the story of the rise of modern media. Clearly national television was the critical new force, and the struggle to dominate television's daily news agenda was the true political battleground of that era. *The Powers That Be* came out in 1979 and was a considerable success, both critically and financially: It stayed on *The New York Times*'s best-seller list for seven months, was a Book-of-the-Month Club main selection, and was, like its predecessor, *The Best and the Brightest*, a short-list finalist for The National Book Award.

I WAS WRITING, IT TURNED OUT, ABOUT A CERTAIN KIND OF MEDIA ERA THAT WAS ALREADY COMING TO AN END.

I was writing, it turned out, about a certain kind of media era that was already coming to an end. The great national newspapers of the time, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, had in the period I was writing about all gotten systematically better. The competition from television stations during the fifties and sixties had killed off many of their print competitors, and left most major American cities with a de facto monopoly paper, one that was better, richer, and more serious than those papers that had existed some 20 years earlier.

Network television executives, for all of their doomed struggles with ownership to expand the half-hour news shows into an hour, reflected the same values as their peers at the best newspapers. Network reporters worked stories in much the same way as print reporters did, covered foreign stories, and did not necessarily think of themselves as stars. The way to become a signature television reporter in those days was to excel on a difficult foreign assignment or two. Print and television seemed to complement each other: In those days the great print institutions like the *Times* and *Post* defined news, not just for their readers but for the nation—because television, picking up their stories a day or two later, tended to amplify them.

Now, merely 21 years later, that era seems quite distant. Even as I was finishing *The Powers That Be*, profound changes were taking place. A generation of television executives that was rooted in print and had accepted the norms and values of print in defining news was about to retire, to be replaced by a new generation of television executives, men—and in some cases women—who had grown up with television and had not worked for newspapers. Their attitudes, and their values and their visual sense, were all quite different. They were, unlike their predecessors, the children of television. They thought privately, and sometimes said publicly, that television journalism that confined itself to serious reporting and tried to emulate a paper like *The New York Times* tended to be boring. The motto of the younger people taking over was a simple one—if it bleeds, it leads.

No story reflected that, I thought, so much as the Iran hostage story, which broke even as my book was published. Each major television market seemed to have been the home of a hostage, so there was always local interest. Television loved the story, and pumped it hard. The sum of its coverage, I think, seemed to reflect a distortion of reality—it seemed to portray the American government and thus the nation as weak, rather than as frustrated—and there is a very big difference. It was the first time, I believe, on a story of this magnitude that television had gone with its own value system rather than that of its print colleagues.

If there is a certain melancholia about the future in the world of newspapers these days, then it is ironic that the world of television is not a happy or confident one either. For other changes have been altering and diminishing the importance of the network news shows, and slowly and steadily changing the value system that had operated at the top in network television news. The most important change was technological, the coming of cable, which created a new kind of competition for the networks. For suddenly, by the late eighties there were all these embryonic networks struggling for minor slices of the audience, and in order to gain even the smallest ratings share, and almost inevitably and unconsciously, they began to push a tabloid formula—sex, crime, and a kind of dimwitted celebrity-obsessed journalism. The effect of this on the networks was dramatic. Their own audience was fragmenting (and shrinking) because of this new competition, and they soon responded by trying to match those tabloid values, most notably in what are called television magazines. The new featured players of network television news were no longer the foreign correspondents but a generation of stars paid $5 million, $6 million, and $7 million a year, people who rarely reported in the true sense (they were usually too busy being on television to have the time to report) but were famed for their ability to attain what was known in television as "the get," that is, the ability to get celebrities to come on the air for what were often suitably fawning celebrity interviews.

CBS, the best of the networks, descended rapidly in the years after William Paley stepped down as chairman in 1983, symbolically ending the proprietorial generation and ushering in the managerial one. The news division had already been viewed as something of an irritant, and the varying people who succeeded Paley, like Laurence Tisch, either hated the idea of spending so much money on something as problematic as good journalism or, like the people who replaced Tisch, took a corporatized view of it. Those network people who could remember days when someone like Edward R. Murrow had easy access to the head of the network seemed more and more

Adapted from the new introduction to The Powers That Be, *to be reissued in October by the University of Illinois Press.*

ANGELA CUMMINGS

BERGDORF GOODMAN . NEIMAN MARCUS

like the last survivors of the Grand Army of the Republic who, in the middle of the 20th century, still managed to march in Veterans Day parades.

The management changed not only at CBS but at all of the networks, driven by profound economic shifts in the larger society. In the early eighties, as the Japanese made their assault upon core American industries like steel and autos, communications companies and entertainment stocks began to look more and more attractive; they were judged to be significantly undervalued. Naturally the pressure within the companies to drive the stocks up manifested itself in the newsrooms as a brutal new kind of quest for higher and higher ratings, which presumably could be achieved by frothier programming.

At all the networks, inevitably, there was a major cutback in foreign reporting (considered too expensive and producing something, it was believed, that few people wanted to watch) and an increase in celebrity coverage, which was thought to bring higher ratings. In many quarters this was viewed as dumbing down, and those who had been the signature figures of the previous generation, journalists like Walter Cronkite and John Chancellor, were openly critical of the profound changes taking place in what had once been their profession. The idea, so powerful in the sixties and seventies, that the nation would gather around its television sets each night in what Daniel Schorr called a national séance was no longer valid.

I suppose there was a certain naïveté—not just on the part of someone like me who thought that the networks' commitment to foreign reporting in that age was genuine, but more important, on the part of the great foreign correspondents themselves, men like Garrick Utley and Jim Laurie, who thought that they and the people who employed them were on the same page. When the Berlin Wall came down, the one thing I never thought of was the effect it would have on journalism, television journalism in particular, releasing those who ran the network news shows from their obligations to cover the world, and allowing them instead to hold a mirror up to an increasingly self-obsessed society.

In much of network television, the classic definition of what makes a great editor—that is, someone who balances what people wanted to know with what they need to know—has disappeared. This retreat from traditional obligation is, however, largely in vain. The almost desperate attempt to cater to and engage the young with things that young people are not yet ready to be engaged with doesn't really work. The audience continues to shrink. The only thing that really happens is that you alienate the people who once believed in you. All in all, it's a sad chapter—in a vain attempt to stem a certain kind of hemorrhaging, legitimacy has systematically been traded off. And once you give it up it's very hard to get it back. ■

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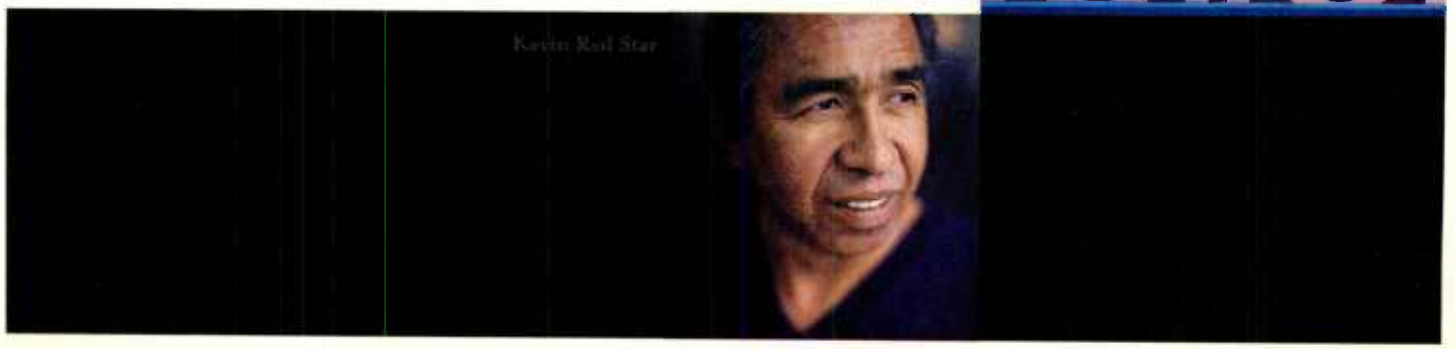

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REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

Violating the magazine's own explicit guidelines, recent *Brill's Content* articles have included negative quotes from anonymous sources. The editors should either amend the policy or, better, follow it. BY MICHAEL GARTNER

There is no mail.

The past couple of issues of *Brill's Content* have apparently been perfect. Oh, there was a complaint from the editors of the *Los Angeles Times* about a story in the July/August issue—the story had been on the *Brill's* website for a few weeks before the magazine appeared—but upon reflection they withdrew their protests. Wisely.

That story was good and interesting—it was, you'll recall, about how the *Times* had dallied and dithered before knocking down an earlier story that didn't appear to have merit. The *Brill's Content* article noted, in passing, that the *Times* "quoted just two sources on the record." But do you remember who some of *Brill's Content*'s sources were? They were "two newsroom staffers," "two editors and one reporter at the *Times*," "two newsroom staffers," "two newsroom insiders," and "a *Times* staffer."

That seems to be a trend in *Brill's Content*—the anonymous source. Here are the first few sources quoted in the May cover article, on Bryant Gumbel: "A former *Early Show* producer." "A current employee of *The Early Show*." "An *Early Show* staffer." "Roseanne, a thirtysomething single woman who joined a focus group." Those were followed by two named sources—managers of two CBS affiliates—and then by a conversation with Steve Friedman, the show's top producer. Then it was back to "one good friend" and, as the story progressed, "a producer who worked on *Public Eye*," "one of the show's former producers," "one former producer," "one former producer," "one former producer," "another producer who has left *The Early Show*," "observers," "one older man," and, finally, "another," who was, presumably, another older man in a focus group.

HOW TO REACH MICHAEL GARTNER
Phone: 212-332-6381
Fax: 212-332-6350
e-mail: mgartner@brillscontent.com
Mail: 5315 Waterbury Road, Des Moines, IA 50312

All of this runs counter to the general policy stated in the front of this magazine and to the specific policy given to employees. The general policy says: "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." *Observers? A former producer?* Who are the observers? Who are the former producers? What are their "limits and biases"?

The "guidelines for editorial employees" are more specific. "Always push people to be on the record," the guidelines guide. "Remind them that readers put more stock in an attributed quote." Later: "Be explicit: All reporters should try to use the most explicit sourcing possible."

And: "Be Careful of Blind Quotes: It's unfair to have your most negative quote about someone be anonymous. Don't do it."

Where was that last guideline, especially, when the folks here were editing the story in the June issue about Richard Blow, the onetime executive editor of *George*, the magazine cofounded by John F. Kennedy Jr.? The story quoted lots of people who took Mr. Blow to task for telling his colleagues to avoid the press following the tragedy that killed Mr. Kennedy—and then turning around himself and peddling a book on Mr. Kennedy.

Most of the negative quotes—and there were a bunch—were anonymous.

The story quotes "one Kennedy intimate" and, again, "one Kennedy intimate." Then "one staff member." Then "another." Then "three sources." ("NEVER USE 'SOURCES SAID,'" say the guidelines. "The words 'sources say' or 'a source said' mean nothing to a reader and should never appear in our journalism.") Then "a Kennedy intimate," "six former colleagues," "five of Kennedy's closest friends." And, finally, "*George* staffers."

Those "six former colleagues" described Mr. Blow "as a self-promoter who tried to control people's access to Kennedy." That last "Kennedy intimate" said, "The way Rich is selling himself is just dishonest." A "self-promoter"? "Dishonest"? *Brill's Content*'s guidelines say "Don't do it," but *Brill's* did it.

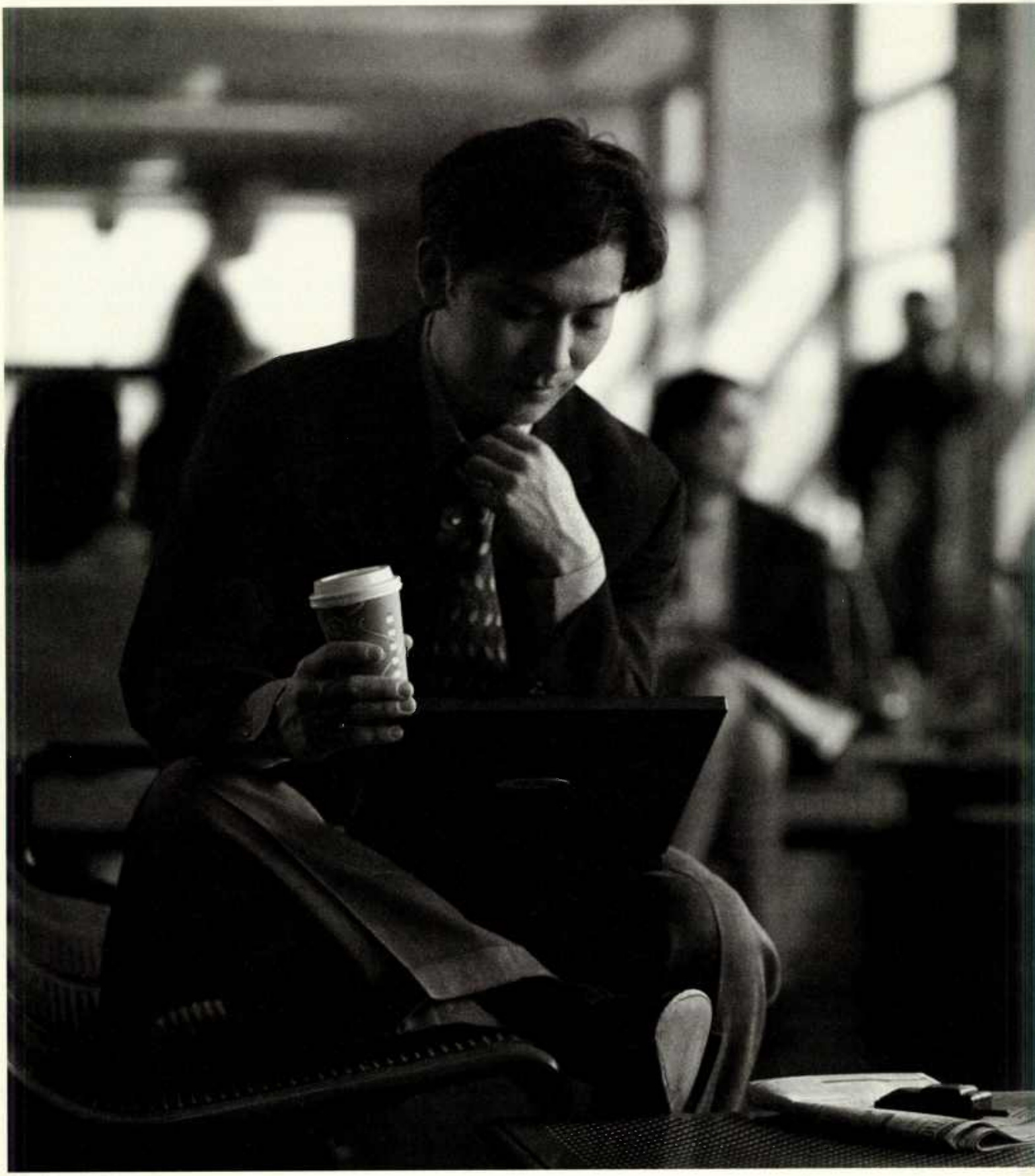
The problem with anonymity is twofold: First, what weight and credence should the reader give to the blind quote? Without knowing who said it, the reader is at sea. "Anonymity must not become a cloak for attacks on people, institutions or policies," says the *New York Times* stylebook, which particularly condemns anonymous quotes. "The vivid language of direct quotation confers an unfair advantage on a speaker or writer who hides behind the newspaper, and turns of phrase are valueless to a reader who cannot assess the source." Second, to whom does the attacked person respond? Without knowing who said it, the victim is left with no one to reply to.

As Reagan-administration labor secretary Raymond Donovan said after he was acquitted of fraud—and after two years of taking anonymous hits—"Where do I go to get my reputation back?"

(Or something like that. A check of websites shows that *Nightline* and the Gannett News Service had him saying, "What office do I go to to get my reputation back?" *U.S. News & World Report* had a "which" instead of a "what." *Time* had him saying to the prosecutor, "Give me back my reputation." *The Rocky Mountain News* had him asking, "Where do I get my reputation back?" while *The Record*, a daily in northern New Jersey, had "Now where do I go to get my reputation back?")

It's noble, of course, that *Brill's Content* has a policy discouraging anonymity and banning negative anonymous shots. "Don't do it" couldn't be stated more clearly. But if you have a policy, you should follow it—or explain to readers why you are breaking it. *Brill's Content* has been doing neither the past few months. The editors should follow the policy—or change it.

A footnote about that story on Mr. Blow: It described him as "WASPily handsome." Is that distinct from [CONTINUED ON PAGE 139]



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NOTEBOOK

The mother of Amílcar Cetíno Pérez (left) after her son's execution in Guatemala was broadcast in June

REALITY TV

THE EXECUTIONER'S SHOW

On June 29, the Guatemalan government executed Amílcar Cetíno Pérez and Tomás Cerrate Hernández for the kidnapping and murder of an 80-year-old woman. If you were channel-surfing that night, you may have seen the lethal injections—actual footage of the condemned men dying, strapped to a gurney.

In 1996, the Guatemalan government began televising executions locally in an effort to curb the country's high rate of violent crime. This time, two U.S. networks—Spanish-language Univision and Telemundo,—and the television arms of The Associated Press and Reuters successfully petitioned the Guatemalan government for access to the event. Surprisingly, some prominent local and national broadcasters in the U.S. ran the footage; even more surprising was that it sparked little controversy even though the idea has long been a contentious issue here.

Although footage of foreign executions has occasionally found its way onto U.S. airwaves, no U.S. execution has ever been televised. In 1994, talk-show host Phil Donahue and convicted murderer David Lawson filed suit seeking to broadcast Lawson's death in a North Carolina gas chamber. Their case eventually reached the U.S. Supreme Court, where it was dismissed.

Fox News Channel pulled footage of the Guatemalan executions from its Reuters satellite feed and aired most of the event (but not the moments of actual death) on two shows, *Hannity & Colmes* [CONTINUED ON PAGE 34]

ON THE RECORD

"When you're in this world, you often have no idea what the truth is."

60 MINUTES EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DON HEWITT, AFTER DISCOVERING THAT ONE OF THE SHOW'S INTERVIEW SUBJECTS—A MAN WHO CLAIMED TO BE THE "CZAR OF IRANIAN STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM"—MAY HAVE BEEN AN IMPOSTOR.

L TO R: JAIME PUEBLA/AP PHOTO; MARK HUMPHREY/AP PHOTO

Coverage

HOUSE OF GORE

Last June, Al Gore was accused of being a slumlord. The Mayberry family—poor tenants renting a house on the vice-president's family property in Carthage, Tennessee—told a local CBS affiliate the building was in disrepair, with overflowing toilets. They said they'd had no luck getting Gore's property manager to fix up the place.

The story received remarkably little attention in the national press. How little? We compared it with the furor in August 1999 over allegations—never proved—that George W. Bush had used cocaine. We searched news databases for substantial articles about either story during the 30 days after each first hit the news.

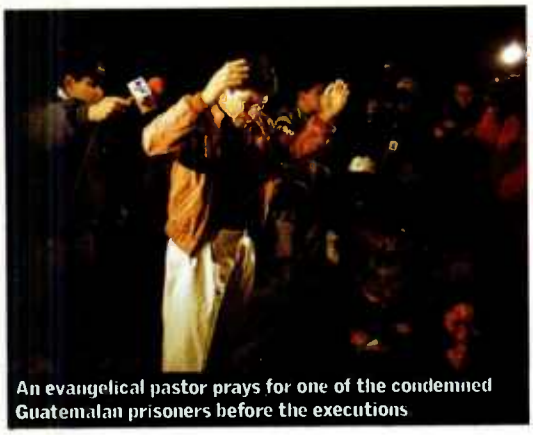
ANNA SCHNEIDER-MAYERSON

NUMBER OF STORIES IN...

Search terms for Bush were "Bush" and "cocaine," "drug," and "drugs." Search terms for Gore were "Gore" and "tenant," "Mayberry family," "slumlord," and "landlord."

Al Gore's Tennessee tenants

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33] and *The Edge with Paula Zahn*, as well as in a news item that ran throughout its daytime programming on June 30. Bill Shine, Fox News's executive producer for prime time, was responsible for the decision to run the footage. Shine says he did so because a *Hannity & Colmes* show on the execution of convicted killer Gary Graham in Texas earlier that month had garnered high ratings, resulting, he says, in Fox's best-ever showing compared to CNN in prime time on a breaking story. "When the Gary Graham execution happened, the ratings were high," Shine says. "That showed a lot of interest by the American people in the story." *Hannity & Colmes* reached 95,000 U.S. households when it aired the Guatemalan footage.



An evangelical pastor prays for one of the condemned Guatemalan prisoners before the executions

Senior correspondent Eric Shawn, who prepared the Fox segment, says he tried to be "responsible and reasonable" in using the images. "You want to give a sense of what the reality is," he says, "and at the same time not be completely offensive."

Telemundo and Univision showed footage of the executions on their evening newscasts on June 29 and June 30, respectively. Telemundo's nightly news reached 217,000 households on the night it aired the images. Fernanda Valdivia, Telemundo's chief international assignment desk editor, offers a simple reason for airing the footage: "We put it in the news because this is what happened," she says. "People want to know what happened." As for her decision to show the moments of injection but not the deaths, Valdivia explains: "That is very cruel. I'm trying to be respectful to my audience, and to the inmate, in showing them the most important part of the story, not the cruelest."

Associated Press Television News and Reuters Video News also ran the footage on their wires—again, minus the moments of death—for subscriber stations to use in their local news broadcasts. APTN's David Notman-Watt, a senior producer on the Latin American desk, says he decided not to show the men dying because it "isn't really news. It's voyeurism....You can show the story of a lethal injection without showing the soul leaving the body."

Not all local stations picked up the footage. Paula Madison, the vice-president and news director of New York's WNBC, decided not to air Reuters Video News's video because, she says, "I think that would have fallen into the realm of gratuitous viewing."

Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, says it's not so cut and dried. "Journalism involves weighing competing interests," he says. "Is it news to watch an execution live? Should [viewers] see what it's like? Yes. Is it exploitative...and is it being done for ratings? Very possibly. You have to look at...how it was shown to make a judgment."

Curt Goering, the deputy executive director of Amnesty International USA, which opposes the death penalty, agrees that there might be merits to airing execution footage. "[But] at the same time," he says "it needs to be recognized this isn't a video game. This isn't a television show. This isn't somebody's fiction. If we trivialize the taking of a human life, it denigrates us all." JANE MANNERS

Synergy Quiz

The proposed merger of the Seagram and Vivendi companies reinforces the notion that media companies feel they're better when they're bigger: more opportunities for co-branding and cross-promotion, more opportunities for synergy. Each of these existing or proposed media conglomerates owns one property in each column. (For our purposes, partial ownership counts; when not 100 percent, a conglomerate's share is listed in parentheses.)

Match the owners with their properties, and imagine the synergistic possibilities:

CONGLOMERATE	PROPERTIES
1 Vivendi-Seagram	a *The Times Literary Supplement*
2 AOL Time Warner	b Deutche Grammophon
3 Viacom/CBS	c jobs.com (38%)
4 News Corporation	d Book-of-the-Month Club
	e Seven-Up Bottling Co. of Vasalia
	f Zondervan Publishing
	g America Online, France (55%)
	h World Championship Wrestling

ANSWERS
1: b, g; 2: d, h; 3: c, e; 4: a, f

Ownership information based on most recent annual reports, 1999.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

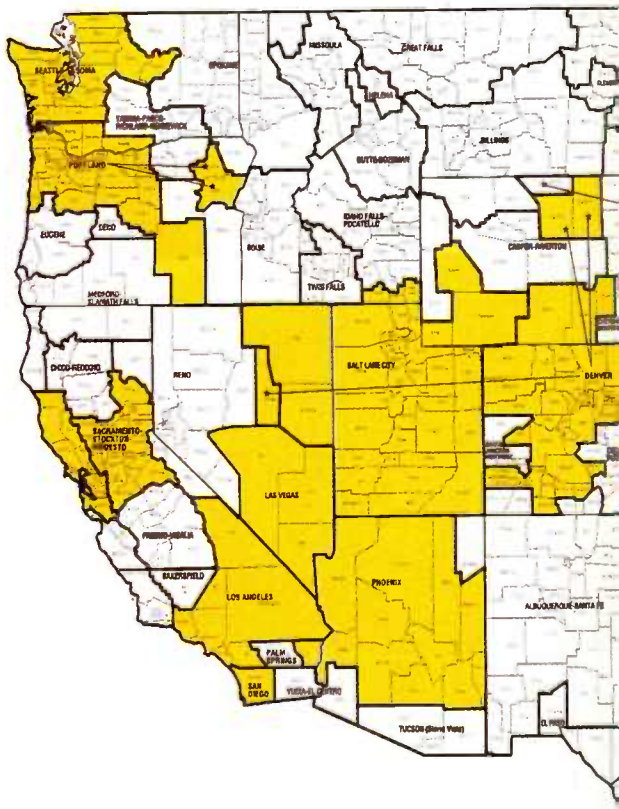
MAPPING OUT

Most people think presidential campaigns are won state by state—as in the map of the United States you see behind Tom Brokaw's head on election night, with red states for Republicans and blue ones for Democrats. But as the war-room staffers working for George W. Bush and Al Gore head into the 2000 election, they have a different map in mind, one that divides the country not into states but into television markets.

Nielsen Media Research identifies 210 "designated market areas" (DMAs), which are based on the reach of regional broadcast signals. Nielsen's map of all the DMAs in the U.S. can be found in every campaign headquarters. As Greg Stevens, the media strategist who guided Senator John McCain's air war, puts it: "The DMA map is more important than any other map."

Campaigns buy advertising time—and score coverage on local television—DMA by DMA. So when strategists block out commercial spots and schedule candidate visits, they're thinking in terms not of geography but of broadcast reach. Candidates don't stump in Springfield, Illinois, anymore—they campaign in the "Champaign and Springfield-Decatur" market.

Campaigning with signal reach in mind makes some media markets more important than others. State-strad-



THE CAMPAIGN AIR WAR

dling DMAs, for example, can offer more bang for a candidate's electoral buck, enabling campaigns to reach many battleground states at once. In May, for instance, Bush made a campaign stop in Paducah, Kentucky, which is in a DMA that reaches parts of Illinois, Ohio, and Missouri. When local stations covered the visit, Bush made news in four states at once.

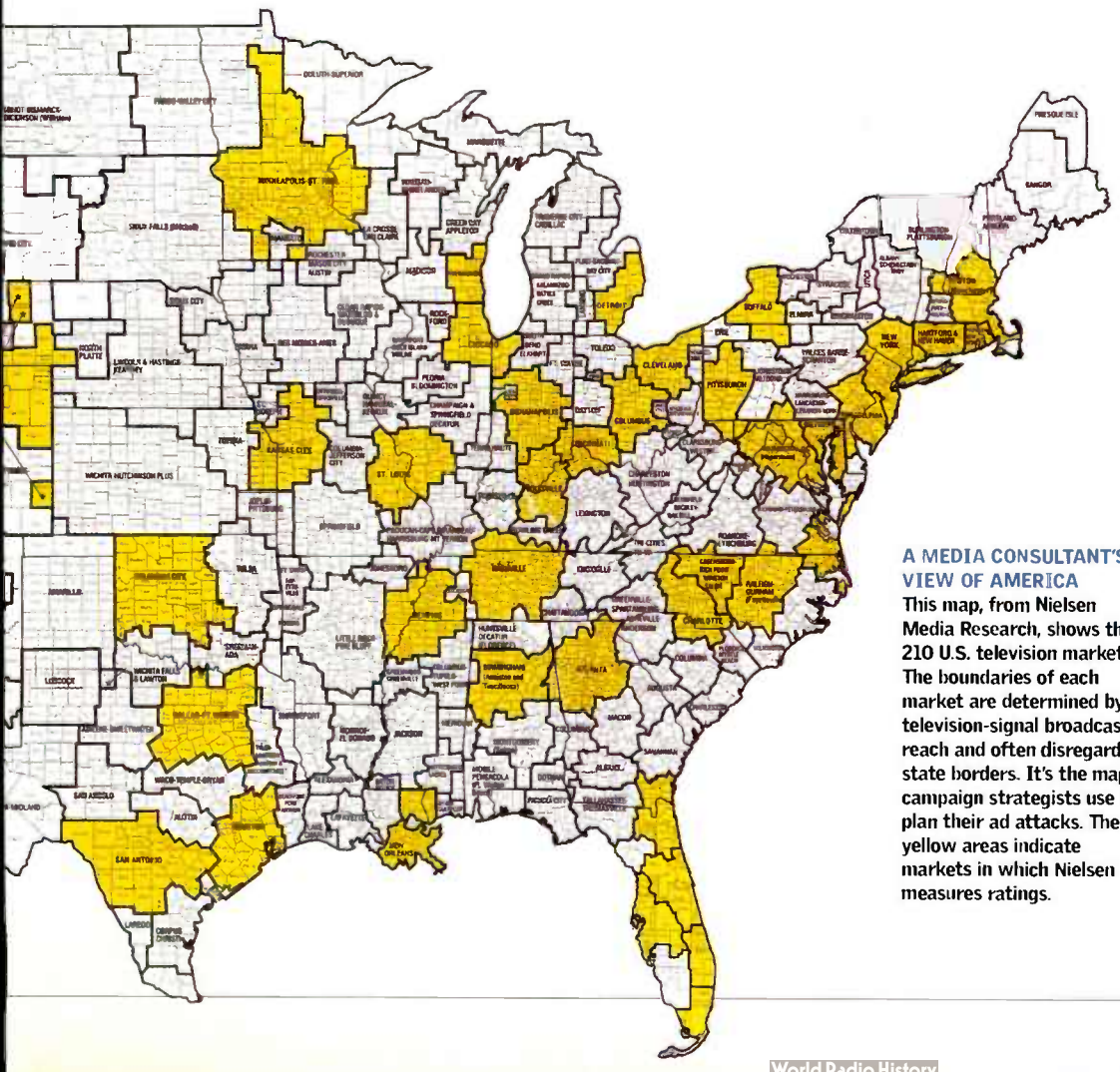
While pundits make much of the role that swing states like Ohio can play in an election, campaign strategists take a more fine-grained approach, homing in on the few media markets, such as Toledo, that can swing an entire state their way. According to political consultant Dick Morris, just 50 DMAs will decide the upcoming presidential election. "Places like Peoria really matter," says GOP strategist Jim McLaughlin, "because markets that small can swing states like Illinois."

The crucial measurement that strategists keep in mind while saturation-bombing a target DMA is the gross rating point—one GRP's worth of television ads in a given market will reach 1 percent of all viewers at least once during the week it airs. But because ad buying is an inexact science, says veteran Democratic media consultant Bill Carrick, a campaign must buy 1,000 rating points' worth of ads—spread out across time slots and stations—to "penetrate," or ensure that every voting-age viewer will see it at least once.

And penetration doesn't come cheap—in the Los Angeles market, Carrick says, one GRP costs $2,300, meaning campaigns must spend $2.3 million to get one ad across. Carrick says Bush would need to invest at least $20 million to compete in California (a state in which he trailed Gore by 11 points according to a June 20 Field Institute poll). In Michigan, by contrast, it costs only about $800,000 to penetrate an ad. Carrick speculates that Bush will forgo California and focus his resources in cheaper markets in states like Michigan and Ohio: To economize, Carrick says, Bush could buy ad time in the Toledo DMA, which carries into southern Michigan.

Of course the DMA calculus counts only if a campaign thinks it has a fighting chance of winning a market in the first place. That's why the residents of Peoria and Toledo should brace for a lively campaign season—both candidates see them as winnable markets. On the other hand, if you hail from an uncontested state such as Utah—firmly in the Bush camp, and an entire DMA unto itself—the ads and the presidential aspirants aren't likely to come to a television set near you.

EVE GERBER



A MEDIA CONSULTANT'S VIEW OF AMERICA
This map, from Nielsen Media Research, shows the 210 U.S. television markets. The boundaries of each market are determined by television-signal broadcast reach and often disregard state borders. It's the map campaign strategists use to plan their ad attacks. The yellow areas indicate markets in which Nielsen measures ratings.

L TO R: MOISES CASTILLO/AP PHOTO. MAP: ©NIELSEN MEDIA RESEARCH

Q & A

OLYMPIC INVESTIGATOR

Andrew Jennings

Four years ago, British reporter Andrew Jennings couldn't get his book on Olympic bribery and institutional favoritism published in America. He'd been convicted of libel in Switzerland for defaming the International Olympic Committee (IOC). But the Salt Lake City scandal has proved many of Jennings's accusations true, and he was recently asked to testify before the U.S. Senate. His latest book, *The Great Olympic Swindle* (Simon & Schuster), will reach American bookstores this fall, as Jennings concludes a dozen years of uncovering Olympic intrigue. STEPHEN TOTILO

You investigated Scotland Yard for six years. What made you turn to the Olympics? Just before the Seoul Games, I read a simple sentence that said [IOC president] Juan Antonio Samaranch was sports minister in Spain in the 1960s. If you were a government minister in Spain in the sixties, you had your right arm in the air, because the Franco dictatorship ran the country until 1975. I knew I had the contrast—an organization that tells us it's about idealism, about decency, about fairness, and it's led by a guy who all his life has believed in trickle-down power, dictatorship.

This is your third book on the Olympics. Why have you stayed on this beat so long? I wouldn't have done the second book unless I'd gotten the documentation. You have to go with a story like that—a document listing the bribes to take gold medals. And then Salt Lake broke and another round of brown envelopes and calls [came in].

Why have you had such difficulty getting published in the United States? I think [U.S. publishers] have the idea that I'm not a sportswriter. I'm a bit irreverent for them. A reporter has the responsibility first to do all the research, but then, is it wrong to entertain the reader?

Evolution

TRUE CRIME


Martha Moxley

The order of operations in true-crime stories is usually clear: The crime is solved, and then comes the fictionalization. But in the high-profile Martha Moxley murder case, it didn't work that way. The 1975 homicide went unsolved for years, though a member of the extended Kennedy clan was believed to be the killer. In 1993, *Vanity Fair* writer Dominick Dunne wrote a best-selling novel based on the crime. Mark Fuhrman's investigative account followed in 1998. Soon after, Michael Skakel, Fuhrman's top suspect, circulated a book proposal in which he denied his guilt. Then Skakel was indicted for murder earlier this year. Here's how the story evolved, from novelization to the front page of *The New York Times*. JESSE OXFELD

1 "They were the family with everything. Money. Influence. Glamour. Power. The power to halt a police investigation in its tracks... America's royalty, they called the Bradleys." Back cover, *A Season in Purgatory*, Dominick Dunne, 1993

2 "If [Michael Skakel] isn't put on trial, then we will have another O.J. Simpson—a murderer who is free because of money, power, politics, and fear." *Murder in Greenwich*, Mark Fuhrman, 1998

3 "My relationship to Martha. Why I lied to investigators. Where I really was and what I really did." What a book proposal promised Michael Skakel would reveal in *Dead Man Talking*, 1998. The book went unsold.

4 "Nearly 25 years after 15-year-old Martha Moxley was bludgeoned to death on the lawn of her family home here, the police today charged Michael Skakel, her former friend and neighbor and a nephew of Ethel Kennedy, in the slaying." *The New York Times*, page A1, January 20, 2000

TWO SIDES

REPORTING REVISIONISM

When neo-Nazi Buford Furrow shot up a Jewish day camp last year in Granada Hills, California, he called it a "wakeup call to kill Jews." After the assault, the *Los Angeles Times* decided to take a closer look at the people behind such attacks and assigned Seattle-based reporter Kim Murphy, a 17-year *Times* veteran, to the hate-crimes beat. Murphy's stories offered detailed insight into the neo-Nazi movement but caused an uproar in Los Angeles's Jewish community, with many accusing the *Times* of legitimizing the views of anti-Semites.

One of Murphy's first articles on her new beat examined a libel suit filed in England last year by David Irving against Holocaust historian Deborah Lipstadt. Irving, who denies that the Holocaust happened, accused Lipstadt of libel for calling him a liar in print. Murphy's January 7 story, headlined "Danger in Denying Holocaust?" ran on the front page and profiled a number of Holocaust "deniers and revisionists," including Irving. Murphy portrayed them as serious, if fringe, scholars being persecuted for their beliefs. The deniers, Murphy wrote, have even helped to clarify the historical record about the Final Solution, "hav[ing] pinpointed contradictions and hard-to-believe details in stories told by camp survivors"—such as, Murphy wrote, the "myth" that Nazis made lampshades out of human skin. Though Murphy quoted a number of historians dismissing revisionism at length, she also noted that some deniers had "won testimonials from academics at respected institutions."

The story outraged members of the Jewish community in Los Angeles. Many felt the 2,300-word article devoted far too much space to voicing the views of Holocaust deniers and naively treated them as just one side of a historical debate. The controversy even found its way into the *Times* newsroom.

"Why were we trying to present two sides of a story to which there aren't two sides?" says Alan Abrahamson, a *Times* reporter for more than 11 years. "The Holocaust happened. Period." On January 31, after numerous complaints to top editors from within and without the *Times*, the paper ran a five-paragraph correction, noting that the "respected academics" that Murphy said corroborated the Holocaust deniers were in fact not historians and that their universities had repudiated their work. The correction also pointed out that a lampshade made of human skin had been "submitted to a U.S. congressional committee."

In April, a judge ruled against Irving in the case and ordered him to pay Lipstadt's legal fees, in excess of $3 million. A *Times* editorial celebrated the verdict and quoted from the judge's decision, which called Irving a "pro-Nazi polemicist" and a "liar and falsifier of history."

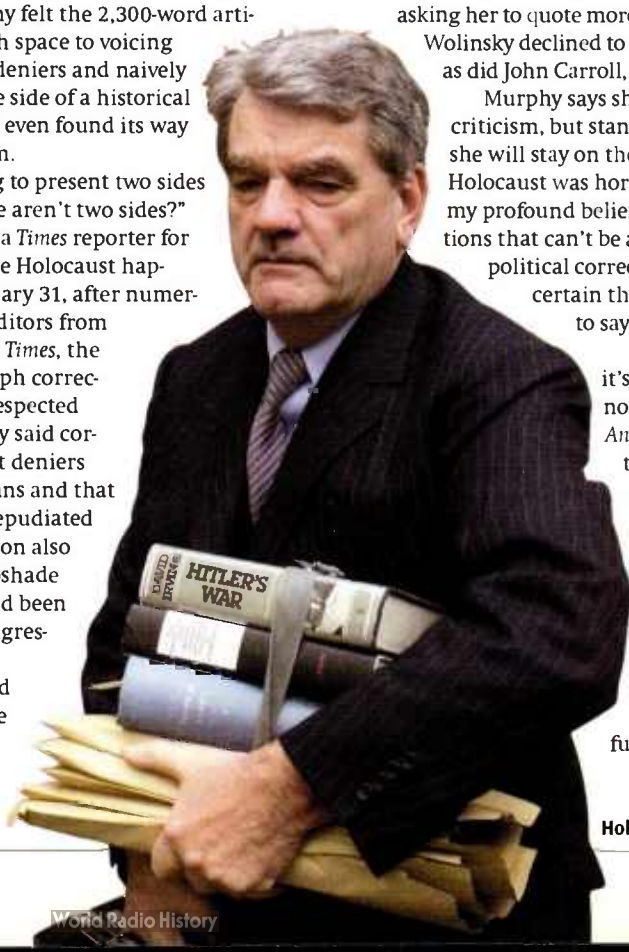
A month after the verdict, Murphy filed another story about Irving, reporting on a speech that the "controversial World War II historian" had given in Orange County. In the May article, Murphy described the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) as an organization that "has promoted revisionist examination of the Holocaust."

With that description, would *Times* readers have known that the IHR denies the Holocaust took place? They would if they visited the organization's website, which offers helpful articles such as "There Is No Evidence for Nazi Gas Chambers" and "A Prominent False Witness: Elie Wiesel." (It also reproduces Murphy's January *Times* article about Irving.) Murphy's second story again engendered disbelief in Los Angeles's Jewish community and others who had followed the trial. "People were just blown away," says historian Lipstadt. "At the very best, these were two highly irresponsible and poorly researched pieces."

And again, some in the *Times* newsroom were incensed. "Kim is a very good reporter," says David Lauter, the paper's religion editor, adding that he expressed his concern to his superiors after Murphy's first story ran. "But I think she screwed up on this particular subject, and I don't have an explanation for why." According to Lauter and Murphy, *Times* executive editor Leo Wolinsky signed off on Murphy's second story after asking her to quote more sources critical of Irving. Wolinsky declined to comment for this story, as did John Carroll, the editor of the *Times*.

Murphy says she has been stung by the criticism, but stands by her stories and says she will stay on the hate-crimes beat. "The Holocaust was horrible," she says. "[But] it's my profound belief that there are no questions that can't be asked. This is an issue of political correctness. There are just certain things you're not allowed to say, even in this country."

But some critics believe it's a question of accuracy, not sensitivity. "The *Los Angeles Times* has an obligation to tell the truth," says Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the Simon Weisenthal Center, who was quoted in Murphy's second article. "The truth is, Irving is not a historian. He's a propagandist. By not getting that point, [the paper] did a fundamental disservice." ERIC UMANSKY



Holocaust denier David Irving

L TO R, REUTERS PHOTOS; MAX NASH/AP PHOTO

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Gimmick of the Month

"Caution. this area has been designated as an insect nest zone," announced the orange and black flier, an "Infestation Warning" issued by the "FIA under the guidance of Infestation Act 57288 (b) -74." The ominous handout—in English on one side, Spanish on the other—looked

legitimate at first glance, and was distributed in ten major cities around the country in early July. But there was no health hazard or insect infestation, nor is there an insect called "Phylomenescus Cerberus." What there was: a USA Network horror movie airing later in the month called *They Nest*. The health alerts were a creative—if alarming—promotional gimmick.

The campaign also included an Internet component: bugmap.org, a website purporting to offer "updated alerts" on the insect infestation. The opening page told visitors to enter their zip codes ("to determine when the bugs will arrive in your area"), but the only response was a message that the system was "experiencing heavy overloads."

"The movie is about bugs that infest a small town," explains Jeffrey Lubow, USA Network's vice-president of advertising creative and media, who goes on to tout the film's "thrill factor" and say the network "wanted to market the movie in the same spirit."

The campaign was so thrilling, in fact, that on July 7, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported in a front-page article that residents of Chicago's Ravenswood neighborhood were upset by the fliers, having lost more than 1,200 trees due to infestation by the Asian long-horned beetle. Chicago City Council member Eugene Schulter told the *Sun-Times* that landlords in the neighborhood were particularly aggrieved, because the fliers were "alarming people renting apartments." Lubow was unperturbed: "I didn't think you could ever get press like that." JULIE SCELFO

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

MR. WILL'S WILD RIDE

PUNDIT SCORECARD

When we last checked in on the accuracy of the weekend pundits' predictions, Tony Blankley of *The McLaughlin Group* was on top with a moderately impressive .640 average, while *The Beltway Boys*'s Fred Barnes brought up the rear with .393. How things change. This month, after a six-month hiatus, we're bringing back the Pundit Scorecard—our one-of-a-kind ranking of the predictive abilities of America's favorite political talking heads.

WINNER
George Will

For this installment, we pored over the transcripts of each episode of four weekend political talk shows—*The Beltway Boys*, *The Capital Gang*, *The McLaughlin Group*, and *This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*—that aired between April 2 and June 25, or 13 episodes of each show. We took note of every prediction, checked it against the actual outcome of events, and then tallied those that could be verified as either true or false as of press time.

LOSER
Sam Donaldson

Perennial loser George Will of ABC's *This Week*—last seen batting a sluggish .397—rocketed to the fore this time around with an impressive six out of six correct calls, including his prediction that the U.S. Supreme Court would allow the Boy Scouts to ban gays from its ranks. (Though there was a five-way tie at the top, Will takes the brass ring for making more predictions all told than his fellow perfect-scorers.) Honorable mention goes to Eleanor Clift for the most *total* correct predictions.

HONORABLE MENTION
Eleanor Clift

Then there's Sam Donaldson. Left in the dust by his on-air foil Cokie Roberts (.750), Donaldson managed to come up with only one prediction in 13 shows, and he got that one wrong (he thought Rudolph Giuliani would stay in New York's U.S. Senate race).

Wading through hours of transcripts as we do, we often come across real gems of rhetorical nonsense—like John McLaughlin pronouncing that Giuliani would stay in the race because "his wife, Donna, will urge him to stay the course" (this just 12 days before news that Giuliani and his wife were splitting). This time, though, our favorite moment is not a prediction, but this explication of market-price mechanisms in the pharmaceutical industry offered by Beltway Boy Morton Kondracke: "PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals] goes after pharmaceutical companies to try to liberate their rats and monkeys that they use for experimentation. The problem is...the drug companies have got to make their factories practically like fortresses, and security adds significantly to the cost of drugs, which is why the prices are so high."

Watch this space next month for more Pundit Scorecard.

	PLAYERS		
1	George Will, *TW*	(6/6)	1.000
2	Morton Kondracke, *BB*	(4/4)	1.000
3	Fred Barnes, *BB*	(2/2)	1.000
4	Margaret Carlson, *CG*	(2/2)	1.000
5	Mark Shields, *CG*	(1/1)	1.000
6	Robert Novak, *CG*	(8/9)	.889
7	Kate O'Beirne, *CG*	(6/7)	.857
8	George Stephanopoulos, *TW*	(9/11)	.818
9	Eleanor Clift, *MG*	(11/14)	.786
10	Al Hunt, *CG*	(3/4)	.750
11	Cokie Roberts, *TW*	(3/4)	.750
12	Michael Barone, *MG*	(7/10)	.700
13	Lawrence Kudlow, *MG*	(6/10)	.600
14	Tony Blankley, *MG*	(8/14)	.571
15	John McLaughlin, *MG*	(7/14)	.500
16	Lawrence O'Donnell, *MG*	(4/8)	.500
17	Sam Donaldson, *TW*	(0/1)	.000

BB: The Beltway Boys; CG: The Capital Gang; MG: The McLaughlin Group; TW: This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts

TEAMS *

1	*The Beltway Boys*	(6/6)	1.000
2	*The Capital Gang*	(20/23)	.869
3	*This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*	(18/22)	.818
4	*The McLaughlin Group*	(43/70)	.614

* Scores based on total predictions made on each show. Clarence Page (seated, above left) appeared on only one episode during the measurement period, and therefore was not included in this Pundit Scorecard.

ON THE RECORD **"If we could tie them to their chairs and hold their eyes open with toothpicks, that would be a different matter."**

—ABC'S COKIE ROBERTS TO *THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER* ON HOW TO GET AMERICANS TO WATCH POLITICAL CONVENTIONS.

Why is it a hate crime when whites commit violence against blacks but not vice versa?

In our politically correct culture, it is simply improper to notice that black people, like whites, can be responsible for vicious crimes of hate. That's why the self-righteous left will be in for some surprises should the law they're proposing go into effect. Sorting Americans into specially protected racial and gender groups like a human "endangered species" act, and designating whites and heterosexuals as "oppressors," is itself an instigation to commit next page | www.salon.com/bc

Clutter

MEASURING THE NOISE IN PRIME TIME

Advertisers dislike TV "clutter"—nonprogram material such as commercials, network and station promos, public service announcements, and program credits—about as much as viewers do. Too much of it diminishes the effectiveness of their ads. Just how much clutter is there? About 13 minutes an hour on A&E—the network with the least amount during prime time, on average—all the way up to more than 18 minutes on MTV, the network with the most. Here, the latest figures.

JULIE SCELFO

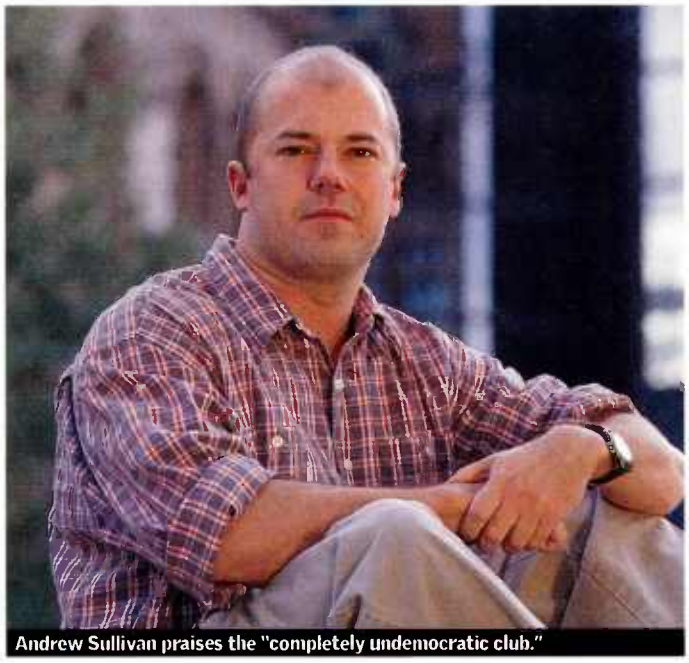
Network	Minutes of clutter per hour
A&E	13:05
CNN	14:38
USA	14:39
NICK	16:03
CBS	16:32
FOX	16:36
NBC	16:46
ABC	16:57
TNN	17:02
WB	17:26
UPN	17:40
E!	18:06
MTV	18:11

Source: American Association of Advertising Agencies and Association of National Advertisers, Inc.'s 1999 Television Commercial Monitoring Report. Figures are for November 1999. The report defines prime time as 9–10 p.m. for cable networks and 8–11 p.m. for broadcast networks (except on Sunday, when it's 7–11 p.m.).

SECRET SOCIETY

BOYS IN THE BANDWIDTH

BQ-Friends, an invitation-only, top-secret network of prominent, nonleftist gay intellectuals, has finally come out of the closet. Inspired by the success of the right-leaning Independent Women's Forum, BQ-Friends recently organized the nonprofit Independent Gay Forum and launched IndeGayForum.com—a website that pools essays on subjects ranging from hate-crime laws to same-sex marriage. The site has attracted hundreds of thousands of hits over the past year. Nearly a thousand people subscribe to its e-mail newsletter, including many prominent members of the mainstream media.



Andrew Sullivan praises the "completely undemocratic club."

BQ-Friends has been honing ideas to fill the ideological void between the antigay right and the gay left and strategizing to raise the profile of gay nonleftists since the early nineties (Though its members didn't christen themselves BQ-friends until 1996). Some writers in the group, including *New York Times Magazine* contributing editor Andrew Sullivan, circulate working drafts of their essays to the listserv members for peer review. BQ-Friends gave itself a public face a year ago with the launch of IndeGayForum, but the website is merely the shop window for the work of the group.

BQ-Friends was born of a shared frustration. Until recently, many gay centrists and conservatives felt their leftist colleagues stigmatized them for their views. Stephen Miller, a libertarian columnist for several alternative weeklies, says that the gay community was so dominated by liberal Democrats and sexual liberationists that "[g]ay papers wouldn't publish things that diverged from leftist dogma." In 1993, literary critic and current BQ-Friend Bruce Bawer published *A Place at the Table*, in which he argued that the silent majority of homosexuals shared the values of mainstream Americans. Inspired by Bawer's work, veteran gay writer Paul Varnell began to network with kindred thinkers. Just as the Internet connected gay lonelyhearts, it also enabled a cluster of gay libertarians, communitarians, conservatives, and classic liberals to coordinate online. Fellowship with formidable like-minded gay thinkers emboldened many members of the telephone and e-mail network.

The emerging brotherhood resolved to flex its intellectual muscle in the conservative media, where gay voices were rarely given respectful hearings. In March 1994, Jonathan Rauch, a Washington-based journalist, tried to publish a retort to an antigay harangue in *The Wall Street Journal*. The *Journal* rejected the piece but eight months later published an op-ed by Rauch that urged Republicans to "build pro-family policies that embrace all responsible Americans, homosexual and heterosexual alike." To demonstrate that there was a critical mass of nonleftist gay thinking, the writers assembled an anthology. In 1996, they published *Beyond Queer: Challenging Gay Left Orthodoxy*, which billed itself as "a serious alternative to 'queerthink.'"

The listserv abbreviated the book's title as its name and began to grow. Membership today stands at more than 20 prominent gay men and a couple of lesbian intellectuals. (The names of most participants are a closely guarded secret.) Sullivan calls BQ-Friends "a completely undemocratic club." New members are added through a fraternity-style selection process. Not all candidates make the cut. One member laments that the e-mail exchanges are filled with "intellectual one-upmanship," and complains that "the debate over Tinky Winky's sexuality stretched out for weeks."

Despite occasional bouts of banality, the listserv is a writer's brain trust. Members use it as an ideological and editorial sounding board. Rich Tafel, executive director of the gay political group Log Cabin Republicans, confesses, "It's always helpful to have someone smarter than yourself critique your thinking."

BQ-Friends and the forum have earned unlikely allies and challenged hardened conservatives to reassess their stance on gay issues. In response to a 1996 *New Republic* essay by Rauch, which argued that granting gays the right to wed would serve society by "domesticating" gay couples, George Will wrote in his syndicated column that Rauch's arguments "merit political debate and legislative judgments." Last spring, when the site posted a piece arguing that gays should consider carrying firearms, dozens of straight gunslingers sent supportive e-mails.

It is making inroads on the right, but the group isn't uniformly right-wing. Any effort to pigeonhole its politics will prove futile, which is perhaps its greatest accomplishment—BQ-Friends has broadened the debate. Other ideological dissidents are certain to copy its cyberstrategy.

EVE GERBER

BROOKS KRAFT/CORBIS SYGMA

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Glossary

THE NEW E-PESSIMISM

Just a few months ago, every day brought fresh news of another 24-year-old equipped with a business plan guaranteed to *monetize page views* and ride the *dotconomy* wave to a *liquidity event*. (Translation: Actually make some money on the Internet and cash out successfully.) These days, not everyone is so sure. Websites like startupfailures.com and dotcomfailures.com are heralding the beginning of the end (or maybe it's the end of the beginning). Here, a glossary of New Economy pessimism.

CONSOLIDATION: A nice way of saying "incredible shrinking stock price." Instead of proclaiming, "That company is toast," an analyst would say "Stock X is likely to consolidate through the end of the summer."

DOT BOMB: An online startup that fails immediately.

DUMP: When employees of a company sell their shares after a "lockup" has expired (see below). This sudden influx of shares into the market can cause a stock to free-fall.

GURGLING: The noise you make when your stock options are "under water" (see below). A desperate employee on his plight: "We're gurgling over here."

LIQUIDITY SQUEEZE: A shortage of cash. Not to be confused with a market's liquidity crunch, which is what happens when the volume of trades plummets and price disturbances are acute.

LOCKUP: The period after an IPO when employees and investors are prohibited from selling their shares.

PROFIT-TAKING: A fancy term for selling your shares, as in "I've made a profit on paper; now I'm taking it." Often used as an excuse for why a stock price has gone down for no apparent reason.

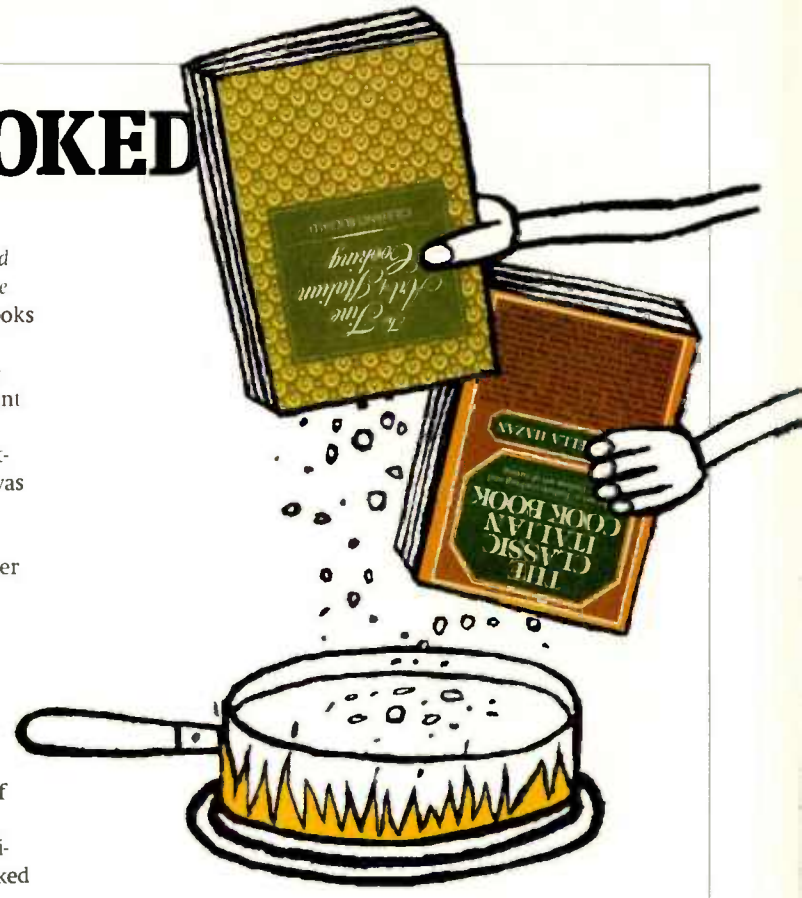
UNDER WATER: Stock options are under water when the market value of the stock is less than the option price, rendering them worthless.

ELIZABETH ANGELL

INFLUENCES

TWICE COOKED

BY MIMI SHERATON



Noted chef David Ruggerio's new book, *David Ruggerio's Italian Kitchen: Family Recipes from the Old Country*, published by Artisan in April, looks like a winner. Having sampled the excellent food prepared by Ruggerio when he was the chef at La Caravelle, and happy that his recent troubles are behind him—Ruggerio pleaded guilty last year to attempted theft in a credit-card scam at his restaurant Le Chantilly—I was prepared to love this book.

And then a funny thing happened. I read Ruggerio's recipe for "Roasted Shoulder of Veal with Herbs" and realized that I had made it a year or two ago—exactly as he described it. I had taken it from *Marcella's Italian Kitchen*, a 1986 cookbook by esteemed food writer Marcella Hazan. I double-checked, and there it was. Although Hazan called the dish "Encrusted Roast Shoulder of Veal," the recipes are virtually identical.

A few days later, I again experienced culinary déjà vu, this time with Ruggerio's "Baked Shrimp, Potatoes, and Tomatoes." I recalled having prepared the dish before, again almost exactly as Ruggerio wrote it, but from a recipe in *Foods of Sicily & Sardinia and the Smaller Islands*, a 1996 work by the past master of Italian cooking, Giuliano Bugialli.

My curiosity aroused, I began to sift through those books, as well as two other bibles of Italian cookery by the same authors—Hazan's *Classic Italian Cookbook* (1976) and Bugialli's *Fine Art of Italian Cooking* (1982)—for Ruggerio look-alikes. I hit upon no fewer than 14 recipes in the four books that appear in almost identical form in Ruggerio's new book, from luganega sausage with black-eyed peas and tomatoes to charcoal-grilled deviled chicken.

I called Ruggerio and asked if all of the 150 or so recipes had indeed emanated from himself, or his family and friends, as his book indicates. He insisted that they had. "This isn't something I put together in a hurry, you know," he told me. "I've been collecting these recipes for years." Asked how he could explain the almost identical recipes I ticked off, he said, "Well, these are regional dishes....They are very simple standards...with just a few ingredients, and they are always made in the same way." Ruggerio later called back to ask me for a list of the recipes in question. "I want to defend myself," he said, and asked for one week's time to present his original notes for the recipes at issue. More than one month after he had asked for the opportunity to defend himself, he had not done so. Ruggerio has not responded to repeated follow-up telephone calls.

"It's all sort of confusing," says Ann Bramson, the publisher of Artisan, when confronted with the suspicious recipes in her author's book. "This [sort of thing] is a publisher's worst nightmare. We could not possibly know if such material is original." She did agree with Ruggerio, however, that there are only a few regional Italian recipes, and they tend to get repeated in numerous cookbooks. (After this story was posted on brillscontent.com, I received a copy of a letter dated June 15 that Bramson had written to Bugialli. "I am mortified to have to tell you," Bramson wrote, "that a cookbook we published this spring may have half a dozen recipes in it that are yours...and that haven't been appropriately credited." Bramson went on to tell Bugialli that "if the contention is accurate, I will do everything I can to set this right." According to Bramson, Ruggerio "still denies" appropriating any recipes.)

Reached at her home in Florida, Marcella Hazan was philosophical about the similarities between Ruggerio's recipes and her own. "Ruggerio changes only a few ingredients from my recipes, and I suppose that makes them his recipes," she said. "But what can you do? This happens all the time. In newspapers, they may take the recipes but sometimes say 'adapted from.' At least that's honest." Hazan adds that the encrusted veal recipe, which Ruggerio cites as his variation on an old standard, is not a regional Italian dish at all—it's a recipe she created by combining two different dishes.

After reviewing Ruggerio's recipes from his cooking school in Tuscany, Bugialli said, "There is no doubt that these are my recipes and I feel cheated." And after looking through Ruggerio's book, 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."

L TO R: FRANK WEBSTER; SCOTT MENCHIN

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TICKER

74 Percentage of Americans surveyed who, when read the text of the First Amendment, said it does *not* go too far in the rights it guarantees

51 Percentage of Americans surveyed who said the press has too much freedom to do what it wants

67 Percentage of Americans surveyed who said public remarks offensive to a racial group should not be allowed

84 Percentage of Americans surveyed who said people should not be allowed to burn the American flag[1]

364,000 Average number of additional viewers who watched CBS's *Early Show* on days when a new *Survivor* loser appeared, compared to the previous broadcast

114,000 Average number of additional viewers who watched ABC's *Good Morning America* on days when a new *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* millionaire appeared, compared to the previous broadcast[2]

873,000 Number of unique visitors in May to Salon.com, which announced significant cutbacks on June 7

647,000 Number of unique visitors in May to APBnews.com, which announced on June 5 it had run out of money

8,908,000 Number of unique visitors in May to MSNBC.com, the most-visited website for news[3]

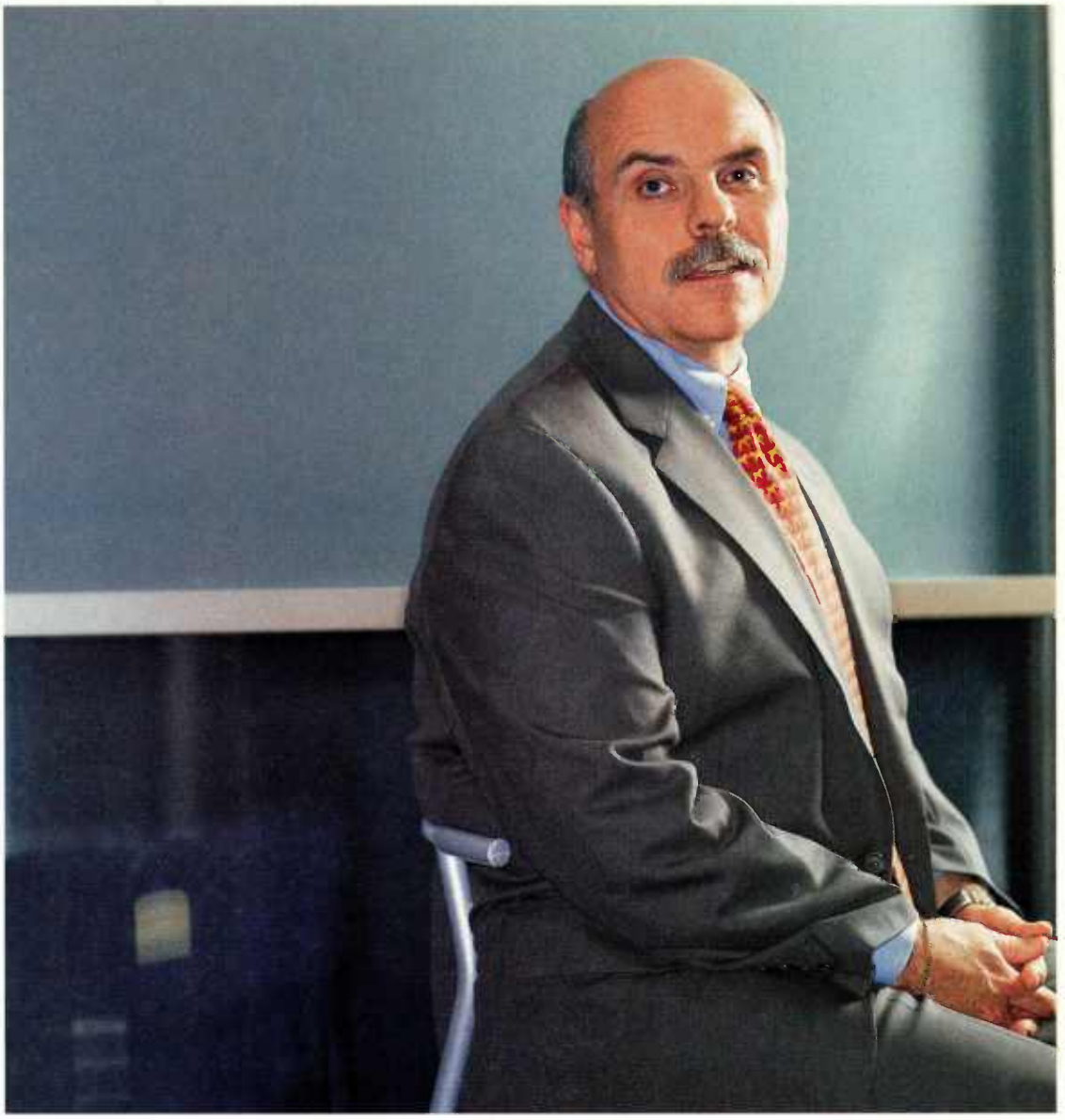
80 Percentage of employees surveyed who said e-mail has replaced traditional mail for the majority of business correspondence

72.5 Percentage of employees surveyed who said e-mail has replaced faxes for the majority of business correspondence

51 Percentage of employees surveyed who said the tone of their e-mail messages is sometimes misunderstood[4]

COMPILED BY JESSE OXFELD

1) First Amendment Center 2) Nielsen Media Research 3) Media Metrix, Inc. 4)Vault.com



ANNE KATRINE SENSTAD

TALES OUT OF SCHOOL

HISTORY, RATED G

MEDIA LIVES

TOM CONDON
Textbook Editor

Have you ever wondered who actually wrote the textbooks you read in grade school?

Tom Condon, 51, is the editorial director of the social studies department at McGraw-Hill School Division. After ten years as a schoolteacher, he turned to publishing in 1979, and now has a direct impact on how millions of kids understand history—including recent history. Condon had to determine whether President Clinton's impeachment, for example, would be included in a textbook. He decided to include the news: "We did one of those dramatic TV things—*Stop the presses!*" says Condon.

So how does McGraw-Hill determine what fifth-graders ought to know about U.S. history? State educational review boards wield enormous power over textbook publishers' final product. "We rely on the states to tell us what they want in their books," says Condon. While the president's impeachment made the cut for McGraw-Hill's newest social studies book, only "possible illegal actions" are mentioned—neither Monica Lewinsky nor Kenneth Starr are mentioned by name.

At McGraw-Hill, there is a collaboration between an editorial board, a team of authors, historical and multicultural consultants, and, of course, the marketing department. "There are a lot of arguments," Condon admits. Christopher Columbus, for example, "is no longer the knight in white armor that he used to be."

There's one other thing Condon says he takes into consideration: weight. "Without breaking students' backs, and without making 25-pound books for 10-year-old kids, we can't do it all." DOV YELLIN

WHAT'S GOING ON AT CONTENTVILLE?

Part magazine stand, part corner bookstore, and part research library, Contentville offers the widest spectrum of content anywhere, from books and magazines to dissertations and transcripts—and more. On top of that, Contentville has dozens of insightful experts who will help you find out what you want to know. Here's what they've been up to lately.

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VISIT THE EXPERTS AT CONTENTVILLE

What the Independent Booksellers are saying...

Our 40 Independent Bookstore Affiliate Experts have been looking at what's hot, what's hyped, and what's gotten the most surprising buzz lately. Here is some of their latest expert advice.

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BOOK PEOPLE
AUSTIN, TEXAS
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BOOK SOUP
WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA
Biography and Film

THE BOOKSMITH
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
Memoir

BOULDER BOOKSTORE
BOULDER, COLORADO
Health and Religion

BROOKLINE BOOKSMITH
BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS
Travel

BUILDERS BOOKSOURCE
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
Gardening

CHAPTER 11 DISCOUNT BOOKSTORE
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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
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NEW YORK, NEW YORK
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DUTTON'S
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
Music

FACT & FICTION
MISSOULA, MONTANA
Hardcover Fiction and Hardcover Nonfiction

HARRY W. SCHWARTZ BOOKSHOP
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN
History

HENNESSEY + INGALLS
SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA
Architecture and Art

Our Travel experts from **Brookline Booksmith** in Massachusetts discuss two classics that expand the definition of the genre: bookseller TIM KRAUSE shares his enthusiasm for Herodotus—identifying him as the first great travel writer and his *History* as "one of the greatest travel narratives of all time," while his colleague RUSS BARKER finds John Steinbeck's classic *Travels With Charlie* as resonant and engaging as ever.

Recent books such as Saul Bellow's *Ravelstein*, Julia Alvarez's *In the Name of Salome*, and Aimee Chin's *Becoming Madame Mao* makes LOUISE JONES, our Biography expert from **Northshire Bookstore** in Vermont, wonder whether the art of biography is best served in the form of the novel.

DAN BLASK of **Harry W. Schwartz Bookshop** in Wisconsin reacts to Loung Ung's heart-wrenching memoir, *First They Killed My Father*, in which Ung relives her experiences as a small child fending for herself as she fled the Khmer Rouge, later to become a spokesperson in the Campaign for a Landmine-Free World.

MICHAEL HOLTE, our Architecture expert from **Hennessey + Ingalls** in California, parses the Minimalist movement in architecture in his overview of new and old books on the subject. (His verdict: Skip *Minimalism*, the new book, and stick with *Minimum*, an older, better book on the subject.)

JENNIFER JAMES, our Children's expert at **Curious George Goes to WordsWorth** in Massachusetts, reminds parents to treat their daughters—as well as themselves—to the enduring delights of the precocious Eloise, whose latest, *Eloise's Guide to Life: How to Eat, Dress, Travel, Behave and Stay Six Forever!*, by Kay Thompson and Hilary Knight, provides guidance for girls of all ages.

SUSAN COHN, our expert on Hardcover Nonfiction from **R.J. Julia Booksellers** in Connecticut, discusses two new books about reading and language. She thinks *Browser's Ecstasy* is tactilely alluring, and that much of the writing is lovely, but ultimately she finds the book "precious," while *The Secret Lives of Words* is "witty and smart" about the origins of language.

VISIT THE EXPERTS

- Contributing Editors
- Magazine Experts
- **Independent Booksellers**
- Academic Experts

Our expert on Politics, STEVE SHUMAN of **Trover Shop** in Washington, D.C., looks at three books—*The Selling of Free Trade, Democracy Derailed*, and *The Control Room*—that explain in chilling detail how our democratic process is compromised more and more every year.

JIM HARRIS of **Prairie Lights Books** in Iowa, our expert on Paperback Fiction and Nonfiction, looks at some recent sports books, singling out *Pitching Around Fidel: A Journey Into the Heart of Cuban Sports*, by *Sports Illustrated* senior writer S.L. Price, as one of the best nonfiction books in any subject he's seen this year.

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Business, Science, and Computers

MYSTERIOUS GALAXY
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
Science Fiction and Fantasy

NEW WORDS BOOKSTORE
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Women's Issues

NORTHSHIRE BOOKSTORE
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Biography and Classic Fiction/Literature

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PARTNERS & CRIME
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
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POWELL'S BOOKS
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Cooking and Travel

PRAIRIE LIGHTS BOOKS
IOWA CITY, IOWA
Paperback Fiction and Paperback Nonfiction

PRIMROSE HILL BOOKS
LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM
Books in the U.K.

RAINY DAY BOOKS
SHAWNEE MISSION, KANSAS
Health and Psychology

REGULATOR BOOKSHOP
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA
History

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MADISON, CONNECTICUT
Lifestyle, Fashion, Design; Business, Hardcover Nonfiction, and Paperback Fiction

THAT BOOKSTORE IN BLYTHEVILLE
BLYTHEVILLE, ARKANSAS
Paperback Best-Sellers

THREE LIVES & COMPANY
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
Memoir

TROVER SHOP
WASHINGTON, DC
Politics

WARWICK'S
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA
Design

WORDSWORTH BOOKS
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
Computers and Science

It took me a long time to see the appeal of *Julie and Romeo*; I dismissed it as another *Bridges of Madison County* wanna-be, with flower shops instead of covered bridges. I curled up with the book and was pleasantly surprised.
CHERYL BARTON
JUST BOOKS,
GREENWICH, CONNECTICUT

Recent Professors' Picks

Two of our newest Academic Experts make their picks.

JOHN MCWHORTER
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Professors' Picks on MUSICALS

Ethan Mordden, Broadway Babies: The People Who Made the American Musical (1988)
Armond Fields, From the Bowery to Broadway: Lew Fields and the Roots of American Popular Theater (1993)
Craig Zadan, Sondheim & Co. (1974)
Martin Gottfried, Broadway Musicals (1979)
Allen Woll, Black Musical Theatre: From Coontown to Dreamgirls (1988)

ROBERT W. RYDELL
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY, BOZEMAN

Professors' Picks on WORLD'S FAIRS

Burton Benedict, The Anthropology of World's Fairs (1983)
Micaela Di Leonardo Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity (1998)
Zeynep Celik, Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs (1992)
Penelope Harvey, Hybrids of Modernity: Anthropology, the Nation State & the Universal Exhibition (1996)
Keith Walden, Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition & the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture (1997)

ACADEMIC EXPERTS

C. FRED ALFORD, Evil (University of Maryland, College Park); JOYCE APPLEBY, Early American History (University of California, Los Angeles); PETER BROOKS, 19th-Century French Novels (Yale University); WILLIAM CARTER, Proust (University of Alabama); JAMES CHAPMAN, James Bond Studies (Open University, U.K.); ANDREW DELBANCO, Herman Melville (Columbia University); KEITH DEVLIN, Mathematics in Life and Society (St. Mary's College); PAULA FASS, History of Childhood in America (University of California, Berkeley); JUAN FLORES, Puerto Rican Identity (Hunter College); SUSAN GUBAR, Feminism and Literature (Indiana University); HENDRIK HARTOG, History of Marriage (Princeton University); ALISON JOLLY, Primate Behavior (Princeton University); MARK JORDAN, Homosexuality and Christianity (Emory University); ALICE KAPLAN, France Occupied by the Nazis, 1940-1944 (Duke University); CLARK SPENCER LARSEN, Bioarchaeology (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill); KARAL ANN MARLING, Popular Culture (University of Minnesota); MIMI NICHTER, Women and Dieting (University of Arizona); DEBORAH TANNEN, Language in Daily Life (Georgetown University); MICHAEL WALZER, Jewish Political Thought (Institute for Advanced Study); STEVEN WEINBERG, History of War (University of Texas, Austin); G. EDWARD WHITE, History of Baseball (University of Virginia); CRAIG STEVEN WILDER, Life in Brooklyn (Williams College); SEAN WILENTZ, American Politics Since 1787 (Princeton University).

What the Contributing Editors are saying...

Our 35 Contributing Editors are accomplished, demanding readers and thinkers. Here's what they've been reading and thinking lately.

VISIT THE EXPERTS
Contributing Editors
Magazine Experts
Independent Booksellers
Academic Experts

Just who are the criminals here? **Sherman Alexie** reads up on the criminal-justice system and wonders if we're locking up the wrong people.

Christine Vachon—working on a film about China, and the new mother of a Chinese adoptee—finds inspiration in recent Asian memoirs.

Mimi Sheraton recalls dining with Saul Bellow and Allan Bloom as she reads *Ravelstein*, Bellow's homage to his late friend. The mushroom and barley soup was delicious.

What is moral? What's immoral? **Wendy Kaminer** revisits these questions with help from Richard Posner, Oprah Winfrey, and some rabid young evangelical Christians.

Harold Bloom takes an ecumenical approach to reading, including Cherokee poetry and thoughts on the beginning of the (last) millennium.

The struggles of World War II were the ultimate test of loyalty and conscience, as **Robert Bookman** learns in his recent reading.

Are certain people marked for death? **David Brown** looks at a magazine article that tries to make sense of the Swissair Flight 111 disaster.

Wendy Wasserstein recalls her days stumping for the NEA and matching wits with Newt Gingrich.

Frank Deford reviews Tony Horwitz's travelogue of the South and examines whether the scars from the Civil War have ever truly healed.

Marine biologist **Cristina Mittermeier** catches up on reading about biodiversity and considers solutions to the dilemma of our natural resources.

Larry Fink reads *The New York Times* for some thoughts from this year's crop of college-commencement speakers.

And **Ira Glass** imagines a scene from Shakespeare (or Adam Sandler), with Malcolm Gladwell using the theories in *The Tipping Point* to meddle in Glass's love life.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

SHERMAN ALEXIE
JONATHAN ALTER
LOUIS BEGLEY
HAROLD BLOOM
SISSELA BOK
ROBERT BOOKMAN
DAVID BROWN
STEPHEN L. CARTER
FAITH CHILDS
JAMES CRAMER
ANNA DEAVERE SMITH
FRANK DEFORD
ESTHER DYSON
GENEVIEVE FIELD
LARRY FINK
IRA GLASS
PETER T. GLENSHAW
DAVID HALBERSTAM
ANITA HILL
LAURA INGRAHAM
DAVID ISAY
WENDY KAMINER
POLLY LABARRE
NEIL LABUTE
PAUL D. MILLER,
AKA DJ SPOOKY
CRISTINA MITTERMEIER
RUSSELL MITTERMEIER
GEORGE PLIMPTON
DAVID SALLE
JOHN SCANLON
MIMI SHERATON
ILAN STAVANS
CHRISTINE VACHON
REBECCA WALKER
WENDY WASSERSTEIN

***Command Performance: An Actress in the Theater of Politics*, by Jane Alexander, is a very strong insider's account of the bureaucracy surrounding government funding for the arts by someone who really cares about the arts, while also being a very wry and witty book.**
WENDY WASSERSTEIN

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 they have been saying lately.

Amid all the e-crazed financial coverage, where does *Marketplace* producer **Emily Danahue** find the best business lessons? In a profile of the Woodstream Corporation, a company that's been building mousetraps the same way for nearly a hundred years.

Just when you thought it was safe to drink fresh-squeezed orange juice, **Elizabeth Craw** picks her must-read women's article: a report on summer food poisoning. Plus: a history of zippers, and the strange math of the sunscreen SPF numbers.

Keith Olbermann treads carefully in the land of self-reference, but he has to say it: *ESPN Magazine* is a magazine about ESPN. Its question to hockey analyst Barry Melrose: "What's it like to do a chat on espn.com?"

As far as **Matthew Goodman** can tell, every article in *Cook's Illustrated* follows the same structure: one that's worked for playwrights since Aristotle identified conflict as the heart of drama.

Daniel Radosh experiences déjà vu while reading the entertainment magazines: "That cheeky anecdote about Renée Zellweger being mooned on the set of *Me, Myself & Irene*? You'll find it in both the July *Vanity Fair* and the July 10 *People*. The portrait of Ozzy Osbourne's home life? Try the August *Spin* or the July 6 *Rolling Stone*."

Forget about the 'N Sync foldouts. **Susan Burton** finds a hands-down winner among all the back-to-school coverage in the teen magazines this month: *CosmoGIRL!*'s "How to Get Your Mom to Buy You What You Want."

Men's Health calls it a "revolutionary" medical test, claiming that "tens of thousands of people have undergone the procedure, and many are alive today because of what was found." But in **Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel's** opinion, the procedure's only benefit is for the doctors collecting fat fees for performing it.

Kate de Castelbajac finds a whopping 57 "beauty bargains" in *Allure* and names her essential reading "for anyone old enough to wear makeup."

Timothy Ferris offers a primer on astronomy magazines for the stargazer in us all, recommending two publications that will help you bring the heavens closer for the price of a decent martini.

What's with men's magazines' obsession with the reality-TV trend? **Michael Segell's** diagnosis: "Clueless editors who crib stories from stupid TV shows should be shepherded to a remote South China Sea outpost with nothing but a flashlight, a book of matches, and a Palm Pilot. An original idea gets you thrown off the island."

Elle's photo shoot "To Die For" casts designer shoes as elements of a crime scene. Guilty or not, writes **Stéphane Houy-Towner**, it's only Gilles Bensimon's quirky photography that makes "some of the most hidious footwear palatable."

Winifred Gallagher finds something for California Buddhists and neo-conservative Christians alike in the religious magazines. When *Reform Judaism* gets body conscious, tackling "The Perfect-Thinness Syndrome," Gallagher says, "Amen and pass the *rugelach*!"

To **Rahm Emanuel**, Washington is just "Disney on the Potomac." Take a cruise around the political wonderland with Clinton's former senior adviser.

John R. Quain examines what happens when e-business reporters don't test a new company's technology before hyping it. Also: *Fortune* still doesn't know the difference between the Internet and the World Wide Web.

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BEHIND THE CONTENT

A LIST OF CONTENTVILLE S LATEST EDITORIAL FEATURES

BOOKS

OPEN ON MY DESK Alfred Habegger spent the past six years reading new books and old documents to put the pieces of the Emily Dickinson puzzle together for his new biography.

THE MOVEABLE FEAST Contentville's coverage of the New York book-party circuit

DIARY OF A BOOK SCOUT Our spy endures the dog days of summer and pictures Gwyneth Paltrow harvesting berries.

CRITICS' CHORUS Some key books, what the most powerful papers and magazines said about them, and what (we think) it means

THE CONTENTVILLE AUTHOR Q&A Davis Miller, author of *The Tao of Bruce Lee: A Martial Arts Memoir* and *The Tao of Muhammad Ali*, answers the 17 questions we always ask.

WHEN READING IS NEW Children's book author and NPR essayist Daniel Pinkwater on *The Rain*, a deceptively quiet children's book that depicts the simple joys of an autumn shower

THE LAST WORD John Sedgewick's thoughts after the publication of his book *The Dark House*

ONLY AT CONTENTVILLE An excerpt from Mimi Sheraton's new book, *The Bialy Eaters: The Story of a Bread and a Lost World*

BOOK NEWS *Hail to the Chief*: Richard Schickel's essay on William Randolph Hearst

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THE CONTENTVILLE EDITOR Q&A Behind the scenes with Sally Koslow, editor of *McCall's*, and Katrina Heron, editor of *Wired*

THE NOUVEAU NICHE This month: *Decor & Style*, *Comics Scene 2000*, and *Collector Card World*

LAUNCH OF THE MONTH *Joey*, a new magazine for gay men under 25

DISSERTATIONS

DISSERTATIONS DECONSTRUCTED Emily Nussbaum on Bill Cosby's 1976 dissertation about *Fat Albert*

-CONTENT SEARCH

IF YOU TYPE IN "GOLF" AND CLICK ON THE "GO" BUTTON, YOU GET THE FOLLOWING:

BOOKS

Chicken Soup for the Golfer's Soul: 101 Stories of Insights, Inspiration and Laughter on the Links, by Canfield, Jack

Eat Right 4 Your Type: The Individualized Diet Solution to Staying Healthy, Living Longer & Achieving Your Ideal Weight, by D'Adamo, Peter J.

Payne Stewart: The Authorized Biography, by Stewart, Tracey

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MAGAZINES

Golf World

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ARCHIVES

Vijay Singh New Golf Master, Jet, May 1, 2000

Mastering Emotions, Sport, May 1, 2000

Masters Of Anti-sports-marketing, Business Week, Apr. 17, 2000

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DISSERTATIONS

An Evaluation of the Influence of Psychological Skills Training on the Self-esteem of Adolescent Female Golfers, by Ulrich-Suss, Kim L.

Clinoptilolite Zeolite As An Amendment Of Sand For Golf Green Root Zones, by Huang, Zong Tsan

The Evaluation of a Program for the Teaching of Essential Mental Skills In Sport, by Glore, Charles Foster, III

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TRANSCRIPTS

NBC Nightly News, Jan. 1, 1999

Saturday Morning, Jan. 2, 1999

This Morning, Jan. 4, 1999

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HARD-TO-FIND BOOKS

The Wedge Book, by Ford, Doug, 1963

The Putter Book, by Rosburg, Bob, 1963

Woman's Golf Game, by Kaskie, Shirli, 1982

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EDITORIAL*

If You Ask Me About Hardcover Nonfiction—Driving Myself Crazy: Misadventures of a Novice Golfer by Jessica Maxwell, by Barbara Theroux, Jun. 23, 2000

If You Ask Me About Paperback Nonfiction—The Majors by John Feinstein by Elizabeth Sullivan, May 8, 2000

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counter culture

Technology allows Web publishers to know precisely what's being read and what's being ignored. But when does market knowledge give way to pandering? BY ERIC EFFRON

When the online magazine *Salon.com* announced in June that it was laying off a dozen or so staffers, the incident received a lot of attention as perhaps the most dramatic evidence yet of trouble in the world of online content. After all, *Salon* is an established brand, with eclectic cultural coverage, news scoops, and a provocative voice. If *Salon* is on shaky economic footing, what does that say about all those lesser content sites and about the very model of advertising-supported (free) content on the Web?

However, the more significant meaning of *Salon*'s problems may lie not in the fact of the layoffs but in the method. It emerged that the decision to eliminate certain positions (and areas of coverage) was based at least in part on software-generated reports that showed how many users had checked out each page. Books and travel and media coverage took their blows. Sex coverage survived.

"I think it's safe to say that the quantitative genie is out of the bottle," declared Lamar Graham, a journalist and academic specializing in digital media. Graham, writing for mediachannel.org, argued that this isn't necessarily a bad development, because traffic stats simply measure the market at work.

Plus, Graham pointed out, the idea of publishers and broadcasters basing decisions about what to cover on their reading of what the market wants (using such old-fashioned tools as focus groups and Nielsen ratings) is not exactly new. "The notion that using stats to determine the allocation of editorial resources is de facto proof of business-side meddling is old-media thinking," Graham argued.

I guess I'm a little guilty of that, because I do find something disturbing about the *Salon* layoffs. As an editor, I've observed focus groups meant to elicit what readers think about this magazine and what they would like it to be. I've reviewed data showing how various covers sell on the newsstand.

But these are inexact exercises that leave a lot of room for interpretation. And part of me is glad I don't have at my disposal technology that could tell me precisely which articles in the magazine are the most popular—I shudder to think what the "ratings" for this column might be. I don't know what I would do with that data if I had it, but it sure would be hard to ignore.

This debate over page views and layoffs is a front-burner one for journalists—lost jobs within the fold have a way of focusing the mind—but what does it mean for consumers? James Poniewozik, who used to work at *Salon* and now covers television for *Time*, suggests that page-view reports may be a "populist corrective" to journalistic arrogance. Might the public benefit if content providers are better able to focus resources on the stories most people have indicated they're interested in?

I don't think so, because although the market is and should be a factor when editors, publishers, and broadcasters decide what to present, some of the most important (and, ultimately, even some of the most popular) offerings defy (or at least are oblivious to) popular taste and consumer demand. Plus, when general-interest publications all play the same popularity contest, the niche publications are left to fill the gap. And that only accelerates audience fragmentation, which makes us smarter about information that interests us but leaves us unexposed to those surprising, one-off discoveries. And as newspapers, magazines, and television networks converge online, with access to the same technology *Salon* employs, it's not hard to imagine a future in which bottom-line-driven executives across the media landscape can make informed—*too* informed, I would argue—editorial decisions based on the latest traffic report.

At this magazine, we often kick around ideas for stories. Lots of conversations start with phrases like "Isn't it amazing that..." or "Wouldn't it be cool if we looked into...". The story process starts from a spark of interest, perhaps a passion for the subject. That's different from starting each day with so-called full traffic reports measuring how many people clicked on the story about the death penalty versus the one about oral sex.

Poniewozik, reflecting recently in *Time* about his experience at *Salon* and his exposure to those hit counts, said that nobody told him to change his writing because of poor numbers. "But why would anyone need to?" he went on. "Few writers with mortgages to pay and access to these numbers could forget about them."

And that's the problem. The quantitative genie is out of his bottle, and I doubt we can count on technology to give us his qualitative counterpart. ■

FRANK WEBSTER

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a little too COOL

Testifying bluntly before a make-believe congressional panel, our columnist shrugs off media consolidation's chilling effects—and ends up left out in the cold. BY CALVIN TRILLIN

I can see myself as a witness at congressional hearings on whether the merger of Time Warner and America Online—yet another big media consolidation—could have a chilling effect on the free exchange of ideas in this country. It's a new subject for me, but not a new fantasy. I often imagine myself testifying at congressional hearings. In my testimony, I always manage to put the interrogating congressman in his place so neatly that the spectators erupt in applause and the chairman, some blustery windbag who looks a little like Jesse Helms, threatens to clear the committee room if there's another such outburst. Sometimes the chairman is actually sputtering. (You occasionally read about people sputtering, but witnessing an actual sputter is rare, even in a daydream.) I remain almost preternaturally calm.

I'm testifying at the request of the merging corporations, to demonstrate that, as someone who writes a column for *Time*, I remain thoroughly unchilled by the merger—although plenty cool in my own way. A Time Warner lawyer is sitting at my side. He's beautifully dressed. The top executives of both Time Warner and AOL are in the front rows, waiting to cheer me on and then take me out to a celebratory dinner at some swanky Washington restaurant. The hearing is being televised by CNN, another Time Warner property. The print reporters include a serious-looking man from *Fortune*, a Time Warner magazine. I assume that somewhere among the spectators there is a producer from Time Warner's HBO, checking to see if my life would make a good HBO original movie—and maybe even an A&R man from one of Time Warner's record companies, on the off chance I break into song. The synergy of all of them being there is producing a low hum in the room, and I feel buoyed by the sound.

A congressman is asking whether I'd be afraid that criticizing some other part of the Time Warner–AOL empire in my column might result in an icy little note from the proprietor—something that starts "Although we're all devoted to the First Amendment and there is certainly no desire to censor what you write...."

"In the first place, congressman," I say, "I'm not even sure anymore who the proprietor is. I lost track two or three mergers ago. I know that Henry Luce is no longer in the picture. After that, it gets kind of fuzzy."

This is a little-discussed aspect of constant mergers: It's not easy to keep in mind whom you're supposed to be afraid of. I keep thinking that Steve Ross or Ted Turner may be involved with Time Warner, but I can't remember which one, or how; showy guys with gray hair have always tended to run together in my mind. If I got an icy little note from the proprietor, I probably wouldn't even know who he was, unless he put right in the note "I happen to be the CEO of this corporation, even though you keep getting me mixed up with Armand Hammer." I could easily just toss it on the pile of hate mail from those corgi fanatics who, after four years, are still angry at me for writing that corgis look as if they'd been put together with unrelated body parts from three or four other breeds.

I glance over my shoulder to see how the top executives of Time Warner and AOL are responding to my testimony. Most of them are nodding and smiling at each other, although a couple of guys on the aisle are looking a bit down in the mouth. It occurs to me that one of

DANNY SHANAHAN

them might be the proprietor. Is that what Ivan Boesky looks like?

Also, I tell the committee, it's not as if I've felt constrained in the past from criticizing other outposts of the empire. How about Little, Brown, the old Boston publishing house that was bought by Time Inc. long before Time Inc. was, in turn, bought by nearly everyone else? In some detail, I remind the committee members and the spectators and the television audience what I've said publicly about having a book published by Little, Brown many years ago—the way the little brownies eased the book into the market so quietly that it was like one of those commando operations carried out in silent pontoon boats under cover of darkness, with black watch caps pulled low and faces smudged with pitch. "I couldn't figure out the thinking behind publishing a book in such a secretive way, Mr. Chairman," I testify, "and then I realized that Little, Brown, being an institution steeped in the reserve of old-line Boston, was guarding against the possibility that the book might be purchased by strangers—people one didn't know. In that, Mr. Chairman, it succeeded."

Most of the executives in the front rows are still smiling, more or less, but I notice that one of them is wearing a sour expression. He is standing up and is leaving the hearing room. He looks familiar. Did I meet him many years ago at Little, Brown?

"And it's your testimony that you wouldn't hesitate to criticize America Online?" the next congressman asks.

"America Online, congressman?" I say. "Don't get me started on America Online. I know from experience that the AOL subscriber who can actually get a human being on the phone at America Online is a person who could have found Amelia Earhart in a matter of days." I pause, to give the executives an opportunity to laugh confidently at how fearlessly I criticize the dominant partner in the merger. There is silence from the front rows. I figure the executives are waiting for an even more pointed zinger.

"And how about the eight advertisements for high-speed-printers-that-will-also-do-your-laundry you have to plow through in order to get to your e-mail?" I say. "Here's what is truly irritating about those advertisements, Mr. Chairman: The 'yes' box is always a lot larger than the 'no' box. The AOL people, working in a breathtaking technology that puts humanity's entire store of knowledge at your fingertips and has revolutionized commerce, actually have a sales strategy that comes down to making the 'yes' box larger than the 'no' box."

A particularly nasty-looking congressman now has the microphone in front of him. I glance over at the CNN man to exchange a comradely smile, but the CNN man is packing his equipment. I assume there must be a breaking story somewhere else in the Capitol. Also, the CNN man probably figures that no matter how long he hangs around, he's not likely to get anything better than that big box/little box line. Oddly enough, the serious-looking man from *Fortune* isn't in his seat either. I thought he might have wanted to stick around to hear me make fun of that embarrassing fiasco *Time* and CNN got into with the story about the nerve gas in Laos.

"So you're testifying, I take it, that you would comment on the sort of dispute that took place a few months ago between Time Warner and Disney over Time Warner Cable's transmission of ABC," the nasty-looking congressman says, "even if that entailed criticizing Time Warner."

"Well, with two mega-corporations in a hair-pulling match," I say, "I think I'd probably settle for what a pacifist friend of mine once said about the Army-Navy football game: 'There's no side to root for. About all you can do is hope that one team loses in a particularly humiliating manner.' Which seems to be what happened to Time Warner."

I glance back to give the corporate executives a reassuring wink. They are not in their seats. I turn to ask the lawyer where they've gone, but he's not there either. It occurs to me that I can no longer hear that synergistic hum. It also occurs to me that I don't know where everyone was supposed to meet for that celebratory dinner. It's obvious that the chairman won't be threatening to clear the committee room, because there's nobody much left to clear. Suddenly, I feel very much alone. ◘

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STUFF WE LIKE

THINK OF ENGLAND

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN PARR

The days when England's reach and resources seemed virtually limitless are more than 50 years past. But while a crop of new, unapologetically untony writers—Zadie Smith, for example—have helped depict England as both messier and more colorful than their literary predecessors could have imagined, images of a mythic age of imperial glory persist. Americans, of course, have always had a complex relationship with Mother England, and although we love to make fun of Brits (those teeth!), a secret strain of Anglophilia keeps Ismail Merchant and James Ivory in business. In his forthcoming book, *Think of England* (Phaidon Press), photographer (and Englishman) Martin Parr seems determined to make mincemeat of the pastorally romantic images of England we hold dear. His hyper-saturated, unpretentious diptychs of the people and things that populate middle England present juxtapositions that are by turns witty, disturbing, and thought-provoking. Parr, who cheerfully admits that his portrait of his homeland is colored equally by "affection and despair," sees his pictorial tribute as an addition to "the great tradition of [English] satirizing England....One thing we have in England is a great gift to laugh at ourselves, which is one thing that saves us all. The Americans—God love them—find it very difficult to achieve the same sort of irony about themselves. You're the richest country in the world, but in terms of irony, we've still got the edge"—he chuckles—"and I prefer irony to economy."

HANYA YANAGIHARA

A photo diptych from Martin Parr's new book, *Think of England*

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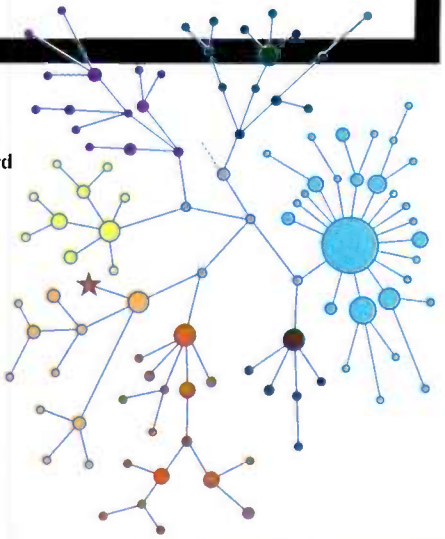

A genetic family tree from Oxford Ancestors' website

OXFORD ANCESTORS

ONLINE GENETIC HISTORY

The "Seven Daughters of Eve" might sound like the title of a fairy tale, but the phrase refers to a recent and well-accepted addition to the science of genealogy. Oxford Ancestors, a company founded by Bryan Sykes, has taken molecular biology online with a website that can trace the maternal lineage of anyone of European ancestry to one of seven women who lived tens of thousands of years ago. Sykes, professor of human genetics at the Institute of Molecular Medicine at Oxford University in England, made this discovery when he tested 6,000 Europeans' DNA and found that they divided into seven groups, each of which, in turn, derived from a single woman (mitochondrial DNA passes unchanged from mother to child). Now, with the click of a mouse, a mouth swab, and a $180 check, Oxford Ancestors will identify the woman to whom a person is related. Those of non-European extraction can receive the

STUFF WE LIKE

"appropriate continental context" for their mtDNA, and Sykes hopes to map the world's remaining genetic clans with the same precision he brings to Europe's seven groups.

Oxfordancestors.com includes the likely birth date and region for each of the seven women, based on mutations in the DNA sequence analyzed. "Xenia" (mother to group X) lived about 25,000 years ago near the Black Sea in what is now Russia, while "Tara" (group T) was born some 8,000 years later in Tuscany. "Helena" claims the most European descendants, while "Velda," though born in present-day Spain, is the progenitor of today's Scandinavians. All seven clans in turn derived from "Lara," one of three African "Eves."

The DNA sampling kit can be ordered online: results arrive in a month, along with a certificate of European maternal ancestry printed on high-grade, frame-ready paper—and the vow that your DNA sample will be destroyed.

But you needn't submit to DNA-typing to appreciate its ramifications for contemporary society: "What all this means is that genetics offers no support at all to current ethnic divisions in Europe," the website states. "Our shared genetic ancestry goes back many thousands of years, far beyond political or religious divisions which are, in comparison, a much more recent phenomenon."

KAJA PERINA

CAMERON BARR

***MONITOR* REPORTER**

If you're not careful, Cameron Barr's reports will pierce you like shards of ice. As the Tokyo bureau chief for *The Christian Science Monitor*, Barr, who has reported for the better part of the decade from a dozen Asian countries, writes with a thoroughness that is sometimes chilling. Take his recent six-month investigation of the Indonesian army's killing spree in East Timor, a bloodletting that took the life of *Financial Times* correspondent and *Monitor* contributor Sander Thoenes. Barr had been covering the story alongside Thoenes, and filed a series of reports that ultimately fingered a specific army battalion, the 745, for the disappearances and murders of at least 21 people, including Thoenes's own colleague.

Barr is one of many talented reporters at the *Monitor*, a daily newspaper that has distinguished itself with its international reporting. While an increasing number of U.S. newspapers have been shrinking their overseas staffs—relying instead on wire services—the *Monitor* has done just the opposite, and Barr's reports are just some of the noteworthy results.

CHIPP WINSTON

Foreign correspondent Cameron Barr

BARR: JOHN NORDELL/*THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR*

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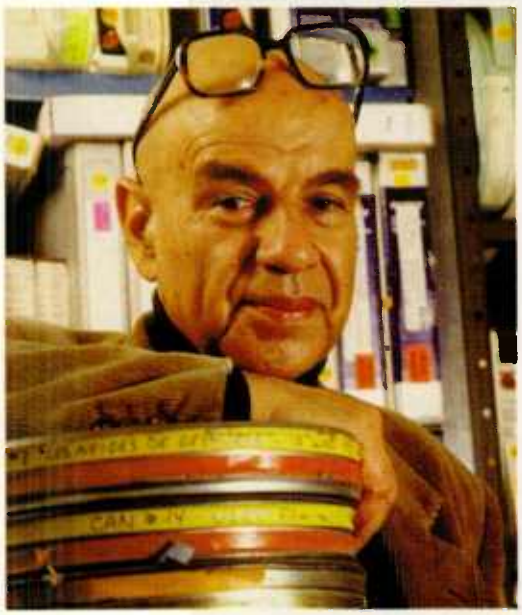


Bud Greenspan, aka Mr. Olympics

MR. OLYMPICS

THE GAMES' OFFICIAL FILMMAKER

Many questions will be answered at the Games of the 27th Olympiad, to begin mid-September in Sydney, Australia—questions like *Who's the fastest man in the world?* and *Did they really need to add trampolining?* One outcome we know already, though, is that sometime in the not-too-distant future, documentarian Bud Greenspan will deliver a filmed history of the event. Greenspan, 73, an American, is the International Olympic Committee's official historian and has been making films about the Games since 1948. In recent years, his projects have become herculean efforts: The 1996 opus *Atlanta's Olympic Glory* had a crew of 130, was shot by 20 cameras, and runs for three and a half hours. The new film, to be released next spring, will air on the Showtime cable network and promises Greenspan's trademark Leni Riefenstahl–meets–Roone Arledge gestalt: soaring tributes to athleticism and the Olympic ideal mixed with sappy up-close-and-personal segments. Look out for it, because it may be your only chance for years to watch televised Olympics without narration by Bob Costas.

JESSE OXFELD

ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER

DOCUMENTARY ABOUT AN OLYMPIC TRAGEDY

Willkommen to the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. Feel the goodwill, watch as the beaming German hosts—the "new democratic face of Germany," says an upbeat narrator— wave and smile at the camera. Little do they know...

From the first sequence of director Kevin Macdonald's documentary, *One Day in September*, tension is in the air. The film, which won an Oscar earlier this year and airs on HBO in September, recounts the events of September 5, 1972, when Palestinian terrorists took hostage and then murdered 11 members of Israel's Olympic team. Jamal Al Gashey, the only surviving Palestinian participant in the terrorism, is prominently featured in the film, as are Ankie Spitzer, widow of slain Israeli fencing coach Andre Spitzer, and various German and Israeli officials. ABC newscaster Peter Jennings is among the reporters on the scene at the time, and his commentary balances the more personal accounts. But it is Macdonald's deft use of a few carefully placed shots left silent on the screen for extended contemplation that holds the movie together: the masked head of a terrorist; the bloody body of Israeli weight lifter Yosef Romano lying dead on the floor of the Olympic Village dorm room; the athletes playing Ping-Pong and tanning as they wait for the Games to resume. And then the reports that "all hell has broken loose."

ALLISON BENEDIKT

A terrorist at the Munich Games

1995, 800 volunteers from the scientific community have answered more than 12,000 questions posted by curious Web users. Type in a science-minded query and the network's experts—doctoral students, researchers, and scientists—will be on the case within days.

MadSci was cofounded by Lynn Bry as part of the Young Scientist Program at Washington University in St. Louis. Bry, an M.D./Ph.D. candidate at the time, envisioned a student-run operation that would allow local faculty to answer the scientific inquiries of St. Louis's K–12 population.

Sparks fly between two grapes in a microwave oven: *before*, *during*, and *after* photos linked at madsci.org.

The scope has since expanded, and the site now fields about 150 questions a day during the school year. In response to the grape question, a physicist from Hughes Research Laboratories in California zapped both grapes and cranberries in his microwave, then posted an analysis complete with sketches of grapes in an electromagnetic field. The site's best feature is the Random Knowledge Generator, which features a different sample of the site's best recent questions every time you click.

Genome projects and NASA launches increase the site's traffic, but Bry says some of the biggest bumps come at final-exam and science-project time. "How to culture bread mold seems to be one of the most popular science projects on the global scale," she says. STEPHEN TOTILO

TOP RIGHT: ANTHONY VERDE

INEQUALITY.ORG

TRACKING INCOME DISPARITY

Inequality.org aims to draw attention to a subject that's often overlooked: the growing income gap between the rich and poor in the U.S. "It's an alarming development that happens under our nose that we don't fully acknowledge," says James Lardner, the site's director and founder and a reporter for *U.S. News & World Report*. "And the news media, of which I'm a part, is only beginning to get wise to this issue."

Lardner started the site in 1998 to "build a network of people in the news media, in the academic world, and elsewhere who are clued in to the latest thinking" about income disparity in the United States. Funded by grants from such organizations as the Albert A. List Foundation, the spartan site features reports and statistics ("The net worth of the top 1 percent of Americans now dwarfs that of the bottom 90 percent—the most extreme wealth concentration since the 1920s") and a "Quote Gallery" with comments on money and equality from economists, politicians, and celebrities. "There are a lot of people who are beginning to be deeply upset at seeing the U.S. becoming dramatically more unequal," Lardner argues. "Concern about inequality is not just a left-wing thing." ADAR KAPLAN

ALPINE ART ADVERTISING

A UNIQUE AD CAMPAIGN

The covers of contemporary-art magazines *Artforum* and *Flash Art* usually feature the artists of the moment and their latest work. But the back covers of these magazines showcase something far more stable: the alpine tranquillity of Switzerland. Noted Swiss art dealer Bruno Bischofberger has advertised his gallery on the back of every issue of both magazines for many years (14 at *Artforum*, 7 at *Flash Art*). Each ad is a photograph that shows traditional alpine village life—cowherders, cheesemakers, nuns, yodelers, and lederhosen-clad farmboys. Bischofberger's narrow focus makes for an ad campaign that's both bizarre and endearing.

You might think the ads are meant as ironic juxtaposition—especially when artists' names appear above streams of manure or over vats of cheese. Not so, says gallery director Tobias Mueller: "We wanted to bring a little bit of our Swiss culture to [the art world]." Bischofberger himself boasts an extensive collection of Swiss folk art in addition to works by Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

As a student, Bischofberger wrote the definitive text on Appenzell, the picturesque alpine region his ads feature. "Bruno deserves a lot of credit for his creativity," says former *Art in America* publisher Paul Shanley. "When you come right down to it, what's he going to do—run another picture of a Warhol painting?"

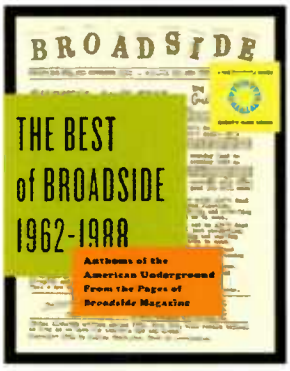
Of course not. But how about a shot of the region's traditional beauty contest for cows? KAJA PERINA

Bruno Bischofberger advertises his art gallery with scenes of life in Switzerland's Appenzell region

BROADSIDE

A COLLECTION OF FOLK HISTORY

For those guilt-laden Sundays when you need to be reminded of your socially conscious roots, here's a five-disc set of sometimes strident folk music gathered under the rubric of *Broadside* magazine, a defunct publication founded in 1962, which believed printing the lyrics and sheet music to great songs could change the world. Smithsonian Folkways, the institution's preservationist music label,



A history of folk, in multimedia

STUFF WE LIKE

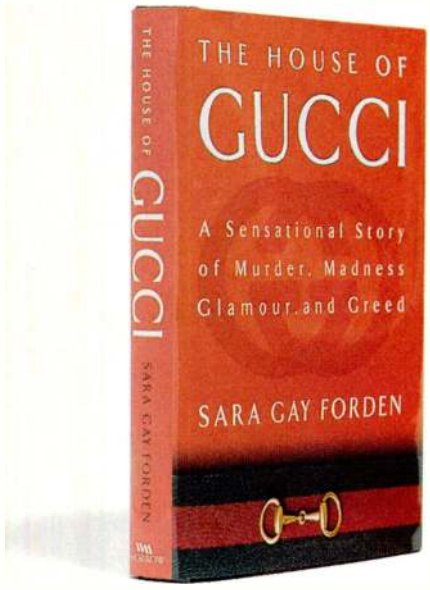
will release *The Best of* Broadside *1962–1988: Anthems of the American Underground From the Pages of* Broadside *Magazine* in September.

Broadside included lyrics to songs like Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind." Its last gasp was more than a decade ago, even though the notion of a "modern topical songs movement" feels even more out of date than that. But this music still resonates, and versions of gems like "John Brown" by Blind Boy Grunt (aka Dylan) easily make up for the hackneyed version of "Hell No, I Ain't Gonna Go." SETH MNOOKIN

THE HOUSE OF GUCCI

TALE OF A FASHION DYNASTY

"You've got the family dynasty, the fashion story, the high finance—and then you've got the murder," says Sara Gay Forden, summarizing the thriller-plot qualities of her new nonfiction book, *The House of Gucci* (William Morrow). The book chronicles the rise and fall and rise again of the Italian fashion dynasty, and investigates the March 1995 murder of Maurizio Gucci, grandson of the company's founder.



A new book about the Italian fashion empire, the murder of Maurizio Gucci, and the trial of his ex-wife for the crime

Gucci was the last family member to run the business before it was sold in September 1993. When he was shot in broad daylight in his office in Milan, speculation began to swirl. Was it a Mafia execution? Or was it his jealous ex-wife who had killed him? The case generated O.J. Simpson–like headlines and interest in Italy, and a six-month trial that began in May 1998 determined it was Gucci's ex-wife who was responsible.

But as Forden tells the story, many other dramatic moments in Gucci family history took place in the boardroom, especially during the years after Investcorp International took control of the company. *The House of Gucci* isn't just a true-crime book; it's a business book. "It's not just that the family drama is the colorful, passionate side, and the business side is dry and staid," Forden explains. "Passion, finance, and business were all woven together."

Forden was the Milan bureau chief for *Women's Wear Daily*, and her connections to the Italian fashion industry have helped produce a detailed and gossipy book filled with firsthand accounts of the fashion business. Forden says she wanted to tell the story of every person who was in any way connected to the Gucci family. She spent two years getting to know her real-life characters—and getting to know them well. Maurizio Gucci's driver, for example, had poignant stories to tell about driving his boss aimlessly around the suburbs of Milan. Even the murderer, Patrizia Reggiani, is described with subtle understanding. "I tried to get inside her head and see how the world looks through her eyes," says Forden, who succeeded. *The House of Gucci*, out in September, delivers an intimate view of a family, a company, and an industry.

LARA KATE COHEN

OPENLETTERS.NET

OTHER PEOPLE'S MAIL, ONLINE

Sometimes the Internet brings to mind Samuel Coleridge's famous line "Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink." There's just so much information, so little good reading. There must, you think, be some way of packaging that information into something that's even vaguely, well, different. Enter Paul Tough, late the editor of the Canadian magazine *Saturday Night* and, before that, an editor at *Harper's Magazine*. Tough recognized that, on the Web, "there's a lot of information out there, but not a lot of the information that should be there." So he launched Open Letters (openletters.net). It's "an ongoing, evolving experiment in content delivery via the Internet," he explains on the site—an attempt "to distribute information with a little depth, with a little soul."

What is this deep, soulful content? Letters. Missives from real people about their real lives, guided and shaped into published prose by Tough and the site's other editors. In one, a correspondent writes of falling in love, or at least something like love, with a tattoo artist she's recently met. Tough writes of a serendipitous moment in a bookstore. And another epistle tells of an American Jew who lost her laptop on an Israeli bus. The Open Letters are beautifully written if, perhaps, a bit bewildering. But they do have soul—which makes them indeed different. JESSE OXFELD

STUFF YOU LIKE

A view from pinecam.com

THOMAS PAYNE OF LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, E-MAILED US THE FOLLOWING:

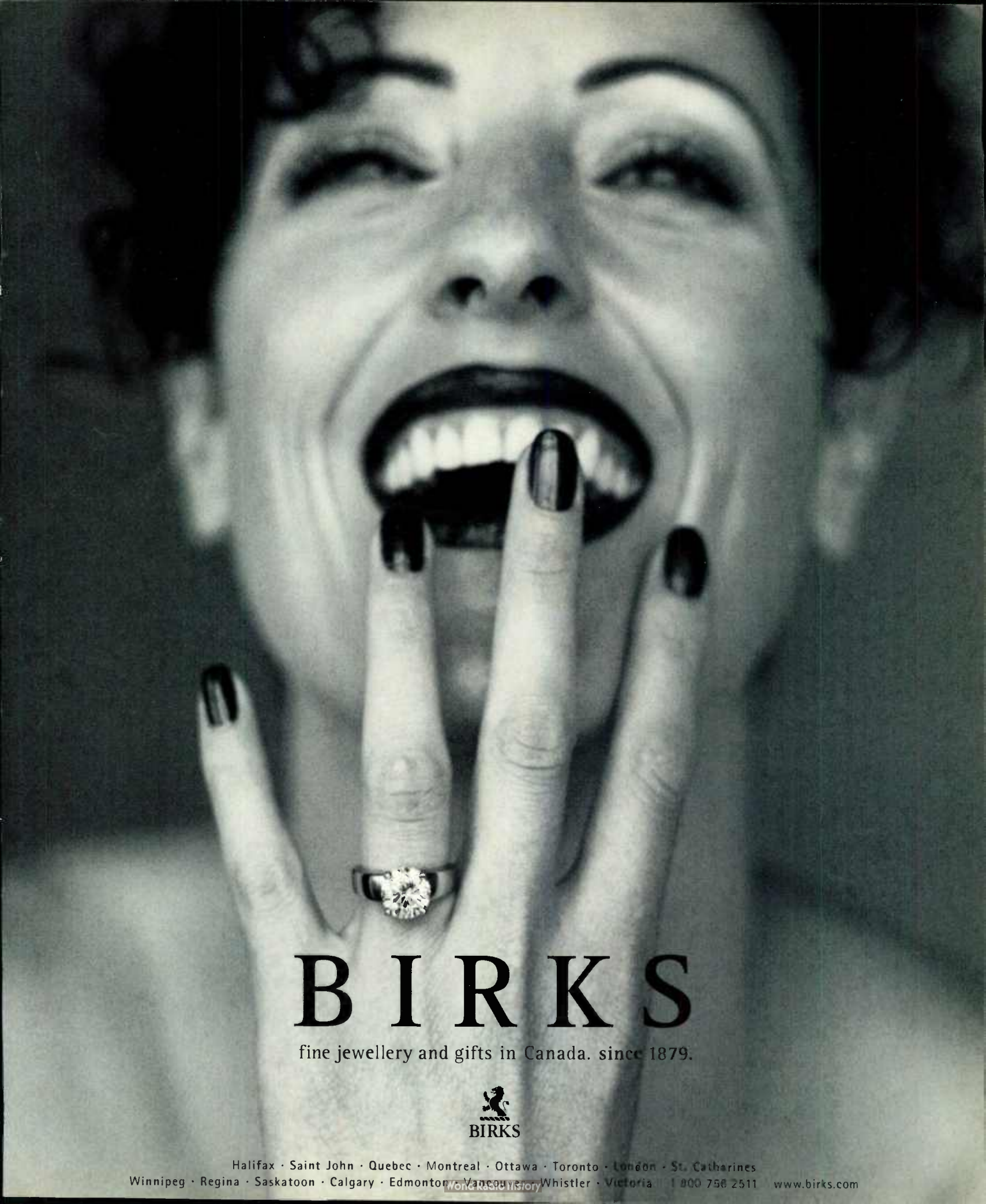
Soon after wildfires broke out June 12 in Hi Meadow, Colorado, about 35 miles southwest of Denver, the proprietor of a local website who lives in the disaster area became a hero to residents there. Wayne Harrison's pinecam.com, an electronic general store started in 1994, offered information on the status of the fires, evacuations, and damages, a marked difference from the sensational microphone-in-your-face coverage on today's television news.

I live in Kentucky but am a former resident of the area where the fire broke out. I did catch some reports on The Weather Channel and was appalled at the smiling, perky disposition of its reporter on the scene. I began following news of the fire at pinecam.com as soon as I learned about the site. In addition to frequent updates, there were postings from local residents expressing frustration with the media coverage of the tragedy, including one notable piece about the dichotomy between Internet coverage and news on TV.

That's what pinecam.com got right: that the fire was a tragedy, not an event. In addition to maintaining the site's other features, Harrison continues to post items in the aftermath of the fire, particularly about relief efforts for the community.

Is there stuff you like? Write to us and share your favorite media sources. Send ideas to: Stuff You Like, *Brill's Content*, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. Or e-mail us at: stuffyoulike@brillscontent.com. Please include your address and contact numbers.

BOOK LUIS HENRIQUE SEABRA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FACE-OFF

So maybe the press is full of closet liberals. But does that mean they'll favor Al Gore in their coverage this election season?

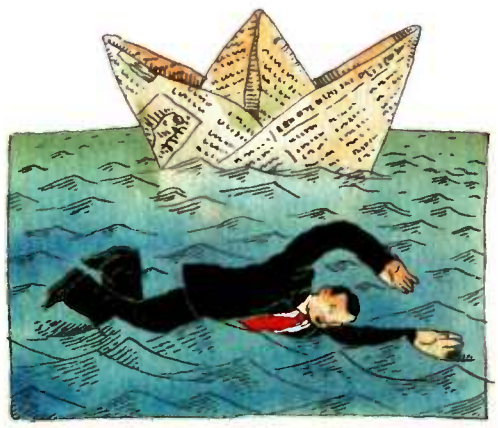
it's the ratings, stupid

JEFFREY KLEIN ARGUES

As the November election approaches, right-wing critics are likely to complain that the "liberal media" are contriving in a thousand ways to torpedo George W. Bush's candidacy and install Al Gore in the Oval Office. These charges always have a disingenuous ring, like the pseudo-outrage of a basketball coach working the referees: Conservatives want the media to favor them with the calls. The "liberal media" charge rests on lazy assumptions and a misunderstanding about the media's importance in presidential politics. Don't get me wrong: the media do play a role in presidential campaigns, just not as crucial a role as conservatives—and journalists—would like everyone to believe. And reporters do have their biases; they're just not primarily political.

Are the media liberal? The foot soldiers are, but the generals are not. The foot soldiers—the reporters and editors who work in the trenches—are often journalism school graduates, and they usually come into the trade fired with a passion for social change and an idealistic sense of journalism's role in democracy. The generals, on the other hand, have the same concern as any business executive: return on investment. The owners are generally conservative because (duh) the social and economic status quo is working quite well for them.

Is there any evidence that, during a presidential campaign, the leanings of political reporters influence their work? A 1998 University of Minnesota study turned a computer loose on media coverage of the last three presidential campaigns, with instructions to root out partisan biases paragraph by paragraph and segment by segment. It found that the coverage was "remarkably evenhanded."



WESLEY BEDROSIAN

But if you're looking for ideological biases in the media, consider what the foot soldiers and the generals have in common: the need to attract attention. For the owners, this means ratings, readers, and revenue; for individual journalists, it means a sense that what they do matters. The problem for the political journalists is that politics doesn't matter much to the American public—especially when the economy is humming along. This isn't a particular problem for the owners and top managers; it's useful feedback. They simply schedule less politics and more entertainment. Politics comes to the fore only when it's entertaining—for example, when a scandal can be made to erupt.

Post-Monica, anyone who maintains that political scandals are the weapon used by the liberal press to wreak havoc on the right is an idiot or a liar—or both. The prevalence of scandal coverage—despite the fact that the public claims to be tired of it—is primarily a function of the media owners' need for profit and the journalists' need to make a splash. Straightforward coverage of substantive political concerns doesn't draw the biggest crowds nowadays. Which is why a recent study by the Center for Media & Public Affairs found that network nightly news stories about presidential politics during the primaries had declined 44 percent last year compared to 1995. And according to the Alliance for Better Campaigns, the top three networks aired a nightly average of just 36 seconds of "candidate-centered discourse" during the month preceding Super Tuesday.

So it's no surprise that early Gallup polls showed that voters were generally unaware of how George W. Bush and Al Gore differ on the issues. What is surprising is that the same polls found no evidence that the pervasive negative stereotyping of both Bush and Gore was influencing voter perceptions. Believe it or not, despite all the articles and jokes, a vanishingly small number of voters thought Bush was unqualified or dim, or that Gore was boring or corrupt. The obvious conclusion: The media's barbs didn't have a significant influence on the electorate before the nominations were locked up.

All this may change in the final months, of course, but the agents of change will be the candidates' campaign machines, not the news media. Political advertisements shape public perception of the candidates far more than newspaper and network coverage. As of late March, according to The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, a record $114 million had been spent on television issue ads (almost as much as was spent in the entire 1995–1996 presidential election cycle). The networks and local TV stations expect to pull in more than $600 million from political ads by November.

But you certainly won't hear any substantial contextualizing, let alone criticism, of those ads from network journalists or local TV reporters—it could jeopardize a prime revenue stream. Don't take my word for it: More than a third of the journalists recently polled by The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press said news that [CONTINUED ON PAGE 66]

playing favorites

JONAH GOLDBERG ARGUES

Let me undermine my case even before I get started: Despite the aid and comfort of the press, Al Gore will lose in November. The reasons are myriad, but they boil down to the fact that Gore has a weird and vice-presidential way about him, and Americans don't vote for oddball sidekicks unless they have to. After eight years, the press is bored with Gore and doesn't trust him, and neither do the rest of us.

But that doesn't mean the press won't eventually be rooting for Gore. I have to begin by making the traditional case against the press, or I won't get invited to the annual conservative picnic, so here goes: The only people who don't understand that the mainstream media are liberal are people who are even more liberal than the mainstream media. Yes, I know, the endless studies proving this are tiresome, but only because they all say the same thing: Journalists are more secular, more liberal, and more Democratic than the population at large. A 1996 Freedom Forum/Roper Center survey found that 89 percent of Capitol Hill journalists voted for Bill Clinton in 1992. *The National Journal* recently conducted another one of those Lexis-Nexis studies revealing, yet again, that the press uses prejudicial terms—*extreme right, partisan Republican*—about conservatives wildly more than they do about liberals.

Nobody believes in the centrality of government in people's lives more than political journalists. This is partly because journalists share establishment liberal notions of progress. Indeed, ever since the days of Herbert Croly, a founder of American progressivism (and, by the way, the founder of *The New Republic*), "progress" has meant a more centralized and activist federal government. The New Deal, World War II, the Cold War, the Great Society—all fueled the conviction that problems are best solved at the national level.

But this top-down approach has another, less ideological explanation; call it the journalism of self-interest. For the same reason that business groups and liberal activists prefer to lobby one national government rather than 50 state governments, big-headed journalists like to have all the action in one place. The more power and reverence we invest in national politicians, the greater the reflected glory and influence for the reporters who cover them and the editorial writers who second-guess them. The press is the permanent priestly class—after all, senators and presidents come and go, but Helen Thomas is forever—and they have a vested interest in keeping the Oracle of Power where they can see it.

Of course, this self-interest mixes easily with reporters' ideological leanings—and general need to make their copy relevant—to make a heady cocktail. My favorite example of this sanctification of government came in 1994: A man tried to crash his plane into the White House. *The Boston Globe* ran a profile of the man. Here's the first sentence: "With everything lost—his marriage, his money and his faith in the government—Frank E. Corder laid down his crack pipe and liquor, purloined a tiny plane and soared toward the White House to try to seize in death what had eluded him in life." Yes, it's tragic; if only this drunk crackhead loonybird criminal hadn't lost faith in government.

So it's no wonder Democrats are the favored party of the national press. Republicans usually oppose new grand schemes; they distrust—or at least say they do—the wisdom and the stature of Washington, and they dispute the existence of the thousand-odd "crises" we are told exist in America today. In other words, Republicans tend to undermine the importance of what journalists do, because they discount the importance of what they report. Republicans are outsiders, aliens, and spoilsports, and when it comes to GOP politicians, there is no such thing as a cheap shot.

In June, for instance, the national press corps wailed like old women at the Ayatollah's funeral when the state of Texas executed confessed rapist and convicted murderer Gary Graham, even though Governor George W. Bush did not have the authority to stop it. The major news networks aired more than 30 stories on Bush and the Graham execution. ABC's morning news might have been renamed *Good Mourning, America*, considering how many Graham defenders it put on. Graham was page-one news everywhere.

WESLEY BEDROSIAN

Flash back to 1992, when Governor Bill Clinton flew home from New Hampshire for the execution of Ricky Ray Rector—a man so brain-damaged he reportedly asked the guards to save his pecan pie for him so he could eat it after his lethal injection. There were a total of two network news stories on the case. Reports of Rector's execution appeared in a few major newspapers, but they were buried on inside pages. Two southern governors, two executions, drastically [CONTINUED ON PAGE 66]

JEFFREY KLEIN [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 64] would hurt the financial interests of a news organization often or sometimes goes unreported, while 29 percent admitted the same about stories that could adversely affect advertisers. TV is not about to bite the hand that feeds it.

Unless, of course, that hand is spoon-feeding miserly news leads, which explains why Al Gore is taking hits in the press: Reporters are incensed that he is keeping them at arm's length. Remoteness from power not only hampers reporting; it also hurts a star reporter's ego. That's why insurgents who need the limelight, such as John McCain, often make themselves so accessible.

Is all this a paranoid view of pressroom politics? Certainly we left-leaners, perennially powerless, often search for conspiracies of interest among the powerful. Therefore, as part of a painstaking research effort to counteract my own ideological biases, I called a middle-of-the-road (if not right-wing) friend, Carl Cannon, who has covered the White House for a variety of publications and occasionally writes for this magazine. He says the liberal press is embarrassed by the enthusiasm it displayed for Bill Clinton in 1992—back when he was an insurgent who promised an exciting break from the Reagan-Bush years—and so are compensating with pursed-lip coverage of Gore. Ironically, the electorate doesn't share this embarrassment about the president—many think he's done a good job of fending off a press that lacks a sense of proportion and decency.

But what about the high-end liberal news brands, those specializing in proportion and decency? Early in the campaign, *The New York Times* gamely covered the issues, but its really big stories were long "character" pieces that finally relied upon conventional contrasts: Bush the lightweight, Gore the robot. These competing profiles were even-handed, but the tone toward Gore was grudging.

Barring a big scandal, November's winner will be the candidate who has most convincingly laid claim to President Clinton's mantle. Gore is positioning himself as the heir to this administration's economic record. Historically, American voters work on the if-it-ain't-broke principle, and if Gore wins, it'll be for that reason—not because he was abetted by a liberal media that secretly yearns for an active executive branch.

But the economy is only one part of President Clinton's legacy; another is his populist charisma. Character aside, he is confident and natural—and comes across as a normal (ergo flawed) human being. In place of Bill Clinton's two-handed handshake, Bush comes up with a nickname for everyone he meets. George W. will succeed if the American people decide they want a buddy figurehead who seems at ease on TV.

In the end, a Bush victory may be in the media's interest. In 1982, when California governor Jerry Brown was running for a U.S. Senate seat, he told me that if he were defeated, it would be because the public no longer wanted to tune in to The Jerry Brown Show. He lost, and his reasoning was probably right. Most of the press soldiers will probably vote for Gore, but as journalists, they would prefer The George W. Show to go prime time. George W. would be easier to cover—and likelier to provide lively copy as well, given his lack of national experience. The upper echelon of the press is populated by high achievers who would love to dissect someone who underachieved his way into the White House. But first the voters, not the press, must decide. ■

JONAH GOLDBERG [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 65] different coverage. Another form of cheap shot is to mock Republicans for being out of touch while crediting Ted Kennedy types as being men of the people. For example, in 1992 President Bush visited a Florida trade show. He was shown a new kind of supermarket scanner that could read torn labels, and he reacted with polite surprise. However, *The New York Times* ran the pool photo of a surprised Bush on page one and manipulated the pool reporter's account of the story (no one from the *Times* covered the show, and the reporter who did thought Bush's reaction didn't merit mentioning in his own report) to make it seem as if Bush hadn't seen a supermarket scanner before. The message: Aloof aristocrat is oblivious to real America during a recession (which, by the way, we now know was vastly more mild than the nightly news suggested). The media loved it, and so did a grateful Clinton-Gore camp. "Here is a man who sees 20-year-old technology at the supermarket checkout line and looks like an ape discovering fire," railed Gore.

Fast-forward to summer 2000; it turns out that Al Gore is a slumlord. According to my friend Matt Labash of *The Weekly Standard*, a destitute family of Democrats named the Mayberrys rent a hovel on Gore property within plain sight of Gore's family home 150 yards away. They even write their checks to "Al Gore." The house is a shambles thanks to the neglect of the landlord, and the Mayberrys can't work because of numerous disabilities. They tried for months to get Gore to make basic repairs to the toilets and flooring to no avail—until, that is, they allowed a local Tennessee TV station to see the squalor and hear their complaints. The national networks (except for Fox) ignored the story and the print media, save for the *New York Post*, *The Washington Times*, and a few others, ran nothing but a few buried wire stories. The major local paper ran one article. Suffice it to say, there was no page-one *New York Times* story.

I will admit that Gore has gotten some rough treatment so far this election cycle—on campaign finance and his gift for inartful pandering—but it is rarely venomous or below the belt. It is always the product of journalists doing the bare minimum required of their profession, whereas when Republicans are in the crosshairs, it's all righteous blood lust.

What's more shocking is that Bush is getting fewer cheap shots than one might have expected. This can probably be explained by the fact that Bush sounds an awful lot like another charming southern governor the press swooned over. Also, Bush coverage has been nasty when he moved right against McCain and it has been friendly when he moved left to the center. Bush is certainly no Bill Clinton, but he isn't Newt Gingrich or Ronald Reagan, either. Bush's "compassionate" rhetoric emphasizes how hard it is to be a single mom and how much help they deserve; that's music to the ears of people like *Newsweek*'s Jonathan Alter.

There's another reason the press hasn't been too rough on Bush: He has the air of a winner. And if there's one thing we know about the courtesan press, it's that they want access to the court. Still, if precedent holds, sometime after the convention, the press will "discover" that Bush is actually a conservative and start beating him up for not "supporting" gays or children, or for something equally meaningless. Fortunately for the sake of the Republic that will be too little, too late, and Al Gore will be sent home to fix the Mayberrys' toilet. ■

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and she's smart, too!

The former editor of *Elle* takes over America's most celebrated arts colony—and here combats the stereotype that she was all dressed up with no place to go. BY ELAINA RICHARDSON

As tabloid headlines go, it wasn't up there with the *New York Post*'s classic "Headless Body in Topless Bar," but "Fashion Editor To Helm Arts Colony" did seem to have legs. From *The New York Times* to the trade-gossipy *Media Industry Newsletter*, reporters struggled to understand how the editor in chief of *Elle*, a glossy fashion magazine, could be named the president of Yaddo, the venerable, 100-year-old artists' retreat in Saratoga Springs, New York.

As the editor in question, I had been treated with extraordinary generosity by these reporters over the years, but as I read the latest stories I couldn't suppress a chuckle. I'd always suspected that my peers in the press considered fashion editors more *Ab Fab* than *60 Minutes*—and here was the stereotype in plain block letters, column inch after column inch.

Consider *New York Times* media reporter Alex Kuczynski's story from April 17: "[Yaddo has] a new president: Elaina Richardson, the editor-in-chief of *Elle* magazine. Come again? The editor of a fashion magazine is going to run the country's most august arts colony and temporary home to writers, artists and composers like Truman Capote, Dorothy Parker, Aaron Copland and Eudora Welty?"

In a subsequent *Times* piece, reporter Robin Finn countered any notion of me as "just another smug fashion plate in a city brimming with well-dressed platters." Still, she felt she had to explain the job shift: "Last month, in a jolting genre jump, [Richardson] handed in her fashionista badge (and that prime perk, a generous clothing allowance), to assume the reins of Yaddo....From now on, instead of free Prada, Ms. Richardson will have to content herself with free poetry."

Well, I swear I never sported a "fashionista badge" or, for that matter, free Prada. (I'm not sure what irks me more: the assumption that I was bribable or the fact that the bribe was never offered.) But, yes, I did get a pretty nice sum of money with which to buy clothes. How could "free poetry," Finn seemed to be asking, possibly dress my mind as nicely?

Soon my laughter turned hollow. Why was everyone *so* flabbergasted? I had, after all, run a multimillion-dollar business that covered a broad range of cultural topics—dominated, yes, by fashion and beauty but including the war in Kosovo, the classical-arts scene, and electoral politics. *Elle*'s masthead listed some of the most gifted writers, editors, and photographers around. We'd won awards. I'd been invited to moderate a media panel at the prestigious World Economic Forum, in Davos, Switzerland. I'd delivered commencement addresses and taught at Oxford. Intellectual pride swelled within me: The new job seemed utterly logical, another chapter in the life of the mind.

And what about my colleagues, who were, by implication, being tarred with the same brush? Anna Wintour, the editor of *Vogue*, may not have attended college, but no one would dispute that her sophistication and critical intelligence have made her one of the era's most influential cultural diagnosticians; Kate Betts, who edits *Harper's Bazaar*, graduated from Princeton and speaks fluent French. They share a fine pedigree: Diana Vreeland, the legendary *Vogue* editor, may have issued frilly dictums ("Pink is the navy blue of India"), but she was an astute art collector and critic; Carmel Snow, whose *Harper's Bazaar* reinvented the look and content of fashion magazines in the 1930s, held equal sway in the world of ideas.

Are we fashion gals now really such dummies?

Unsure if I was defending my (former) profession or behaving like a huge masochist, I decided to put my cards on the table and demand some answers. And so I called *New York Post* media writer Keith J. Kelly,

Life in *Elle*: Elaina Richardson became editor with the February 1997 issue (left); the August 2000 edition

whose column had noted my move from glitz to tweed. Although Kelly admitted to having found my resignation surprising, he said that the true shock for him was that anyone in publishing today would not leap "to an Internet company to get a pocketful of stock options."

Kelly said that he felt that he "gave the fashion industry more credit than others might"; he could not deny, however, that "the stereotype is that fashion editors are not broad-minded—they often don't have much to say about anything beyond their own world. If you ask about anything other than fashion, you get met by a blank stare. It's usually true that fashion editors think that fashion is the be all and end all."

Michael Shnayerson, who penned a lively article about the history of Yaddo for *Vanity Fair*'s July 2000 issue, had mentioned in his piece that "the board's recent choice for a successor to Michael Sundell as president of Yaddo may strike some as modern in the most disconcerting way. Elaina Richardson, 38, is the coolly black-garbed editor in chief of *Elle* magazine—a fashion arbiter turned literary den mother."

So I rang Shnayerson, too. He didn't play into the fashion-editor-as-anti-intellectual camp, but he did say that for many, it's an issue of "ephemera versus permanence." In other words—if I may parse "ephemera" for a second—fashion editors, with their monthly campaign to promote the newest look/trend/starlet, are essentially anti-substance. They're ludicrous creatures who care more about hemlines than world hunger, who find the search for the latest must-have accessory a reason to get out of bed in the morning.

In this context, Shnayerson said, "Someone could say, 'There's some lowering of literary standards if fashion is brought into an arts sanctuary.'"

When Shnayerson says "someone," he's on to something. Clearly, these writers are parroting a larger social construct, one fed by their readers.

It's not about the Prada: On September 9, Richardson becomes president of Yaddo.

LIBRADO ROMERO/*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

At about the time that my Yaddo appointment was being negotiated, I traveled on *Elle*'s behalf to the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., where I gave an address titled "Fashioning the Self for the New Century." Having pored over hundreds of slides of the spring 2000 runway shows, I decided the obvious topic had to be the nudity. I'm not talking décolletage—I'm talking total breast-baring. I culled images of Gothic nudes and classical nudes to illustrate that Helmut Lang and Versace belong not just to two different style camps but to two different streams of art history.

At the end of the hour, a shy woman approached me at the podium and said tentatively, "Thank you for your talk. It was very interesting, but what I really wanted to know is, is orange a good color to buy this year?"

Perhaps this is why fashion magazines don't trumpet their often outstanding features content more: It's the clothes, stupid. Or, as the *Times*'s Kuczynski told me, "fashion editors never actually point out their wonderful academic backgrounds the way other publishing types do. Kate Betts, for example, is brilliant, but she would never bring it up." Kuczynski added, "Your job at *Elle* was absolutely about profit on every level; it was about encouraging economic transactions. Part of the surprise [about your job shift] was an economic surprise. I certainly don't think fashion editors are dummies." It's a matter, then, of hyping consumption (*Ab Fab*) versus protecting those who consume (*60 Minutes*).

Our alleged frivolity is tempered, of course, by the culture's unapologetic fascination with the supposed glamour, status, and sheer fabulousness of the fashion set. I began chuckling again when I read an account of my new life in the *Daily Record*, the largest newspaper in Scotland, where I was born. Annie Brown wrote: "The Scot who dictates the fashions of Manhattan has left the Prada-wearing glitterati in shock. She has walked out on the job they all covet to run a secluded artists' commune."

What kind of fool am I? ■

reality talks

Twenty citizens who gathered to talk about the media sound off on its bias and sensationalism—and why they keep coming back for more. BY FRANK LUNTZ

Numbers might not lie, but they don't always tell the whole story. Earlier this year, when *Brill's Content* conducted a nationwide poll on public attitudes about the media ["Public to Press: Cool It," March], we learned, for example, that more than half of those polled believed that the media paint an overly negative portrait of national life. The results were eye-opening, but they left us wanting more.

If a respondent had been given the chance, how might she have explained her "yes" when asked if the media go too far in pursuing the truth? Was she thinking of a particular situation—the coverage of Princess Diana's death, or maybe a local murder investigation? Did she respond vehemently or hesitantly? Could she pinpoint a moment in the coverage where she felt the media went too far?

In early July, with these types of questions in mind, *Brill's Content*, in a joint venture with MSNBC's *The News with Brian Williams*, convened a focus group in Southern California. We wanted to fill in the gaps of the story, to understand the deeper motivations and subtleties that polling can't provide.

I and my staff at Luntz Research Companies selected 20 swing voters and asked them to join us for more than three hours of structured conversation. The session also included a segment during which the participants watched and rated their reactions to news coverage. The individuals we recruited for this focus group had all voted in the 1996 election but were not, by their own characterizations, committed partisans. None identified himself or herself as either a strong Democrat or a strong Republican. The group represented a mixture of ages, incomes, and occupational backgrounds—from insurance agents and preschool teachers to administrative assistants and social workers. Although the group's members had limited knowledge of politics (only three knew enough about House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt to offer a description of him), almost everyone had something to say about the news media.

Lee Briskorn

"SOMETIMES THEY SEEM TO OVER-SENSATIONALIZE EVERYTHING. [THEY] OVER-DISTORT THE WHOLE TOPIC."

When I threw out the first question—What word or phrase best describes the American news media?—it didn't take long to get to the point at hand: "Sensationalism," several people said. Other comments, offered without hesitation, were equally negative: "bad," "aggressive," "deception," "manipulative," and "vicious." One woman laughed and said, "I have to go with all of them." In fact, only 2 of the 20 participants had an overall favorable impression of the press.

But many in the focus group, citing sensation over substance, reserved their harshest criticism for television news coverage. "Newspapers go more into depth," one participant said. "Unlike TV, which just gives bullet points." For Lee Briskorn, a realtor, calling the media "sensationalist" wasn't strong enough. "Sometimes they seem to over-sensationalize everything," he said, "over-distort the whole topic."

The conversation moved quickly to the issue of credibility. As in the national survey we'd conducted, the participants in the focus group questioned the media's motives, speaking of perceived biases: "They're trying to brainwash all the time," said one. Others spoke of reading multiple newspapers in order to get the whole story.

Some complained that information packaged as objective news in papers or on television was anything but. Referring to the JonBenét Ramsey case, Mike Taffolla said that the press had "become judge, jury, and executioner."

It was no surprise that coverage of a murder case came up, for the group declared that the media focus too much on the negative. "Why are you so exploitative and showing all of these murders," asked one participant, "when the murder rates are actually going down?"

June Lamond put it another way: "I am a happy person, and I don't want to see all that negativity," she said. "It makes you think the whole society should be on Prozac or something. It's depressing out there."

When the discussion turned to the issue of whether the media go too far in pursuing the truth, things heated up. The majority of participants answered in the affirmative. Citing a variety of examples—from deaths of celebrities to car chases broadcast live on TV—and turning to ask each other questions, the majority of the group was eager to voice the opinion that the media often overstep the lines of privacy and decency.

Linda Adair, a customer service representative, offered this observation: "You can see them, in certain instances, like perhaps a family has lost a loved one and

ALL PHOTOS BY ROMAN BARRETT

Participants in the focus group used hand-held computers to measure their reactions to news clips.

they just hound them. They stand there at the door and, if [a family member] walks out of the house weeping, they are right there, [asking], 'How do you feel? How do you feel?' They don't have any sensitivity or compassion."

Participants were quick to say that celebrities often had their privacy violated. When the discussion turned to such media-saturated moments as the deaths of Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy Jr., Cynthia Cairns offered the following: "The paparazzi following [Princess Diana] tightly as they did is not what I consider kosher." But she went on to acknowledge that the issue was not cut-and-dried. Speaking of the journalists who swarmed to the scene of Princess Diana's accident, she said, "But because they did follow her [life] so closely, they had a right to be there."

It was here that I felt we were getting to the heart of the matter. Cairns's comments were skirting the issue of the "voyeur index" that had been noted in our earlier survey—that is, the difference between what people say they want to watch and what they do watch. I asked the question: "Should they have shown Princess Diana at the scene of the accident?"

A man shrugged a "yes." "It's truth; it's reality," he said. Another respondent, a woman, immediately turned on him: "We don't need to see that reality. We see that every day. I see people dying every day." Voices rose as participants twisted around in their seats to question each other and defend their views. "Wait a minute, you wouldn't want to see Princess Di dead, but you'll see Nicole Simpson?" asked one. "Dead is dead. Leave them alone!"

Although only 4 of the 20 said that the press should have shown accident photos of the dying Diana, more than half admitted that they would have looked if such explicit photos were available. "People are going to be curious," offered Mike Scalice, a preschool special-needs teacher. "They want to know. It's sick, but it's in the back of your mind. 'How bad is she hurt?'"

Said Scott Ferrell, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation counselor, "You know why they watch it? It's primal."

The participants were aware of—sometimes even a little sheepish about—the contradictions they voiced. As in our poll, the focus-group participants had a complicated relationship with the media that ran hot and cold. They felt dependent on the media and, at times, resentful of that dependency. "The saddest thing is that we like all the gut-wrenching, terrible things that are going on," said Leslie Mays, a medical office manager.

When I asked if the participants thought that television stations should broadcast live footage of hostages held at gunpoint, most demurred. When questioned as to how many of them would watch this footage if they came across it when switching channels, about half the hands in the room shot up, and the participants tittered.

"You're laughing," I said a moment later to Lamond. "Tell me why."

"Because I don't want to see it. I don't want to," she said. "But I'll watch it. I don't know what makes me do it."

"Primal," said Ferrell, shaking his head as the room erupted again into laughter.

The participants' nervous laughter and their quick acknowledgment of their own contradictory behavior gave us further insight into the findings of our poll: While their claim—that they couldn't advocate the coverage that they watched—smacked of hypocrisy, it was a hypocrisy most did not deny. Perhaps they felt more accountable than they said.

The participants in our focus group did say that senior executives at news outlets were culpable for producing "primal" stories. "[T]hey're out there for the money," said Jeff Johnson, a postal worker. "They're out there to get ratings. They're out there to sell commercial slots. And that's it. That's the bottom line."

"Wouldn't you do what [your boss said] if you might get an anchor position?" asked Barbara Mora, a social worker. Ferrell agreed. "If one of your executives say[s], 'I want you to go out and do this job' and it goes against [the] grain, against your morals," he asked, "would you actually be able to stand up and say 'No, I don't want to do that?'"

Still, sympathizing with a journalist's plight did not make any of the participants more likely to appreciate news media. Members of the focus group noted that they were turning away from traditional media outlets to other sources for information such as the Internet and specialized cable channels. Almost half also felt they could get valuable news from some rather unconventional sources: the late-night monologues of Jay Leno and David Letterman. One individual's offhand remark about this viewing habit spoke volumes: "You would learn something about the issues if you're not watching the news." ■

June Lamond

"I AM A HAPPY PERSON, AND I DON'T WANT TO SEE ALL THAT NEGATIVITY. IT MAKES YOU THINK THE WHOLE SOCIETY SHOULD BE ON PROZAC OR SOMETHING."

can't shake the past

Should my newspaper ignore history when a renowned con man slips back into town and claims he's become an honest man? Not when the facts suggest otherwise. BY MIKE PRIDE

I learned that Edgar Berube was out of prison when an advertising saleswoman came to the newsroom one morning and asked if I recognized Berube's name. I asked why she wanted to know. Well, she said, Berube had opened an art gallery here in Concord, New Hampshire, and had just signed an advertising contract with the *Monitor*, the newspaper I edit.

As at any other upstanding newspaper, there is a figurative wall between our ad department and the newsroom. But information sometimes flows through that wall. The saleswoman had just tipped me to a news story, and I couldn't help responding with a piece of advice: If you're dealing with Ed Berube, take cash only, and make sure the ink on the currency is dry.

In the coming days that lesson would be reinforced, reminding us that with Berube, things are never quite what they appear to be. The simple tale of an ex-con going straight in a novel way soon became a more complex story of whether he had fooled us—and, through us, our readers.

Berube's odyssey began more than 20 years ago. By the early 1980s, he had become a celebrated con man around New Hampshire—"your all-American flim-flam man," in the words of one county prosecutor. Posing as a rich young man from a variety of famous families—a Kennedy, a du Pont, the grandson of Armand Hammer—Berube would choose a college and arrive on campus in a limousine. He would do his best to live up to the phony family name, treating his pals to nights on the town in Boston.

A REPORTER'S JOB: BE SKEPTICAL, NOT CYNICAL. WE'D LET READERS JUDGE WHETHER AN EX-CON HAD CHANGED.

Though he didn't fool everyone, most people took him at his word. And why not? He was out for a good time, and his new friends got to go along for the ride. It wasn't them he was ripping off: Banks and credit-card companies were the victims of his forged checks and the expenses charged against bogus accounts. Berube later told a *Boston Globe* reporter he was able to maintain his ruses because the students were blinded by the chance to rub elbows with a rich celebrity. "[P]eople look at heroes or legends and will put common sense aside to be a part of them," he said.

It was only a matter of time before Berube's schemes came undone. Ultimately, he was charged with 38 counts of theft and forgery. He pleaded guilty to ten counts, crimes that had cost their victims more than $50,000. He was sentenced to a minimum of seven and a half years in prison.

So much for the great pretender. Or so it seemed.

On October 2, 1984, nine months after he was sentenced, Berube became a legend. That was the day he escaped from state prison and, after a stop at home to con his mother out of $250, headed west. He got away by forging papers authorizing his early release to a drug rehabilitation program in Massachusetts.

Berube never showed up at the drug rehab center, of course, but then, no one there expected him. By the time prison officials had figured out, a month later, what he had done, he had established a new identity as a PGA golfer and heir to a multimillion-dollar food business. This scam was short-lived, and Berube was captured in Colorado after six weeks of freedom. An escape conviction extended his stay in the state prison to 15 years. The judge who finally released him two years ago wrote in her order that he had "served probably far longer than any inmate in New Hampshire history for non-violent offenses."

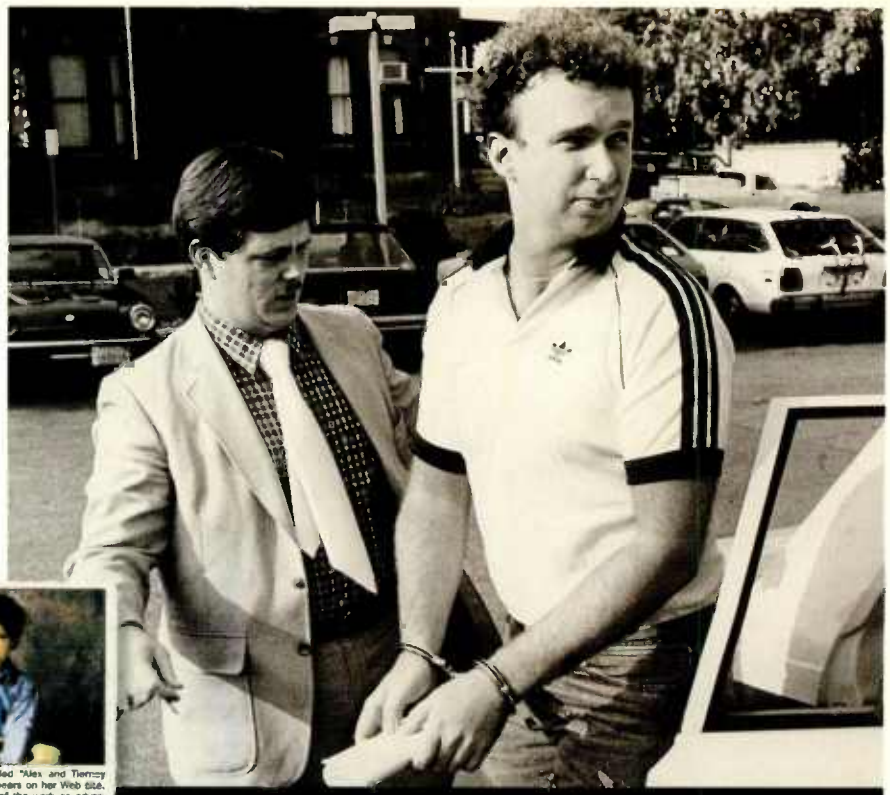
The New Hampshire state men's prison is in Concord; released inmates regularly slip back into local life unnoticed. But it didn't take a journalistic genius to realize that Berube's metamorphosis from prisoner to businessman was front-page news.

Berube seemed to understand this. He wasn't surprised when Gwen Filosa, our reporter, walked into his gallery to interview him shortly after the ad saleswoman alerted us. He was forthright and polite. In prison, he had become an accomplished artist. Now, he told Filosa, he was trying to turn his gift into a legitimate commercial venture. His ads said that if customers brought in a photo of their favorite person or pet, he would produce a painting of it for $39.95.

Part of me was deeply suspicious of this supposed transformation. Rehabilitation is a nice concept, but something about Berube's crimes made it seem unlikely that any stretch behind bars would straighten him out. It wasn't that his crimes were vicious or diabolical, but they were so compulsive that Berube couldn't stop himself even after he was caught. He was addicted to fooling people into believing he was someone he wasn't, then moving on, slipping into a new identity, and doing it again.

Still, another part of me wanted to see Berube as a man who had done the crime, done the time, and deserved another chance.

I knew that the second thought—the idea that Berube deserved the benefit of the doubt—would govern how Filosa approached the story.



Above: Edgar Berube (right), as he is escorted into a New Hampshire courthouse in 1983. Inset: an original painting (top) and Berube's reproduction

A reporter's job is to be skeptical but not cynical. In this case, that meant reporting on Berube's present in the context of his past, not speculating on what might happen in the future. If she did this well, readers could decide for themselves whether to see Berube's story as uplifting or troubling. It would be up to readers to judge whether they thought Berube had changed. We wouldn't make that judgment ourselves.

Filosa's story about Berube's Eye 2 Eye art gallery in downtown Concord ran in April under the headline "Contrite ex-con man gets down to business." The story emphasized his desire to run a legitimate enterprise and the help he had received from townspeople in establishing the gallery. It also recounted his life of crime. "It's a lot of luggage," he said. "But it's luggage that I packed."

The image above is a 1998 painting titled "Alex and Tierney Dodge" by artist Wendi Caporale that appears on her Web site. The image below is Ed Berube's version of the work as advertised in local newspapers.

That might have been the end of the story, but with Berube things are never as simple as they seem.

A few days after Filosa's story ran, an anonymous letter appeared on my desk. Clipped to it were magazine photos of several familiar-looking paintings, as well as copies of Berube's ads in the *Monitor*. I get piles of mail, and I usually toss unsigned letters in the trash. I am not, however, averse to anonymous tips, and that is what this letter was.

The writer identified himself or herself as "an artist and a very concerned citizen." The tipster had visited Berube's gallery, and his or her chief allegation was this: "I estimate close to 100 percent of his entire 'work' is recognizable as someone else's." The material clipped to the letter seemed to substantiate this claim. From *American Artist* magazine, there was Nelson Shanks's portrait of Princess Diana, which looked much like the one in Berube's ad in the *Monitor*. Paintings by Janice Baragwanath and Denise Horne-Kaplan were nearly identical to paintings hanging in Berube's gallery.

With these materials in hand, Filosa went to work on a follow-up story. She had liked Berube and now worried about what she might find. Was he still the same con artist he had been? She also asked herself: *Would I be doing this story if it weren't about Ed Berube?*

We like to think we treat everyone the same in the news business, but it's not true. Because Berube was an ex-con, we were far more eager to get to the bottom of this story than we would have been if the tip had been about a gallery owner or a painter with no dark past. On the other hand, if what the anonymous tipster said was true, Berube had conned Filosa and, through her, the *Monitor*'s readers. Paintings he had represented as his own were, at best, only partly his own.

Berube admitted to Filosa that he had copied the work of others. How could he deny it? Through the Internet and phone calls to some of the artists, Filosa had confirmed and fleshed out what the tipster had sent us. The artists were flattered that Berube liked their work enough to copy it but also felt violated by his having done so. "It's plagiarizing," one told Filosa. "It's not permitted."

Berube said it was normal for an artist to look to the work of other artists for "reference." In prison, he said, "you've got to use whatever material you can get. I didn't have the luxury of having people sit down." Although the poses and compositions of the other artists were practically identical to his own, he pointed out that his paintings were not exact copies. Finally, he said, these paintings were not for sale—an assertion we had no way of verifying or disproving. According to Berube, the purpose of the copied paintings was to suggest what he could do for clients and to show off his framing and matting services.

Despite our discomfort at having published a story that represented Berube as a changed man when that might not be the case, our job as a newspaper was clear in this matter. Again, it wasn't to judge the legality or even the ethics of what Berube had done. Rather, it was to establish the facts, sift through them, ask the right questions, and report our findings for our readers.

The facts dispelled Filosa's qualms about whether we were being fair to Berube in pursuing the second story. What changed her mind was talking to the artists whose work Berube had copied. Art is not just putting paint on canvas, they told her; it is conceiving of a picture and then devising a composition to capture what you have imagined. When Berube copied those paintings, he appropriated not only the images but also the artistic minds behind them.

As for me, although I can't help pulling for a guy who served so much hard time, I have to wonder how far Berube has come from the days when he got his kicks borrowing the identities of others. If he had copied the paintings just for practice, like an art student in a museum, it would have been one thing. But whether the paintings were for sale or not, he was using all of them for commercial purposes and had put his name on at least one of them.

I was surprised to see Berube back in the news this spring after an absence of 15 years, but—sad to say—I won't be surprised if he makes our front page again sometime soon. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEN WILLIAMS/*CONCORD MONITOR*

Novel Idea.

Everybody knows, the more you read, the more you know. But these days, finding the time to read isn't always easy.

So at Microsoft, we've developed a new technology that enables people to get books instantly and read them anywhere, simply and conveniently. It's called Microsoft® Reader.

Microsoft Reader with ClearType™ display technology brings everything we all love about books—the clean, crisp type and uncluttered format—to a variety of PCs, laptops, and handheld devices, delivering the first immersive on-screen reading experience that rivals paper.

And Microsoft Reader enables you to carry hundreds—even thousands—of books with you wherever you go.

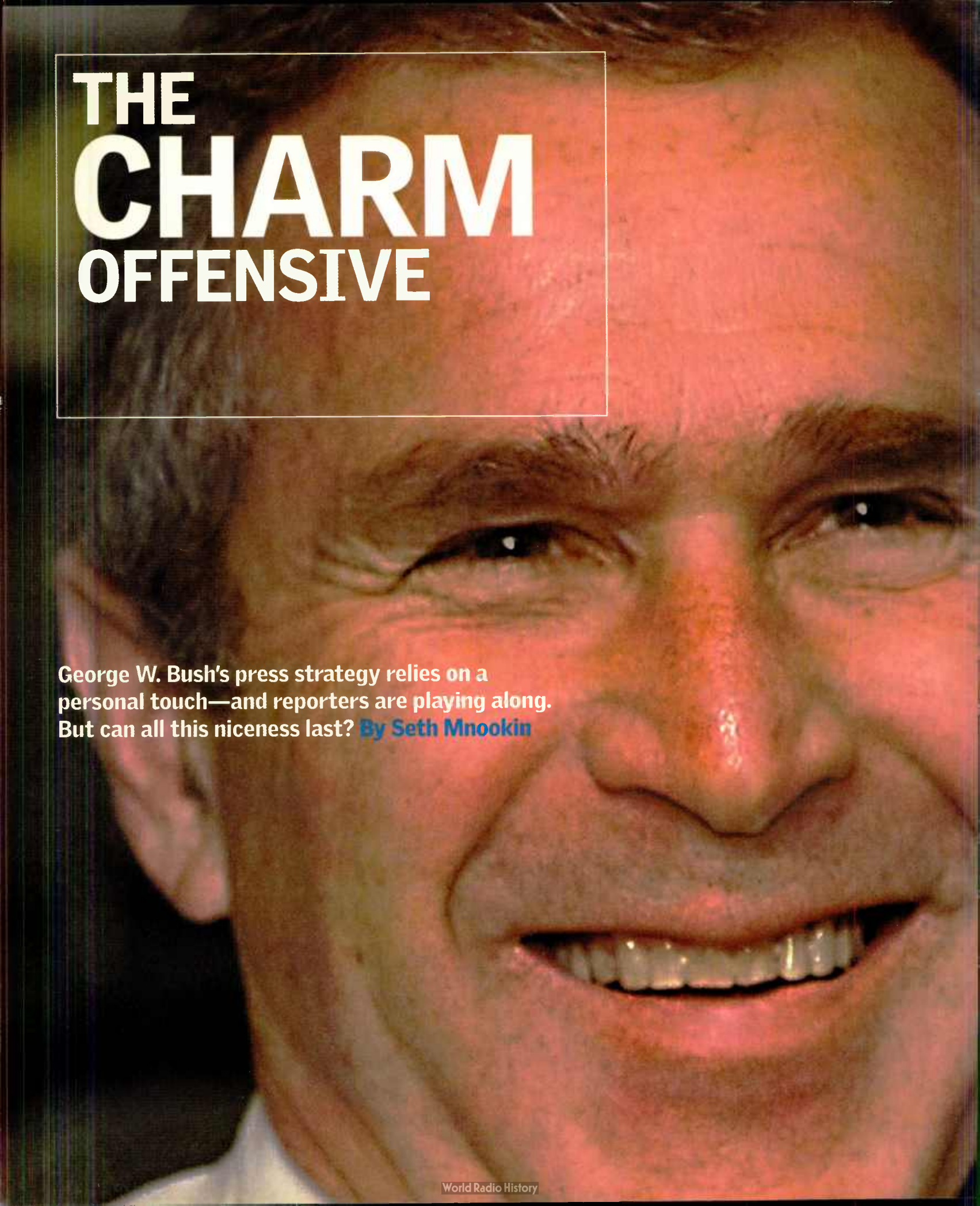
Microsoft Reader. Finding more time to read isn't novel. Making it possible is.

Microsoft® Reader with ClearType™

Microsoft®

Where do you want to go today?®

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE



George W. Bush's press strategy relies on a personal touch—and reporters are playing along. But can all this niceness last? By Seth Mnookin

Images of Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush boarding his campaign plane and cruising the cabin

L TO R: DAVID J. PHILLIP/AP PHOTO; NINA BERMAN/SIPA; BROOKS KRAFT/CORBIS SYGMA

George W. Bush is talking about the press.

"These are folks that have a job to do, and I've got a job to do. And it's a symbiotic relationship. They depend upon me to generate news, and I depend upon them to disseminate the news that I'm trying to make."

It's the Friday before Father's Day and Bush is sitting in the front right-hand row of his chartered kelly-green-and-purple-trimmed Miami Air 727. He is wearing a crisp white shirt, a deep-blue tie flecked with gold stars, and cowboy boots. He missed two pencil-eraser-sized spots shaving, one toward the bottom of his neck and the other high on his right cheek. He is sipping coffee and picking at a muffin.

At the moment, the Bush campaign is all but running on cruise control. Bush is leading in national polls by as much as a dozen percentage points, and he has become effective in getting his message out, with the press dutifully reporting on this Social Security plan or that proposed tax cut. There have been no recent disasters, no speeches at universities that denounce Catholicism, no "I think we need not only to eliminate the tollbooth to the middle class, I think we should knock down the tollbooth" malapropisms.

Bush is being shadowed by spokesman Ari Fleischer, a 39-year-old, trim, balding man who delights in his Saab convertible and served as communications director for Elizabeth Dole during her failed presidential run. The governor is visibly less comfortable without Karen Hughes, the seemingly ubiquitous communications director responsible for keeping the candidate on message. During a preflight question-and-answer session about why Bush is forsaking the Texas Republican convention, the governor hesitates a couple of times and looks at Fleischer, who offers little solace. But for this conversation—a discussion about Bush's relationship with the press corps—Fleischer, perched on a rectangular black foam cushion at the governor's feet, will be just fine. This is a subject about which Bush doesn't need any white papers or briefings with foreign-policy adviser Condoleezza Rice. It's a subject he likes to talk about.

"I think probably the best thing I've done is interface with the press," he says. "They get to see the human, that I'm a human person, that I've got feelings, I care, I've got priorities. It gives them a better sense of who I am as a person. All people making up their mind of who they're going to vote for for president, in many ways it's the same thing I'm trying to do on a much less intimate scale with the American people."

What Bush is describing is his charm offensive, his ability to bestow a personal touch. Bush has an uncanny faculty to use pertinent personal details as a sort of entrée, whether it's with a reporter, a local Republican official, or a businessman. Since February—when the always available, ever loquacious Senator John McCain was seriously threatening Bush's march to the Republican nomination—this approach has become the Texas governor's de facto press policy, especially as Hughes began to allow Bush to work his magic with the press during flights. Indeed, Bush has become the McCain of the general election, with Vice-President Al Gore being seen as walled off, too scripted, too careful, much the way Bush was viewed during the primaries. But unlike other masterful schmoozers who sought the Oval Office—unlike, say, Bill Clinton—Bush doesn't build these personal bridges out of a latticework of shared policy

Bush jokes around with his press corps while on the campaign trail: "They get to see...that I'm a human person...."

goals or intellectual common ground. He focuses on box scores and bons mots. Which can still be hard work. "I think a relationship with the press corps is something that, it...kind of grows in a way," Bush says. "I think you don't see instant rapport."

"The ultimate form of cultivating a reporter is to develop a personal, intellectual relationship," says David Kusnet, who wrote speeches for Democratic presidential nominees Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis, and Bill Clinton and was President Clinton's chief speechwriter for the first two years of his administration. "That's what Clinton did with people like [former *Newsweek* reporter] Joe Klein and [*Washington Post* columnist] E.J. Dionne. He's a great meeter and greeter of everybody, including the press."

Bush is also a great meeter and greeter. But with Bush, all this bonding is built around effluvia. In a now legendary anecdote from college, Bush, then a sophomore pledge for the Yale fraternity Delta Kappa Epsilon, was able to recite the names of all 55 members of his pledge class. More than three decades later, he's still at it: After I met Bush for the first time, *USA Today* reporter Judy Keen turned to me and said, "Now he'll remember you forever. Just you watch."

Bush even embraces—sometimes literally—reporters who have slammed him. *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen tells of a time when Bush asked Cohen, "Have you ever written anything nice about me?"

"I said, 'Yeah, I think I did, once,'" Cohen says. "And he grabbed me and sort of hugged me. I told him it wasn't that nice."

Wayne Slater, who covers Bush for *The Dallas Morning News*, says of the governor's press strategy, "The whole idea is to show he's a good guy, a nice guy. That's been his calling card for his whole life. It's an advantage and at the same time, he doesn't have to worry about some slipup. I think that's what he's tried to do throughout his whole career. The question is, 'Will we let him get away with it?' And at the moment we are."

Indeed, the press and the governor are engaged in a kind of subtle dance. There's always the feeling that if reporters push too hard, Bush could disappear to the front of the plane. In the meantime, Bush has neutralized the biggest question about his candidacy—his perceived lack of intelligence—by letting reporters see that he is a sharp enough guy when engaged in casual conversation. And impressions like this can make all the difference; even reporters concede that the press looks for examples to illustrate its feelings about a candidate. "When George Romney ran for president [in 1968], the general feeling in the press corps was that Romney was a dummy," The *Post*'s Cohen says. "So when Romney made that famous remark that he had been brainwashed"—Romney, then the governor of Michigan, said he had been brainwashed by American propaganda on a tour of Vietnam—"they all jumped on it. Not being in the press, I thought [his comment] was refreshing. The press thought it was the dumbest thing ever said."

Reporters now acknowledge that they might have been too hard on Romney. Longtime political columnist Jack Germond, who covered the Romney campaign, wrote in his 1999 book, *Fat Man in a Middle Seat*, "The use of the term...made it so easy for the press and his political rivals to seize on the caricature of the naïve governor, out of his depth, being conned. In fact, Romney was trying to make the point that he overcame these attempts to enlist him behind the policy and now had a thoughtful decision that it was a mistake. But never mind. It was too tempting to make jokes about brainwashing."

L TO R: ERIC DRAPER/AP PHOTO; BROOKS KRAFT/CORBIS SYGMA (3); ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP PHOTO; ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN/CORBIS SYGMA

PLANE TALK

On a June 16 campaign flight from Boston to Columbus, Ohio, Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush spoke with *Brill's Content* senior writer Seth Mnookin about Bush's relationship with the press. What follows are excerpts from that conversation.

Seth Mnookin: [During the presidential primary season] you felt like [the press] was being too favorable to McCain?

George W. Bush: That, or some felt it....I never really felt that way....I felt like the coverage has been balanced and fair. I don't read every piece. I went back [to the press section of the plane] and shocked them the other day when I said, "You know, I don't read all, I don't read everything you write." And I wasn't trying to be offensive or cute. I was just being truthful. I got to deal with these people on a daily basis and if I begin to take what they write personally it's going to be hard to stay focused on the ultimate objective, which is to convince people to be for me. And one of the writers said, "Well, how do you know if you don't read what we write? How do you know what people's perception of you is?" And my answer is, maybe they draw perceptions of me in different ways, if you know what I mean.

SM: Is there something that you wish you had done

Contrast the drubbing Romney got to the lack of attention paid to some of Bush's recent blunders, ones that could easily be used to highlight Bush's perceived lack of intelligence. On the day of the June 22 execution of Texas death row inmate Gary Graham, Bush gave a statement in which he said, "On October 28, 1981, Mr. Gary Graham was found guilty of capital murder and later sentenced to death by a Harris County grand jury...." But grand juries indict; trial juries find defendants guilty or not guilty. A database search turned up only one commentator, CNN's Larry King, who noted that Bush had confused one of the most basic legal distinctions; not a single newspaper noted the mistake.

Also in June, Bush was stumped when asked about the fate of Angel Maturino Resendiz, the so-called railway serial killer, whose story had been on the front page of virtually every major Texas newspaper. "I don't know that issue. I'm sorry. I need to look into that," Bush told a reporter when asked if he would let Resendiz be tried outside Texas, one of the most pressing issues in the case. A search found that only one reporter—the *Houston Chronicle*'s R.G. Ratcliffe—had reported on Bush's lack of familiarity with one of the biggest criminal cases in Texas this year.

Bush has neutralized the biggest question about his candidacy, his perceived lack of intelligence, by letting reporters see that he is a sharp enough guy when engaged in casual conversation.

A couple of weeks before my June 16 interview with Bush, I flew with him from Sacramento to Austin and had my own encounter with his press approach. It was a Friday morning, and Bush's campaign plane was half empty. No public events were planned for the day, and a goodly portion of the press corps had decided to drop off of the campaign until Monday. There were about a dozen reporters huddled around the center of the main cabin when Bush made his way back from his seat in the first-class section. When he reached me, Bush brought both of his hands up to my cheeks and pinched them between his fingers, gently shaking my head forward and back. "I just wanna head-butt you," he said affectionately.

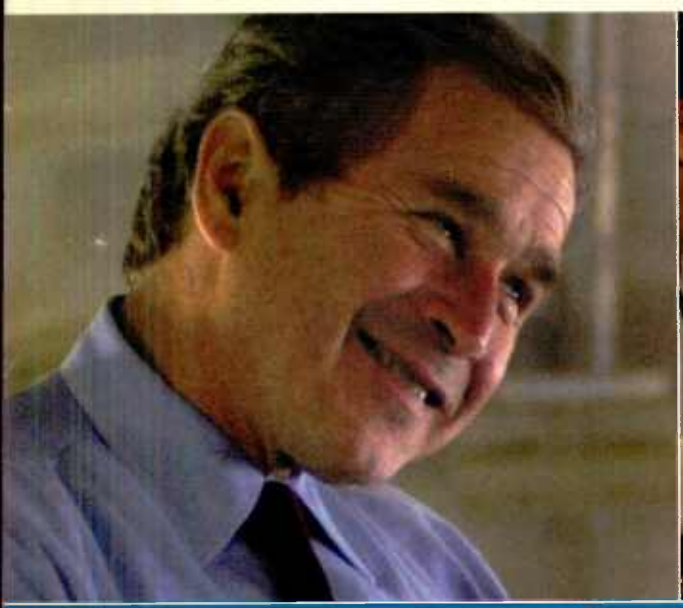
I know better, but I still got a kick out of Bush's attention. I was joking around with the man who has an odds-on chance of being the next president of the United States. After Bush left, I turned to Michael Sokolove, a reporter for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*'s Sunday magazine; Sokolove was preparing a profile of Bush to coincide with the Republican convention in Philadelphia. "That," Sokolove said as he went over his final notes for his scheduled interview, "was very weird."

Actually, it wasn't weird, at least not for the reporters more used to traveling with Bush than Sokolove and I: The easy intimacy where the candidate pinches your cheeks or pokes at your potbelly is the norm when dealing with Bush, even if substantial off-the-cuff conversations about anything more heady than the Texas Rangers' prospects in the American League West are almost unheard-of. For the previous week, Bush had been needling two reporters about a possible romance, even making reference to the flirtation at a news conference. After brutal Red Sox losses, Bush will commiserate with ABC News off-air reporter John Berman, a BoSox fan. He calls the *Los Angeles Times*'s

differently, or might do differently in the future?

GWB: I don't think so. I think it might have been early on, the perception that I wasn't willing to interface with the press. I...don't remember frankly what was going on. I don't remember. We had a very interesting issue going in. Most of the press corps, a lot of the press corps prejudged me based upon something they had heard...stuff they had heard about how poorly I reacted about some of the stories they wrote about my dad in '92. And I did. If somebody wrote something I didn't like, I told them. And most reporters probably don't like to be told that somebody didn't like their story. I mean I guess that's just reality, but they didn't, and it was the same thing that happened in '94 [during Bush's first run for governor in Texas]. When I first got going, the [Ann] Richards [Bush's Democratic opponent in 1994] people put out the word to the press corps, "Oh, don't worry, he'll blow up....you know, he'll lose his cool." So I think a lot of the press weren't sure how to gauge me. They were living on rumors and...fumes from the past. I'm trying to remember, like a year ago was when we first launched and I went back there and, and kind of, it was kind of a period of time where there was some uncertainty. I think they were a little uncertain about me and I wasn't sure exactly what to expect. I'd never been a candidate for president, but over time I got to know some of the reporters.

SM: Now, with the space of a couple of years,...do you feel like the national press was fair to your father regarding no new taxes, or regarding his syntax?



Some smiling moments with the press: "Sometimes I fool around with them. And sometimes I'm concerned about their personal lives."

T. Christian Miller—who is cue-ball bald—Slick, after Don "Slick" Watts, a guard with the Seattle SuperSonics during the 1970s who was known for his shaved head. "You know, again, I tend to view each person, you know I do, I don't look at the pack as a pack. I've tried to get to know something about them," Bush would say later. "These people are human beings. We spend a lot of time together."

The New York Times's Frank Bruni, Miller, and Berman, like many of the other reporters covering the Bush campaign, are all covering their first presidential race. Reporters say the face time they get with Bush—especially when compared with the limited access afforded by the Gore campaign—helps them do their jobs. It gives them context, they say, and lets them round out their stories.

"He's out of the first class into the plane talking to everybody," says *Boston Globe* correspondent Curtis Wilkie, who has covered presidential elections since 1972. "We all have vanities. If [candidates are] smart, they're going to call you by name. It naturally plays on anybody's vanities, his sense of self-esteem: 'Gee, this guy knows who I am.'" It's a strange sort of courtship between the press and a serious presidential contender, and a sense that chivalry—whether genuine or well faked—can only help a candidate hungry for favorable coverage.

"I do go back to the back [of the campaign plane] as you know and make news sometimes," Bush says. "Sometimes I fool around with them. And sometimes I'm concerned about their personal lives. But I don't think it's clouded their stories at all. As a matter of fact, I think the only thing I ask for is an objective look about who I am and what I'm saying and the policy I laid out. And sometimes the folks are objective and sometimes opinion begins to creep in to what, to their column, to their stories, to their news stories."

As of late, most of that creeping has been positive. Two weeks before my interview with Bush, Bruni had written another in a seemingly endless parade of stories addressing Bush's intellectual gravitas. Sure, Bruni wrote, Bush can convey a "disdain for intellectualism." But his "frequently sharp wit suggests that he is plenty bright." Speaking of the personal time he gets with Bush, Bruni says that "interacting with a candidate invariably affects your coverage, in ways that can both benefit and harm the candidate. It gives you more knowledge and more insight into what that person's strengths—and weaknesses—are."

With the election less than 100 days away, Bush is winning the ground war with the traveling press troops. Reporters like him. They appreciate the easy humor, the charming manner, the personal attention.

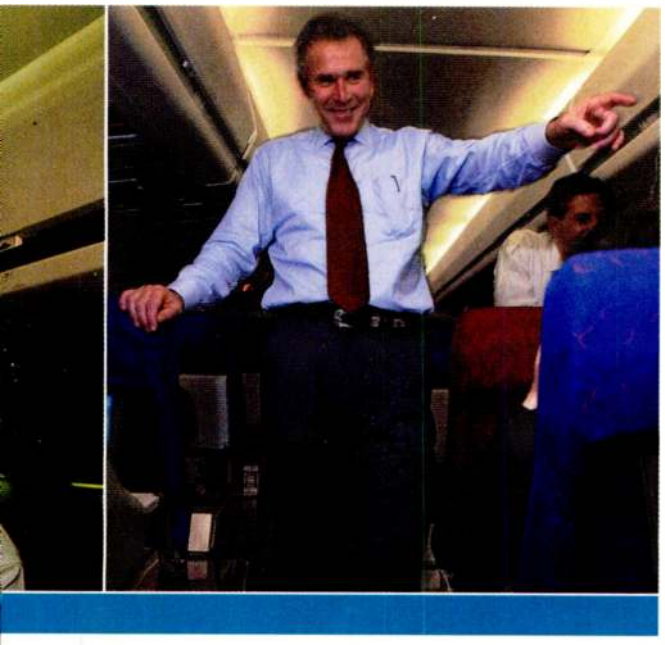
The positive spin that can result from increased access doesn't come only from reporters who have been traveling with Bush for months on end. Take Esther Schrader, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter who flew with Bush from Sacramento to Austin for an interview focused on U.S. policy toward Latin America. Before takeoff, she emerged from the bathroom and saw Bush talking excitedly with a group of reporters. With pen poised and tape recorder in hand, Schrader made a hurried dash up the aisle of the plane. Once there, she was summarily calmed down by 25-year-old Gordon Johndroe, a communications aide who

L TO R: ERIC DRAPER/AP PHOTO; ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN/CORBIS SYGMA; ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP PHOTO

GWB: Well, I think they were fair on the no new taxes. He's the guy who said it.

SM: You think he screwed up?

GWB: Well, he's the person who said it. They didn't say he said it when he didn't say it. He's the man who said it at a convention. No, I don't think that was unfair....Of course, I don't like the needling. I'll tell you a classic case of unfair: the wimp cover in *Newsweek*. Based upon a fake poll...the day he announced. Yeah, that was really unfair. In '88. Of course he overcame that but it kind of set the tone a little bit. So here's this World War II hero having to kind of confront a tone set by a slick magazine on the day he announced for president and newscasters holding it up: "Bush will be dogged by the image." And it obviously didn't matter in the long run. But I thought that was unfair, and told them so. And it's documented I told them so....I didn't mind telling them so. I mean, you got to understand something about me. It's one thing to be the leader who has to set a tone and show the ability to take a punch or handle defeat and victory; that's what a leader does. Well, I wasn't a leader. I was a warrior on behalf of a leader, and we used to say the definition of loyalty around us was if a grenade was rolling close to the old man the question was who would dive on it first. I mean this is a guy we loved. And I was [an] unabashed...you know, Bush man. One of my jobs was to enforce loyalty. If I thought people were leaking or saying things ugly about my dad behind his back or jumping ship, I'd be in their face. And as to the press corps, if I thought somebody was writing unfair stories, I'd say, "You know your story's not



trails Bush. Put the tape recorder away, Johndroe signaled. Nothing newsworthy here. Waving his arms excitedly, Bush was explaining which of his family pets had been named after which players in the Texas Rangers farm system.

Schrader had traveled with Gore during a period when the vice-president was embroiled in the Elián González controversy. In an April 8 story, Schrader led with the fact that the vice-president had said "not a word about little Elián González," going on to write, "Gore's silence on the issue was in sharp contrast to the Gore of a week ago, when, in a brazen move to win Cuban American votes, he bucked his own administration by declaring that González should be granted permanent resident status in the United States."

In contrast, Schrader was noticeably wowed by Bush's relaxed demeanor and personal charm. When Schrader's article about Bush came out, on June 22, it read, "For a man with a reputation as a foreign policy neophyte, Bush's fluency in things Mexican may come as a jolt....Bush may be the most Mexico-savvy politician ever to run for president."

Schrader would not comment on either her coverage or her views of the candidates.

Karen Hughes forms one side of Bush's "Iron Triangle," the trio of advisers who have shepherded Bush's political career since his 1994 campaign for governor; campaign manager Joe Allbaugh and strategist Karl Rove are the other two sides. Hughes, a former television reporter known for being loyal and protective, hews close to her boss during press conferences. Her approach is simple, really: Decide on a message and hammer it home. Don't deviate. Don't get thrown off course.

Even though Hughes is vacationing when I meet with Bush for my interview, her lessons stay with the candidate. The key to getting your message out, Bush explains to me, is to pound it into the ground. Be sure to include a position paper for the press corps to go along with any prepared remarks. It's a lesson Bush is excited about learning. "I remember when I announced how much money I had raised," Bush says. He laid out his opinion "on campaign funding reform in a huge press conference." A couple of months later, and following his resounding defeat to McCain in the New Hampshire primary, Bush was campaigning in South Carolina. "And Ari [Fleischer] and Karen [Hughes] and whoever was there said, 'You got to give a speech on campaign funding.'

"I said, 'What the heck are you talking about?...How many speeches do I need to give? I've been talking about it in debates,' and [they said], 'Nope, you've got to give a formal speech.' And it turns out the definition of a speech is not answers at press conferences or answers at debates. It is a speech coupled with a white paper. Seriously, and I'm not being facetious. I'm just telling you what reality is....I just thought it was interesting. Again I'm making no comment either way, except what I'm telling you is the realities of policy, how policy is viewed by the press corps and how we have learned to fashion it so people end up reading about it. And I might say, I can't complain in the least about the overall treatment because [in] this campaign we've driven the policy debate....I think it's interesting from the candidate's perspective and the campaign's perspective. It's a lesson for what future campaigns got to be aware of, that an issue only becomes a formal issue at a particular moment in time."

Bush stops talking, brings his hands together, and nods. It's easy to get caught up in his wide-eyed naïveté. Position papers! Who knew? It's so simple that when things don't go right—when the day's anointed message does not get covered—Bush gets ticked off. The day before my interview, Bush says, he had laid out some "very good initiatives for integrating people with disabilities into the workplace," a "very hopeful" message. "And, uh, it didn't make the newspapers. Even though we had planned the day to try and encourage it be in the newspapers." The reason, Bush thinks, is that he agreed to talk to the press that day, and so they had a chance to write about something besides his spoon-fed message. It was, Bush says, disappointing.

Conventional wisdom dictates that being friendly—and, at times, even chumming—with the press can't hurt your campaign. But it won't necessarily help it, either. "I think Bush's schmoozing with the press comes across at a distance to me as a little condescending," says Jules Witcover, a longtime political columnist for *The Sun* of Baltimore. "From what I understand, he gets to know who they are and talks about their personal lives, and tries to be their buddy. A candidate is not going to be a buddy. He may find a couple of sycophants, but by and large it's not going to be that way. I cling to the idea that a straightforward relationship, maybe friendly, but not solicitous, is the best for everyone." [CONTINUED ON PAGE 128]

fair." As opposed to worrying about...how I'd be treated in future races. I mean some people kind of pull a punch for fear they may affect their next incarnation and I'm not, I wasn't that way.

SM: Now we're flying out of Boston, where the reporter had his pop quiz for you last year. Is that the kind of thing that's fair for a reporter to do?

GWB: Well...it was...a lesson learned.

SM: What was the lesson learned?

GWB: I shouldn't have answered the question. I mean, it was a game he was playing. I didn't realize it at the time, and I'm a more suited candidate. People can ask anything they want....The American people have got to understand I'm going to answer them the way I want to....On my part I should have said, I'm through. I don't hold it against him.

SM: So it's fair for reporters to ask the questions, but politicians or whoever can say, "Look, I'm not going to answer that?"

GWB: Well I...think there's a degree of civility....I think some questions are totally inappropriate questions.

SM: What would be a totally inappropriate question?

GWB: How many times do you beat your wife? But... I can't stop that from happening. I think the press corps is...inappropriate...chasing rumors and gossip.... The game of politics is to float gossip on somebody and force the press corps to respond, and I think the press corps [has] wised up to the game. But it's a game. It's a Washington, D.C., game and I chose not to play it early 'cause I knew what was going to happen if I started chasing rumors and gossip. ◘

A full transcript is available online at www.brillscontent.com.

With her high-profile social life and hip writing, *New York Times* reporter Alex Kuczynski is the reigning "It" girl of media coverage. Is she the face of a changing *Times*?

By Gay Jervey

Smart Alex

Alex Kuczynski was in a quandary. She had been invited to a birthday party for the 3-year-old daughter of a leading investment analyst who follows the media, which the 32-year-old Kuczynski has been covering for *The New York Times* since the fall of 1998. The winter afternoon promised something out of *Eloise*, with well-appointed children slurping Shirley Temples and darting through the halls of The Plaza Hotel, weaving between clusters of equally well-appointed parents sipping Scotch and Shiraz. *What to give the little girl who more than likely has everything?* Kuczynski thought. *If I were a 3-year-old, what would I want?* But Kuczynski had never laid eyes on the girl and didn't know the father all that well. *A children's book? No, too predictable. Or maybe a* New York Times *jumper? Nah, too cheesy, too corporate.* As luck would have it, Kuczynski had to look no further than her desk. In a drawer was a plastic model of a Motorola cell phone—the very one Kuczynski herself uses—left over from a photo shoot. *That's it, a model of a cell phone! What fun!*

Kuczynski dashed out and bought a miniature beaded purse, into which she popped the model phone, her business card, and the following note: "Dear Emily, Happy Birthday! Please feel free to use this phone to call Auntie Alex. Let me know if Daddy ever drops media news around the house! Love, Auntie Alex."

"I guess you could have seen it as being in poor taste," Kuczynski says with a laugh, confirming the anecdote, which had been told by a friend. "Here I am exhorting this kid to rat out on her dad. But everyone understood it was a joke from a reporter. And, by the way"—she pauses—"he has never called me with a story."

THOSE WHO KNOW HER would say that the move was quintessential Kuczynski—disarming, clever, charming, devilish—and light-years away from the straitlaced, buttoned-up behavior one tends to associate with *The New York Times*.

In the nearly thee years that she has been at the *Times*—the past two covering the media, primarily the magazine business—Kuczynski has emerged as something of an "It" girl of media coverage, a sort of *Sex and the City* meets Generation X with pearls, crossed with the Rosalind Russell of *His Girl Friday*. She pops up in the gossip and media columns of *New York* magazine, the *New York Post*, and the New York *Daily News*, and in James Brady's column in *Advertising Age*. Kuczynski's romance with ABC News correspondent John Miller, which ended earlier this year, was fodder for gossip from newsrooms to Elaine's, the Manhattan eatery where the two used to wine and dine with such literati as Gay Talese, Tom Wolfe, and Nicholas Pileggi and Nora Ephron, as well as the likes of former New York City police commissioner William Bratton and his wife, *Court TV* anchor Rikki Klieman.

"Appearing in the gossip columns can hurt more than it helps," observes journalist and author Joe Conason, a friend of Kuczynski's. "It encourages false assumptions about the character and seriousness of the person whose name appears in bold print."

Kuczynski maintains that socializing simply comes with the territory. "Going out is part of how any reporter covers this beat," she says, shrugging. "Part of covering the media is knowing people and getting people to trust you. And the best way to do it is face to face." She continues, "Covering the media is like stepping into a casino full of gamblers....Who is going to step up to the blackjack table and fail? Who will win?"

Randall Rothenberg, a former *Times* reporter, editor, and columnist, notes that

Alex Kuczynski photographed at *The New York Times* on June 28, 2000, by Chris Kolk

traditionally a *Times* reporter should not be a personality. "Alex is a public person within the community, not merely because of her writing but because of her going to Elaine's and dating John Miller," he notes. "That is a different thing for a *New York Times* reporter."

"Now there is this reality that individual journalists are their own brands," adds Rothenberg. "And where can this be better applied than in the media business? Alex epitomizes both the changes in the *Times* and the changes in media and print journalism."

The *Times* has long had a tradition of cultivating its writers, who, in some cases, become marquee names—Rick Bragg, Anna Quindlen, Thomas L. Friedman, Maureen Dowd. But the paper's reporters have generally not been well known outside the world of journalism. Indeed, they have tended to wear their *Times*ian anonymity like a second skin.

Over the past several years, however, the *Times* has increasingly encouraged writers to run with their individual voices—which Kuczynski clearly does. What separates her from the others, however, is her outsize presence beyond the confines of the paper's newsroom. Kuczynski's very existence at the *Times* is emblematic of the more liberated path the paper has taken over the past decade.

"*The New York Times* has always valued great writers," concludes Rothenberg, who now runs Booz-Allen & Hamilton's Strategy and Business Media Unit. "The real evolution is that from the person on the page to the personality off the page."

"Alex is part of a continuum of a process that began as early as [op-ed columnist] Maureen Dowd, when she was a reporter, as far as having a public presence and edgy writing," observes Susan E. Tifft, coauthor, with her husband, Alex S. Jones, of *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind* The New York Times, the definitive history of the paper. "The *Times* is caught, as many newspapers are, with trying to be current and with-it while still maintaining its standards of fairness, accuracy, and, if you will, sobriety. They are trying to find a kind of journalism and journalist who has a kind of edgy quality and *au courant* sense. So the fact that they have Alex Kuczynski is not necessarily surprising and is very much in keeping with what they perceive readers want. She is a different kind of reporter, and that's all part of that trend."

It may not be surprising, then, that Kuczynski is perceived by some as preferring personality-driven pieces over hard-core business stories. She says, "I look at the magazine industry from both the cultural and the business perspectives. That said, I think that some personalities just happen to grow to hypertrophic proportions in the magazine world and so make for colorful material, but we have not neglected critical business stories." Nonetheless, nuts-and-bolts business coverage to a large extent fuels the media beat, and there are those who feel she sometimes misses the picture.

A certain degree of authority and expertise is expected from *The New York Times*, which Kuczynski and her work do not always convey, particularly when she makes glaring errors that show a lack of understanding of a given subject.

Over the course of her three years at the paper, the *Times* has published 33 corrections to Kuczynski's work. Seven were editing errors or involved inaccurate headlines or photo captions, for which she is not responsible. Of the remainder, many were the kind of mistakes reporters often commit while on deadline, such as misspellings and incorrect dates.

But others suggest that for a reporter whose byline appears in the *New York Times*'s business section, Kuczynski can be weak with numbers. On January 29, 2000, Kuczynski wrote a story, the headline of which said that more people watched the Regis Philbin show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* on ABC than watched President Clinton's State of the Union address. "Almost twice as many Americans would watch Mr. Philbin's trivia quiz show as would watch the president of the United States deliver his final scheduled major address," Kuczynski wrote. In fact, Kuczynski compared only the ratings that ABC got for *its* broadcast of the presidential address to the ratings that *Millionaire* got. She neglected to count the number of people who watched the president's address on every other network. The mistake was corrected two days later, but it was more than a correction of a small factual error; it made the *Times*'s headline and the entire point of the article one big "never mind."

Another substantive error occurred in a July 13, 1999, story, in which Kuczynski reported that a New York judge had upheld an arbitration decision to award retroactive wages to members of the drivers' union at the New York *Daily News*. In fact, the judge hadn't made any decision at all; the arbitrator had only submitted a document to the judge reaffirming his earlier decision. (There was also a correction to a story she wrote about this magazine.)

Another error that caused a stir was Kuczynski's October 5, 1999, story, "*TV Guide* Sold For $9.2 Billion in Stock Deal."

A certain degree of authority and expertise is expected from *The New York Times*. Some of Kuczynski's errors suggest that for a reporter whose byline appears in the *Times*'s business section, she can be weak with numbers.

Details Editor Ousted and the Magazine Will Go to Fairchild

The New York Times

At Atlantic Monthly, a Tense Staff Sizes Up the New Owner

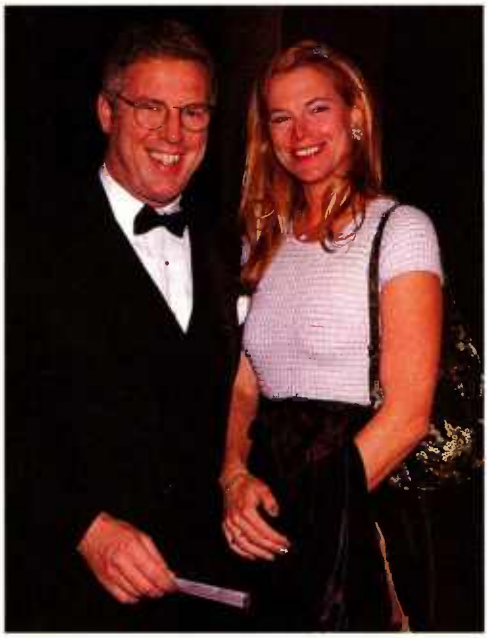
By ALEX KUCZYNSKI

"Gemstar International Group, which develops Interactive program guides, said yesterday it was buying *TV Guide*, the nation's best-selling magazine, with a weekly circulation of about 12 million, for $9.2 billion in stock," she wrote. "The deal...ends Rupert Murdoch's 11-year association with *TV Guide*." Two days later, the *Times* ran a correction saying that the article "misstated [*TV Guide*'s] future relationship to News Corporation, the Rupert Murdoch company and a 44 percent shareholder. The company will keep a 20 percent stake, not end its association with *TV Guide*." (In fact, News Corporation retained 21.49 percent of Gemstar–TV Guide International, Inc.)

"We pointed the [original] mistake out to Alex, and she moved quickly to correct it," notes a spokesman for News Corporation. But not apparently before the company was deluged with phone calls from investors wondering what was going on. Kuczynski says, "No mistake is acceptable, but it was an error that occurred on deadline and we corrected it." Kuczynski's editor, Dave Smith, who has been at the paper for 17 years, says, "I stand by that."

In another instance, this past May, Kuczynski wrote a piece on page one of "Business Day" about the possible creation of an "editorial czar"—a position above that of Time Inc. editor in chief Norman Pearlstine—at the soon-to-be-merged AOL Time Warner. She wrote, "Two senior Time Inc. executives said last week that an editorial job might be created above Mr. Pearlstine's, a sort of AOL Time Warner uber-editor who would oversee—and try to create synergies between—the journalistic activities at Time Warner and America Online." The article went on to state that Steve Case, chairman and CEO of America Online, Inc., and Gerald M. Levin, chairman and CEO of Time Warner Inc., had discussed the notion. Kuczynski then noted that Time Inc. spokesman Peter Costiglio had indicated that there were no plans for any such position. In addition, Edward Adler, senior vice-president of corporate communications for Time Warner, had also told Kuczynski that such speculation was not true, although she did not quote him directly in the story.

Kuczynski's report sent a flurry of e-mails and phone calls throughout Time Warner, as executives scurried to ascertain where such a story could have come from. Three days later, the *Times* published a letter to the editor from Levin, in which he wrote, "Steve Case...and I never considered a 'super editor' position to supersede Time Inc.'s editor in chief." Comments Kuczynski, "I had good sources on the story and I stand by my reporting." Likewise, Smith says, "We stand by our reporting."



ROBIN PLATZER/TWIN IMAGES

ABC News correspondent John Miller and Alex Kuczynski at a charity event in April 1999

At the end of the same article, Kuczynski quoted Don Logan, chairman, president, and CEO of Time Inc., saying, "I'm from Mississippi, and he [designated AOL Time Warner cochief operating officer Robert Pittman] is from Alabama." In fact, Kuczynski had reversed their birthplaces. "That is the direct quote that he gave me," Kuczynski says, adding that this was the first time she'd been told of any inaccuracy in the quote. "I have never transposed quotes; I wish [Logan] had called me," she maintains. "If he swore up and down to me that he did not say it, we would run a correction. Even now." (Logan could not be reached for comment.)

When asked about concerns over Kuczynski's perceived penchant for personality-driven stories, Dave Smith notes, "I have only had one conversation [to this effect]." He stresses, "Alex is not a *business* reporter; none of my reporters are. They are *media* reporters, which means they have to take the social, cultural, and business aspects of the story. Business is a very important element of what they do, but only one element." Smith continues, "Alex does the business stories but also captures where the culture is heading."

Art Cooper, the editor in chief of *GQ*, comments, "She is fun to read, as long as she is not writing about you." But, Cooper stresses, "this is *The New York Times*, the most important coverage. People read the *Times* and believe [what they read] to be true. Often Alex's reporting is sloppy. But, having said that, I look forward to reading her stuff. She is the best writer that they have had doing that beat. She is a lot like Maureen Dowd in that you look forward to reading her turn of phrase, her language. Alex has the ability and talent to be really, really good."

Addressing the questions of her accuracy, Kuczynski offers, "There is never an excuse for a mistake; I always try to correct them. If this were a monthly or weekly magazine, not a single mistake could be excused. But since it is a daily, mistakes slip in."

Despite having made her fair share of errors, Kuczynski has given a sharp edge to the paper's coverage. "I think that Alex has brought a whole different take to [the media] beat," observes Keith Estabrook, vice-president of corporate communications at BMG Entertainment. "Robin [Pogrebin, Kuczynski's predecessor] made that beat intelligent, and now Alex is making it sexy. A lot of people are resistant to her and her coverage, but a lot of people don't like change."

Even before Kuczynski took on the beat, the *Times*'s coverage of the media had begun to evolve. In May 1995, with public interest in the entertainment business and the Internet economy growing, the paper gave Monday's edition of its daily business section the rubric "The Information Industries." Felicity Barringer, its first editor, came to the section from Sunday's "Week in Review," where she had been deputy editor. "The idea was to highlight technology and media coverage," Barringer says. Under the watch of Dave Smith, who became media editor in the spring of 1998, the pages inaugurated "Media Talk," a sidebar to which Kuczynski often contributes, writing short items such as "*Newsweek* Drops an Excerpt of Gore Book" and "*Talk* Magazine Recycles 1992 Photographs."

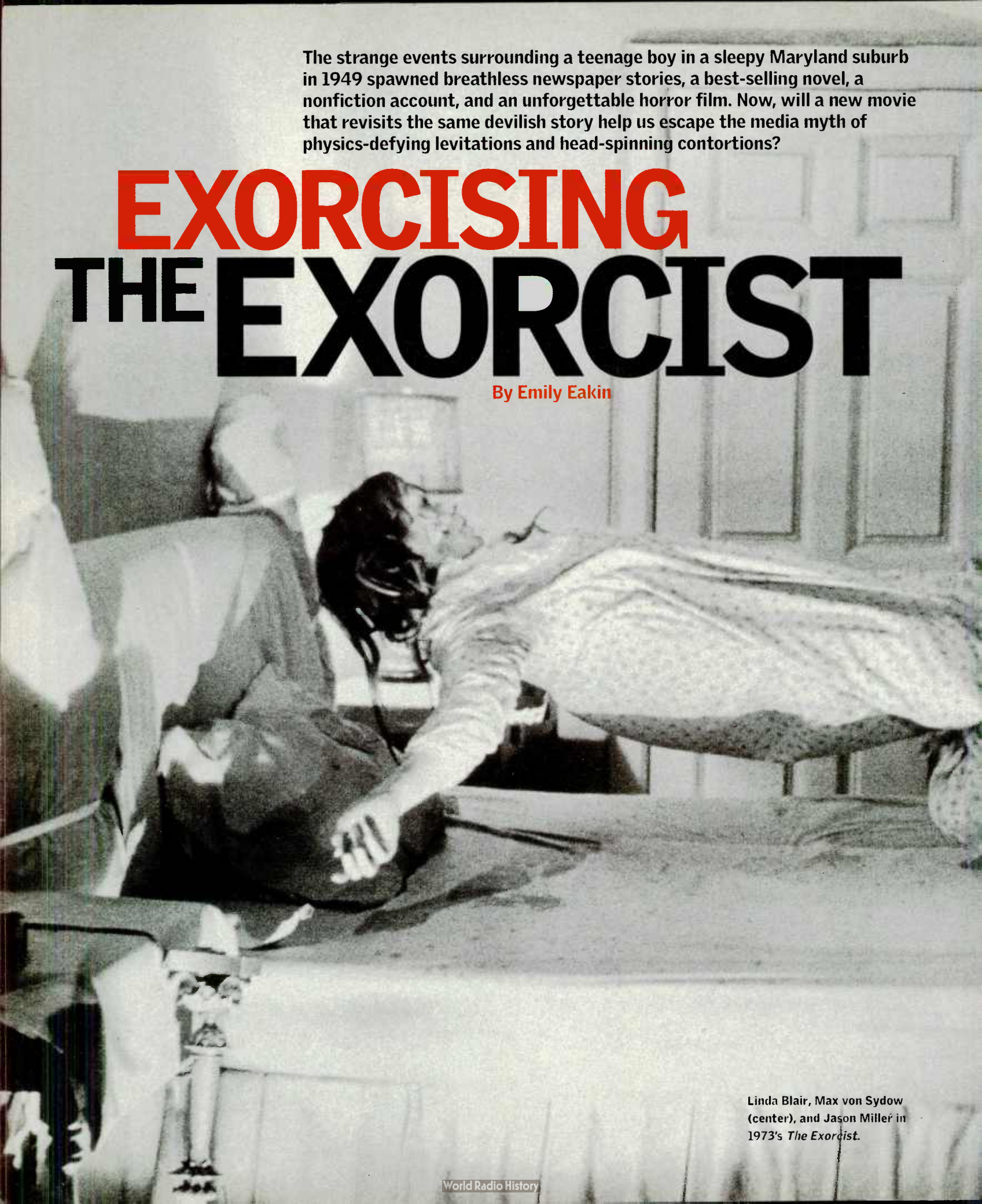
Smith explains that Kuczynski's cultivated eye for cultural trends is critical to her work. "A good media reporter needs to understand culture," he says. "You can see it in the way that Alex reads a magazine. It is like an artifact, like she is on a contemporary archeological dig."

"She also has a lot of courage; she can write about somebody, or [CONTINUED ON PAGE 129]

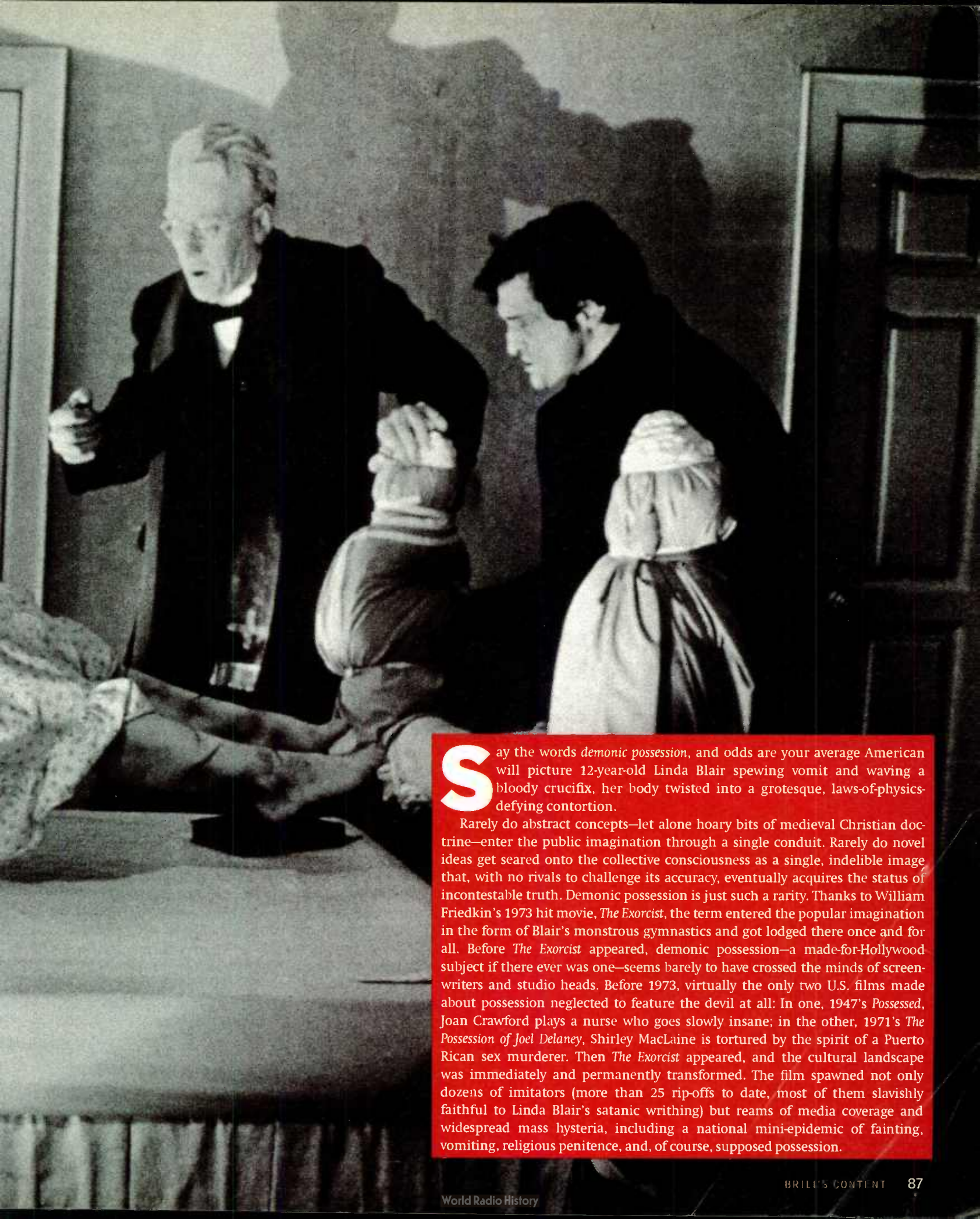
The strange events surrounding a teenage boy in a sleepy Maryland suburb in 1949 spawned breathless newspaper stories, a best-selling novel, a nonfiction account, and an unforgettable horror film. Now, will a new movie that revisits the same devilish story help us escape the media myth of physics-defying levitations and head-spinning contortions?

EXORCISING THE EXORCIST

By Emily Eakin



Linda Blair, Max von Sydow (center), and Jason Miller in 1973's *The Exorcist*.



Say the words *demonic possession*, and odds are your average American will picture 12-year-old Linda Blair spewing vomit and waving a bloody crucifix, her body twisted into a grotesque, laws-of-physics-defying contortion.

Rarely do abstract concepts—let alone hoary bits of medieval Christian doctrine—enter the public imagination through a single conduit. Rarely do novel ideas get seared onto the collective consciousness as a single, indelible image that, with no rivals to challenge its accuracy, eventually acquires the status of incontestable truth. Demonic possession is just such a rarity. Thanks to William Friedkin's 1973 hit movie, *The Exorcist*, the term entered the popular imagination in the form of Blair's monstrous gymnastics and got lodged there once and for all. Before *The Exorcist* appeared, demonic possession—a made-for-Hollywood subject if there ever was one—seems barely to have crossed the minds of screenwriters and studio heads. Before 1973, virtually the only two U.S. films made about possession neglected to feature the devil at all: In one, 1947's *Possessed*, Joan Crawford plays a nurse who goes slowly insane; in the other, 1971's *The Possession of Joel Delaney*, Shirley MacLaine is tortured by the spirit of a Puerto Rican sex murderer. Then *The Exorcist* appeared, and the cultural landscape was immediately and permanently transformed. The film spawned not only dozens of imitators (more than 25 rip-offs to date, most of them slavishly faithful to Linda Blair's satanic writhing) but reams of media coverage and widespread mass hysteria, including a national mini-epidemic of fainting, vomiting, religious penitence, and, of course, supposed possession.

Twenty-seven years after its release, the film's grip on the American public seems hardly to have eased. Despite its relatively crude special effects, *The Exorcist* is routinely voted the scariest movie ever made (these days, that means beating out *The Blair Witch Project*), and on September 22, Warner Bros. Studios is rereleasing it with 11 added minutes of original footage and a remixed stereo soundtrack. More interesting, however, is the film's persuasive power: In giving visual form to a phenomenon with which contemporary Americans were largely unacquainted, *The Exorcist* managed to convince a good many of us that possession by the devil was a plausible, if unlikely, occurrence. Indeed, for those inclined to believe its story, it was an authoritative reference work.

"It was as true to life as it can get," says Kevin Ingalls, a Baptist pastor in Dallas who estimates that he has performed nearly a dozen exorcisms over the past 20 years. "It's about 85 percent accurate, 15 percent Hollywood. The temperature dropping, the green bile, the continuous flow of bodily fluids—you can cite many cases where that happens."

Are these latter-day possessions cases of life imitating the movies? Or did *The Exorcist* capture a genuine, if rarely encountered, human experience? How do we go about distinguishing fact from fiction when we are confronted, on the one hand, with a horror film of such monumental cultural influence and, on the other, with a set of centuries-old—and ultimately untestable—religious beliefs?

The answers to these questions depend in part on a teenage boy and how we choose to understand what happened to him during the first four months of 1949. For despite all its horror movie accoutrements, *The Exorcist*, it turns out, has its roots in actual events. The movie was based on a novel, William Peter Blatty's 1971 best-seller, which drew its inspiration from newspaper accounts of a case of alleged possession and exorcism involving a boy in suburban Maryland.

THE *WASHINGTON POST* REPORTED THAT DURING THE EXORCISM RITUALS, "THE BOY BROKE INTO A VIOLENT TANTRUM OF SCREAMING, CURSING, AND VOICING OF LATIN PHRASES—A LANGUAGE HE HAD NEVER STUDIED."

Below, *The Washington Post* covers exorcism. The first article (right) appeared on August 10, 1949; the second, ten days later.

Priest Frees Mt. Rainier Boy Reported Held in Devil's Grip

By Bill Brinkley
Post Reporter

In what is perhaps one of the most remarkable experiences of its kind in recent religious history, a 14-year-old Mount Rainier boy has been freed by a Catholic priest of possession by the devil, Catholic sources reported yesterday.

Only after 20 to 30 performances of the ancient ritual of exorcism, here and in St. Louis, was the devil finally cast out of the boy, it was said.

In all except the last of these, the boy broke into a violent tantrum of screaming, cursing and voicing of Latin phrases—a language he had never studied—whenever the priest reached those climactic points of the 27-page ritual in which he commanded the demon to depart from the boy.

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Pastor Tells Eerie Tale of 'Haunted' Boy

By Bill Brinkley
Post Reporter

An out-of-this-world story of a "haunted" 13-year-old Washington area boy was reported last night by a clergyman here to closed session of the Society of

This October, cable television audiences will be able to examine the case themselves. Airing on Showtime on Halloween, this movie, also called *Possessed*, is billed as the true story of the "only documented exorcism performed by the Catholic Church in modern-day America." According to its director, Steven de Souza, the feature-length film is intended as the "anti-*Exorcist*." It aspires, in others words, to skepticism. Even as it faithfully reproduces the spine-chilling trademarks of demonic possession—flying objects, shaking mattresses, bloody scratches, and infernal cursing—*Possessed* aims to suggest a number of nonsupernatural explanations for what, against all rational possibility, appears to be happening on the screen.

Like *The Exorcist*, *Possessed* is based on a book, a 1993 history of the case written by Thomas Allen. De Souza says that while reading Allen's book, he was struck less by the descriptions of possession and exorcism than by intimations of the heady cultural climate in which the incident unfolded. He found a host of threatening specters, none of them demonic, that suggested tantalizing possibilities. Among these were the paranoid rhetoric of the Cold War with its dual terrors—communism and the atomic bomb—racial unrest over desegregation, and the residual trauma of World War II. "When you read the book, you see that it's not happening in a vacuum," de Souza says. "The story did happen at a real place in a real time. What was that time like? Arthur Miller's the guy who made the analogy between McCarthyism and the Salem witch trials, but in six degrees of literary separation, look how quickly we get from witches to possession."

Where family, doctors, nurses, and clergy saw demonic possession, should we see mass cultural hysteria instead? It's a provocative idea, with some compelling historical evidence to back it up, but it's difficult to prove. Certainly in 1949—and for decades afterward—such skepticism was in markedly short supply. Consider the story that greeted readers of *The Washington Post* on August 20 of that year. There, starting in the middle of page one, beneath a banner headline warning of a possible communist coup in Finland, was a lengthy article titled "Priest Frees Mt. Rainier Boy Reported Held in Devil's Grip." The story began breathlessly: "In what is perhaps one of the most remarkable experiences of its kind in recent religious history, a 14-year-old Mount Rainier boy has been freed by a Catholic priest of possession by the devil." The boy's family, the paper reported, had turned to exorcism only after medical and psychiatric solutions had been exhausted. The baffling symptoms were duly noted: scratching sounds in the wall of his family's suburban home, spontaneous migrations of heavy furniture, flying objects, and vibrating mattresses, all of which were witnessed by numerous individuals but only when the boy was present. According to the *Post*, the exorcism had been no easy feat. It had required two months, several priests, stints at two different Jesuit institutions—Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., and St. Louis University in Missouri—and more than 20 repetitions of the 500-year-old Roman Catholic exorcism ritual. "In all except the last of these," the paper reported, "the boy broke into a violent tantrum of screaming, cursing, and voicing of Latin phrases—a language he had never studied."

With its elaborate description of Catholic ritual—including extended quotations from the rite itself—the *Post* article seemed to be conducting an exorcism of its own. With evident relief, the paper noted that the possessed boy had been symptom-free since May and

PREVIOUS SPREAD: THE NEAL PETERS COLLECTION

Linda Blair's stare in *The Exorcist* gave a face to demonic possession. Insets: the cover of William Peter Blatty's novel and the movie poster.

extolled the dedication of the priest who, as chief exorcist, had endured the terrifying ordeal: "In complete devotion to his task, the priest stayed with the boy over a period of two months, during which he said he personally witnessed such manifestations as the bed in which the boy was sleeping suddenly moving across the room."

The *Post* story caught the eye of William Peter Blatty, then a junior at Georgetown University. "I wasn't just impressed: I was excited," he wrote 20 years later. "For here at last, in this city, in my time, was tangible evidence of transcendence. If there were demons, there were probably angels and probably a God and a life everlasting." Over the next two decades, while developing a career as a screenwriter, Blatty, a practicing Catholic, continued to think and read about demonic possession. Then, in 1968, armed with a book contract from Bantam Books, Blatty located Father William Bowdern, the Jesuit priest at St. Louis University who had conducted the exorcism. Blatty wrote to the priest, requesting information about the case. Bowdern declined, citing respect for the boy's privacy and a gag order placed on him at the time by the archbishop of St. Louis. In his letter to Blatty, however, Bowdern did make one provocative remark: "I can assure you of one thing: the case in which I was involved was the real thing. I had no doubt about it then and I have no doubts about it now."

The priest's testimony was the proof Blatty had been looking for. "Here was a living witness to a case of possession in America, where there were witnesses alive to this date," Blatty recalled recently by telephone from his home in Santa Barbara, California. "A reticent, rational man who was obliged to keep his promise of confidentiality and secrecy to the family but nevertheless was absolutely convinced that what he was dealing with was the real thing. That was enough for me."

Although *The Exorcist* was a work of fiction, Blatty strove to make his story as believable as possible. Years after the novel's publication, he described the research he'd undertaken: He read every account of demonic possession he could find—from cases in ancient Egypt to one investigated by noted Harvard psychologist William James—only to conclude that the only plausible case backed up by a living eyewitness was the one involving the Mount Rainier boy.

According to the *Rituale Romanum*, the manual used by Catholic priests for hundreds of years, a person in the throes of demonic possession should exhibit paranormal capacities, superhuman strength, and

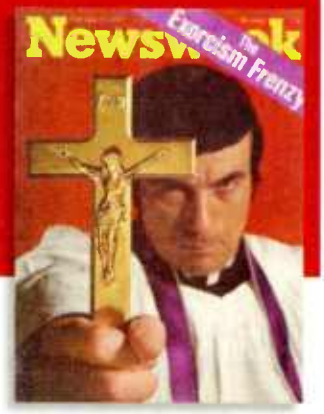
a knowledge of languages to which he or she has not previously been exposed. The Mount Rainier boy, Blatty decided, met most of the criteria. There was a diary kept by the exorcist; the levitation of a hospital nightstand witnessed by a Washington University physics professor who had been called in by the family; and spontaneous red marks that appeared on the boy's skin, some of them forming words or images (including a menacing face and a devil's pitchfork). As for *The Washington Post*'s claim about the boy's cursing in Latin, Blatty ruled it out: The boy, he decided, could have been parroting phrases he'd picked up during the exorcism ritual.

When Blatty sat down to write his novel, he invented his own plot and characters. His possessed child was a cherubic little girl, living with her recently divorced movie-star mother in a townhouse in Georgetown. While possessed, the little girl commits a homicide, and her exorcists lose their lives in their attempts to save her. Nothing like this occurred in 1949, but the case remained a guiding inspiration.

When William Friedkin, director of *The French Connection*, first read *The Exorcist*, he was so affected by it that he decided to turn the book into a film. "Blatty made me aware of the 1949 case," Friedkin said when I spoke to him in his office on the Paramount Pictures lot. "I read *The Washington Post*'s lengthy article; I read the files about this case at Georgetown University. I also spoke to the boy's aunt. She gave me some information and some background that found its way into one specific shot, and that is the furniture moving. That's something she told me had happened, that she had witnessed. Also, she told me a lot of other stuff, about things flying off shelves and stuff. So the conversation I had with her and reading the diaries certainly helped to reinforce an attitude on my part that something had happened here that could very well be called demonic possession, and that it was a real concept, and that if it was a real concept, here was some pretty solid evidence of it."

To judge by the reaction of movie audiences, the public was inclined to agree with him. Watching Linda Blair's swollen bile-and-pus-covered face and matted hair as she taunted her exorcists with profanities or, more infamously, masturbated with a bloody crucifix, early viewers of *The Exorcist* vomited, fainted, and, according to newspaper reports, sought exorcisms in record numbers. "I remember walking down Fifth Avenue with Jason Miller [the actor who plays the exorcist in the film]," says Friedkin. "The movie had just opened, and three or four people in the course of this little walk we were taking would come up to him and start telling him that they had a nephew or a child or they knew somebody who was possessed. He told me it happened to him all the time." The actor James Cagney told Friedkin that after seeing *The Exorcist*, his barber of more than 20 years abandoned his trade to join the priesthood. Even the film's cast and crew were spooked. Friedkin had a priest bless the set during the shooting, but to little avail; in a 1998 documentary about the movie, Ellen Burstyn, who played Blair's mother, ascribes nine deaths—including those of actors, crew members, and their intimates—and a fire that broke out on the set to the film's supposedly cursed material. Film critic Pauline Kael, who disliked the movie intensely, dubbed it "the biggest recruiting poster the Catholic Church has had since the sunnier days of *Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's*."

ACCORDING TO *NEWSWEEK*, A BOSTON CATHOLIC CENTER RECEIVED ONE REQUEST EACH DAY FOR AN EXORCISM AFTER THE FILM'S RELEASE.



February 11, 1974, five weeks after the film's opening

Five weeks after the film's release, *Newsweek* devoted a cover story to "The Exorcism Frenzy": In Illinois, the magazine reported, the cinema janitors were up to their ankles in vomit; in California, a distraught viewer had "charged the screen in a vain attempt to 'get the demon'"; in downtown Boston, a Catholic center was receiving one request per day for an exorcist. Psychiatrists in Milwaukee and New York City expressed the opinion that demonic possession was not inconceivable. "In the whole field of spiritualism, mysticism, religion, and the human spirit," one mental health expert was quoted as saying, "there are things so minimally understood that almost anything's possible."

Americans, in short, seemed predisposed to believe, if not the story recounted in *The Exorcist* per se, at least the movie's premise that possession by the devil was a possibility. The most vocal exception to this trend was the Catholic Church itself. *Newsweek* quoted a Jesuit priest and psychologist, Father Juan Cortés, who worried that the film gave undue credibility to a concept he considered theologically outdated. "Like many Catholic priests," the magazine remarked, "Cortés does not believe that demons exist." He wasn't alone. Back in 1949, after the exorcism was completed, the St. Louis archbishop who had authorized it appointed a Jesuit scholar to examine the records, interview participants, and render a final verdict. Bowdern, the exorcist, had already filed his own report, signed by 48 witnesses. But according to Thomas Allen, author of the book *Possessed*, the Jesuit scholar concluded that there had been nothing supernatural about the boy's affliction. Instead, he speculated, the child suffered from a psychosomatic disorder with "kinetic" features.

The case's most knowledgeable living witness, of course, is presumably the former demoniac, the boy Allen calls Robbie Mannheim. Though Allen did learn the boy's real name and address, and attests that he is now "a grown man living a happy, balanced, and productive life," the real Robbie Mannheim is fiercely protective of his privacy and declined Allen's requests for an interview. As a result, Allen was obliged to rely for the most part on the sometimes contradictory archival reports and interviews with sources whose knowledge of the case is at best indirect. *Possessed* doesn't necessarily make clear what Allen, a Jesuit-educated Catholic, thinks about the case, so I asked him. "Once you get to demonic possession—and I'm not sure it's demonic possession—that opens up a whole new channel," he said by telephone from his home in Bethesda, Maryland. "I don't want to be mystical, but we don't know that much about gravity or electricity. There may be physical elements we don't have perfect knowledge of." To some extent, Allen noted wryly, his uncertainty mirrors that of the contemporary Catholic Church. Last year, the Vatican modified its exorcism guidelines to encourage priests first to rule out

LUIS HENRIQUE SEABRA

Steven de Souza (above left), co-writer and director of *Possessed*, calls his film the "anti-*Exorcist*." He based it on Thomas Allen's 1993 account (inset). Above: Father Bowdern (center, played by Timothy Dalton) leads the exorcism, assisted by priests played by Michael McLachlan (left) and Henry Czerny.

BOOK: LUIS HENRIQUE SEABRA

psychiatric diagnoses. *Possessed* reflects this official ambivalence. Allen intended the book to be a comprehensive documentation of the case, not a debunking. For that, we would have to wait for Steven de Souza.

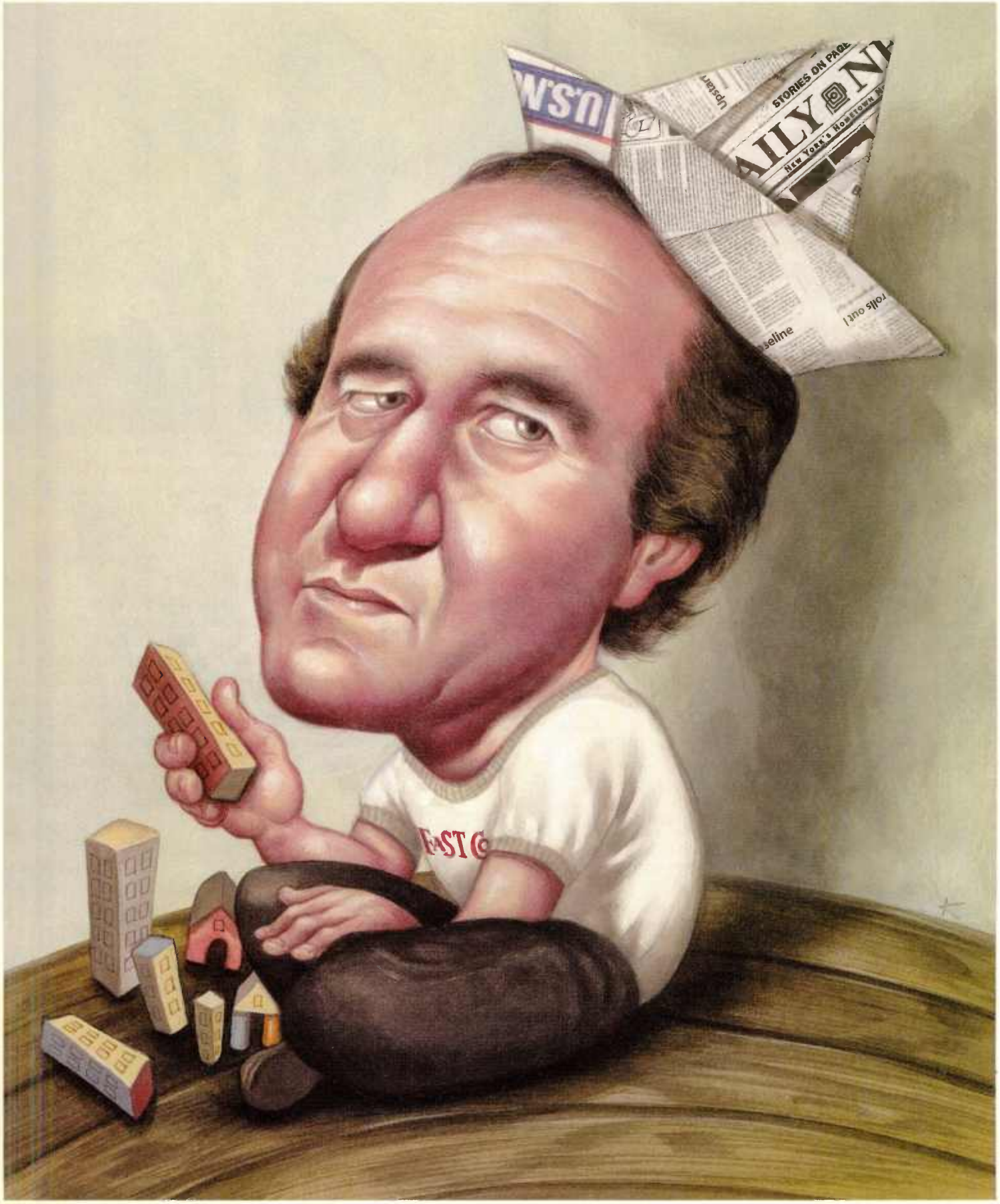
A prolific screenwriter, de Souza, 52, calls himself "the Hollywood napalm guy," having spent most of his career penning outlandish action movies, blockbusters such as *48 Hours*, *Die Hard*, and *Commando*, and goofy comedies like *The Flintstones*. Most were works of preposterous comic-book-style fantasy, in which beefy muscle men lumbered through hazardous terrain performing breathtaking acts of physical derring-do. De Souza found himself yearning to try his hand at something more plausible. *Possessed*, which he co-wrote and directed, at first seems an unlikely choice: a story whose facts are up for grabs. But the ambiguousness appealed to de Souza—"all the implications that there were other possible interpretations of what happened besides being 'possessed,'" he says.

Earlier this summer, de Souza invited me to Los Angeles for a sneak preview of his film. Afterward, we sat down under an oversized blue umbrella on the roof of the Beverly Hills Peninsula Hotel and, over a plate of equally oversized blueberry pancakes, he proceeded to enumerate his many nonsupernatural theories about the case, several of which he has tried to incorporate in the film.

Possessed opens with a series of dramatic crosscuts. First, we are in the middle of a chaotic battlefield somewhere in France. The date is November 1, 1944, All Saints' Day. German voices echo in the background. We can see the silhouette of a burning church. On the ground, half in shadow, a wounded GI is calling out for last rites. An army chaplain crawls to him and begins to recite a Latin prayer. Suddenly, a Nazi soldier with a raised bayonet looms above them. Then, we are no longer in France but in the spartan bedroom of an American priest, who, awakening from this traumatic flashback, clutches his side, on which we can see a long white scar—the result of a German bayonet. The priest staggers about his room, takes a swig from a flask of whiskey, and lights a cigarette. The camera cuts again, and we are in another bedroom, where a winsome, freckle-faced redhead is sitting under a blanket, reading a comic book aloud to himself by flashlight. The camera closes in on the book, and we see that it is a *Tales From the Crypt*-style fable involving ghouls and graveyards. "No! Keep away! The spell gives me power!" reads the kid, imitating the voice of a comic-book witch. "*Dominus vo-vis-com*," he says (Latin for "Lord, be with us"). Suddenly the boy's parents appear. The comic book is confiscated amid angry reproaches: "Oh, Robbie, not this again. How many times do we have to tell you? This is why you keep having bad dreams."

Already, during the first five minutes of the film, de Souza lays down several of what he calls "railroad tracks" intended to lead the viewer away from demonic possession. The priest haunted by flashbacks from World War II is the chain-smoking Bowdern, soon to become Robbie's chief exorcist. For the purposes of the film, Bowdern's character is a composite, based on the life stories of two priests involved in the exorcism—Bowdern and Ed Burke. Bowdern, de Souza learned, spent four years in the war as an army chaplain but never saw battle—a fact that left him with lasting guilt. Burke, on the other hand, not only saw battle as an army chaplain but was bayoneted by the Germans and received a Silver Star for courageous service. De Souza seized on Burke's wound as a strong visual image for the trauma both priests associated with World War II. Was exorcising a demon a way of conducting the battle against evil that Bowdern had been denied during the war? De Souza considered it a reasonable possibility. "I was struck that Father Bowdern was always plagued by the fact that he hadn't done enough for his men when he was chaplain," he says.

And what about Robbie? Though the official church and medical records are short on biographical details, [CONTINUED ON PAGE 131]



Zuckerman Unbound

Mort Zuckerman is on a mission. With his media empire in trouble, he's cutting loose the losers and tightening the reins. By Robert Schmidt

The butler is right behind him, but it is Mortimer Zuckerman who answers the door at his house in Northwest Washington, D.C. It's a Saturday afternoon in late March, and Zuckerman is casually dressed in gray slacks, a blue shirt, and a gold sweater. Standing in the doorway, he could easily be mistaken for any of the wealthy but nameless lawyers or diplomats who live in this quiet neighborhood tucked off Connecticut Avenue. He certainly doesn't look like a man who made his fortune in the bruising world of commercial real estate, nor the feared media mogul known for his tirades directed at hapless editors. He's not tall enough to be imposing, and he doesn't exude the star quality one would expect of a man who is one of the few recognizable and outspoken media owners in America.

Zuckerman is relaxed and cheerful as he heads down the hallway and settles in on the living-room couch of his startlingly empty home. He explains that he and his wife, Marla Prather, have just sold their house because they have been spending less time in Washington since Prather left her job as a curator at Washington's National Gallery of Art to work in New York at the Whitney Museum of American Art. In town for the exclusive Gridiron Club press dinner, this is their final weekend at the house, which sold furnished for $3.25 million, and most of their personal belongings are packed.

There is no strain in Zuckerman's face, and he seems in no hurry to discuss the news that has rocked his publishing empire: Two days ago, Zuckerman replaced Debby Krenek as editor in chief of the New York *Daily News*, sending the tabloid's already unhappy newsroom into deeper despair. Zuckerman named the paper's Sunday editor, Edward Kosner, as Krenek's replacement. Editor changes are not uncommon at the *Daily News*—Kosner is the fifth person to take the editor-in-chief job during Zuckerman's seven years as the paper's owner.

A cup of hot tea in his hand and Chance, his yellow lab, at his feet, Zuckerman insists that it was Krenek's decision to leave and that the change had been coming for some time. But Zuckerman is not one to dwell on the past, even if the past is only a few days before. And for the moment, he claims to be thrilled with Kosner and his new deputy, Michael Goodwin, previously the *News*'s editorial-page editor. "I thought [Kosner] did a very good job with the Sunday paper; I mean it had a substance, a grittiness, an intelligence," says Zuckerman.

Zuckerman with his wife, Marla Prather, in 1997, at a Whitney Museum gala in New York City

Zuckerman is anxious to present the transition as a smooth one and quell any negative publicity. He says he wants stability at the *Daily News*, and he insists that Kosner is not simply another poor slob who has just put his head on the chopping block. "The good news for me is that I have really wanted to be able to appoint from within," says Zuckerman. "No matter what happens, when you bring somebody in from the outside, you never know how it's going to work."

Zuckerman, 63, has been spending a lot more time these days thinking about the *Daily News*, as well as the two other publications that constitute his media holdings, *U.S. News & World Report* and *Fast Company*, a new-economy business magazine. And he should be.

The past few years have been happy ones for Zuckerman personally; he got married for the first time, and he has a young daughter, about whom he can't stop talking. He also took his real-estate firm, Boston Properties Inc., public in 1997 to great success. But Zuckerman's privately held media business has been in a steady downward spiral—which he has had a hard time acknowledging. (*Crain's New York Business*, a financial trade publication, accused Zuckerman last December of "lying" by insisting that the *Daily News* was profitable when court documents proved the contrary.) Indeed, only *Fast Company* is doing well. The *Daily News* has been hemorrhaging

KELLY JORDAN/GALELLA LTD.

Illustration of Zuckerman by Anita Kunz

"I'm beyond the point where I'm driven by financial income," says Zuckerman. "Psychic income is much more important to me."

money and has been beset by union problems and a printing plant that cost hundreds of millions of dollars but can't print the paper on time or in color. *U.S. News*, based in Washington, D.C., lost almost every top manager on the business side in less than two years, and in January, the magazine reduced the base-rate circulation it guarantees advertisers. The Boston-based *Atlantic Monthly*, Zuckerman's first major media purchase, had so many management problems that he sold it last year. Topping it all off, Zuckerman and his longtime partner, Fred Drasner, a minority owner and the former day-to-day manager of the media holdings, have gone their separate ways.

The media properties are in so much trouble that Zuckerman has been forced to confront speculation that he is leaving the media business altogether. And if there is one thing Zuckerman hates, it's bad press. He has been angrily confronting reporters who have written that the *Daily News*, *U.S. News*, and *Fast Company* have been quietly put up for sale. When first contacted by *Brill's Content*, Zuckerman barked into his speakerphone that he would "rather jump out a window" than cooperate with this story. But there's another side to Zuckerman: He wants to be liked and he wants to be accepted by the media establishment, which has decided, arbitrarily, that he is merely a rich guy playing with his editorial toys. Ultimately, Zuckerman decided to sit for five hours of interviews in his New York office and his Washington home to discuss the changes in his life and his plans for his media properties.

Zuckerman is charming, polite, and funny—or at least he can be. He's a great conversationalist, with a soft voice that he raises when he's telling a joke or mimicking a character in the stories he likes to tell. What's most apparent after talking with Zuckerman is that the birth of his daughter has caused him to think about the future and about his legacy. His friends call this "the new Mort"—who turns down opportunities to go out at night and actually puts work aside to go on vacation. And the new Mort has decided that he likes owning his three publications and he wants to get them all running smoothly and profitably. "One gives me an insight into the national and international issues, a window," explains Zuckerman, speaking of *U.S. News*. "Another gives me insight and a window into the city of New York. And the third, into this whole world of God knows what, this whole world of information and technology."

The new Mort says he is reorganizing his life to focus on the media business and his commercial real-estate firm. Former employees say that's a good thing, because his publications are in turmoil. Zuckerman has spent more than 30 years building an empire so diverse that he has had little time for anything else. Now he's getting rid of most of it. He's already sold his 15 percent share in the Washington Redskins and pulled out of a Maryland-based communications firm in which he was a major stockholder. Zuckerman hopes that by the end of the year, he will have sold his stake in seven different businesses, ranging from a graphics company (which does pre-press work for this magazine) to a laser-eye-surgery company to two Internet ventures. "I saw a good opportunity; I went for it. But I just don't want to do that anymore," explains Zuckerman. "I'm beyond—this is actually embarrassing—but I'm beyond the point where I'm driven by financial income. Psychic income is much more important to me."

But why is he getting out now? It's certainly not the money. Despite some financial trouble in his empire, Zuckerman's holdings are valued at more than $1 billion, according to *Forbes*, and he can easily afford to run the publications at a loss. "I think it was my daughter," he says. "I said, 'What am I doing? I'm going off to some f--king board meeting, for what?' When I come home at the end of the day, I've just been going nonstop, and I like to play with my daughter, and I like to read. Well, I don't have the time."

There will be time, Zuckerman insists, for the media properties. "As I shed myself of the things that I am less interested in, I'm going to devote myself more and more to nurturing both the editorial side and the business side [of the publications]," he says. Although Zuckerman did not draw the same attention as he did with the Kosner appointment, in January, he installed a new president and chief operating officer at the *News*, Les Goodstein. A 22-year *Daily News* veteran, Goodstein replaced Drasner as the person responsible for the daily business management of the paper.

Zuckerman's media holdings: *U.S. News & World Report*, the New York *Daily News*, and *Fast Company*

With Goodstein running the business side and Kosner in charge of editorial, Zuckerman says he is committed to making the *Daily News* a better paper. He also wants it to make money, of course. "This is not something I approach casually. I think about it a great deal and when I think I can improve [the newspaper] I make changes," he says. "I have to take the heat under these circumstances. It's not always pleasant, but that's my job."

There's plenty of heat. Sordid details of Krenek's departure have appeared in the New York press—including the charge that she did not know she was being moved out until she read about it in the *News*'s rival tabloid, the *New York Post*. (Zuckerman angrily denies reports that he leaked the story to the *Post*.) The *Daily News*'s newsroom was stunned; Krenek, who had worked at the paper for 13 years, her last two and a half as editor in chief, was popular with her staff. The reporters and most of the editors at the *News* learned of Krenek's departure from a press release. "From the grunt level it's just yet again another change and another editor, with another learning curve," says one dismayed reporter. "[Kosner] will be gone in another year. That's the one constant in this place, that there is going to be another regime."

Furthermore, Kosner's appointment has touched off a wave of defections of high-level reporters and editors. Also troubling to

LUIS ENRIQUE SEABRA

reporters is the loss of a significant number of minorities and women. Zuckerman attributes much of the turnover to Kosner's instituting a new management team. However, Zuckerman concedes that the paper needs to attract and keep more women and minorities. Recently, he and Kosner set up a task force to help with minority recruitment. And in July, Kosner announced a slew of new hires and promotions, bulking up the *News*'s investigative reporting staff and boosting the number of female editors.

In his first months on the job, Kosner has paid close attention to the first eight pages of the paper, deciding what goes on page one and writing the paper's banner headlines. Kosner has redesigned the borough sections of the paper, and plans to revitalize the *News*'s features. "I think [Zuckerman] has got an idea for what the paper should be," Kosner says. "I think he hasn't, up until now, found the mix in the paper that expresses how he wants it to be."

Zuckerman (right) with his partner, Fred Drasner, signing the purchasing contract for the New York *Daily News* in 1993

Finding that right mix has always been a struggle for Zuckerman. "He swings between 'Let's take the high road' and 'Let's take the low road,'" claims Larry Sutton, a *Daily News* reporter for 23 years who is now an associate editor at *People* magazine.

This time, Zuckerman says, he wants to take the high road and cover the news more seriously. "You have to do the kind of celebrity coverage; it's part of our franchise," he says. "But in my judgment [the *News*] is much better...when it's not an entertainment paper but a *news* paper."

No business genius looking to earn big bucks would have bought the publications that Zuckerman did. *The Atlantic*, his first major purchase, in 1980, was a venerable but staid title with little growth potential. *U.S. News* was a frumpy magazine when Zuckerman bought it, in 1984, and although it was (and still is) in third place in the newsmagazine category, behind *Time* and *Newsweek*, Zuckerman says the weekly, for which he paid more than $170 million, has at times been profitable. The *Daily News*, which Zuckerman bought out of bankruptcy in 1993, faces stiff competition in a city with two other major dailies. The wealth Zuckerman accumulated in his real-estate business allowed him to buy troubled publications, and that fact isn't lost on him. "Of course, the wonderful thing about real estate is that it enabled me to enter journalism at the right level," he says with a laugh. "Frankly, the reason why I bought these media properties...wasn't because I was going to maximize my income," Zuckerman says. "I was just happy buying journalism."

At first, Zuckerman was involved with the business side of his publications when he first purchased them, but it was at more of a big-picture level, hiring—and firing—publishers and ad directors and setting up management teams. Though editors who have worked with Zuckerman call him a micromanager, business staffers say that running the day-to-day operations, holding meetings, and having the executives report directly to him was never his modus operandi. And when Zuckerman's publications started to do better, he focused his attention elsewhere. Now Zuckerman's attention is again focused on the business side, as well as the editorial side, of the publications. He meets each week with the top managers of the *Daily News* and *U.S. News*, and every other week with the managers at *Fast Company*.

Zuckerman says he wasn't initially sure he wanted to buy the *Daily News*. Drasner encouraged him to make the purchase, and for most of the time he has owned it, Zuckerman has paid less attention to the paper than he has to *U.S. News*. Zuckerman isn't a tabloid guy, nor—unlike Drasner—is he a native New Yorker; he has little in common with the *Daily News*'s blue-collar core readership. Likewise, Zuckerman has had a hard time identifying with the paper. A story that Zuckerman likes to tell illustrates this disconnect. "After we were finally announced as the new owners, we went up to meet the drivers at 1 o'clock in the morning. The head of the drivers' union gets me up on one of the trucks, and he's speaking to 400 very powerful, beefy guys who basically throw 85-pound bundles around," Zuckerman says. "He said, 'I want you to know that this guy graduated from Harvard and he plays squash. We can really identify with that.'"

Zuckerman's No. 1 problem now is stopping the paper's huge losses. Although Zuckerman refuses to discuss the paper's finances, federal court documents that were released in a case against the drivers' union last year show that the *Daily News* lost $17.9 million in 1998. That's on top of $19 million in cash that Zuckerman pumped into the paper on his own. Since 1995, it has had only one profitable year, according to the court filings.

Circulation, too, has fallen or remained flat. For the six months ended March 31, the *News*'s daily circulation was 730,542—a 0.1 percent increase over the same period last year. But the paper's Sunday circulation fell to 820,230, a drop of 1.8 percent, for that same six-month period. (In comparison, for the six months that ended on March 31, 1995, the *News*'s daily circulation was 725,599 and the Sunday circulation was 974,034 copies.) The decline is due largely to the price war waged by Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post*, which relaunched its own Sunday edition in 1996. The Sunday *Post*'s introductory price was 25 cents, compared with the *News*'s $1.50. To compete, Zuckerman cut his price to $1, but that didn't stem the circulation decline and ended up costing the paper about $17 million in revenue per year.

Compounding the *News*'s circulation and financial woes is the paper's printing plant in Jersey City, New Jersey, and its presses. The nine offset printing presses were billed as state-of-the-art but were

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TOP: REUTERS PHOTOS

Miguel Gil Moreno de Mora (below and on opposite page), an award-winning cameraman for Associated Press Television News, was killed by rebels on May 24 in Sierra Leone.

Deadly Competition

As demand for war footage to air on the network news heats up, more journalists are taking chances in dangerous situations—and for two of them, the risks proved fatal. By Peter Maass

L. BRENNAN LINSLEY/AP PHOTOS; R. REUTERS PHOTOS

Unlike the wild weeks that preceded it, May 24 seemed destined to be a slow and easy day for Miguel Gil Moreno de Mora. The world's attention was fixed on the sudden Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, so there was little demand for news footage from Sierra Leone, even though more than 500 United Nations peacekeepers had been taken hostage in a resurgence of the country's brutal civil war. Gil Moreno, an award-winning cameraman for Associated Press Television News (APTN), could have stayed in Freetown but decided to drive outside the capital to Rogberi Junction, where the U.N. was trying to figure out whether some of its peacekeepers had been executed.

Rogberi Junction was quiet, but soon the competition showed up—a vehicle carrying the Reuters "dream team," which consisted of Kurt Schork, a renowned war correspondent; Yannis Behrakis, a veteran photographer; and Mark Chisholm, a top-notch cameraman. The three men were Reuters's best war-zone journalists; although Gil Moreno knew and liked all three, he would not have been glad to see them on this day. A week earlier, one of Gil Moreno's supervisors had told the APTN team that editors at the agency were unhappy with their coverage of the capture of rebel leader Foday Sankoh. Reuters had badly beaten APTN on the story, and a major news organization, which was a client, had complained about it, according to four APTN journalists. Since the call, Gil Moreno had been pushing himself harder. He didn't want to get beaten by the competition again.

There was the sound of gunfire in the distance. The soldiers at Rogberi Junction said the rebels—from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which had brutally maimed thousands of civilians—were being pushed back. The soldiers said they would escort the journalists if they wanted to get closer to the fighting. Although the road ahead was surrounded by jungle and often infiltrated by the rebels, the soldiers said it was safe, so Gil Moreno and the Reuters team pushed onward. They were heading into the sort of no-man's-land that Gil Moreno, a Spaniard, had been warning other colleagues to avoid. "He said, 'Someone will get killed, because this is not a safari,'" recalls a journalist who worked closely with Gil Moreno in Freetown.

Did Gil Moreno choose to run the risks simply because his competitors had? Kurt Schork covered mostly wars—Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kosovo, East Timor—for Reuters during the past decade and had the wisdom of experience. He was a risk taker, but he seemed invincible. A Rhodes scholar who studied at Oxford University with Bill Clinton, Schork had successful careers in real estate and in New York politics—becoming executive director of the city's transit system—

before turning to combat journalism at the age of 40. Schork was at the center of the world's close-knit community of war correspondents, and Gil Moreno, though a highly respected veteran, looked up to him.

Schork drove the lead vehicle, Gil Moreno the second; soldiers were squeezed inside the cars and splayed on the hoods (a common sight in Sierra Leone). They didn't get far. After a few miles the group ran into an RUF ambush. Schork and Gil Moreno were killed in the fusillade, as were four soldiers. Behrakis and Chisholm, who was hit in the arm, scrambled out of the cars and escaped into the jungle. Behrakis smeared himself with mud and leaves to blend into the terrain as the rebels looked for survivors; they came within 15 feet of him. After the rebels disappeared back into the bush, Behrakis and Chisholm walked to Rogberi Junction and sent out the news that two of the best war correspondents of the post–Cold War era had been killed on a dirt road in a country few people could find on a map—if they could even be bothered to look for it.

Wars kill journalists. But the deaths of Kurt Schork and Miguel Gil Moreno de Mora, in the same ambush, devastated their colleagues and should give pause to the rest of us who take for granted the stories and pictures we see on the news. War zones are chaotic and dangerous places where bad things happen. But bad things don't happen all the time, and when they do, you can usually find reasons, or contributing reasons. One of the most alarming factors I learned as I talked with dozens of journalists about Gil Moreno was that he sensed that things were getting out of hand in Sierra Leone but felt obliged to take risks that he sensed might be unwise. No one knows exactly what Gil Moreno was thinking when he headed down that road with his friends from Reuters, but many journalists, particularly at The Associated Press, fear that it was the pressure of competition that led to his death.

The nexus between risks and competition among journalists is most acute for television cameramen like Gil Moreno. Writers can do much of their work based on the accounts of refugees and soldiers, and many of their stories have less to do with frontline action than with narrative and political analysis. Photographers need to spend more time on the front lines, but the commercial pressures are not as intense as they are for video cameramen trying to feed the monster that never sleeps—the television networks, which pay huge sums for images of war. This appetite for blood-splattered film is fed largely by two companies locked in their own fierce battle for dominance—APTN and Reuters, which are both based in London and sell footage to all the major networks in the United States.

Gil Moreno, a Barcelona native who practiced law before switching to journalism, was APTN's star cameraman. He was one of the few Western correspondents to enter Grozny when Russian forces flattened the Chechen capital last winter. His journey into and out of the city was stunning. Not only was kidnapping a threat, but thousands of Russian artillery shells were landing in Grozny every day. For journalists, the war in Chechnya has been the most dangerous of any of the past decade, yet Gil Moreno emerged intact.

This wasn't the first time he did what seemed undoable. When nearly every other Western journalist fled Kosovo or was kicked out before the North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombing in June 1999, Gil Moreno stayed behind. It took cleverness and courage to pull it off without being arrested or killed. Few journalists were surprised when Gil Moreno was awarded the prestigious Rory Peck Prize for television journalism in 1998.

Gil Moreno knew the danger that awaited him in Sierra Leone: His friend and APTN colleague Myles Tierney had been killed in Freetown a year earlier (see "Hearts In Darkness," June). The country had been tortured for years by a civil war in which the main rebel group, the RUF, funded its operations by gaining control of lucrative diamond-mining regions. The diamonds made their way to consumers in the developed world—primarily in America, Western Europe, and Japan—underwriting the purchase of guns and machetes that terrorized civilians in such countries as Sierra Leone, Angola, and Congo.

The rebels in Sierra Leone are led by Sankoh, whose fighters remain active in the bush even though he was captured on May 17 by pro-government troops. The rebels are, however, little more than plunderers with Ray-Bans and Kalashnikovs. In recent years a Nigerian-led intervention force prevented the RUF from taking control of the country, but last year, with the Nigerians wearying of the expense and bloodshed, the U.N. brokered a peace accord under which the RUF was given a share of power and an amnesty for crimes it committed during its reign of terror.

The Nigerian force was replaced by thousands of U.N. soldiers, who turned out to be

REUTERS PHOTOS

Gil Moreno (right) follows a Kosovo Liberation Army member in June 1998.

the Keystone Kops of peacekeeping. Most of the U.N. soldiers arrived in Sierra Leone with little weaponry, unreliable communications gear, and scant awareness of the nastiness that awaited them. When they tried to take control of the RUF's diamond-mining areas, the RUF attacked, seizing hundreds of U.N. hostages. With the battle-hardened Nigerians gone, the RUF sensed an opportunity to commandeer the entire country. It was May, and the war was on again.

Because the prestige of the United Nations was at stake, the war was on the front pages of newspapers and at the top of television broadcasts worldwide. Hundreds of journalists flocked to Freetown. There were two wars going on—one fought by soldiers, the other by journalists to get the best stories or pictures or television footage.

In recent years, Reuters and AP decided to supplement their print and photo businesses with full-fledged video operations. Most of the world's broadcasters—especially those in America—were reducing their overseas staff, creating a lucrative void that Reuters and AP rushed to fill. Major broadcasters usually pay in excess of $1 million a year for footage from Reuters or APTN, each of which has hundreds of clients. Their battle has evolved into television journalism's equivalent of Coke vs. Pepsi.

According to three journalists who worked in Freetown with Gil Moreno, he seemed anxious shortly after he arrived in early May. He would drive down a road and pass a government checkpoint, then pass through jungle

where rebels might be hiding, then another government checkpoint—and he couldn't trust any of the fighters, government soldiers and rebels alike. Many of the rebels were kids, many were on drugs, and Gil Moreno knew they might do anything to him—lie, steal, kill. The situation in Sierra Leone was more unpredictable, and therefore more dangerous, than anything he had come across before. Gil Moreno found himself stopping at checkpoints because it didn't seem wise to go further—and then watched as other journalists ventured deeper into the jungle. The risks he took were calculated; he knew better than to roar down a jungle road without the faintest idea of whether an ambush might await him. He wasn't being cowardly, just smart.

Gil Moreno's attitude changed abruptly in mid-May. APTN was beaten by Reuters when Sankoh, the rebel leader who had been hiding in Freetown, was seized and taken into detention. Reuters quickly uploaded footage of crowds celebrating his capture. APTN had nothing. For several hours APTN editors outside Sierra Leone were unable to reach their team. According to four journalists I spoke with, the British Broadcasting Corporation, a major APTN client, complained about the lack of footage.

Editors at APTN in London were livid. While their team in Sierra Leone had performed splendidly since the war had reignited, the fact remained: Reuters had beaten them. A senior producer in Africa finally got through to the office in Freetown and let the team there know that they had been beaten and that their bosses were not pleased.

Gil Moreno and his APTN colleagues in Freetown were shocked and angry. They were risking their lives in a country where, a year earlier, an APTN cameraman had been killed. Gil Moreno expressed his displeasure to colleagues including Laurent van der Stockt, a photographer for the Gamma photo agency. "He told me there was a phone call from AP to tell them a client was complaining about the coverage in Sierra Leone, that it was not good enough," van der Stockt says. "I said to Miguel, 'Tell me you won't care about that kind of s--t.'" Van der Stockt knew how the complaint would be interpreted: "It means 'Go a bit more to the front line.'"

The management of APTN denies knowing of any complaint from a client about the coverage from Sierra Leone, or of any call to Sierra Leone to convey such a complaint. "Whether there was any feedback from a more junior member of staff I know not, but the staff members I've talked to say there is no knowledge of any complaint being passed on," says Nigel Baker, the head of news for APTN. "I can't say categorically that it didn't happen, but I am not aware of it happening."

BBC news media relations manager Jon Steel said in an e-mail, "There is no evidence of, and no one can recall, any complaint from BBC to APTN around that time, indeed we are not aware of any lapse in their coverage."

Even if a news agency's client complains about coverage, editors who sit behind desks thousands of miles from a war zone usually don't criticize or second-guess their people in the field. If the story is a political story, a "rocket" (complaint) will be sent without hesitation, but in a war zone, a bit of criticism from an editor can nudge a journalist to take more risks, even if that's not what the editor intends. Generally, print and photo editors refrain from those sorts of calls, but such prodding is more common in television, because the commercial pressure to provide fresh footage is intense, as are the rewards and the penalties.

I talked with someone who was among a group of journalists who traveled to Lungi Lo, a small village outside Freetown, with Gil Moreno the day after the call. A detachment of British soldiers stationed there told them that they should not go any further because RUF rebels might be in the jungle ahead. They stayed put and interviewed a group of refugees living in the village under British protection. Soon, however, a vehicle carrying a Reuters cameraman arrived at the base and headed up the road, toward the area the British soldiers [CONTINUED ON PAGE 136]

Television's appetite for blood-splattered film is fed largely by two companies locked in their own fierce battle for dominance—APTN and Reuters, which sell footage to major networks in the United States.

Reuters correspondent Kurt Schork (above) was killed in an ambush in Sierra Leone on May 24. Left: His Reuters coworkers (from left: Mark Chisholm, Elly Biles, and Yannis Behrakis) at a memorial for him in Washington, D.C.

T: REUTERS; B: BURHAN OZBILICI/AP PHOTOS

Joan Didion's distinctive writing—sharp-eyed, personal, full of idiosyncrasies and literary tics—established her as the journalistic voice of the 1960s. So profound was her influence on women writers, though, that it's impossible to read journalism today without hearing her voice. By Katie Roiphe

Didion's Daughters

I don't think that I have ever walked into the home of a female writer, aspiring writer, newspaper reporter, or women's magazine editor and not found, somewhere on the shelves, a row of Joan Didion books. Very few women in the business have not, early in their careers, stayed up late into the night reading her, the sky streaked violet: "I could indulge here in a little idle generalization...could talk fast about convulsions in the society and alienation and anomie and maybe even assassination, but that would be just one more stylish shell game. I am not the society in microcosm. I am a thirty-four-year-old woman with long straight hair and an old bikini bathing suit and bad nerves sitting on an island in the middle of the Pacific waiting for a tidal wave that will not come." There it is. The brilliant paranoia. The sentences in love with their own drama.

On the cover of one of the books is a famous photograph of Didion, stick thin, hair blowing, brow furrowed, eyes hidden behind enormous black sunglasses, looking as if she needs a cigarette. She was the embodiment of everything cool in sixties journalism. Her writing was stylish, ironic, neurotic, and felt. Her sharp tone cut through the pretensions and weirdness of the times, but she also cried as she walked down the street and had migraine headaches and could barely get out of bed. That was her persona—bruised, fragile, harboring a mysterious sorrow that had something, but not everything, to do with the world around her. Didion wrote about murderers and fanatics and 5-year-olds doing acid. She wrote, "I am so physically small, so temperamentally unobtrusive and so neurotically inarticulate that people tend to forget that my presence runs counter to their best interests." She did clipped irony and she did sentences swelling with portent. Hers was the quivering, sensitive sensibility of a generation, and still her words reverberate through our magazines and newspapers, her quirky, distinctive, oddly formal writing style borrowed and imitated, echoed and incorporated until it becomes simply the way we write. And it isn't a fleeting fashion. Nearly 40 years after her first essays appeared in places like *The Saturday Evening Post*, we still imitate Joan Didion, and if we don't imitate Joan Didion, we imitate the people who imitate Joan Didion. Her rhythms are so mesmerizing, her insights so impressive, her personality so perversely appealing that they lodge in the mind. It's no different from the boom of British authors writing like Martin Amis, or novelists drawing on Hemingway and Mailer, or painters drawing on Corot, but it is testimony to the power of Didion's style and the strength of her voice that it echoes into the casual pieces of this, the next century.

At the beginning of her classic collection of essays *The White Album* (1979), Didion quotes from her own psychiatric report and then says, "By way of comment I offer only that an attack of vertigo and nausea does not now seem to me an inappropriate response to the summer of 1968." That was one of the revelations of her style: The writer's own psyche became a delicate radio station channeling the outside world. The news was all about how the news makes you feel. And that is one of her most dubious legacies: She gave writers a way to write about their favorite topic (themselves) while seeming to pursue a more noble subject (the culture). It was a particular kind of cultural criticism she was pioneering, with childhood sleepovers and marital problems and tears folded delicately into the mix: navel-gazing with a social purpose. Didion did it gracefully, but many of those who followed did it not so gracefully.

Take Anna Quindlen and her endless chronicles of the world shrunk down into the television set in her living room, with her sons making Lego houses in the corner. If Didion developed a personal rapport with the reader, whom she speaks to directly in her essays as "you," Quindlen developed the kind of friendship with the reader where she sits at the kitchen table swapping recipes. Quindlen, who gained prominence on the op-ed page of *The New York Times* and is now a writer for

Joan Didion at home in Hollywood, 1970. This photograph appeared on the jacket of Didion's 1970 novel, *Play It As It Lays*.

She was the embodiment of everything cool in sixties journalism. Hers was the quivering, sensitive sensibility of a generation, and still her words reverberate through our magazines and newspapers, her quirky, distinctive, oddly formal writing style borrowed and imitated, echoed and incorporated until it becomes simply the way we write.






SLOUCHING TOWARD DIDION

Top to bottom: Elizabeth Kolbert, Maureen Dowd, Susan Orlean, Anna Quindlen, Sarah Kerr, and Meghan Daum

Newsweek, was making her ideas palatable to the quintessential nineties audience, their bookshelves filled with memoirs and *Oprah* blaring from their television sets. In other words, an audience that wanted more intimacy and fewer ideas.

On one of the rare occasions when the outside world impinged on her interesting family life, at the end of the Persian Gulf War, Quindlen wrote: "Euphoria has been one of the war's buzzwords. We have been repeatedly cautioned not to feel it. The president said the other night this was not the time for it. It has never crossed my mind." The last sentence, the brisk personal reaction punctuating the public event, is pure Didion. The Gulf War also left Quindlen disoriented, she told us. "I am reasonably sure of only three things today," she wrote, "that George Bush will be re-elected president in 1992; that...he might win by the largest landslide in the history of the nation; and that we are incredibly skilled at war." This sense of being so stunned by the news that you can only be "reasonably sure" of a few things was one of Didion's most common states of mind. Didion herself put it this way: "I am talking here about a time when I began to doubt the premises of all of the stories I had ever told myself, a common condition but one I found troubling."

Of course Quindlen is warmer, fuzzier, dopier, and more domestic than Didion, a tabby to Didion's panther. But there is a slightly hysterical strand running through Quindlen's extremely public breakfasts with her children that brings the older journalist to mind. You can hear a hint of Didion's emotional fragility, of that nausea and vertigo, for instance, in Quindlen's assertion that "I have never sat down to write about abortion without feeling, at least for a moment, the complexities sweep over me like a fit of faintness."

Quindlen was not the only *Times* writer to draw on Didion's sensibility. Remember when Maureen Dowd began to distinguish herself as a political reporter with her colorful ruminations on George Bush on the usually staid front page of *The New York Times*? Instead of simply reporting, Dowd took apart the news and analyzed it, breaking down the language of politics with quick sarcastic swipes. Like Didion, she proved herself a connoisseur of the small ironies and eccentric details of political hypocrisy. She observed, "But pork rinds, promoted by Mr. Atwater as a down-home staple of Mr. Bush's diet, have not been seen in the White House in nearly three years; Mr. Bush's favorite snack, it turns out, is popcorn." In her essays on people like John Wayne, or Huey Newton, or The Doors, or the Reagans, Didion wrote about what took place behind the image, about the construction and manipulation of public perception. Take this memorable scene from an essay in which Didion writes about the then California governor's wife and a couple of photographers:

"'Nipping a bud,' Nancy Reagan repeated, taking her place in front of the rhododendron bush.

"'Let's have a dry run,' the cameraman said.

"'The newsman looked at him. 'In other words, by a dry run, you mean you want her to fake nipping the bud.'

"'Fake the nip, yeah,' the cameraman said."

And then there's Dowd, in the front section of the *Times*:

"'Basic Parthenon shot?' the President asked the photographers who wanted to capture him standing in front of the ruins."

Dowd also imported into conventional newspaper articles Didion's habit of deeply scrutinizing people's choices of words. She wrote, for instance, "At the Cabletron Systems computer parts plant in Rochester, he began a sentence concerning the Persian Gulf War with his usual manner of speaking, starting to say, 'about to begin,' and then thought better of it and switched to a Southern synonym midphrase, 'It was one year ago, one year ago that Desert Storm was about—fixin' to begin, as they say in another of my home states, Texas.'"

You can also hear Didion's cadences—as well as several of Didion's signature phrases—running beneath the political writing of Elizabeth Kolbert in *The New Yorker*. In a recent piece about the New York senatorial race, Kolbert writes: "In the months following, the fuss over 'Captain Jack' proved to be central to the emotional logic of Giuliani's election effort." Not only does the rhythm of the sentence echo Didion, but the "emotional logic" of an election effort is exactly the sort of thing Didion was constantly discussing. "Logic" also happens to be one of Didion's favorite words (Didion wrote: "As it happened I had always appreciated the logic of the Panther position" and "So many encounters in those years were devoid of any logic save that of dreamwork").

Things "appear" and "seem" in Joan Didion's writing. They are symbolic of and emblematic of; they characterize; they have morals and messages; they do not simply lie flatly on the page. Which is also true of Kolbert: "The killing of Diallo, by contrast, seems to be emblematic of something new: a form of racial bias that is statistically driven and officially sanctioned and that, depending on your perspective, may or may not be racism at all." This sentence is also very Didion. She loves long, oddly constructed sentences, with ridiculously complicated syntax, often in the passive tense, that are weirdly beautiful, like tall and awkward

PREVIOUS PAGE: JULIAN WASSER; THIS PAGE TOP TO BOTTOM: GASPER TRINGALE; NYT NEWS SERVICE; GASPER TRINGALE; AP PHOTO; ALIX LAMBERT

teenagers. The artful and prolific use of the indirect phrase and the passive tense are signature Didion styles. Kolbert's phrase "may or may not be racism" is also pure Didion: a typographic illustration of ambiguity, as when Didion wrote, "The Getty's founder may or may not have had some such statement in mind."

And Kolbert also evokes Didion in her strategic use of quotation marks. Take the following Didionesque observations about stockbrokers: "Brokers routinely have days in which they are 'butchered' or 'killed' or 'annihilated' but dying on the floor is not regarded as an entirely metaphorical prospect." And "Last month, the First Couple completed their long-awaited move—'move' here being understood in the loosest possible sense." This particular use of quotation marks is one of Didion's stylistic tics that have made their way so completely and thoroughly into our journalistic patois that they are almost hard to identify. Didion was so suspicious of received ideas that she filled pages with such observations as: "The clothes were, as Mrs. Reagan seemed to construe it, 'wardrobe'—a production expense, like the housing and the catering and the first-class travel," or "To encourage Joan Baez to be 'political' is really only to encourage Joan Baez to continue 'feeling' things." Didion uses ironic, or what could be more accurately called skeptical, quotation marks fanatically and constantly. They highlight the fact that the journalist is not just telling a story; she is taking it apart.

Travel writing also lends itself to Didion's dreamlike idiom. In the middle of Susan Orlean's January 2000 piece in *The New Yorker* about Khao San Road in Bangkok, she interrupted her story to say: "I have a persistent fantasy that involves Khao San." Later, she writes, "From here you can embark on Welcome Travel's escorted tour of Chiang Mai...or an overland journey by open-bed pickup truck to Phnom Penh or Saigon, or a trip via some rough conveyance to India or Indonesia...or anywhere you can think of—or couldn't think, probably, until you saw it named...." Which brings to mind Didion's frequent trains of *ors* such as: "Music people never wanted ordinary drinks. They wanted sake, or champagne cocktails, or tequila neat....We would have dinner at nine unless we had it at eleven-thirty, or we could order in later....First we wanted a table for twelve...although there might be six more, or eight more...."

So enduring and powerful is Didion's voice that her influence extends to writers who weren't even born when her first essays began to appear. Meghan Daum's 1999 essay in *The New Yorker* on leaving New York strongly evokes Joan Didion's famous reflection on the same subject, "Goodbye to All That," written 30 years earlier. Daum writes, "Once you're in this kind of debt—and by 'kind' I'm talking less about numbers than about my particular brand of debt—all those bills start not to matter anymore." Didion writes, "I do not mean 'love' in any colloquial way, I mean that I was in love with the city, the way you love the first person who ever touches you and never love anyone quite that way again."

Daum continues, "As it turned out, I did go to Vassar, and although it would be five years until I entered my debting era, my time there did more than expand my intellect." Didion uses the phrase "as it turned out" almost relentlessly in her writing, and she also loves to put complex temporal relations into a sentence in just that way. Here is Daum: "I'm kind of glad I didn't know, because I've had a very, very good time here. I'm just leaving the party before the cops break it up." Here is Didion: "It was a very long time indeed before I stopped believing in new faces and began to understand the lesson in that story, which was that it is distinctly possible to stay too long at the Fair."

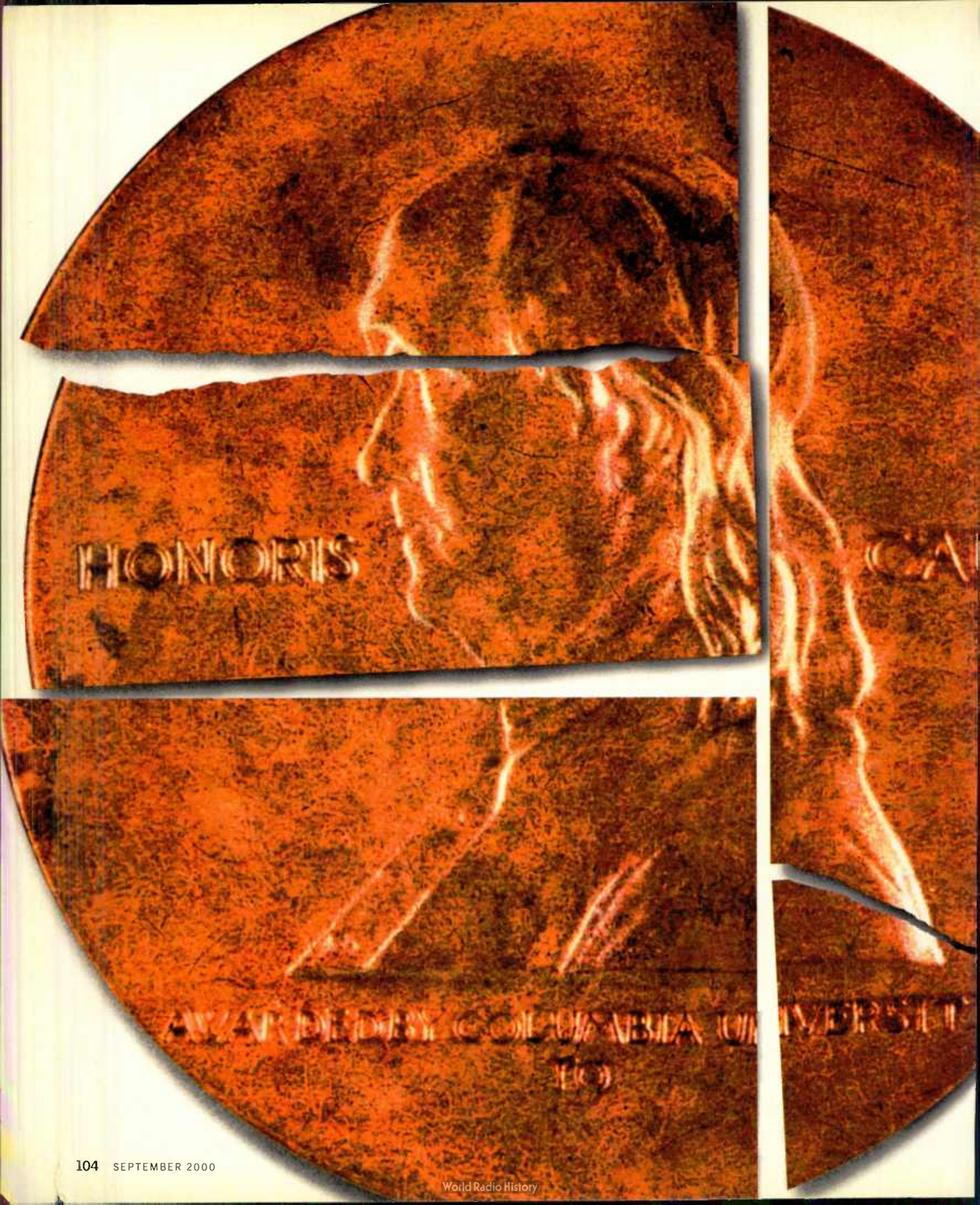
So enduring and powerful is Didion's voice that her influence extends to writers who weren't even born when her first essays began to appear.

Another young writer whose prose suggests late nights curled up with Didion is Sarah Kerr, writing here in *The New York Review of Books* in 1994: "But the arrangement did hold out a dream, a particularly Mexican parable of opportunity, for everyone in every sector, as a kind of glue." (Didion used the word "parable" over and over, as in "this is a California parable, but a true one," or "this may be a parable, either of my life as a reporter during this period or of the period itself," as well as phrases like "particularly American" or "particularly Californian.")

Joan Didion, 1996

LARRY STRONG/CONTRA COSTA TIMES

"But that is to get ahead of the story," Kerr wrote at one point in her political analysis. Didion also assumed the role of the storyteller with lines like "I want to tell you a Sacramento story." In fact, the idea of teasing out the "narratives" and "stories" and "plots" of real life is one of Didion's trademarks. After the famous first line of her collection *The White Album*, "We tell ourselves stories in order to live," she might use the words "story" or "narrative" up to 15 or 20 times in a single essay. This too has entered our journalistic conventions as a cliché. Here is Lynn Darling in *Esquire*: "Marriage is for most of us the narrative [CONTINUED ON PAGE 136]



EYES OFF THE PRIZE

The Pulitzer Prize, the most prestigious award in journalism, is plagued by questions of fairness and accuracy—and no one's doing anything about it.

By Seth Mnookin

On September 30, 1999, a lengthy Associated Press dispatch about an alleged massacre of Korean civilians by American troops ran on the front pages of both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, as well as in dozens of smaller papers around the world. "It was a story no one wanted to hear," the article began. "Early in the Korean War, villagers said, American soldiers machine-gunned hundreds of helpless civilians, under a railroad bridge in the South Korean countryside." The dispatch quoted a dozen former servicemen, including two who said they had been given orders to kill civilians; one of those, Edward L. Daily, identified himself as a machine-gunner with the regiment that had been accused of perpetrating the massacre. "On summer nights when the breeze is blowing, I can still hear their cries, the little kids screaming," the AP quoted Daily as saying. "The command looked at it as getting rid of the problem in the easiest way. That was to shoot them in a group."

The story was immediately handicapped as a potential Pulitzer Prize winner, and AP submitted it in more than one category early this year. The Pulitzer rules are straightforward: Entries must have been published in a newspaper and need to be submitted by February 1 to cover work done in the preceding calendar year. The responsibility for accuracy rests solely with the entrant.

The AP didn't submit supplementary material that called into question any aspect of its dispatch. And on April 10, the Pulitzer board announced that the wire service had won a prize for investigative reporting for "revealing, with extensive documentation, the decades-old secret of how American soldiers early in the Korean War killed hundreds of Korean civilians in a massacre at the No Gun Ri Bridge."

But there was a problem: Edward Daily had not been at the No Gun Ri Bridge at the time of the alleged atrocities; he did not even join the regiment in question until almost a year after the date the killing is supposed to have occurred. Within days of the piece's publication, people outside AP began to harbor doubts about Daily. On October 6, 1999, a week after the article's publication, Robert Bateman, a teacher at West Point and an acquaintance of Daily's, filed a Freedom of Information Act request (which requires federal agencies to disclose certain records requested in writing by any person) for Daily's wartime service records.

On October 28, Michael Dobbs, a reporter from *The Washington Post*, filed his own FOIA request. And on November 23, almost two months after the story ran and after more than a year of reporting by AP, Randy Herschaft, an AP researcher on the No Gun Ri project, filed the

Above: Joseph Pulitzer established the prizes that bear his name in his 1904 will. Win a Pulitzer Prize (left) and the first line of your obituary can be sent to the printer. Illustrations by Marc Yankus

AP PHOTO (2)

organization's first official request for Daily's military records.

What these people got back was a one-page synopsis showing that Daily was not with the Seventh Calvary Regiment at the time of the alleged No Gun Ri massacre. *Brill's Content* has learned that Herschaft got his response on December 7, almost two months before the final deadline for Pulitzer submissions. Herschaft would not answer a question about what he did with this information except to say, "The very nature of the reconstruction process is sketchy, and there are gaps." (Part of Daily's military record was destroyed in a 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis; however, Daily's record was reconstructed and includes the period during which the No Gun Ri massacre is alleged to have occurred.)

Furthermore, a historian says one of the authors of the story, Charles Hanley, wrote to him in an e-mail on March 27—two weeks before the Pulitzer Prizes were announced—saying, "I don't believe anyone in our copy is all he has ever said he was, and our interviews, obviously, are rife with bulls--t and deceptions. In the journalism, as I said, we sought the least common denominator...." In the e-mail, Hanley challenges anyone with conflicting documents concerning Daily's military record to "show me."

Hanley is on leave from AP and did not return two e-mail messages and two telephone calls asking for comment. Kelly Smith Tunney, AP's director of corporate communications, says that Hanley's remarks concerning the news agency's interviews were meant only to show that historical reconstructions are complicated and often convoluted. "It was like a giant jigsaw puzzle," she says. In response to whether Hanley had seen Herschaft's document of Daily's military record, Tunney says, "There were thousands of pages of records, so I think...that's one of the challenges of this kind of reporting...." In the end, Tunney says, AP editors and reporters were convinced they got the story, including Daily's military record, right.

They didn't. Daily himself now concedes he couldn't have been at No Gun Ri. But despite Hanley's feeling that AP's interviews were "rife...with deceptions" and despite the official record of Daily's wartime service, the news organization did not file a correction to its story. Nor did it inform the Pulitzer organization of any discrepancies; Daily's official military record, obtained through the FOIA request, was not included in AP's Pulitzer entry in February. It wasn't until May 25, after lengthy articles by *U.S. News & World Report* and Stripes.com, the online version of the military newspaper *The Stars and Stripes*, showing Daily had not been at No Gun Ri, that Hanley published a follow-up piece under the headline "Ex-GI Acknowledges Records Show He Couldn't Have Witnessed Killings." In that story, on which Herschaft is credited as a contributor, Hanley writes of "[w]artime documents found in government archives by The Associated Press." The *U.S. News* article went further, writing that "military records and sources provide new evidence that three of the men quoted [in the AP piece] may not have been at No Gun Ri at the time of the alleged massacre. Five others, re-interviewed by *U.S. News*, do not support the thesis of the AP story."

"There were discrepancies up the ying-yang," said Tunney on June 8, speaking of Daily's military record. She had just given this reporter a tour of AP's Manhattan headquarters; posters commemorating AP's recent Pulitzer were decorating the hallways. "Randy [Herschaft] decided he was satisfied with the information he had," she said.

For this reason, Tunney now says, AP did not tell the Pulitzer organization of Daily's military record. "There were conflicting records, and many ambiguities, and there were areas of disagreement as well as areas of agreement. They [the reporters] looked at them all and were satisfied," she says.

When asked if there were any plans to re-examine the awarding of the prize in light of evidence that more than half of the quoted eyewitnesses either feel they were misquoted or were not actually at No Gun Ri, Seymour Topping, the administrator of the Pulitzers, replies, "What you refer to as evidence is in dispute." The Pulitzer Prize board—which includes AP president

LEFT TO RIGHT: THE DENVER POST, HELEN H. DAVIS/AP PHOTO; ED BETZ/AP PHOTO; KATHY WILLENS/AP PHOTO

Some of this year's Pulitzer Prize winners upon hearing the news (from left): *The Denver Post*'s Michelle Fulcher and Frank Scandale were part of the team that won for its Columbine coverage; Mark Schoofs of *The Village Voice* won for his series on AIDS in Africa; and Randy Herschaft (left) and Charles Hanley of The Associated Press team that won for its dispatch on an alleged Korean War massacre.

and chief executive officer Louis Boccardi among its 19 members—never met to discuss the revelations. Asked whether the entire incident caused him to worry about the Pulitzer process as a whole, Topping answers, "No."

The Pulitzer Prize: Win one, legend has it, and the first line of your obituary can be sent to the printer. It's the Oscar of the news business, the Nobel of journalism. Pulitzer Prizes bring plush assignments, catapult workaday hacks onto management tracks, attract book agents and eager editors like ants to a picnic. So it would follow that in an industry whose tenets are fairness and accuracy, the Pulitzer, the pinnacle of the profession, is a paragon of these virtues.

But that's not the case. In the 19 years since Janet Cooke won a Pulitzer Prize for a fabricated story she wrote for *The Washington Post*—and just two years after Patricia Smith was named a Pulitzer finalist months before being fired from *The Boston Globe* for making up material in her columns—virtually no safeguards have been installed to ensure that Pulitzer entrants are fair or accurate. Even after questions are raised—about reporting techniques, biases, objectivity, or accuracy—they can be ignored. Indeed, the secretive process by which stories become Pulitzer winners relies on jurors' and board members' instincts, the same instincts that failed to ferret out Cooke's duplicity.

Seymour Topping has served as the administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes since 1993.

AUDREY TOPPING

But the Pulitzer process is threatened by more than just inaccuracy. There are numerous opportunities for conflicts of interest. Although many newspapers bar reporters from covering their friends or writing about subjects in which they have a stake, Pulitzer jurors often sit on committees that consider their employer's work—or the work of their direct competitors—even if they do not discuss their organizations' work. The same is true of the board members who make the final decisions concerning the prizes. Take AP's Boccardi or Donald Graham, the publisher of *The Washington Post*, whose paper won three Pulitzer Prizes this year.

And then there is the unrealistic time frame in which jurors are supposed to read the nominated pieces. In recognition of the workload jurors have faced, the juries were recently expanded from five to seven members for the categories with the most entries; also, each juror is no longer required to read every entry. (Every entry must be read by more than half of the members on any single jury committee.) Still, thousands of stories must be evaluated in three days. This year, for instance, there were 205 entries in the commentary category, each with a cover letter, biographical material, and as many as ten articles. Several jurors on the commentary committee say they tried to read at least half the pieces submitted—say, 1,000 columns—during the first two days of the session and that most of the last day was spent reaching a consensus on three finalists. That translates into 500 columns per day, per person. Put another way, if every juror read for eight straight hours a day, that's one column every 58 seconds.

"It's not perfect," acknowledges Topping, a former *New York Times* editor who has served as administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes since 1993. "But it's a good process....That's why the Pulitzer Prizes have retained the prestige they have today." (The Nobel Prizes, unlike the Pulitzers, usually recognize a body of work, not just that produced in a single year. The Nobels—awarded primarily in subjects such as physics and chemistry—also have a more complex and lengthy review process.)

The AP's Randy Herschaft received a copy of Edward L. Daily's military records, which cast doubt on the validity of the No Gun Ri story, two months before the final deadline for Pulitzer submissions.

On Wednesday, March 1, after two days of slogging through hundreds of articles on the Asian financial crisis, the South American drug wars, and sundry topics in between, five weary jurors were debating which three entries would be their selections as finalists for the Pulitzer Prize in international reporting this year.

The jurors were huddled around a table in the Joseph Pulitzer World Room, located on the third floor of Columbia University's School of Journalism in New York City. The World Room is named for a large stained-glass window that depicts the Statue of Liberty astride two globes. The window came from the old offices of Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*—at one time the country's largest circulation daily—and commemorates the *World*'s role in bringing the statue from France to America. The *World* led the charge to raise money to build a pedestal at the entrance of New York Harbor so that the statue, which was stranded in France, could be installed. The window is illuminated from behind by four floodlights for special occasions; March 1 was such a day.

Some of the initial judging was easy. Joyce Davis, a jury member and the deputy foreign editor for Knight Ridder newspapers, said it had been almost certain that of the three eventual finalists, a package on Kosovo and one on Chechnya would get a nod because "those were the two most important foreign stories of the year."

But what about the third slot? Would it make sense to pick two Kosovo entries? And what of *The Christian Science Monitor*'s work on the East Timor uprising? After all, a frequent *Monitor* contributor, Sander Thoenes, had been killed on the job. As the day progressed, it became clear that the fight for the final slot was between two series on a subject many jury members felt had been played out: AIDS in Africa. The first project was a narrative titled "AIDS and the African" by reporters from *The Boston Globe*; the other was a multifaceted series, written by *The Village Voice*'s Mark Schoofs, that examined the disease's scientific, cultural, and social ramifications. The jury—comprising Davis; John Bussey, *The Wall Street Journal*'s foreign editor; John Maxwell Hamilton, the dean of Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication; Michael Parks, then the editor of the *Los Angeles Times*; and Sally Jacobsen, the international editor for The Associated Press—was split, with Bussey and Hamilton favoring Schoofs's work and Davis and Parks leaning toward the *Globe*'s. Jacobsen, who refused to comment on her role, served as a mediator, according to Davis.

"I thought [the *Globe*'s work] was done more in a way that could reach the average reader," Davis says. "With the *Village Voice* piece, it was so complex, the question was, who could really approach it?"

The daunting scope of Schoofs's work was not Davis's only reservation. Unlike the investigative-reporting jury discussing The Associated Press's No Gun Ri entry, the jurors on the foreign reporting committee questioned some of the conclusions in the piece. In one of the most startling sections of Schoofs's series, the 37-year-old Yale philosophy graduate wrote about East African prostitutes who seem immune to AIDS. The research behind this contention has been trickling into the mainstream media during the past year. Schoofs took this line of thinking to a new level, relying on the work of four scientists to hypothesize that this apparent AIDS immunity disappeared when the prostitutes stopped whoring themselves.

"That raised a lot of eyebrows" on the jury, Davis says, raising her own eyebrows as she speaks over lunch at Washington's National Press Club cafeteria. "He just threw it out there, and it was such a startling contention. There were questions about whether the science was really valid." Eventually, Davis says, she decided Schoofs's work could be trusted; after all, the one-page biography the *Voice* submitted with Schoofs's entry listed several patents he held. "I figured he was probably some type of scientist," she says. But Schoofs is not a scientist; his patents are for swimming flippers he developed during summers while at college.

After winning a Pulitzer in the early 1970s, a photographer—unable to handle the sudden fame—called a press conference to declare that he should be referred to as Jesus Christ.

Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian immigrant with a Jewish father and a Roman Catholic mother, established the Pulitzer Prizes in a will he wrote in 1904. As owner of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*—which his family still controls—and the *New York World*, Pulitzer was one of the most powerful newspaper publishers in America. But by 1904, Pulitzer, at 57, had not been the editor of the *World* for more than a decade and had not set foot inside the *World*'s newsroom since 1890. Moreover, according to an biography posted on the Pulitzer Prize website, Joseph Pulitzer's physical and psychological health was rapidly deteriorating: "Virtually blind, having in his severe depression succumbed also to an illness that made him excruciatingly sensitive to noise, Pulitzer went abroad frantically seeking cures. He failed to find them, and the next two decades of his life he spent largely in soundproofed 'vaults,' as he referred to them, aboard his yacht, *Liberty*...."

Still, the man who had been mocked as "Joey the Jew" in his youth and baited as "Pew-litzer the Jew" during his time as a successful publisher (his name, and that of the prize, is pronounced Pull-itzer) wanted to make sure his renown, and family name, lived on after his death. He designated money in his will for his prizes and for a school of journalism at Columbia University; in 1912, one year after his death aboard *Liberty*, the Columbia School of Journalism was founded. Five years after that, the first Pulitzer Prizes were awarded. Pulitzer planned for four in journalism, four in letters and drama, one in education, and four traveling scholarships.

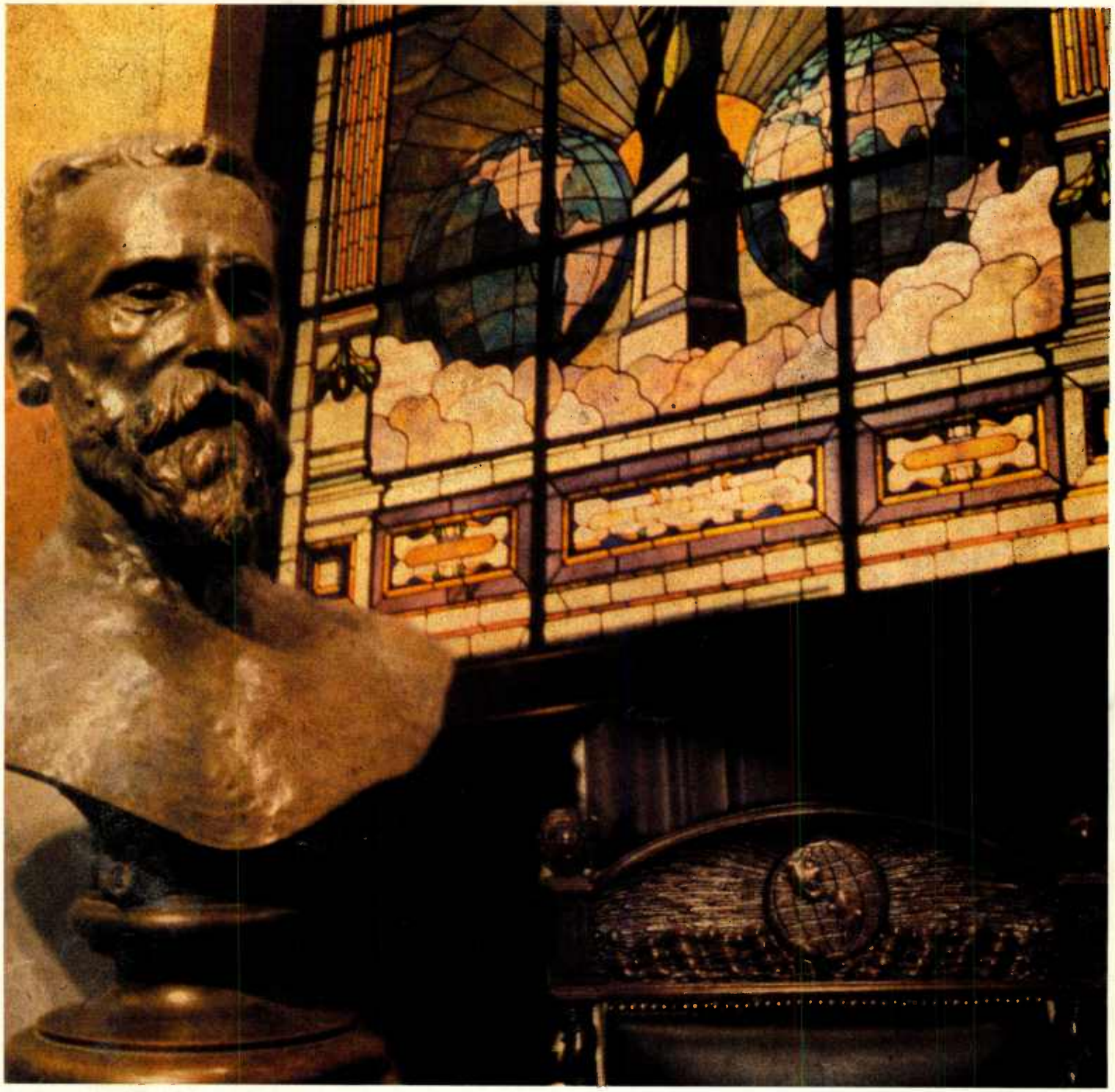
Today, there are 14 journalism awards and seven awards in "Letters, Drama & Music." The public service award, by dint of its societal implications, remains the most prestigious; it is also the only award that must be given to a newspaper and not an individual (although when a winning entry in other categories is credited to three or more people, the citation also goes to the staff of the newspaper). The public service award is the only award that gains its recipient the small, gold medal often associated with the prizes; other winners receive a certificate and $5,000, money often matched by the winner's newspaper in a bonus.

The selection process has changed as well. Although the basic structure—small juries forwarding the names of three finalists to the larger board—remains the same, the board's decisions used to be ratified by Columbia University's board of trustees. This procedure was done away with in 1976, following several contentious discussions about awards for the publication of the Pentagon Papers, reporting on President Richard Nixon's tax returns, and articles detailing the U.S. policy process during the Indo-Pakistani war. Of the switch, *Los Angeles Times* press critic David Shaw wrote in his 1984 book, *Press Watch*, "Many trustees felt uncomfortable paying tribute to journalistic work based on information that many thought had been obtained illegally or improperly." Also, following a host of fractious squabbles in the 1970s between the juries and the board—when the board overturned jury picks or gave the award to an entry a jury had not even considered as a finalist—juries must now submit three finalists, in alphabetical order, for the board to consider. Still, the board has the right to select a winner from outside the submitted list of finalists, or to not select a winner at all.

For decades, the single most vital person in the Pulitzer process has been the prize administrator, a sort of despotic secretary who oversees the entire operation. The current administrator is Topping, a sonorous man with a tuft of white hair, who has a tendency to answer questions in complete paragraphs replete with parenthetical clauses and hypothetical rejoinders; when interrupted, he just plows right on. Before Topping's appointment in 1993, he was with *The New York Times* for 34 years, serving as foreign editor, managing editor, and editorial director for the chain's regional newspapers. Topping's ties to the *Times* are so strong that some of the first questions he answered following his appointment involved his inability to serve impartially. "Editors around the country know me," he was quoted as saying. "They have confidence in my impartiality and my dedication to the principle of the Pulitzer."

An old-school newsman with a reputation for not taking any guff, Topping says he accepted the Pulitzer job because of his sheer love of newspapers. "Because of my personal circumstances, I don't need this job," Topping says in his seventh-floor office overlooking Broadway and 116th Street at Columbia University; by that, he means that he doesn't want for money. Indeed, Topping didn't become the prize administrator until an age when many are focusing on retirement: He was 71 when he succeeded former *Time* and *Newsweek* editor Robert Christopher in 1993.

It is Topping, with the help and guidance of the board, who chooses the dozens of jurors who judge the prizes each year. "The framework is one that...is designed to ensure diversity," Topping says of the jury selection process. "We want jurors that are representative of newspapers across the country....Beyond experience, we take into account gender, ethnic background, large newspapers, small newspapers, geographic spread. All of those things go



A collage of the Joseph Pulitzer World Room at Columbia University in New York City, where the Pulitzer Prize nominations are reviewed.

MARC YANKUS

into it. We also try to get a fair balance among the various chains and particular newspapers." And during the three-day jury process, it is Topping who circulates from table to table in the World Room, answering queries and shepherding selections.

Topping first contacted the men and women who would serve as jurors for the 2000 Pulitzer Prize late last year; many of these prospective jurors had dealt with "Top," as he is known to almost everyone, in the past, either as jurors or previous Pulitzer winners. After figuring out the final list of jurors, Topping mailed out a letter on January 12, in which he thanked the jurors for agreeing to serve and stressed two main points. The jurors would, he wrote, need to select three finalists without preference and to maintain confidentiality "so as to discourage lobbying and speculation which tends to confuse candidates for the prizes." Both of these points are partially a response to the conflicts of years past, when juries would vote on a top choice and then often complain if the board overturned it. The line about "confus[ing] candidates for the [CONTINUED ON PAGE 137]

Weight Loss

Hollywood's new diet phenomenon

Lose up to 10 lbs this weekend!

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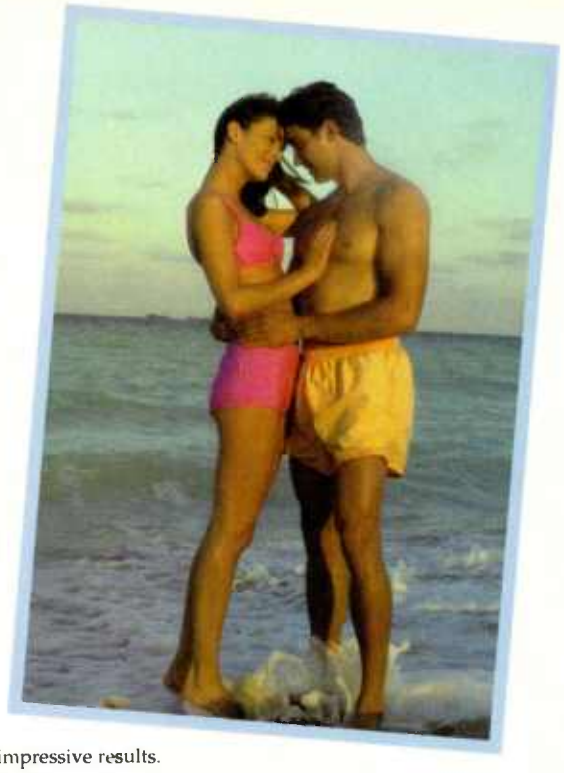
by Pete Johnson



How often have you wasted precious time and money trying to lose weight? Let's see...I've tried every quick-fix, fad diet known to man...even tried the ones where you buy the pre-packaged food. They all seem to take months to show any results... and by that time my motivation is gone! Even straight fasting didn't work for me. Then I read about the Hollywood 48-Hour Miracle Diet and decided to try it—I had nothing to lose but weight—and I did!

The skinny. James Kabler, world famous for his phenomenally successful Six Day Bio Diet, has now launched the faster and easier Miracle Diet. The Hollywood 48-Hour Miracle Diet is a special formulation of all-natural juices and botanical extracts so it looks like an ordinary bottle of juice—and works like a miracle! For two days you give up all bad food habits. In place of fats, sugars and artificial ingredients, you flood your body with the vitamins, minerals and essential oils found in this amazing juice. Just mix half of it with an equal amount of cold water and sip it throughout the day. It's so easy. There's no measuring or combining foods, no counting calories or points, no hassle. It's that easy.

Hollywood's best-kept diet secret. This amazing diet has been rushed to the sets of E.R., Friends, plus many of today's biggest celebrities. It's what actors, actresses and models use to fit into those sleek suits and sexy dresses—fast! And it's so delicious, refreshing and satisfying that it's featured on the menu of the famous Hollywood Hills Cafe. This phenomenal weight-loss program is great for anyone because you only have to stay on it for 2 DAYS TO SEE RESULTS! Ideal for people who have a special occasion coming up and want to look and feel their best—fast. High-school reunions, weddings, even that trip to Hawaii are all great reasons to lose a quick ten!

Detoxify your system. Based on the time-tested and popular European method of periodic cleansing of the body, the all-natural, citrus-flavored juice supplies your body with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, essential oils and other cleansing ingredients that detoxify and rejuvenate your body, while you shed pounds. And it supplies more than 100% of the U.S.R.D.A. of 12 essential vitamins in every serving.

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Michael J., Chicago Illinois

"My boyfriend called and invited me to go sailing. I quickly did the Hollywood's 48-Hour Miracle Diet, lost 8 pounds and got into my bathing suit."
Jennifer T., San Diego, CA

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BOOKS

Hand-wringing over privacy in society • Electronic best-sellers • Law and pop culture blur • The return of the graphic novel • An African-American success story? • Rousseau's *Dream* makes a comeback • How the Talmud and the Internet speak the same language • At work on a new biography of Alfred Hitchcock • Questions and answers about the process of writing

BUSTING THE PRIVACY POLICE

BY MARK BOAL

When future Supreme Court justice Louis D. Brandeis and his law partner Samuel D. Warren wrote their seminal essay on privacy for the *Harvard Law Review*, it was a time of technological upheaval similar in many respects to our own. The year was 1890, and the telephone, telegraph, phonograph, and instant photograph—all invented within a four-decade span—were just beginning to change the world. Some commentators were utopian, but Brandeis and Warren were suspicious of the new technologies, seeing speedy communications as aiding the uncivil impulses of society. They worried most about the press. "Instantaneous photographs and newspaper enterprise have invaded the sacred precincts of private and domestic life," degrading the culture and endangering the body politic. So they created a legal argument to keep the press and their gadgets at bay, deeming it a "right to privacy" and a "right to be let alone."

Now, more than a hundred years later, in another era of rapid technological growth, Brandeis and Warren's anxiety about privacy-invading technology has risen again. This time around, privacy has spawned something of a cottage industry. There are think tanks devoted to protecting privacy, and foundations dispensing grants for its further study. In Washington, D.C., there's a pro-privacy coalition that has grown broad enough to support its own loyal opposition. Privacy law, once a legal backwater, is suddenly a hot career track. There are fears about medical privacy, financial privacy, and Internet privacy. Stories feeding on these fears sell copies of *Business Week* and *Time*, support newsletters and websites, and provide easy fodder for talk show titan Larry King, who recently asked the host of CBS's surveillance drama, *Survivor*, "What's happening to privacy?"

NICK DEWAR

Then there are the books. There's a brisk trade for overheated titles such as Simson Garfinkel's *Database Nation: The Death of Privacy in the 21st Century* (O'Reilly & Associates) and Jeffrey Rosen's *The Unwanted Gaze: The Destruction of Privacy in America* (Random House), which was recently christened by *The New York Times* as "the definitive text on privacy perils in the digital age." These volumes sometimes stoop to fear mongering, but should not be dismissed on that account alone. What's happening to privacy is indeed sca:

serious, and regrettable, but it's also inevitable.

There's no stopping America from becoming a place that blurs the boundary between public and private—a surveillance society. The reason is that documentation and control, and the attendant loss of privacy, are as inseparable from mass society as the computer is from the Information Age. Surveillance is no mere instrument of the press, or "black hat" technologists (in hacker parlance), or law enforcement. It is bound up in the very structure of modern institutions, for only via surveillance can centralized bureaucracies keep tabs on—and influence the behavior of—large numbers of people. To put the point another way, complex social structures, such as the Internet, depend on surveillance for their survival.

But why let that fact get in the way of a good story? From the news media, we expect a dose of self-help along with our daily doom and gloom, and lately they're delivering (this magazine is no exception; see "Privacy Under Siege," May) with stories that foretell the end of privacy, only to offer five handy steps to protect yourself from online snoops. Books can strike a more complex chord, but to sell they still have to climax in a major key. So it's no surprise that both Rosen and Garfinkel—not to mention privacy insider Robert Ellis Smith, whose self-published *Ben Franklin's Web Site: Privacy and Curiosity from Plymouth Rock to the Internet* is useful and informative—allow themselves the luxury of optimism underneath their pessimistic prognostications. These tomes begin and end with the argument that technology has conspired to diminish privacy, but that better laws or a more active citizenry can turn things around.

Rosen, an associate professor at the George Washington University Law School and legal affairs editor at *The New Republic*, does an admirable job explaining how legal safeguards have declined since the 19th century. A personal diary was considered sacrosanct then, and even earlier in history, Rosen explains, defendants used privacy law as a shield against government invaders. But by the close of the 20th century, Ken Starr could legally seize Monica Lewinsky's hard drive, even though she hadn't been charged with a crime. The Supreme Court is largely to blame. It slid backward on this issue, from staunchly supporting privacy at the turn of the century to vitiating it gradually over the next hundred years.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO PRIVACY IS INDEED SCARY, SERIOUS, AND REGRETTABLE, BUT IT'S ALSO INEVITABLE.

But Rosen fails to present a sustained analysis of why the courts reversed course. He takes only a few steps back from the microcosm of legal theory, never fully developing a larger view. An unparalleled explanation of the social forces that form the backbone of the surveillance society is sociologist James Rule's 1973 classic, *Private Lives and Public Surveillance: Social Control in the Computer Age*, now out of print. After studying databanks in England and America, Rule concluded that every large organization (political, corporate, or social) in a mass society relies on data collection and monitoring in order to pierce the surface uniformity of the population and reach people on an individual level.

The larger the scale of the organization, or the society, the more intense and personal the surveillance must necessarily be. Throughout history, greater societal complexity has entailed a rise in surveillance; this has been going on since the first census helped the British Empire solidify its domain. Indeed, it's been going on for so long that the futility of the current privacy movement sometimes reminds me of a man who opens an umbrella when he's already wet.

One clear example of this relationship is the recent history of the Internet. The Net began with a bias toward openness; it was built for a community of colleagues who knew each other and wanted to share information easily. Data flew over the network in packages as sealed as a postcard. But when the dotcoms boomed, the system was forced to evolve to a higher level of complexity. Companies had to track customers, advertisements, and each other in order to earn a buck. And so—not only out of greed but also out of the imperative to survey and control a medium unsuited to commerce—the first Internet monitoring devices were born.

Still, Garfinkel argues that we can take protective measures against the privacy-invading technologies already pouring out of high-tech factories. If we don't, he says, we'll soon be living in a transparent society, with surveillance cameras, biometric scanners, and genetic planners having the run of the place. But he concludes hopefully: "Privacy is certainly on the ropes in America today, but so was the environment in 1969....There are signs around us indicating that privacy is getting ready to make a comeback as well." But, for the moment, this analogy doesn't stick. It takes a long time for a movement to mature, to reach political viability, and privacy activists are far from the power centers. They're even outgunned in Europe, where a European Union directive prohibits the commercial trade of personal information. That directive recently lost much of its meaning, thanks to a deal the U.S. Department of Commerce struck exempting American corporations from its reach.

How long will it take privacy to gain a foothold in Washington? Take Garfinkel's environmental analogy a little further. Fuel efficiency standards weren't seriously proposed until 60 years after Henry Ford's Model T began polluting, and by then portions of the ozone layer had already been vaporized. Assume that a similar dynamic holds true here: The first generation of surveillance-enabling computers was born in the sixties. So at best, we shouldn't expect significant privacy legislation for another two to three decades. But even that outlook may be too rosy. Just as the Industrial Revolution altered our relationship to natural resources, so too will the information revolution alter our relationship to personal data. There's a fortune to be gained by mining that data (the exact value of which economists might usefully measure), and who realistically expects that privacy won't be sacrificed for profit?

In the future, our privacy worries may look as quaint as Brandeis and Warren worrying about the instant photograph and the telephone. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't mourn the way privacy is diminishing at the present moment. We can grieve before the inevitable death. Doing so just puts us in that awkward but familiar position of feeling both too early and too late. ■

BEHIND THE BOOK

THE BUSINESS

THE E-BOOK REVOLUTION The Microsoft Reader e-book program for PCs debuted in August. And although the runaway success of Stephen King's e-book *Riding the Bullet* caught the publishing industry off-guard, digital books have been the next big thing for some time. Indeed, while traditional print publishers were busy poring over *The New York Times*'s best-seller list, online e-book houses—which digitally publish everything from computer manuals to bodice-rippers to management guides and beyond—have been quietly compiling their own such lists. Here's a sampling of the hot titles on the digital frontier. While it may not look like the best-seller lists you're used to, never fear—the revolution, after all, has just begun.

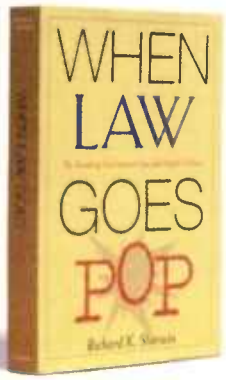
MIGHTYWORDS.COM
A Glimpse of Heavenly Miracles
(stories about death and the afterlife)
How to Make & Market Gel Candles That Sell Like Wildfire!
(plus visuals and reference material)
Attract Anything With Your Mind Instantly!
("secret techniques" to attract money, sex, and more)

XLIBRIS.COM
Piers Anthony's *Refugee* and *Mercenary*
(from the cult science-fiction writer)
Bent Wings (a memoir of Air Force service)
Laugh Factory (public speaking tips from a former deputy U.S. attorney general)

REEL-LIFE DRAMA

BY JULIE SCELFO

Everyone loves a good courtroom drama. Legal stories have long dominated television and movies—from *Perry Mason* and *The Practice* to *Inherit the Wind* and *Erin Brockovich*. And the media love courtrooms too; witness our fascination with O.J. Simpson and JonBenét Ramsey. In *When Law Goes Pop: The Vanishing Line between Law and Popular Culture* (The University of Chicago Press), Richard K. Sherwin offers a much-needed look at this interplay and what he considers its threat to the credibility of America's legal system.



Sherwin, a professor at New York Law School and former New York County assistant district attorney, argues that the public's obsession with all things legal is nothing new; he cites the 1859 prosecution of radical abolitionist leader John Brown as the first case to receive widespread media attention. But in today's environment, the "increasing confusion between fiction and reality defines our era culturally," Sherwin says. "We thought that law was the last bastion of reason, but it turns out that law, too, like other areas such as advertising, journalism and politics, is being increasingly affected by the juggernaut of entertainment."

Sherwin's concerns are not purely theoretical: He contends that there are real implications when the public learns about law (and about lawyers and the legal process) mainly through visual media. Viewers—potential jurors, after all—become used to the dramatic, often fictional devices that are common to TV and the movies, which, in turn, compels lawyers to tailor their legal arguments accordingly. The result, in Sherwin's view, is a threat to justice, as court proceedings are tainted by the "image-based logic of popular culture."

Given the scope and complexity of the problem, Sherwin's interdisciplinary approach is useful. The book is a bit heavy at times; Sherwin gets lost in jargon—one section is titled "Skeptical Versus Affirmative Postmodernism"—and theories made famous by other authors abound. But his knowledge of how media culture affects the courtroom is valuable, as is his rigorous examination. Can we prevent America's legal system from going "pop"—losing its legitimacy by becoming just another part of popular culture? Given America's courtroom obsession—from the fictional life of *Ally McBeal* to the surreal coverage of Elián González—it's about time someone did some explaining. ■

BEHIND THE BOOK | THE SERIES EDITOR

Chip Kidd

Chip Kidd has always loved comics, but he probably never thought he'd have the opportunity to be a comic-book editor himself. Kidd, the star of Alfred A. Knopf's team of book-cover designers, fell in love with Chris Ware's devastating and elegant graphic short story *I Guess* when he read it in *Raw* magazine in the early nineties. The two became friends, and Kidd, determined to find Ware a larger audience, approached Dan Frank, the editorial director of Knopf Publishing Group's Pantheon Books, with samples of Ware's work. Frank was enthusiastic and helped Kidd acquire Ware's book *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* and the collection of another underground favorite, Daniel Clowes. The Pantheon graphic novels series was revived, with Kidd its acquiring editor, project designer, and staunch advocate.

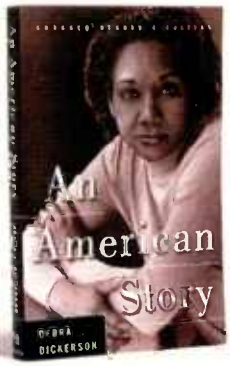
That Pantheon is one of Knopf's sister imprints aside, Kidd couldn't have asked for a better publishing house to launch such a series; Pantheon was publishing graphic novels—most notably Art Spiegelman's two-volume *Maus* in 1986 and 1991 and Matt Groening's pre-*Simpsons* "Life in Hell" series beginning in 1986—before the resurgence of comics as a legitimate storytelling medium. But graphic novels are difficult to publish; expensive, time-consuming, and rarely lucrative, they're largely the domain of small, specialized independent houses such as Fantagraphics Books, Inc., which published chapbooks by Clowes and Ware. Still, as Kidd describes the series's lavish production and potential projects, one almost forgets that publishers aren't supposed to take such risks. "It's a different visual language," says Kidd. "It's beautiful storytelling...just in a different genre." HANYA YANAGIHARA

Panels from artist Chris Ware's forthcoming book, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*

AMERICAN STORY?

BY KAJA PERINA

Debra J. Dickerson was born in 1959 to former sharecroppers and grew up in a St. Louis ghetto. In an autobiography, *An American Story* (Pantheon Books), by turns harrowing and inspiring, Dickerson, a smart, sassy contributor to such publications as *The Village Voice*, *Slate*, and *U.S. News & World Report*, recounts her journey from star pupil bused into a mostly white elementary school to training-school wing commander and chief intelligence officer in the Air Force and finally to Harvard Law School student. Dickerson struggles in the book with her identity as an overachieving black woman, and it is her self-proclaimed status as a perennial outsider that has engendered some of the book's boldest critiques. Dickerson spares no one, from African-American welfare recipients to the black elite. "With leaders who can be bought off with a plane ride, no wonder the Dems take the black vote completely for granted," she writes, relating an exchange in which she took former NAACP chapter president Hazel Dukes to task for being so easily impressed with what she thinks were candidate Bill Clinton's empty gestures toward the African-American community. Dickerson is similarly disgusted when a summer associate at a prestigious law firm cries discrimination because a deejay hired for a firm party spurns a request for reggae music: "Millions...invested in an attempt to lure blacks to the firm and it all comes down to reggae at the company picnic. For this Martin died on a filthy balcony? For this, four little girls died at Sunday school?"



But as revealing as Dickerson's endless criticism can be, it is just as often unenlightened and redundant, making her inspirational story a sometimes tedious read. And the larger conclusions she thinks she draws often seem arbitrary. As a research assistant to Harvard Law professor Randall Kennedy, for example, Dickerson watches black students who privately disparage him approach him for recommendations. This leads her to cast many blacks at Harvard as hypocritical and opportunistic. Such generalizations have their frustrating converse in incidents that warrant, but never receive, racial or social analy-

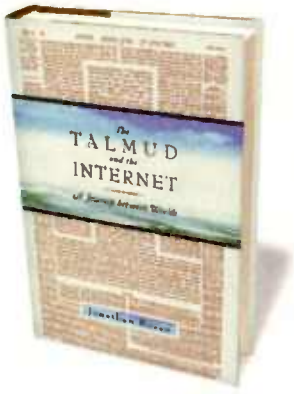
BOOKS: LUIS HENRIQUE SEABRA; KIDD: MARION ETTLINGER

sis. Dickerson vehemently points out that her troubled brother received all the affirmation that she, the overachiever, was denied. This complaint is repeated mantra-like, but Dickerson never considers how it might reflect the treatment of males in many American families.

Indeed, this memoir's most palpable component is its bitterness, and although Dickerson's anger is often justified, it isn't always well expressed. Recalling her difficult decision to leave the Air Force after a dozen years of outstanding service, she writes: "Recounting it here makes it all seem very simple and straightforward, but I truly believe this is the point at which I developed hypertension....Aside from myself to worry about, I still had family responsibilities—I wasn't some Kennedy who could just disappear and find herself with the aid of an expensive shrink." These unnecessary assertions grow tiresome. It's clear that Dickerson's progress is hard-won, but her worldview is rife with contradictions. A better edit could easily have eliminated the redundancies and encouraged a fuller analysis of Dickerson's complicated racial and socioeconomic politics. It's clear that alienation is still Dickerson's way out of the black/white, elite/working class, conservative/liberal dualities into which she's constantly thrust. But perhaps the book's greatest contradiction lies in its generic title. Classifying Dickerson's life, success story though it is, as a simple up-by-the-bootstraps tale is a misguided attempt to universalize what has obviously been a singularly embittering experience. ■

WEB WISDOM

BY SETH MNOOKIN



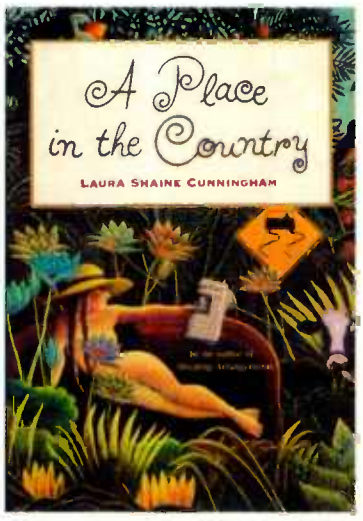
Too often, writers dealing with either religion or technology communicate with a haughty dependence on the arcana of their fields. If you don't already have a working knowledge of the Gnostic scriptures or can't discourse on the philosophical underpinnings of a browser as a metaphor for society, these writers seem to imply, you're not worth trying to reach.

Jonathan Rosen is not such a writer. His slim volume, *The Talmud and the Internet: A Journey between Worlds* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), is a rare achievement: a work that will be meaningful to experts and ignorants alike, at once thought-provoking and approachable. More, it is a delicate and beautiful book, one that steps back from the overwhelming complexity of our lives and suggests a new framework with which to view the world. (Rosen and I used to be colleagues at the *Forward*, a weekly Jewish newspaper.)

Rosen's book grew out of the death of his maternal grandmother; he had been keeping a journal of her dying on his home computer. Naturally, that journal was the only thing that wasn't backed up when Rosen's computer crashed. And so, Rosen thought, he had lost these memories. This dual loss, of his grandmother and of his recorded memories of her, prompted Rosen to search the Internet—where "universities were all assembling vast computer-text libraries," or so he thought—for one of John Donne's meditations.

Finding that meditation ("All mankind is of one author and is one volume") proved harder than Rosen had thought. Those imagined libraries were not online, and each time he hoped a thread would lead to his goal, pulling on it brought him to a new, unexpected place. Rosen did eventually find Donne's writing—on a software designer's homepage, no less—but by that time he had begun thinking about how the Internet was so like the collection of Jewish teachings known as the Talmud, a bookshelf's worth of volumes containing cross-referenced and convoluted arguments held by rabbis with one another, and with their predecessors, across the centuries. The Internet, Rosen thought, could be described with the same words an ancient Jewish sage had used to describe the Talmud: "Turn it and turn it, for everything is in it." And both the Internet and the Talmud help us understand our own lives, serving as metaphors for the willy-nilly ways in which

FURTHER EVIDENCE OF DEFORESTATION



Henri Rousseau's 1910 junglescape, *The Dream* (above), has been invaded by bourgeois bohemians.

David Brooks's recent book (above center) labels this high-concept, high-maintenance group "Bobos," America's ruling class. It's understandable, then, that his cover was originally going to update an archetypal painting: Grant Wood's *American Gothic*. That painting turned out to be a bit *too* archetypal, however. Simon & Schuster art director Michael Accordino opted for *The Dream* when he realized just how often *American Gothic* had been parodied.

Laura Shaine Cunningham's memoir (above right) details her quest for all Bobos' holy grail—a second home—so she took the idea of the Rousseau image to her publisher. "*The Dream* for me meant the dream of a place in the country," she said. The idea of using modern details was hers as well. "The warning sign is a little wink at the pitfalls of buying country property. She's wearing my hat. And if you study *The New York Times*, you see a picture of my house!" KAJA PERINA

we get from one place to the next.

These thoughts are laid out in the first chapter of Rosen's book, which makes up about a tenth of this, his first work of nonfiction (he is the author of the novel *Eve's Apple*). That chapter was first written as an essay for *The American Scholar*; the rest of the book was born of its promise. And it shows.

The bulk of *The Talmud and the Internet* has no formal allegory or structure beyond the premises set out in that first section; the result is an occasionally meandering journey through Rosen's upbringing, his heritage, his love of reading, and his religious and personal convictions.

There are moments of stark clarity and shimmering poetry. But the book does not always hold together as part of a single rhetorical puzzle. Henry Adams and Odysseus, exile and the Holocaust, Proust and northern California's earthquakes: All these are roped together by Rosen's intellectual and actual journeys, and the connections, while ambitious, are sometimes tenuous.

Rosen's deep-rooted knowledge of Jewish tradition and culture results in a collection of wonderful tales, such as the story about the rabbi whose soul could not depart for heaven because his students' prayers were keeping him bound to earth. In contrast, Rosen's lack of awareness of cyberspace reveals an almost childlike sense of wonder for innovations that are commonplace and, sometimes, undeserving of the attention he gives them. But Rosen's larger point—that the Internet and the Talmud can serve a similar function, to offer a sense of completeness and understanding out of disorder—continually feels fresh and provocative with each new parallel. And the intersecting poignant and wonderfully written scenes from Rosen's life—as he confronts birth and death and slaughter and rejuvenation—would hold up as a touching intellectual memoir on their own.

Toward the end of his book, Rosen offers up the Internet as a tool for society to deal with the "loss of our own center." Rosen suggests cyberspace will connect society much as the Talmud has bound together generations of rabbinic scholars. The Internet's very anarchy offers a connection and purpose so elusive in life. I'm not sure I agree. The Internet seems too solitary, too fundamentally lonely. Despite the ubiquitousness of chat rooms and online communities, actual human contact and discourse binds me to society and to my own center. Indeed, it is books like this one—books that I can hand to a friend, and then heatedly debate over coffee—that infuse me with a sense of connection to the people around me, and to generations before and after. "The loose, associative logic of the Internet, and the culture it reflects, is not merely a mirror of the disruptions of a broken world but offers a kind of disjointed harmony," Rosen writes. I would say the same thing about *The Talmud and the Internet*. ◘

UNIVERSAL PICTURES/ARCHIVE PHOTOS

BEHIND THE BOOK

OPEN ON MY DESK

THIS MONTH, PATRICK McGILLIGAN DISCUSSES WHAT HE'S READING FOR HIS CURRENT PROJECT

Film historian Patrick McGilligan has been working on his biography of Alfred Hitchcock for three years, and he is just past the halfway mark in his research and writing. It's a long, slow, painstaking process, made especially difficult, he says, by the abundance of writing already available about the director, and the resulting popular preconceptions: "Hitchcock as voyeur, Hitchcock as homosexual provocateur, Hitchcock and his sadomasochism. The most daunting thing in Hitchcock's case is that everybody thinks they know [him]." The public was less familiar with the other directors McGilligan has taken on—he's written biographies of Fritz Lang, George Cukor, and Robert Altman—and so there wasn't the same pressure to dig up something new, which he is determined to do. "The whole task of the book," he says, "really has to be to find out what hasn't been found out before, about a person whom everyone has been scurrying around for ten or 20 years trying to find everything out about."

Particularly intimidating for McGilligan at first were three widely read books on the director: John Russell Taylor's authorized biography, *Hitch: The Life and Times of Alfred Hitchcock*, published in 1978; Donald Spoto's more critical biography, *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*, published in 1983 and rereleased last year to coincide with the Hitchcock centennial; and legendary French director François Truffaut's 1984 collection of interviews, *Hitchcock*. After reacquainting himself with these works, however, McGilligan says he began to notice gaps and inadequacies, open areas he could explore. Most books, he says, focus on Hitchcock's Hollywood years and on his most popular films—*Vertigo*, *Psycho*, and *The Birds*. This is especially problematic in the biographies, McGilligan explains, where writers often make judgments about the director's life and personality based on these films—his cruelty, his misogyny—and then retroactively fit their conclusions into cursory treatments of his early life. McGilligan thought he might be able to tell a different, fuller story if he explored these neglected years in depth, from the director's birth, in 1899, to 1939, the year before Hitchcock's first Hollywood film, *Rebecca*. McGilligan found himself especially drawn to the years before 1926, when no one had ever heard of Hitchcock.

"Someone's early life is always key; it's always a foundation; it's always very essential," the author stresses. So he began his research in the director's birthplace—London. His approach: Scour Hitchcock's neighborhood, town, schools, church, and workplaces, and then combine that with his existing research and knowledge of Hitchcock's films and career. He believes that contemporaneous accounts are supremely important for any biographer. From Hitchcock's early life, McGilligan found newspapers, alumni newsletters, parish bulletins, class lists, journals, letters, records, and even a few surviving witnesses.

Alfred Hitchcock

The tentative title of McGilligan's book, scheduled to be published next year, is *Darkness and Light*, an apparent reference and challenge to Spoto's biography. In Hitchcock's life, McGilligan says, "there is darkness and there is light. There's not just this dark, sadistic person." ELIZABETH HELFGOTT

This article is excerpted from contentville.com, where the full text can be found.

BEHIND THE BOOK

AUTHOR Q&A

Sidney D. Kirkpatrick is the author of *The Messenger: Edgar Cayce, His Life and Legacy*, a biography of the renowned medium (Riverhead Books).

How did you get the idea for your book?

The idea wasn't mine. I arrogantly believed that anyone interested in a trance medium was either fooling himself or the unwitting victim of fraud. Then along came Nancy Thurlbeck, a longtime student of the Edgar Cayce readings, who asked me to read *There Is a River*, a 40-year-old biography of the so-called sleeping prophet of Virginia Beach....Having finally read the book, I had to admit that Cayce's life was one of the most appealing modern-day adventure stories I had ever read. Then the detective in me took over and there was no turning back. I was no longer asking myself whether or not Cayce actually did what he was alleged to have done but rather how he had done it and what was the true purpose of his work. That's when the detective in me took over.

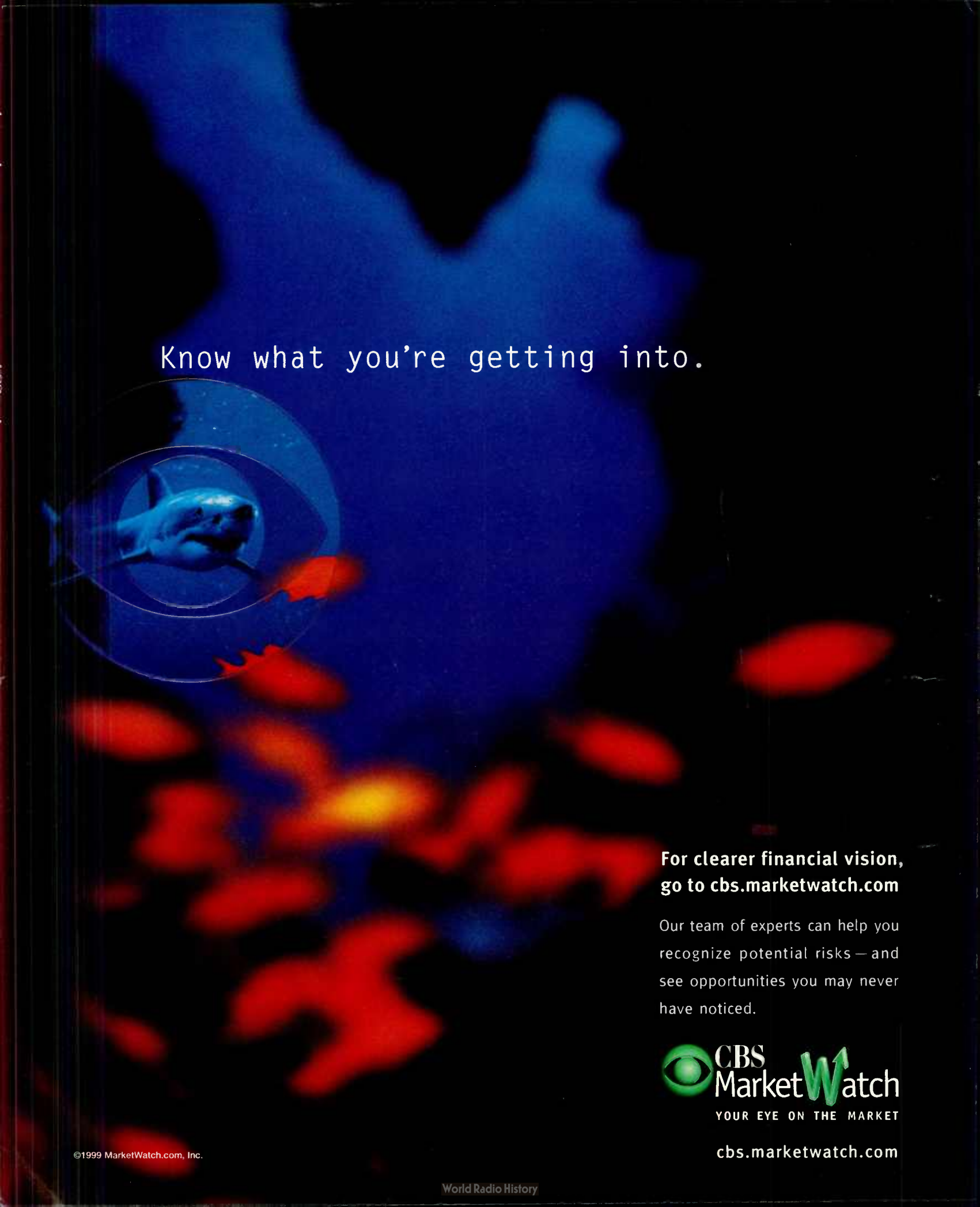
What is your favorite chapter in the book and why?

Since most of Cayce's readings were given 60 or more years ago, the odds were against finding living people who had requested and received readings. Thus, Nancy and I were delighted when...we found living people to interview. These chapters, such as the one on the child mystic, Faith Harding, are invariably the best.

What is the best advice about writing anyone ever gave you and who gave it?

I have received two important pieces of advice. The first is from a private detective in Dallas who told me, "Never assume; always verify." I have since come to believe that this is the first and most important task of any nonfiction writer. The second...is from an attorney at Dutton who once told me to only write about dead people. I think he's right. You are less likely to be sued and can go to sleep at night knowing that the subject of your book isn't going to wake you up...with an idea that can't wait until morning.

This article is excerpted from contentville.com, where the full text can be found.



A POWERFUL SITE FOR INSIDE NEWS

Inside.com, a much-hyped website for media and entertainment professionals, debuted this spring. Insiders are indeed reading the site—but not for the reasons its founders envisioned. By Jesse Oxfeld

For certain media folks, the biggest event so far this year had nothing to do with Elián González or the presidential election. For them, the biggest event was the launch of a website. But it wasn't just any website; it was one that claimed as its founders two big-name journalists and promised to deliver both dish and data about the media industry.

That website is Inside.com. It is the creation of Powerful Media Inc., the company—named with hiply ironic self-aggrandizement—formed by Kurt Andersen, who cofounded *Spy*, edited *New York*, and writes for *The New Yorker*; Michael Hirschorn, who was the editor of *Spin*; and Deanna Brown, who was associate publisher of *Brill's Content* at its launch. The Inside.com press kit says the site is "devoted to providing...mission-critical information for professionals in the music, film, television, radio, magazine, newspaper, web- and book-publishing industries."

It's an ambition as exciting as it is audacious. If Inside.com offered only run-of-the-mill within-the-business news and information (news briefs, trend stories, job changes) in its five sections—TV, Film, Music, Media, and Books—it would be competing with a wide range of trade publications: The weeklies *Broadcasting & Cable* and *Electronic Media* cover television; weekly and daily *Variety* and the daily *Hollywood Reporter* cover film, television, and music; the weeklies *Billboard* and *Hits* report on music; the weekly *Editor & Publisher* and the monthly *Folio* cover newspapers and magazines, respectively; and, finally, *Publishers Weekly* covers book publishing. All of these publications have regularly updated Web presences (and there are dozens more highly targeted newsletters published for people in these fields). Among these nine journals alone, there are more than 600 years of experience and a combined editorial staff of more than 400. (Inside.com added Digital, a sixth area featuring information mostly repurposed from elsewhere on the site, as we went to press.)

When last counted, Inside.com's masthead listed 57 contributors and staffers. It's a talented 57. Many of the writers and editors are alumni of those very trade journals, and of media and entertainment beats at major publications; some spent time working in the businesses they now chronicle. Hirschorn, Inside's editor in chief, says he's not really trying to compete with the trades. "I think we're complementing them," he tells me in a phone interview. "What we think is that we can bring deeper analysis and perspective, as well as timeliness—which may seem to be contradictory goals, but I think we're actually pulling it off." Inside.com will be less comprehensive than the trades, he says, but will be "smarter, better, and faster."

Maybe so, but the trades are still out there, covering Inside.com's beats. How can this new site attract readers—and make money—in a crowded marketplace, especially when content sites have recently had difficulty staying afloat? Inside.com's idea—what its founders said, repeatedly, would differentiate it from the existing pack—was its "mission-critical" databases, which would archive statistics and information and be so easily searchable and so comprehensive that they'd become indispensable resources for industry professionals. "We want to go way off the deep end with our data," Hirschorn told *The Boston Globe* in one widely quoted remark, "so that you could roll around in the stuff for hours."

The plan, then, was for Inside.com to make most of its money in two ways. First, the site would try to attract lots of visitors to the free sections, which would, in turn, attract lots of paid advertisements. Inside would also sell subscriptions, charging $199 per year to industry pros, who would feel they had to read the site to keep up with their industry's news, gossip, and trends. But the main draw for those pros, as described repeatedly in prelaunch interviews and articles about Inside, would be those databases.

The site's news and analysis—the information that, at least through mid-July, when we went to press, was available for free—have been receiving high marks. The site's front page is dominated by Inside's take on various media developments, many of which constitute its strongest material: intelligent, informed looks at those stories—maybe a day or two after they've broken elsewhere but with new reporting and fresh insights. When news broke, for example, that the much-acclaimed but ratings-challenged sitcom *Sports Night* would not, after all, be picked up by HBO, Inside.com dutifully reported a short news story at the time—and followed up the next week with an interesting, behind-the-scenes recounting of the show's final gasps. Tom Bierbaum, a longtime *Variety* reporter, writes a daily Nielsen-ratings analysis. Six daily digests—one general, five subject-specific—provide comprehensive wrap-ups of relevant coverage in the other trade publications and the popular press.

Interestingly, two months after Inside.com's launch, its readers say it's not the databases but that free stuff—the reporting, the analysis, the wrap-ups—that keeps them coming back. Each Inside subject area has its own complement of databases. Once you click past the front page and enter, for example, the Music section, you'll find additional news coverage, as well as

two databases that calculate first-week sales predictions in different ways. In one, Inside.com's panel of six music executives predicted that Mötley Crüe's latest album, *New Tattoo*, would sell 40,666 copies in its first week, and in the other, posted just after the album went on sale, the site projected total first-week sales of only 25,000 copies, based on first-day numbers. But one of the music-industry professionals I spoke with points out that labels have their own staffs for such predictions.

It's not just the music executives who find the databases superficial. Dawn Davis, a senior editor at Vintage Books, stresses that she heads to the site for its news. "It gives a nice, bite-sized overview of what's going on," she says. Indeed, the half-dozen book-industry people I spoke with saw little use for such database features as the Book Tracker, which aims to provide a catalog of noteworthy (read: with movie potential) books. This archive also lists such data points as a title's agent and publisher and who holds its paperback, serial, and film rights. Members of the tight-knit publishing community say it's information they can and do gather on their own.

Christian McLaughlin is a producer at a Universal-based film company and the kind of subscriber the site is targeting. Although he's spent a lot of time on Inside.com, he considers the Film section's databases "just window dressing around the stories." The databases offer, among other things, a schedule for upcoming releases, and an archive of movie producers' purchases of new source material. Another displays daily box-office totals. It's an impressive collection of information, but, McLaughlin notes, "they don't have anything that's proprietary." Release dates, source-material purchases, and box-office figures are readily available from the trades and their websites.

The TV section serves two masters: Some data is aimed at people in the TV-news business, and some is for those in entertainment programming. The sole feature for news folks: a daily evening-newscast rundown that lists the stories each of the three network newscasts covered, how long each story ran, its angle, and who reported it. That information is provided by independent network-news analyst Andrew Tyndall, who for years has produced and distributed by fax the more comprehensive weekly *Tyndall Report* about the evening newscasts. Nearly everyone in the business, Tyndall says, is already a subscriber to his weekly version.

For people in entertainment TV, Inside.com features last night's Nielsen ratings as well as ad rates for all the prime-time shows. Nielsen figures are, of course, crucial data to TV people, but they don't need to turn to Inside.com for them. "That's much more available to me through my company," says Jeff Lindsey, a media relations staffer for ABC entertainment. But Lindsey does note the value of the ad-rates chart. He says he gets many calls from people seeking ad rates, but because networks and ad agencies treat that as proprietary information, it's "not something you can usually find." He also appreciates Inside.com's news coverage: "For me, the real upside is that I can go to one place and get recent articles on a topic."

The Media section, for people in the magazine and newspaper businesses, has a database that examines magazines' sell-though rates—the percentage of magazines sent to newsstands that are actually sold—and another on magazines' and newspapers' ad volume. The main failing of the sell-through database is that its numbers are calculated on only a year-to-year basis, not issue to issue, which is when things actually get interesting. (Many editors would be curious to know, for example, how a *Time* cover on Alzheimer's—health stories usually sell well—fared against *Newsweek*'s Harry Potter cover.) And the ad-volume data is nothing new to those in the businesses. "We look at those numbers monthly, and we've got good access to them on the day they come out," says Richard Tofel, the vice-president for corporate communications at Dow Jones & Company, which publishes not only *The Wall Street Journal* but also magazines, including *SmartMoney*. Tofel says he's been reading Inside.com's news content regularly.

IF INSIDE'S STORIES ARE CONSISTENTLY GOOD ENOUGH, ITS READERS CAN MAKE THE CASE TO THEIR BOSSES THAT THE SITE IS A MUST-READ.

So if the industry pros reading the site are more impressed with the free stuff than they are with the databases, where does that leave Inside.com? It might mean that the content that was supposed to be free will increasingly come at a cost. Hirschorn acknowledges that in terms of data, the site hasn't yet reached its potential. "I think some of it we have, some of it we're about to have, and some of it we're hoping to have," he says. "We're pursuing databases on a whole number of ends, some of them proprietary—in the sense that we'd be licensing data—some of which we'd be creating ourselves, and some of which we would be creating with partners." He adds that the company has always known that the full databases wouldn't be "in place for 9 to 12 months."

Hirschorn says that the news and analysis, which have thus far been available for free, will begin moving into the paid column. "The breaking news, most of it will be free, but the deeper data features and the analytical features will be paid," he says. "The understanding is that we're going to be pushing the line forward," meaning that less of the content will be free. Indeed, Tom Bierbaum's rating analyses have always been advertised as paid content (although while I was researching this article, they were available for free), and in late June e-mail service of subject-specific Daily Digests went paid. The downside to making more content paid, of course, is that fewer people can get to it, leaving fewer eyeballs to entice advertisers.

This model—selling subscriptions for online news and analysis—is one that failed for *Slate*, the high-profile, Microsoft-backed Web magazine that covers politics and culture. And Inside.com is in some ways similar to *Slate*: Both are best when delivering reflective news stories that mix opinions and reporting.

That explains the emphasis on data: One of the few content sites on the Web to make money is wsj.com, *The Wall Street Journal*'s subscription-only site, which provides essential information to finance professionals. It offers all the reporting and analytical resources of the *Journal* and Dow Jones Newswires, the full text of the paper's foreign editions, extensive data from "briefing books" on thousands of companies, and links to articles from the *Journal* and other publications. The site works in part because its readers' employers often pay for it.

But it seems that for Inside's audience, data need not be the draw. People like the stories, and if Inside's stories are consistently good enough, its readers can make the case to their bosses that the site is a must-read. And then, as with wsj.com, their companies will pay for it. In that case, it doesn't matter whether a media professional *actually* needs access to the site. It matters only whether a media professional's company *thinks* he needs it. With that dichotomy between user and payer, the perception of Inside.com's usefulness becomes more important than its actual usefulness, and the tremendous hype surrounding the site's launch has then effectively served to prime the payer's pump. So far, it seems to be working: Many of the media-industry professionals I spoke with said they'll want to subscribe to Inside.com when the free trials run out. One person told me her employer had already decided to pay for employees' subscriptions for at least the first year.

And the databases, ephemeral though they might seem to professionals within the industries they cover, may end up being useful to others even in their ephemerality. As media become more intertwined, as book and magazine editors become more concerned with box-office grosses, cursory but reliable cross-industry data can be valuable when it's compiled in one place. Professionals may get better data from their own industry trade journals, but it's nice to have one place where they can get basics on other industries. Remember those nine trade journals reporting on Inside's coverage areas? A year's subscription to all of them would cost $1,780. ■

THEY KNOW THE SCORE

Our scouting report on six major league baseball journalists—and why you should let them take you out to the old ball game. By Lara Kate Cohen

MURRAY CHASS
THE NEW YORK TIMES

B.A., liberal arts, University of Pittsburgh, 1960

Work highlights: Reporter, The Associated Press, Pittsburgh bureau, 1960–63; sportswriter, AP, New York bureau, 1963–69; sportswriter, *The New York Times*, 1969–present

What do you read on a regular basis to stay on top of the game? *I read what other baseball writers write, generally. I like to see what the competition has, and then I'll scan the local papers in Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles.*

Did you ever have dreams of playing in the majors? *No. I had dreams of becoming a newspaper reporter. I played a little bit growing up, and I've played in various softball leagues for 35 years. I never had any delusions or pretensions of being anything more than a recreational softball player.*

What do you do in the off-season? *There's no off-season in baseball....If a journalist didn't cover the developments in the off-season, they wouldn't be much of a writer.*

PETER GAMMONS ESPN

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1963–68

Work highlights: *The Boston Globe*: baseball reporter, columnist, contributor, 1969–99; *Sports Illustrated*: reporter, senior writer, columnist, 1976–78, 1986–90; baseball studio analyst: ESPN's *Baseball Tonight* and *SportsCenter*, 1988–present; senior writer, *ESPN The Magazine*, 1999–present; columnist, ESPN.com, 1999–present

Author: *Beyond The Sixth Game* (Houghton Mifflin, 1985); coauthor: *Rocket Man* (Viking Penguin, 1988)

Declined to be interviewed.

JOE MORGAN ESPN

B.S., physical education, California State University, Hayward, 1990

Work highlights: Major league baseball player: Houston Astros, Cincinnati Reds, San Francisco Giants, Philadelphia Phillies, Oakland Athletics, 1963–84; member, National Baseball Hall of Fame, 1990; analyst, ESPN, 1990–present; World Series analyst: ESPN Radio, NBC, 1997–present

Author (selected works): *Baseball For Dummies* (IDG Books Worldwide, 1998); coauthor, *Joe Morgan: A Life in Baseball* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1993)

What is the biggest difference between television and print baseball journalism? *When you're broadcasting a game you have millions of viewers. Writing is not quite as expansive; the circulation isn't the same. You're scrutinized by more people when doing TV.*

What do you do in the off-season? *I've covered some golf, but I'm usually relaxing....Last year I covered 12 games in 12 cities in 12 straight days, ending up with the league champs and the World Series. At the end of all this it's time to wind down.*

Have you ever had aspirations to manage? *I've had an offer. In fact, there have been times when I went to sleep thinking I was the manager of a team. After a good night's sleep...I've changed my mind.*

TOM VERDUCCI
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

B.A., journalism, Pennsylvania State University, 1982

Work highlights: Sports copy editor, *Today Newspaper*, Coco, Florida, 1982–83; high-school-sports and baseball beat reporter, national baseball columnist, *Newsday* (Melville, NY), 1983–95; contributor, CNN Sports Illustrated, 1997–present; staff writer, senior writer, *Sports Illustrated*, 1993–present

What do you read on a regular basis to stay on top of the game? *I read* The New York Times *on a daily basis. I read the whole paper, not just the sports pages. I also always look at sportspages.com. It's a convenient way to pick and choose things that are topical. If I'm doing a story on the [Chicago] Cubs, I'll look at the Chicago daily papers.*

What sets you apart from other baseball journalists? *I don't know if this sets me apart, but I like to think that I have a good understanding of baseball and a good perspective on the game itself. It's easier for me to do because I'm covering the game from a national perspective.*

SUZYN WALDMAN
WFAN (Sports Radio Network, NYC)

B.A., economics, Simmons College (Boston), 1968

Work highlights: Stage performer, 1968–83, including *Man of La Mancha* and *No, No, Nanette*; play-by-play broadcaster: WPIX, WNYW, MSG, 1996–present; WNBA broadcaster, Lifetime Television, 1999; broadcaster, WFAN, 1987–present

What do you read on a regular basis to stay on top of the game? *I read [on] the Internet daily. I try to read the sports pages from all the major newspapers around the country. I subscribe to sportspages.com, and that keeps me connected. I at the least try to read about the teams the Yankees are going to be playing, and about who's involved in trades.*

Did you ever have any aspirations to play baseball? *No, I never wanted to play. I went to Fenway Park with my grandfather, who had season tickets.*

Where did your interest in covering baseball come from? *You don't have to play the game to love it....Vin Scully and Marv Albert never played their games, but they loved covering [them].*

What is the biggest difference between radio and print journalism? *With radio or TV, you don't have an editor. Whatever you say comes out of your mouth and is there forever. Nobody reads it or proofs it; those of us in radio don't have that luxury.*

PAUL WHITE
BASEBALL WEEKLY

B.A., speech and theater, State University of New York at Oswego, 1972

Work highlights: Sports editor, features editor, weekend editor, news editor, *Times Herald* (Port Huron, MI), 1976–82; sports copy chief, baseball editor, *USA Today*, 1982–91; founding editor, *Baseball Weekly*, 1991–present

What do you read on a regular basis to stay on top of the game? *I always go to sportspages.com. It has links to the sports sections of all the papers around the country.*

Did you ever have dreams of playing in the majors? *Same as any 6- or 7-year-old kid, but it didn't take me a lot of time to realize it was a pipe dream....I was actually a better hockey player. Baseball has always been my first love, but unfortunately I'm not very good at it.*

What sets you apart from other baseball journalists? *The feedback I get from readers is that they see me more as a fan than a journalist. That's kind of fun. At* Baseball Weekly, *we take the approach that we are fans who happen to be in this business rather than journalists that just happen to cover baseball.*

GAMMONS: SCOTT CLARKE/ESPN; MORGAN: RICH ARDEN/ESPN

MAKE NEWS, NOT WAR

Colombian journalist Maria Cristina Caballero trudged deep into war-torn mountains and met face to face with the most feared man in Colombia to get a story. She came back with a peace offering. By Kimberly Conniff

Maria Cristina Caballero followed the instructions: In December 1997, she flew alone to the northern Colombian state of Córdoba. She carried the most recent issue of *Cambio 16* magazine, as she had been told, so that the men waiting for her at the airport could pick her out of the crowd. She had been told to follow two men to a yellow sedan with shaded windows. She got in and they drove into Colombia's mountainous countryside, changing cars and drivers twice along the way.

Finally, Caballero arrived at a hut surrounded by 300 heavily armed men. At the center of this small army was the most feared man in Colombia: Carlos Castaño, the leader of the country's right-wing paramilitary forces, whose brutal campaign against Colombia's rebel guerillas claimed the lives of 902 civilians and soldiers last year, according to Colombia's office of the public defender. Caballero flipped on her tape recorder and wasted no time getting to the point: "Colombia's President Samper has said that you will be pursued up to the gates of hell," she said. "What do you think of this?"

Questions like that have made Caballero, 37, one of the most respected journalists in Colombia. She spent five hours interviewing Castaño that day, grilling the warlord about the damage caused by his decades-long campaign against the guerillas—and any civilians he suspects of sympathizing with them. To Caballero's—and the world's—astonishment, Castaño told her that he was tired of the fighting and willing to talk peace.

In Colombia, which has been in the chokehold of an unofficial war for nearly four decades—one marked by a furious, often brutal jockeying for power among guerillas, private paramilitary armies, and the government—Castaño's comment was big news. But it was more than just a story: Caballero's interview with Castaño helped spark a movement toward reconciliation and peace.

In her 21-year career as a reporter, Caballero has earned top honors in her profession, including two Simón Bolívar prizes for national journalism, last year's International Press Freedom Award from the Committee to Protect Journalists, and a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University.

But her success has also made her a prime target. Death threats have long been part of any Colombian journalist's job description; at least 57 members of the press have been killed since 1986, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Caballero had grown accustomed to operating in a climate of risk. In May 1999, while she was working as the investigative editor at *Semana*, Colombia's premier newsmagazine, a neighbor warned Caballero that someone was staking out her apartment. The same day, she found a message on her home answering machine telling her she wouldn't live to see the next morning. Two weeks later she fled to Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"I think it's a miracle I'm still alive," says Caballero with a laugh. It is mid-June, and she is speaking from the plush dining room of the faculty club at Harvard University, where she is working on a book about the Colombian conflict as a fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. A compact, ebullient woman with loosely coiled black hair, Caballero doesn't come across as someone who has hunted down narcotraffickers or hiked through the jungle to interview guerilla troops. But beyond the cheerful exterior, say friends and colleagues, is a shrewd reporter whose zeal in getting a story often borders on obsession. "She looks harmless, and she has that sweet little voice," says Isaac Lee Possin, the editor of *Semana* until last December. "[But] when she's interviewing, she's like a rottweiler—she bites and doesn't let go."

Caballero interviewing a guerilla leader in 1999

Caballero's journalism career began in 1979, when, as a college student, she brashly walked into the office of the editor of Colombia's top business newspaper and demanded a job (which she eventually got). Since then, her exposés have rattled government agencies and rebel forces alike. In 1989, she traveled deep into the jungle to report on the fate of Bruce Olson, a Norwegian man kidnapped by guerillas after living with an indigenous group for 30 years. Seven months of relentless reporting helped lead to Olson's release. And in 1991, her series on Colombia's National Property Institute disclosed that the government was pilfering millions of dollars by illegally processing official real estate documents (the head of the agency was fired as a result).

Caballero picked up the story that would lead her to Castaño in 1997, after paramilitary soldiers massacred at least 25 people in the rural village of Mapiripan, reportedly because they were suspected of sympathizing with guerilla forces. She trekked to the region to interview survivors and turned up evidence of ties between the paramilitary groups and the legitimate Colombian army. Caballero spent the next six months tracing the origins of the Mapiripan massacre and others like it. The story kept returning to the same man: Carlos Castaño. She would stop at nothing short of an interview, and hounded Castaño for six months, passing notes through intermediaries, until he relented. "I knew there was a risk," she says. "[But] I thought, if I don't go...I will have lost the chance to understand...why he is doing this."

Caballero recognized that Castaño's announcement that he was willing to discuss a peaceful settlement was more than just headline news, and before she left Castaño's camp, she hastily scrawled him a note: Would he be interested in putting his peace proposal in writing and eventually meeting with representatives of the other warring factions? He shocked her by saying yes. She immediately contacted the International Red Cross and Colombia's National Conciliation Council with the news. "This [was] bigger than a story; this [was] hope for peace," she explains. Within five months, the Red Cross and NCC had persuaded the paramilitaries, the guerillas, and the government to write down their conditions for peace, which were published in *Cambio 16* under the headline "Peace on the Table." Ernesto Samper (then the president-elect) met with a guerilla leader less than two months later. "I can't say whether [Caballero] led directly to this meeting," says Adrianne Foglia, the Colombian government's international press attaché. "But [it was] the first time when certain actors of violence explained what they were fighting for."

Caballero's effort to bring Castaño to the bargaining table cast her in an unusual role for a journalist, one she continues to play: not just reporting on Colombia's conflict but actively trying to end it. Some wonder whether she is

"This [was] bigger than a story; this [was] hope for peace," says Maria Cristina Caballero, photographed in Boston.

JASON GROW/SABA

crossing the boundary between journalism and advocacy. "I think there's a tension there," says Steve Reifenberg, the director of Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. "That's not a role that people are used to seeing journalists in." But Reifenberg and others also suggest that in a country as desperate and troubled as Colombia, perhaps that boundary shouldn't be so rigid.

Caballero makes no apologies for her commitment to nudging her homeland toward peace. "In such countries, do you only report atrocities?" she asks. "Or if, for example, in an interview with Castaño, he's proposing peace, do you in some way help?...In such a polarized society, the media can be like a bridge."

Today, strolling amid Harvard University's ivy-covered walls and patrician elegance, 2,600 miles from home, Caballero says she is continuing that mission. When she reads of more massacres and kidnappings in the Colombian press, Caballero says she sometimes asks herself, "Oh, my God, what am I doing? I can't abandon these people." She hasn't: In 1997, she organized an international conference on law and democracy in Colombia at Harvard, her way of putting her country's problems on the international radar screen. In the past year and a half, she has turned even more directly to advocacy, taking her cause to the United Nations and the White House (where she and other prominent women from developing countries met with Hillary Clinton). "She's standing on a different piece of real estate now," says Bill Kovach, the former curator of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism (and this magazine's former ombudsman). "She's an activist who's trying to make things happen. [But] she's using it openly, not trying to disguise it as reportage."

In panels and editorials, for example, Caballero publicly questions the $1.3 billion in foreign aid to Colombia, designed to crack down on the country's drug trade, that Congress approved in June. She points out that more than 80 percent of the package is earmarked for Colombia's military and argues that too little will go to the peasant coca farmers who are expected to give up their staple crop, which accounts for 90 percent of the cocaine that enters the U.S. each year. She also fears that some of the military aid may be used to illegitimately underwrite paramilitary operations.

After she finishes her book on the Colombian conflict, Caballero says, she hopes to return to Colombia and her job at *Semana*. Her work at Harvard may have raised international awareness of Colombia's troubles, but she says her real passion is directly confronting—and understanding—the warlords who have subjected her country to years of violence.

Caballero spent December 1998 and January 1999 in just such a dangerous situation: stationed in a jungle zone crawling with guerilla troops, trying to track down their notoriously brutal leader and ignoring the pleas of Possin, her editor, to leave the region. Possin was about to run a searing report he feared would make the men thirsty for retaliation. Days later, when Caballero faxed him four hours of interview transcripts from a remote village church, Possin didn't know whether to hug her for scoring a groundbreaking interview or to chide her for putting her life in jeopardy. "But I was getting too close," Caballero says today. "How could I possibly leave?" ■

LOOKING FOR GLORY IN *DETAILS*

Can Patrick McCarthy, the guiding light of Fairchild Publications, and 28-year-old Daniel Peres, the new editor in chief of *Details*, revive the moribund men's magazine? By Katherine Rosman

On Monday, March 20, Daniel Peres was paying the check at L'Avenue, a Paris bistro, when his cell phone rang. His boss's secretary at Fairchild Publications was on the line from New York. "Please call Mr. McCarthy on his cellular phone," she said. "He would like to speak with you."

The European editor for *W*, Fairchild's flagship consumer magazine, the 28-year-old Peres (pronounced, appropriately, "Paris") had just finished a lunchtime interview with Vincent Perez, the handsome Swiss actor. Peres had arrived at the café without a reservation and in sneakers, and the maître d' tried to turn him away, but Peres charmed him with his pidgin French and the prospect of a movie star's arrival. Soon he had a table by the window. With Perez, the conversation had focused on the actor's forthcoming movie, *I Dreamed of Africa*, with Kim Basinger, and Perez's hopes of becoming better known in America. Afterward, the actor took off down the avenue Montaigne. Peres paid the bill and walked outside.

Then he dialed his boss, Patrick McCarthy, the chairman and editorial director of Fairchild Publications, which publishes *Women's Wear Daily*, *W*, *Jane*, and ten lesser-known trade publications. When McCarthy answered, he gave Peres the news: S.I. Newhouse Jr., chairman of Advance Publications, the magazine company that owns Condé Nast Publications and Fairchild Publications, had made McCarthy a startling offer. He had asked him to take over *Details*, the men's magazine that for the last six years had been flailing under a succession of Condé Nast editors.

Peres's response was immediate. "I want in," he told McCarthy. He flew to New York for dinner to discuss it, and nine days later, Peres was named the magazine's editor in chief.

Perhaps no consumer magazine carries more cultural, economic, and editorial baggage than *Details*. It was started in 1982 by style editor Annie Flanders as an edgy chronicle of downtown Manhattan nightlife, and for six years it was a word-of-mouth urban success. In 1988 Newhouse bought it and handed it over to a young *Vogue* editor named James Truman with the instructions to create a men's magazine for the nineties. Truman, then 29, spent two years working on an editorial plan before coming out with his first issue. When it debuted, the magazine had an innovative feel. One issue had a cover story on the young actor River Phoenix; another had a feature in which director John Waters rated best-dressed criminals. The fashion layouts were cutting-edge, East Village rather than Madison Avenue.

DETAILS WENT THROUGH MULTIPLE PERSONALITY SHIFTS—FOR A TIME A DOWNTOWN CULTURE MAGAZINE, LATER A "LAD MAGAZINE" LOADED WITH NEARLY NAKED WOMEN. FOUR EDITORS IN FIVE YEARS WERE BROUGHT IN AND DISMISSED.

During Truman's four-year tenure as editor in chief, the magazine's readership grew rapidly. Part of this was simple luck. The magazine's relaunch coincided with the rise of Generation X and the discovery by advertisers that young people were worth marketing to, but it was also true that Truman had hit on a new sensibility. By the end of 1994, the magazine's average total paid circulation had quadrupled, to 473,625.

The River Phoenix cover was typical of the *Details* touch in that it assumed that usually disparate readerships—straight and gay men as well as young women—could be made interested in the same thing. *Details* was never a moneymaker, but it captured this androgynous moment in late-20th-century culture, and that was enough to make it a success. "The magazine...was genderless, asexual," remembers an editor who worked on *Details*. In 1994, Newhouse promoted Truman, then 35, to editorial director for all of Condé Nast.

But the problem with capturing a moment in the culture is that the culture keeps changing. During the second half of the decade, a series of Condé Nast editors under Truman's watch tried to keep up, first refining and then moving beyond the tone of sexual ambiguity and Gen-X zeitgeist that had proven so successful for the magazine in the early nineties. The magazine went through multiple personality shifts. For a time it was a downtown culture magazine, then briefly a magazine about work, and finally a "lad magazine," loaded with pictures of nearly naked women in imitation of the hugely successful British import *Maxim*. Four editors in five years were brought in and then fired (one stepped down before his dismissal was official). But each incarnation failed to lock in the readership of 600,000 that Condé Nast coveted and felt was essential to the bottom line. According to a Condé Nast insider, *Details* "lost, conservatively, $35 million" during this time. In March 2000, Newhouse fired the staff and transferred responsibility to his Fairchild division, an implicit rebuke to Truman. Now, with McCarthy and Peres in charge, *Details* is scheduled to launch again on September 26, 2000.

600,000 OR BUST

A reasonable person might ask why Newhouse has bothered. Why didn't he simply close the magazine down or start a new men's title? And then there's the question of whether the cultural interests of young gay and straight men and their female peers have as much overlap as they did in the early nineties. Industry wisdom is once again that there are not enough straight men who care about clothes to support a fashion magazine and that they would be nervous about reading the same fashion magazine as gay men. "You can't get to 600,000 with any content that repels heterosexual men," says a former men's magazine editor.

McCarthy and Peres's solution to this perception is in essence to ignore it. They are looking to the original *Details* for inspiration. "James created a great magazine," says McCarthy. "We're looking at it not to copy it but in terms of its sensibility." The cover of the new *Details* will likely be a movie star—think Brad Pitt or Jude Law. Inside will be pages of fashion and features meant to reinforce a sense of cultural knowingness: edgy but elegant pictures and, say, a story about the fast rise and early death of a young artist. Fairchild's goal is to reach 400,000 readers with the launch and then to move up to 600,000, the fabled number that—with the exception of one issue—eluded *Details* during the last ten years. Fairchild is returning *Details* to its roots and hoping the culture follows.

"If *Details* fails," says a journalist who has worked for both Fairchild and Condé Nast, "then Patrick is just another person who couldn't fix a magazine that very well could be fatally broken. By no means will Patrick be finished if the

Daniel Peres (left) and Patrick McCarthy in New York City. Portrait by Michael Thompson.

magazine doesn't take off. But if he does make it work, Patrick's star will be made—if it isn't already."

A success with *Details* would represent a watershed moment not only for McCarthy, but for all of Fairchild. If Fairchild can fix what Condé Nast couldn't, the division will achieve tremendous power within Newhouse's Advance Publications. "Si will be watching this one very closely," says a former *Details* editor. Indeed, this is Fairchild's—and McCarthy's—moment, and unlike their famously sniping cousins at Condé Nast, people at Fairchild are known for their teamwork and ability to put aside egos and posturing for the better of the company. As one Fairchild insider notes, "Our company is small enough that we all pitch in. That is very much part of our corporate culture." There are other magazines in the Condé Nast group waiting for first aid, most notably *Allure*. Fairchild would also be able to argue that startups should now come from its division and that existing resources should be rebalanced. All it has to do is fix *Details* first.

THE FAIRCHILD WAY

On a sunny day in May, Patrick McCarthy walks toward the third floor newsroom in the 11-story Fairchild Publications headquarters, across the street from the Empire State Building. He is dressed conservatively in gray pants, a pink button-down shirt, and a blue sport coat. His green eyes are surrounded by laugh lines and long eyelashes. He is handsome. He is fashionably late.

He quickly strides past four intimidating oil portraits with simple gold plaques that read L.W. Fairchild, E.W.B. Fairchild, L.E. Fairchild, and E.W. Fairchild. The men in the portraits have stern gazes, like Edwardian bankers. McCarthy goes into the corner office where he holds meetings (he does his editorial work at an ordinary desk in the newsroom). Sitting down, he brushes the lint off his shirt and dismisses the possibility that there is a curse on the name of *Details*. Fixing a magazine, he says airily, "is not rocket science. You want to write a story that people want to read and run photographs that people want to look at." The office he sits in is large; there is a sense of quiet confidence to it.

But the office's effortless elegance belies the company's humble roots. A 1997 *New York* magazine cover story relates how Edmund Fairchild partnered in 1890 with an owner of newspapers that covered the grocery and men's apparel businesses; after that came *Daily News Record*, which covered men's fashion and included the weekly "Women's Wear" page, which eventually grew into the immensely profitable Fairchild publication *Women's Wear Daily* (now *WWD*). In 1924, Edmund's son joined the company, and in 1951 his grandson John followed. The company was sold to Capital Cities in 1968 and later owned by The Walt Disney Company.

Women's Wear Daily made its name by covering the business of apparel, giving no-frills coverage to a frilly subject. In 1966, John Fairchild succeeded his father as the leader of the company. He was a tough, ambitious manager, and the company grew under his watchful eye and harsh tongue. A reporter's goal, he says today, should be "getting the bacon. You get the story and you get something that no one else has."

Though Fairchild—known universally within the company as Mr. Fairchild—essentially retired in 1997 and took the ambiguous title editor at large, his ethos lives on at the company. There is more than a corporate culture at Fairchild Publications—there is a sense of a legacy. When journalists talk about their experiences working there, they repeat such phrases as "Yes, I attended the Fairchild Finishing School" and "Well, that is just not the Fairchild Way." The Fairchild Way means long hours, multiple tasks, and keeping your dissatisfaction to yourself. The company rewards hard work and loyalty.

McCarthy is a vintage product of the Fairchild Way. According to New York media legend, John Fairchild handpicked him and molded him in his image: a Mr. McCarthy to go with Mr. Fairchild. Others say, however, that it was the other way around. "I don't think John ever took it upon himself to groom Patrick," says Mort Sheinman, a 40-year Fairchild veteran who served as managing editor of *WWD*. "If people choose to groom themselves, that is their own choice."

Born in 1952, McCarthy grew up in Massachusetts, graduated from Boston University, and received a master's degree in journalism from Stanford University. After graduating, he took a job covering the regulatory side of the apparel business in Washington, D.C., for Fairchild. His annual salary, he says, was $12,000. Then, in 1978, Mr. Fairchild posted the fledgling in London. At the time, London was again becoming an important city in the fashion world, and McCarthy made such an impression on Fairchild that in 1981, he asked McCarthy to head the Paris bureau of *Women's Wear Daily*.

It was during these years, McCarthy says, that he began his lifelong love affair with the world of fashion. "On the one hand you've got the toughest people in the world I've ever met," he says. "But at the same time they have the most fragile egos, that if they're not invited to that party and if they're not given the right seat, they get hurt." In 1986, after five years of covering the European scene, McCarthy was summoned by Fairchild to New York and made editor of the daily *WWD* and *W*, which John Fairchild had founded as a biweekly broadsheet newspaper in 1972. McCarthy converted *W* into an oversized, upscale glossy monthly with striking design and elegant photography. The coverage was friendly, the carrot to *WWD*'s stick. "I have clients who their be-all and end-all is to be in *W*," says a public relations executive. "It doesn't matter that it's a smaller book than others. It has a certain cachet. It's exclusive....There's no better place to be."

This executive believes that *W* benefits from Fairchild's work ethic. "Everyone there is trained as a newspaper journalist," she says. "They are not trained out of the Condé Nast 'Let's go to the show' school. [*W* editors] go to Lutèce for lunch, but they keep their radar up, and then they come back and write about it."

Since taking the editorial director title over from Fairchild in 1995, McCarthy has done almost everything right. Besides revamping *W*, he has maintained *WWD*'s status as the obligatory read of the fashion business and has overseen the launch of *Jane* magazine, which as of December 1999 had a total average paid circulation of 541,611. When he helped engineer the sale of the company by Disney to Newhouse for a reported $650 million last year, it was a front-page story in *The New York Times*. Daniel Peres may be the new face of *Details*, but all eyes in the close-knit magazine industry will be equally trained on McCarthy.

Former and current employees speak of McCarthy as a witty editor, a testament to the rewards of hard work, and a perfectionist whose icy silence or acid criticism can dissolve even the most seasoned reporter's confidence. When McCarthy walks through the bustling Fairchild newsroom, his staff grows quiet, glancing at him sideways to see where his eyes will fall. A nod from McCarthy is a golden moment; a rebuke can be devastating.

Sari Botton remembers such a rebuke. She was an editor for both *WWD* and *W* when her section was scooped in 1994 on the story that

***Details*'s covers reveal the magazine's metamorphosis during the nineties, from (left to right) an androgynous, Gen-X publication to an overtly sexualized, titillating one.**

George Lindemann, the heir to the Cellular One fortune, had been arrested and charged with killing a show horse for insurance money. McCarthy, Botton remembers, approached her desk and said to her in a firm voice, "You are worthless." She was crushed. Today a freelance writer, Botton laughs quietly at the incident. "He was right," she says. "We were all idiots. How could we have missed that story?"

Peres acknowledges that McCarthy's criticism can be severe. Early in Peres' career, when he was a cub reporter at *DNR*, McCarthy so hated a story Peres had written that McCarthy literally threw the copy at him. The threat of a repeat of this incident, Peres says, keeps him on his toes. "I want to please him...and that has motivated me quite a bit," he says. (When asked about the paper-throwing incident, McCarthy squeezes his eyes shut in embarrassment. "That was unforgivable," he says. "It *was* a very bad story, but still, that was unforgivable.")

Generally, though, McCarthy doesn't apologize for his behavior. "If *The Wall Street Journal* or *The New York Times* gets a story that should have been in *Women's Wear Daily* [first], then what is the point of the paper?" he asks. "The very identity of *Women's Wear* is shaken" when the paper gets scooped.

To succeed under McCarthy, "you better be a person who can deliver under almost any circumstances," notes *W* entertainment editor and *Details* consulting editor Merle Ginsberg. In 1998, Ginsberg wasn't able to get the movie stars who were on the covers of competing magazines like *Vogue* and *Elle* to pose for *W*. Such arrangements, made through the actors' publicists, are time-consuming and difficult. Ginsberg's personal life was in disarray: She had just moved; her father had just died. "We all have stress," says Ginsberg, "but I was showing it." McCarthy did not cut her slack or hide his dissatisfaction. Soon, he wasn't speaking to her at all—and everyone knew it. "The worst thing that can happen in Patrick's orbit is that he freezes you out," she says. Not until Ginsberg got Demi Moore to sit for a cover did she return to his good graces. Ginsberg notes, however, that there is a flip side, that McCarthy is generous and even warm to the employees who do right by him. And right now, Exhibit A is Daniel Peres. "Dan has always been liked by Patrick," she says. "I think Patrick sees in Dan a bit of himself."

I REALLY WANT MY *STUFF*

Daniel Peres sits at a table facing a white leather booth in the breakfast room of Morgans Hotel on Madison Avenue in Manhattan. It is a quarter to nine on an early May morning, and he is sipping orange juice. He is exhausted.

Peres left Paris to work on *Details* with so little notice that he didn't have time to rent an apartment in Manhattan, so as of May, he is living in room 1004 of the chichi Morgans and is growing tired of the Eloise-like experience. "It's not as fabulous as people think to live in a hotel," he says. "I really want my *stuff*."

NADINE JOHNSON/FASHION WIRE DAILY

In his element: McCarthy chats up, from left, *Harper's Bazaar* editor in chief Katherine Betts, Hearst Magazines Division president Cathleen Black, and *Vogue* editor in chief Anna Wintour.

It is understandable that he longs for the familiar, given the whirlwind his life has been recently. His ascent at Fairchild was swift. Born in 1971 and raised in Baltimore, Peres came to Manhattan to attend New York University, from which he graduated in 1993. After a brief stint as a fact checker at *Esquire* ("I was the boy with the jeans and the baseball cap turned backwards," he remembers. "There wasn't any polish yet"), Peres took a job as an assistant retailing editor at *DNR*, the lesser-known men's-market counterpart to *WWD* at Fairchild.

His arrival was noticed immediately. "I remember the first time Dan walked into the Fairchild newsroom," says Sari Botton. "Every single woman took notice. And not just because he's one of the few straight, cute, single guys. He's not matinee-idol cute. But there's something about Dan."

Peres is enthusiastic. He is articulate. His stories are engaging. He has an intangible sex appeal and an easy, subtle charm. When told that people often refer to him as a flaming heterosexual, he blushes. And when he hears that women speak fawningly of his charm and sex appeal, Peres, clearly exasperated, asks, "Does anyone say I'm *smart*?"

Merle Ginsberg recognized Peres's magnetism when he was hired to edit the "Eye" page, the party- and personality-driven gossip page in *WWD* and *W*. "The thing about...the 'Eye' desk," says Ginsberg, "is that you have to be comfortable uptown and downtown. You've got to look good, be very friendly and open....People have to think about you not as a reporter, but as part of the scene....Dan took to it like a fish to water."

The surest sign that Peres had a promising future at Fairchild came in spring 1998, when McCarthy named him chief of *W*'s Paris bureau. Almost immediately he was promoted to European editor, where his task was to write about such people as director Roman Polanski, designer Karl Lagerfeld, and the sundry European nobility, like Princess Elizabeth of Greece, who is a fixture in *W*'s pages. But most important, the post gave Peres polish and exposure.

Charm, however, doesn't guarantee a successful run as editor in chief—nor do good looks or schmoozing with the social elite. Since his return to New York, notes Ginsberg, "he has not been going out. Just work, work, work. I can see there's a weightiness to him now. Suddenly, he seems older."

He is, after all, in a difficult situation. He is attempting to revive a magazine that has failed over and over. He is trying to hire a staff with little management experience. His own reporting has been limited primarily to covering travel, gossip, and celebrities. This doesn't worry his mentor. "Dan is incredibly smart and incredibly easygoing," McCarthy says. "He handles a crisis with great aplomb. A launch of a magazine is one crisis after another."

Only a month after Peres assumed the editor in chief title, though, that aplomb seemed to be absent as Peres dealt with a press eager to write about him. After two weeks of putting off *Brill's Content*, the usually genial editor finally makes an appointment for an interview by saying, "Let's bite the bullet. Let's just get this f- - -ing thing over with. So I only have a minute. Take out your little pen and your date book, and let's schedule this thing." (Peres later denied using the word "little.")

By early June, the media were still swarming and gleefully reporting tales of what they deemed Peres' hubris. *Fashion Wire Daily* ran a story that quoted a letter Peres had sent to new Arista president L.A. Reid stating that Reid should agree to an interview with *Details* because people are "fighting tooth and nail" to get into the launch issue. "Page Six" of the *New York Post* printed a similar item, recounting another missive Peres sent to a Hollywood player. "The letter...tries to flatter the player into agreeing to be part of the first issue," "Page Six" reported.

Of the media attention, Peres says, "I would

imagine it comes with the territory. I'm not excited about it." As Ginsberg notes: "It's one thing to produce a good magazine. It's another thing to have the media watching your every move."

NOT GAY, BUT GAY-FRIENDLY

A framed drawing of a "W" with a Chanel logo and a handwritten message from Karl Lagerfeld under it ("for your first 25 years!") hangs on the wall of the office McCarthy uses for conferences. On a wood buffet built out from the wall is the layout for an advertisement for Fairchild's latest venture. It reads: "*Details*: The Next Big Thing."

The new *Details* will either recapture the zeitgeist or it won't. Peres will have help in creating the look and voice of it from McCarthy, *W* executive vice president/creative director Dennis Freedman, and *W* senior vice president/group design director Edward Leida—the triumvirate that remade *W* and launched *Jane*. Since they helped refashion *W* in 1993, its circulation has grown from 258,473 to 434,495, and it has surpassed *Harper's Bazaar* in ad sales. And *W* is quickly approaching the market's top two bestsellers, *Vogue* and *Elle*. Freedman and Leida have given *Details* a minimalist, clean, sophisticated look, more high-tech than the other men's magazines. "I have the holy trinity behind me," Peres says. "It's an amazing safety net that helps me to sleep at night and keep food down." Leida even has an office at *Details*, which speaks volumes about the company-wide effort to resurrect the magazine, especially since it already has its own art director, Rockwell Harwood. "[Freedman and Leida] are very much involved, just as they were very much involved in *Jane*," says a Fairchild insider. "Patrick is very, very concerned [about *Details*] and he is watching everything."

Fairchild and McCarthy are also known for being able to create glamour on a budget. "We put our resources where they will do the most," says McCarthy. Fairchild editors do not fly to Paris on the Concorde, he explains. "But we will spend $20,000 to reshoot a cover in order to get it just right. It's just not in our nature to be extravagant....We don't have three people for one job," an allusion, one suspects, to the Condé Nast division of the Newhouse empire. In addition, Fairchild's bottom line is fortified by its unglamorous yet profit-generating trade publications, such as *Footwear News* and *Supermarket News*.

In May, Peres says he sees no reason why *Details*, as a men's fashion magazine, can't enjoy the same success as *W*. "Men are vain," he says. "They are more vain now than ever. They want beauty products and cuff links....They want the best clothes. Style doesn't need to appear on Derek Jeter to appeal to men."

By early June, though, Peres seems a bit unsure of the identity of his magazine. Advertising buyers who have seen a mock-up of the new *Details* consider it a pop-culture and fashion magazine. But press reports instead have Peres informing would-be contributing writers of his intention to create a *Vanity Fair* for late-twentysomething men. A June 5 piece in *The New York Observer* stated, "Mr. Peres said that there had been no shift in editorial focus from two weeks ago when he said, 'Straight men are interested in fashion now. One hundred percent. We are interested in grooming.' Still, it sounds as if he's moderated his vision: 'We cannot do cover-to-cover fashion, style, shaving, grooming. What's the point?'" Peres scoffs at the *Observer* story, denying that he has shifted *Details's* focus since May. Then, however, he describes a magazine with a decidedly shifted—and uncertain—focus. "When we were first coming out of the gate, we were saying very little about what we were planning," he says. "Because it's coming out of Fairchild, everyone assumed that *Details* would be a strictly fashion-focused magazine, which it is not." He only adds to the confusion by continuing, "The fashion focus is not going to be buried."

PERES SAYS *DETAILS* WILL BE NEITHER PRETTY BOY NOR MACHO MAN. "IT WILL BE A *MEN'S* MAGAZINE," HE SAYS. "WE CAN'T AFFORD TO ALIENATE ANYONE."

Regardless of what identity Peres claims for the magazine, the new *Details*—whether it is a version of *Vanity Fair* or not—will face the same challenge that the old one found insurmountable: Can it appeal to heterosexual men without alienating gay readers and vice versa?

Yes, says James Reginato, *W*'s features director. "I think gay and straight culture are coming closer and closer together. There used to be more of a lag time before straight men caught on to gay style. Now I walk around and I can hardly tell the difference—especially in cities like New York, L.A., Chicago, Miami. I would imagine *Details* will not be a gay magazine, but a gay-friendly fashion magazine," says Reginato.

Hanging over the *Details* team is the counter-example of *Maxim*. *Maxim*, an offshoot of a British publication, appeals aggressively to heterosexual men and their dreams of virility. Introduced in 1997 to America, it is the most successful men's magazine of the last decade. In June 1998, a year after its debut, *Maxim*'s average paid circulation stood at 481,128. Six months later that number was 733,744. In the same time period, *Details*, then under its fourth of five editors, idled under 600,000. If *Maxim* is the wave of the future, then *Details* will sink.

McCarthy takes umbrage at the suggestion. "Should we believe that only magazines with boobs on the cover can be a success? I think that is a myth....Dan's vision and my vision is to publish to 28-year-old men—gay and straight," adds McCarthy. "We won't exclude either.... America has changed, even in the past 15 years." And besides, even if Peres is unable to clearly articulate *Details's* new, ambitious, still-fluid shape, he can rest assured that he won't be the only one trying to solve its problems. If Peres epitomizes the image the revamped magazine hopes to project, then McCarthy is its brain trust, the experience behind an appealing and untested new face. Even Peres recognizes the limits of his influence and power over *Details*: "I can't do this alone and I'm not pretending to be Patrick McCarthy, Tina Brown, or Graydon Carter. I am a 28-year-old man. But I know what I want and I know what the market needs because I am my reader." Indeed, Fairchild is betting that the readers Peres exemplifies—young, stylish, and upwardly mobile—are once again kings of a growing economy. As it did in the Bret Easton Ellis–dominated eighties, *Details* again hopes to be one with the culture.

Apropos of *Details's* history, the new incarnation will be debuting at a lucky time when young men are making the most of a growing economy. "Take the $100 million IPO man," explains David Keeps, a former *Details* editor. "He has a huge disposable income. He doesn't have to put on a suit and tie to go to work. But he does have to put on a suit and tie to meet with his investors. And he does want a $2,000 leather jacket to show his buddies how large he is living."

And it's not just the self-employed entrepreneur who will benefit from some fashion advice, says Beth McCarthy (no relation to Patrick), director of licensing and marketing for Bill Blass Menswear. "The average guy doesn't know how to dress casually....[W]hen [my boyfriend] has to put together something casual, it has him in a panic." The professional trend toward casual style, says Beth McCarthy, gives market relevance to a magazine like *Details*. To have mass appeal, however, "they cannot be too 'pretty boy,'" she warns.

Peres says *Details* will be neither pretty boy nor macho man. "It will be a *men's* magazine," he says. "We can't afford to alienate anyone." Still, sex will be in the mix. But as *W*'s Ginsberg points out, "It will not be crass....It will have an old–New York, old John Fairchild feel." To underscore her point, Ginsberg says this: "The worst insult you can give in the Fairchild universe is to say, 'It's tacky.' *Details* will *not* be tacky."

Peres agrees with Ginsberg: "Tacky is very bad stuff." Asked to give examples of what would be considered tacky, Peres raises his eyebrows. This question does not merit an answer. "What is tacky? Oh, *please*. Come *on* now." Then he simply responds, "We need to be sophisticated and smart. Tacky just won't cut it." That simply would not be the Fairchild Way. ■

AND NOW, A WORD FROM THE WEB

Two new voice-activated Internet services are aiming for a future in which, ideally, online information will be only a phone call away. By John R. Quain

It seems that every week the Web is trying to transform itself in order to take control of another medium. First it was print, then commerce, music, movies, even television. Now it's the telephone.

Web access via cell phones is already available on models that use the Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) language to deliver, say, text headlines or driving directions to mobile-phone users. But the tiny screens on these so-called WAP-enabled phones make the information difficult to read. This has opened the door to "voice portals"—talking websites that convert Web pages into spoken-word, voice-activated systems that read the news over the phone, tell you where to find a restaurant, or give the latest stock prices. These voice portals may also remind you of those annoying voice-mail systems you have to navigate to do your banking or check your credit card balance by phone.

But for those who want instant access to information, the idea of picking up a phone to get news from the Internet is enticing. Voice portals circumvent the poor legibility of WAP-enabled phones and the high service charges associated with personal digital assistants that offer wireless Net connections. It's even cheaper than calling 411, though it's not free, as cellular services charge users for placing each call, even those to an 800 number.

QUACK.COM

Quack.com is one of two nationwide voice-activated Internet services. (Quack and Tellme, the two services reviewed here, don't charge users; they derive revenue from the ads that play on the services. Enabling website companies like Lycos, Inc., to use the technology is another source of revenue.) So far, Quack provides only a tiny spoken-word slice of what's available online, but anyone who calls the toll-free number will quickly appreciate the possibilities.

No sign-up is required: All you have to do is call Quack.com (800-737-8225) to get weather, traffic, sports, stock, and movie information from around the country. Restaurant listings for the San Francisco and Minneapolis-St. Paul areas were available when I tested the service, with hundreds of thousands of U.S. eateries to be added by the end of the year.

A youthful male voice instructs the caller about the specific voice commands needed to wade through the audio directories. Saying "runway," for example, returns you to the main listings; "repeat" tells the system to repeat a description or headline. I found it simple to navigate and rarely got lost or frustrated. And my *um*s and *ah*s did not confound the system. The only distractions: the ads that played while Quack.com was calling up a movie description or the latest baseball scores.

Even if you have an unlisted or blocked number, the Quack system knows which city you're calling from. It automatically offered me New York City traffic info, with a synthesized voice reading of that day's hazards. The delivery is a little disconcerting; a recorded male voice and synthesized female voice often combine to complete one sentence. It was nonetheless an efficient way of delivering the information.

Quack covers every major current movie, but its "reviews" are actually synopses. The service relies on The Internet Movie Database, Ltd., and Tribune Media Services for its info, which includes theater locations and phone numbers. Unfortunately, Quack won't automatically connect you to a ticket-purchasing system over the phone. (The company says it plans to roll out such a service soon.)

Restaurant listings follow a similar format. You can choose from various cuisines and search for a restaurant according to price range (full reviews aren't yet available). Quack will also give the cost of an average meal at, say, Lulu's in San Francisco. Again, the service won't automatically connect you to the restaurant to make a reservation.

If you start asking for information on a particular city, the Quack service will assume that any subsequent information you request, such as a three-day weather forecast, should apply to the same locale. I found this distracting, especially when I was calling for information about a city to which I was traveling but also wanted movie times in my own neighborhood. However, if you want regular traffic information for a particular city or specific stock quotes, you can set up a personalized account either over the phone or via the Quack website (www.quack.com).

Other information I gleaned from the system was as current as anything available online. Sports scores from ESPN are updated constantly. Stock pricing information is delayed by the standard 20 minutes (15 minutes for NASDAQ-listed stocks).

Overall the Quack system worked well and easily understood my requests. It uses voice-recognition technology that is more accurate than that used on personal computers. The reason is simple: It understands only a limited vocabulary. Consequently, saying "Corel Corporation" in the stocks area brings up the current price even more quickly than does looking up the ticker symbol online. But don't expect the system to answer questions about the latest Middle East peace talks. And that may be the service's main shortcoming so far—a lack of depth. You can get sports scores, for example, but no sports stories. Quack promises that it will soon expand its offerings.

PETER ARKLE

TELLME

Started by former Netscape employees, Tellme has won most of the voice-portal hype as Net media mavens have jumped on the next big thing. Tellme offers information from a much wider array of Web sources than Quack.com does. On the other hand, Tellme's audio-delivery system was a little bumpier.

To access Tellme, you can sign up online or by calling a toll-free number (800-555-8355), where you are greeted by a perky automated female operator. A voice-menu system similar to Quack's takes you through the service's selections, which contain all of Quack's options, plus news headlines from CNN and *The Wall Street Journal*, lottery numbers, airline schedules, horoscopes, and soap opera updates.

The news section includes top stories, business news, a health-watch section, entertainment, and sports. Rather than using a combination of synthesized and recorded voices, Tellme uses only recorded human announcers. Thus, listening to the news section is similar to listening to a radio broadcast, even though in many cases the sentences you hear are composed of individually recorded words pasted together on the fly.

To voice-surf to other sections, go to the Tellme menu, then use obvious keywords, such as "restaurant," to access dining choices across the country. Here, too, Tellme offers a more complete service than Quack. Tellme has nearly half a million restaurant names and addresses, accompanied by Zagat reviews. Best of all, once you've chosen a place to have dinner—for instance, Coconut Grill in New York—Tellme can automatically connect you by phone to the restaurant so you can make a reservation. Contrast this with a standard directory-information service, which charges for the call and requires that you know a restaurant's name.

Tellme's voice-recognition ability worked best in categories with a limited vocabulary, such as weather forecasts and horoscopes. In the restaurant area, the service often misheard or failed to hear my commands. Saying "Harvey's," for example, usually got me information about Arby's.

Tellme's announcers are a tad excitable, but the voices are bearable. The service was previewing when I tested it and had a lot of hiccups. Tellme misunderstood even basic keyword commands, and the spoken-word audio often skipped in and out like a poor cell-phone connection. (The company said it expects to fix the glitches by the end of the summer.) Like Quack, the system uses occasional ads, which I found unobtrusive, to support the service. My main criticism of the service: It sounded too much like a bad Top 40 AM station, replete with a Tellme jingle, screeching-tire sound effects, and bombastic announcers.

NOT THE LAST WORD IN VOICE PORTALS

These voice-surfing services can make you feel as though you're in voice-mail hell, moving from option list to option list without ever reaching your party. But I was surprised at how quickly I could actually get to a local weather forecast or the latest sports scores. Compared to the time you waste waiting for a graphics-filled page to download to your computer, the voice services weren't that slow.

Both companies plan to offer everything the Web offers but in audio form: voice-activated ticket orders and online auction bids, for example. Of course, there will also be more competition. VoiceXML, the basic technology for designing voice-enabled websites, is gaining wider use, and many sites plan to add text-to-speech capabilities. Lycos, the search and portal company, has announced it will launch a voice-enabled site based on Quack's technology before the end of the year. So you'll soon be able to dial a toll-free Lycos number to get Reuters headlines, for example.

Initially, like much of the Internet, voice-portal Web access will be crude. That's because current voice-recognition technology limits what you can reliably get these systems to understand. Asking for "www.net2phone.com" presents quite a challenge unless the vocabulary you're allowed to use is restricted. But as with most Internet innovations, there are ambitious plans afoot for voice portals. The developers of Tellme picture a not-too-distant future where you can ask for a restaurant from your car phone and the service will not only tell you where the restaurant is but also send the driving directions to your car's navigation-system display. When that happens, all you'll have to do is tell me where to sign—or should I say speak—up. ■

The Charm Offensive

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 81] Indeed, Witcover says he views what little back-and-forth there is between candidates and reporters as pretty much meaningless. He's not impressed with talk of baseball and campaign trail crushes: "If [a candidate] occasionally strolls to the back of a plane and drops a few bons mots, what good is that?"

And Witcover, like his partner at *The Sun*, Jack Germond, and Wilkie of *The Boston Globe*, says good press relationships often aren't good news for a candidate. As Wilkie points out, in the two recent elections with the biggest divide between whom the press liked and disliked—Nixon-McGovern in 1972 and Reagan-Mondale in 1984—the press favorite was roundly clobbered. Wilkie warns of a danger of being too friendly, too open, with the press: "When suddenly you step on your d--k and retreat, then people are going to write, 'Well, he screwed up.'"

History shows that good relationships with the press often don't translate into votes in the polling booths. "Most of the really good guys don't make it, whether it's [Mo] Udall or [John] McCain," Wilkie says, referring to the former Arizona congressman and current Arizona senator, both of whom failed to win their party's nomination for president. When Wilkie talks about "really good guys," he means candidates who are open and freewheeling, candidates who, in their lack of inhibition, make for good coverage. But not always positive coverage.

"The problem," says James Carville, the man who helped engineer Bill Clinton's victory in 1992, "is when they turn on you they really turn on you." Speaking of the press, Carville says that "they have a right to be there. But I wouldn't go out of my way to either be rude or be nice to them. I wouldn't do things just to satisfy the press....They're just kind of a fact of life. Be pleasant, businesslike, but don't cater to them and don't ever think that they won't turn on you in a second.

"I just think the best way in the long run is to have a polite, professional and slightly distant relationship with them," continues Carville, who has no formal role in the Gore campaign. "If you see them in a social context, say, 'Hi, how you doing?' but don't go back and get sucked in....At some point you're not going to want to talk to them....So I think all that chumming up...in the long run just ain't worth it. Just stay in the front of the plane and read your briefing papers and do your crossword puzzles and sleep and scream at the staff. But the press, don't eat with 'em, drink with 'em, talk with 'em. Be cordial, professional, and just slightly distant. You're the presidential candidate; they're some stiff with a notebook."

For the most part, Gore has stuck to this approach. Reporters traveling with him frequently grumble about how cut off they are from the candidate; after a June 28 event in Ohio, when a Gore aide asked what the press wanted to do next, one scribe cracked, "If we were with Bush we'd have a press conference." Another reporter, speaking of Gore while traveling on the Bush plane, said, "He acts like he's the f---ing president already." In the months leading up to the conventions, Gore's relationship with his press corps was so bad that even some journalists were sympathizing with the vice-president. A reporter who traveled with the Gore campaign for a couple of days this spring said, "I felt

there was an ethic on the plane that Gore was a bad guy. I had the sense that [reporters] were harsher on him and more critical of him, and never gave him the benefit of the doubt," says the reporter, who asked not to be named.

But Gore has been opening up more. He's been making appearances in the press section in the back of Air Force Two, including a recent off-the-record foray when he downed a Heineken and talked about his grandson's birthday. While his formal press availabilities, even when they take place on his plane, tend to be fairly contentious—Gore recently grimaced when he told the press he was "at your disposal"—the vice-president is getting better at interacting with reporters.

And if Bush remains the front-runner, the differences between Bush and Gore in their dealings with the press are likely to diminish even further. The longer Bush remains in front, the more likely campaign communications director Karen Hughes is, as the *Houston Chronicle*'s Ratcliffe puts it, "to roll [Bush] up like an armadillo and not let him close to reporters."

For now, Bush doesn't see that happening. "A campaign, you know, has got to be respectful to the press corps, but cannot let the press corps drive the strategy....When it comes to the overall story, the long-term view of the campaign, it's so important for the campaign to set the long-term view. So we were patient on our issues, and started laying out our issues, as you remember, after a period of time. And that was at the time that"—and here Bush begins intoning in a mock serious newscaster's voice—"'No he doesn't believe anything. Not specific.' Some of that, by the way, ginned up by my opponent, some of it ginned up legitimately by editors saying, 'Wait a minute, when's he going to say something?'

"If you talk to the press on a regular basis like I do and don't talk to the press on an irregular basis, it does create a sense of anxiety [when there's a lack of access]. It's either/or."

For now, the charm offensive is paying off. With the election less than 100 days away and American voters displaying a lingering lack of interest in presidential politics, Bush is winning the ground war with the traveling press troops. Reporters like the man. They appreciate the easy humor, the charming manner, the personal attention. If this were high school, the press would be the drama nerds and the history club freaks. Bush would be the popular boy who has lots of friends. And the popular boy is courting the geeks.

"The fact that we see much of him relaxed, and can take his temperature in nonscripted ways, means we see a more rounded Bush and it's harder to caricature him," a reporter who often travels with Bush says. The reporter goes on to say, "He is better when he's less formal, and in letting us see that, it means we're going to have and make more nuanced judgments."

Within five minutes of meeting me for the first time, Bush developed some shorthand to signify our intimate connection. Since the press was writing about Bush, and I was writing about the press, he and I were joined together in a kind of enemies-of-my-enemies equation. Now—I've spent a total of about five days traveling with the Bush press corps—whenever Bush sees me, he sticks out his right hand, wrapping his middle finger around his index finger. And then, as he's waving his hand back and forth, he shouts out, "Me and you, right?" ■

Smart Alex

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 85] something difficult, and see the person the next night," continues the 47-year-old, slightly rumpled Smith, who sits across from Kuczynski in the congested, high-ceilinged business newsroom. Explaining his decision to hire her, Smith says that, among other things, "I thought that this was a world Alex would be comfortable in."

That she most certainly is, buoyed by her gregariousness and social confidence, a product of her eclectic and rarefied upbringing. Kuczynski was born in Peru, where her father was president of Peru's Central Bank. Her mother is the daughter of Joseph Casey, who was a Democratic congressman from Massachusetts, and the sister of novelist John Casey. Kuczynski attended the elite Madeira School, near Washington, D.C., and Barnard College, where she wrote for the *Columbia Daily Spectator*. This pedigree has given her the poise to move easily in many social worlds.

Like many, Jay Stowe, a friend of Kuczynski's who worked with her at *The New York Observer*, describes her as fearless—a trait that fuels her style on the job and off. "Alex is like that character Mame," he says with a laugh. "She is this big, blowsy broad who steams through life like Bismarck." Stowe recalls the whirlwind of attending media parties with Kuczynski. "I would be like, 'Just get me a drink.' And Alex would be like"—Stowe turns his voice into a bit of a squeal for emphasis—'Oh, there is Norm [Pearlstine]!' Or 'There is [*Time* managing editor] Walter [Isaacson]! Let's go say hello!' And she would drag me along, a body in her wake. That is just the way that she is. She has no qualms or awkwardness about talking to anyone."

Her social ease is supported by her august real estate: A story in the *Times* can have a long half-life and affect everything from stock value to advertising revenue. Notes John Fox Sullivan, the publisher of the *National Journal*, a policy journal based in Washington, D.C., "[Alex] is good at capturing the industry...and she is a major force because she is at the *Times*. My dog could cover media for the *Times* and it would be read."

Kuczynski is well aware of the weight the *Times* carries, especially in media-saturated New York City. "The media beat is one in which the characters are writ large. I also like writing about Manhattan, where most of this beat plays out—its grandiose scale, its scheming and heroic characters."

ONE SUCH CHARACTER IS MEL KARMAZIN, chairman and CEO of the former CBS Corporation and now the president and CEO of the newly merged Viacom-CBS. In a November 1999 profile of Karmazin, Kuczynski wrote, "Put bluntly, can Viacom-CBS be run successfully by a man who has never seen a television pilot, has rarely made programming decisions, and has never supervised creative people on a daily basis?" She went on, "Mr. Karmazin, who leads a quiet life for a media mogul, is a reluctant celebrity, uncomfortable speaking about himself....When Mr. Karmazin does talk about himself, he sometimes seems awkward, more like a hyperactive 10-year-old boy than a 56-year-old chief executive." In another story, on former *Details* editor in chief Mark Golin, Kuczynski described him as "wittily vulgar," with a "beer-and-babes sensibility."

As the hip tone of her writing might suggest, Kuczynski's path to the hard-news pages of the *Times* was unconventional. She came by way of the "Sunday Styles" section, where she worked from October 1997 to August 1998; prior to that she was a reporter at *The New York Observer*—a Manhattan weekly with an upper-crust, socially-plugged-in readership—where she wrote from late 1994 to 1997. At the *Observer*, Kuczynski penned a column called "The Eight-Day Week," a cheeky takeoff on the crowded datebook of a busy, overbooked New Yorker, and she also wrote features on everything from the trend for stress-reducing colonics to the disturbing number of germs that incubate on the streets of Gotham.

Before that, she worked in book publishing—first at St. Martin's Press, then at Villard, a division of Random House—but Kuczynski had her heart set on getting a job at a magazine. She flunked the typing test at

Smart Alex

Condé Nast but got some freelance research projects at *The New Yorker*. Eventually, Kuczynski sent a letter to Peter Kaplan, the editor of the *Observer*, pitching him a story about green-card marriages. According to *Observer* lore, Kaplan turned to one of his editors and said, "Call this guy!"

At the time the *Observer* was a petri dish for quirky and talented writers. "Alex started out kind of quietly and then became larger than life," recalls Peter Stevenson, the *Observer*'s executive editor, who worked with Kuczynski. "Every Wednesday Alex had ten story ideas. Eight might be terrible, but two would be brilliant."

Even in the *Observer*'s highly charged—and slightly neurotic—atmosphere, Kuczynski stood out, in no small part because of her wattage, height (5 feet 11), and ambition. And then there was the matter of her private life, which, evidently, wasn't so private. "Alex is the kind of person who will tell a perfect stranger about the sex that she had the night before," says a former *Observer* colleague, echoing an oft-repeated observation. By all accounts, life at the *Observer* was a kind of hip, intellectual *Animal House*, and Kuczynski fit right in. Jay Stowe, now the features editor at *Outside*, muses, "Alex can be a whole lot of fun when she is not scrambling up the career path."

"Alex was always on her game," adds Stowe. "If she felt that she had stepped on somebody's toes, she was quick to buy flowers, send champagne."

One recipient was Colin Harrison, the deputy editor of *Harper's* magazine, whom Kuczynski had routinely ridiculed in "The Eight-Day Week." In the fall of 1996, Kaplan dared her to attend a book party for Harrison at Manhattan's Soho Grand Hotel. She took the dare, but not before arming herself with a bottle of Veuve Clicquot champagne.

"She wrote something about me," Harrison says with a laugh. "I can't remember what it was. But she came to my book party, gave me a bottle of champagne, and asked if I would forgive her. And then she [wrote] the same thing again."

Kuczynski's writing was attracting the attention of more than just her victims, however. In October 1997, *New York Times* editor Trip Gabriel hired her as a reporter in the "Sunday Styles" section.

"I remember her saying that the *Times* was calling," says her friend Jamie Brickhouse, a book publicist. "It was kind of like a theatrical star saying that Hollywood was calling."

IN LESS THAN A YEAR, Kuczynski's wide-ranging "Sunday Styles" stories—including a profile on the actor and director Vincent Gallo and a piece on the angst of a long, three-day Valentine's weekend—caught the attention of Dave Smith. "I just felt that this was someone with a lot of potential and remarkable skills," says Smith, who has a reputation within the *Times* for working well with younger reporters. "One thing that I definitely wanted to do was to jump as fast as possible on the cultural themes [in the media business]."

These days her work often appears outside the business section as well, in "Sunday Styles," *The New York Times Magazine*, and *The New York Times Book Review*. To get ideas, Kuczynski estimates, she talks on the phone between 20 and 50 times a day. Every morning, in addition to the *Times*, she reads the New York *Daily News*, the *New York Post*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*; and flips her remote control between the network morning shows and CNN. When she arrives at the office, Kuczynski logs on to media and news websites such as Slate, Inside.com, and Jim Romensko's MediaNews.

In her nearly three years at the paper, Kuczynski has written more than 300 articles. While giving her buzz, her presence in and out of the paper has opened her up to envy, too, which sometimes resonates in a kind of loaded, vague nastiness about her. "Anything bad that you hear has to do with jealousy," contends gossip columnist Liz Smith. "Alex is ambitious, really smart, and great-looking."

Although many comment positively about Kuczynski's direct and friendly manner, others are less sanguine about her methods, suggesting that she is not always up front about exactly what she wants. Some say they have been blindsided by her coy, sometimes flip, and even deceptive approach. Kuczynski maintains, "As you report, circumstances often change, and I am always as straightforward as I can be. I don't see it as a reporting flaw if people don't always know what [I'm] going to write."

Edward Conlon might not agree. Since 1993, Conlon, a New York City police officer and a 1987 graduate of Harvard College, has been writing articles for *The New Yorker* under the pseudonym Marcus Laffey. This was a well-known fact in the heart of the publishing world, but not in the Bronx, where Conlon worked as a detective. Then, in November 1998, Conlon—still using his pseudonym—signed a reported $995,000 book contract with Riverhead Books, a division of Penguin Putnam Inc.

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Kuczynski had met Conlon socially, and at some point he told her of his work as Marcus Laffey. When the news of his book deal broke, she phoned several people at both *The New Yorker* (including *Brill's Content* editor in chief David Kuhn, who had been Conlon's editor at *The New Yorker*) and Riverhead, saying that she wanted to write a story about Conlon's life as well as his upcoming book; several sources told her that they would not speak to her if she planned to use Conlon's name. Shortly thereafter, Kuczynski called back and indicated that she was preparing a story on the ethics of pseudonym writing and did not plan to name Conlon, and as a result, she obtained interviews. Right before the article went to press, Kuczynski contacted some of her sources again and said that her editors had decided to identify Conlon. Then on November 23, 1998, the *Times* ran a story in which Conlon was exposed as Laffey.

People to whom Kuczynski spoke at both *The New Yorker* and Penguin Putnam, not to mention Conlon, were not pleased. "When I interviewed people for that story," Kuczynski insists, "I made it clear that we were in the process of deciding whether or not to name him."

LIKE CONLON, DAVID BRADLEY, the owner of the National Journal Group and, now, *The Atlantic Monthly*, needs no convincing of the effect of Kuczynski's coverage. On September 29, 1999, the story "At *Atlantic Monthly*, a Tense Staff Sizes Up the New Owner" began: "There was the crackle of the interstate static. Then the disembodied voice of Mortimer B. Zuckerman...wafted tinnily through the room." Zuckerman was telling the magazine's staff of its sale via speakerphone; the article went on to report that Bradley's soothing presence had eased tensions considerably.

Bradley—who describes himself as "an unabashed fan" of Kuczynski's—recalls, "The angle [of her story] was that I had...turned around the despair at *The Atlantic Monthly*," which, he believes, overstated his effect. Rather, Bradley contends, it was Zuckerman's appearance in person the next morning at the magazine's offices that calmed things down. He reflects, "[Kuczynski] is so dispositive on her

beat that her word is final. She can create the history."

Zuckerman called Kuczynski to ask that she clarify why he had been forced to inform the staff of the sale by speakerphone, as opposed to in person, as he had planned: *The Wall Street Journal* had already gotten wind of the acquisition and planned to run it in the next day's paper. Zuckerman praises Kuczynski's willingness to right the wrong: "She said that she got it out of context." The following week, the *Times* ran a "Media Talk" item explaining why events had forced Zuckerman's hand.

Bradley recalls that when he purchased *The Atlantic Monthly*, "[*National Journal*'s] John Fox Sullivan gave me one piece of advice. He said, 'You only need to accept two calls from the press. You accept the call from [*Washington Post* media columnist] Howie Kurtz if you want your mother to like you. You accept the call from Alex Kuczynski if you want the rest of the world to like you.'"

Three weeks before Kuczynski covered the *Atlantic Monthly* sale, she, along with a team of *Times* reporters, wrote about the merger of CBS and Viacom. Tom Rogers, the chairman and CEO of Primedia, was executive vice-president of NBC at the time of the merger. "Alex called me to get some background of the CBS and Viacom transaction," Rogers recalls. "She had very little background on broadcast consolidation issues, and I spent a considerable amount of time off the record with her. I was pretty impressed with how she was able to quickly assimilate an enormous amount of information about a complicated transaction."

On September 8, 1999, the day after the official announcement of the merger, Kuczynski's story in the *Times* was headlined "Making a Media Giant: The Personalities; CBS Chief Wanted to Buy or Be Bought." It began, "As Sumner M. Redstone, the 76-year-old chairman and chief executive of Viacom Inc., stepped from an elevator in The St. Regis Hotel in midtown Manhattan yesterday, the man right next to him, Melvin A. Karmazin, 56, president and chief executive of CBS, appeared to be temporarily distracted."

Recalls her former beau, ABC's John Miller, "I read the paper that day and I am thinking, 'How the hell did she meet the two principals, trail them to the press conference, while all the other reporters are cordoned off?' I asked Alex, and she replied, 'It's easy. I was late to the press conference.'"

"I got great details by being late," Kuczynski says, laughing. "Three reporters for *The New York Times* are all late. We get in the elevator, and there are Sumner and Mel. That was fortuitous." She nods. "Some of it is great luck."

Last summer, when John F. Kennedy Jr.'s plane went down near Martha's Vineyard, Kuczynski was staying on Shelter Island, New York, at John Miller's house. When the news broke, "ABC called me and said, 'Come in. We have a Learjet waiting.'" Miller explains. "I said, 'Well, I will get there faster by boat.'" So he and Kuczynski leaped onto Miller's Boston Whaler and headed north. Miller recalls that as the Whaler got closer to the Vineyard, the water "started out real nice and just got choppier. And there was Alex alternately throwing up and calling the *Times* desk."

"The entire island was booked solid," Miller continues. "Alex opened up her phone book, called a nice couple she knew who had a house on the island. And they said, 'We were expecting you. Your room is ready.'" Miller pauses. "Sometimes, it is good to be Alex." ■

With additional research by Alexander Eule

Zuckerman Unbound

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 95] untested when Zuckerman bought them in 1995. They never worked out. First there were electric and computer problems that caused the paper to be printed late. Then there were difficulties with printing in color. Zuckerman's push to have a full-color paper every day has been delayed indefinitely. Today the *News* prints in color five days a week.

Moreover, to say that Zuckerman is not exactly liked by the unions is an understatement. Relations with Zuckerman "have been anything but harmonious," says *Daily News* staff columnist and Newspaper Guild representative Juan Gonzalez. "He has trouble understanding that American democracy should extend to some degree into the workplace." Zuckerman is a smart guy, says Gonzalez, who has traveled to Cuba with him and says they have a good relationship, but "he just doesn't know how to treat people well. He treats them terribly, from a labor-management perspective."

Zuckerman's biggest union headache, a three-year-long battle with the drivers' union, finally came to an end in late June when the two sides reached a settlement that provides for a bonus and pay increases through 2009. In March 1999, an arbitrator awarded the union an $18.5 million pay increase. But the amount was compounded by a "me too" agreement with the other unions that allows them to get the same raise. Zuckerman got the ruling overturned by a federal judge, but his argument that he would be forced to close the paper if he had to pay left his employees unsettled. The settlement is clearly a relief for Zuckerman, who says the union's productivity concessions, which include among other things extended delivery routes, could substantially boost the *News*'s circulation. But Zuckerman notes that dealing with nine unions is never easy. "It's an ongoing, shall we say, relationship."

Compared with the *Daily News* saga, Zuckerman's problems at *U.S. News* are tame. The newsmagazine is the media property that Zuckerman seems to enjoy owning the most. He holds the title of editor in chief (as opposed to copublisher at the *Daily News*) and writes a weekly back-page editorial.

But as with the *Daily News*, Zuckerman has had problems with editors at *U.S. News*, going through four in the first five years (1984–89) he owned the magazine. Life at *U.S. News* did settle down when Zuckerman appointed the husband-and-wife team of Mike Ruby and Merrill McLoughlin co-editors in 1989. They ran the magazine for seven years before stepping down. But turmoil returned when Zuckerman hired James Fallows as their replacement.

Fallows, a well-known writer and media critic, had bold ideas for remaking the magazine, including doing longer pieces on societal trends and public policy. Fallows also came in swinging an ax; before his first day of work, he fired—with Zuckerman's backing, he says—two top editors and political columnist Steven Roberts. Zuckerman, who says he favors hard news and investigative reporting, didn't like what he saw and began sitting in on some editorial meetings, approving stories, and making cover decisions. Fallows, who thought Zuckerman was meddling, resisted. "Mort could take a personal interest in every page in the magazine, every line in the budget, and every head in the head count," says Fallows. "That degree of very specific personal interest in every facet of the magazine had its pluses and minuses." Harold Evans, Zuckerman's editorial director at the time, was dispatched to fire Fallows. Top editors Fallows had brought in took to the press, bashing Evans and Zuckerman. Evans accused Fallows of missing or downplaying important news and driving out more than 50 members of the editorial staff.

But now *U.S. News*'s editorial team appears stable. Stephen Smith, who took over in 1998, has brought the magazine back to focus on hard news. "He's a demanding boss and a challenging boss, but his inherent sense of ethics is second to none," Smith says of Zuckerman, adding that Zuckerman gets involved in the editing process mostly when the magazine runs complicated economic stories. And, Smith says, he welcomes the help. In September 1998, *U.S. News* was about to publish an article warning that world currency devaluation could lead to a market crash as severe as the one in 1929. "Mort said it was 'dead-ass wrong,'" Smith recalls. "It was five or six pages, and we ripped it up on a Friday night. Thank God we did."

The real turmoil at *U.S. News* is on the business side. Since early 1998, when longtime publisher Thomas Evans left the magazine for an Internet company, almost every top manager has departed. That includes the advertising director, the vice-president of marketing, the vice-president of communications, and the heads of the regional sales offices in New York, Boston, Washington, Detroit, Chicago, Dallas, and Los Angeles. Evans's successor, Patrick Hagerty, also left the magazine after a brief stint in the position. In January, Zuckerman got rid of the position of group publisher of the magazine group and required all his publishers to report to him.

Real estate can be a nasty, cutthroat world, and it is where Zuckerman developed his management style, where he learned to compete, and where he is most definitely a player.

The loss of business talent has hurt the magazine's bottom line. Circulation has been flat, hovering at about 2.1 million. Although the magazine's ad pages rose by about 4.5 percent in 1999, to 2,059, according to the Publishers Information Bureau, they're still behind those of *U.S. News*'s competitors. (*Time* had 3,139 ad pages, and *Newsweek* had 2,599 in the same time period.) But in January, *U.S. News* cut by 7 percent the 2.15 million rate-base circulation it guarantees advertisers and left its ad rates unchanged. In the wake of that move, ad pages have plummeted 14 percent in the first five months of this year compared with the same period last year.

Zuckerman won't reveal whether *U.S. News* is losing money, but he does concede that its business side is not where it should be. "I'll put it this way: It's certainly not making the money it was," says Zuckerman.

There is one great success in Zuckerman's empire—*Fast Company*. And after a career of owning troubled properties, Zuckerman is more than ready for a winner. "There is a God," he exults. The monthly's circulation jumped 57 percent last year, to 402,603, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations. This year it continues to grow, and Zuckerman says the magazine has already adjusted the number of subscribers it promises to advertisers to 500,000. According to the Publishers Information Bureau, ad pages last year increased 61 percent, to 1,685—lower than it could be, according to Zuckerman, because he stepped in and put a limit on advertising. Readers were having trouble finding the articles and the editorial staff was having problems producing enough copy to fill the magazine. "I've never been in that situation," says Zuckerman. "I keep on telling everybody, after 25 years of groveling for advertisers, now I have to put a limit...on the number of ad pages in the book."

Zuckerman provided the financial backing for *Fast Company*'s 1995 launch and took it under the umbrella of his magazine group. Its founding editors, Alan Webber and William Taylor, are still happily running the place, and Zuckerman gives them all the credit. "I thought those two guys were good; I had no idea they were geniuses,"

Zuckerman says. According to Webber, Zuckerman has been paying more attention to the magazine recently. "Our relationship is a very good one," says Webber. Of course, he adds, "it's easier to have a positive relationship when things are going well."

Almost as successful as the magazine is an ancillary business that sets up conferences for readers and corporate clients. Another hallmark of the magazine has been its Company of Friends—a grassroots network in which more than 25,000 readers worldwide meet to talk about business and issues raised by the magazine's articles. Only *Fast Company*'s website has been moribund. It's a standard archival site where readers can look up old articles or purchase subscriptions—surprisingly ordinary for a publication devoted to the new economy.

ZUCKERMAN IS FAMOUS BECAUSE he is a media baron, not because he develops and manages office buildings. His publications were his entrée into the world he now inhabits—where he jets off to visit global leaders, where his social life is chronicled in gossip columns, and where he guest-hosts for Charlie Rose and appears on Sunday-morning talk shows gabbing about current events. But it is important to remember that Zuckerman is a real-estate guy. His longtime partner in the business, Edward Linde, says real estate is what Zuckerman enjoys most. "I think his primary interest in all of the time that I have known him has been real estate and the business that we have had together," says Linde.

Real estate can be cutthroat, and it's where Zuckerman developed his management style, where he learned to compete, and where he is most definitely a player. And it's a field in which Zuckerman is legendary for his toughness. "Nobody is going to put one over on Mort," says Phil Meany, a regional managing director of the commercial real-estate firm Grubb & Ellis Company Inc.

Boston Properties, one of the largest real-estate companies in America, has been as stable as Zuckerman's publications have been tumultuous. He founded the company in 1970, at 32, after he left his first real-estate job, at the prestigious Boston firm Cabot, Cabot & Forbes, following a dispute with a senior partner. (In what would soon become a hallmark of Zuckerman's business career—litigiousness—he filed suit against his old company. Zuckerman ended up winning $6.5 million in the contractual dispute and, along the way, bad press and the animosity of Boston's tight-knit business community.)

Boston Properties was one of the first commercial real-estate firms to realize that the market was about to crash in the late 1980s. The firm stopped speculative building in 1988 and secured its tenants with long-term leases. Those moves kept the firm open when many other real-estate concerns shut their doors. Zuckerman was quick to jump into the market in 1996, once it began to heat up again.

In 1997, Zuckerman and Linde took Boston Properties public, forming a real-estate investment trust. The company raised $903 million—the largest initial public offering by an REIT at the time. The IPO was so successful that Boston Properties launched a secondary offering the next year and raised an additional $808 million in cash. Zuckerman, whose title is chairman of the board, holds more than 9 million shares of the company, valued at more than $300 million.

The key to Boston Properties's success has been the Zuckerman-Linde partnership. Linde is the guy who manages the business from the inside, making sure the office is running smoothly and tending to the details of the transactions. Zuckerman is the high-profile idea man.

That's how Zuckerman thought his media partnership with Fred Drasner worked, too.

They met more than 20 years ago when Drasner, then a lawyer in Washington, was representing the other side of a business deal with Zuckerman. Still, the two hit it off. Zuckerman says he was impressed with Drasner's toughness and sense of humor and hired Drasner to be his attorney. Drasner was instrumental in closing the deal for *U.S. News*, and Zuckerman brought Drasner in as a partner, giving him a small piece of the magazine. Zuckerman also put Drasner in charge of the magazine's business operations.

For a while, the partnership worked. Drasner brought *U.S. News*'s costs under control and assembled a solid publishing team. Despite *U.S. News*'s lower circulation, its ad page count was competitive with those of *Time* and *Newsweek* from 1992 to 1995. Drasner was given a bigger ownership stake in the *Daily News* than he had in *U.S. News* (Zuckerman won't say how much) and the title of copublisher. Drasner enjoyed running the *News* and spent more time than Zuckerman at the paper. He was instrumental in negotiating deals with its nine unions. The two men brought the *News* out of bankruptcy, and the paper made $8.5 million in 1993, $5.6 million in 1994, and $5.8 million in 1997, according to a federal court filing.

More successful at first were the string of side businesses the two developed. Drasner ran Applied Graphics Technologies Inc. (AGT), a graphics company he and Zuckerman acquired with *U.S. News*. He brought Zuckerman into Snyder Communications Inc., an advertising and marketing company based in Maryland. Daniel Snyder, chairman of Snyder Communications, brought both Drasner and Zuckerman as minority partners into the group that purchased the Washington Redskins last year.

With their businesses booming, Zuckerman was comfortable having Drasner oversee the operations. But little by little, their investments faltered. Meanwhile, Drasner became enthralled with owning the Redskins and is spending more of his time these days in Washington.

"This is a classic story of [the owners] having too much on their plate, not minding the store," says one person close to Zuckerman and Drasner. "They are both brilliant people...but they're horrible managers. If you look at their track record, you'd say it's a pattern. They buy, fix it, build it up, and it starts doing well. Then they start doing something else."

Zuckerman makes one thing clear—Drasner will be less involved in the turnaround. Although Zuckerman tries to paint the breakup as amicable, he is obviously unhappy with his partner.

Zuckerman agrees that he has spent less time than he should have with his media properties. He maintains, however, that he isn't worried about their business problems, calling them "hiccups." He's fixed them before, he says, and can fix them again.

But Zuckerman makes one thing clear—Drasner will be much less involved in the turnaround. Although Zuckerman tries to paint their breakup as amicable, he is clearly unhappy with Drasner. "I think Fred is a business genius, but it's not just a question of talent; it's also a question of application and perseverance," says Zuckerman. "And he has basically applied that elsewhere." Later Zuckerman adds: "You can't run a business by not being there." (This is quite a change: In January, when Zuckerman made an unsolicited call to *Media Life* magazine to quell speculation that he was dismantling his media empire, he also made it clear that he and Drasner were not splitting.)

Drasner says he retains the title of copublisher of the *News* as well as an ownership stake and is still involved with the paper "on a strategic level." He insists that he was not moved out by Zuckerman and that he is doing what he wants to do—working with the Redskins and AGT. Drasner has told friends that part of the trouble with the

publications is that Zuckerman cares little for keeping costs down and that his free spending has contributed to their decline. When asked if Drasner was getting out of the *Daily News*, Zuckerman indicated that it was a possibility.

Drasner declines to talk about his partnership with Zuckerman and his stake in the media properties. "I'm not going to have a discussion with Mort through a magazine. I'm not commenting at all," says Drasner. However, the two men have taken steps that indicate they are disentangling their finances. Recently, AGT hired an investment banker—a sign that the company is up for sale.

ZUCKERMAN SAYS HE ALWAYS wanted to be involved in journalism. Growing up in Montreal, he began subscribing to *The New York Times* at the age of 13. "There were probably 150 people who read *The New York Times* in Montreal every day," says Zuckerman. "It was such an obsession with me that my friends said I would never marry a woman who didn't read *The New York Times*."

Zuckerman's parents were middle-class immigrants from Russia. His grandfather, with whom he was close, was an Orthodox rabbi. Zuckerman's father, a confectionary and tobacco wholesaler, died when he was 17. Zuckerman says his father wanted him to become a rabbi like his grandfather. ("That's why I never go to temple," he says with a laugh.)

Zuckerman graduated from McGill University at 19, with a degree in economics and political theory. He headed to the United States, earning an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School before returning to McGill for a law degree. Although he never became a lawyer or took the bar exam, Zuckerman continued on the law route at Harvard University, where he got a master's degree in law in a joint program with Harvard's business school. He also picked up a certificate in regional urban planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a certificate of law from the University of Paris. (Zuckerman taught regional urban planning for nine years at Harvard and then for three years at Yale University.)

In 1962, Zuckerman settled in Boston, where he turned his attention to real estate—and to his social life. He purchased a large townhouse in the tony Beacon Hill neighborhood and became well known for his dinner parties, at which his intellectual Harvard friends mingled with his journalist friends and his political friends, who were contacts from his real-estate business. Boston's mayor at the time, Kevin White, was a close friend and frequent dinner guest, as were future Massachusetts governor William Weld, Harvard law professor (now Supreme Court justice) Stephen Breyer, historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Boston Globe* columnist Ellen Goodman, and *New Republic* owner Martin Peretz.

Boston, however, began to seem too much like a small town to Zuckerman. Controversy swelled around the young developer, starting after he filed suit against his former employer, Cabot, Cabot & Forbes. His development projects were controversial as well. One particularly large building project called Park Plaza sparked a battle that lasted seven years. Neighbors and community groups, upset with the size of the project and concerned about its impact on historic downtown Boston, where it was to be located, fought hard. Zuckerman scaled back the project several times and ultimately dropped it. A few years later, Zuckerman left Boston for New York, where he has remained.

One part of Zuckerman's reputation that followed him from Boston was that of a ladies' man. His romances, including those with Gloria Steinem, Diane Von Furstenberg, Nora Ephron, and Joan Lunden, were staples of the New York gossip columns. Author Avery Corman, a longtime friend and softball teammate of Zuckerman's, remembers a steady parade of women that Zuckerman would bring to the games. "We were always guaranteed to have somebody in attendance to watch our game, because Mort would always have his latest lady in attendance," Corman recalls.

Still, Zuckerman kept telling his friends that he wanted to get married—a claim most of them doubted. "Mort always wanted to get married—my feeling was that when he met the right person, he would," says Judith Miller, a reporter at *The New York Times*. "But I kept wondering if he really wanted to." Adds Miller: "With a couple of notable exceptions, many of the women who went out with him continue to adore him." The notable exception is Steinem, whom Zuckerman almost married. She later trashed him, though not by name, in one of her books, describing him as shallow and self-centered.

Zuckerman almost married Gloria Steinem, who later trashed him, though not by name, in one of her books, describing him as shallow and self-centered.

Zuckerman met Marla Prather in 1996 at the opening of an exhibit she set up at the National Gallery. Although Zuckerman was squiring Bianca Jagger that night, he became immediately smitten with Prather. Tall and studious-looking with strawberry-blonde hair, Prather was not the typical socialite Zuckerman was known for dating. But he set about wooing her, and five months later they were married.

Prather, says Zuckerman's friend Jason Epstein, the retired editorial director of Random House, is a perfect match for Zuckerman. Epstein notes that they each have passionate interests—Zuckerman in politics and international affairs and Prather in art—that don't overlap but give them common ground. "That's why they can respect each other, even though their interests are quite different," says Epstein. "They do occupy quite separate intellectual worlds, but they occupy them in the same way."

Zuckerman's friends say that although marriage has calmed him, it was the birth of his daughter, Abigail, that changed him. He's crazy about her, so much so that he loses his normal eloquence and struggles to explain it. "I mean, the moment of her birth was just the greatest moment of my life," says Zuckerman. "And she is the most wonderful, wonderful person I've ever had in my life. It's just spectacular; it really is spectacular."

The walls of Zuckerman's eighteenth-floor New York office are filled with photographs of his daughter, and Zuckerman loves to regale visitors with stories about her love of dinosaurs, her proficiency in Spanish, and her busy schedule, which includes ballet and music lessons. Recently, says Miller, she and Zuckerman were at an Anti-Defamation League dinner in New York, and Zuckerman slipped out in the middle of the proceedings. He went home to tuck Abigail into bed, returning a half hour later.

Aside from Abigail's pictures, the only other decoration Zuckerman has on his office walls are five of his degrees and a few copies of his *U.S. News* editorials. Two of the editorials hang in frames with personal notes from President Clinton. The decor is a testament to two of Zuckerman's favorite activities—learning and policy. "I think Mort began life as an intellectual and somehow discovered he had a flair for real estate," says Epstein. Zuckerman's close friend Irwin Winkler, the movie producer, agrees. "He's an intellectual," says Winkler, a regular guest of Zuckerman's. "You should sit around sometime and see him in a conversation with people like [former White House counsel] Lloyd Cutler and [former Commerce secretary] Pete Peterson and [former *New York Times* editor and current *Daily News* columnist] Abe Rosenthal, and

you find Mort at the foreground of the conversation."

Zuckerman's editorials and the few reported pieces he writes for *U.S. News* are not just thrown together. This April, for example, Zuckerman went to Russia (which he has visited about 25 times) to do some reporting on the recent election of Vladimir Putin as the country's president. In preparation for the trip, Zuckerman says he read about 75 articles on Russia, assembled by *U.S. News* researchers in a four-inch-thick binder. He had also been on the phone with government officials in both the United States and Russia to get a sense of where they stand on foreign policy, domestic policy, legal issues, and financial issues.

U.S. News editor Smith says it's hard to fathom how much work Zuckerman does to keep up on political events. Last year, Smith joined Zuckerman on his private plane to fly down to Texas for lunch with Governor George W. Bush. On the trip, Zuckerman read five or six newspapers and about half a dozen magazines, ripping out pages to save and underlining important passages. Smith, who reads about that much as part of his job, kept up a similar pace. After lunch and a long interview, the two headed back to Washington. Once they were airborne, Zuckerman turned to *Foreign Affairs* magazine and various monographs on foreign policy. Smith looked over with amazement. Exhausted, he had retreated to a novel. "I deal with Mort almost every day, and I'm hard-pressed to think of more than a couple of journalists who are in his league in IQ power," says Smith.

Back in Zuckerman's Washington home last March, our interview quickly ground to a halt when Abigail walked in from the back door, her short, blonde hair soaked from the rain. When she waltzed into the living room, Zuckerman's eyes lit up and his seriousness dissolved. Abigail's joy at seeing her dad and her running chatter with her doll made it impossible to talk. Despite Zuckerman's entreaties for her to play elsewhere, she was staying put. We took the conversation into his study.

There we discussed his plans for his media properties. Over the past six months or so, Zuckerman has started to study the Internet to figure out how it can fit into his media properties. "I'm just mesmerized by it," says Zuckerman.

It's surprising that Zuckerman is capitalizing on the Internet so late in the game. *U.S. News* was one of the first consumer magazines in the country to go online, but in recent years, as other news organizations were pouring money into their websites, Zuckerman wasn't. He says he wanted to take things slow, but perhaps he took them too slow, since the IPO market has virtually dried up. "If you're now in a world where there is so much money and so much talent and they're all coming up with good ideas and you don't get there first...." Zuckerman pauses. "Well, I don't rush that way. I couldn't figure out how to make it work."

Both *U.S. News* and *Fast Company*, Zuckerman says, will soon be involved in e-commerce ventures. However, the initial steps have not been easy. In late April, Zuckerman was forced to put on hold his plan to spin off part of *U.S. News*'s website to an e-commerce company called Embark.com. The company, which provides an array of services to college students, cancelled its IPO. Zuckerman is now talking to other e-commerce companies about a short-term partnership.

Zuckerman is also working on *Fast Company*'s Web property. "We are really going to look seriously at the possibility of developing a unique kind of Internet company, a business-to-business Internet company, with the FastCompany.com URL," says Zuckerman, referring to the magazine's Web address. He's been getting advice from former *U.S. News* executive Jake Winebaum, who runs eCompanies, an Internet firm that works with entrepreneurs on company startups.

Zuckerman concedes that he feels a bit dated by the Internet—he doesn't have a computer on his desk and rarely uses one. But he says he is eager to learn. "It is a completely different business model than conventional or traditional business," says Zuckerman. "You know, I can understand it intellectually but how to execute it is a whole other thing."

Zuckerman may be still learning about e-commerce, but the Internet is the future, and he's been thinking a lot about the future. Zuckerman insists he is intent on getting his publications up and running so that he'll have the opportunity to pass them on to the next generation. Abigail, who, as Zuckerman speaks, is throwing a minor temper tantrum in the next room, turned 3 in July.

"I literally introduced my daughter to the newsroom of the *Daily News* as their next publisher," says Zuckerman. "If she doesn't want to do it, she doesn't want to do it. But she's going to have that chance. And frankly, it's a fabulous job." ◘

Deadly Competition

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 99] had warned about.

The person I talked with explained what happened next: "Miguel was like, 'I have to go. You think I want to do this? Reuters is going. After yesterday, I have to go.'"

A few miles up the road, by this person's account, Gil Moreno met up with the Reuters vehicle, which had turned around and was heading back toward Freetown. The Reuters crew said they had just talked with villagers who warned them the RUF was indeed in the area. Gil Moreno, with great relief, turned his vehicle around and returned with them to Freetown.

Gil Moreno faced other pressures in Sierra Leone. On occasion, APTN and Reuters would purchase film in a war zone from freelance journalists and pseudo-journalists who show up in their offices with good footage—perhaps images of a massacre or of soldiers involved in a firefight. The footage often comes from high-risk areas that experienced journalists consider off-limits. Sometimes the film isn't authentic—pictures of an old massacre passed off as new—but if the footage is strong and is judged to be authentic, Reuters or APTN or any number of broadcasters will pay good money for it.

That happened several days before Gil Moreno was killed. A freelancer offered combat film to the APTN staff in Freetown, but they turned it down, largely because the guy who offered it seemed unreliable. He was rumored to go into combat armed, more of a mercenary than a journalist. He took his video to the Reuters staff in Freetown, and they bought it for several thousand dollars. According to Rodney Pinder, editor of Reuters video news services, decisions relating to purchasing footage from freelancers are made "eight times out of ten" by the Reuters team on the ground; superiors in London are contacted only if the price is unusually high or if the authenticity of the film is questioned. In the following days, Reuters bought another batch of film from the same man.

Some of the footage was important and received widespread global attention. It included some of the first glimpses of corpses found in the bush dressed in what appeared to be U.N. military uniforms. The images seemed to confirm what the U.N. and its member states had most feared: that peacekeepers had been killed by the rebels.

Buying such footage is a murky business. How do you know that film shot by independent operators, or that they say they shot, is authentic? If you refuse the film, will a competitor buy it, thereby making your clients wonder why you don't have it? Or will the film wind up on the Internet, where your clients will see it and wonder why they are paying you a million dollars a year when better stuff is available on the Web for free?

Deadly Competition

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 99] According to two journalists I spoke with, Gil Moreno and his colleagues at APTN, and even some journalists at Reuters, were upset that the combat footage, coming from an apparently dubious source, had been bought by Reuters. Although the film appears to have been authentic, the purchase of it legitimized a freelancer whose methods and means were thought by some to be below journalistic standards. After the purchases, the Reuters staff in Sierra Leone agreed with their APTN counterparts to refuse further offers from this freelancer. But the transaction increased the pressure on Gil Moreno and every other responsible cameraman because a precedent seemed to have been set; offers from pseudo-freelancers would be considered.

The pressures must have been weighing on Gil Moreno the day he was killed. I talked on the phone with Behrakis, a member of the Reuters dream team. Behrakis, based in Athens, told me that Gil Moreno did not seem troubled by the decision to go past the Rogberi Junction checkpoint. "We knew what we wanted to do and we decided to do it," Behrakis says. "We knew it was risky but we didn't think it was terribly risky. We took risks in other places that we thought were much more dangerous....We were in no-man's-land, in a place that one day was controlled by the government, the next day controlled by the rebels. It was a very fluid situation. But this was a part of our job. We didn't think it was crazy. We were just being professionals, doing what we do, reporting the story." Even so, the risks involved in driving past Rogberi Junction were eerily similar to the risks that Gil Moreno had not wanted to take a week earlier when he saw a Reuters vehicle drive past the British camp in Lungi Lo, outside Freetown.

Many of the journalists I spoke with believe that in the wake of the tragedy in Sierra Leone, television pools—in which news organizations agree to share material they gather—should be used more frequently. Such arrangements were used by most television organizations in Sarajevo during much of the Bosnian war, largely because the fear of getting beat on a hot yet dangerous story was causing cameramen to take ill-considered risks. In Fiji, for example, Reuters and APTN agreed to create a pool after a cameraman was shot during a recent coup there. But according to APTN and Reuters news executives, a pool wasn't even considered when the fighting erupted in Sierra Leone. It was, from the start, a battle for the best footage that has created, in its wake, a small army of embittered journalists.

"I don't think it's cool in a competitive, breaking situation for bosses to send rockets saying we got our asses kicked," says one such journalist. "I think that should be criminal."

The message has gotten through to top Reuters editors. According to Geert Linnebank, editor in chief of Reuters, staff there have made a point of not providing negative feedback to war correspondents. But now, he says, the policy will be formalized on paper and distributed throughout the London headquarters and to all bureaus. The same is not true at APTN. Baker says no such policy is being considered and he expressed surprise that a competitor would do so. "The majority of journalists I've known want feedback on how their material is being received," he says. "It is standard of any news organization to give feedback on their performance."

Reuters is also moving more quickly than The Associated Press to provide war-survival training to its combat journalists. The most popular course, "Hostile Environments and Emergency First Aid Training," is offered by Centurion Risk Assessment Services, which is run by former members of the special forces unit of Her Majesty's Royal Marines. It includes instruction on recognizing and avoiding mines and booby traps, how to protect yourself in a firefight, and combat first aid. At the beginning of the course, students are subjected to an exercise in which they are confronted with a simulated attack or hostage-taking.

The Centurion course is not cheap—about $2,000 for five days—but Reuters began, in late 1997, enrolling its combat journalists in it. More than 100 have taken part to date. According to Linnebank, Reuters will now require participation in the course before sending a journalist to a conflict zone; until now, the company encouraged participation but did not require it. The AP has sent only about 50 and has no plans to require participation in the course for journalists heading to war zones. "Obviously [the course] can sharpen people's skills, but it is not the only way of learning how to conduct yourself safely," claims Baker of APTN. Journalists can learn survival skills in the field, he says, and some journalists, by virtue of mandatory or voluntary military service, come into the profession with combat knowledge.

Behrakis credits his two years of military training and the Centurion course with helping him survive the ambush in Sierra Leone. He told me that as he was making his way through the jungle after the attack, he chose a path through the toughest terrain, because the easier path, where people would be expected to walk, would also be the most likely place to contain booby traps and mines. This was one of the tips he learned in the Centurion course. Schork was one of the first Reuters journalists to take the course. Gil Moreno, who was 32 years old when he died, had not taken it.

Of course, no amount of training could have saved them from the jungle ambush. Many dangerous situations come down to a matter of luck; in this case, two journalists survived the fusillade outside Rogberi Junction; two did not. But the pressure of competition, which can affect the risks journalists take, is a factor that, unlike luck, can be controlled, if decision-makers choose to do so. It might not have made a difference for Gil Moreno, but his colleagues don't want to find themselves wondering about these issues ever again. As an APTN journalist put it, "We have to change the rules of engagement." ◘

Didion's Daughters

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 103] spine of our lives, the epic on which we hang our sense of who we are." Here is Meghan Daum: "If there is in this story a single moment when I crossed the boundary between debtlessness and total financial mayhem, it's the first dollar that I put toward my life as a writer in New York." And Elizabeth Kolbert: "The important story of his tenure is obviously the one about the city's recovery." And it has become as commonplace for writers to reflect on their story, and the storylike nature of their story, and the construction of The Story itself.

Didion's writing was so original, so distinctive, that paradoxically she has lost her originality. She has become mundane, traces of her sharp personal lyricism scattered through newspapers and magazines. (There are also male writers who imitate Didion, though more of them borrow from Tom Wolfe. Think of all of those articles you've read in *GQ* and *Esquire* with such Wolfian sound effects as "Splat!" and internal free associations and liberal spatterings of exclamation points.)

But all of this influence could be the highest achievement a writer can hope for. It is Didion's incomparable style that seduces so many writers, but it is also the romantic persona she created: ambitious and vulnerable, narcissistic and paranoid and disoriented and maddeningly perceptive. The great revelation of her writing is that it was emotionally charged *and* coolly intellectual after a journalistic tradition that was dry and distanced and straightforward.

One peculiar effect of Didion's absorption into the mainstream is that it has become hard to read her work without hearing the echoes. In her most recent novel, *The Last Thing He Wanted*, her fifth book since

The White Album, she begins to sound like a parody of herself: "That she did not was the beginning of the story as some people in Miami came to see it."

Of course one could argue that Didion herself was influenced by the women writers who came before her, by Mary McCarthy's essay "My Confession," about communism in the thirties, for example, or by Rebecca West's *The Meaning of Treason*, which took apart and channeled the experience of postwar England in the way Didion would later take apart and channel the experience of sixties America. But that, as Didion would say, is a whole other story. ◘

Eyes Off the Prize

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 109] prizes" is likely also a reference to these jury-board disputes over top choices; one possibly apocryphal Pulitzer tale tells of a *Newsday* reporter who suffered a nervous breakdown after word leaked out that he had been the top choice of the jury, only to have a *New York Times* reporter end up with the prize. (Another Pulitzer tale describes a photographer who won the prize in the early 1970s and was unable to handle the sudden fame, at one point calling a press conference to declare that he should be referred to as Jesus Christ.)

Topping says he tries to place jurors in their first choice of committee—he takes informal polls in telephone conversations with them leading up to the first meeting of the nominating jurors. And, Topping says, he does so without regard to potential conflicts of interest. At both the jury and the board level, if an individual's paper is being considered, that person must recuse himself from the discussions. "That's worked well in ensuring no conflicts," Topping says. But juries can nominate only three entries; therefore, a juror retains influence—albeit indirectly—over his paper's entry through what he says about other entries. And although jurors will occasionally recuse themselves when a direct competitor's work is being discussed, there are no rules requiring a juror from, say, *The Washington Post*, to refrain from discussing an entry submitted by the paper's longtime rival for national prominence, *The New York Times*. Some jury assignments seem careless in their execution, even to the jurors themselves.

A little over a month after *The Denver Post* was chosen as a finalist, the board gave it the Pulitzer for breaking news. The *Post*'s Jeanette Chavez's role in selecting the finalists troubled her own reporters.

Take this year's breaking-news jury. Breaking news is often dominated by a sudden, unexpected disaster, such as 1998's shooting rampage by a state lottery worker in Connecticut, for which *The Hartford Courant* won, or the 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800, for which *Newsday* won. In 1999, there was no bigger national breaking-news story than the massacre at Columbine High School, and both the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* and *The Denver Post* submitted their Columbine coverage for consideration. For the past decade, the *Post* and the *News* had been locked in one of the fiercest newspaper wars in the country, and a Pulitzer Prize would provide a huge psychological boost. "This is as grueling as anything out there," Frank Scandale, the *Post*'s assistant managing editor for news, says of the papers' rivalry. "And on this story, it was *mano-a-mano*, our reporters versus their reporters, our editors versus their editors, our copy editors versus their copy editors." (In May, the *News* and the *Post* entered into a joint operating agreement, whereby the two papers will merge business operations but maintain separate newsrooms.)

So Jeanette Chavez, the *Post*'s managing editor and a first-time Pulitzer juror, says she was taken aback when she picked up her name tag that Monday morning and saw she had drawn the breaking-news assignment. "I was shocked," she says. "Totally stunned." Chavez says she did not request to sit on the breaking-news jury.

And when, a little more than a month after the *Post* was chosen as a finalist, the board gave it the Pulitzer for breaking news, Chavez's inclusion on the jury troubled some of her own paper's reporters. The night the awards were announced, *Post* staffers gathered in a ballroom at Denver's Westin hotel. Amid the celebration, word began circulating that Chavez had been on the jury; the *Rocky Mountain News* was not represented on that, or any other, juries. And so the *Post*'s reporters, who had heard the news of the prize just hours earlier, began to ask themselves: Is that appropriate? "Some of the reporters went right over to Jeanette," Scandale says, "and asked, 'How could we win this? Tell us how this wasn't a conflict.'"

Compounding the questions was the fact that although the *News* wasn't even recognized as a Pulitzer finalist, it was winning other national awards. A couple of weeks after the Pulitzers were announced, the *News* won the Society of Professional Journalists' Sigma Delta Chi award for deadline reporting for its Columbine coverage. As one *Rocky Mountain News* reporter says, "Look, I'm sure they deserved it. But it would smell a lot better if they won it without Jeanette on the jury."

Chavez was not in the room for the jury discussions about either the *News* or the *Post* entries; indeed, jurors and board members are not even allowed to discuss entries submitted by other papers owned by the same company. (That means, for example, a juror from *The Boston Globe* could not discuss an entry by a reporter from its parent company, *The New York Times*, and as a result of the recent Times Mirror–Tribune merger, a juror from *Newsday* can no longer discuss a *Chicago Tribune* entry.) But Chavez was free to discuss other entries, and she acknowledges discussing the merits of the type of story for which her paper was nominated versus other papers' entries. For example, another of this year's finalists in the breaking-news category was *The News & Observer* of Raleigh, North Carolina, for its coverage of Hurricane Floyd. Referring to that entry, Chavez says, "It's not to take anything away from what they did, but at least [a hurricane] is something you can anticipate. It's occurred before and you have some preparation for it. I don't think anyone anticipated a shooting in a suburban high school." Other members of the breaking-news jury agree that this was one line of discussion during their deliberations. Then there's the personality issue: As Joyce Davis, a member of the international jury, says, "Who knows how personalities come into effect. If I'm sitting next to you and you're really nice, maybe I'll be more inclined to vote for your piece."

Competition wasn't so fierce on the international-reporting jury. With the exception of Hamilton, the dean of Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, every juror's paper or company had submitted entries for consideration, but there was no competition on the scale of *The Denver Post* versus the *Rocky Mountain News*. Indeed, late in the game one of the most contentious debates involved comparing the work of the *Voice* with that of *The Boston Globe*, and neither paper had representatives on the jury.

Hamilton read Schoofs's piece first, and immediately felt he had found a potential winner. "As soon as I read it, I turned to the guy next to me"—Bussey, who had edited last year's winning entry by *The Wall Street Journal*—"and said, 'This is a great, great piece of work.'"

Bussey and Hamilton began advocating Schoofs's work. "Still," Hamilton says, "I must say I was concerned that it wasn't going to make our final list, because *The Village Voice* isn't normally the place you turn to for foreign news." Indeed, the *Voice* is best known for its

cultural coverage, New York City political reporting, and entertainment listings.

Hamilton and the rest of the international jury knew nothing about Schoofs besides the brief biography that had been submitted by the *Voice*. They knew nothing about his nearly seven-month trip to Africa, during which he contracted malaria and suffered 104-degree fevers. Unlike Bussey's foreign squad at the *Journal*, Schoofs was a one-man operation; indeed, Schoofs taught himself how to work a digital camera so that he could shoot the art that ran with his series.

Although only three of the jurors—Davis, Parks, and Jacobsen—thought the *Globe*'s work was worthy of a prize, all five agreed that Schoofs's work was Pulitzer caliber. So Schoofs got the nod as a finalist, along with the AP staff for its Chechnya coverage and *The Washington Post* staff for its Kosovo work.

But Davis's concerns about the accuracy of Schoofs's scientific speculations and her questions about whether Schoofs was correct in hypothesizing that African prostitutes lost an apparent immunity to AIDS once they gave up prostitution were never passed on to the Pulitzer board. No calls were put out, no scientists questioned. Some scientists do believe that the African prostitutes' apparent immunity is due to low-level exposure to the HIV virus, but others think the theory is illogical.

So, at the very least, Davis's instinct that this claim needed further examination was a good one. But her doubts were never addressed, and this remains the biggest problem with the Pulitzer process: the lack of vetting for accuracy. In this case, Schoofs, by all accounts a meticulous reporter, presents a point of view about which there is honest disagreement. But even when the questions are more pressing than the ones Davis raised concerning Schoofs's science—even when there is evidence that a reporter has a problem with accuracy or truthfulness—there is rarely even the most cursory check.

The Pulitzer Plan of Award, the guidelines and rules that govern the prizes, stipulates only that newspapers must include challenges to the accuracy of the specific entry in question. This means that when newspapers submit entries by journalists about whom past questions have been raised, the newspapers are not required to notify the Pulitzer board of the writer's history. This year, for instance, Gina Kolata and Kurt Eichenwald of *The New York Times* were named as finalists in the investigative-reporting category for a series about pharmaceutical companies' secretly paying doctors to test drugs on patients. Kolata has drawn repeated criticism (including an October 1998 article, "Flawed Science at the *Times*," in this magazine) for her supposed biases: In 1998, she prematurely touted a cure for cancer while shopping a book proposal on the subject. And Eichenwald came under fire when he wrote a blistering page-one story in the *Times* about alleged evidence of a Texaco executive referring to black employees as "f--ing niggers." In fact, further examination of several microcassettes showed that the executive had actually said "poor St. Nicholas." Eichenwald was criticized in publications ranging from *The New Republic* to *The American Spectator* for everything from shoddy to biased journalism. And yet none of this year's board members who spoke to *Brill's Content* said they were notified of any concerns, past or present, with either Kolata's or Eichenwald's work.

There's also the sole reliance on the news organizations submitting the entries to include "any significant challenge to the accuracy or fairness of an entry, such as published letters, corrections, retractions, as well as responses by the newspaper...." The AP didn't publish the information that Daily had not been at No Gun Ri until after the Pulitzer process was completed, and, AP spokeswoman Tunney says, the news service did not feel it was necessary to tell the Pulitzer organization that AP had evidence Daily had not been at the alleged massacre site. Because of this, neither the investigative jury nor the Pulitzer board were aware of the questions concerning Daily's record.

This runs contrary to how Topping describes the Pulitzer process, during which, he says, "every question that comes up is addressed and dealt with." Topping argues that he assembles a board of top editors and publishers who are most likely to spot errors or questionable dispatches. But it is precisely because top editors and publishers often do not recognize the holes in their reporters' work that honors were given to Janet Cooke and Patricia Smith in the first place. After all, when Cooke was at the *Post*, reporters had been whispering about too-good-to-be-true anecdotes for months. In Smith's case, the *Globe* newsroom had been buzzing for years about silky quotes spun from unlikely sources.

E.R. Shipp, now the ombudsman for *The Washington Post*, was the chairman of the commentary jury the year Smith was named as a finalist. "Our job is to judge the quality of the writing and the scope of the reporting," she says. "Our job is not to determine whether they accurately quoted anybody....The Pulitzer organization [not the jury] probably should be where the screening should take place." But screening doesn't take place in the Pulitzer organization; Topping wrote in an e-mail to *Brill's Content* that it is the job of the outfits submitting the work to make sure everything checks out. When asked whether the Pulitzer board had ever considered submitting questionnaires to the people or institutions who had been written about to see if they had any complaints about the stories under consideration, Topping wrote, "The answer is no."

Screening for accuracy in stories does not take place in the Pulitzer organization. According to the prize administrator, that job belongs to those submitting nominations.

The *Globe* never told the Pulitzer committee about the concerns with Smith's work—concerns that had been responsible for instituting a fact-checking process for the *Globe*'s columnists—when they submitted her work for a nomination. Moreover, the paper suffered no consequences from the Pulitzer organization.

Even when overt questions of accuracy are brought before the Pulitzer juries and board, they can be ignored. In separate interviews with *Brill's Content* chairman and chief executive officer Steven Brill last year and this reporter this spring, Topping referred to 1999's investigative-reporting prize (given to *The Miami Herald* for a report on pervasive voter fraud that helped overturn a mayoral election) as an example in which jury members investigated questions of accuracy on their own. But five of the seven people on that jury—Rick Rodriguez, the executive editor of *The Sacramento Bee*; David Boardman, the assistant managing editor of *The Seattle Times*; Rebecca Corbett, an assistant managing editor at *The Sun* of Baltimore; Bob Giles, the senior vice-president of the Freedom Forum; and Shawn McIntosh, the managing editor of *The Clarion-Ledger* of Jackson, Mississippi—say they don't remember anyone's looking into questions of veracity. (Boardman, Corbett, and McIntosh say they remember some discussion, and subsequent inquiries, regarding whether the *Herald*'s work had preceded or followed official revelations regarding the voter fraud.) A sixth jury member, Gene Miller, was recused from those discussions because he was an associate editor at the *Herald*. The seventh juror, David Jones, a former assistant managing editor at *The New York Times*, couldn't be reached for comment.

When it comes to investigative projects such as the *Herald*'s, the Pulitzer board does not approach the subjects of articles to see if

they have objections to the piece. Although newspapers are required to include any corrections relating to their entries, there is never a formal announcement of which stories have been submitted for prizes. This year, for instance, Brush Wellman Inc., a company that makes beryllium, a hardening agent in alloys, submitted a 14-page letter to Topping and the Pulitzer board regarding a series of articles by *The Blade* of Toledo, Ohio, dealing with beryllium and its use in the production of metal used to make nuclear bombs. Brush Wellman did not know *The Blade* was submitting its series for a Pulitzer, said David Meeker, a senior counselor at Brush Wellman's public relations firm. "But I do know they were pretty aggressive about getting prizes," Meeker says. And so on February 23, Thomas Clare, a lawyer working for Brush Wellman, sent a letter to Topping outlining the company's concerns assuming the series had been submitted. "Brush Wellman understands that the 'Deadly Alliance' special report may have been submitted to the Pulitzer Prize Board for consideration," Clare wrote. "As the primary target of that series, Brush Wellman believes that the Board is entitled to consider its views on the accuracy and quality of the series of articles, and its deservedness of journalistic accolades." In addition to the 14-page letter, Brush Wellman posted a point-by-point refutation of the entire *Blade* series on its website.

The letter was submitted less than a week before jury members were scheduled to meet at Columbia. It was never given to the investigative-jury members to read. *The Blade*, Topping explains, would not have enough time to respond to all the complaints. Instead, Topping summarized Brush Wellman's complaints as he understood them once the *Blade* series was on the table as a potential finalist.

"We don't know, honestly, if our position was read in detail," Meeker says. "I do know that no one called us with any follow-up questions." *The Blade*, along with Kolata and Eichenwald's *New York Times* series, was named a finalist for investigative reporting; the award went to The Associated Press team for its No Gun Ri story.

AT THE END OF THE DAY on March 1, each of the 14 juries handed in a three-page report, one page for each finalist. The jury selections were then forwarded to the 19-member Pulitzer board. Unlike the jurors, the board is self-perpetuating; each year, a membership subcommittee meets to fill vacancies. Generally, board members serve three three-year terms, according to Topping. Besides Topping and George Rupp, the president of Columbia University, this year's board included John Carroll, then the editor of *The Sun* of Baltimore and now the editor of the *Los Angeles Times*; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the W.E.B. DuBois Professor of Humanities at Harvard University; Doris Kearns Goodwin, the historian and biographer; Mike Pride, the editor of the *Concord* (New Hampshire) *Monitor* and a columnist for this magazine; William Safire, a columnist with *The New York Times*; Paul Steiger, the managing editor of *The Wall Street Journal*; Boccardi of AP; Graham of *The Washington Post*; and eight other members. Edward Seaton, the editor in chief of *The Manhattan* (Kansas) *Mercury*, was the board's chairman.

The board members are forwarded the juries' selections for finalists in early March to read and review. The board then meets for two days in early April; this year it met on April 6 and 7.

"The juries, the board members, are prominent people in the field. They hear things, they read the reviews. If there was a problem, they would be likely to know," Topping says, explaining why no checks are needed in the Pulitzer process.

But AP's No Gun Ri dispatch—like Patricia Smith's columns and Janet Cooke's "Jimmy's World" before it—only reinforces the notion that Topping is wrong in thinking that the "prominent people" who make up the Pulitzer board can sniff out problems. This year, *The Washington Post*'s Dobbs had learned Daily was not at No Gun Ri months before the Pulitzer board deliberated. But Donald Graham, the publisher of *The Washington Post*, did not raise any objections to AP's work. When asked whether he knew about Dobbs's research and whether the AP case made him question the Pulitzer process, Graham said through a spokeswoman, "I have no comment whatsoever about anything regarding the Pulitzer process."

And AP will not be sanctioned by the Pulitzer board in any way for withholding the information that called its winning entry into question. The shame, Topping explains, of a Pulitzer scandal should be enough to ward off questionable entries.

When asked why, then, there continued to be entries with factual errors, made-up sources, and incomplete information, Topping declined to answer. ■

THE OMBUDSMAN

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39] Catholically handsome? Or Jewishly handsome? Or Muslimly handsome? Odd.

Equally odd was another throwaway line in the June issue. The "Media Lives" department talked about *Time* and *Newsweek* editors in Hong Kong who are married to each other. *Brill's Content* reported: "His wife agrees. 'It's a very bad situation to know what the other spouse is doing,' says [*Newsweek*'s Dorinda] Elliott, 42, whose petite frame and sophisticated dress belie her manic energy."

That means, apparently, that most small journalists who dress well are lethargic.

The editors might want to look into that as a story idea.

The editors respond: Our policy on anonymous sources is always to try for nonanonymity. If that's not possible, we negotiate to get the fullest description we can, preferably one that indicates the person's biases, and we never just quote "sources." Michael Gartner is right to hold our feet to the fire on this crucial issue, and his column has reinforced our commitment to the strict standards we have established. However, we think some of his criticisms are unfair or overstated.

As for our *Los Angeles Times* coverage, Gartner implies that our reliance on anonymous sources was, hypocritically, akin to that of the story we criticized. But our piece included on-the-record comments from all of the key players in the saga. It's unfortunate there had to be anonymous sources, too, but a distinguishing attribute was attached to each; none were simply described as "sources."

Similarly, in the Bryant Gumbel piece, sources were, consistent with our guidelines, described in the fullest manner our reporter could negotiate with them. (As for Roseanne and the "older man," they were participants in a focus group, and we were simply respecting their privacy.) However, the use of "observers" is lame, and we should avoid that. Regarding the Richard Blow piece, seeing all those negative anonymous quotes in one sequence does make us realize there were too many, although the story included on-the-record comments making similar points.

As for the use of "WASPily" and the description of Dorinda Elliott's frame and demeanor, we should have picked our words with more care.

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

Exorcising the Exorcist

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 91] de Souza gleaned that Robbie was an only child and something of a loner—an obedient, unathletic kid who read comic books and played board games. De Souza also learned that Robbie's father was a lapsed Catholic with a low-level government job. His mother, a Lutheran, was a housewife. The family had German forbears and attended a German Lutheran church. The files also note the unusually close relationship Robbie enjoyed with his elderly great-aunt Hannah, a spiritualist who made regular, extended visits to the family from her home in St. Louis; she taught the boy how to use a Ouija board—an instrument she used to contact the spirit world—and died in January 1949, a week or so after the onset of Robbie's affliction. Robbie was said to have been devastated by her death.

The film takes pains to suggest that in Robbie we are dealing with a child of active imagination—his fondness for scary comic books, magic tricks, his ventriloquist's doll, and Aunt Hannah's Ouija board—the kind of child, in other words, who might be prone either to hysteria or to committing elaborate pranks at the expense of credulous adults.

De Souza followed the trail of doubt. When Bowdern and another priest, the Reverend Bishop, first evaluated Robbie, de Souza noted, they agreed that a hoax was not out of the question. Robbie, they thought, could have produced all of the baffling incidents that had occurred up to that point, including scratching sounds in the wall, red welts on his chest and abdomen, flying objects, and moving furniture. In keeping with this theory, de Souza sought to restrict the use of the film's special effects to what are known as floor effects—simple optical tricks that can be performed on a theatrical stage or, more to the point, by a particularly ingenious child. Simple, perhaps, but convincing to the viewer. In one early scene in the movie a heavy armchair in which Robbie has been sitting appears to pirouette on one leg. Could a 13-year-old boy really pull off such a trick? Absolutely, de Souza says. "All you need to do is drill a little hole in the floor and have a bolt in one leg of the chair. No one would even know it's there until you do it."

Another early scene features Robbie in his classroom at school, watching a goofy instructional film about how to prepare for an atomic-bomb attack. As the teacher tells the class to duck and cover, a couple of kids throw paper clips at Robbie from the back of the room. Under the desks, the teasing gets worse. "Robbie doesn't hafta worry," taunts one of his adversaries. "His grandmom's a Nazi spy. She'll save him." Suddenly, Robbie's desk—with Robbie under it hanging on for dear life—begins to slide around the room as if self-propelled, wreaking general havoc and leaving a couple of kids with bloody noses. "This was a well-documented event," says de Souza. "The teacher and the other students witnessed this. I thought it would be very easy to make your desk move."

The scene adds a new railroad tie to the mix: the psychological impact of Robbie's German-American identity. That a child with a German last name living in an Allied country at the end of World War II might be subject to ostracism by his peers had occurred to Timothy Dalton, the British actor who plays Bowdern in the film. Dalton recalled seeing German kids mercilessly taunted by classmates when he was at school in England in the 1950s. Was Robbie's bizarre behavior part of a cunning ploy to win a long vacation from the bullies at school? Among his early demonic manifestations, de Souza notes, were the words NO SCHOOL, which appeared scratched on his belly one day. Seeing these words, Robbie's parents decided to keep him home indefinitely. "I never thought of that," jokes de Souza about his own childhood strategies. "I only thought of saying, 'I have a tummy ache.'"

Through the classroom lesson, this scene also introduces the Cold War as part of Robbie's world. Throughout the rest of the film—when Robbie's father sacks out in the den after work or when the Jesuits confer about Robbie's case with the St. Louis archbishop—televisions in the background blare a nonstop chorus of alarm about the Cold War: the communist threat abroad, the atomic bomb, and—thanks to the ubiquitous media presence of Senator Joe McCarthy—the enemy at home. Although televisions weren't really common until the early 1950s, the paranoid political mood is historically accurate. By 1949, the tension between the Soviet Union and the United States had escalated into a standoff, hearings before the House Un-American Activities Committee were in full swing, Whittaker Chambers had fingered Alger Hiss for espionage, and McCarthy was fanning the flames of anti-communist paranoia. McCarthy's message, of course, was that evil was alive and well in American society. All you had to do, he said, was look around: Communists were everywhere—205 of them in our own State Department.

Viewed in this volatile social context, *Possessed* is cable television's *The Crucible* and Steven de Souza its Arthur Miller. Robbie Mannheim is no longer just a little boy with a weird affliction but a full-blown cultural symptom, the product of historical forces sweeping from Moscow to Los Alamos. In other words, what might have been a case of severe emotional disturbance or merely an elaborate hoax was—thanks to the particular cultural dramas of midcentury America—destined to become a case of demonic possession.

It's an ambitious theory. The only problem with it is that most viewers of *Possessed* won't see things this way. The movie's floor effects may be simple, but to the viewer they look supernatural. The final exorcism scene is downright gothic. Set at a Catholic mental hospital on the eve of Halloween, it features Robbie strapped to an iron bed surrounded by dripping candelabra. As Bowdern chants the prayers of exorcism, lightning flashes at the windows, and an ornate crucifix that had been tucked under Robbie's mattress suddenly stands up on end. For one jaw-dropping moment, the mattress, with Robbie flailing away on it, hangs suspended over the erect crucifix. A moment later, the crucifix, propelled by unseen forces, is hurtling through the air. It finally comes to a quivering stop, embedded in a stone wall on the opposite side of the room. A few minutes and eerie musical cues later, Robbie is free of his demons.

What might have been a case of emotional disturbance or merely an elaborate hoax was—thanks to the particular cultural dramas of midcentury America—destined to become a case of possession.

"If there were a slug line for this movie," says de Souza, "I would like it to say, 'This time the witch hunt is real.'" It's a great idea, but he's unlikely to have his way. *The Crucible* notwithstanding, social history and the supernatural don't mix well. Given a choice on a Saturday night between Joe McCarthy and Linda Blair, the communist devil or the Hollywood one, Americans invariably seem to opt for the latter. In the end, even de Souza, for all his rationalist aspirations, isn't immune to Hollywood's image of the demonic. Does this make his movie a failure? No, it just makes his movie a movie.

The allure of mass media technology is precisely its ability to mythologize reality, to reflect it back to us as something we have not yet seen or imagined. At their most successful—or insidious, depending on your view—the illusions manufactured by the entertainment industry take their place alongside the unmediated images of daily life or, in rare instances, supersede them. Demonic possession is one of those rare instances. Showtime and Warner Bros., with its rerelease of *The Exorcist* this month, understand this. By premiering *Possessed* on Halloween, Showtime is appealing not to the public appetite for truth but to a much more pronounced craving for diabolical entertainment. Memo to Catholic priests: Brace yourself for a barrage of phone calls. ◘

LETTERS

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18]
entirely new class of diabetes medications with a method of action completely different from all prior therapies available.

Every other diabetic treatment we have available has caused and will continue to cause deaths in the future. Why do we prescribe them? For the same reason we prescribed Rezulin—they save lives and prevent devastating complications of diabetes.

The article by Carl Cannon repeatedly uses loaded phrases, distorting complex decision-making processes and turning them into a simplistic model of evil corporate/bureaucratic/medical forces versus a hapless public.

I'm not against the decision to remove Rezulin from the marketplace. There now are other drugs with the same effective mechanism of action that do appear safer. My dispute is with your article. I subscribe to *Brill's Content* expecting a rational objective skepticism rather than distorted hysteria.

ERNEST BADE, M.D., HILO, HI

Carl Cannon responds:
David Willman's reporting on the dangers of Rezulin wasn't vindicated by me; it was vindicated by the British government, which banned this medication; by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which ultimately rescinded its approval of it; and by Warner-Lambert itself, which acknowledges that other diabetes medications have better "safety profiles" than its own drug. Despite what Dr. Bade asserts, I certainly acknowledged that this is not a black-and-white issue. But as my article was primarily journalism criticism, I centered more on the historic tensions between beat reporters and specialists, on whether the rest of the media was slow in responding to the *Los Angeles Times*'s disclosures, and on Willman himself, whose doggedness helped bring this to the public's attention.

Neither Willman nor I ever wrote—or implied—anything along the lines of "take Rezulin and you'll probably die; don't take Rezulin and you'll live." (Indeed, as Willman himself noted in his coverage, the reason that these deaths became so apparent so quickly is that so many hundreds of thousands of patients were taking the drug.)

I'll leave it to the discerning reader to decide which one of us—Dr. Bade or I—engaged in "distorted hysteria."

The L.A. *Times* investigated Rezulin.

WASTE OF NEWSPRINT

When *Brill's Content* came upon the scene, it was heralded as the watchdog of the media. The magazine has failed miserably to live up to its billing.

A case in point is August's "And This Just In?" [The Big Blur], by editor Eric Effron. Pardon me if I do not seem to see the relevance of his attack on NBC for airing the miniseries *The '70s* and referring to it during newscasts. Why is it that he does not tackle true abuses of media power?

Fox News Sunday abuses the power of the media every weekend. So-called newsmagazines appearing on Fox are equally guilty of partisanship and lack of objectivity.

The media are by and for the conservative businesses of which most of them are a part. Excuse me, Mr. Effron, but your columns indicate that *Brill's Content* is just another conservative waste of newsprint.

GENE DEVAUX, GREENWOOD, MO

UNFAIR STORY

I found your story "Capturing Elián" [August] quite unfair to [Associated Press freelance photographer] Alan [Diaz], making [him] sound like a cynical propaganda machine.

Instead of making [one] person's case, it would have been more interesting to examine the general issues raised by his story. Is it possible to cover a subject for several months on a daily basis without befriending him? You didn't mention that Diaz gained sympathy from the Cuban family by policing the relations between the family and the crowd of journalists.

In this story, media have been hostages of both camps. This is also a point that should have been worth analyzing.

GUILLEMETTE FAURE, NEW YORK, NY

TEEN GURUS NEED THEIR PARENTS

Your article on teen gurus "The Rise of the Teen Guru" [August] indicates that these young people have outdistanced their parents. This may be true regarding knowledge of electronic devices, [but] these teens do not have life experience[s] and need their parents in many other ways. There have always been precocious youngsters, but that does not make them adults in other ways.

BEVERLY TALLADAY, COVENTRY, RI

THANKS

Thank you, Steven Brill, for "Taming the TV Giants" [Rewind, August]. You're the first person I've read who so eloquently puts forth my unshakable belief that companies who own the distribution medium shouldn't own the content they distribute as well, especially in relation to national and international broadcast media....I thought I was living in a free market society, but I'm naive.

MARK ROSE, SEATTLE, WA

INSULTING CRITICISM

Richard Kilberg, president of Fred Friendly Seminars Inc., is absolutely right when—in his response to staff writer Jane Manners's August piece ["Too Friendly?," Notebook] about the National Association of Home Builders bankrolling a seminar—he says "private clients have always paid for seminars...."

Fifteen years ago, I approached Fred Friendly about putting on a seminar on medical malpractice for the Association of Trial Lawyers of America. (I was the chief ATLA flack at the time.) Friendly thought it a splendid idea. He ran the whole show. The program was a great hit at ATLA's 1985 convention. Friendly, of course, pulled no punches for the trial lawyers. ATLA paid Friendly $25,000, plus expenses.

Your criticism is an insult to Friendly's memory.

ROBERT HAVEL, LONGWOOD, FL

LIFE DEMANDS

Despite the considerable time I spent explaining the situation to your reporter, "Making Demands on *Life*," in your August issue [Notebook], has the facts wrong. The company's arrangement with the *Life* photographers wasn't "due to end, in fact, when they passed away," as your item has it, but when their spouses passed away. We've shared syndication revenue with surviving spouses decades after *Life* photographers left the company and passed away. (We do this for no other group of former Time Inc. employees—a key fact also mentioned to your reporter.) As the photographers themselves would confirm, it was their request that Time Inc. continue payments to their children, after they and their spouses were gone, that we declined. The reasons for this decision, which I detailed to your reporter but the piece didn't mention, included the administrative difficulty and expense of finding and keeping track of large numbers of children years after their parents were no longer associated with *Life*.

Your getting the story right might have made Time Inc. seem a lot less heartless, and then it wouldn't have made nearly as interesting a tale. Indeed, you might have had to produce a more thoughtful, nuanced piece about a special group of former employees asking for extraordinary treatment, instead of the knee-jerk "big-bad-corporation" piece you ran.

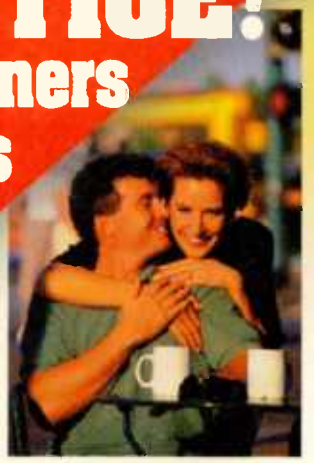
There were also other errors in the story, including "the planned sale of 30,000 of the company's

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 142]

TOM LYLE/MEDICHROME

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Attention Homeowners Read This Now!!!



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PER MONTH	PER MONTH	PER MONTH	PER MONTH	PER MONTH

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• Free Consultation With Our Paralegal On Staff

• Zero Complaints with Consumer Affairs

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- Driveway
- Sidewalk
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LETTERS

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 140] most famous prints." As I told your reporter, we have 30,000 prints in our collection, but we expect to sell only a few hundred a year at most.

SHELDON CZAPNIK,
TIME INC., NEW YORK, NY

Stephen Totilo responds: Mr. Czapnik is correct: Surviving spouses receive syndication fees from Time Inc., and I regret that my story omitted that fact. The point remains that the former *Life* photographers signed an appeal to Time Inc. to get those rights passed on to their descendants and they were denied.

As to the sale of Time Inc.'s most famous prints, Mr. Czapnik's estimate of how many will be sold in a given year does not change the fact that 30,000 are set to be sold. That figure is based on my interviews with Mr. Czapnik and the photo dealer chosen by Time Inc. and was corroborated by a fact checker.

As to whether the article was a "knee-jerk 'big-bad-corporation' piece," the story made explicit mention of both Time Inc.'s "historically generous tradition of taking care of photographers' families" and explained, as Mr. Czapnik told me, that Time Inc.'s treatment of its photographers already "exceeds contractual requirements."

DISAPPOINTED DOUBLECLICK

"I am very disappointed in the overwhelming amount of misleading and inaccurate information contained in senior writer Mark Boal's August article ["Click Click Trick," Next].

Let me set the record straight: "Transparent GIFs" or "spotlight tags" are not used for "monitoring people moving through websites"; rather, they are tools for advertisers to determine how many users have clicked on an ad and how well a website is serving consumers. All of this data is anonymous; it is used only in aggregate form; it is not used for profiling; the advertiser has the sole right to use the information; and DoubleClick is contractually obligated not to share this information with any other company.

In February, DoubleClick's chairman announced that the company would not link users' names with their Web activity across the sites in the absence of government and industry agreement. I repeated that commitment to Mr. Boal, as I have to many reporters over the last few months. Yet Mr. Boal makes the blatantly false claim that "if you make a purchase or fill out a questionnaire on a site with a DoubleClick ad, the firm will more than likely collect that information from the website and link it to your cookie."

DoubleClick does not and will not use sensitive health information, information of a sexual nature, sensitive financial information, or information about kids for profiling. Again, Mr. Boal is totally wrong when he writes that the information collected at "various porn and health sites is ideally suited to linking a person's name to his or her computer." Your article even misquoted me when it said that this "could change with the development of government standards." No matter what standards the government develops, DoubleClick has repeatedly publicly committed that it would not use sensitive information to develop a user profile. Furthermore, information about visitors to the Procrit or iFriends sites legally belongs to those companies. DoubleClick has no right to link information users may give at these sites to their computers or to use in any other way.

DoubleClick's clients' use of "spotlight tags" does not violate any Federal Trade Commission standard or our own privacy policy. Clearly, Mr. Boal did not bother calling the FTC before making this scurrilous and inaccurate charge. Again, these tags are used so websites and advertisers may know how many computers are visiting their sites or viewing their advertisements. Just as a store may count how many people are entering its premises or a magazine may keep track of its circulation, a website or an advertiser may count how many "eyeballs" they are getting.

What's behind DoubleClick's policies?

DoubleClick's technology is subtle and complicated, and we depend upon journalists to try to understand complex issues and present them fairly and accurately. By holding the media to a high standard for "Accuracy, Labeling and Sourcing, No Conflicts of Interest, and Accountability"—as your masthead states—*Brill's Content* does a service for reporters and the people and companies to whom they report. Next time, I hope that *Brill's* will hold itself to this same lofty standard.

JULES POLONETSKY, CHIEF PRIVACY OFFICER, DOUBLECLICK, NEW YORK, NY

Mark Boal responds: Despite Mr. Polonetsky's lengthy list of complaints, the substance and specifics of my story are accurate: that DoubleClick collects sensitive information from pornography and health websites without public disclosure; that this practice violates standards on public disclosure that have been endorsed by the Federal Trade Commission; and that DoubleClick has the ability to merge this data with the actual identities of Web users should it choose to do so in the future.

Mr. Polonetsky's letter boils down to the claim that, at present, DoubleClick does not merge names with sensitive data. My story did not contend otherwise, and, in fact, directly quoted Mr. Polonetsky to that effect, while also quoting officials of DoubleClick clients. As for his claim that I misquoted him at one point, my notes and those of our fact checker indicate that he was quoted (paraphrased, actually, since the remark was not in quotation marks) accurately.

Mr. Polonetsky says DoubleClick's data are collected in anonymous and aggregate form for use by advertisers and that the company is contractually obligated not to use the information in any other way. The company has taken this position since last February, when it reversed a policy stating the opposite. Both its current position and the reversal were reported in detail—and neither alters the facts I reported.

Mr. Polonetsky also says he repeated his CEO's commitment to wait for government standards before moving ahead with profiling; I quoted the same CEO saying as much. He goes on to say that I falsely claimed that "if you make a purchase or fill out a questionnaire," DoubleClick links the information with cookie files. But information traveling from the sites I investigated is linked to DoubleClick cookies. Mr. Polonetsky says I am "totally wrong" for saying that information the company gathers is "ideally suited to linking a person's name to his or her computer." But the fact is, cookie files are designed to distinguish one computer from another—and once the cookie file has been established, it's a short step to correlating that with an actual identity.

Mr. Polonetsky says that Web bugs—what he now calls "spotlight tags"—do not violate any FTC standards or his company's privacy policy. However, it's not the use of Web bugs per se but the failure to disclose them that runs afoul of DoubleClick's privacy policy to offer "online customers notice about the collection and use of personal information." It also runs afoul of what the FTC has deemed, in a report to Congress, "widely accepted fair information practices." ■

ILLUSTRATION BY ISTVAN BANYAI

BRILL'S CONTENT (ISSN 1099-5234) (GST 866176886) is published monthly except combined issues in December/January and July/August by Brill Media Ventures, L.P., 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Subscriptions are $16.95 for one year in the U.S., $21.95 in Canada, and $26.95 in all other countries. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BRILL'S CONTENT, PO Box 37523, Boone, IA 50037-0523. Vol. 3, No. 7, September 2000. For subscription information, please call 1-800-829-9154.

KICKER BY BRUCE MCCALL

The Secret Agony of Barbara Walters

"I'm just not as courageous as I guess I appear on the air. I don't drive....I'm afraid of driving."
—Barbara Walters in Ladies' Home Journal

An ABC-TV soundman recalls the night when word was flashed to Barbara Walters, as she prepped to interview Gwyneth Paltrow's last six boyfriends poolside at a Los Angeles hotel, that Michael Jackson was ready at long last to talk turkey about his newest nose. But Barbara must come alone for the pre-interview to a "safe house" somewhere west of Westwood. And she must come right now.

"It was 1 A.M.," the soundman remembers, "her limo driver had split for the night, and she didn't know how you hail a cab. But Babs is a gamer. Grabbed the keys to my van and was gone. Half an hour later she was back, in tears. Said she sat in the backseat like always but the van wouldn't budge. The Jackson coup, of course, was toast."

A soul-searing moment, underscoring a tragic truth. "Towering as it has been," observes show-business Solomon Dominick Dunne, "Babs's career would have scaled even greater heights of the Everest we call fame had she only known how to drive a car."

That Ms. Walters would be condemned to a professional lifetime of chauffeured *durance vile* was preordained. Childhood trouble with Mixmasters; failing grades in typing school; openly buffaloed by elevator buttons, even today: It should have shocked no one that there came, early in her career, the notorious "Incident Le Cirque"—a midtown New York luncheon date with Egypt's larger-than-life King Farouk, a tardy but violent arrival through the restaurant's front door in a driving lesson gone horribly awry, the birth of a lifelong phobia. Not to mention the birth as well of those "Barbara Walters was driving" rumors that have fueled tabloid fantasies for decades. It was Barbara at the wheel, they blared, when Princess Grace's Rover sailed over that cliff. When Princess Di and Dodi rocketed into that Paris tunnel. All the way back to France in 1960 and Albert Camus, his sports car, his crash: Blame it on Barbara. All vicious balderdash, of course. But from La Walters only dignified silence and the intrepid pursuit of her mission as mother confessor to the great and near great. Asking for no sympathy, no special treatment other than that her chauffeur must be a nonsmoker and not chew gum.

Barbara cannot interview herself and lay bare for all America to see the pathos, the heartbreak, the professional grief her handicap has brought. These are known only to herself and her closest pals. One of them cites—not without bitterness—the time in 1991 when a transportation snafu forced Barbara to buy a skateboard and traverse the 60 miles from Baghdad to an isolated military bunker over stony back roads—alone—to interview Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein's fiancée. "Babs was plum flat-out tuckered," reports the pal. "The fiancée finally got bored with waiting for her to catch her breath and canned the damn interview. And worse yet, ABC wouldn't let her expense the skateboard."

There was the day America's most beloved interlocutor to the stars hitchhiked from Santa Monica to Malibu for her chat with *Baywatch* sex kitten Pamela Anderson Lee, to throw the paparazzi off her trail—but Barbara, never strong on highway directions, fetched up in Tijuana instead.

And picture the piquancy: Car-crazy TV talk-show demigod Jay Leno angrily cuts short a rare at-home interview after he invites Babs to drive his brand-new Lamborghini and she runs it through the back of the garage.

It can now be told that when her limo driver got lost en route to the state penitentiary and an exclusive interview with Texas's most charismatic serial vivisectionist on his death gurney, Babs was carrying a note from his high-school sweetheart begging him to marry her by fax. But she could only sit there squirming as the limo drove in circles and the minutes melted away. The note, and Barbara, arrived too late.

Driving-challenged or not, plucky, spunky, indefatigable—that's Barbara. How's this for plucky? "You drive," ordered Chilean ex-dictator General Augusto Pinochet after Ms. Walters lured him out of his London mansion and into his Mercedes last year for a clandestine once-in-a-sweeps-week interview. Although Pinochet's subsequent health decline can't be blamed in whole on the ensuing wild ride across Regent's Park and its abrupt end in that mercifully shallow duck pond, the unsatisfactory interview, alas, can. Unaware of the drama that had just unfolded in a public park thousands of miles away, viewers of that week's *20/20* contentedly watched a rerun of Barbara's interview with Madonna's baby.

But adversity seems only to spur Barbara on. Television's favorite stargazer has appointments to keep and people to meet and probing questions to ask; if it must be done the hard way—waiting for the stretch Town Car that may or may not arrive on time, hunting for her limo on a crowded street *après-première*, archetypal Type A telejournalist—well, so be it.

If you could be a tree—of whatever kind—you definitely wouldn't want to see Barbara behind the wheel and headed in your direction. If you were the CFO of ABC-TV, you'd see that sky-high pile of limo bills as a drag on profits, no question. But think for a moment of Barbara: all alone in that big backseat en route to another encounter with another popular idol, her destiny in someone else's hands, nothing to hold on to except her interview notes and her regrets. Because Barbara Walters won't ever know what it is to be a Hertz Number One customer. How she would feel when the valet at the Ivy parked her car right out front. The simple everyday ritual of changing a flat on I-95 at rush hour, granted to Everyman but not to her. Diane and Katie and Oprah, meanwhile, laughing at her behind her back. And all those near misses and might-have-beens and botched exclusives, the yield of a hopeless inability to tell P-R-N-D-L from Prada.

Doubtless, Barbara's TV tête-à-têtes yet to come will thrill beyond even those golden Monica and other magic moments now secure in the Walters pantheon. But shed a tear, America, for what might have been. ■

ROBERT DEMICHIELL

(Just a small insight into our signature collections)

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881/888 Broadway
(212) 473-3000/674-1144

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