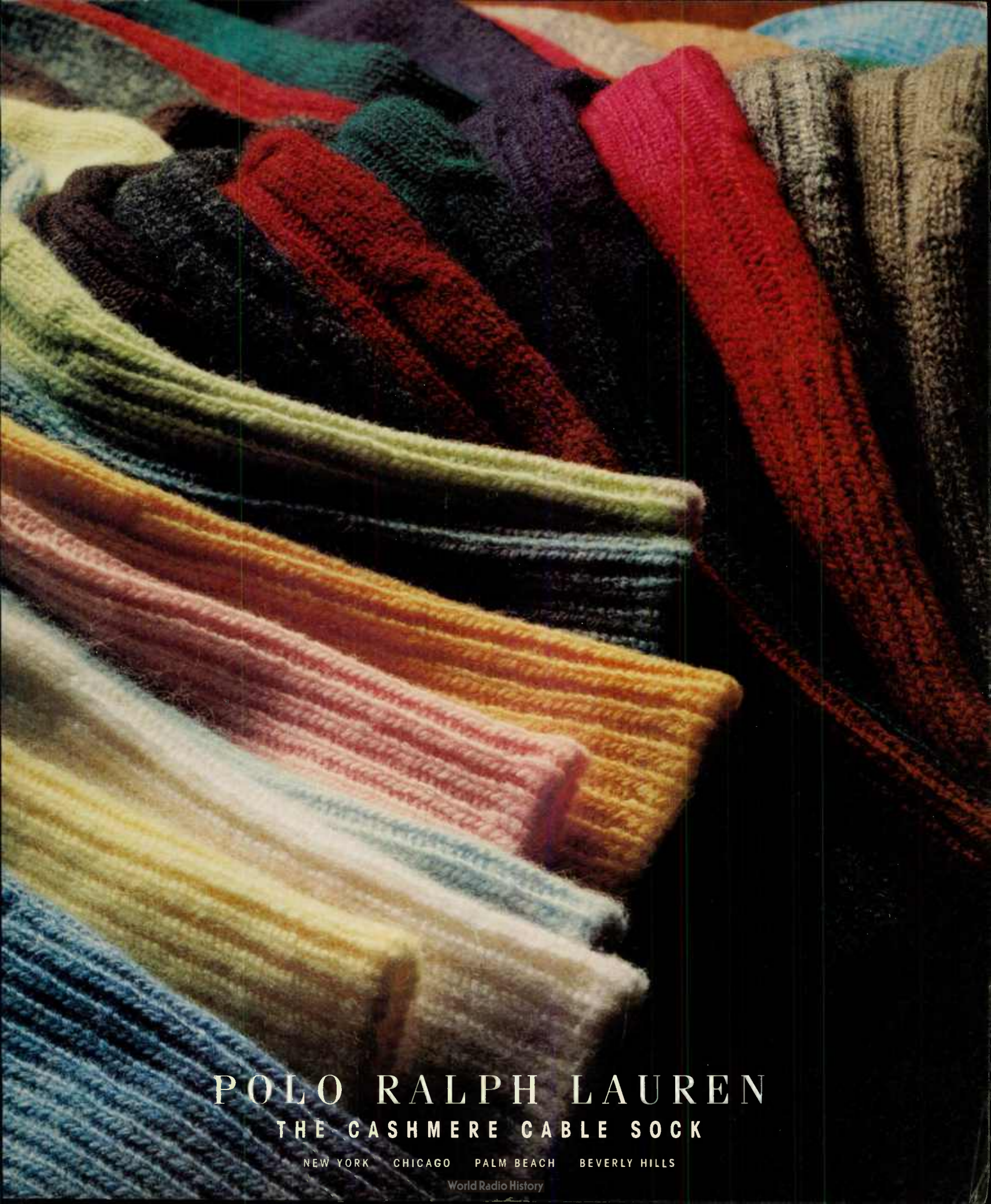

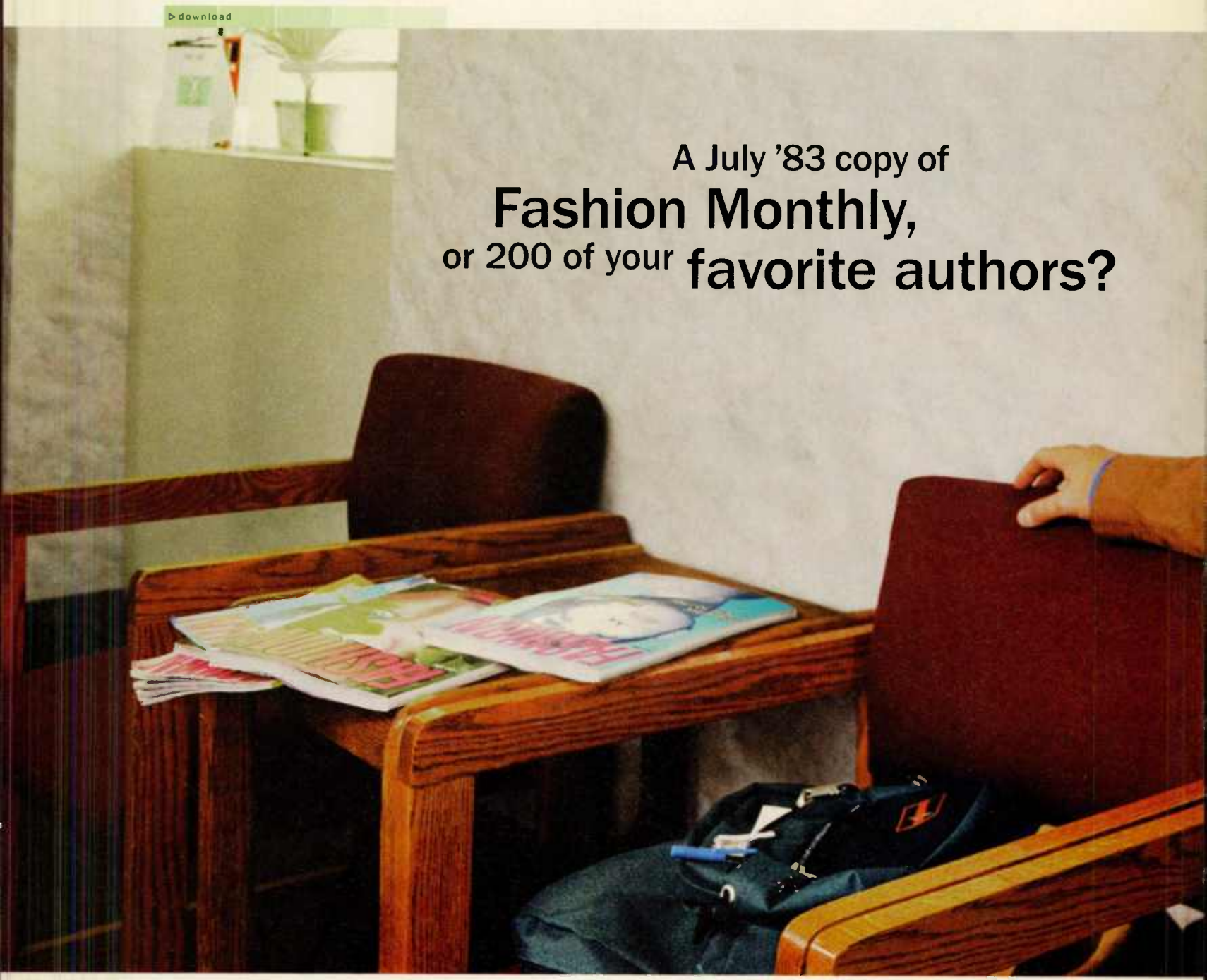

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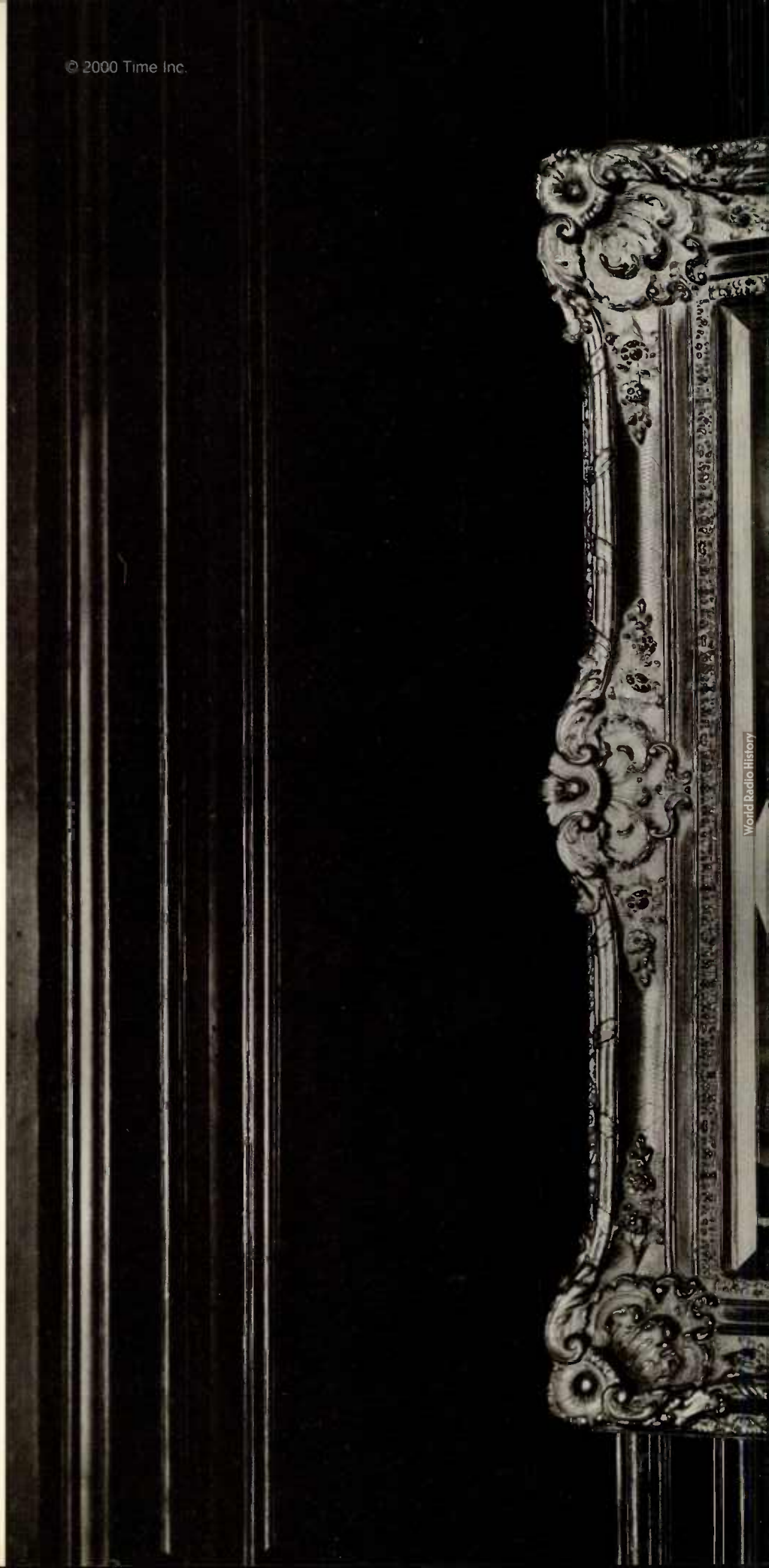

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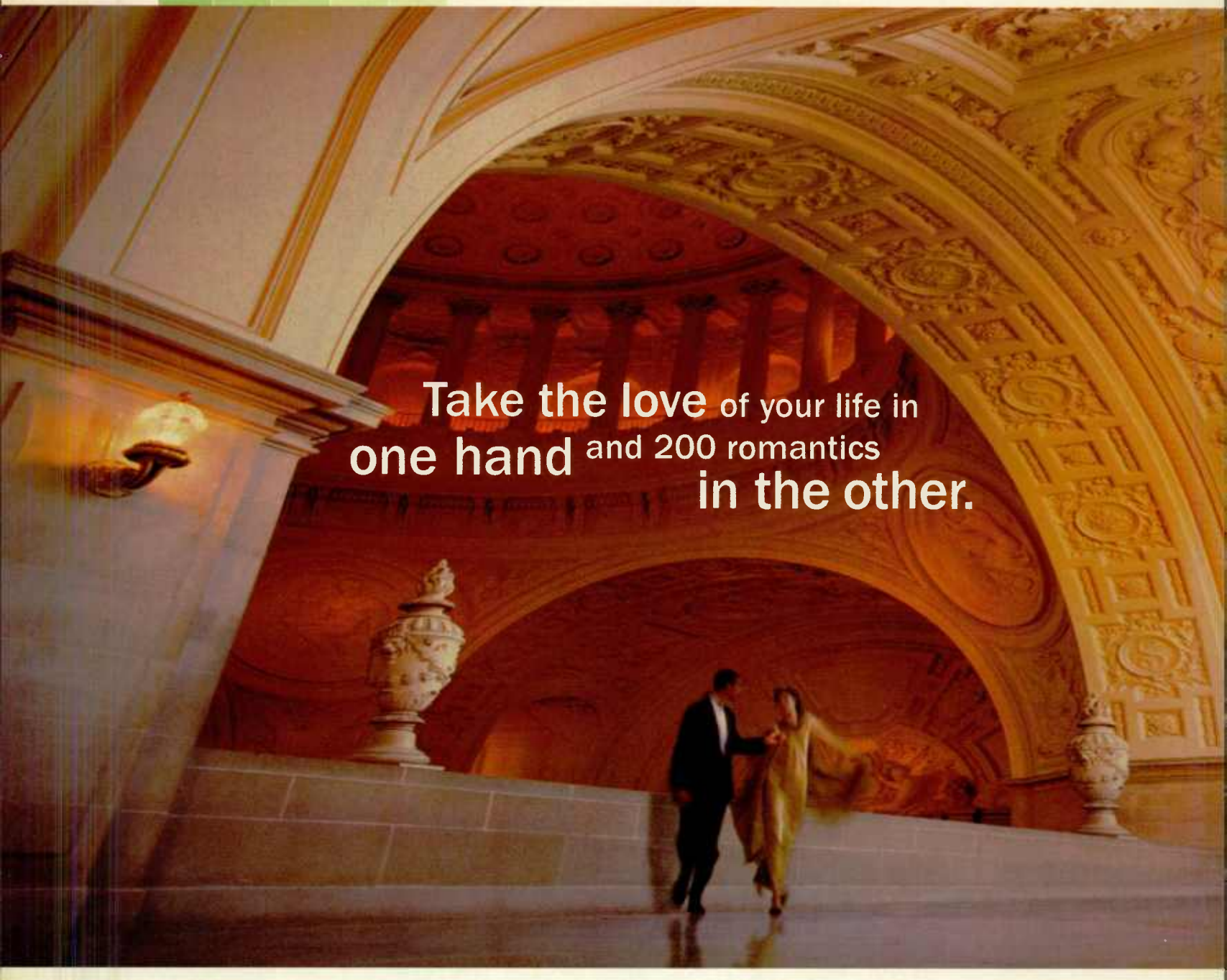

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CONTRIBUTORS

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR ("Why Do I Do It?" page 50), CNN's chief international correspondent, is a contributor to CBS News's *60 Minutes*. She has received two George Foster Peabody Awards and three Emmy Awards.

MARK BOAL ("Winning the Blame Game," page 138), a senior writer for *Brill's Content*, also contributes to *Rolling Stone* and *Salon*.

JOHN COOK ("S.F. Confidential," page 96), a *Brill's Content* senior associate editor, was the managing editor of *Mother Jones*.

JIM EDWARDS ("Wrong Turns," page 112), a senior writer for *Brill's Content*, was previously the celebrity news editor at APBnews.com.

GAY JERVEY ("Walking the Line," page 92), a senior correspondent for *Brill's Content*, has profiled many news-media personalities, including Bryant Gumbel and Chris Matthews.

JOE KELLEHER ("The Player," page 120), an anesthesiologist, appeared on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* on July 23, 2000. He has contributed to *Salon*.

JONATHAN MAHLER ("Establishment Radical," page 125), a founding editor and senior writer for *Talk*, was the editorial-page editor for the *Forward*.

SETH MNOOKIN ("Fear and Writing," page 116), a senior writer for *Brill's Content*, was the city editor at the *Forward*.

EDMUND MORRIS ("Getting Inside the Mind of a President," page 105) has won a Pulitzer Prize and is Ronald Reagan's authorized biographer. He is working on *Theodore Rex*, the second volume of his Roosevelt biography.

ABIGAIL POGREBIN ("The Son Also Rises," page 106), a senior correspondent for *Brill's Content*, is also a contributing writer to *Talk*.

MIKE PRIDE ("The Mail Call," page 87), a contributing editor to *Brill's Content*, is the editor of the *Concord Monitor*, in New Hampshire.

KATIE ROIPHE ("Profiles Encouraged," page 57) is the author of *The Morning After* and *Last Night in Paradise*.

DAVID STREITFELD ("Clinton by the Book," page 102) covered the publishing industry for 12 years at *The Washington Post*, for which he now writes about Silicon Valley.

MAIA SZALAVITZ ("12 Steps Back," page 72) is a coauthor, with Dr. Joseph Volpicelli, of *Recovery Options: The Complete Guide*.

CALVIN TRILLIN ("London Fogged," page 69), a contributing editor to *Brill's Content*, is the author of *Family Man*, a columnist for *Time*, and a staff writer for *The New Yorker*.

SCOTT MENCHIN

FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

CROSSOVER DREAMS

The presidential election is weeks away as I write this, and no one, not even the press, is pretending to know who will win. But this much is certain: As the stars of the Clinton administration head for the exits, they're marshaling their insider knowledge and connections with an eye toward post–White House careers. Many, having gone through the media wringer and survived, will choose print or television journalism—and become pundits, analysts, and commentators. Indeed, scores of news stars—from Bill Moyers, who advised Presidents Kennedy and Johnson; to Diane Sawyer, a Nixon press aide; to *Hardball*'s Chris Matthews, a speechwriter for Jimmy Carter—have already passed through this tricky revolving door.

The most highly visible recent defector is George Stephanopoulos, the former senior adviser to President Clinton, who became a celebrity himself early on in the administration. The story of Stephanopoulos's leaving Washington and writing his best-selling and controversial memoir, *All Too Human*, has been well chronicled. But on page 92, senior correspondent Gay Jervey charts his reinvention as a journalist for ABC News and explores, in depth, the allure and danger of crossing over from politics to the press—not only for Stephanopoulos but also for his audience.

Since the day Stephanopoulos first appeared on *This Week* in 1997, and through his increasingly frequent commentary on *Nightline* and *Good Morning America*, he has been assailed by critics (some with agendas, some without) who have questioned whether he can comment without bias. Paul Begala, Stephanopoulos's good friend and a former counselor to President Clinton, says, "No matter what he does, somebody gets mad at him. It's a lose-lose situation." Stephanopoulos says that some political skills are easily transferable to journalism: "[O]ften in the White House you are a reporter...[trying] to get all of the facts together and tell the story....The skills are directed toward different ends, but they are still the same skills."

As Stephanopoulos has demonstrated, President Clinton's crew would also do well to land book deals—and soon. Leading the pack will likely be the president himself, David Streitfeld reports on page 102. Bill Clinton's need to settle legal debts and political scores—and to take the lead in defining his presidency for posterity—may well prove irresistible. But, as Streitfeld points out, the genre's quality and enduring historical contribution have often proved dubious. Presidential memoirs "only look good before they're written," says a publisher who's worked on several. "Presidents don't write so much as burnish."

On page 125, Jonathan Mahler examines political writer and cultural critic Christopher Hitchens, who more than any of his journalist peers gleefully cast himself as a character in the central drama of this administration, and in doing so crossed another line—from observer to participant. The British-born Washington gadfly writes regularly for *The Nation* and *Vanity Fair*—probably the first and last writer ever to appear on both those mastheads at once—and has over the years accrued power and influence by attacking those who have more of both than he (such as Mother Teresa and President Clinton, his most famous targets). Mahler relates how Hitch, as he is known to colleagues and political figures who love or loathe him, became front-page news when he publicly betrayed his pal and presidential aide Sidney Blumenthal (himself a former journalist—and a crossover in reverse) during the Lewinsky imbroglio.

This issue charts how today it's sometimes hard to keep track of who's a journalist and who's not, as what was once a Chinese wall has become over the last several years an ever more flexible folding screen. DAVID KUHN

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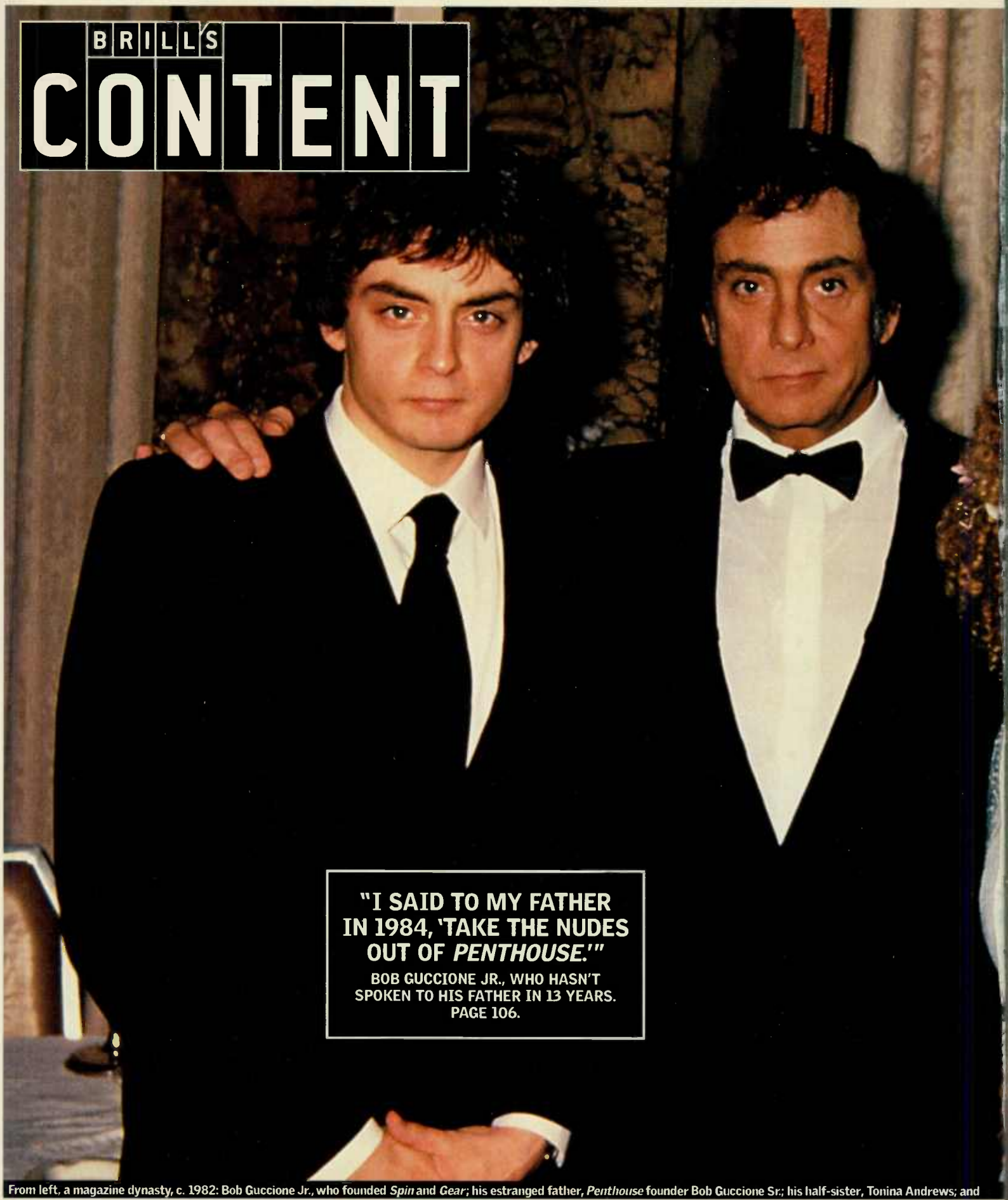

"I SAID TO MY FATHER IN 1984, 'TAKE THE NUDES OUT OF *PENTHOUSE*.'"

BOB GUCCIONE JR., WHO HASN'T SPOKEN TO HIS FATHER IN 13 YEARS.
PAGE 106.

From left, a magazine dynasty, c. 1982: Bob Guccione Jr., who founded *Spin* and *Gear*; his estranged father, *Penthouse* founder Bob Guccione Sr.; his half-sister, Tonina Andrews; and

COVER STYLING: PHYLLIS LEIBOWITZ; GROOMING: JANE CHOI/ENNIS

DECEMBER 2000
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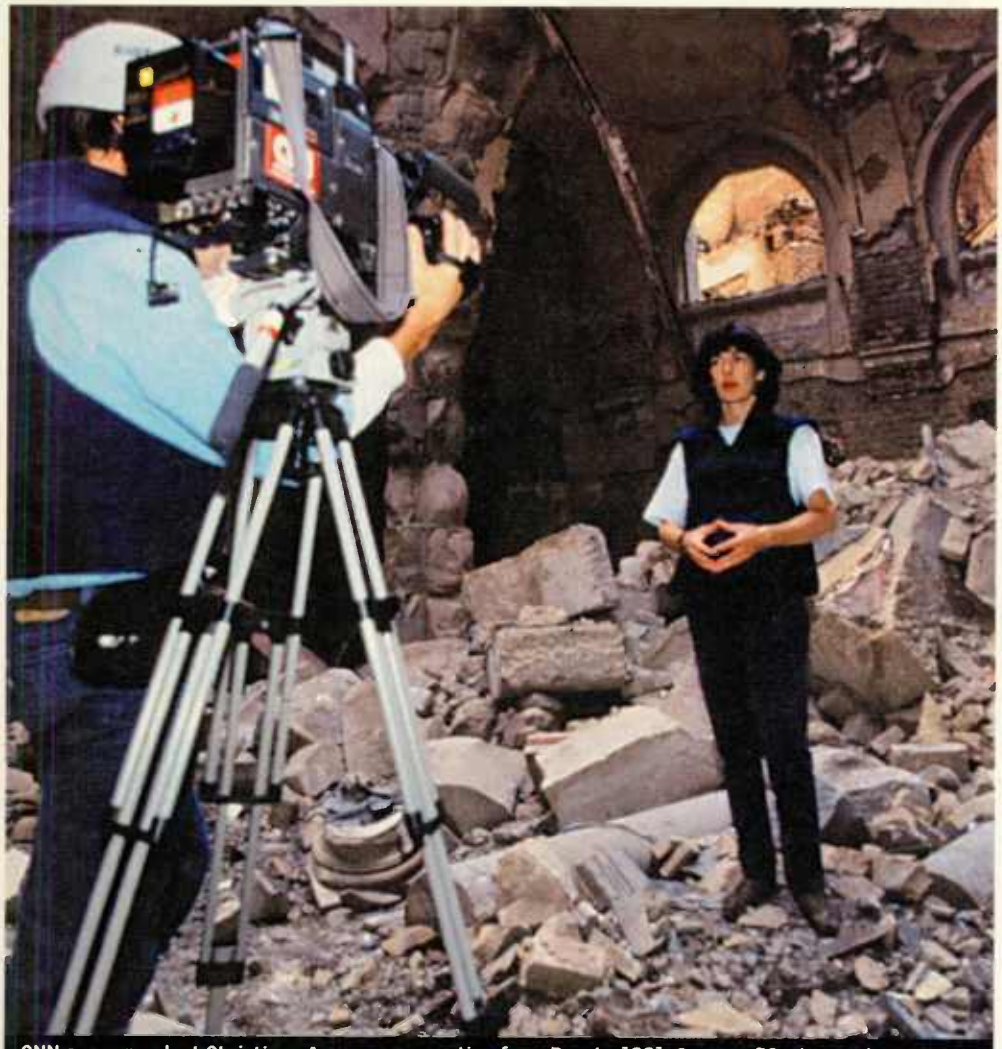
his brother Anthony, who worked for Guccione Sr. and is now being sued by his company. Bob Jr.'s gambit, page 106.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: RANDY HARRIS

"I MANAGE THE FEAR, MY COLLEAGUES MANAGE THE FEAR, BUT IT CERTAINLY TAKES ITS TOLL."

CNN CHIEF INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR, REFLECTING ON HER COMMITMENT TO COVER LIFE-THREATENING STORIES. AT WORK, PAGE 50.

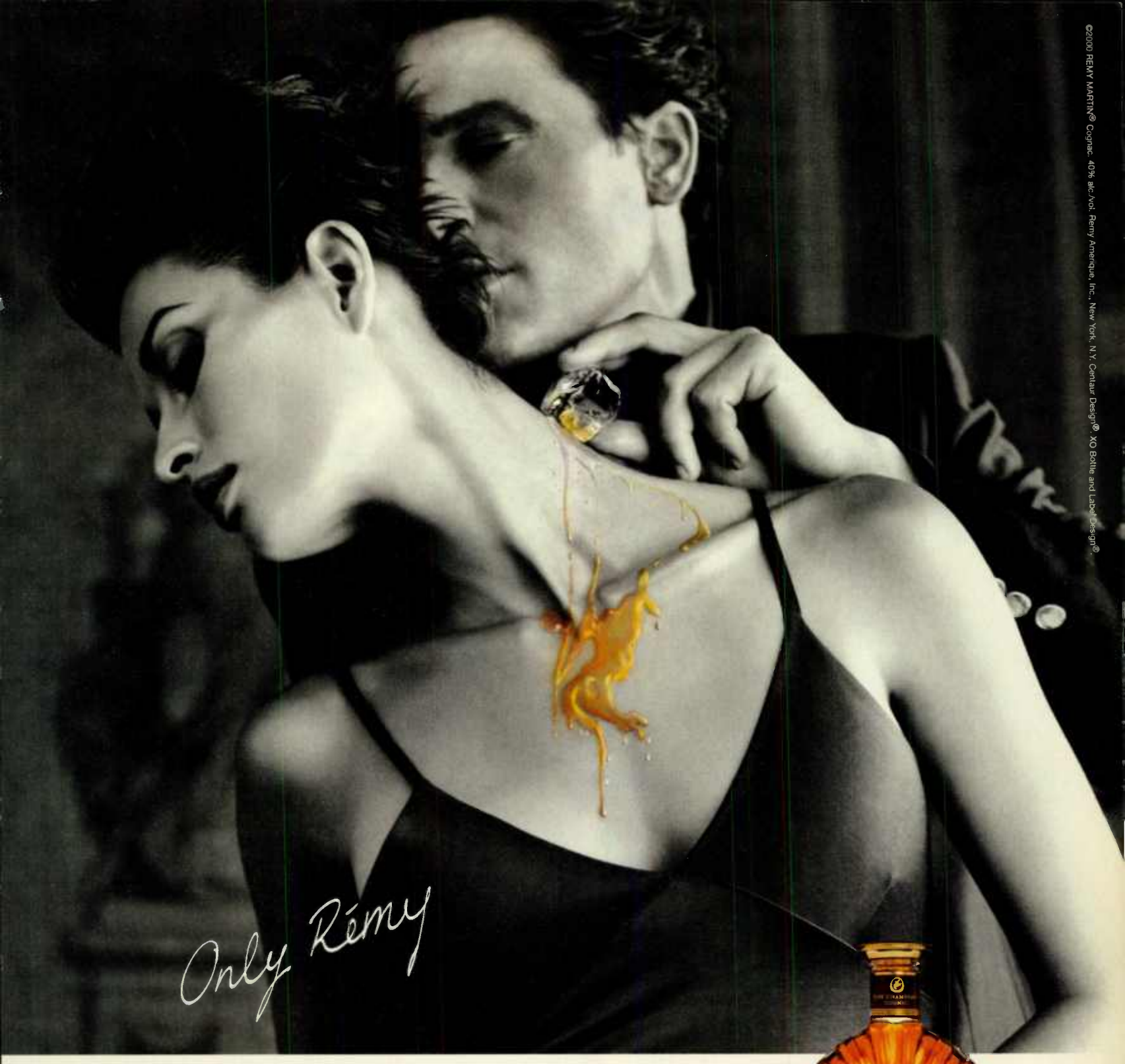


CNN correspondent Christiane Amanpour reporting from Bosnia, 1991. On page 50, she ponders whether the risk is still worth it.

COURTESY OF CNN

UP FRONT

COLUMNS



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DOUG LOWENSTEIN, THE VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY'S CHIEF SPINMEISTER, WHO REHABILITATED ITS IMAGE WITH WASHINGTON AND THE PRESS. PAGE 138.

An image from Max Payne, one of the violent videogames that, with the help of a savvy public-relations and lobbying effort, endures even after the Columbine killings. Spinners, page 138.

DEPTS.

BRILL'S CONTENT

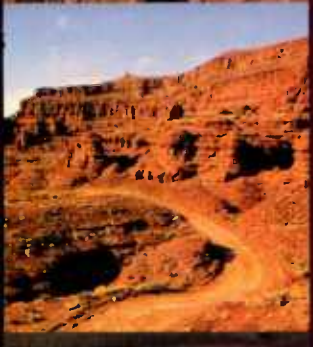
WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

No Conflicts of Interest
We believe that the content of anything that sells itself as journalism should be free of any motive other than informing its consumers. In other words, it should not be motivated, for example, by the desire to curry favor with an advertiser or to advance a particular political interest.

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



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

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4. Our corrections policy should not be mistaken for a policy of accommodating readers who are simply unhappy about a story.

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READERS DEFEND *SUN* ERRORS; A SOURCE HOWLS; AND THE *CHICAGO TRIBUNE* STANDS TALL

DEFENDING THE EARLY *SUN*

*It is not the sins of Jim Haner ["Favorite Son," October] that prompts this letter. It is the sweepingly snotty statement by Jim Asher that before he and the rest of the Philadelphia [*Inquirer*] mafia descended on Baltimore, the *Sun* "was a pretty rotten newspaper." In my opinion, what appears on the street today is a different paper but not a better paper than before they took over. The *Sun*'s record of achievement over the years stands up to anything the Philadelphians can offer.

Over the years, the *Sun* earned its share of Pulitzers and produced scores of stories that caused changes in public policy. When the complaints rolled in [about Haner's errors] his wrist was slapped; it was explained that "mistakes were made" and that he was simply overexuberant in his reporting. Others might say that it is his proclaimed lust for a Pulitzer Prize, apparently at any price, in a prize-oriented culture. A prize for a story, or series of stories, is a reward for good work, but it is not the measure of a newspaper's worth.

I spent my entire career—43 years—at the *Sun*, and it was a damn good, even great, newspaper for decades before the Philadelphians showed up.

ROBERT ERLANDSON, TOWSON, MD

DISHONEST STORY

Brill's Content damaged its credibility by publishing Abigail Pogrebin's attack on James Haner.

It's clear that Pogrebin was determined to write a story supporting [former Baltimore *Sun* reporter] David Simon's envy-

fueled and slanderous allegation that if Haner won a Pulitzer for the Baltimore *Sun* the paper might have to give it back. Pogrebin couldn't find any evidence to support the baseless allegation that Haner is somehow another Janet Cooke.

What your reporter found was that in a career of stellar accomplishment Haner made a couple of errors in daily stories and that they were quickly corrected. Knowing Haner, we have no doubt they were honest mistakes made on deadline.

It might have been fair game to examine newsroom reaction to those errors in a responsible story about tensions between the old and new guard at the *Sun*. But Pogrebin wrote an extremely dishonest story twisting a few corrected errors to try to make it appear that they somehow supported Simon's allegation of journalistic corruption.

A publication that presumes to police journalists shouldn't have allowed Pogrebin, Simon, and a cowardly chorus of unnamed sources to savage the reputation of one of the finest newspaper reporters in the country.

In trying to shame Haner your publication has shamed itself.

APRIL WITT, BETHESDA, MD
CYRIL ZANESKI, WASHINGTON, DC

ERRORS OF OMISSION

*The only cloud I see after reading "Favorite Son" is the one hanging over your magazine, your pliant reporter, and her embittered source. We all make mistakes. We all get sick when we make them. But your piece is replete with errors of the worst kind—those of omission. You provided a personal platform for a sad vendetta by David Simon that has nothing to do with journalism and everything to do with a professional history that your reporter apparently failed to figure out. I've worked alongside Jim Haner on numerous investigative projects during the past decade—and he was always a consummate professional, obsessing over every detail before going to print. Jim has spent much of his career trying to help the powerless, a collection of voices painfully absent from your piece. I wonder what the parents of children who have been poisoned by lead paint in

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LETTERS

Baltimore would say about who got it right and who got it wrong.

SCOTT HIGHAM, WASHINGTON, DC

Abigail Pogrebin responds: Ms. Witt and Mr. Zaneski, both former colleagues of Mr. Haner's, have every right to dismiss his mistakes as "a few corrected errors." The essence of this story was that journalists—respected journalists—disagree strongly about how dismissable those errors are, whether they represent something more troubling or are mere blemishes on an otherwise stellar career. The reaction I have received by disinterested parties who don't know Haner has been overwhelmingly that his defenders were well represented in my story and that the issues raised were much grayer than in Janet Cooke's situation. It is entirely false that I set out to prove David Simon's position. If anything, I set out to disprove it. Neither Mr. Higham's nor Ms. Witt's and Mr. Zaneski's letters argue with the substance of the errors but say only that they don't matter. Other accomplished journalists would beg to differ. And that's exactly what the piece was about.

MORE CLUES

Thirty-two years ago at Duke University, we spent many happy hours avoiding schoolwork while pondering Paul McCartney's tragic "death" ["Paul Was Dead," October]. My favorite clue, which I discovered by accident, appeared (in all places!) on the very *Life* cover proclaiming "Paul is still with us." Hold it up to the light, and you'll see a large Mercury Marquis (from the ad on the other side) driving right through his chest.

RICHARD SASSAMAN, BAR HARBOR, ME

IMPLIED SEXISM

I was surprised to find myself in the middle of Seth Mnookin's October piece ["Spice Girls on the Bus," Notebook] about the [Al] Gore reporters. Mnookin's article alleges [that there is] a group dynamic on the Gore bus, which he says has led to name-calling directed at three reporters. He says they have been called the "Spice Girls" and the "Bitches on the Bus" and clearly implies that complaints about the three have been due to sexism. But when he actually quotes someone criticizing the three, he quotes me, three separate times! This is odd, because: 1) I have never been on or near the Gore bus; 2) I had never even heard the terms in question until Mnookin called me; 3) I had never written about one of the [three] reporters; and 4) I don't call people "bitches"—ever. I can't tell you how disgusted I am to have been dragged into the middle of this situation, to which I have no connection.

I have criticized the work of two of the reporters on my website, The Daily Howler. My commentary on the two reporters has been extremely detailed and extends back to April 1999. But Mnookin's critique of my work is simply laughable. In his article, he pulls two minor items from The Daily Howler (whose meaning he still manages to bungle), then seems to attribute the criticism of the writers to sexism. If this is the best your magazine can do, you should simply stop publishing, as soon as possible.

BOB SOMERBY, BALTIMORE, MD

Seth Mnookin responds: Nowhere in my article did I say Mr. Somerby had been on or near the Gore bus; nowhere did I quote him calling the reporters in question the "Spice Girls"; and nowhere did I quote him calling the reporters in question "bitches." I make clear that Mr. Somerby wrote about only two of the three reporters—"two tough old birds," to quote Mr. Somerby's website—by writing in my piece, "Bob Somerby has even taken to tracking what he sees as Seelye's and Connolly's tonal problems...."

For more than a year, Mr. Somerby has maintained a website that acts as a daily compendium of reporters' perceived biases against his college roommate, Al Gore. When I contacted Mr. Somerby—for a story he obviously thought would take his point of view—he both urged me on and supplied me with several sources he felt would back up his charges. Mr. Somerby was one of the first people who pointed out how many of the reporters traveling with Gore were bothered by the "Spice Girls," and he sent me the name, e-mail address, and phone number of a reporter he said would back up his charges. Indeed, Mr. Somerby's surprise at appearing in my article surprises me.

'Spice Girl' Ceci Connolly at work

ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP PHOTO

MAKE THEM EXPLAIN

[Steven] Brill's article ["Pin 'em Down," Rewind, October] proposing that candidates be given a list of issues and insisting on "yes" or "no" answers as to whether they are for or against each issue seems very strange to me.

Give the candidates an issue (say, one a week), ask for a position, and ask how it was arrived at. Assure them that their replies will be printed in full for everybody to see and critique. Sometimes the reasoning is more important than the position. It gives us an idea of how he might handle a situation as president.

EDWARD PERRY, BEAVERCREEK, OH

PUZZLING

Although I appreciate Jesse Oxfeld's generous review of my book, *Inventing Al Gore* ["Presidential Libraries," Sources], in your October issue, I find the last lines puzzling. Oxfeld says that "[a]dditional reporting by others raised some questions" about the credibility of John Warnecke and his descriptions of Gore's marijuana use. I note on page 198 that Warnecke has had problems in the years since he and Gore were friends, including chronic depression. I'd be curious to know what additional reporting Oxfeld is describing here.

BILL TURQUE, WASHINGTON, DC

Jesse Oxfeld responds: Bill Turque is right; it was inaccurate to refer to "[a]dditional reporting by others." Turque himself reported on Warnecke's troubled history. Others, though, interpreted that history as more damaging to Warnecke's credibility than Turque did. It was widely reported in January that the editors of *Newsweek* (where Turque works as a Washington correspondent) chose not to publish a planned excerpt from the book because of such concerns.

AMAZING ADVANCES

I was disappointed when a brief story ["Armed Forces TV"] in your October Stuff We Like section grossly underplayed the Armed Forces [Radio and Television Service]'s foresight in its coverage of a truly amazing technological advance. The story reports, with apparent [CONTINUED ON PAGE 175]

CORRECTIONS

In October's "Lies and More Lies" [The Military and the Media], we reported that David Goff served in the military in Okinawa through October 23, 1970. In fact, he served there until December 1970. Also, Goff's military file consisted of at least three pages, not two, as we reported. In that same story we misspelled Stephen Banko's name and also, under a photo of him, referred to a "traveling" Vietnam memorial. The memorial, in fact, is permanently located in Buffalo, New York.

In November's "Verbatim" [Notebook], due to an editing error, we misspelled Robert Novak's name.

In October's "Secrets & Liz," we misspelled Fran Lebowitz's name.

In October's "His Honor's Honor" [Talk Back], Renata Adler reported that John Dean lost his lawsuit against Gordon Liddy. In fact, that suit was dismissed by the court.

In November's "The Vital Center" we ran a photo of John F. Kennedy with Arthur Schlesinger that was taken in 1961, not in 1960, as we reported.

In November's "The Journalist and the G-Man" we misspelled Walter Lippmann's name.

We regret these errors.

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FACE TIME

1992: Bill Clinton is running hard in New Hampshire, and a photographer catches the candidate reflecting on the wear of the race

When Bill Clinton leaves the White House in January, he will be remembered as a consummate candidate, a politician whose presidency many called a permanent campaign. Eager to shake hands and tour the country, President Clinton was almost always camera-ready. Not so in 1992, when photographer Dan Habib of New Hampshire's *Concord Monitor* caught the Arkansas governor in a rare private moment. Habib's photo was recognized by the National Press Photographers Association as the newspaper campaign photo of the year and made The Associated Press "Photos of the Century" list.

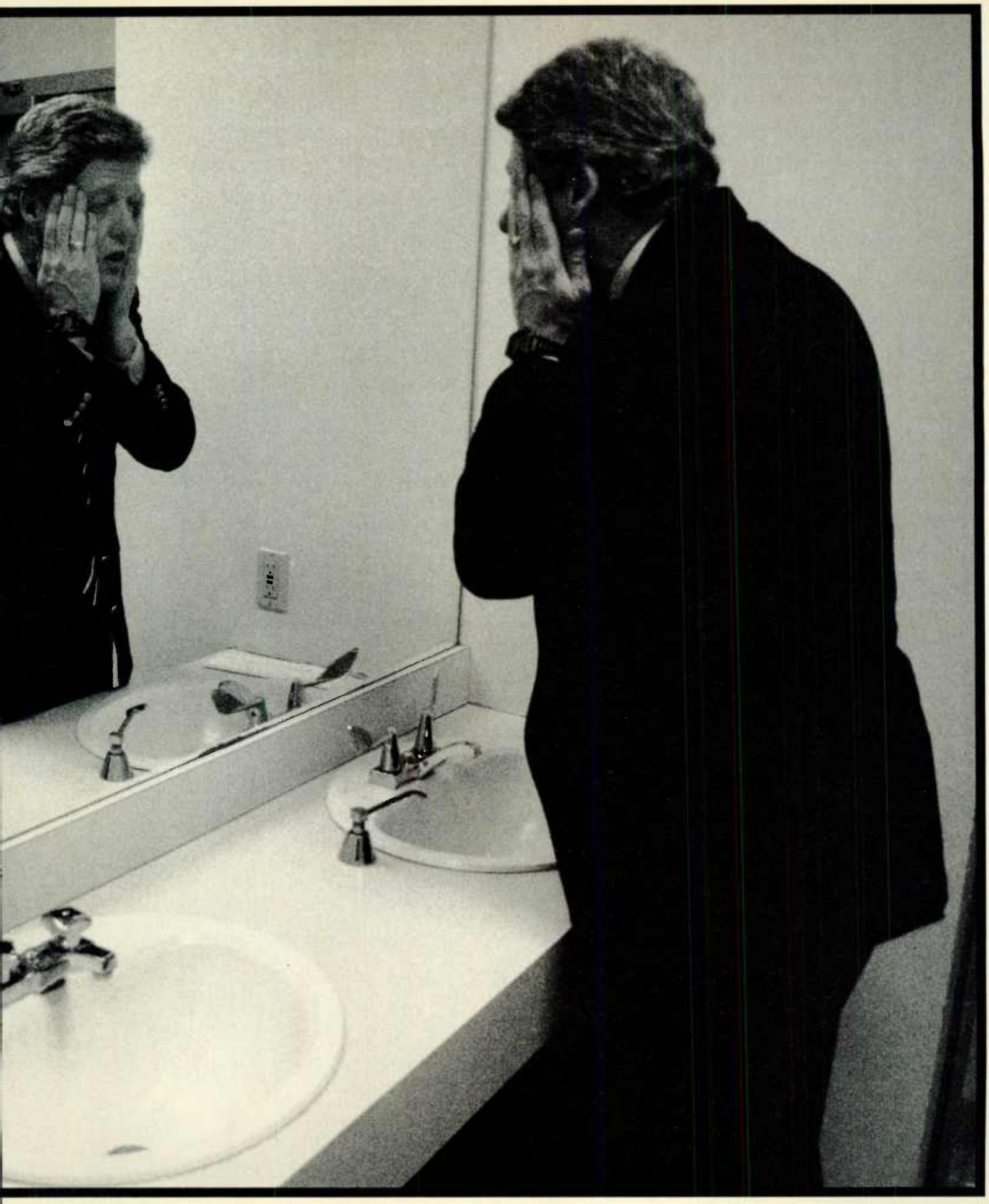
In the weeks before the New Hampshire primary, the *Monitor* had secured a full day of access with each candidate. On January 11, 1992, Habib shadowed Bill Clinton. The deal was that everything the *Monitor* might see that day would be on the record; everything it heard would be off. Habib jogged with the candidate at 7 A.M. and tagged along as he flew north for coffee with millworkers. "He was perhaps the best candidate at ignoring me," says Habib, now the *Monitor*'s photo editor. "I think at most he maybe said two sentences to me the whole day."

When Habib spotted campaign staffers waiting for Clinton outside a bathroom, he knew he had the opportunity to get the shot he wanted. "I casually walked into the bathroom, hoping for a shot of him combing his hair or washing his hands," the photographer says. But Habib found the candidate—or at least noticed his legs—in a stall helping a man in a wheelchair. Habib left without taking a picture; Clinton followed, wheeling the man out to his friends.

Habib became even more determined to get his "bathroom shot." After Clinton completed a TV interview, Habib spotted him entering another men's room and tried to follow. Bruce Lindsey, Clinton's campaign director, stopped Habib, but the candidate, hoarse from his all-day speaking marathon, welcomed him in. Habib was shooting in black and white so he could use natural light and remain unobtrusive. As Clinton started to remove layers of TV makeup, he pressed his hands to his face, betraying, just for a moment, a hint of fatigue. Habib took his photo. "'You have to be on 24 hours a day,'" Habib remembers him saying. "'It's exhausting.'"

At first Habib didn't think the picture would be of much importance. It didn't run until more than a month later, on the day of the primary, February 18. By that time Clinton was defending himself against Gennifer Flowers and answering allegations that he'd dodged the draft. Says Habib, "After all the stuff hit the fan the photo just seemed to represent him a whole lot more." STEPHEN TOTILO

Photograph by Dan Habib/*Concord Monitor*



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between the lines

Hostile reactions to press coverage of Middle East violence show that in the Internet era, hyperinformed citizens see mainstream media in a whole new light. BY ERIC EFFRON

A friend of mine who cares deeply about Israel and Jewish affairs used to start each day with *The New York Times*, scanning the headlines for news about the Middle East and checking the op-ed page (hoping for a hawkish William Safire column on Israel and dreading Thomas Friedman, whom he deems too dovish on the subject). But now whenever my friend talks about the *Times* and the Middle East in the same sentence, it's to rant about what he considers the latest evidence of the *Times*'s anti-Israel bias.

If the *Times* is hopeless, I ask him, where does he go for his Middle East news? He rattles off the four websites he turns to on a regular basis. This new media diet says a lot not only about how people interact with the press these days, but also how the Internet, by enabling us to reach higher levels of sophistication about the subjects we care about most, has armed us to become media critics even while moving us further away from a shared media experience.

My friend, especially during times of crisis in the Middle East, logs on to aipac.org, the website of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the most prominent pro-Israel lobby group in Washington; jpost.com, the online version of *The Jerusalem Post*, an English-language daily based in Israel that veers to the right politically; virtualjerusalem.com, a news and lifestyle site whose motto is "the place where Jews click"; and finally, and perhaps most tellingly, camera.org, the website of an outspoken group called the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, which exposes alleged anti-Israel bias and misinformation in mainstream media.

CAMERA does a lot more than monitor the media: It deconstructs specific articles and broadcasts, provides the historical or political context it thinks is missing in those reports, and urges its constituents to speak up—even providing links to the letters-to-the-editor pages of the offending newspapers. Here's a recent offering:

"Many news correspondents are using lopsided language in reporting on Jewish attacks against Arabs versus Arab attacks against Jews. Arab mobs, whose actions range from stoning Jews praying at the Western Wall to firing guns at Israeli soldiers to destroying Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, are typically characterized as 'protesters' or 'demonstrators.' In contrast, Jewish mobs...are described as 'rampaging.'

"For example, on Oct. 10, 2000, *New York Times*' Deborah Sontag writes that: 'Thousands attended funerals there [in Nazareth] on Monday for two Israeli Arabs killed on Sunday night, by Israeli riot police, after Jews *rampaged* through the heart of town.'" But in the same article, CAMERA states, Sontag writes that "...the Israeli cabinet decided early this morning to avoid exploding a tense situation and gave Yasir Arafat" a last chance "to quiet *protests*."

CAMERA also raised concerns about Sontag's use of the Arabic name of the site Ariel Sharon visited in September, which by many accounts touched off the escalation of violence. In the third paragraph of an October 3 analysis in the *Times*, the site was called "Haram al Sharif";

MIRKO ILIC

the Jewish term "Temple Mount" didn't appear until the 13th paragraph. Such details may seem tangential to casual observers, but for those keenly interested in the Middle East, they are crucial because they touch on deeper, profound disagreements.

People can and do quibble with the specifics of some of CAMERA's critiques; in fact, those on the other side of the issue point to pieces in *The New York Times* and elsewhere that use language that tilts the other way (and you can find articles in the *Times* that use the Temple Mount name more prominently than the Arab term).

Indeed, you don't have to look too far on the Web to find media critiques that argue passionately that the problem with the coverage of the Middle East is a rampant *pro-Israel* bias, coupled with ignorance and animosity toward Arabs and Muslims. U.S. media coverage of the recent violence "has revealed shocking levels of hostility to Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims from many American commentators and journalists," says an October 15 statement from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (adc.org). And like CAMERA, ADC has some specific complaints, which it, too, urges its members to protest:

"Perhaps the most egregious expression of anti-Arab hatred in the mainstream press in recent days came from the online publication Slate...Slate columnist Scott Shuger called one of the Palestinians who had participated in the killing of two Israeli soldiers 'a piece of s--- posing as a human being' and other Palestinians as 'the other turds....' In the past two weeks, over one hundred Palestinians, mostly unarmed civilians, have been killed by Israeli occupation troops.... No American journalist has called the Israelis who committed these atrocities 'pieces of s--- posing as human beings,' and we are certain that editors would have prevented their journals from being used as forums for any such sentiment."

Maybe. The point, though, is that anyone exposed to these sorts of media criticisms is not only becoming more sophisticated about the media he consumes but also more partisan. In a way, it's a direct assault on the still-prevailing journalistic ethic (or aspiration, anyway) of objectivity. *The New York Times* and other top news organizations, in my opinion, generally try to get the story right. But they will never satisfy people who are viewing the coverage from the perspective of a combatant or an insider—and in our Information Age, that's increasingly the perspective of the typical reader, because that reader can now become hyperinformed about the topics she cares about from the sources she trusts—which may mean sources that share her worldview or her prejudices.

There's a dirty secret in journalism circles that any journalist who happens to get written about—and who therefore knows *a lot* about the subject of the story—is appalled by the number of mistakes that show up in the piece and about the lack of nuance and context. The story is never quite right. But so many of us are becoming so thoroughly informed about the issues we care about most—and the Middle East generates a particularly passionate instance of this phenomenon—that we're all starting to view the coverage of that subject the way the journalist who finds himself on the other side of the interview does.

THE PRESS CAN'T SATISFY THOSE WHO VIEW COVERAGE FROM A COMBATANT'S VIEWPOINT—BUT THAT'S BECOMING THE TYPICAL READER'S PERSPECTIVE

In fact, nuances do get missed, mistakes do get made. The goal of honest journalism is not to advance a cause but to capture the truth of the moment as best as can be done under the circumstances. These days, though, people on any side of almost any issue can get all the information they think they need—and instantly—from here and abroad. The briefing my friend receives from those four websites gives him raw and official information that in the old days we relied on the press to filter for us. One former colleague recently passed along an e-mail raising concerns about news coverage of Israel that included a link to the official page of the Israel Defense Forces (idf.il); the page showed a diagram depicting the IDF view of the infamous shooting of a 12-year-old Palestinian as he crouched against a wall with his father. So when readers like these read the *Times* now, they're looking not so much to be informed but rather to see if the *Times*, from their standpoint, got it right.

As the public reaction to the media coverage of the Middle East demonstrates, when mistakes happen or are perceived to have happened, informed people now have the knowledge and means to do something about it. When *The New York Times* and some other newspapers ran a woefully erroneous caption under a bloody AP photo of a youth and a policeman (the caption indicated he was a Palestinian who had just gotten beaten by the Israeli when in fact he was a Jewish kid from Chicago who was being protected after a beating by Palestinians), the flood of outraged e-mail (to this magazine and certainly many others) was astounding. The *Times* soon corrected the caption and ran a piece about the misidentified Chicagoan, but the media critics were not satisfied. The episode was viewed as evidence of a deep animosity toward Israel—and seen on top of the numerous other instances of alleged journalistic missteps they now read about daily, who can blame them?

Similarly, observers sympathetic to the Palestinians complained bitterly that the American press downplayed or soft-pedaled the story of the 12-year-old Palestinian killed by Israeli soldiers. Critics complained that some in the press blindly accepted the Israeli spin on the story (that he was killed in a "crossfire" when in fact, they say, he was targeted). The episode was viewed as evidence of deep animosity toward the Palestinians, and seen on top of the numerous other instances of alleged journalistic missteps they now read about daily, who can blame *them*?

But in every one of these cases, there *are* facts. The truth is out there somewhere, and the press has to keep trying to sort it out. And all this intensive scrutiny might just make the results better.

Still, as we rely more on sources of information that are highly focused and targeted, that serve as extensions, really, of the underlying conflicts, I'm afraid we could also be losing any hope of finding common ground on the most contentious and divisive issues. ■

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REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

The September *Brill's Content* story about fairness and thoroughness in the Pulitzer Prize process included two examples in which the writer himself was neither fair nor thorough. More phone calls would have helped. BY MICHAEL GARTNER

Seth Mnookin paints—or maybe tars—with a broad brush.

In the September issue of *Brill's Content*, Mr. Mnookin lit into the process by which Pulitzer Prizes are awarded to newspapers. The process "is plagued by questions of fairness and accuracy—and no one's doing anything about it," part of the headline read.

Well, maybe.

There's no question the Pulitzer board has made an atrocious mistake or two in handing out its hundreds of journalism awards since 1917. There's no question, either, that the integrity of the system relies in large measure on the honesty and goodwill of the newspapers that submit entries and the instincts and intuition of the 17 journalists and academics who are voting members of the board. And there's no question that, sometimes, honesty and intuition aren't enough.

That was the theme of Mr. Mnookin's story, and it was a legitimate theme.

But two of the examples Mr. Mnookin cited to prove his point don't prove it. In fact, they raise questions about Mr. Mnookin's own fairness and accuracy—or at least the thoroughness of his reporting. And a promotional piece *Brill's Content* sent out three years ago to prepare for the launch of the magazine raises a more serious question: Was Mr. Mnookin's story shaped to fit the preconceived notions of this magazine's founders?

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

First things first.

(Before that, though, a disclosure. I served on the Pulitzer board from 1983 to 1992 and was chairman of it in that final year. In 1997, I won the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing. So I am inclined to be defensive about the boards of the 1980s and appreciative of the boards of the 1990s.)

Back to Mr. Mnookin and the two examples.

In one example, he takes the Pulitzer board to task for the gentle way it dealt with a series produced by Sam Roe of the Toledo, Ohio, *Blade*. The series was about the use of beryllium in the production of nuclear bombs, and it was harsh on a company called Brush Wellman Inc., a manufacturer with a large facility in neighboring Elmore, Ohio.

Brush Wellman, anticipating that *The Blade* would enter the series for a Pulitzer Prize, sent a long letter outlining its complaints about the articles to Seymour Topping, who administers the prizes. The company also posted on its website its response to the points in the *Blade* story.

Mr. Mnookin takes Mr. Topping to task for not passing the Brush Wellman complaint along to the Pulitzer jury. And Mr. Mnookin characterizes the Brush Wellman Web posting as a "point-by-point refutation" of the story.

There are three problems with this. The first problem: "Refutation" is a loaded word. It means to demolish an argument by producing evidence of the truth. Mr. Mnookin did not investigate the accuracy of the *Blade* series. His use of "refutation"—and his editors' approval of that word—implies that he believes that Brush Wellman was right and *The Blade* was wrong. It was, at best, a careless choice of words, at worst an editorial comment that maligned the work of a newspaper.

The second, and worse, problem: Mr. Mnookin never called anyone at *The Blade* for comment. If he had called Ron Royhab, the executive editor, Mr. Royhab would have said what he said in a strong letter to me: "1. Since *The Blade* series was published 17 months ago, neither Brush Wellman nor anyone else has identified a single factual error in the entire *Blade* series. 2. Neither Brush Wellman nor anyone else has requested a retraction or correction of any fact published in the series. 3. No legal claims of any kind have been filed or threatened against *The Blade*. Ohio's statute of limitations for libel has expired." Mr. Royhab also wrote: "We would like to know the basis on which *Brill's Content* published the assertion that Brush Wellman has refuted—that is, 'proved to be false or erroneous'—even a single sentence in our story." Thomas Clare, a Washington lawyer who represents Brush Wellman, says he "absolutely, completely" disputes the first two of Mr. Royhab's assertions, but that's not the issue here. The point is that Mr. Royhab's position should have been included in the story.

The third, and worst, problem: Mr. Topping says he did indeed pass along the file to the Pulitzer board as soon as Brush Wellman allowed him to—and before the board met to award the prizes this spring. Mr. Topping says that shortly before the Pulitzer screening jury met, Brush Wellman sent him "a very large report" complaining about the *Blade* series. But he says—and Brush Wellman confirms—"that the report was sent to me under terms that it be confidential." He says he told the company he needed to show the complaint to *Blade* editors for their comments, and he says it was "some weeks" before he received that okay. (Lawyer Clare says the "confidential" tag was on a routine fax cover sheet. He says that he sent the material to Mr. Topping by Federal Express on February 23, that Mr. Topping called him and received permission to distribute the material on March 3, and that he sent Mr. Topping a letter confirming that phone conversation on March 9.) The seven-person screening jury met in New York for three days starting February 28, and Mr. Topping says that when he realized the jury might select the *Blade* series as one of the three finalists, he summarized the complaint to its members. The jury, thus informed, included the series among the three finalists for the Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting.

Juries usually select the finalists four to six weeks before the Pulitzer board meets, and all of the articles are then shipped to board

members. They read them at their leisure at home or at work and then go to New York for two days to deliberate and debate and discuss before selecting the winners. Mr. Topping says that he "presented the full report [from Brush Wellman] to the board and discussed its contents" when the board met on April 6 and April 7. Mr. Topping notes that he himself thought that the series "was a very good one...[that it] surfaced a very bad situation." But for one reason or another, the board gave the prize to The Associated Press for its (also controversial) series on the No Gun Ri massacre during the Korean War.

All of this—Mr. Mnookin's failure to call *The Blade*, *The Blade*'s response, and Mr. Topping's elaboration on why the complaint was not immediately sent to the jury and his disclosure that it was presented to the full board—puts a decidedly different cast on Mr. Mnookin's example. Indeed, it pretty much demolishes its usefulness in proving Mr. Mnookin's central assertion about the Pulitzer process. And, of course, it proves once again that there is more than one side to every story and that a reporter can never make too many phone calls.

The second example also centers on a phone call not made—and, thus, an impression not valid. Coincidentally, it's also about the latest prize for investigative reporting and involves the third finalist, a series about pharmaceutical companies that was coauthored by Gina Kolata and Kurt Eichenwald of *The New York Times*. Mr. Mnookin points out, correctly, that the Pulitzer guideline "stipulates only that newspapers must include challenges to the accuracy of the specific entry in question...[and] 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."

Using that as his launching point, Mr. Mnookin then noted some past criticism of the work of Ms. Kolata, who did not complain to this magazine, and of Mr. Eichenwald, who complained vigorously. Here's what Mr. Mnookin wrote: "And Eichenwald came under fire when he wrote a blistering page-one story in the [New York] *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."

THE PARAGRAPH IS ABSOLUTELY FACTUAL—BUT, AS THIS MAGAZINE SAYS EVERY MONTH IN PROCLAIMING WHAT IT STANDS FOR, ACCURACY OF FACT IS NOT ENOUGH.

That paragraph is absolutely factual—but, as this magazine says every month in proclaiming what it stands for, accuracy of fact is not enough. "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," the policy promises. The part about Mr. Eichenwald was about as inaccurate in context as is possible in a magazine. Mr. Eichenwald did write what this magazine says he wrote, and he was roundly criticized. But "f--ing niggers" were the words in a transcript filed with the court and were the words that virtually every listener thought he or she had heard—and the listeners included top Texaco executives, lawyers, and viewers of *Nightline* and *Good Morning America*. Further, when the tapes ultimately were enhanced, the offensive "f--ing niggers" did not become a sympathetic "poor St. Nicholas" but rather, taken in full, the equally racist and newly anti-Semitic sentiment that "I'm still struggling with Hanukkah, and now we have Kwanzaa. I mean, I lost [CONTINUED ON PAGE 150]

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

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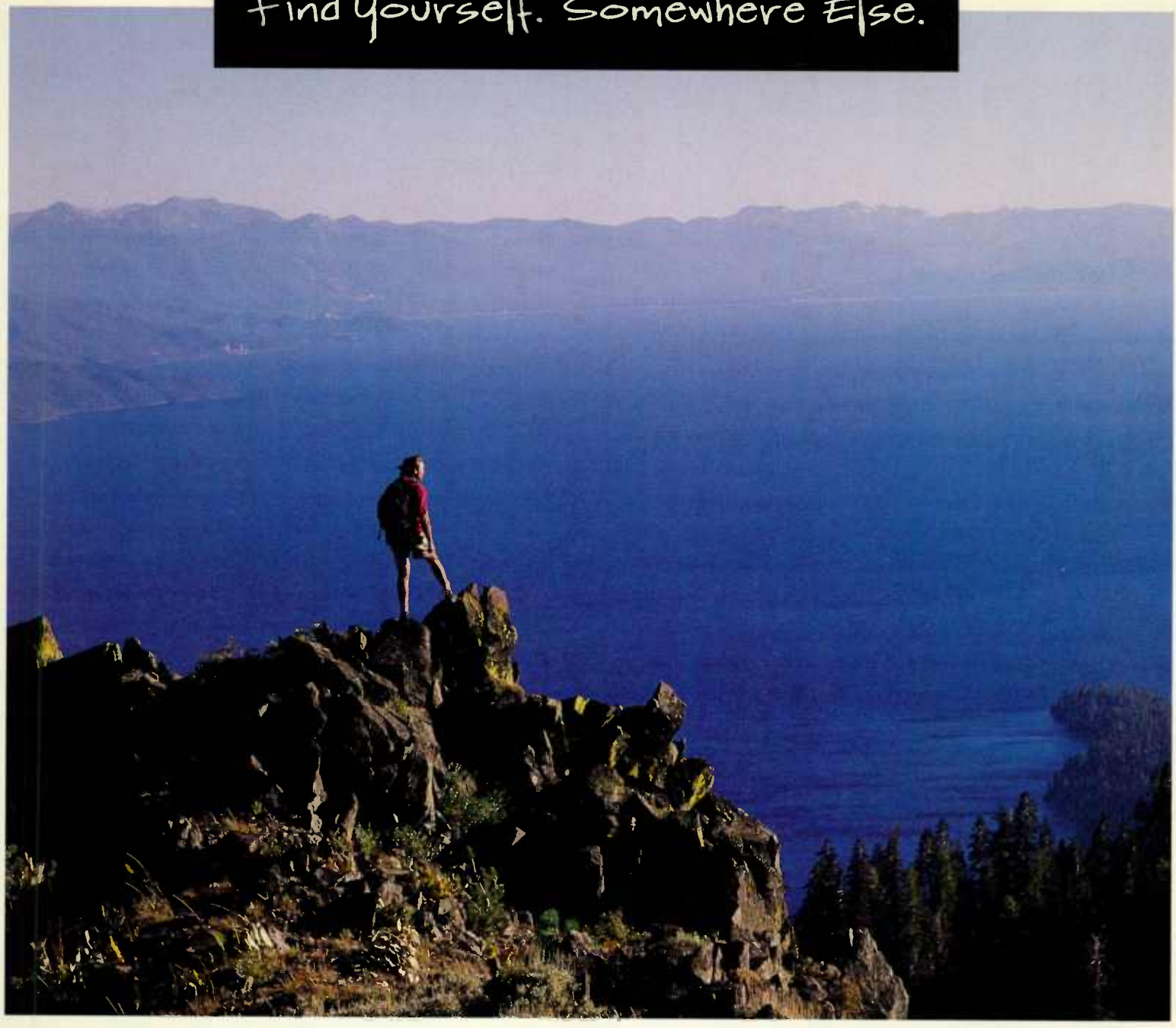

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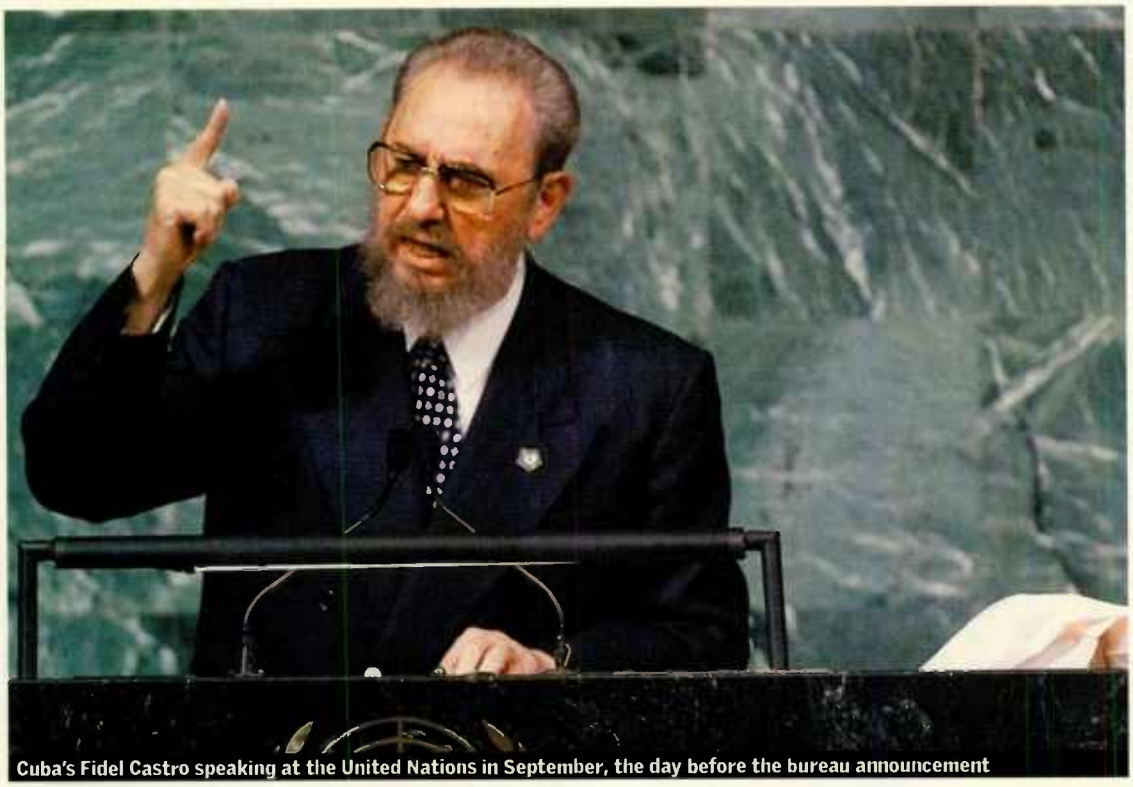
NOTEBOOK



Cuba's Fidel Castro speaking at the United Nations in September, the day before the bureau announcement

NEWS FROM HAVANA

WITH FIDEL'S BLESSING

Gilbert Bailon, the executive editor of *The Dallas Morning News*, was skeptical. A Cuban government official had just called to invite him to a meeting at the United Nations to discuss opening a bureau in Havana. Was Cuba finally giving his paper the nod? "We didn't want [to go to New York] to just have yet another meeting," Bailon says. "But they told us, no, no, come," and at the meeting, "within the first 30 seconds, [the Cuban foreign minister] told us, 'You've got the bureau.'"

The next day, September 7, 2000, the Cuban government announced that for the first time in 40 years, a U.S. newspaper—indeed two regional newspapers, the *Chicago Tribune* and *The Dallas Morning News*—would be permitted to open bureaus in Havana. (CNN and The Associated Press already have bureaus in Cuba.) The news surprised the rest of the journalism community, especially *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, which have also been trying to open offices in Cuba.

Ask the Cuban government why these two were tapped and its answer is simple. "*The Dallas Morning News* and *Tribune* have clearly been in favor of lifting the [United States trade] embargo, but that's not the point. They were the first papers to ask for bureaus. We played no favorites," says Luis Fernandez, press officer at the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C.

And maybe he's right—many papers' editorials support lifting the embargo. But both dailies have done more than ask; they've lobbied hard for the bureaus—six years for the *Morning News* and nine for the *Tribune*. Each sent company executives and [CONTINUED ON PAGE 38]

HOLIDAY E-COMMERCE

Predictions about how much money Americans spend online during the holiday season vary wildly, depending on whom you ask. Not just the predictions, either—the experts can't even seem to agree on what happened *last* year. "There's a little voodoo involved," says Ian Mount, a writer for *eCompany Now* who has noted the disparities. Here's how the analysts' numbers stack up, along with their stated prediction criteria. EMILY CHENOWETH

COMPANY	JUPITER	FORRESTER	GARTNER	BIZRATE.COM
LAST YEAR	$7 billion	$5 billion	$6.31 billion	$3.24 billion
THIS YEAR	$11.6 billion	$10 billion	$10.72 billion	$6.05 billion
INCREASE	66%	100%	70%	87%
LOOKS AT	seasonality, consumer survey data	seasonality, consumer survey data, retailer interviews	seasonality, political and economic factors, consumer data	seasonality, Bizrate affiliates' data, category trends

L: BETH A. KEISER/AP PHOTO. R: U OF WISCONSIN–MADISON/AP PHOTO (2)

Reality Check

PHOTO MAGIC

In September the University of Wisconsin, Madison, was caught trying to diversify—digitally—the school's student body. The administration spliced a black student into a group photograph of otherwise white students shown on the cover of an application brochure.

Anna Gould, a sophomore and a reporter for one of the school's papers, *The Daily Cardinal*, says she noticed that Diallo Shabazz, the black student in the photograph, "had the sun shining on his face, and the other people looked like they were under a clouded sky." She investigated and discovered that the image of Shabazz had been digitally transferred into an archive photo of students at a football game.

The altered brochure

The original photo

"People have always tried to do this sort of thing, for one reason or another," says David King, author of *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia*. "In the Russian case, it was terribly sinister," he says, "because not only were [people] retouched out of the picture, they were retouched out of the world—they were killed."

Fortunately, Shabazz is still with us. The University apologized and reissued the brochure. JULIE SCELFO

Evolution

FINE PRINT

In October, the American Medical Association released a study associating the use of birth-control pills with breast cancer in women with a family history of the disease. It wasn't long before media outlets like the *Today* show began tossing out short, sweeping statements about the potential danger of birth-control pills without citing the most crucial detail: The study showed the linkage only for pills used during or before 1975. Here's how the story evolved. AMY DITULLIO

THE STUDY 'Women with a first-degree family history of breast cancer who used OCs [oral contraceptives] prior to 1975 were at significantly increased risk of breast cancer. We saw no evidence for an increased risk of breast cancer associated with use of OCs after 1975 in first-degree relatives...'
—*The Journal of the American Medical Association*, week of October 11, 2000

THE STORY 'A new study says birth-control pills may raise the risk of breast cancer among women who also have a strong family history of the disease. The study found that women who use the pill who have sisters or mothers with breast cancer are three times more likely to get the disease than women who don't use the pill.'
—*Today*, October 11

THE REACTION 'A study released today by the JAMA has the potential to give women who use oral contraceptives the false impression that they are at risk for developing breast cancer....Nothing in the study indicates increased risk of breast cancer for most women using birth control pills today.'
—Planned Parenthood press release, October 11

THE CLARIFICATION 'A new study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reveals that if you took birth-control pills before 1975 and you have a family history of breast cancer, you could be at greater risk for the disease.'
—Katie Couric on *Today*, October 12

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37] high-ranking editors on pilgrimages to Cuba. They came bearing gifts; they went fishing with government officials. Both tried in vain to meet with Fidel Castro. "They've been lobbying for years," says Howard LaFranchi, Latin America bureau chief for *The Christian Science Monitor*. "Many journalists going over there were taking bottles of wine and perfume to the press office of the Foreign Ministry." Indeed, *Morning News* staff writers who traveled to Cuba on reporting assignments were asked to swing by the ministry and just, well, re-express interest in a bureau, says Bailon. And in 1995 the *Tribune* even held one of its quarterly editors' meetings in Havana—to which it flew in senior Tribune Co. editors.

THE PAPERS' EXECUTIVES AND SENIOR EDITORS CAME BEARING GIFTS.

Economics has a lot to do with both papers' success. Alfredo Corchado, a *Dallas Morning News* foreign correspondent based in Mexico, attended one of the paper's meetings with government officials. "The Cubans took out a map and pointed to the port in Houston," he says. "The Texas farm lobby is big and pushing to end the embargo." Chicago, the headquarters of many agribusinesses, also has a large economic interest in Cuba, and vice versa. In October 1999, Illinois governor George Ryan headed a delegation, which included many businessmen, to the country—the first by a U.S. governor since before the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

The Cubans probably also saw the deal as a counterbalance to its nemesis, the anti-Castro *Miami Herald*, which has been barred from visiting the island. The *Tribune* bureau will be staffed with a reporter from the Tribune Co.-owned *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, the *Herald*'s main competitor. "Obviously, from the Cubans' point of view, their choice of the *Sun-Sentinel* over *The Miami Herald* makes the decision a bit more entertaining," says David Adams, Latin America correspondent for the *St. Petersburg Times*.

The papers, which hope to open bureaus by the end of 2000, tried to soften the Cubans up through baseball, the national pastime of both Cuba and the U.S. In 1995, the Chicago paper broached the idea of a game between the *Tribune*-owned Chicago Cubs and the Cuban national team. On one of his trips to Cuba, Howard Tyner, the *Tribune*'s editor, came loaded with Cubs paraphernalia, says a former staffer. Tyner was unavailable for comment. *The Dallas Morning News* also pushed the baseball angle and briefly tossed around the idea of sending former pitcher Nolan Ryan to Cuba to help it advance the cause.

Of course, there's nothing necessarily wrong with newspapers wining and dining authorities, even in a communist dictatorship. If the papers use the offices to report aggressively and honestly about the country, its readers will benefit. And no one, including the papers' competitors, claims that a secret bargain was struck.

But the lobbying presents a problem if it influences the editorial product, as some of the deal's detractors say happened, including journalists who have worked at the papers. "I think [both papers'] coverage has been enlightening, but not particularly aggressive," says Richard Chacón, Latin America bureau chief at *The Boston Globe*. "That said, it's hard to do that kind of [tough] reporting without suffering repercussions from the Cuban government."

Tracey Eaton, Mexico bureau chief of the *Morning News*, who is likely to head the Havana bureau, doesn't apologize for the lobbying. "Yeah, we've courted the Cubans. We've developed sources and relations and contacts." Tod Robberson, a *Morning News* correspondent in Panama, adds that it's no different from covering the Clinton administration. "If you...hammer them on Lewinsky and campaign finance day in and day out, you will lose access." Except, of course, the White House can't kick reporters out of the country.

The Dallas Morning News, perhaps in its desire to be accepted by the Cubans, devotes a considerable amount of space to the country. "They give almost as much coverage to Cuba as to Mexico," a country with ten times the population whose border is located only a few hundred miles from the *Morning News*'s headquarters, says Ginger Thompson, a Mexico correspondent for *The New York Times*.

CASTRO: ILKKA UIMONEN/CORBIS SYGMA; ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

Though some of those stories have been critical, others have been overly favorable. In a 1998 *Morning News* article about the Cuban elections, for example, the first sentence stated that Castro called the vote "an experiment in democracy." The article went on to quote Castro saying that Cuba is just as democratic as other countries. The only other paper to cover the one-party election, *USA Today*, explained in its first sentence that the elections were "sprinkled with moments of comic irony"—namely Castro's disingenuous claim. The *Morning News* also published an article on a 1998 interview that Castro had with a group of U.S. editors that reads like a transcript. The paper included a list of what Castro said were "misconceptions Americans have about Cuba"—without providing alternative views. One of the few U.S. papers that covered the story, the *St. Petersburg Times*, quoted Castro extensively but gave more context: "The country Castro runs is in much worse shape." (The *Tribune*'s coverage relies mostly on wire reports.)

"We say things about Mexico that we would never dare say about Cuba," says one current *Morning News* staffer. "I think our coverage has been timid."

Ricardo Chavira, an assistant managing editor who led the *Morning News*'s effort to get the bureau, disagrees: "We cover Cuba as completely and honestly as anybody." ERIC UMANSKY

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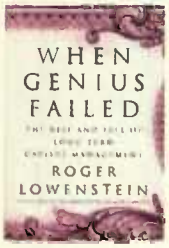
NOTEBOOK

Spin

PRE-PUB NOTE

"This letter is to inform you that Random House will release a book written by Roger Lowenstein: *When Genius Failed: The Rise and Fall of Long-Term Capital Management* in early September and to share my view of the book." So begins a letter sent by financier John Meriwether to investors in his new fund, JWM Partners, on September 5, a week before Lowenstein's book was to go on sale. The book tells the story of Meriwether's now infamous hedge fund, LTCM, and its 1998 collapse, a financial disaster that threatened the stability of markets around the world.



Brill's Content **obtained a copy of Meriwether's letter from a source who insisted on anonymity. "Generally, I find the book mean-spirited and its main themes are not true," it reads. "For example, one of the author's contentions revolves around individual partner responsibility for risk management." The letter goes on to say that "virtually all [of LTCM's] capital has been returned with a profit" and, reassuringly, that the new fund has "fundamentally restructured [its] risk management philosophy to reduce the risk associated with extreme events."**

Elizabeth Fogarty, a Random House publicist, says she heard about the letter just as the book was being released, adding that she was concerned Meriwether and his associates might somehow "interfere with the process" of its review. In response, and without having seen Meriwether's letter, she and another publicist called *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine, among other publications, asking editors to beware of reviewers who eagerly volunteered for this particular assignment.

Asked about the letter, Lowenstein had little to say. "I certainly stand by the accuracy and the contents of the book," he says. "And I don't think it's mean-spirited."

JULIE SCELFO

PROGNOSTICATIONS

LIBERAL WOMEN ON TOP

PUNDIT SCORECARD

Not only does *McLaughlin Groupie* Eleanor Clift hold for a third consecutive month the top spot on our Pundit Scorecard—which tallies the accuracy of weekend punditry—she also racks up her seventh win, just one more than *The Capital Gang*'s Margaret Carlson. Although Clift saw her batting average dip slightly this cycle, second-placer Al Hunt, of *The Capital Gang*, fell even further—which means *McLaughlin*'s house liberal in fact widened her lead. (Don't write that letter to the editor: We were wrong to list Michael Barone of *McLaughlin* as October's winner. Clift was the prizewinning prognosticator that month, too.)

WINNER
Eleanor Clift

Next month's Pundit Scorecard will be the moment of truth for our platoon of predictors. Never mind the tangential issue of who actually will spend four years in the White House; the important question to be answered on November 7 is which of our pundits forecast various races accurately. *Our* crystal ball says: Expect interesting movement in the standings as dozens of predictions are finally proved either right or wrong.

SOLID
Margaret Carlson

But even this penultimate month in the political season was a prime time for punditry. The presidential race narrowed, the debates exasperated, and the Middle East exploded, giving our band of merry analysts innumberable opportunities to opine. Many of their new predictions are not yet verifiable, but the crew did well with calls resolved this month. *Capital Gangster* Robert Novak went a remarkable five for five this time—one of eight pundits to bat a thousand—though some of his soothsaying required no great insight, such as his prediction that Al Gore would attack George W. Bush's capabilities and that Bush would lash back.

LOSER
George Will

Novak, in third place, is our best-performing conservative. He has never topped the list, but he's never landed in the bottom spot, either. This month, that dubious honor is held for the eighth time by *This Week*'s George Will, who edges out *Beltway Boy* Fred Barnes for the record. We've tallied the scorecard 17 times, and these right-wing men have filled 88 percent of our last-place slots. Appearing in 76 percent of our winner's circles was the Clift-Carlson combo of left-leaning women, who have held the top spot a combined 13 times. Critics have long charged that the press is too liberal. Is this scientific proof that liberal reporters are actually—gulp—right?

JESSE OXFELD

PLAYERS

1	**Eleanor Clift, *MG***	(140/218)	**.642**
2	**Al Hunt, *CG***	(85/135)	**.630**
3	**Robert Novak, *CG***	(70/112)	**.625**
4	**Clarence Page, *MG***	(8/13)	**.615**
5	**Kate O'Beirne, *CG***	(31/51)	**.608**
6	**Margaret Carlson, *CG***	(40/66)	**.606**
7	**Tony Blankley, *MG***	(100/167)	**.599**
8	**Michael Barone, *MG***	(76/127)	**.598**
9	**George Stephanopoulos, *TW***	(101/170)	**.594**
10	**Lawrence O'Donnell, *MG***	(29/49)	**.592**
11	**Sam Donaldson, *TW***	(37/65)	**.569**
12	**Mark Shields, *CG***	(25/44)	**.568**
13	**Cokie Roberts, *TW***	(34/62)	**.548**
14	**Morton Kondracke, *BB***	(87/161)	**.540**
15	**John McLaughlin, *MG***	(94/188)	**.500**
16	**Fred Barnes, *BB***	(80/165)	**.485**
17	**George Will, *TW***	(37/83)	**.446**

BB: *The Beltway Boys;* ***CG:*** *The Capital Gang;* ***MG:*** *The McLaughlin Group;* ***TW:*** *This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*
Covers predictions made between August 2, 1998, and October 8, 2000

TEAMS

Losers again: *Beltway Boys* Barnes (left) and Kondracke

1	***The Capital Gang***	(251/408)	**.615**
2	***The McLaughlin Group***	(447/762)	**.587**
3	***This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts***	(209/380)	**.550**
4	***The Beltway Boys***	(167/326)	**.512**

Scores based on total predictions made on each show

ON THE RECORD:

'Everybody has their favorites. Pure objectivity is a myth!'

—*WASHINGTON TIMES* EDITOR IN CHIEF WESLEY PRUDEN, COMMENTING IN *THE WASHINGTON POST* ON NEWSPAPERS' VARIED TREATMENT OF AL GORE AND GEORGE W. BUSH IN THEIR FRONT-PAGE STORIES

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POLITICAL PRESSURE

WITHHOLDING OPINION

Op-ed columnists normally try to affect politics by writing, not by offering *not to write*. But that seems to be exactly what Susan Estrich did last year with her occasional column in *USA Today*. In Estrich's new book, *Sex and Power*, she writes of her efforts to persuade Al Gore to include more women among his cadre of top campaign aides. Estrich describes how at one point in April 1999 she used her column at the nation's widest-circulating daily to pressure the vice-president—before the column had run. "I write a column connecting the need for women as voters with the need to have women at the table, pointing to the reported underrepresentation of women in the Gore campaign," she writes in the book. But the book also notes that she did not hand in her column; instead, she sent it to Gore via overnight mail. "Two days pass," Estrich writes. "No word. *USA Today* wants to run the piece on the following Monday."

Was Estrich implying that she would kill her column if Gore agreed to hire more women? And did Estrich, who managed Michael Dukakis's failed bid for the presidency in 1988, want a job with Gore? "What I wanted them to do was hire some women and minorities in prominent roles," Estrich writes in an e-mailed message. (Estrich was traveling and could not be reached by phone.) "As for a job—I wasn't looking for one, couldn't and didn't want to work on a presidential campaign." Estrich explains that she realizes it's not standard journalistic practice to send out columns before they run: "It was the first (and only) time I've ever sent a column to someone in advance, because I was baffled by the inaction of the campaign, and in my (girlish) way, was eager to do some good, not offend, and I wanted to give Gore the benefit of the doubt—maybe he wasn't aware of what was going on???"

Whatever the case, *USA Today* never ran the piece. In *Sex and Power*, Estrich says that she decided not to submit it after the vice-president called to "yell" at her.

As a matter of policy, *USA Today*, "the nation's newspaper," never shows articles to their subjects in advance, says Brian Gallagher, the editorial-page editor. "We're reviewing the [Estrich] case now, and if we see a need to add more safeguards, we will," Gallagher says. "We're not at that stage yet." SETH MNOOKIN

Pressuring Al Gore: *USA Today*'s Susan Estrich

CORPORATE CHEERLEADING

BERTELSMANN RALLIES ITS TROOPS

The publicity shots of Bertelsmann CEO Thomas Middelhoff—looking toothy and dapper in a hunter green jacket and blue tie—were displayed for weeks in the halls of Random House and BMG Entertainment, the media conglomerate's flagship North American holdings, which include magazine publisher G+J USA. Still, more than 4,000 of Bertelsmann's New York employees had little idea what awaited them on the morning of September 15 when they filed into Radio City Music Hall to hear their German chief give a private company report. "Meet your CEO, Thomas Middelhoff," read the Radio City marquee. Bertelsmann has long held such company meetings in Munich, Paris, and Barcelona, but this was the first stateside. With slides announcing that revenue was up 25 percent, net income up 45 percent, and cash flow up 22 percent this fiscal year, it was a presentation unfamiliar to the average New York publishing employee.

Thomas Middelhoff

'MEET YOUR CEO, THOMAS MIDDELHOFF,' READ THE MARQUEE.

There were rumors that something unprecedented was planned—perhaps the announcement of an IPO. Earlier in September, Middelhoff had told *The New York Times* that he would address questions, including: "What is the personality of our CEO? For what is he staying and fighting? What to him is important?" It wasn't long into the two-hour presentation, according to six Bertelsmann employees who attended, that the 47-year-old Middelhoff revealed a side of that personality that got the attention of nearly everyone in the hall.

The presentation began with video clips of employees working happily at post-takeover Random House. These were followed by a shot of Daniel Brewster, G+J USA's president, gently breaking the news—"No, Thomas, you cannot be on the cover"—and a mock cover of G+J's *YM* magazine with Middelhoff's head superimposed on the body of teen pop star Britney Spears. Then came another faux rejection: BMG head Strauss Zelnick vetoing a Middelhoff duet with Whitney Houston, one of the label's artists.

Middelhoff was just getting started. "I know you all have been making fun of my green jacket," he said plaintively, before pitching the jacket into the audience (though whether this was intended as an acknowledgment of corporate solidarity or delinquent fashion sense was unclear). Middelhoff's most memorable statements, however, were far from ironic and came almost at the end of the assembly. "Do you love your job?" he asked the hall. "Because I love my job—I would die for Bertelsmann! I love Bertelsmann—and I love America!" On that note, "New York, New York" piped through the hall, and the stunned minions filed out.

Bertelsmann employees said they appreciated Middelhoff's intentions, but the rally's immediate effect was, well, counterproductive. "Work was dead," says a Random House employee. "Everyone just took off. I think people were floored by what they had witnessed." KAJA PERINA

STARTING FRESH

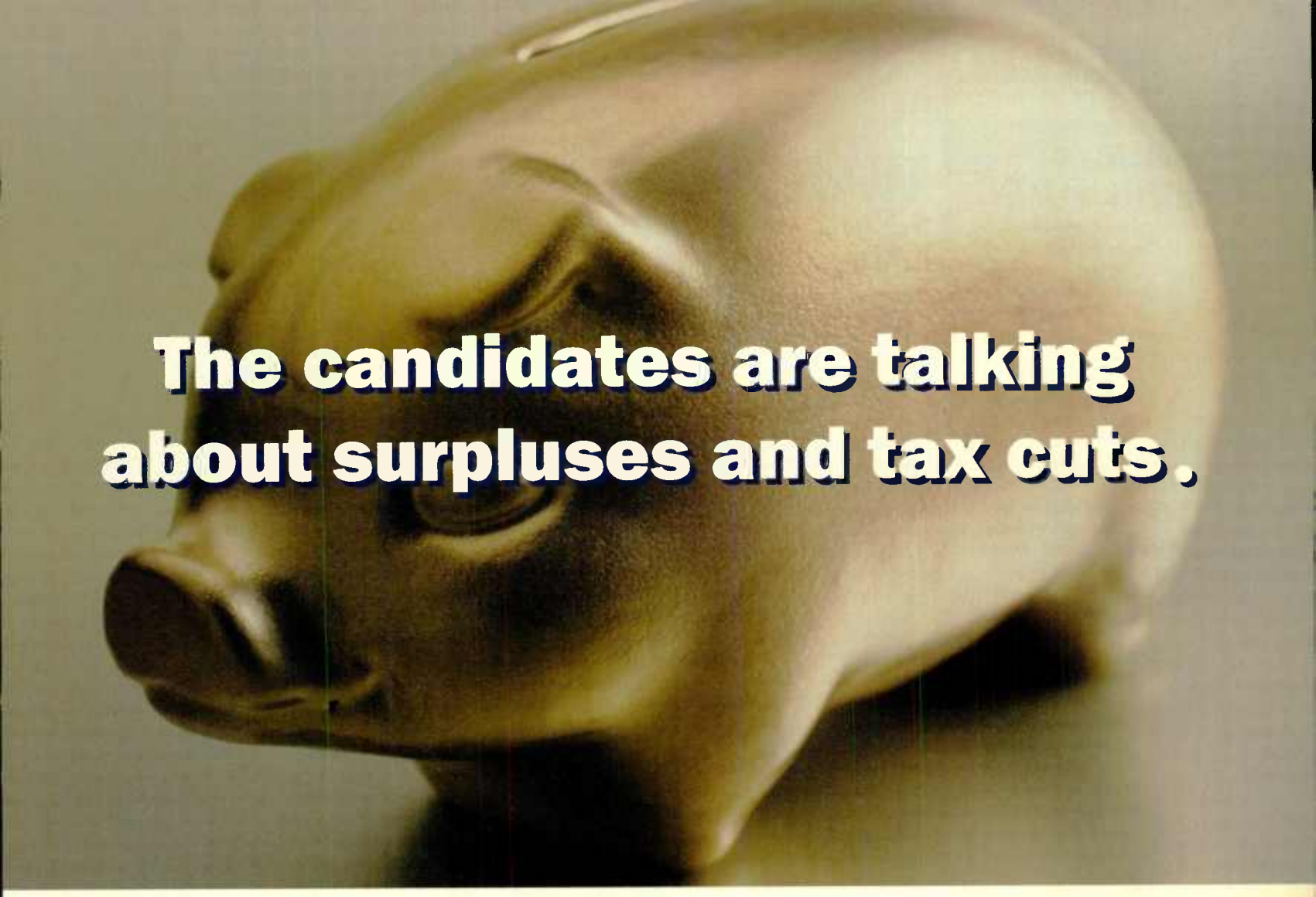
Change the name of a company or a product, and years of brand-building are lost. It's a drastic step but sometimes necessary, whether because of a merger, legal action, or just being out of date. We asked leading brand guru Clive Chajet to rate the latest crop of semiotic makeovers, shown here with the reported advertising budget for each. LARA KATE COHEN

OLD NAME	NEW NAME	BUDGET	COMMENT
Andersen Consulting	To be announced	$100M	**N/A** The new name will have to convey that "it's the same old Andersen Consulting, but in a new suit."
Bell Atlantic/GTE	Verizon	$20M-$30M	**C-** "What does 'truth on the horizon' have to do with a telephone company?"
Plain M&M's	Milk Chocolate M&M's	$10M	**B** "I do think that *plain* is a rather plain word, and a more happily descriptive and appealing word, like *chocolate*, makes sense."
Prunes	Dried plums	$10M	**A+** "Prunes have an image as a laxative for older people—to re-create the image of the prune is impossible. On the other hand, plums have a wonderful image."

PLAIN

MILK CHOCOLATE

ESTRICH: ANN SUMMA/GAMMA LIAISON



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Gimmick

$0 QUESTION

The History Channel sends inordinate amounts of press material: At times, Fedexed tapes and media kits arrive nearly every day. But the network's most eye-catching offering came a few months ago in a small, slim envelope. It was an invitation.

History IQ, a new game show, debuted on October 2. To whet journalists' interest, The History Channel played to our vanity: It organized a "press-only day," when a group of reporters trooped to a Manhattan studio and competed against one another for neither cash nor prizes.

Seven people attended, and the show's publicity staff arranged us into three somewhat caste-conscious games. First I would play against *Newsweek*'s Jonathan Alter and *New Yorker* TV and theater critic Nancy Franklin. Next would be *Maxim* against Newark's *Star-Ledger* against an amazingly trivia-talented guy who writes a six-times-a-week TV column for United Feature Syndicate. Last came the reporter from *Cablevision*, a trade publication, against whomever else they could scrounge up.

Let's not get hung up on how the game went. Suffice it to say there's no shame in losing to *The New Yorker*. ("You could have lost to *me*," pointed out the guy from *Maxim*.) And it was a lovely ego boost to knock Alter off the show with my faster finger (and knowledge of FDR's cabinet).

Did the gimmick pay off? There wasn't a storm of *History IQ* news stories. "But you guys got to experience it," argued Debra Fazio, who organized the day. "And word-of-mouth means a lot, too." Perhaps. A *New Yorker* short, though, which we learned at press time was scheduled for imminent publication, means much more. JESSE OXFELD

Our reporter identifies New Deal Interior secretary Harold Ickes.

MONEY PRESS

WAR OF THE SCOOPS

The grandees of business journalism—the 112-year-old *Financial Times* of London and the 111-year-old New York–based *Wall Street Journal*—are encroaching on each other's turf. In 1997 and 1999, respectively, the *FT* and the *Journal* began aggressively promoting their overseas editions: The *FT*'s U.S. edition took on the *Journal*; the *Journal*'s European edition took on the *FT*. It's a two-front news war in which the race to break market-moving stories is so important that the *FT* often trumpets its scoops by placing full-page ads in other business publications. A look at the number of stories it breaks, as well as its circulation growth rate, shows that the scrappy, salmon-sheeted *FT* has an early edge in the overseas expansion race.

Financial Times U.S. editor Robert Thomson cedes American business news to the *Journal* but insists that "[f]or an Illinois businessman who has an interest in international commerce, the *Financial Times* is an absolutely necessary dietary supplement to the *Journal*."

One of the *FT*'s self-congratulatory ads. Left: the *FT*'s U.S. editor, Robert Thomson, who is taking on the *Journal*.

Dow Jones, however, doesn't merely want to supplement the *FT* in Europe. Spokesperson Richard Tofel says *The Wall Street Journal Europe* is "aiming to be a substitute for the *FT*." His line of attack: "The *FT* is principally a British paper....If your business is either in Britain and global, or outside of Britain, the *Journal* is clearly superior."

Yet the *FT* frequently scoops the *Journal* on U.S. business stories. As reported in these pages (February 1999), the *FT* was first to reveal that Exxon Corp. and Mobil Corp. were set to merge—then the biggest corporate union ever—on Thanksgiving eve last year. More recently, on May 24, 2000, the *FT* broke news of a merger between two other American behemoths—UAL, the operator of United Airlines, and US Airways. On October 13, the *FT* reported that the American oil giants Chevron Corp. and Texaco Inc. were in merger talks.

THE *FT*'S U.S. CIRCULATION IS THREE TIMES WHAT IT WAS.

But as Dow Jones spokesman Richard Tofel emphasizes, the *FT* previewed its stories on its website, and on CNN. By the time the *Financial Times* hit American doorsteps, other papers were reporting the stories, too. Tofel argues that stories that didn't debut in print shouldn't count as scoops, and that Dow Jones also breaks stories on its proprietary wire and on its website, which has 500,000 paying subscribers. Thomson responds that "a scoop is a scoop" and explains that the paper often breaks stories on the Internet as they are being published in the *FT*'s Asia and Europe editions. (The *FT*'s website, ft.com, is free.)

A survey of *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Wall Street Journal Europe*'s recent European scoops shows that the *Journal* juggernaut has made inroads internationally. The *Journal* reported on June 2 that Anglo-Dutch conglomerate Unilever had sweetened its bid to buy New Jersey's Bestfoods. On August 18, the *Journal* reported that British Telecom was discussing a merger with AT&T. And on September 12, the *Journal* reported that Germany's Dresdner Bank AG was in talks to buy the New York investment bank Wasserstein Perella & Co.

But these scoops involved stateside companies and weren't as large as, for instance, the Chevron-Texaco merger, notes Thomson. "US Airways, Exxon—these were market-moving stories because they are companies in which thousands of Americans have shares," he says, adding that the *Journal* deserves less credit for scoops regarding small American-based subjects.

Circulation figures offer additional evidence on how the competition is shaping up. Since June 1999, when *The Wall Street Journal Europe* began a $50 million expansion campaign, the paper's circulation has jumped by about 15 percent. As of July, the *Journal Europe* averaged about 90,120 daily, while the *FT* sold an average of about 335,400 copies in Europe.

In North America, *The Wall Street Journal* dwarfs the *Financial Times*. Each day it sells about 1.8 million copies, while the *FT* sells only about 119,000. Yet the *FT*'s American circulation is three times what it was three years ago. So although the *Journal* enjoys a far more formidable home field advantage, the *FT* deserves the title of Most Improved, because its increase in circulation is far steeper.

To prove its relevance to American readers, the *FT* must keep scooping the *Journal* and letting readers know about it. That's why the British-born upstart regularly advertises its scoops in business periodicals—including *The Wall Street Journal*. Says Tofel, "I think that their feeling that they need to place ads in the *Journal* says more than I ever could." EVE GERBER

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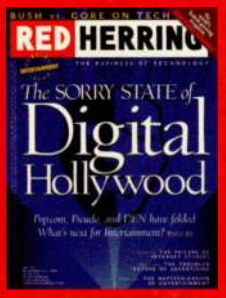

RED HERRING

RED HOT

Q&A

JAZZ WARS

Ken Burns specializes in long-form historical documentaries, like *Baseball*, that impart a nostalgic glow to the American past. This January, PBS will air his latest, the 18-hour *Jazz*, and Burns, before his movie has even run, is under attack by some in the notoriously fractious jazz world. Here, the director answers his critics.

JOSEPH GOMES

WHAT SORT OF CRITICISM ARE YOU HEARING ABOUT YOUR FILM?

The gist of it comes down to two main points. One is that I do the last 40 years in the last two-hour segment. I'm a historian; I'm not in the business of telling the present. I'm very pleased that those people will be upset. The second accusation is that somehow I've fallen prey to a cabal that has Wynton Marsalis, Stanley Crouch, and Albert Murray as chief witch doctors. While we interviewed them, and they were extremely helpful, we interviewed people of every different stripe. I'm a strong filmmaker. I made the film I wanted to make.

SO YOU HAVEN'T TAKEN THE TRADITIONALISTS' SIDE, PRETTY MUCH IGNORING 1970s FUSION, FOR EXAMPLE?

I really didn't want to get into these tar baby arguments where you fight over what's jazz and what's not. I have bigger fish to fry. In the end, the film is about jazz, but it's also about race, and the 20th century—which means it's about world wars and depressions and sex and drug abuse and protest, and the way people dress, and what kind of cars they drive. These are all things that this film notices. I couldn't get bogged down in the so-called Jazz Wars.

Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns

POLITICS AND PHOTOGRAPHY

REPORTING UNDER FIRE

The horrifying scene of 12-year-old Mohammed Aldura dying at his father's side in the Gaza Strip was broadcast all over the world in October. Many accounts credited the video footage to a "French cameraman," but the man who shot it is a Palestinian, 45-year-old Talal Abu Rahma. He has covered tensions in the region for such organizations as CNN, and now France 2, for more than a decade and owns a bureau in Gaza used by international news organizations.

A still from Talal Abu Rahma's video footage: September 30, the Gaza Strip Aldura—father and son—under fire

Abu Rahma is not unusual. Many of the editors, producers, camera crews, and sound technicians on the ground in the Middle East are local Palestinians and Israelis. Etti Wieseltier, an Israeli, was part of the Italian TV crew that shot equally horrifying footage of an Israeli soldier thrown from a window in Ramallah into the arms of a Palestinian mob. "Many times, especially in the tough areas, reporters are not going to the scene," she says. "They get information from their crew...from the Israelis, the Palestinians, from whomever."

In such a polarized environment, the region's native newspeople often find that objectivity is hard to maintain amid bloody conflict. Inevitably, their work and their words become enmeshed in the propaganda war that accompanies the actual conflict. Wieseltier, for instance, gave an account of the Ramallah murder at a press conference arranged by the Israeli government. Her colleagues' footage was eventually distributed by Israeli authorities at the U.S.-brokered emergency peace summit in Egypt.

ABU RAHMA CAN'T AVOID PERCEPTIONS THAT HIS VIEWS ARE SLANTED.

Wieseltier says she has worked with Palestinian camera crews and has reported stories both favorable and unfavorable to the Israeli military, but still she struggles to be impartial. "Maybe I'm not objective," she says, recalling the impact of seeing the soldier's death. "Not only was he an Israeli, but he was a human being."

The video of the 12-year-old's death has also been politicized, and Abu Rahma's eyewitness account is in dispute. The cameraman had been filming at the Netzarim intersection for five hours, since 7 in the morning, he says. He thought Palestinian children on their way to school would throw stones at a nearby Israeli army base. At noon, as he was preparing to leave, a firefight began. Abu Rahma took cover with several other Palestinians behind a Volkswagen minibus, and for about 30 minutes he filmed the

According to Abu Rahma, the Palestinians fired across the intersection for just the first few minutes. The rest of the shooting, he says, came from the Israelis. And he says the Palestinians did not fire back. "They didn't have enough bullets," he says. "Believe me, I'm telling you the truth." Israeli authorities dispute this claim, although they acknowledge the boy was killed by Israeli gunfire.

Abu Rahma's eyewitness account immediately became part of the heated debate about the Israeli military and its tactics. In its defense, the Israeli Defense Forces released an aerial photo of Netzarim, arguing that given the locations of people around the intersection, there was a sustained crossfire. Yehuda Ya'akov, media officer for the Israeli consulate in New York, says that while he thinks most reporters accurately reported a crossfire, Abu Rahma "spinned it against Israel."

Given how close he is to the conflict, Abu Rahma can't avoid perceptions that his views are slanted. At the same intersection in May, for example, he was shot by Israeli troops, struck in the hand with a rubber bullet. He's sure it was no accident. "Many times [journalists] are targets for the Israeli army," he says, "because they think if we are not there, people won't throw stones."

But Abu Rahma's views of the conflict are nuanced. He speaks, for example, of Israeli soldiers "who don't have a heart" but goes on to tell a story of how they saved his life: Abu Rahma was filming Israelis returning from a funeral for two countrymen killed by the Hamas. Armed men in the procession spotted him, he says: "They came quickly to me, and they wanted to shoot me." Just then, he adds, Israeli soldiers drove up in jeeps and stopped the attack. "I sent a letter to the army to thank them for saving my life." STEPHEN TOTILO

TOP: FRANCE 2 VIA APTN/AP PHOTO. BOTTOM: LEE MARRINER/AP PHOTO

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Ticker

24.5 Percentage of employees surveyed who said they spend at least one hour each workday surfing the Web for non-work-related reasons

12.6 Percentage of employees surveyed who said they spend at least two hours each workday surfing the Web for non-work-related reasons

41.5 Percentage of employers surveyed who said their companies actively monitor or restrict employees' Web activity[1]

6 Number of times, through October 1, that *Newsweek* used the phrase "the Austin powers" to refer to George W. Bush's Texas-based top advisers

1 Number of times that it was funny[2]

$705 Amount of money, in millions, NBC paid for the rights to broadcast the Sydney Olympics

1,812 Number of NBC Sports staffers in Sydney during the Olympics

162.5 Hours of Olympics coverage NBC aired on its broadcast network

13.8 Average prime-time household rating for that coverage

36 Percentage decline in average prime-time household rating from the 1996 Atlanta Olympics[3]

426 Number of movies released by the eight major studios between 1995 and 1999 that received an R rating at least in part because of violent content

108 Number of those movies released by Walt Disney—more than by any other studio[4]

23 Percentage of teens surveyed who said they are influenced by celebrity endorsements when deciding which brands to purchase

71 Percentage of teens surveyed who said they are influenced by whether the brands donate money to a good cause[5]

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1) Vault.com 2) LEXIS-NEXIS 3) NBC Sports; Nielsen Media Research 4) Inside.com 5) Roper Starch Worldwide

Ann Klenk, a consultant to political talk shows, on the *Hotline* set in Washington, D.C.

DANUTA OTFINOWSKI

POLITICAL SHOWMANSHIP

MEDIA LIVES

ANN KLENK
Media Consultant

The formula for political talk shows seems easy enough: Take a couple of chairs, a snappy jingle, and two or three gleefully disagreeable pundits, and you have another *Crossfire*. For Ann Klenk, a media consultant in Washington, D.C., who has put together political talk shows for everyone from Oxygen Media to CNBC, the process is a little more complicated. Or at least it should be. "Most of the network executives don't pay much attention to their political programming," says Klenk. "They hire a Republican and they hire a Democrat and they throw them on the air." This may not be, she says, the best approach.

The way to keep a political talk show interesting, according to Klenk, is to tailor its format and content to the viewers most likely to be paying attention. For true politicos, that means a hard-hitting "strip" show: one that airs daily. *Crossfire*—not one of her projects—falls into this category. Though Klenk likes some argumentative and personality-driven programs, she deplores the "talking heads begging for a nanosecond of airtime."

Klenk works with a network to decide on a show's format, hire a host and reporters, and book guests. She tries to make shows, she says, that aren't "slapped together like a ham and cheese sandwich." Klenk's most successful projects have capitalized on political or cultural trends and, she hopes, appeal to a wider audience. In 1993, in the wake of the much-ballyhooed electoral gains made by women in the previous election, she created *Equal Time* for CNBC, a show then hosted by two women. More recently, Klenk has been experimenting online, with a chat program on AOL (hosted by *The View*'s Meredith Vieira and targeted at women aged 25 to 50) and a webcast on MSNBC.com for *The Hotline*, an inside-the-beltway political publication. But whatever the format, says Klenk, political talks shows will endure, "because politics is one of the few common denominators Americans have."

ELIZABETH ANGELL

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why do I do it?

I want to tell my infant son why my colleagues and I risk our lives: to try to do good. But is the risk worth it now that the journalism I know and love is dying? BY CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR

Seventeen years ago, I arrived at CNN with a suitcase, my bicycle, and about 100 dollars in my pocket. My bosses, however, might feel as if it's been seventeen hundred years, because I've aged them, I've beaten up on them, and this column will be no different.

I had come from one of the best local stations, WJAR-TV, in Providence, Rhode Island, which, taking pity on me, had hired me right after college. Someone at the station who had a friend at CNN told me, "You know, this is a great opportunity for somebody who has a foreign accent, because we hear foreign accents on CNN. Who knows—maybe they'll take you because you don't fit within the American spectrum of news."

And, sure enough, I was assigned to the foreign desk simply because I was foreign, having been born in London. I quickly announced, innocently but ambitiously, that I wanted to be—was *going* to be—a foreign correspondent. Back then, the trench-coated correspondent was the job to strive for—when reputations could be made with a couple of well-reported foreign stories.

I worked my way up through every level. I was a writer, I was a producer, I was a field producer, and now I am a reporter. At first, we were ridiculed as Chicken Noodle News. We loved the fact that we were mocked as we kicked ass all over the world. We were thrilled and privileged to be part of a revolution, because—make no mistake about it—Ted Turner has changed the world with CNN. Not only did he create 24-hour news and everything that has meant, but he truly created the global village. As corny as that sounds, nothing has been the same since.

I WONDER WHETHER YOU KNOW WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE TO SPEND ALL OF YOUR WORKING LIFE SCARED.

But with all my youthful exuberance and highfalutin dreams, nothing prepared me for the intensity of the work I took on and have done over the past ten years with my wonderful teams of camera people and editors and sound people and field producers. When I started out, I was an adventurer. I thought CNN would be my ticket to see the world and to be at the center of history—on someone else's dime.

Soon the reality of my business sank in.

I have spent the past decade in just about every conceivable war zone. I have made my living bearing witness to the most horrific events of the end of the 20th century. Because CNN is seen all over the world, I've become globally identified as a harbinger of war and disaster. Wherever I go, people say jokingly—or maybe not so jokingly—that they shudder when they see me:

"Oh, my God. Amanpour is coming. Is something bad going to happen to us?"

U.S. soldiers, with whom I now have more than a passing acquaintance, joke that they track my movements to predict where they will be deployed. And I have calculated that I have spent more time at the front than most normal military units.

I have lost many friends, and I've seen many more wounded—by snipers, by mortar shells, by land mines, and by crazed, Kalashnikov-wielding druggies at checkpoints. It has occurred to me that I have spent almost every working day of the past ten years living in a state of repressed fear.

I rarely talk about this, because, frankly, it is impossible to talk about, but I wonder whether you know what it must be like to spend all of your working life scared. Scared of being shot, of being kidnapped, of being raped by lunatics who don't want their story to be told or who blame you for bringing NATO bombs down around them. I manage the fear, my colleagues manage the fear, but it certainly takes its toll.

And then there's the nightmare of what we see: in Rwanda, piles of bodies being lifted by bulldozers after a genocide and dumped into mass graves—and the toughest of soldiers, supervising this, in tears. In Bosnia, little children being shot in the head. In Somalia and Ethiopia, the walking skeletons heralding those terrible famines. I remember once doing a live shot from a so-called famine camp in Somalia, in which I showed a man, told his story, and explained how ill he was. I suddenly realized that he was dying at that very moment. And I didn't know what to do—I didn't know how to move the camera away, how not to sully what was happening in real life. These images and these sounds will never leave me.

Lately I've been wondering why I do it, why anyone would do it. The answer used to come after only a few seconds: because it matters, because the world will care once people see our stories. Because if the storytellers don't do this, then the bad people will win.

This article was adapted by Ms. Amanpour from her speech at the Edward R. Murrow Awards ceremony of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, held September 13, 2000, in Minneapolis.

Christiane Amanpour says that before her son was born, she "joked about looking for bulletproof Snuglis and Kevlar diapers."

MARC JOSEPH/CORBIS OUTLINE

I was always certain I could never sustain a personal relationship while I worked this hard or while I was driven so intensely by a story. Indeed, in the flush of journalistic passion I once told an interviewer that of course I would never get married, and that I most definitely would never have children. If you have a child, I said, you have a responsibility to at least stay alive.

That was seven years ago. I have now been married for two years and have a 5-month-old son. Before he was born I joked about looking for bulletproof Snuglis and Kevlar diapers. I was planning, I told everybody, to take him on the road with me.

At the very least, I expected to keep up my hectic pace—and my passion as a war correspondent. But now, like every other working mother would, when I think of my son and having to leave him, and imagine his fixing those large innocent eyes on me and asking, "Mummy, why are you going to those terrible places? What if they kill you?" I wince.

I know what I *want* to say: that it's because I have to, because it matters, because Mummy's going to tell the world about the bad guys and perhaps do a little good.

But something strange has happened, something I never expected. Sadly, marriage and motherhood have coincided with the demise of journalism as I knew it and dreamed it would always be. Judging by the experience of my network colleagues, I am no longer sure when I go out there and do my job that the story will ever air. More often than I care to remember, I have sympathized with those who, like myself, have been assigned to some of the world's royal bad places. They have gone through hell to report their pieces only to find the stories frequently killed back in New York—because of some fascinating

new twist on Fergie getting fatter or who knows what. I have always thought it morally unacceptable to kill pieces that people have risked their lives to get.

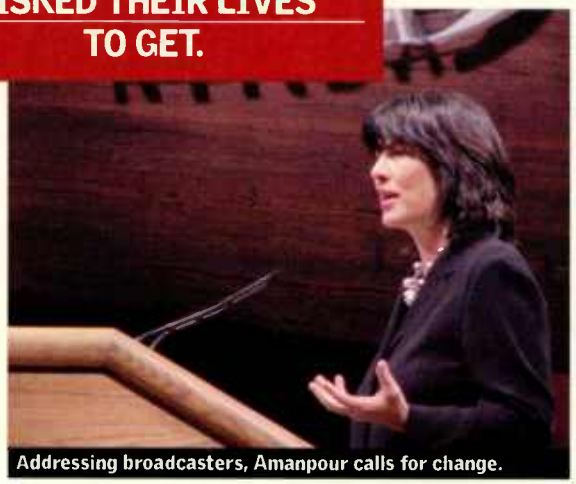
My son was barely 2 months old when two of my best friends and colleagues, from The Associated Press and Reuters, were murdered in an ambush in Sierra Leone ["Deadly Competition," *Brill's Content*, September]. I was devastated—and angry. They were killed telling an important story, but I wonder: Does anyone know where Sierra Leone is? If not, why not? How many stations, how many networks, aired their footage?

I am not alone in feeling depressed about the state of news today. A veteran BBC reporter and friend of mine has said, with supreme British understatement, "News is heading down rather a curious corridor." A longtime and highly awarded colleague of mine has left the business altogether for politics, saying that he thinks news and journalism died in the nineties.

I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT IT MORALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO KILL STORIES JOURNALISTS HAVE RISKED THEIR LIVES TO GET.

I'm not quite as pessimistic, but something has got to change. All journalists, I believe, are in the fight of their lives to save the profession they love. I believe that we can do it; I believe we can win this battle.

A few months ago, I clipped an article from *The New York Times* that I very nearly put under my pillow. It said that WBBM-TV in Chicago is going back to basic journalism! That was the article—and a rare example of dog-bites-man actually being news [Notebook, *Brill's Content*, May]. I have also read that news directors in Florida and elsewhere around this country are trying the same thing. I don't dare ask how this radical experiment is faring in the ratings, but all my fingers and toes are crossed.



Addressing broadcasters, Amanpour calls for change.

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, television, national and international, is the critical force. And yet the powers that be, the moneymen, have decided to eviscerate us. You see, it actually costs a little bit of money to produce good journalism, to travel, to investigate, to put compelling viewing onscreen, and to give people a reason to watch us.

But God forbid that money be spent on news operations, on pursuing quality. For the most part, the viewers get a lot of demeaning, irrelevant, superhyped sensationalism. And then we wonder why people are tuning out in droves. I don't think it's just the new competition—it's the drivel we spew into living rooms.

David Halberstam, the great Vietnam-era journalist and author of the classic book *The Powers That Be*, which charted the rise of modern media, wrote in this magazine's September issue that journalism today is basically tailored to the shareholders, that the owners display real passion only for their stock.

As parent companies and corporations rake in the profits, let me throw down this challenge: What is the point of having all this money and this fancy new technology and being able to go anywhere and broadcast everywhere if we are simply going to drive ourselves and our news operations into the ground? It really makes me wonder about mega-mergers.

Yes, media is big business, but surely there must be a level beyond which demanding profit from news is simply indecent. We all love *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. I love *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. Networks, make your money off that. Leave news alone, with only good, competitive journalism as the benchmark. And give us a break, you advertisers. I know I don't need to point out that quality programs make money too. There's *60 Minutes*, there's *Nightline*, and there are many others. News is part of our communal experience. It is a public service.

No matter what the hocus-pocus focus groups say, time has proved that all the gimmicks and cheap journalism can carry us only so far. When you tell a focus group, "Well, would you rather hear about some distant, irrelevant, ridiculous place on the other side of the world or about, you know, medical health at home?" obviously, they'll choose the latter. But if you ask, "If we told you a story about the AIDS epidemic in South Africa or the little children starving in Ethiopia, if we made those issues compelling, would you listen?" I bet they'd say yes. This is a country full of compassionate people, people who like to care. And I know from the reaction my stories get that people are interested if you tell stories well and relevantly.

With the Cold War over, media management seems to behave as if it no longer has an obligation to cover the world. Supported by the awful focus groups that suggest Americans care about nothing except contemplating their own navels, they and we have succumbed to a culture of self-obsession.

Lest you think these are the woolly-headed musings of a foreign correspondent, let me assure you that we correspondents are not dinosaurs. We are the frontier. The techno-wizards have mastered the hardware, but we are the software. And that will never change. Today's buzzwords are *content* and *platform*. Well, we produce the content for every platform. And I maintain that newsprint, humble newsprint, *The New York Times*, etc., still rules the world.

I recently picked up a copy of *The Economist*. The cover said, "What the Internet cannot do." And here I had thought that the Internet had taken over! An article in the issue pointed out that, as many already know, the Internet is pretty good at delivering data (real-time, written information) but has a more difficult time with video—

DOUG ERICKSON/RTNDA

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Amanpour with her husband, ex-State Department spokesman James Rubin

which is the biggest slice of broadcasters' output. The story went on to say, "At the end of 1999, according to 'Broadband Intelligence,' an industry newsletter, only around 1.5 million American households, around 1.5 percent of the country, had broadband Internet [video] connections." So I just assume and calculate and hope I am right—that television is still it.

As for CNN, I am thrilled by the recent management changes. We are responding to the times. And I'm sure we will regain our niche, stop trying to be all things to all people, and find our way back to doing what we do best—what we alone can do. And that is gather the news first, tell the news, and send it out the farthest around the world.

But our industry has invested so much money in technology that perhaps it's time to invest in talent, in people. You wouldn't believe how many people in newsrooms I know have a hard time even recognizing news anymore.

Here in the United States, my profession is much maligned—people simply don't trust or like journalists anymore, and that's sad. They accuse us, particularly television journalists, of hyping everything for ratings. In the September issue of this magazine, a group of people said—and this is *really* sad—that they might be able to learn something about issues if they don't watch the news. That's scary: They'll get their information somewhere else, because, they think, they are not getting it from us.

Elsewhere in the world, however, I've seen that journalists are considered serious players. In emerging democracies such as Russia, in authoritarian states such as Iran or even Yugoslavia, journalists play a vital role in civil society. Indeed, they form the very basis of those new democracies and civil societies.

I KNOW MANY PEOPLE IN NEWSROOMS WHO BARELY EVEN RECOGNIZE NEWS ANYMORE.

Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, is hell-bent on silencing the voice of the independent media—that's how powerful he thinks they are—unless they toe his line. When he and his government failed the test of leadership and lied to Russia and the world about the sinking of the Kursk submarine, it was Russian journalists who were the first to expose the Kremlin's double-talk and KGB-style propaganda, Russian journalists who revealed there were in fact no survivors despite the Kremlin's protestations. In Iran the entire reform and democracy movement has been based on the emerging free press. It is now so powerful that the hard-line mullahs have cracked down, trying to run the outspoken new journalists out of business. But every time a newspaper is closed down, another opens up.

I am proud of the work Western journalists did in exposing genocide and mass murder, spurring action, eventually, in Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor. Often our words and pictures are these people's only opening to the world.

In the United States, too, there has been fantastic work exposing corruption and injustice. But how our media treat the democratic process and the truly poisonous relationship between government and the press right now must have something to do with why Americans are so alienated from that process. We in the press, by our power, can actually undermine leadership.

You remember, for example, the image of the dead U.S. soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in October 1993. That picture, which we played over and over and over and over again, forced a new president, one not experienced in foreign policy, to pull out of Somalia. The legacy of the photograph has affected U.S. foreign policy ever since. Because of that enduring image, this country didn't intervene sooner in Bosnia, despite the genocide we had broadcast. It's the reason there was no intervention at all in Rwanda when half a million people were killed in three months. It's the reason the war criminals are not being apprehended in Bosnia.

Leaders are afraid of those pictures because they reinforce the fact that taking action can produce casualties—and frankly, I think we do a disservice by obsessively rebroadcasting them.

So are we in danger of killing off our profession? I recently came across the following quotation from Martha Gelhorn, who was married to Ernest Hemingway (although she hated that being the first point of introduction) and a great, great war correspondent:

"All my reporting life I have thrown small pebbles into a very large pond, and have no way of knowing whether any pebble caused the slightest ripple. I don't need to worry about that," she said. "My responsibility was the effort. I belong to a global fellowship, men and women, concerned with the welfare of the planet, and its least protected inhabitants. I plan to spend the rest of my years applauding that fellowship and cheering from the sidelines. Good for you....Never give up."

I still have many years left in me, if I still have a job, but that's what I'll tell my son when he's old enough to torture me with painful questions. I'll tell him I am a believer and that's why I still do it. I believe that good journalism, good television, can make our world a better place.

And I really believe good journalism is good business. ■

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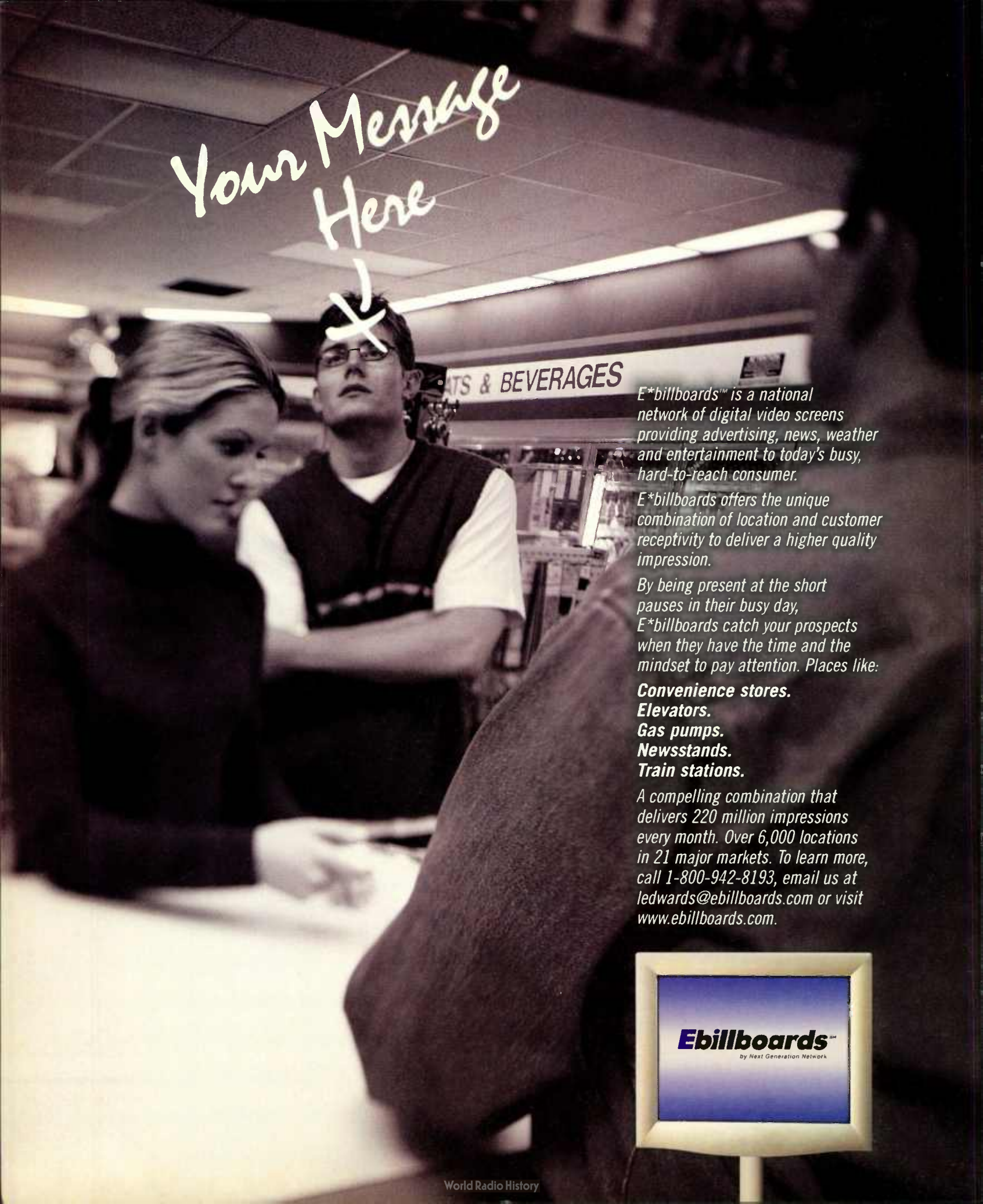

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profiles encouraged

The genre of the movie-star profile has hit an all-time low: The same clichés and mundane details appear in the tabloids and highbrow publications alike. BY KATIE ROIPHE

In May, a freelance writer named Tom Kummer was caught fabricating movie-star profiles for one of Germany's most respected newspapers, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. He wrote graceful articles about stars he had never met. He had been doing it for years. *The Times* of London reported that his interviews were so good that *Marie Claire* interviewed him about "the secret of his success," which he ironically said was demanding at least 45 minutes with his subjects. What eventually betrayed him was his inability to be banal, his desire to put ideas into people's mouths that they would never actually utter. In other words, his fatal mistake was to make the celebrity profile interesting. *The Times* of London also reported that he had Sharon Stone saying she is trying "to irritate men from wholly different classes of society," and Courtney Love saying she felt: "Empty, depressed, rather dumb." The fact that he was able to carry on for so long tells us less about Kummer than it does about the genre itself. The style of celebrity profiles has become so rigid, so absolutely predictable, that the substance, the poor ephemeral star herself, is wholly superfluous. That was the piece of information Tom Kummer passed along, the valuable contribution he made to the journalistic community, the point he dramatized as no one had before: *All movie-star profiles are the same.*

Our celebrity culture has become so greedy and wild that it overwhelms and consumes the writer's individual voice. It feels, sometimes, like the writer gives up, thinks of the rent bill, and types on a kind of automatic pilot, giving the magazine or the reader or the movie publicists what they want—and nothing more. Our appetite for the same photograph of a movie star in a spaghetti-strap dress is insatiable, and so, it seems, is our appetite for the same article. But why do we continue to read it over and over, why are we interested in it when we could generate it from thin air just as easily as Tom Kummer? It may be because the celebrity profile is not about information, it is not about journalism, it is not about words; it is a ritual.

THE CELEBRITY PROFILE IS NOT ABOUT INFORMATION; IT IS A RITUAL

No matter who the celebrity is, the pieces follow the same narrative arc. There is the moment when the movie star reveals himself to be just like us. (In *Vanity Fair*, "Pitt, then, turns out to be that most surprising of celebrities—a modest man" and "Paltrow jumps up to clear the table, and has to be told almost sternly not to do the dishes.") There is the moment when the movie star is not mortal after all. (In *Entertainment Weekly*, Julia Roberts has "a long, unbound mass of chocolate-brown curls—just the kind of Julia Roberts waterfall tangle of tresses that makes America think of bumper crops and Wall Street rallies and $100 million at the box office.") There is the fact that the movie star was funny-looking and gawky as a child ("'I had braces, and I was skinny,'" says Gwyneth Paltrow in *People*. Winona Ryder told *Life* she was taken "'for an effeminate boy'"). There is the J.D. Salinger book the movie star is reading (*Entertainment Weekly* reports that Julia Roberts "has a book of J.D. Salinger stories...on the coffee table," and Winona Ryder tells *In Style*, "'I have every edition, every paperback, every translation of *The Catcher in the Rye*'"). And then there is the moment when the author of the piece wryly acknowledges the artificiality of the situation. ("I have firm instructions from your people to make you comfortable," a *Harper's Bazaar* writer says to Brad Pitt, "so perhaps you should choose where you'd like to sit.") There is the disbelief on the part of both the celebrity and the author about how rich and famous and successful the movie star has become. In the end, it's not hard to see why Tom Cruise might not be essential to a Tom Cruise profile. With the pieces themselves as strictly styled as a geisha's makeup, the face behind them ceases to matter.

Start with the way the movie star looks. How should the aspiring plagiarist describe her? What should she be wearing? In *Esquire*, Winona Ryder was "in jeans, cowboy boots and a clingy Agnes B.-type jersey," in *Life* she was "in jeans and a long-sleeved undershirt," and in *In Style* she was "makeup-free, hair swept up in a headband." In *Harper's Bazaar*, Gwyneth Paltrow "is wearing jeans, a blue cotton-fleece sweatshirt....Her hair is held back by a wide black headband," and in *Vanity Fair*, she wears "her long blond hair pulled back in a simple ponytail and no trace of makeup." Julia Roberts wears "Levi's, a snug blue top....Her hair is pulled back" in *Vanity Fair* and "Levi's, a white shirt, boots, and no makeup" in *In Style*. In *Vanity Fair*, Renée Zellweger wears "jeans, a T-shirt, sneakers, and no makeup." A stripped-down wardrobe is offered as proof of the stars' unpretentiousness, their surprising accessibility.

If glossy magazines are to be believed, movie stars also have a limited number of character traits, one of which is vulnerability. Somebody in nearly every profile comments on that surprising aspect of the fabulous person's psyche, and if somebody else doesn't, the writer will. The mother of Jack Nicholson's child, for instance, is quoted in *Cosmopolitan* as saying, "'He's very strong yet very vulnerable.'" Julia Roberts is described in *Vanity Fair* as being "boldly vulnerable," and in *Cosmopolitan*, "her vulnerability brought Marilyn Monroe to mind," whereas in *Good Housekeeping*, "that same vulnerability that made her a star almost destroyed her."

In *Rolling Stone*, she "show[s] some vulnerability." In *Vanity Fair*, Meg Ryan has a "compelling vulnerability," and Rupert Everett says of Madonna, "'she has a lot of vulnerability'"; in *The New Yorker*, Regis Philbin is described by a fan as "'totally vulnerable.'" And why not? Vulnerability is the natural counterpoint to the sublime perfection that the profiler has gone out of his way to chronicle. It is a vague way of satisfying the need for the movie star to be "human" without detracting from her glamour with undue specificity.

And then there is the physical illustration of vulnerability: The mere presence of a magazine writer makes actresses turn every shade of red. In *Vanity Fair*, Renée Zellweger is "pink," and Meg Ryan's "face flushes." In *Harper's Bazaar*, Gwyneth Paltrow's "cheeks flush," in a *Vanity Fair* article, she "concedes with a blush," and in a *Vogue* article, "Paltrow turns crimson." *Esquire* reports a story in which Winona Ryder "turns scarlet." In *Newsweek*, the mention of her boyfriend's name causes Julia Roberts to blush and in *In Style* "reduced her to almost girlish blushes." Even Madonna blushes in *Vanity Fair*.

Not only do they blush; they glow. *Redbook* gushes, "It's really true: When you see Julia Roberts in person, she just...glows." *Vanity Fair* refers to her as "a lovely young woman glowing amid the flashbulbs," and *People* says, "[F]ans can't get enough of her glowing face." In *Newsweek*, the writer doesn't think Gwyneth Paltrow needs to lighten her hair because "[s]he's glowing already," and *Vogue* rhapsodizes about her "big, glowing smile." Other hackneyed phrases pop up regularly: In *Good Housekeeping* Julia Roberts is "like the proverbial deer caught in headlights," and in *Vanity Fair*, Meg Ryan "looked like a deer in headlights." There is no need in movie-star profiles to dispense with clichés because clichés—red carpet, flashbulbs, incandescence—are what stardom consists of: The role of the movie-star profile is to reinforce and sell that stardom, not to examine or undermine it. Which is also why almost all movie-star profiles from *People* to *The New Yorker* are peppered with superlatives—they add to the breathiness of the piece, the tone of worshipful trashy love and sheer commerce. *Cosmopolitan* calls Julia Roberts "the most desirable and successful actress in the world." *Redbook* calls her "the biggest female star on the planet." And *People* declares that "Roberts is, quite simply, the most appealing actress of her time." In *Vogue*, Gwyneth Paltrow is "The Luckiest Girl Alive," and in *Time* she is "the most beguiling actress of her young generation." In *The New Yorker*, Tom Hanks is "the most disarming and successful of American movie stars." In *People*, Brad Pitt is "Hollywood's hottest hunk," and Tom Cruise is "The Sexiest Man Alive." It is rare that one reads about a moderately successful actress, or the second sexiest man in Hollywood.

Every actress over the age of 20 is also depicted as girlish, childlike, or adolescent. Take the description of Julia Roberts in *Vanity Fair* ("[b]y turns childlike and sophisticated"), or Renée Zellweger (who has "little-girl moxie") in *Vanity Fair*, or Meg Ryan ("whose adult allure is redolent of adolescence") in *Vanity Fair*, or Sharon Stone (whose "childlike sexual greediness was perhaps the most eerily enticing quality about her [*Basic*] *Instinct* work") also in *Vanity Fair*. In *In Style*, the 28-year-old Winona Ryder is like a "defiant teen," and in *Life* she "sits like a kid." Fiftysomething Goldie Hawn, *In Style* informs us, looks as "youthful as a teenager," and a look of "childlike glee overtakes" Julia Roberts. *Cosmopolitan* compares Madonna to a "restless child," while *Vanity Fair* describes "the little girl...behind the woman." Male actors are invariably described as boyish. "Part of Hanks's appeal," *The New Yorker* explained, "is his boyishness." *GQ* talks about how Tom Cruise "projects a sexuality that is boyish." Even 61-year-old Warren Beatty appears "tousled and boyish" in *The New York Times Magazine*.

It often seems that the writers of magazine profiles have spent one too many Saturday nights watching *Breakfast at Tiffany's* on late-night cable, because nearly every movie star is compared to Audrey Hepburn or Holly Golightly, as Charlize Theron is in *Vanity Fair* and Julia Ormond is in *The New York Times Magazine*. In *Newsweek*, Gwyneth Paltrow's neck "brings Audrey Hepburn to mind," and other qualities of hers provoke the same comparison in *Vogue* and *In Style*. Julia Roberts is compared to Audrey Hepburn in both *In Style* and *Vanity Fair* (in 1993 and again in 1999), and *Redbook* reports that " 'she is the only actress now who can lay claim to Audrey Hepburn's mantle.' "

It is increasingly common for a magazine profile to include a pious denunciation or mockery of the tabloids, where, the highbrow writer points out, every little thing the celebrity does is being followed, every detail of what she eats and whom she dates is being observed—what an outrage to human dignity and privacy! And yet one wonders how the *Vanity Fair* or *Vogue* or *Entertainment Weekly* article is so wildly different. Indeed, it is often the same gossip, the same mundane details wrapped up and delivered in a different tone. But highbrow writers, and even not-so-highbrow writers, continue to be outraged by the tabloids, as if a slightly more literary turn of phrase changes the fundamental moral tenor and cultural worthiness of the venture. The anti-tabloid moment serves a definite function: It justifies the profile as more than just gossip. One writer in *Vanity Fair* makes fun of an item from the *New York Post* about Julia Roberts eating brunch with Benjamin Bratt at Caffe Lure on Sullivan Street, and then proceeds to report in all seriousness that she shops for soy milk at Korean delis. The qualitative difference between these two observations is unclear. It may be a certain

Gwyneth Paltrow, Julia Roberts, and Brad Pitt: The clichés are what we crave and come to expect. Illustration by Martin Mayo

amount of self-contempt projected onto the "tabloids" for their invasive curiosity, or it may be that the highbrow writer really believes that his pursuit is more legitimate simply because it is juxtaposed with such psychological insights as "she's no shrinking violet," and printed on higher-quality paper.

There are certain stylistic guidelines that immediately present themselves to the aspiring plagiarist. One of the transparent rhetorical tricks employed by movie-star profilers across the country is a hip, *Bright Lights, Big City* second-person voice. A *Newsweek* profile of Julia Roberts states, "On the way to her house, [Julia] Roberts drags you into a lingerie shop and tries to persuade you to buy a nightgown for your wife." And in *Entertainment Weekly*, "As you walk in the door, Roberts tells you she's in her panic state." In *Rolling Stone*, "[y]ou opt to look out the trailer door and take in the view of the mountains. After a bit, Pitt joins you in contemplation." And again in *Rolling Stone*, "[w]hat really throws you is what happens when Cruise puts the pedal to the metal." This is a cheap way of drawing the reader into the encounter: offering the illusion that it is you who is admiring the view with the luminous cluster of glamour that is Brad Pitt. So much of the movie-star profile is premised on the perception of the reader's desperate desire to "meet" the movie star that it is no surprise that the fantasy should be so literally reflected in the style. The writer does not feel called upon to make the scene so vivid that we feel as if we are there; instead, he lazily types out three words: *You are there.*

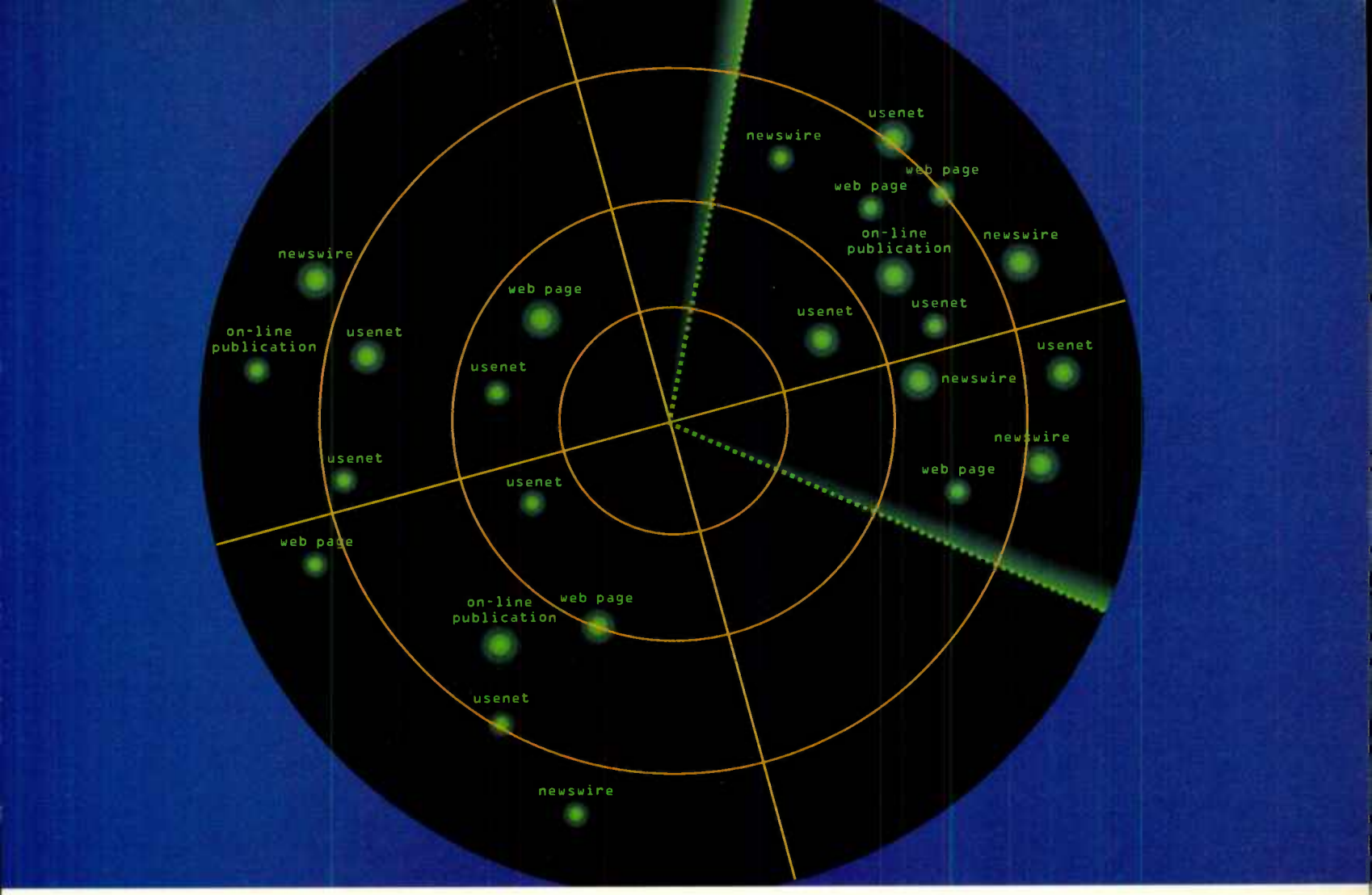
THE ROLE OF THE PROFILE IS TO SELL STARDOM, NOT UNDERMINE IT

One of the most important moments in the movie-star profile is the moment of intimacy. That is, the moment when the writer proves that he has really contacted his celestial subject and has forged a genuine connection, distinguishing himself from the sycophantish hordes and servers-up of celebrity fluff. In *The New York Times Magazine*, the profiler writes, "Minutes after the plane lands, Ormond and I are slumped in the backseat of a limousine. We're tired. We're angry. We are about to have our first fight." Or it can be something smaller, along the lines of this Julia Roberts profile in *Newsweek*: "Later she takes your arm. And crosses Union Square." Or this one in *Vogue*, "One last hug. Paltrow, after two hours of this fashion madness, smells very eau de fresh." Or it can be a flirtatious voice-mail message, like the one Regis Philbin leaves a *New Yorker* writer: "(The next day, I received a message on my voice mail: 'Spend a whole day with you. Sing my guts out onstage for you. Do everything I can for you, and not even a goodbye.')" The writer reports the flirtation, the few seconds of intimacy, the subtext of which is that he or she has really made an impression on the star, has penetrated the defenses. In *The New York Times Magazine*, the writer says that Warren Beatty "studied the artifacts of my life as if they were long-lost Mayan ruins." Julia Roberts says to a *Vanity Fair* writer, "'You've got a pretty good pair of lips there yourself.'" These flirtations are never offered as evidence of the star's manipulative powers but rather suggest the ability of this particularly charming and attractive writer to get beyond the routine and glitter and impress the real person.

In a *Vanity Fair* profile of Renée Zellweger, "the look on her face is one that a grown woman gets that lets a man know that the night is now over." Often, the sexual overtone, the very datiness of the interview, is played up by the writer. It is fawning fandom taken to its logical extreme. There is a flirtation between the interviewer and the interviewee, a play of power, an adoration mingled with hostility that resembles nothing more than a 15-year-old's courtship. Here is *Vanity Fair*'s Kevin Sessums, the consummate highbrow profile writer and intellectual provocateur, with Julia Roberts: "'[Y]ou're famous because you're a good actress. You're *infamous* for the actors that you've f--ked,' I challenged, trying to shock a response from her. Roberts flashed her eyes at me the way she can flash them on-screen when someone has gotten her attention. Seduction lay in her unshockable stare; she cocked her head and waited." One can hear what he is saying to the reader: I have gotten Julia Roberts's attention! Seduction lay in her stare! But comments like this are often laced with a sadism—a certain resentment, perhaps, of having to sit there with an important person and record every minor dietary habit you are lucky enough to observe—that makes its way into the prose. Take the moment Sessums says to Meg Ryan, "'Cocaine may harden one's heart, but it makes one, well, less hard in other places,' I venture. 'If you were intimate with him—and I assume you were—how could you not know he was snorting coke?'"

Because fawning laced with irony somehow seems cooler and more palatable, the paradox of writers like Kevin Sessums—who has written more than 30 celebrity profiles for *Vanity Fair* alone—emerges. The tone is knowing and flirtatious and world-weary. But what is strange is how the world-weariness meshes with naïve fascination. It is, in a way, a perfect reflection of the culture, a faux intellectual distance masquerading as the real thing, irony that is really adoration in a new form. The complexities of the tone make celebrity worship less demeaning, giving it a kind of chic allure it would not otherwise have. These complexities allow the intelligent, critical reader to interest herself in the exact beige of the movie-star's furniture, to read about the blush and glow without shame. There is often a stunned incredulity, tinged with sexual attraction, that seems to render the writer comparatively speechless, so that the profile is dotted with banal statements of wonder that seem out of place in otherwise competent writing, as when a *Vanity Fair* reporter quotes Madonna as saying "'I wanted to be *somebody*,'" and then adds, "And boy is she." That "boy is she" would not have made it into a piece about Alan Greenspan or Madeleine Albright or Al Gore; its wide-eyed wonderment would not have a place in any form of journalism other than that of the celebrity profile. It's as if the presence of Madonna had dazzled and almost drugged the writer (and the reader) into a haze of inarticulateness, a baby patter of awe.

But why are we willing to put up with it, to wade through the stock phrases, to pick up the same article on the newsstand again and again? Because, in the end, we are not interested in Winona Ryder; we are interested in fame: its pure, bright, disembodied effervescence. And what these articles do is strip down the particulars to give us the excitement itself. They provide us with the affect of excitement, the sound and feel of it. It is a primitive thing, this form of admiration, one that paints in fuzzy lines and speaks in hackneyed terms. True mystery doesn't interest us; the statement "she had an aura of mystery" does. The clichés are what we crave and come to expect. What makes glamour, like lights on a marquee, is the repetition, the familiar sounds of adoration, the same babble of fawning irony, the same vulnerable perfect creature we don't really want to read about. ◘



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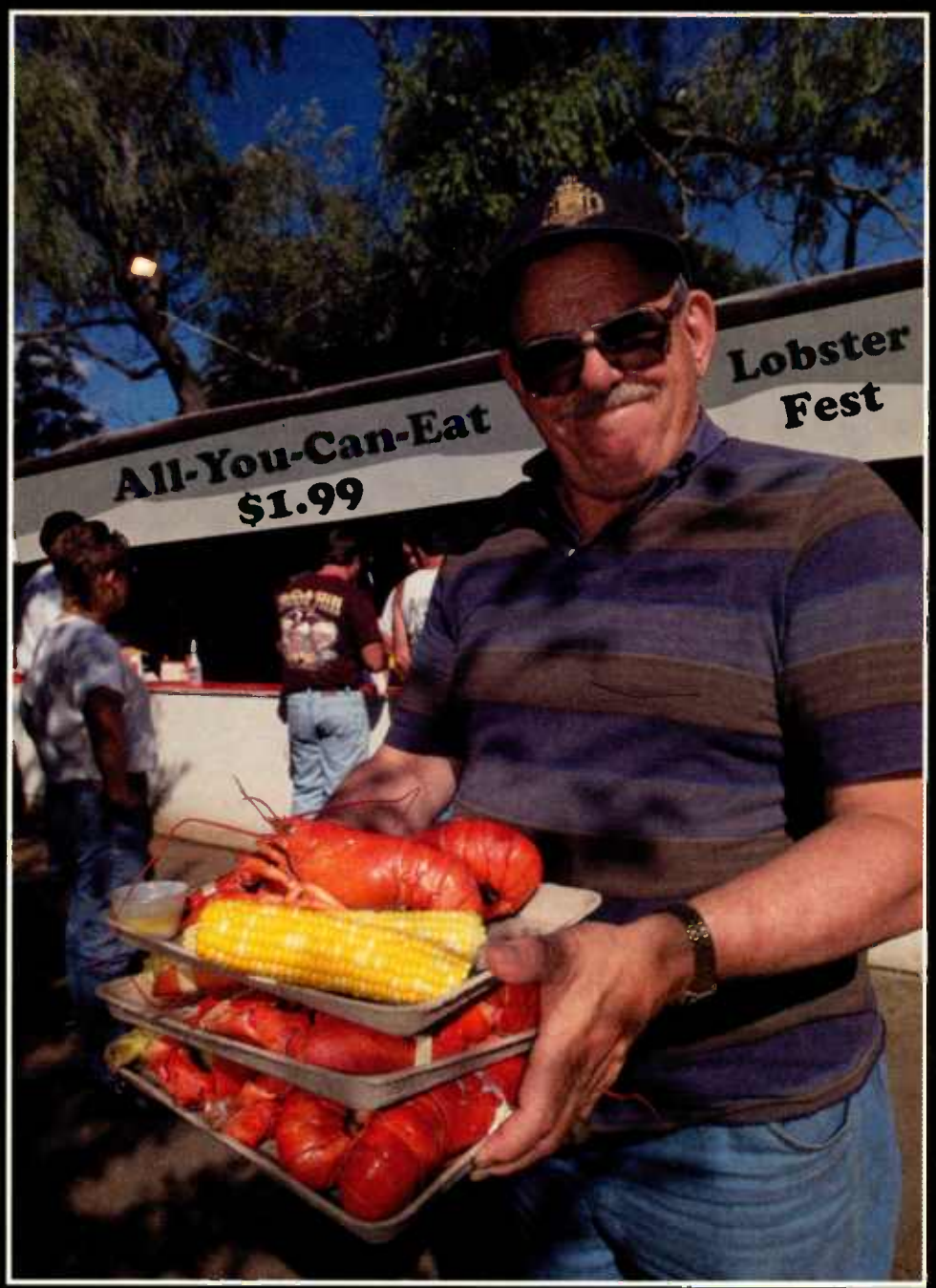

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STUFF WE LIKE

A Dutch 250-guilder note shown in *The Art of Money;* the modernist design dates from 1985.

THE ART OF MONEY

BOOK OF DESIGN

In 1964, well before Internet IPOs, the Gulfstream V, and CNBC, Paul McCartney and John Lennon naively sang that they didn't care too much for money. Money, after all, couldn't buy them love. That notion is today as quaint as owning stock in a respectable blue chip with steady profits. So finally, the perfect coffee-table book for the era arrives: *The Art of Money* (Chronicle Books, December). David Standish, formerly an editor at *Playboy* and now a freelance writer, has composed a history of currency, examining what the imagery and design used on more than 80 countries' bills say about those countries and their self-images. The book is a lavishly illustrated delight, overflowing with beautiful reproductions of money. Some are unintentionally funny, like the Belgian 1,000-franc note with its picture of a napping farmer; others, such as the antecedents of our familiar U.S. greenbacks, are more sober. The financial facsimiles are colorful and clear and look almost real, but, alas, not real enough to buy lunch—or love.

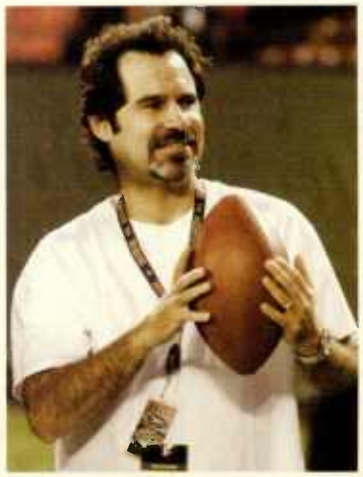
JESSE OXFELD

'THE ANNOTATED DENNIS MILLER'

ONLINE INTERPRETATION

It takes encyclopedic knowledge and a long night to sort out all of the historical and cultural references comedian Dennis Miller makes as a commentator on ABC's *Monday Night Football*. Locke Peterseim, an arts and entertainment editor for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* website (Britannica.com) and the author of the site's "The Annotated Dennis Miller" feature, can attest to that. Peterseim wakes before dawn every Tuesday to write a quarter-by-quarter breakdown of Miller's scattershot comments—explaining what the comedian meant, for example, when he compared Terrell Davis's taped left ankle to the work of the artist Christo. The annotation begins: "Christo Javacheff is a sculptor famous for wrapping up big things like buildings and islands in cloth or plastic." A fan so in tune with Miller's range that he recognizes Miguelito Loveless, the villain on TV's *Wild Wild West*, as a frequent reference, Peterseim provides a clear explanation of nearly every comment Miller makes while calling the game, along with descriptions of the plays that inspired them. His annotations are packed with helpful links, mostly to Britannica's own online articles, and Peterseim also ventures his own jokes (not quite as amusing as Miller's) in his breezy write-ups. Peterseim says times have changed since he was hired by the company three years ago and was told "This is Britannica. We're not cute." Peterseim's humorous approach "sort of crept in there," he says, the result of trying, like Miller, to connect football with the likes of photographer Mathew Brady and Dante's *Inferno*.

STEPHEN TOTILO



Dennis Miller's varied cultural references on *Monday Night Football* are explained at Britannica.com.

MILLER: IDA MAE ASTUTE/ABC

STUFF WE LIKE

GLOBAL BUSINESS

BBC RADIO PROGRAM

Peter Day's *Global Business*, a weekly half-hour radio program from the BBC World Service, addresses technological innovations and business practices that are, in Day's words, "shifting the way people work and the way they live in the world." Recent topics have included Islamic banking, the business of the Olympics, and the problems of "hollow dot.coms"—Internet companies lacking viable business plans. Not content simply to invite guests into his studio, Day takes his microphone around the world: In the course of a program in his "Future Perfect" series, Day visits a Tokyo "house of the future" and explains its "health-conscious lavatory," and later interviews a trade minister in Singapore about the demise of "Big Democracy." Day crafts his reports into a dialogue of sorts, piecing together disparate ideas and points of view. Day provides background and context, and perhaps most important, he tells a story: "I think storytelling is still the main game we're in," he says, "and it's a modest thing, but if you can tell a story properly you're probably adding a little bit of comment and illumination at the same time."

EMILY CHENOWETH

Global Business airs on select public radio stations nationwide. See bbc.co.uk/worldservice for more information.

Peter Day reports on business and technology for BBC radio.

CBS NEWS SUNDAY MORNING

LEISURELY TELEVISION

On television, quiet is uncommon. News anchors seldom stop talking, and when they do, it's often to give speaking time to a pundit. What's more, much of what airs—sports highlights, foreign wars, and sitcoms—is set to a soundtrack. Amid the cacophony, *CBS News Sunday Morning*, and especially its signature finale, is an island of calm.

Most segments of the newsmagazine are leisurely and polite. No one pans a movie in as gentlemanly a tone as *Sunday Morning* critic John Leonard. Few poke as much fun with as little sarcasm as correspondent Bill Geist. But it is the blissful end of each show that makes for TV's most civil moment. For a few minutes the cameras switch to some remote swamp, forest, or mountaintop. There's no score, no voice-over—just quiet, enough that you can often hear the wind.

A 'benediction'

Charles Osgood, who took over as the show's host for Charles Kuralt six years ago, says *Sunday Morning* moves at a liturgical pace. Viewers have suggested that a poem be read or music be played over the closing segment, but Osgood thinks the quiet works best. "I think of it as a benediction to our Sunday morning services," he says. "We go out and look at creation." STEPHEN TOTILO

DWELL

INTERIOR-DECOR MAGAZINE

The last thing the world needs is another shelter magazine. Between the haughty elegance of *Architectural*

STUFF WE LIKE ABOUT FOOD

ROADSIDE

MAGAZINE ABOUT DINERS, ETC.

Sometimes a fast-food franchise won't suffice: You have to have the ultimate peach pie or a plate of perfect home fries. So where might you find this elusive source of comfort food? Let *Roadside*, a magazine devoted to greasy spoons and other staples of Americana, be your map.

Roadside satisfies an appetite for pleather banquettes and neon signs; its mission is to fight the "homogenization" of American culture by drawing attention to the homemade, the kitschy, and the quirky. A recent issue chronicles the struggles of a Columbia, Missouri, diner fending off a national drugstore chain vying for its location. Another tells the story of how a 70-foot water tower in the shape of a ketchup bottle (the largest ketchup bottle in the world, in case you were wondering) was spared by the citizens of Collinsville, Illinois. It became the small town's chief tourist attraction, and helped revitalize the local economy.

Roadside recently got a new publisher, and founding editor Randy Garbin plans to expand and redesign the magazine starting with the January issue. "I look forward to offering employees a salary," he says. "I used to have to pay them in pie."

LARA KATE COHEN

Subscription information is available online at roadsidemagazine.com.

A diner in Gardner, Massachusetts, from the January issue of *Roadside* magazine

DAY PHOTOGRAPHED BY STEPHEN CHILCOTT; DINER: RANDOLF GARBIN/*ROADSIDE* MAGAZINE

THE ART OF EATING

EPICUREAN QUARTERLY

Legend says that the Velvet Underground's first album sold just nine copies; the trick was, they were sold to the right nine people. Edward Behr's little-known food quarterly, *The Art of Eating*, is perhaps just as disproportionately influential. Written and published by Behr since 1986, the publication has just 3,400 subscribers, but they include Julia Child and Alice Waters.

A carpenter before he turned to food, Behr produces *The Art of Eating* out of the Vermont home he designed himself. There the epicurean writes and designs the beautifully illustrated 32-page publication (it was referred to as a newsletter until Child wrote him that the term seemed "an inadequate name for this profound and interesting document"). Behr devotes each issue to one main subject and travels to the source—from pig farms in Iowa to the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna, where red cows are used to make the best Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese. "The best food and wine have a sense of place," he says, and Behr weaves together history, travelogue, illustrations, and a recipe or two to create a publication that tells you as much about the world we live in as the food that we eat. ELLEN UMANSKY

Subscription information is available online at artofeating.com.

A spread from the 'Dressed to Kill' chapter of Tibor and Maira Kalman's *(un)Fashion*

Digest and the *über*hipness of *Wallpaper*, the spectrum is pretty well covered. But *Dwell* might still find a place in your heart—and on your Herman Miller coffee table. The bimonthly startup, based in San Francisco, put out its first issue in October and promises an approachable, relaxed take on modern architecture and interior design. "Come in and see why we're the nice modernists," says its website. Being from California might have something to do with it: *Dwell* is more Venice Beach messy-hip than Reykjavík cool. The magazine's prose is marked by a sweet if slightly goofy enthusiasm for design, instead of the studied weariness of most critics hooked on midcentury modern. The layouts don't show perfect, spotless houses but real, bustling homes. And *Dwell* doesn't assume you know it all already—one article explains how to read a floor plan. Best of all, *Dwell*'s editors don't take themselves too seriously. A feature on vacuum cleaners spotlights the Hello Kitty model because the author of the piece thinks Kitty is a minimalist icon: "She isn't a cat, but rather the idea of a cat." Makes you look at your third-grade lunch box in a whole new way.

ELIZABETH ANGELL

Subscriptions available at dwellmag.com.

(UN)FASHION

GLOBAL DRESS CODES: A BOOK

The very fashionable graphic designer Tibor Kalman, who ran M&Co and *Colors* magazine, passed away last year. His wife and frequent collaborator, Maira, has just completed their last work, *(un)Fashion* (Harry N. Abrams), a book of photographs from around the world. The 6- by 9-inch volume presents a straightforward look at how people dress themselves for occasions ranging from shopping to warfare.

With a no-frills approach, the Kalmans organized *(un)Fashion* into sections—"Accessories," "Optics," "Facemasks," "(un)Mentionables," "Headgear," "Footwear," "Work," "Play," "Holywear," and "Death"—that show functional daily wear mixed with local style in countries such as Mongolia, Ukraine, Brazil, and Sri Lanka. The chapter "Dressed to Kill" pieces together snapshots of Sandinista rebel garb, a Liberian guerrilla wearing a woman's orange pocketbook, and a heavily armed 105-year-old Armenian woman with a sash of ammunition; "Extreme Conditions" presents such wardrobe choices as an Inuit hunter's polar bear cloak in Greenland and the getups of firefighting monks in Poland, presumably chosen on the basis of religious tradition and, we hope, nonflammability. During his career, Tibor worked with such clients as the Talking Heads, the 42nd St. Development Project, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. The Kalmans' final project has a real-world grounding that exemplifies their commitment to design simplicity and worldbeat diversity.

ALLISON BENEDIKT

Grant Wood's 1939 painting *Parson Weems' Fable*, which illustrates an article at Common-place.org

COMMON-PLACE.ORG

EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY ONLINE

Historical writing is often so scholarly that it isn't accessible to a large audience or so simplified that it's little more than a timeline. *Common-place* (Common-place.org), a free online magazine launched in September about pre-20th-century American history, occupies that middle ground.

"There's a gap between what academic historians write and what the public reads," says editor Jill Lepore, an assistant professor at Boston University. "We thought we would experiment." The current issue looks at colonial gun ownership, examines period dress as represented on television and in film, and offers book reviews.

"I'm really struck by the diversity of readers who are responding to us," says Jane Kamensky, who coedits the journal and is an associate professor at Brandeis University. The site draws everyone from "amateur history buffs" to "gun enthusiasts," she says. "There really is a popular readership for this kind of serious history writing."

JOSEPH GOMES

TOP: PETER BERSON; BOTTOM: GRANT WOOD, *PARSON WEEMS' FABLE*, OIL ON CANVAS, 1939, 1970.43, AMON CARTER MUSEUM, FORT WORTH, TEXAS

STUFF WE LIKE

SHOOTING WAR

FILMING WWII: DOCUMENTARY

Some of the men who served as combat cameramen in the United States armed forces during World War II, such as John Huston and Russ Meyer, went on to storied careers in Hollywood. Most, however, have remained anonymous. We meet them in *Shooting War*, a documentary by *Time* magazine film critic Richard Schickel. Tom Hanks, in his post–*Saving Private Ryan* role of WWII veterans advocate, is the narrator.

The nearly 1,500 men who filmed the war—much of it seen here in color—struggled with the difficult assignment. In one sequence, shot from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* in the turbulent Pacific, the shadow of an enemy plane slides across the flight deck just before a bomb explodes and kills the cameraman. At Normandy, many of the cameramen survive the beach landing only to watch all but one reel of their historic footage tumble from an officer's duffel bag into the sea.

A still from *Shooting War*, a documentary about combat cameramen

The documentary also examines how cameramen staged some of their most dramatic shots. Huston had American soldiers pose as dead Germans to supplement his footage of the battle to free San Pietro, Italy, in 1944. That same year, in Bourg, France, the Army's Fred Bornet decided that the cheering crowds were not displaying sufficient euphoria for his film of the town's liberation. He asked a woman to run through the marching soldiers and kiss them. But most of the footage needed no enhancements—a Japanese woman tossing her baby, then herself, off a cliff rather than surrender; or a camera mounted on a dive-bombing P-39. The documentary gives movement to scenes often only read about in books or glimpsed in still black and white. STEPHEN TOTILO

Shooting War *airs in December on ABC.*

THE BOOKLOVER'S REPAIR KIT

TOOL SET

E-publishing may or may not be the way of the future, but books made of paper will be with us for a long time—particularly if they're well maintained. To help with the maintenance, Estelle Ellis has put together *The Booklover's Repair Kit* (Knopf, $125). It consists of a manual by Ellis and her team of book-repair experts, and a large collection of erasers, brushes, tools, tapes, and acid-free papers. For careful handling of especially fragile volumes, the kit also includes a pair of white cotton gloves—a nice touch. The manual is a snappy primer on the mechanics of book construction (do you know what a "headband," "board paper," and a "cloth turn-in" are?), and the margins are laced with quotations about books and reading. The kit is the bibliophile's version of the childhood tool set—a box full of possibility—with a Victorian twist. It comes in a beautiful book-shaped case and will fit in well on a shelf of beloved—and now repaired—classics. ELIZABETH ANGELL

Do-it-yourself book repair: supplies with comprehensive instruction manual

STUFF YOU LIKE

TOM JENKINS, OF ENGLEWOOD, COLORADO, SENT US THE FOLLOWING:

Betsy and Ed Marston, editor and publisher of *High Country News*

***High Country News*, a gutsy 16- to 20-page newspaper based in the small western-Colorado town of Paonia, reports on environmental news and controversies in the West for subscribers in 41 countries and all 50 states.**

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***High Country News* is published by the not-for-profit High Country Foundation. Subscription information is available online at hcn.org.**

Tom Jenkins is a freelance writer and has contributed to High Country News.

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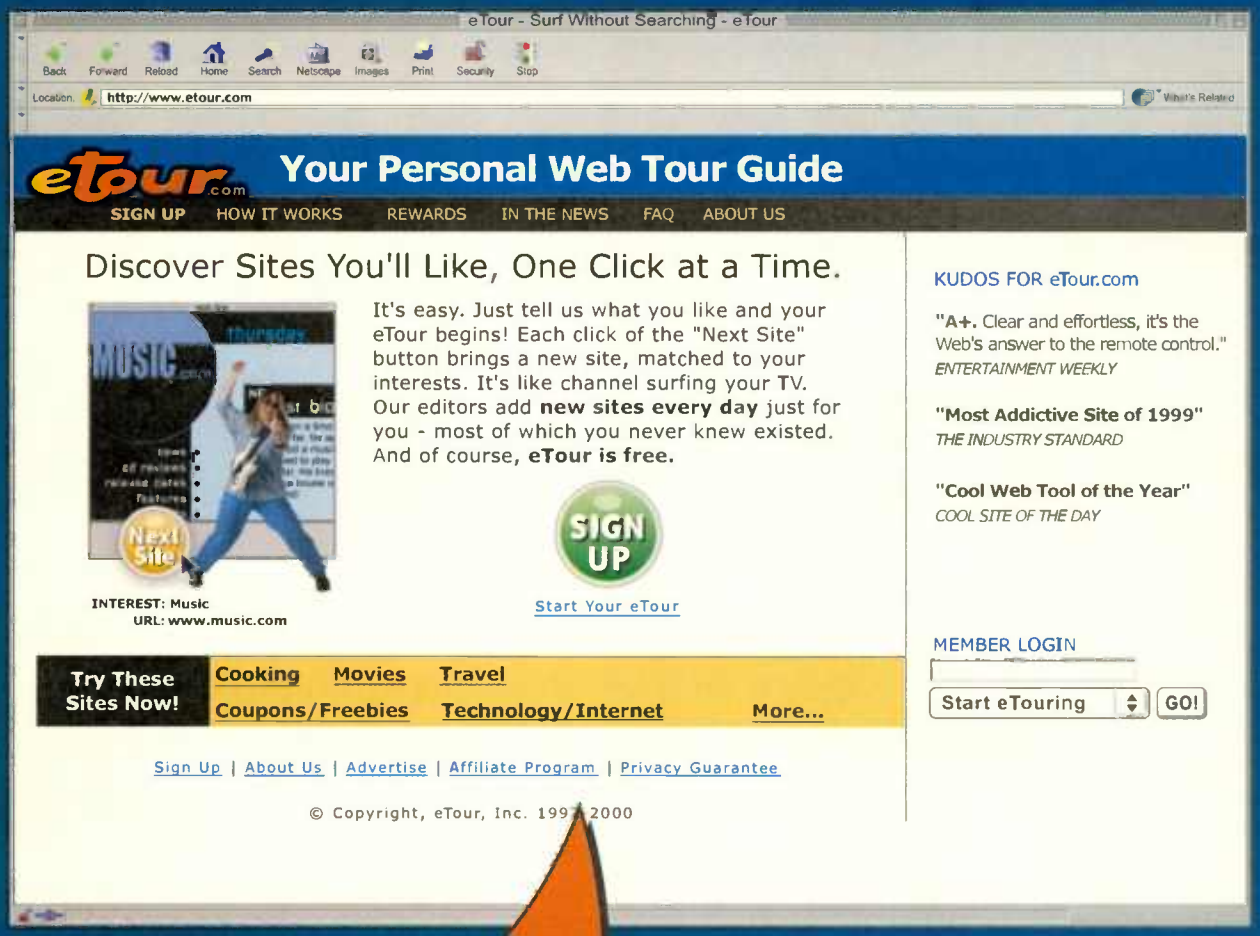

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london fogged

With all those newspapers to wade through every day, it's no surprise that the English lost their Empire. BY CALVIN TRILLIN

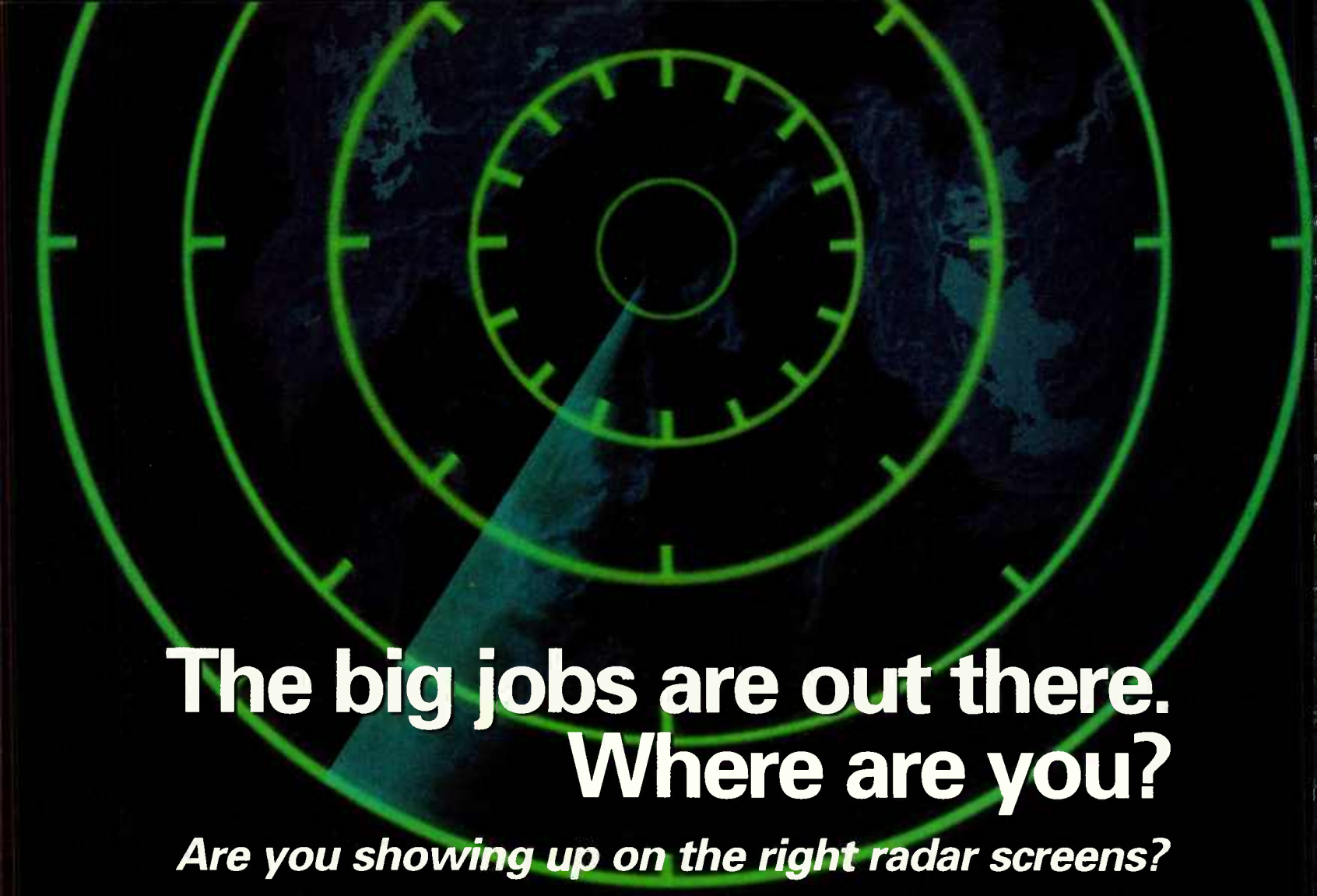
I wonder how people in London get all those newspapers read every day. Depending on how you count, there are at least eight or nine dailies, and roughly that number of papers on Sunday. Saturday papers contain the sort of magazines and feature sections that Americans associate with Sunday, and then the Sunday papers do it all over again with different magazines and different feature sections. I know that democracy is supposed to thrive if the citizenry is well informed, but where is the line between well informed and simply swamped? Could this be the real reason for the dissolution of the Empire? Could it be that if the English hadn't been so bogged down in newspapers they might still control the Indian subcontinent, or at least Newfoundland?

It may be only a coincidence, but in New York, the cultural and business capital of a country whose sway over the world has been growing, there are now only three dailies, and it's common to hear people complain bitterly about the weekly burden of having to plow through the Sunday *Times*. I once knew someone who had to keep up with the news—he worked for a newsmagazine—but claimed that the thought of having to make it through the *Times* on Sunday brought on a tension that threw his entire weekend out of whack. At one point, he adopted a policy of putting the Sunday *Times* aside to read on the following Tuesday. He said that on Tuesday it seemed more like a diversion than a chore—partly, I assume, because he could consider a lot of the news out of date and guiltlessly dispense with entire sections. Think of the tension that poor man would feel if he woke up every morning in London knowing that he had eight or nine newspapers to read before he could peacefully close his eyes once more.

Of course, he would presumably pick and choose among the eight or nine. When I arrived in New York—at a time, I should note, when nobody was referring to the United States as the world's only superpower—there were seven dailies. A lot of people managed to read one or two in the morning and one or two in the evening. In fact, you could begin to conjure up a picture of somebody by describing him as, say, a *Trib*-in-the-morning-and-*Post*-in-the-evening sort of guy. (Those were the days when the *Post* was sometimes called "knee-jerk liberal" rather than reliably right-wing, the days when I submitted to a parody paper called *The New York Pest* the front-page headline "Cold Snap Hits Our Town; Jews, Negroes Suffer Most.") There were so many newspapers that you could put them to specialized uses. I knew somebody who read the *Daily News* while riding the subway: That is, he both limited himself to the *Daily News* while riding the subway and did not ride the subway without reading the *Daily News*. I knew somebody who, at the end of a stressful workday, liked to go from his office to one of those old-fashioned Irish bars on Third Avenue, get a booth to himself, order a tall beer, and read every word in the *World-Telegram & Sun*.

It is true that the prospect of reading half a dozen English news-

TONY MILLIONAIRE



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papers is less daunting than the prospect of reading half a dozen American newspapers, since English papers are, as a rule, more entertaining and less reliable. It stands to reason that you're going to feel less guilty about skipping a paper or two if you know that what's in them is probably not true anyway. I may be particularly sensitive to this point. When I was just out of college, more than 40 years ago, I spent a week or so on a story with a gaggle of English journalists in Tunisia, and after that I never truly believed a word I read in an English newspaper.

At the time, guerrillas fighting for Algerian independence were using Tunisia as a safe haven, and French generals were threatening to cross the Tunisian border in "hot pursuit." The French troops that were still based in Tunisia from the days before Tunisian independence were allowed to remain on the condition that they not leave their garrisons. I then had a temporary job in the *Time* bureau in Paris—its duties and origins were unclear to all of us—and the bureau chief decided that, as ignorant as I was, I could at least serve to phone the office if I noticed swarms of French soldiers shooting people in the streets of Tunis.

A month before this, I'd read Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* and had thought that it was, although hilarious, a bit broad. After my time in Tunis, I took it for granted that *Scoop* was a roman à clef, somewhat understated. English reporters casually talked about their plans to heat up the conflict a bit the next day, or maybe tone it down; what actually was happening seemed almost irrelevant to them. The most brazenly inventive of the Englishmen—I'll call him Simpson—liked to boast about not leaving the hotel. "Just a bunch of Frogs chasing a bunch of Wogs," he often said, to explain why the situation did not justify undue exertion. "You can't keep these colored people off each other's necks." When I returned from a trip to the desert that had included interviewing a swashbuckling French Foreign Legion colonel who'd caused a great stir by ignoring orders to keep his troops in their garrison, Simpson informed me that during my absence he'd written what he reckoned to be a rather brilliant feature on the colonel. "By the way, what did he look like?" Simpson asked me, out of what seemed like idle curiosity. I told him that the colonel was a big, burly fellow. "Pity," Simpson replied, without sounding in the least distressed. "Said he was gaunt."

IF ALL THE FACTS ARE GOING TO BE THE SAME, WHAT'S THE POINT OF READING SIX DIFFERENT STORIES ABOUT A DOCTOR CUTTING OUT A PACEMAKER WITH A PENKNIFE?

I lived in London for a while many years ago, and I found that one of the advantages of having access to so many newspapers was the opportunity to see the different ways that various reporters of Simpsonian turn of mind would embellish the same story. When I stopped off in London for a few days recently, I tried that with what seemed to be the favorite feature story of the day—a story that appeared in six of the nine papers I bought. It concerned a doctor who was called to pronounce an elderly woman dead—which he did, in the presence of her daughter and a neighbor. He then borrowed a penknife, cut the elderly woman's pacemaker out of her chest, and handed it to the astonished neighbor. (Apparently, pacemakers can explode during cremation, but the removal is customarily done, somewhat more discreetly, at the funeral parlor.) Although *The Express* thought the doctor's home was worth £800,000 and *The Sun* appraised it at only £500,000, the stories were, on the whole, pretty consistent. I was disappointed at this indication that English papers may have grown more reliable in the past 40 years. If all the facts are going to be the same, what's the point of reading six different stories about a doctor cutting out a pacemaker with a penknife? And if a lot of what's in the newspapers is actually true, you really do have to feel guilty about leaving half a dozen of them unread every day. The paper-reading burden for the English may be even greater than I'd thought. Fortunately, there's not much of the Empire left to lose. ■

12 steps back

I had hoped my article in *New York* magazine would energize an old debate in alcoholism treatment. Instead, the head of an important rehab center was unfairly fired. BY MAIA SZALAVITZ

Having spent ten years as a health and science journalist in print and television, I thought I'd be jubilant if a story I wrote won national attention and changed an important institution. Unfortunately, in July, when newspapers and television grabbed a short article I'd written for *New York* magazine on the revamping of one of the nation's most respected alcohol- and drug-rehabilitation centers, it was terribly distorted. In the aftermath, the doctor who ran the clinic lost his job, the reforms he made were reversed, and a complicated debate about the treatment of alcoholism was reduced to a clash of anecdotes that shed little light on the subject.

Here's how my story went wrong.

MID-MAY Ninety percent of American alcoholism treatment programs tell patients that they have a chronic disease and that the abstinence-based, 12-step support program Alcoholics Anonymous is their only hope. Most academic researchers, however, disagree. They have long argued that a strategy that offers options, including moderate drinking and a variety of abstinence-based therapies, combats a wider variety of alcohol problems and therefore benefits a larger segment of the population.

A COMPLICATED DEBATE WAS REDUCED TO A CLASH OF ANECDOTES.

Maia Szalavitz reported the Smithers story.

This decades-old battle between clinicians and researchers took a critical turn recently when the Smithers Addiction Treatment and Research Center, on Manhattan's Upper West Side, expanded its program to include a self-help group, Moderation Management, or MM, in addition to its support of AA. One of the country's most respected rehabs—along with the Betty Ford Center, in Rancho Mirage, California, and the Hazelden Foundation, in Center City, Minnesota—Smithers has treated such celebrities as Darryl Strawberry, Truman Capote, Joan Kennedy, and Dwight Gooden. A former cocaine and heroin user myself, I had chaired a 12-step meeting in Smithers's detoxification program from 1992 to 1998. I knew the innovations at Smithers would make for an explosive story, and an editor at *New York* agreed. Having been assigned a short article, I secured an interview with Dr. Alex DeLuca, the chief since 1991 of Substance Abuse Services at St. Luke's–Roosevelt Hospital Center, which runs Smithers. I also spoke about the changes at Smithers with several counselors, the previous director, and two patients.

Quitting drinking entirely, though a surefire solution, doesn't take into account alcohol's integral role in our culture and often isn't acceptable to people whose alcohol "problem" may be as simple as being young and irresponsible. Even AA suggests attempting controlled drinking if you question whether you're an alcoholic. Smithers, under DeLuca's direction, had begun to change its program in the early nineties, adding therapies that did not demand complete abstinence. The focus of Smithers's program widened to enable patients to decide for themselves what their goal should be and how best to achieve it. Moderate-drinking treatments, however, are heretical to many AA members who work in the field of alcoholism treatment. They believe that if you can't control drinking on your own, you must quit. And although controlled-drinking therapy is widely available in European and Canadian clinics, few in the United States offer it. Consequently, addiction care in which patients, not physicians, control the course of treatment is unique in American medicine. A 12-step program that relegates control of one's behavior to a "Higher Power" and instructs the patient to "pray" for recovery would be considered alternative medicine, to say the least, in the face of any other disease.

JUNE 7 It seemed that interest in controlled drinking was growing and that my piece for *New York* could not have been better timed. As I was reporting the story about Smithers—I had interviewed DeLuca a week or so before—a segment of the ABC newsmagazine *20/20*, hosted by Dr. Nancy Snyderman, explored the subject. The program featured several former heavy drinkers who now drink socially. Illustrating how controversial the issue has become, a guest on the show who worked as an alcoholism counselor predicted that his acknowledgment on the air that he supported controlled-drinking therapy and that he drank socially would cost him his job. Another guest on the show was Dr. Alan Marlatt, a well-respected psychology professor from the University of Washington who studies alcoholism and relapse prevention. Ten years earlier, Marlatt had been one of the authors of a study, "Broadening the Base of Treatment for Alcohol Problems," conducted by the Institute of Medicine, part of the National Academy of Sciences. The study concluded that complete

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abstinence was too narrow a goal for the treatment of alcohol problems. "Rather than me try to shove abstinence goals into everybody who comes in for help with a drinking problem," Marlatt said on the show, "what can we still do to begin to make progress and get the person on board?" Smithers, then, was doing what the National Academy of Sciences had recommended ten years ago.


GOTHAM

Drink Your Medicine

The Smithers rehab center stuns the AA faithful by culling out a few steps.

Campaign-Trail Traffic Report

The July 3 article that caused the firestorm

JUNE 9 *TV Guide* reported that former first lady Betty Ford and John Schwarzlose, president of the Betty Ford Center, sent letters to The Walt Disney Company's chairman and CEO, Michael Eisner, and ABC News president David Westin to express their displeasure with the *20/20* program. Ford called the program "unbalanced" and said that alcoholics would die as a result. Snyderman, who had anchored the report, said, "We did a very balanced piece, and I stand by it." A 1996 study sponsored by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism supports her decision to discuss both approaches seriously. Surveying more than 4,500 people, the study found that up to 20 years after exhibiting symptoms of alcoholism (technically called alcohol dependence), 27.8 percent of the subjects were still drinking excessively, 22.3 percent were abstinent, and as many as 49.9 percent were drinking moderately. Of the last group, not one person met the diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence. Other studies have found that those who make moderation a goal fare no worse than those who choose abstinence. I hoped to make clear in my article that the research strongly supported Smithers's new methods.

JUNE 17 *The Seattle Times* reported that Audrey Kishline—the author of *Moderate Drinking: The Moderation Management Guide for People Who Want to Reduce Their Drinking*, the best-known book on the subject, and the founder of Moderation Management—had crashed her car in March, killing a man and his 12-year-old daughter. The 43-year-old Kishline's blood alcohol level was three times the legal limit, and she was charged with two counts of vehicular homicide. When news of the accident broke, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence jumped on the issue. The de facto voice of Alcoholics Anonymous (which does not make policy pronouncements), NCADD released a statement on June 20 that quoted Kishline's attorney. "Moderation Management is nothing but alcoholics covering up their problem," he said, claiming that this was his client's position. The NCADD release concluded, "This dreadful tragedy might have been avoided if Ms. Kishline had come to this realization earlier."

THE ARTICLE SEEMED DIFFERENT FROM THE VERSION I HAD APPROVED WITH MY EDITOR.

The press release, however, neglected a crucial fact: Two months before the accident, Kishline had decided that she couldn't safely moderate her own drinking and, following the guidelines written into her program for such circumstances, joined AA. Kishline had announced this in late January on an Internet listserv for members of MM, which *The Seattle Times* reported in a later story. The president of the NCADD, Stacia Murphy, acknowledges that she knew Kishline had joined Alcoholics Anonymous and that she omitted that detail from her statement. "It wasn't relevant," Murphy says. But of course it was relevant. If people knew that Kishline had attended AA after deciding she could not drink moderately, they might think AA, not MM, was the program that failed her. While writing, I called my editor at *New York* to ask about including Kishline in my piece, but because of the incident's complexity and space considerations, we did not include anything about her accident in the story.

JUNE 29 Kishline pleaded guilty to vehicular homicide, and ABC's *World News Tonight* asked Dr. Marlatt, the alcoholism expert who had appeared on *20/20*, to discuss the efficacy of controlled drinking. Clips from those interviews were used early the next morning on ABC's *World News Now* and on ABC's *Good Morning America*. In neither story was Kishline's decision to join Alcoholics Anonymous mentioned—nor was the fact that Moderation Management recommends AA to members who find that they can't control their drinking. No medical or psychological research was cited in either report. The implication was that moderation does not work and abstinence does.

The editor at *New York* and I finished the work on my article that evening. I hoped the 800-word piece was balanced and gave enough history that a reader unfamiliar with the debate surrounding alcoholism treatment would find it clear. I quoted Dr. DeLuca, who had said of the changes at Smithers, "It is radical for addiction treatment, but it's really a return to traditional medicine. In medicine, if treatment doesn't work, you change it." I couldn't know then that the media's handling of the Kishline story would affect how my own piece about Smithers would be received, but I signed off, and it went to press.

JULY 3 My article hit the stands in the morning, which I spent at Smithers doing additional research for another story I planned to write about the clinic. My *New York* article, I had hoped, would highlight the fact that patients at Smithers now had choices and that treatment was finally becoming both more empirically based and user-friendly. I had

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intended the article to point out that since the 1950s, when Alcoholics Anonymous was adopted wholeheartedly by American hospitals, advances in treatment of alcohol problems had essentially been stalled. In the piece, DeLuca's predecessor at Smithers, Dr. Anne Geller, asked, "Would you want surgery done now the way it was done in the fifties?"

But later that day, when I saw the magazine, the article seemed different to me from the version I had approved with my editor. It was headlined "Drink Your Medicine" and was accompanied by an illustration of a man guzzling booze in bed while a busty, whistling nurse looked the other way. Before I signed off, I had not thought to ask to see the headline or the illustration, both of which I felt were misleading. Stunned, I read and reread the story. One sentence stuck in my head: "But now, in a move tantamount to the Catholic Church's reversing its position on abortion, the legendarily hard-line Smithers...has decided to...abandon the lifetime-abstinence approach." In the draft I had handed in, I had written that Smithers "has abandoned the abstinence-only approach." At some point during the editing process the wording got changed, which might not at first seem that significant—in fact, even I failed to notice it when I read the piece before publication—but it misled many readers. Also, the subtle shift between "abstinence-only" and "lifetime-abstinence" made it easy for 12-step advocates to attack Smithers.

The botched sentence provoked a widespread misconception that Smithers had rejected abstinence entirely. *New York* had posted my article on the Web three days earlier, on Friday, June 30. The story was picked up by the *New York Post*, where it was featured on the morning of July 3 with a headline even more lurid than my original article's: "Booze goes on menu at famed celeb rehab clinic." Because the *Post*'s piece was written over the July Fourth weekend, one of the two reporters told me, she couldn't reach any academic researchers. Instead, the reporters interviewed several AA members—one of whom said, "I've tried moderation, and I ended up back in rehab"—and a former NCADD president who called MM "a deadly piece of advice." No one from Smithers was quoted about the changes in the clinic, although the reporter said she had tried to contact officials there. The *Post* was the first, but certainly not the last, newspaper to report that Smithers had supplanted Alcoholics Anonymous with Moderation Management. Given the media attention and controversy about Audrey Kishline, the *New York* piece was vulnerable to misinterpretation. The dramatic headline, titillating illustration, and table-of-contents rubric—"Giving up on abstinence"—only made matters worse. Asked about this later, *New York* magazine senior editor Jessica Lustig says she wouldn't change a thing about the magazine's handling of the story: "We thought the headline and illustration were perfectly suited to the story. They were really carefully chosen. Any story can get distorted in the tabloids, and we have no way of controlling that." Lustig refused to comment further.

Almost immediately, abstinence-only advocates mobilized. Still upset by the *20/20* program, newly energized by the Kishline tragedy, and enraged by the notion that Smithers had abandoned abstinence, they flooded the center with e-mail messages and telephone calls to denounce Moderation Management as a sham. From this point on, the press conflated the two stories, implying that Smithers embraces a pro-drinking program started and now renounced by a drunken killer.

The press office at St. Luke's–Roosevelt, which oversees Smithers, refused to comment while it assessed the situation. DeLuca and other employees say they were not allowed to talk to the press. No one could correct the false impression, given by my piece and others, that abstinence was no longer practiced at Smithers—and no one was able to tout the government grants that Smithers had received to study alternatives to strict abstinence. The reporting that followed became preposterously distorted—to the point that a correspondent for *The Times* of London suggested that rising vodka sales in New York City were due to Smithers's new policy and the HBO program *Sex and the City*. According to the writer, Smithers had "discreetly loosened its rules to allow patients the odd slurp of what they fancied."

JULY 9 The news that Smithers had embraced a new philosophy gave a fresh line of attack to Adele Smithers-Fornaci, the founder's widow. The

What Happened

JUNE 7 ***20/20*** **explores whether problem drinkers can moderate rather than quit outright.**
JUNE 17 ***The Seattle Times*** **reports that Audrey Kishline, author of *Moderate Drinking*, crashed her car in March and killed two people.**
JULY 3 ***New York*** **magazine and the *New York Post* hit the stands with articles on Smithers.**
JULY 9 Adele Smithers-Fornaci purchases full-page ads in *The New York Times* and the *New York Post* that denounce moderate-drinking approaches.
JULY 10 Dr. Alex DeLuca is fired from Smithers; CNN's *Larry King Live* combines the Kishline and Smithers stories.
JULY 17 A London *Times* article blames an increase in vodka sales in New York on Smithers and HBO's *Sex and the City*.
AUGUST 11 Audrey Kishline is sentenced to 4½ years in prison.

June 7: *20/20* airs

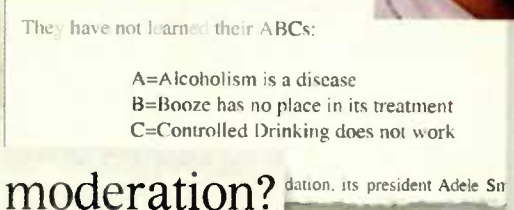
July 10: *Larry King Live*

July 3: *New York Post*


Booze goes on menu at famed celeb rehab clinic

July 10: Dr. Alex DeLuca fired

July 9: Detail from full-page ad


They have not learned their ABCs:

A=Alcoholism is a disease
B=Booze has no place in its treatment
C=Controlled Drinking does not work

July 17: London *Times*


Drinking in moderation? How cosmopolitan

DELUCA: DAN BRINZAC/*NEW YORK POST*/CORBIS SYGMA

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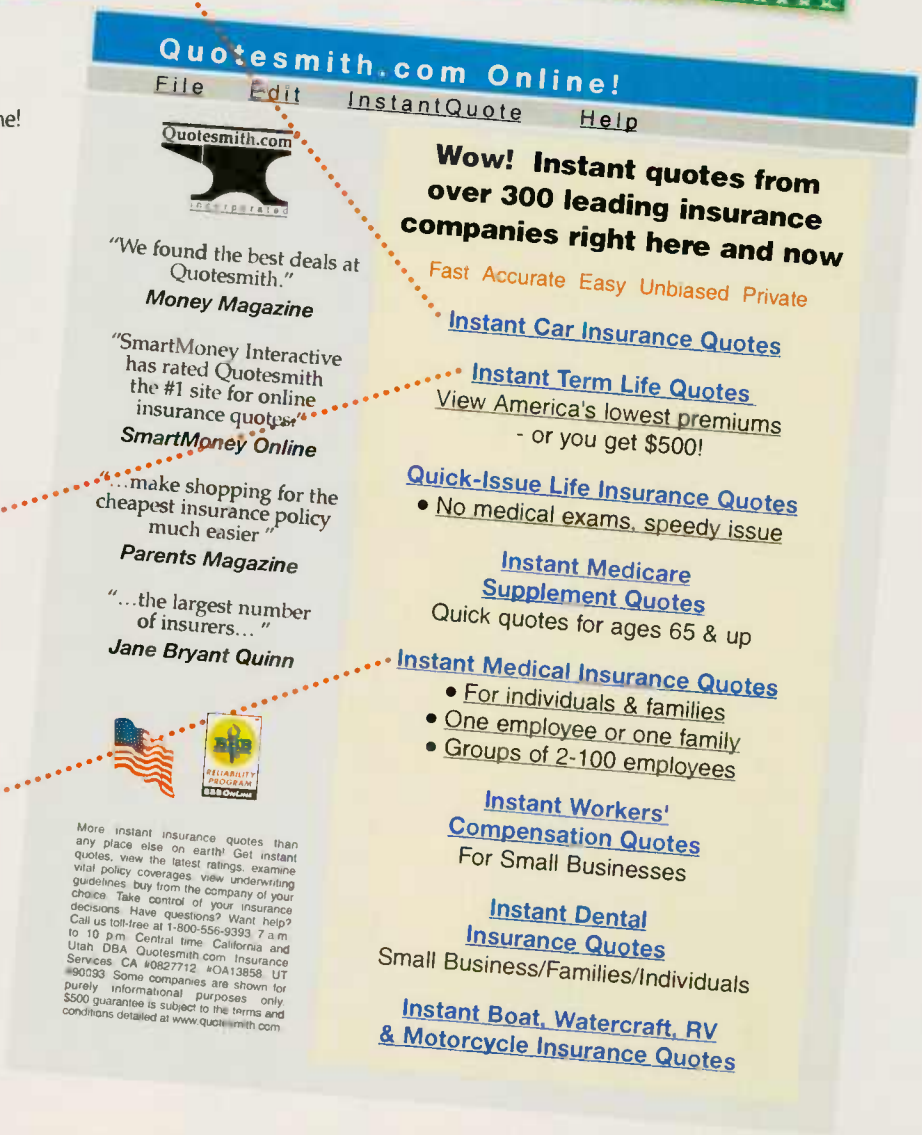

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AD CODE:
BRILL 12/00

center was founded in 1971 with a $10 million gift by R. Brinkley Smithers. He died in 1994, and his widow has had a contentious relationship with St. Luke's–Roosevelt ever since. Just weeks after her husband's death and months before a benefit she had hoped would raise money for a redesign of the center, the hospital insulted her by announcing the sale of the mansion in which Smithers was housed. She hasn't been associated formally with the center for more than five years, and she is also in protracted litigation with the hospital over alleged mismanagement of the endowment. Smithers-Fornaci purchased full-page advertisements in the Sunday *New York Times* and *New York Post* calling Moderation Management "an abomination." The advertisements said that Smithers has "not learned [its] ABCs: A=Alcoholism is a disease, B=Booze has no place in its treatment, C=Controlled drinking does not work."

JULY 10 A St. Luke's–Roosevelt statement said that Smithers "has a long and proud tradition of treating alcoholism by advocating total abstinence. While we recognize there may be other legitimate alternatives in the treatment of this difficult disease, no change in our own program policy was ever approved. Since Dr. Alex DeLuca does not support the program philosophy, we have accepted his resignation as Director of Smithers." DeLuca claims that he never offered to resign and that he was told by his superiors that he had to do so or he would be fired. "They didn't even give me a chance to do damage control," DeLuca says. "We could have turned this into a real opportunity to promote what we were doing. If it wasn't so sad, it would be funny. I met with my supervisors every week for two years. To say that they didn't know what I was doing is absurd."

I TRIED TO EXPLAIN THE DISTORTIONS THAT HAD EVOLVED FROM MY STORY.

When I first interviewed DeLuca for *New York* in May, he had been happy to discuss his accomplishments at Smithers. He worked with colleagues on three different million-dollar federal grants to study newer options for substance-abuse treatment, and he'd published results in the *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*. In addition, DeLuca had painstakingly taught the counselors at Smithers that what they'd learned in their own abstinence-based recovery might not always hold true for their clients. "The changes I made were structural and in the hearts and minds of the counselors. It took me ten years," he says. "The center doesn't have a treatment philosophy other than what I've written, and I have never rejected abstinence. I still think it's the safest way for people to recover, but I'm not going to turn them away if they are not yet ready. I can't work that way." Carol Bohdan, a spokesperson at St. Luke's–Roosevelt, refused to comment for this piece.

On the evening of July 10, CNN's *Larry King Live* devoted an hour to what had by then been transformed into the Kishline-Smithers story. The show began with emotional testimony from family members of those killed in the Kishline crash. Margaret Penny Sowards, the prosecutor in the case, was interviewed next. She said that she wished she could recommend a stiffer sentence than the four and a half years that legal guidelines allow. King asked, "You'd like to—you could ask for more, couldn't you?" Sowards said, "I'm constrained by the law in terms of what we would get. We have to have aggravating circumstances to justify it, [and] there just aren't any of those present in this case unfortunately."

Then King moderated a roundtable that included an AA member, actress Mariette Hartley (best known as Dr. Claire Morton from *Peyton Place*); the president of the Betty Ford Center, John Schwarzlose; former senator Bob Packwood, who recovered from an alcohol problem without AA but supports the organization; and, to balance the discussion, a Moderation Management board member. The conversation focused on personal stories. No attempt to discuss scientific data was made; no alcoholism researchers were booked. "The goal of that show was to put together a panel with a variety of personal experiences and viewpoints to discuss the issue of alcoholism," a spokeswoman for CNN said. DeLuca says, "Anecdotes are sexier than science. It's fine to have people share their experience, but medicine is not anecdote—or shouldn't be."

As the show aired, reporters were calling me to track DeLuca down. While on the phone, I tried to explain the distortions that had evolved from my story. I then left a message for DeLuca suggesting that he return the calls if he wanted to. I spoke to Jennifer Steinhauer of *The New York Times*, who was covering DeLuca's firing, and told her that Smithers had not cut abstinence from its program. Although an article by Sam Howe Verhovek in the previous day's *Times* had correctly stated that Smithers had "decided to adopt Ms. Kishline's [moderation] program as one approach," and DeLuca agreed to call Steinhauer to clarify what he had done with the program, Steinhauer's story, which appeared the next day, implied that controlled drinking was far more important than it was. "Dr. Alex DeLuca," she wrote, "recently decided to steer the clinic...toward an approach that advocates controlled drinking." Steinhauer's piece missed the distinction between advocating Moderation Management and offering it as a treatment option; she refused to comment further for this article.

The next day, a group run by a former publications editor for the NCADD, which had organized the initial anti-DeLuca onslaught, released a statement titled "Victory for Abstinence-Based Treatment." "Thanks to an incredible outpouring of concern, support and action," it read, "the director at the Smithers treatment program quit and the hospital has agreed to abandon the moderation-management model."

EPILOGUE On August 11, Audrey Kishline was sentenced to four and a half years in prison. "It's hard for me to say this," Kishline's sister, a recovering alcoholic, told *The Seattle Times*, "but I don't think [Kishline's sentence is] stiff enough." The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* indicated a week later that the family of the father and daughter killed in the crash would sue Kishline in civil court. Two sources close to Kishline say she had never renounced Moderation Management and that she still believes it can help some people—a fact that had been lost weeks before. Dr. Alex DeLuca is considering suing St. Luke's–Roosevelt for defamation and wrongful dismissal. Adele Smithers-Fornaci has added to her ongoing litigation against St. Luke's–Roosevelt: She wants $60 million and her late husband's name removed from that of the treatment center. And the final irony: In an attempt to persuade those who might now consider controlled drinking a viable therapy for alcohol problems, the Smithers Foundation has announced plans to reprint a pamphlet, "Experimentation: The Fallacy of Controlled Drinking Where Alcoholism Exists." It was published in 1963. ■

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 to e-books and study guides—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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WHAT THE INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLERS ARE SAYING...

Our 60 Independent Bookstore Affiliate Experts have been looking at what's hot, what's overhyped, and what's gotten the most surprising buzz lately. Here are some of their recent observations and opinions.

VISIT THE EXPERTS
Independent Booksellers

Jan Weissmiller of Prairie Lights Bookstore finds the title story of Alice Elliott Dark's *In The Gloaming* to be one of the most subtle and moving pieces about AIDS in our literature.

According to The Partners at Partners & Crime, Minette Walters's first mystery, *The Ice House*, is a sure winner for any reader looking for a younger, hipper version of P. D. James or Ruth Rendell.

Mary Gay Shipley of That Bookstore in Blytheville calls *Nowhere Else On Earth*, by Josephine Humphreys, a rare treat for those who like Southern novels, written by a master storyteller who can conjure up strong characters and an impressive sense of place.

Steve Shuman of Trover Shop discovers that David Gergen's *Eyewitness to Power* is not a juicy kiss-and-tell about Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Clinton. Rather, it is a serious look at the four presidents: the traits they brought with them to the job and the lessons they left for others to heed.

Robin Stringer of Davis-Kidd Booksellers recommends Gilda Carle's *He's Not All That: How to Attract the Good Guys* not just to any teenager, but to anyone still dating.

From the biology of brambles to recommended cultivars by region, Barbara Bowling's *The Berry Grower's Companion* holds your hand through every aspect of growing small fruit, according to Amy Wynn of Builders Booksource.

If you're interested in the Boxers (the Chinese peasants and martial-arts adherents who revolted against the colonial powers in 1900), Diana Preston's *The Boxer Rebellion* offers a fast-paced history, according to Daniel Goldin of Harry W. Schwartz Bookshop.

In T.C. Boyle's *A Friend of the Earth*, Jessica Graham and Marek Laskowski of Primrose Hill Books find a sobering vision of our possible future and a disturbing portrayal of the futility of an environmental movement pitched helplessly against the greed and indifference of corporate despoilers.

"I've managed to sell 19 copies of *The Ethical Slut: A Guide to Infinite Sexual Possibilities* at our store on Union Street in San Francisco—home of dotcom yuppie men who have actually been known to say, 'But I could take care of you'—so you know the book is going somewhere."

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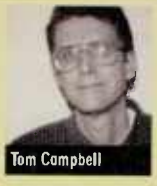
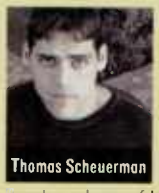
RECENT COMMENTARY FROM OUR EXPERTS


Tom Campbell

AN EXCERPT FROM "BUZZ FROM THE FLOOR" BY TOM CAMPBELL AT REGULATOR BOOKSHOP

"In *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era of Healing*, Larry Dossey draws some startling conclusions from scientific experiments on the effect of prayer on the healing of disease: Even when the people praying did not know the person they were praying for, even when the person being prayed for had no idea what was going on, even when the people praying were halfway around the world from the "subjects" of the experiments, prayer helped people to heal. A lot.

Regulator Bookshop *is located in Durham, North Carolina.*


Thomas Scheuerman

AN EXCERPT FROM "CURRENT TITLES IN PHILOSOPHY" BY THOMAS SCHEUERMAN AT BOOK PEOPLE

Foucault in 90 Minutes takes about 60 minutes to read. World War II, Nazi occupation, homosexuality, radical politics, S-and-M, and drugs—Foucault saw and did it all in his lifetime. However, his academic contributions, his so-called "archaeology of human sciences," his invention of the concept of historical epistemes, and his groundbreaking work in the area of postconstructionist critique—these are all given short shrift. The author is quick to dismiss most of them as either derivative of Nietzsche or Durkheim or extreme transgressions of good sense and taste. His condescending attitude toward Foucault's unconventional sex life doesn't quite jibe with his subtle and recurrent voyeurism: He seems to loathe the subject, but he just can't seem to leave it alone. It's quite fun to chart the progress of his fascination-repulsion throughout the narrative.

Book People *is located in Austin, Texas.*

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BEHIND THE CONTENT

A SAMPLING OF CONTENTVILLE S LATEST EDITORIAL FEATURES

BOOKS

OPEN ON MY DESK Edmund Morris discusses the books he's reading for his upcoming biography on Theodore Roosevelt.

THE MOVEABLE FEAST Our book-party columnist guides us through the who's who of the fall literary bashes: An excerpt: Dave Eggers, the most eligible writer in town, once again demonstrated his Oz-like powers, luring several hundred literati onto the L train and over to Williamsburg, Brooklyn, for a reading on behalf of his cult mag *McSweeney's*. Admirers demonstrated their devotion and powerlessness by standing in rapt attention for hours as *McSweeney's* contributors displayed their incantatory powers—including Neal Pollack, author of McSweeney's Books' first volume, *The Neal Pollack Anthology of American Literature*; *White Teeth* author Zadie Smith; and the Great Eggers himself.

DIARY OF A BOOK SCOUT Our industry spy prepares for the Frankfurt Book Fair and reports on celebrity memoirs by the likes of Anne Heche and Hugh Hefner.

CRITICS' CHORUS A simple breakdown of who loved and who loathed Gore Vidal's *The Golden Age*, Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, and the other books everyone's talking about.

THE CONTENTVILLE AUTHOR Q&A Greg Bottoms answers the 17 questions we always ask. An excerpt: *How did you get the idea for your new book*, Angelhead: My Brother's Descent Into Madness*?*

I wanted to make sense of the strange, violent, sad life of my brother, who was a severe paranoid schizophrenic. Literature, among other things, has the ability to infuse the nonsensical, the blunt, the horrible, with not only a crystalline logic absent in the randomness of life, but also with a kind, hard-earned light where it seems perhaps only darkness might exist.

What is the best advice about writing anyone ever gave you, and who gave it?
The novelist and short-story writer Mark Richard once referred to a sentence as a machine with a job to do. If it's not doing a job, get rid of it.

WHEN READING IS NEW Children's book author and NPR commentator Daniel Pinkwater discovers his inner nine-year-old after reading *Gladiator*, by Richard Watkins.

THE LAST WORD Eugene L. Pogany, author of *In My Brother's Image: Twin Brothers Separated by Faith After the Holocaust*, discusses his family's devastating experiences and the role of the Catholic Church during the Holocaust.

ONLY AT CONTENTVILLE Original essays, excerpts, outtakes, and other genre-defying pieces of writing you'll find only at Contentville

BOOK NEWS Film critic Richard Schickel reviews Peter Lefcourt and Laura J. Shapiro's anthology, *The First Time I Got Paid For It ...Writers' Tales from the Hollywood Trenches*, and Jonathan Mahler discusses Christopher Hitchens's new book, *Unacknowledged Legislation: Writers in the Public Sphere.*

LITERARY WANDERER Literary adventurer Geoff Dyer reads his way across the continents.

MAGAZINES

THE CONTENTVILLE EDITOR Q&A Behind the scenes with the editors of magazines large and small

THE NOUVEAU NICHE This month: *Lowrider*, *Watch Time*, and *All About Beer*

LAUNCH OF THE MONTH *Smock*, a lush bimonthly fusing contemporary art and fashion, and *Total Movie*, a DVD-inclusive magazine devoted to movies that "rock"

DISSERTATIONS

DISSERTATIONS DECONSTRUCTED Paul Wallich on Carl Sagan's dissertation "Physical Studies of Planets"

WHAT THE CONTRIBUTING EDITORS ARE SAYING...

Our Contributing Editors are accomplished, demanding readers and thinkers. Here's what some of them have been reading and thinking lately.

VISIT THE EXPERTS
Contributing Editors

Some see an opportunity for genuine revolution; others, a deification of crass capitalism. Polly LaBarre reads competing theories on the nature of the new economy.

He's all man, but Ira Glass still can't help finding humor and comfort in the stories in Melissa Bank's *The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing.*

Reluctant to visit a photography exhibit on lynching in American history, Faith Childs finds that the accompanying book can be just as enlightening.

Despite the book's popularity, Mimi Sheraton finds Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point* distinctly lacking as an instructional manual for the restaurant business.

Laura Ingraham looks at a new biography of Maria Callas and Aristotle Onassis and remembers a bygone time of style and romance.

Financial whiz James Cramer is impressed by Roger Lowenstein's *When Genius Failed,* calling it "an excellent inside look at the blow-up of the fabled moneymen" of the bond-trading firm Long-Term Capital Management.

Chess is just math and poetry, but Sherman Alexie still hasn't mastered it despite everything he has been reading on the game.

The cactus bug, the donut bug, and Bug Rogers—new mother Wendy Wasserstein looks at the current infestation of pop-up books and recommends a creepy, crawly, funny series by David A. Carter.

When it comes to novels about historical figures, it can be hard to tell what's fact and what's fiction. Anita Hill considers the implications of Darin Strauss's historical novel, *Chang and Eng.*

Reporting from the Sun Valley Writers' Conference, David Halberstam considers himself lucky to be in a profession full of so many talented, supportive, and cute people.

And Wendy Kaminer responds to Harold Bloom's Contentville critique of the *Harry Potter* phenomenon with a look back at her beloved *Nancy Drew* books.

OUR CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

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DAVID BROWN
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"Cynthia Ozick is one of the two or three best essayists in America—her only true rivals are Gore Vidal and John Updike."

LOUIS BEGLEY
ON *QUARREL & QUANDARY,*
BY CYNTHIA OZICK

RECENT COMMENTARY FROM OUR EXPERTS

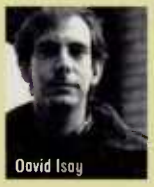

Stephen L. Carter

AN EXCERPT FROM WHAT STEPHEN L. CARTER IS READING NOW

In *Farenheit 451* it was the books that made life hard that were burned—Shakespeare or the Bible. A book that made life better, in Ray Bradbury's terms, would be spared. Life in the society he was describing was about the self and how one shouldn't have to grapple with difficult ideas to attain personal happiness. It seems to me that this is very much a description of contemporary America. The mere fact that we don't physically burn books doesn't mean that we're not in the process of destroying the notion that we should cope with difficult ideas and struggle with hard texts. And it doesn't mean that we're not ignoring the perception that we improve as people by dealing with great literature, as opposed to dealing with how to make a million dollars without any investment or how to lose weight without diet or exercise.

Yale law professor **Stephen L. Carter** *was selected by* Time *magazine as one of the 50 leaders of the next century.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY GAIL ZUCKER


David Isay

AN EXCERPT FROM WHAT DAVID ISAY IS READING NOW

I'm rereading *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York,* by Luc Sante, which I read when it first came out and hated. Looking back now, I think the reason I hated it is that before the book was published, NPR did a piece on Sante, and I was annoyed that I didn't produce it given that the subject matter is so up my alley. So then when the book did come out, I picked it up just ready to hate it. I guess you could say I had a chip on my shoulder about it, but I started reading it again about a week ago and I think it's amazing. It's a history of lowbrow characters and culture in New York City during the 19th century up through the very beginning of the 20th century. The amount of research that Sante accomplished is absolutely unbelievable. It's really a beautiful book, and I'm sorry that I hated it the first time around.

David Isay *is the founder of Sound Portraits Productions and a regular contributor to National Public Radio's newsmagazines.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY HARVEY WANG

WHAT THE MAGAZINE EXPERTS ARE SAYING...

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

VISIT THE EXPERTS
Magazine Experts

The definition of a family has changed, and parenting magazines are starting to notice. Elizabeth Crow reports on *Parenting*'s touching story of a gay couple's attempts to adopt a child.

Who wants to look like a millionaire? As *Allure* attests, "The rich are different from you and me." Kate de Castelbajac gives the skinny on how to fix your hair, makeup, and even your smile so that you, too, can look like a million bucks.

Dr. Ezekiel J. Emanuel analyzes *Time*'s coverage of death and dying and considers the tough questions: Who is to blame for "bad deaths," and what can be done to prevent them?

Every so often, a magazine's "special" issue lives up to its billing. Matthew Goodman praises *Gourmet*'s Special Harvest Issue, which looks at how some small-time farmers are changing the future of American agriculture.

You're young, image-conscious, and wouldn't be caught dead reading *Glamour*. Stéphane Houy-Towner checks out edgier, alternative publications like *Black Book* and *Detour*, which are reinventing the fashion magazine as we know it.

*Wallpaper**, the favorite design rag of the downtown hipster crowd, can no longer claim ingenue status. Four years after their first issue, Chee Pearlman casts a fresh eye on this modernist shelter magazine, asterisk and all.

Daniel Radosh muses on the sudden celebrity of Kate Hudson and *Almost Famous*, a movie that "gives entertainment writers and editors the opportunity to indulge in three of their favorite subjects: movies, music, and themselves."

The media may emphasize their similarities, but when it comes to science, Al Gore and George W. Bush have widely disparate views. Timothy Ferris elaborates on their differences and on how each might approach science and technology as president.

OUR MAGAZINE EXPERTS

SUSAN BURTON
Teen Magazines

ELIZABETH CROW
Women's, Parenting, and Children's Magazines

KATE DE CASTELBAJAC
Beauty Magazines

DR. EZEKIEL EMANUEL
Health Magazines

RAHM EMANUEL
Political Magazines

TIMOTHY FERRIS
Science Magazines

WINIFRED GALLAGHER
Religion and Spirituality Magazines

MATTHEW GOODMAN
Cooking Magazines

STEPHANE HOUY-TOWNER
Fashion Magazines

THE STAFF OF *MARKETPLACE*
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KEVIN MITNICK
Computer Magazines

KEITH OLBERMANN
Sports Magazines

CHEE PEARLMAN
Design Magazines

JOHN R. QUAIN
Technology Magazines

DANIEL RADOSH
Entertainment Magazines

ELAINA RICHARDSON
Fashion Magazines

MICHAEL SEGELL
Men's Magazines

"I started wondering why there isn't more comic writing in the general-interest teen magazines. Do the editors think that the girls who read their magazines aren't funny, don't repeat lines from movies to each other, never watch Chris Rock on HBO?"

SUSAN BURTON
TEEN MAGAZINES

RECENT COMMENTARY FROM OUR EXPERTS


Martha Little

AN EXCERPT FROM "OFF THE RACK" WITH THE STAFF OF *MARKETPLACE*, MONEY & FINANCE MAGAZINES

It's compelling to think that the Napster technology is unstoppable. To me, it's equally compelling—and more worrisome—that we might silence Napster forever. For instance, if, as Charles Mann suggests in *The Atlantic Monthly*, the law required Internet service providers to monitor (and report) their customers' use of services such as Napster and Gnutella, the effect would be chilling. Robert Kohn, cofounder of Emusic.com (a site that charges users to download legal MP3 files), lays it out this way: "If the police started arresting people and seizing their computers, music on the Internet would not seem quite so free." —Martha Little, Commentary Editor, NPR's *Marketplace*

Marketplace *is public radio's national series about business, the global economy, and finance.*


Michael Segell

AN EXCERPT FROM "OFF THE RACK" WITH MICHAEL SEGELL, MEN'S MAGAZINES

The October issue of *Details*, the first published by Condé Nast's sibling company, Fairchild, and its new editor, Daniel Peres, is aiming at the sophisticated urban 25- to 35-year-old man who is "worried." Come again? "He's worried about things like do I mousse my hair?" says Peres in his editor's note. "Do I wear flat-fronts or pleats?" If ever you doubted that modern masculinity (or sophistication) is in trouble, *Details* offers fresh evidence. Of course, if the gel-versus-mousse conundrum has you so "worried" you require chemically induced sleep each night, *Details* is there for you. Otherwise, skip it.

Michael Segell *is the author of* Standup Guy: Masculinity That Works *and the forthcoming* A Man's Journey to Simple Abundance.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARA BARRETT

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the mail call

Nothing says more about the community my paper covers than the letters I receive. How do I referee a civil debate—while letting readers say whatever comes to mind? BY MIKE PRIDE

A critic of President Clinton wrote a letter to the editor (me) earlier this year reacting to a picture that had run in the Concord, New Hampshire, *Monitor*. In the picture, several Indian women were gathered around the president to celebrate his visit to their village. The reader wrote a scathing critique of Bill and Hillary Clinton, which asserted that the picture "made me wonder which one he selected to be escorted to the presidential chambers and given the honor of dropping to her knees to execute a Lewinsky."

We published the letter, and shortly afterward another reader wrote to suggest that this portion of it should have been edited out. "[T]his letter, as printed, contained sexually [exp]licit ravings which I feel the *Monitor*'s legion of family readers, including my 14-year-old eighth grader, should not have been exposed to," the letter said.

So who was right—the reader who thought the trashy phrase should have been excised or me, the person who allowed it?

As the editor of the *Monitor*, I have necessarily delegated most responsibilities for the paper's content to the editors who work with me. But I have kept the job of choosing and editing letters to the editor.

Talk all you want about free speech on the Internet: For my money, no public forum is more important to a community than the letters-to-the-editor column of the local newspaper. There are other venues for such an exchange of views—chat rooms, public hearings, talk radio, town meetings—but for many communities only the letters column carries messages to such a large percentage of the citizenry.

I love this part of being the editor. At a small newspaper like mine, readers tell you what they care about. They hold you to a high standard of accuracy, letting you know immediately when you get things wrong and—less often—when you get things right. If you run a wide variety of opinions on the editorial pages, showing that there are no sacred cows, readers will speak their minds on all manner of public issues.

Concord is a political town in a political state, and people cherish the right to speak up. The *Monitor* is still small enough that we can run nearly every letter about public issues we receive from our readership, editing them for libel, length, and taste. (We delete profanity, for example, and we won't publish personal attacks on citizens who are not in the public eye.) The Internet has broadened this reach.

SELÇUK DEMIREL

Many former residents, as well as others, read the *Monitor* online and e-mail us. If their letters have something relevant to say about a local or state issue—and often they do—we print them.

We recently completed a rugged primary-election campaign, and letters poured in from members of Democratic governor Jeanne Shaheen's own party, calling her cynical, pathetic, cowardly, "the gambling queen," and "something of an airhead." When I wrote a column defending her, one letter writer said it was I who was the airhead. Another called me "a Nackey Loeb of the Left," a reference to the late publisher of the *Union Leader*, a New Hampshire newspaper known for its right-wing politics and below-the-belt journalism.

Name-calling and cheap characterization are no substitutes for sound argument, but they are time-honored tools of an engaged citi-

zenry, especially during a political campaign. Readers are free to call the governor—or me—an airhead.

Of course, not all letter writers are engaged citizens rising to the political moment. Some are unengaged—or too engaged. Years ago, when the *Monitor*'s offices were located in downtown Concord, the colorful characters who peppered the paper with letters also managed to pay me regular visits. One of them, an intelligent and imaginative man with mental problems, once showed up in the newsroom dressed in tinfoil and bumper stickers. His letters usually commented on such issues as how odd it was that Iran and Iraq were at war when the only real difference between them was an *n* and a *q*. Other regulars were obsessed with particular issues—animal rights or the "dumbing down" of school curricula.

We didn't and don't run all letters that these writers send us, but we do try to give them a fair opportunity to express their views. In Boise recently, a regular letter writer committed suicide on the front lawn of the *Idaho Statesman*. His suicide letter said he believed that the newspaper had unfairly restricted his right to express his anti-gay-rights views. From what I read, the *Statesman* had done its best to balance the letter writer's desire to take part in a public debate with the newspaper's responsibilities as an arbiter of taste.

DEEP DOWN, I HAD TO ADMIT THAT I FELT A TWINGE OF PERVERSITY IN ALLOWING THE PHRASE IN QUESTION TO BE PRINTED.

Although I have never had such a tragic case, this balancing act is familiar to me. And at the moment, gay-rights issues do indeed elicit the strongest opinions and incite the most personal reactions at the *Monitor*. Their currency means they deserve as wide a hearing as possible in the letters to the editor. My job is to put aside my own views and referee a fair match.

Glenn Currie, a frequent letter writer and occasional guest columnist on our op-ed pages, touched a nerve when we published his commentary opposing gays in the military. Currie, a veteran, described life aboard a naval vessel as a long period of close confinement of rowdy men at "the peak of their sexual and physical drive." Adding women to a crew caused problems, he wrote, but at least these could be limited by providing the women with separate quarters. "If you put openly gay men into this whole mix, and have them share compartments, showers and toilets with heterosexual men, you are asking to light a powder keg," he said.

It was Currie who ignited the powder keg. The letters to the editor in response to his opinion invariably attacked him. One reader called his piece "the sniveling, whining, bigoted, ignorant musings of someone still living in the stone ages." Another wrote: "The viewpoints of bigots must always be allowed. Civil discourse dictates that we who promote tolerance extend the courtesy to those who seek to shut out dissident voices."

In a follow-up letter, Currie objected to being vilified. "It is unfortunate that a few radicals, buttressed by the forces of political correctness," he wrote, "find it necessary to personally denigrate anyone who may not agree with them on hot-button issues."

Like Currie, I am a veteran, but it happens that I disagree with his position on gays in the military. At the same time, his critics would have served their cause far better by sticking to the issues.

And yet a contentious, cutting-edge issue rarely generates cool, dispassionate debate. To have excised the insults or to have asked Currie's critics to rewrite their letters would have painted a false picture of where the public stands on the issue of gays in the military.

That is the essence of my defense for running the letter with the Lewinsky remark that commented on the photograph of President Clinton and the Indian women.

The reader who protested this decision made an excellent case. "Couldn't *Monitor* editors have edited out or condensed this particular section while allowing the main body of the letter to run?" he wrote in a letter not meant for publication. "Is the *Monitor*'s definition of 'public interest' so broad that a specific euphemistic description of fellatio...is deemed appropriate for family readers?"

The *Monitor*'s selection of any letter for publication is "a deliberate choice," the protester wrote. It represents "what the *Monitor* believes to be in the 'public interest' [and] reflects the *Monitor*'s journalistic values." In this case, he wrote, "the *Monitor* erred in publishing the offensive matter—its redeeming qualities were not apparent and it did not merit recognition as in the 'public interest.'"

My first thought when I read this letter was that the reader was right. Deep down, I had to admit that I had felt a twinge of perversity in allowing the phrase in question to be printed.

But in examining this thought, it occurred to me that it wasn't the naughtiness of the phrase that had touched my darker side. Rather, I had been struck by the notion that almost three years after the Lewinsky scandal became public, President Clinton's actions were still generating such scathing commentary from ordinary citizens.

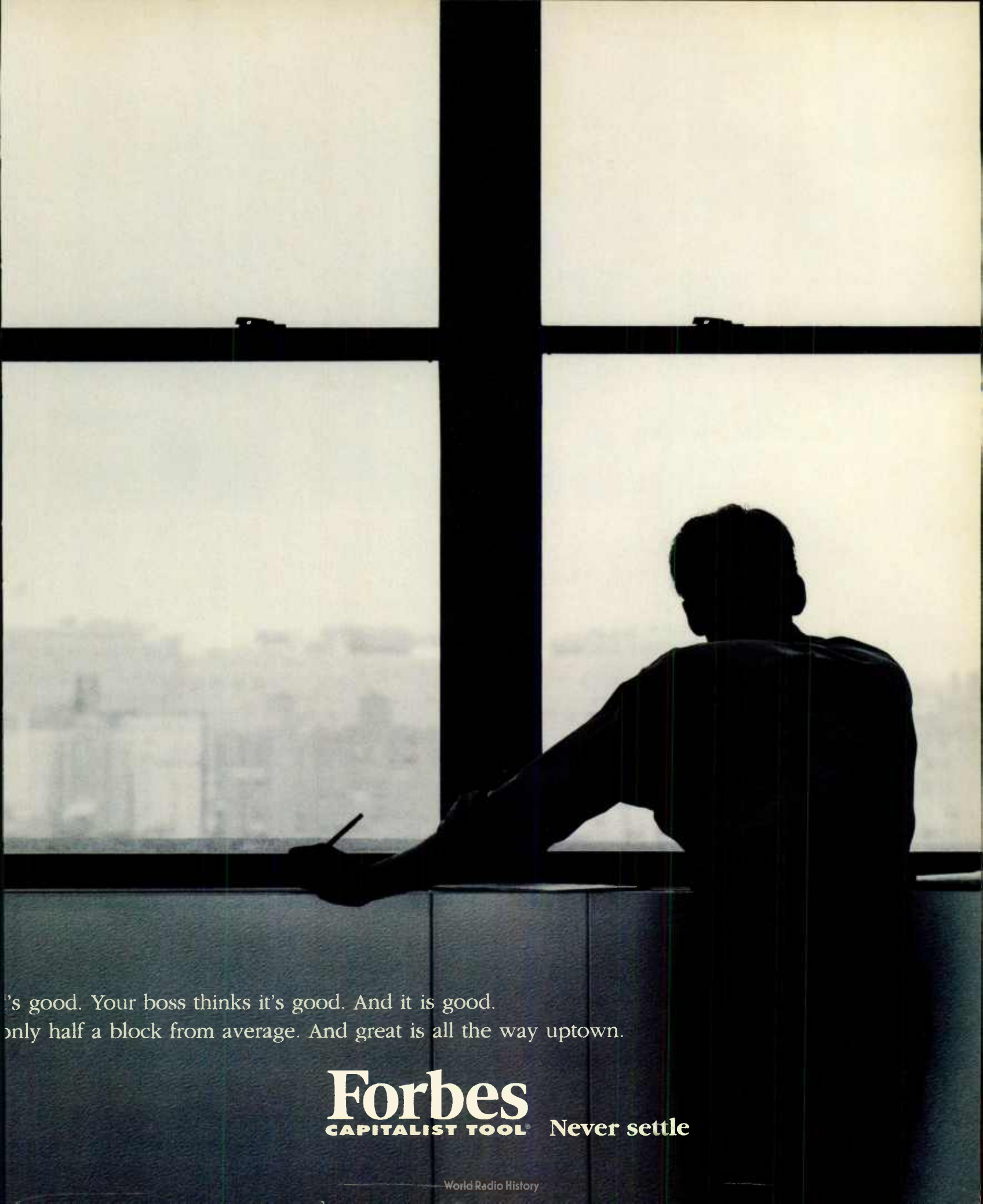
Furthermore, the writer's use of such a coarse image had made me focus on my own thoughts about Bill Clinton and the scandal that tainted his presidency. This is not a comfortable subject for me, and I suspect I am not alone in this. To have edited out this portion of the letter would have been to rob it of its power to make readers think, reducing it to just another garden-variety attack on the president and the first lady. (The letter's primary target was Hillary Clinton. The writer chided "Clinton sycophants" and made a mocking reference to "Hill and Bill, our role models for future generations!")

I have some sympathy for the reader's complaint that, in a family newspaper, his 14-year-old should not be exposed even to indirect references to sexual acts. But in the Clinton-Lewinsky case, I'm afraid we crossed that line.

The *Monitor* letters column is both an outlet for readers and a stimulus for their thinking. Because civility remains (for the most part) an honored virtue in New Hampshire, there is no danger of rude voices commandeering this soapbox. But it needs to remain open to the outrageous, the personal, the provocative, and, on occasion, even the mildly vulgar. The day we start erring on the side of caution in publishing readers' opinions will be the day that vitality and an honest exchange of ideas begin to seep out of the paper itself. ◘

You think your proposal is good.

Your coworkers think
But good is



Walking The Line

George Stephanopoulos, President Bill Clinton's golden boy and War Room spinmeister, is earning his journalistic stripes at ABC News—and ratcheting up the debate about crossing over from politics to the news media. By Gay Jervey

PAUL BEGALA WAS KEYED UP.

The former counselor to President Bill Clinton had spent the last two weeks preparing vice-president Al Gore for his first debate against Texas governor George W. Bush, and by the time he arrived at the Boston campus of the University of Massachusetts on October 3, the congenitally energetic Begala was in full throttle. He spent most of the day wired and tense, pacing in nervous circles in one of the three trailers that served as Gore's command posts. Earlier in the day, Begala had run into his old friend ABC News analyst George Stephanopoulos, with whom he had worked closely during the 1992 Clinton campaign and the president's first term, and he was pretty sure he would see Stephanopoulos again before the evening was over.

He just didn't know that he would scream at him.

But he did, in a congested, high-powered hallway full of members of the press and the cabinet, including Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Andrew Cuomo.

"After the debate, I was tired and overwrought," says Begala. "I had seen George on ABC with Peter Jennings calling the debate for Gore. But then, as we were getting ready to leave, I overheard someone say that when George had later appeared on *Nightline*, he described Gore as arrogant. When I walked out of the room where we were all congregating, I saw George in the hall and just blew my stack. I yelled, '*Goddamnit, George, how dare you call Al Gore arrogant?*' George got this wounded look on his face and said, 'You're wrong. That is not what happened. I said that Gore won it hands down but that at certain points Gore may have had a demeanor that might bother some people.'" Begala pauses. "But the point is, I love Georgie...and if I could leap to those conclusions and get so angry, then how will people feel who don't know him or, worse, have a predisposition against him?...If this is what he gets from my side—from one of his best friends, no less—what does he get from the other guys?"

'If viewers saw me as a flack I would not survive,' says George Stephanopoulos. Photographed by Randy Harris

Unfortunately for Stephanopoulos, much of the same—if without the mixed feelings and personal touch. The following day, the conservative Media Research Center, which produces what it calls "expert documentation of the latest liberal media bias," faxed a report headlined "ABC Wins in the Post-Debate Bias Contest." In it, the group wrote, "Unpaid Shill. Four years ago, George Stephanopoulos was a paid staffer for Al Gore's election. The only difference last night was that he's now paid by ABC News. Just after the debate ended, he swooned, 'Gore dominated the debate, Peter.'"

"As we say in Texas, George can't win for losing," Begala observes. "No matter what he does, somebody gets mad at him. It's a lose-lose situation."

Stephanopoulos is hardly the first former political operative to cross over into the fourth estate. Consider the career trajectories of Bill Moyers, Tim Russert, Diane Sawyer, David Gergen, and Chris Matthews, to name a few (box, page 95). And by no means will he be the last. With the change in the administration, the coming months are likely to see more Stephanopoulos wanna-bes as departing White House and other government officials weigh their journalistic options. As such, Stephanopoulos is emblematic—and highly visible.

Top: Stephanopoulos in New York, 1994. Above: with Michael J. Fox at *Newsweek*'s '100 Newsmakers of 1996' party.

Stephanopoulos has been under a microscope as his role at ABC has evolved from pundit into analyst and reporter over the past year; observers have watched and evaluated his ability to make the transition from partisan adviser and commentator to objective journalist. Begala says, "What George is doing has been done before by the likes of Diane Sawyer and Tim Russert. But none of them at the time were as red-hot famous as Georgie. George will be the first one to pull it off at this level since Bill Moyers, and that was a long time ago. But like I said, right now he can't win for losing."

Stephanopoulos is the first to admit that his situation embodies a catch-22, and he seems to have made peace with that stubborn, frustrating notion. "In a weird way, the fact that it is such a straitjacket is liberating. I just accept that a certain group is going to feel that I am biased no matter what the situation," Stephanopoulos says as he scurries across Manhattan's West 86th Street. As usual, Stephanopoulos is in a hurry. It's the day after the first presidential debate, and he has just returned from Boston—and his tongue-lashing from his buddy Begala—and will soon be leaving for Danville, Kentucky, to report on the debate between the vice-presidential candidates.

Stephanopoulos left the White House on New Year's Eve 1996 and joined ABC News shortly thereafter. His work at the network has blossomed and evolved, and he is now at a threshold in his new career that might see him move into other areas of coverage. Stephanopoulos will have his hands full for the immediate future, as he covers the transition to a new administration. After that, suggests Paul Friedman, executive vice-president and managing editor of ABC News, "the question becomes 'What next?' He has expressed some interest in going overseas....All I can say is that he has unlimited potential."

"I am very open to doing more than just straight politics...and to doing more longer pieces. Or if opportunities arose to do stories overseas I would love to do it," Stephanopoulos says. The ironic similarities between his past and present lives are at times not far from his mind. "This is a little bit like being in the final days of a campaign, when you can't think about what you are going to do afterwards, so you don't have a set idea," Stephanopoulos says. "We [at ABC] have said that we will regroup in December."

When asked about his future, Diane Sawyer, who appears with Stephanopoulos often on *Good Morning America*, says, "He can just do more. More of everything. I would love to see him [guest] anchor. I don't know if he has done *Nightline* yet, but he would be so good....It will be interesting to watch him over the next year." (He hasn't yet appeared as an anchor on *Nightline*.)

Stephanopoulos signed on at ABC as a regular pundit on *This Week*. Since then, the man many had come to know as President Bill Clinton's boyish and most visible confidant, strategist, and peripheral brain has served as a political analyst and correspondent for *Good Morning America*, *World News Tonight*, and *Nightline*. From January 2000 to the third week of October, Stephanopoulos had turned up 182 times on ABC News and proved to be pivotal to the network's campaign coverage.

TOP R MOTAMEDI/GALELLA LTD BOTTOM ANDREA RENAULT/GLOBE PHOTOS

'Where it gets tricky is when it just seems like I am telling stories from the old days and when it is only about one side...I have to self-monitor a little bit, but politics is good training for that.'

In taking so visibly to the airwaves, Stephanopoulos has raised the question that hangs over the growing phenomenon of the revolving door between government and journalism, a tension that has increased in the multimedia age. Can one move gracefully—and, more important, legitimately—between the two? Stephanopoulos has been dismissed by some as nothing more than a partisan apologist and mouthpiece disguised as a pristine and objective—if telegenic and appealing—observer. Others, particularly Democrats—among them some of his former White House colleagues—condemn him as a disloyal opportunist who has betrayed not only his principles but also President Clinton, the man who made him a household name.

Take the recent experience of one Washington journalist. "Last week, I was in a van, a motorcade, and Stephanopoulos's name came up," this source says. "And just about everybody saw him as a rat. Even the Secret Service guy weighed in. The general feeling is that he has cashed in. The discussion turned and somebody said, 'I can't respect him. He turned on Clinton to make money, and I just can't respect that.' Someone else said, 'Bill Clinton made him.' I see it both ways. And I don't think it is for journalists to judge him."

David Gergen, the former adviser to Presidents Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Clinton, who is now editor at large of *U.S. News & World Report* and regularly appears on *Nightline* with Stephanopoulos (and who was also an analyst on PBS's *NewsHour*), speaks from experience: "Just as others have had to earn their stripes and convince the political and journalistic communities that they are not biased, George has been having to do that, and he is making strides." Gergen adds, "It is very, very hard—you are in no-man's-land for a while. If you say anything less than 110 percent supportive of the people that you used to work for, they look cross-eyed at you. And if you say something positive about them, other people will say that you are biased. So it can be a lose-lose situation."

Stephanopoulos reports from the floor at the Republican National Convention last August.

Maybe so.

But these days, Stephanopoulos seems to be winning.

THE REVOLVING DOOR

"The line that I am trying to walk is that, on the one side, I do have a unique perspective because of my background," says Stephanopoulos, sitting on a bench on a warm October day in New York's Central Park. "And to the extent that I can illuminate how the players on both sides are thinking about issues—making calculations and reaching decisions—I think I can give some value. Where it gets tricky is when it just seems like I am telling stories from the old days and when it is only about one side. And you can't avoid that completely, but I am aware of the tension. I have to self-monitor a little bit, but politics is good training for that."

"All that I can do is try to approach each situation as honestly as I can," Stephanopoulos continues, as he downs a sesame bagel with nova and cream cheese. He pauses to thank a passing jogger, who, referring to the debate coverage, shouts, "Great reporting last night, George!" Stephanopoulos goes on. "And all that I can hope for is that, over time, people will see that from week to week and day to day, I try to be fair."

So far, it seems, so good. Interviews with scores of journalists and political operatives suggest that whatever they think of the appropriateness of the revolving door, Stephanopoulos has made the transition as well as anybody could. "Quite frankly, I think that he has done a pretty good job of moving from one side of the aisle to the other...and of not burning his bridges and being really unbiased," says John Weaver, the former national political director for Arizona senator John McCain's presidential campaign. "I can't point to any coverage that was biased one way or the other."

Stephanopoulos has won over even some who are inclined to be skeptical of moves like his. "Overall, I am very suspicious of the revolving door," says Jack Germond, the crusty columnist for the Baltimore *Sun* who has covered politics for four decades and appears regularly on TV as a pundit. "But I think that George has done it about as well as anybody can. He is cogent....He does not have 30 years as a reporter and, as to all the crap about whether or not you need that, I don't know....I think that what has happened is the TV culture prizes celebrity, and George is a celebrity. But he does serious work. He is more than just a pretty face. He does not set my teeth on edge like some of them do." [CONTINUED ON PAGE 154]

THE REVOLVING DOOR: Ten who have gone from the back room to the pressroom

	NOW	THEN		NOW	THEN
	**TONY BLANKLEY** *The McLaughlin Group*	Press Secretary, Rep. Newt Gingrich		**BILL MOYERS** PBS	Adviser, Presidents Kennedy and Johnson
	**DAVID GERGEN** *U.S. News & World Report*	Adviser to Presidents Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Clinton		**JOHN MCLAUGHLIN** *The McLaughlin Group*	Speechwriter, Presidents Nixon and Ford
	**WILLIAM KRISTOL** *The Weekly Standard*	Chief of Staff, Vice-President Quayle		**CHRIS MATTHEWS** MSNBC's *Hardball*	Speechwriter, President Carter
	**WILLIAM SAFIRE** *The New York Times*	Speechwriter, President Nixon		**JEFF GREENFIELD** CNN Political Analyst	Speechwriter, New York City Mayor John Lindsay
	**DIANE SAWYER** ABC News	Press Aide, President Nixon		**TIM RUSSERT** NBC's *Meet the Press*	Special Counsel, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan

BLANKLEY, GERGEN, KRISTOL, SAFIRE & MOYERS: NEWSMAKERS (5)

S.F. CONFIDENTIAL

How did a small-time publisher gain control of the *San Francisco Examiner*, the most storied paper in the West? A roiling, high-stakes tale featuring an ambitious immigrant family, backroom deals, dramatic courtroom revelations—and one of the strangest sales in newspaper history. By John Cook

San Francisco mayor Willie Brown

The *Chronicle* and *Examiner* joint offices

Future *Examiner* publisher Ted Fang

One night in 1988, Ted Fang, the editor and publisher of *The Independent*, a tiny, free San Francisco newspaper, was working late, listening to a local radio talk show. The host was interviewing the owner of Fang's main competitor, another small giveaway filled with advertisements. According to Fang, the competitor, who happened to be from Chicago, began attacking his rival paper, singling out "one woman who is playing a political game...Florence Fang."

Incensed, Ted called in to the radio show (using, he recalls, a fake name to get past the producers) and made it on the air. "I said, 'Hey, I'm the son of Florence Fang, and I don't appreciate the way you're talking about my mother,'" he says. "'My family has always been in San Francisco and contributed to this community, and who are you? A carpetbagger from Chicago.'...I went on for about three minutes before they cut me off, but it felt good."

These days, no one would dare cut Ted Fang off. On Wednesday, November 22, Fang will become the editor and publisher, as well as the owner, of The Hearst Corporation's *San Francisco Examiner*, one of the oldest, most storied newspapers in the West. It was the paper that launched William Randolph Hearst's empire in 1887, helped spark the Spanish-American War with its jingoistic calls to arms, published Mark Twain's and Hunter S. Thompson's dispatches, and, by way of Orson Welles, gave us *Citizen Kane*.

Many in San Francisco view with suspicion the circumstances by which Fang and his family came to own the *Examiner*, or, as Hearst dubbed his paper, the "Monarch of the Dailies." The family's purchase of the paper surely ranks as one of the strangest transactions in the history of the news business. The Hearst Corporation literally gave the paper to the Fangs, along with $66 million, so that the Department of Justice would allow Hearst to buy the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the city's other, and more successful, daily. Many in San Francisco have accused the Fangs of leveraging their extensive political connections to wrangle

L: FANG: ERIC RISBERG/AP PHOTO; *CHRONICLE*: DAVID YEE/UPI; BROWN: ERIC RISBERG/AP PHOTO; R: RON BURDA/*SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS*

A *San Francisco Examiner* staffer inspects copies of the paper announcing its sale to the Fangs on March 17, 2000.

the *Examiner* from Hearst. Joseph Alioto, the antitrust lawyer who eventually filed suit against Hearst to block the *Chronicle* purchase, called the deal a "sham and a farce" and a "down-and-dirty bribe." A federal judge ruled that the purchase was nothing short of "cronyism."

Even Fang's supporters acknowledge that the family drives a hard bargain. Frank Gallagher, a former *Independent* reporter who is an advocate for his old boss, flashes an impish grin and says: "Ted conned Hearst. Big time."

The story of that "con" is utterly bewildering. It is a convoluted tale of machine politics, backroom deals, decades-old political and personal rivalries, dramatic courtroom revelations, and a politically ambitious—some say rapacious—Chinese-American publishing dynasty that has consistently used its newspaper as a cudgel with which to attack its enemies and a platform from which to praise its allies. The saga would make for a riveting miniseries, and the cast of characters practically begs for a soap-opera treatment: Phil Bronstein, the swashbuckling executive editor of the *Examiner* and husband of actress Sharon Stone; Warren Hinckle, the legendarily hard-drinking, eyepatch-wearing rapscallion who writes a front-page column for *The Independent*; Jack Davis, the ruthless San Francisco political consultant who has described himself as "a warlord for the Fang family interests"; Willie Brown, the nattily dressed and notoriously slick mayor of San Francisco, who has transformed the city into his private political fiefdom; Timothy White, the naïve editor and publisher of the *Examiner*; and the would-be spoiler, Clinton Reilly, the failed mayoral candidate who threw the entire tawdry drama into open court for the world to see.

Then there is, of course, the Fang family: the father, John Fang, who died suddenly in 1992 at the age of 67 during routine surgery, but whose hardships and success as an immigrant to this country still cast a long shadow over his family's fortunes; Florence, the widowed matriarch, who runs the business and has worked to ensure her family a powerful position in San Francisco; and their sons, James, Ted, and Douglas.

John Fang was born in Shanghai in 1925, and when the Chinese communist purges began, he was sent out on his own by his family to carry on the name. To this day, Ted says in a telephone interview, he has never met any relatives from his father's side, and his father never spoke of their fate.

John Fang moved to Taiwan in 1949 and worked as a newspaper reporter before immigrating to the U.S. with Florence in 1960. He launched the publishing empire that would one day swallow William Randolph Hearst's pride and joy by buying a print shop and selling tourist "handy guides" to San Francisco's Chinatown. His printing company, called Grant Printing, would go on to enjoy success as one of the only print shops in the country with the capacity to print Chinese characters, and Ted remembers orders coming in from Chinese restaurants all over the country that needed menus printed.

At the same time, John Fang rose from reporter to publisher of *Young China Daily*, a fiercely anti-communist Chinese-language newspaper based in San Francisco and financially supported by the Taiwanese ruling political party. (Florence ran the day-to-day operations of the printing company.) John became a force in Chinese-American politics, eventually leaving *Young China Daily* in the late 1970s to found *AsianWeek*, a sedate, free English-language weekly that is now run by his son James. "[John Fang] was very much concerned with two destinies," local politician Michael Yaki told the *Chronicle* in March. "The destiny of his family and the destiny of Chinese Americans as a political force in this country." These concerns took the shape of one specific goal; as Ted explained in a speech to the California Newspaper Advertising Executives Association earlier this year, "It was my family's dream to buy the *Examiner*."

'I learned from my father what newspapers meant to the community,' says Ted Fang, who will soon become the editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*. 'What I learned on my own is that newspapers are a business.'

As a boy, Ted Fang used to help his father by sweeping the newsroom floor of *Young China Daily*, but he was a reluctant candidate to fulfill his father's dream. Having witnessed the long nights and low pay that his father endured, he never planned to go into the newspaper business and to this day regards his success as a publisher with humility. His parents didn't intend for him to enter the family business either—"My parents attempted to preordain the careers of all their children," says Ted, "and I was preordained to be a doctor." But when the pre-med courseload at University of California, Berkeley, which he attended but left four credits short of a degree, failed to hold his interest, he found that despite his parents' wishes as well as his own, he "had ink in [his] blood." Ted says: "I learned from my father what newspapers meant to the community. What I learned on my own is that newspapers are a business."

Two of the Fangs' publications

The Independent, the flagship of the Fang business, isn't much to look at. It's cheaply designed, the writing is poor, and the coverage, at least when it comes to politics, is often too blatantly slanted to be taken seriously. Published three times a week, *The Independent* announces itself as "San Francisco's Neighborhood Paper" and makes an effort to cover local issues and stories that Ted Fang feels the two major dailies ignore, "like mom-and-pop stores having their tenth anniversary," he says.

The result is a grab bag of dull stories that would seem more at home in a small-town weekly ("SF to Rely More on Recycled Water" gets the front page) juxtaposed with screaming, tabloid-style headlines about local politics ("Reilly Campaign Implodes"). And despite isolated

San Francisco mayor Willie Brown presents Florence Fang with a proclamation declaring September 8, 2000, 'Florence Fang Day.'

KIM KOMENICH/*THE SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER*

streaks of admirable journalism, such as a 1991 series on lead contamination in a local public housing project, *The Independent* is legendary in San Francisco for not being read. Warren Hinckle's front-page column is accompanied by a photograph of its author—he is recognizable to thousands of San Franciscans as the guy whose face they step on as they walk out of the house in the morning.

By some accounts, San Francisco's two daily newspapers, the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner*, aren't much better. The papers both tend to load their front pages with wire-service copy, neither has taken the lead on a major story of national significance in recent years, and they are smarting from the recent dominance of Knight Ridder's *San Jose Mercury News*—which is based 50 miles to the south and launched a San Francisco edition in July—in covering the high-tech economy.

Though both San Francisco dailies date from the late 1800s, only the more successful *Chronicle* (with a circulation of 465,000) has the reserve that one might expect of a century-old newspaper. It is workmanlike in delivering the news and was for 45 years the home of the beloved late columnist Herb Caen. Its executive editor, Matt Wilson, keeps on his office wall a series of black-and-white photographs of the *Chronicle* newsroom from the 1920s, when it was built, through the 1980s, and the photos are distinguishable only by the length of the reporters' hair and shirt collars. Otherwise, the newsroom's spacious, efficient atmosphere appears to have remained consistent through the ages.

The *Examiner*, by contrast, is the obnoxious kid brother. Bombastic headlines scream from the front page, and left-wing screeds scream from the editorial pages in the rear. As an afternoon paper, the *Examiner* is the underdog to the stalwart *Chronicle*, with a circulation hovering around 100,000 and, consequently, a lower editorial budget. But it regularly and gleefully beats the *Chronicle* in city hall reporting; *Examiner* reporters Lance Williams and Chuck Finnie, for instance, have a virtual lock on covering a scandal in the city's minority-contracting program, and their coverage has in part prompted an FBI investigation. The *Examiner* newsroom, with its clut-

'Anyone who knows Willie Brown knows that he wouldn't have supported the sale [of the *Chronicle* to Hearst] unless the Fangs benefited,' says Phil Bronstein, the *Examiner*'s executive editor.

tered cubicle décor and televisions sprouting from the ceilings—has the air of a start-up despite the paper's age.

Despite their differences, though, the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* have more in common than one might expect. Both papers are housed in two jointly owned buildings connected by an aerial walkway at Mission and Fifth streets, in a rather sketchy area of San Francisco's downtown. Just around the corner is a city block full of flop motels and dive bars that are hopping by noon. Both were for years private, family-owned papers—the *Examiner* by The Hearst Corporation (William Randolph's grandson remains chairman of the board), which owns 11 other newspapers including the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and the *Houston Chronicle* and magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Esquire*; and the *Chronicle* by The Chronicle Publishing Company, which is in turn privately owned by the descendants of Michael and Charles de Young, the brothers who founded the paper in 1865.

Moreover, though the two papers' newsrooms compete vigorously for stories, the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* can't quite be called competitors—from an economic perspective they are virtually the same newspaper and have been since 1965. That's when The Hearst Corporation and Chronicle Publishing entered into a Joint Operating Agreement (JOA), under which their two papers, both of which had been suffering losses by competing directly, merged all but their editorial operations into one unit, The San Francisco Newspaper Agency (SFNA). Under the JOA, Hearst and Chronicle Publishing shared their advertising sales, printing facilities, distribution network, and prepress production, splitting the profits down the middle. The JOA allowed Hearst's *Examiner* to piggyback on the *Chronicle*'s success, taking half of every dollar in revenue even though the *Examiner* brings in far less money than the *Chronicle*. Under the tender mercies of the JOA, Hearst cleared $20 million in 1999 from what is, by all accounts, a failing newspaper.

This arrangement in turn gave the papers another common characteristic: They have both over the years been the targets of ire and litigation from the Fang family. Ted Fang calls the two dailies a "joint operating monster," and in 1994 the Fangs' holding company, Pan Asia Venture Capital Corporation, sued Hearst and the SFNA for "predatory pricing," alleging that the JOA allowed both papers to pool their resources and make lowball bids on city advertising contracts. Pan Asia won at trial in 1996, but three years later, an appellate court sent the case back for retrial; the suit was still in litigation in 1999 and would become a crucial pressure point in Ted Fang's behind-the-scenes crusade to acquire the *Examiner*.

Paper moves: Above, Frank Bennack (center), Hearst president and CEO, announces the company's purchase of the *Chronicle*; below, the *Examiner*'s executive editor, Phil Bronstein (left), and its publisher, Timothy White (center)

TOP: KATY RADDATZ, *THE SF EXAMINER*/AP PHOTO. BOTTOM: KOCI HERNANDEZ/*THE SF EXAMINER*/AP PHOTO

The battle for the *Examiner* began on August 6, 1999: The Hearst Corporation announced that it had purchased the *Chronicle* from the de Youngs for $660 million and would attempt to sell the *Examiner* or shut the paper down if it could not unload it, which was likely. The JOA was set to expire in 2005, at which point both the *Chronicle* and *Examiner* would have to disentangle all the assets they shared and compete head-to-head, a costly prospect for both papers. And Hearst knew that without the JOA, the *Examiner* was dead in the water.

The deal caused an uproar in a city that prides itself on its political activism, and Mayor Willie Brown pounced on Hearst for threatening to turn San Francisco into a one-newspaper town. Three years earlier, when rumors of a similar deal were circulating, Mayor Brown had written a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno requesting that the Justice Department examine whether such a purchase would cause "anti-competitive concerns for our local and neighborhood papers."

The business logic for Hearst was simple, however: The afternoon *Examiner* was a failing newspaper—its circulation has fallen 21 percent over the past decade—and Hearst had virtually no hope of turning that decline around. The morning *Chronicle*, on the other hand, was

Friends of the Fangs: Above, feared political consultant Jack Davis; left, *Independent* columnist Warren Hinckle; and inset, U.S. senator and former San Francisco mayor Dianne Feinstein

thriving, and the de Youngs were eager to sell it. They put it up for sale in June 1999, and Hearst jumped at the opportunity to own its more successful competitor, offering $660 million, at least $150 million more than other potential buyers.

By acquiring the *Chronicle*, Hearst had secured a long-term newspaper presence—the only presence, perhaps—in San Francisco. And it wouldn't be the first time a paper bought out its competitor: Joint Operating Agreements have been a part of the newspaper landscape since the late 1930s. As a Hearst lawyer pointed out in a 1999 letter to the Department of Justice, 27 cities have seen their major dailies enter into such agreements. At the time of the sale, 15 of those JOAs had been terminated, under circumstances in which only one of the two papers survived. The Department of Justice moved to prevent only one of those transactions, a fact that probably led Hearst to believe that the DOJ wouldn't intervene in San Francisco.

So all that was left for Hearst was to clear the transaction with the Department of Justice's antitrust division, dispose of the *Examiner*, and merge its staff with the *Chronicle*. (In the purchase agreement, the de Youngs required Hearst to retain all *Chronicle* employees.) That's when Hearst walked, largely unaware, into a fight with San Francisco's political machine—and lost to the tune of $66 million.

"Anybody who knows Willie Brown knows he wouldn't support the sale [of the *Chronicle*] unless the Fangs benefited," says Phil Bronstein, the *Examiner*'s executive editor. With his salt-and-pepper beard and square jaw, Bronstein is a handsome man—almost archetypically so, in the manner of his actress wife. He carries himself with the disarming confidence that he earned during his nearly 30-year career as a journalist, which includes a Pulitzer nomination for his dispatches from the Philippines during the toppling of Ferdinand Marcos's regime.

On this afternoon in September, Bronstein's office is a mess—stacks of newspapers erupt from the corners and other papers seem to cover every surface. Of course, no one could fault him for letting the place go a little. In about two months, on November 22, he and all of his employees will hand over the *Examiner* to Ted Fang and walk across the hall to the *Chronicle*, their new home. None of the 210 staffers at the *Examiner*—not even Bronstein—knows at the moment precisely what his job will be on that day. Hearst has promised employees at both papers a job at the new *Chronicle* but has been severely limited by the purchase agreement from coordinating the impending merger of the *Examiner* staff with the *Chronicle* staff or from discussing it with its own rank and file.

At the moment, Bronstein is talking not about his own uncertain future or that of his staff but about how the Fangs came to own the paper he has stewarded since 1991. "The political system was wired for that outcome," he says. "There was an inevitability about it given the way San Francisco politics works."

Here is an example of how it works: In late July 1999, Timothy White, the *Examiner*'s editor and publisher, and Hearst's loyal man on the ground in San Francisco, arranged a meeting with Willie Brown. White wanted to warn the mayor that in several days, Hearst would be announcing its purchase of the *Chronicle*. As he explained in an e-mail sent to his superiors in New York (which later became part of a court record), he "pitched [Brown] extensively for his support of our acquisition of the *Chronicle*, particularly urging his support of dropping a requirement (if any) to divest of the *Examiner*."

Willie Brown, who has been mayor of San Francisco since 1995, is a consummate political player and runs San Francisco with a charming, positively regal bearing. White is known in *Examiner* circles as a good boss who was a bit out of his depth in San Francisco's poisonous political environment. (He declined to be interviewed for this article.) As Bronstein puts it, "It took Tim a while to figure people out, and I'm not sure at the end of the day that he fully figured them out."

Had White figured Brown out, he would [CONTINUED ON PAGE 161]

HINCKLE: ROBERT ALTMAN; DAVIS: MICHAEL MACOR/*SF CHRONICLE*; FEINSTEIN: RICHARD ELLIS/LIAISON

Clinton By The Book

Presidential memoirs are met with big advances, big expectations, and big hype but are typically better in theory than in practice—depending on how much personal information the First Author is willing to reveal. Soon President Bill Clinton will likely start shopping around a memoir of his own. Will it solidify his legacy, or will his life story be remaindered?

By David Streitfeld

I could resist no longer. I pulled Monica closer and whispered, "I don't care if I'm impeached. I must have you. I may be the leader of the free world, but you rule my heart!" I pulled her down onto the couch, imagining that I heard my hero, John F. Kennedy, cheering me on. If you couldn't pick up babes in the Oval Office, he was pointing out, what was the point of being president?

Okay, President Bill Clinton's memoirs probably won't contain passages as juicy as that. He may have been the most indiscreet president in modern history, the one we know all too many intimate details about, yet the chances of a revelatory autobiography—one that, say, gives a convincing account of his involvement with Monica Lewinsky as well as a believable portrait of what must be the most closely examined yet least understood marriage in American history—are slim to none.

Partly, it's the nature of the office. "Clinton could write a good book," says author Gore Vidal, who has chronicled the American presidency in fact and fiction. "But being president gets you into bad habits. All candor goes." And partly it's the nature of Bill Clinton.

Candid or not, it's a given that the president's memoirs will be stacked on the front tables in Barnes & Noble and Borders in about two years.

The book will be anticipated by leaks in the newspapers, accompanied by excerpts in *Time* or *Newsweek*, and heralded by mornings with Katie, afternoons with Oprah, and evenings with Barbara. President Clinton will do endless public appearances, selling the book door to door if necessary. It's all practically ordained.

The presumptive Clinton book is a hot topic within publishing, but few of the publishers and editors contacted would address the question directly, since they will presumably have a high level of interest in President Clinton's memoir themselves. Every time a president turns his office over to a successor, whether in relative triumph, like Presidents Clinton and Reagan, or unwillingly, like Bush, Ford, Nixon, and Carter, the publishers come calling. The dance is always the same: Immediately after or even shortly before the president leaves the White House, discreet inquiries are made by a publisher or agent. The president meets with prospective publishers, charms them all, and picks one. A vast sum of money—at least by the standards of publishing—changes hands, and the amount is immediately leaked to the press. The happy publisher announces that the president will be writing the book himself and that it will be a volume for the ages.

The extent of the revelations in President Bill Clinton's expected memoir remains to be seen.

This moment is the high point of the memoir's existence. The prospect is almost always more enticing than the reality.

President Reagan's memoir, *An American Life*, was the best example of this process at work. Simon & Schuster negotiated a deal during his last days in office for a sum in the environs of $7 million. If that wasn't the largest advance any writer of any kind had ever received, it was at least in the neighborhood. But Reagan was the most popular president in decades, so the contract made sense. Simon & Schuster chief Richard Snyder called the deal "the book of the century," adding in an interview: "The president has advised me he is going to write it himself. I presume it's high on his list of priorities, and he's going to relish it." Reagan chimed in by press release: "I've got my pen in hand and I'm ready to get started."

Behind the scenes, it was a different story. Even the immediate recruitment of a ghostwriter—former *New York Times* reporter Robert Lindsey, author of the well-received story of two American spies, *The Falcon and the Snowman*—couldn't motivate Reagan to dwell on his past. Simon & Schuster became more worried when, as a sort of dry run for the memoirs, it published President Reagan's collected speeches in 1989. Initial hype that 100,000 copies would be issued gave way to a first printing of 65,000; one internal company sales document listed total sales of 18,300 by February 1991.

That failure forced the publisher to realize

Illustrations by Nick Higgins

that the memoir might not necessarily sell of its own accord. But President Reagan proved immune to editorial suggestion. He refused to mention his first wife, Jane Wyman, until the last moment, much less expand on his rather skimpy coverage of the Iran-Contra affair, his editor, Michael Korda, wrote in his own memoir, *Another Life*. "I hear it's a terrific book! One of these days I'm going to read it myself," Reagan said happily at a photo-op session at the publisher's New York offices when the book was finished. For a president often accused of exaggeration, this was apparently no less than the exact truth.

Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*, 1990

The response by the public and critics was less kind than that of the putative author's. *An American Life* spent a mere eight weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list and was drubbed by the critics. Korda declined to be interviewed for this story, but in *Another Life* he concluded that although people might have had affection for Ronald Reagan, "they had no curiosity to know more about him and were smart enough to guess that they wouldn't find out anything new from his book anyway." In short, he wrote, the book "was a disaster."

Even when presidential memoirs haven't been disasters, they've tended to be disappointments. Says Howard Kaminsky, who, as president of Warner Books in the mid-'70s, brought out *RN*, Richard Nixon's memoirs, "most of these memoirs only look good before they're written. Presidents don't write so much as burnish."

Kaminsky says Nixon's book was reasonably profitable. "We paid about $2 million...and it put Warner on the map." The same was true of Jimmy Carter's best-selling *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, which was issued by Bantam Books in 1982 when it was trying to make a statement with its hardcover list. But Gerald Ford's *A Time to Heal*, published in 1979 by Harper & Row, in association with Reader's Digest, was considered a disaster by any reckoning: an advance of about $1 million, sales of about 20,000.

Richard Nixon, *RN*, 1978

"People have tended to overpay for presidential memoirs," says Ashbel Green, the Knopf editor who published George Bush's non-memoir, *A World Transformed*, a foreign-policy tome written with former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft for which they received a reported $1 million. "They do it for the prestige, or to bask in the company of ex-presidents." Green declined to comment on the success (or failure) of Bush and Scowcroft's book.

An axiom in publishing is that there's always some house anxious to pay more than a project is worth. One consequence of the merger binge in publishing, however, is that only a handful of conglomerates realistically could and would pay top dollar for a presidential tome: the Bertelsmann empire, which includes Doubleday and Random House; HarperCollins, part of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.; Time Warner's Little, Brown and Warner Books; and Simon & Schuster, owned by Viacom. (Penguin Putnam, Inc., whose divisions include Putnam and Viking, could foot the bill, but on the rare occasion when this house has ventured into political waters, it has been a misfire. When it comes time to bid on President Clinton, Putnam chief Phyllis Grann will probably remember issuing former secretary of state James Baker's memoirs, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, for which she paid an estimated $650,000 but reportedly sold fewer than 20,000 copies. A Penguin Putnam spokeswoman remarked, "Clinton is not Baker; Baker is not Clinton. Each book is looked at case by case." The company wouldn't confirm or deny the Baker numbers.)

"The question is whether any of these players feels so strong about being the publisher of Bill Clinton that they will exceed what anyone else wants to offer," says Peter Osnos of PublicAffairs, who published Clinton at Times Books four years ago. "That was the situation with Jack Welch," the General Electric chief executive who recently decided to tell his story for a $7.1 million advance from Warner Books. In that deal's wake, former Clinton treasury secretary Robert Rubin scored $3.3 million from Random House, outdistancing by $600,000 or so the previous record-holder from the administration, George Stephanopoulos.

Both the Welch and Rubin deals might bode well for President Clinton. "A president of the United States, in for two terms, not with big world events but at least a swirl of events, should be able to exceed what Welch got," says Kaminsky. Other publishers, speaking on condition of anonymity, tend to think

THE CLINTON ERA BOOKSHELF

DONE DEALS

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS, *ALL TOO HUMAN: A POLITICAL EDUCATION*

REPORTED ADVANCE: $2.7 million ▸ Weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list: 15 **VERDICT:** "He was the pessimistic staffer, constantly worrying about consequences and fallout; the President was the optimistic star, convinced he could wing his way through his often self-inflicted troubles" (*The New York Times*). **REVELATION:** Stephanopoulos's criticism of Clinton was surprisingly candid for a former staffer given that the president was still in office.

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, *IT TAKES A VILLAGE AND OTHER LESSONS CHILDREN TEACH US*

REPORTED ADVANCE: None (and royalties went to charity) ▸ Weeks on best-seller list: 20 **VERDICT:** "Maybe...the president and the Democratic Party would be better off if she took a tougher look at her favorite social programs. But there is no denying her basic point: Children need a good start in life, and too many aren't getting one" (*The Washington Post*). **REVELATION:** None. Nor did the press look too hard—everyone's hands were full with Whitewater and Travelgate documents, which were released at the same time.

ROBERT B. REICH, *LOCKED IN THE CABINET*

REPORTED ADVANCE: approx. $300,000 ▸ Weeks on best-seller list: 7 **VERDICT:** "What distinguishes Reich from other Cabinet secretaries is not that he has a different value system, but that he is willing to violate the ordinary post-job code of behavior....His portrait of Clinton is personally fond but substantively negative" (*The New Republic*). **REVELATION:** Reich's book distorted certain congressional hearings and contained statements by Reich not reflected in the public record.

DAVID GERGEN: *EYEWITNESS TO POWER: THE ESSENCE OF LEADERSHIP, NIXON TO CLINTON*

REPORTED ADVANCE: approx. $400,000 ▸ Weeks on best-best-seller list: 4 **VERDICT:** "Gergen spins his own centrist credentials, noting that he was never as conservative as Reagan nor as liberal as Clinton, never as muddled as Ford nor as bull-goose loony as Nixon. A reporter when not in government, Gergen seems to have shed his journalistic instincts when he entered the White House" (*Los Angeles Times*). **REVELATION:** Clinton ceded many decisions to Hillary as compensation for his philandering.

ROBERT RUBIN, UNPUBLISHED

REPORTED ADVANCE: $3.3 million **VERDICT:** Uncertain; sold on the basis of a 16-page proposal to Random House; to be published in 2002. **REVELATION:** To be determined.

KAJA PERINA

CLINTON: LYNSEY ADDARIO/AP PHOTO. REICH: DONALD STAMPFLI/AP PHOTO. GERGEN: NEWSMAKERS. RUBIN: SANTIAGO LLANQUIN/AP PHOTO

THE CLINTON ERA BOOKSHELF

NEW DEALS?

We asked eight editors and literary agents to speculate on what books with these bylines might be worth—depending on the extent of the book's revelations—and the odds that they will be published at all. The consensus:

HILLARY CLINTON

ESTIMATED ADVANCE: $1 million–$7 million **PROBABILITY:** Most thought she'd write a memoir eventually but were divided over how soon. Most thought she stands to make more than her husband, given her potentially large female audience. **ODS THIS BOOK WILL BE PUBLISHED:** 2:10

CHELSEA CLINTON

ESTIMATED ADVANCE: $2 million–$3 million **PROBABILITY:** Editors agree that even the remotest confessions from the First Daughter would be "priceless [but] inconceivable—you can't assess the value of something that's never gonna happen." One editor counseled her to consider a "coming of age" book for young women. **ODDS:** 0:10

JANET RENO

ESTIMATED ADVANCE: $250,000–$1.5 million **PROBABILITY:** Reno has an autobiographical arsenal: more secrets than other cabinet members and a known distaste for Clinton. But she'd have to counter publishers' widespread perception that the book would be self-serving and attract little public interest (except among irate Republicans and conspiracy theorists). **ODDS:** 3:10

SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

ESTIMATED ADVANCE: $100,000–$300,000 **PROBABILITY:** Blumenthal denies a *Washington Post* report that he has already penned a book proposal but admits that he's likely to write a memoir shortly after leaving the White House. **ODDS:** 10:10

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT

ESTIMATED ADVANCE: $300,000–$2 million **PROBABILITY:** Given Albright's status as t first female secretary of state, the long tradition of memoirs by her predecessors, and her academic background, most believe Albright will write a memoir. Two editors suggested that she would try to take credit for Milosevic's fall from power, and one suggested that she will enlist her former spokesman James Rubin as coauthor. **ODDS:** 9:10

WILLIAM COHEN

ESTIMATED ADVANCE: $100,000–$300,000 **PROBABILITY:** Cohen has the inclination though not the most scintillating subject matter. The U.S. didn't go to war during his three years as secretary of defense, but he did write books before his stint in Clinton's cabinet, including novels and a volume of poetry. **ODDS:** 5:10

KAJA PERINA

President Clinton will go for slightly less than Welch: between $5 million and $7 million.

Even the lower figure would be impressive considering the track record of *Between Hope and History*, which Bill Clinton wrote in 1996 as his re-election campaign was under way. Out of 492,891 copies printed three months before his decisive victory over Bob Dole, roughly 125,000 sold, but for the publisher, it wasn't the usual financial disaster, because the president took no advance. Still, it isn't a good omen for his memoirs: Critics complained that it was singularly uninteresting. It didn't help that the very brief book—an essay, really—seemed overpriced at $16.95, nor that the president couldn't really do much to promote it.

Attorney Robert Barnett of the Washington law firm Williams & Connolly—who agents for George Stephanopoulos and Ted Koppel, among other politicos and journalists—declined to do more than confirm he would be representing Clinton in this and other post-presidential matters. But the White House hasn't changed hands yet, and many factors won't be decided until the last moment. It's possible that Clinton may end up doing a deal for more than one book, and that the first to be written won't be the traditional memoir. But considering that he owes his lawyers millions, it's inevitable that there will be some big book.

Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 1982

If any publisher deserves the Clinton deal as a reward for past services, it would be Simon & Schuster, which has just issued its third book by the first lady. The history of these illustrates the vagaries of political publishing: *It Takes a Village*, the first, was a big hit. The second, *Dear Socks, Dear Buddy: Kids' Letters to the First Pets*, appeared during a bout of Clinton fatigue, and was not. Expectations for the latest, *An Invitation to the White House*—an oversized volume on entertaining at the First Residence—are not overly optimistic: The announced first printing is 100,000 copies, hardly a blockbuster number.

Simon & Schuster has taken care of enough of the Clinton support team—advisers James Carville, Paul Begala, and David Gergen, and speechwriter Michael Waldman—to be considered the official administration publisher. "We are happy we have a good relationship with the first family," says Simon & Schuster publisher David Rosenthal diplomatically, though he wouldn't speculate about his interest in President Clinton's memoirs.

Whether it's Simon & Schuster or anyone else that buys them, it'll still be doing it on no more than a handshake and a hope that the stories told will be ones that about 1.5 million readers want to pay $35 to hear. "I think Clinton faces with this book the same problem that the curator of his presidential library is going to face: Where do we put all this impeachment stuff?" says Washington writer Christopher Buckley. "The answer is, in the basement."

A superb editor will be needed to prevent such a deep-sixing, or at least not make it so obvious. "The relationship between the editor and the author is going to define the book," says Osnos, who besides President Clinton has worked with political figures ranging from Nancy Reagan to Tip O'Neill. "A big part of figuring out how to do this right is dealing with things Clinton doesn't want to say, and yet still providing a convincing, accurate, historically satisfying record of his presidency." He could, Osnos suggests, approach the problem like this: "'Let's face it, the details of my relationship with Monica Lewinsky could not be better known. I have been interrogated, debriefed, given public depositions. There aren't any facts I can add,'" and so on, skating through a general mea culpa that will satisfy the reader while avoiding subjecting himself to further ignominy.

Edmund Morris, author of the controversial Reagan "memoir" *Dutch*, doesn't think it can be done successfully. "My reading of Clinton is that he's a cagey political person, and cagey political people write the most unreadable books." This happened even with Theodore Roosevelt, the second volume of whose life Morris is now writing. In TR's autobiography, "the part about his earlier life is quite delightful, but as soon as he gets to the presidency he becomes bland and boring. He had that caginess, and the concomitant desire to preach, that all presidents suffer from. There's a dead tone that comes when you try to address posterity."

Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 1885

Moreover, former presidents don't seem too receptive to advice about how to shape their stories. Korda

H. CLINTON: JOHN FILO, POOL/AP PHOTO; C. CLINTON: REUTERS PHOTOS; RENO: KARIN COOPER/AP PHOTO; BLUMENTHAL: ARCHIVE PHOTOS; ALBRIGHT: KAMENKO PAJIC/AP PHOTO; COHEN: AP/CHART WEERAWONG/AP PHOTO

mapped out for President Reagan a beginning in which the president, leaving office, would relate his thoughts as he flew back across the country for one last time on Air Force One. He would gaze down at the people sleeping far below, wondering what was in store for them, pontificating while pondering his own life's journey. "But no amount of prodding could get the president to reveal what his thoughts, if any, had been on that historic occasion," Korda recounts in his book.

In a sense, the old actor was merely demonstrating his intuitive understanding of audiences. After the initial burst of attention—a flurry driven more by sensation seekers than those curious about the historical record—few care about presidential memoirs at all. How much money they lose for the publisher up front can be argued, but it's undeniable that they don't contribute anything to the bottom line over the years.

It will help Bill Clinton that he's the first Democratic president since FDR to serve two terms in office, and that he's just about as popular. But even FDR couldn't help FDR when, early in his second term, he decided to publish a multivolume collection of his speeches and papers. It was the big book of 1937; every publisher wanted it. Random House won, but soon regretted it. "It was a rather dull collection," publisher Bennett Cerf recollected later. When *The Public Papers* appeared in 1938, popular emotion was running against Roosevelt. Random House sold 7,000 sets, but remaindered more than that. Cerf had no regrets. "I had a couple of weekends at Hyde Park with FDR and one at the White House—and you can't buy that for money."

Of course, Roosevelt never got the chance to write a true memoir. Ulysses S. Grant almost didn't either. Dying of throat cancer, he produced all by himself the only presidential memoir that everyone agrees is impressive—*Personal Memoirs* is even enshrined in the Library of America series of classic American literature. It sold about 300,000 copies by subscription in 1885, an astounding number for the time and pretty great even now.

But Grant had a secret weapon. He didn't write about his presidency, which was a failure, but about his leadership of the Union Army in the Civil War, in which he excelled. That's an option that President Clinton doesn't have. He didn't serve in the military and indeed famously did his best to avoid serving in Vietnam. If there's any drama to be discovered in his life, he'll have to find it in his White House years. But he'll probably opt for policy, not Monica. ■

BETTMAN/CORBIS

GETTING INSIDE THE MIND OF A PRESIDENT

Historically, presidential biographies—not autobiographies—have pulled back the curtains and shed new light on their subjects. After all, it's always easier to examine someone else's foibles than your own. Edmund Morris is an exemplar in the field: The first volume of his biography of the 26th president, The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt, *turned history into high art and won a Pulitzer Prize in the process; his recent biography of Ronald Reagan,* Dutch, *had well-connected tongues wagging from Washington to Wyoming with its odd—and much-criticized—use of fictionalized first-person passages. Here's what he was reading during a typical day's work on the second volume of Roosevelt's life.*

BY EDMUND MORRIS

All of these sources are within arm's length, and relate in some way to the book I'm doing and the book I've done:

● An old calendar for 1906, the days not just dates, but numbered cumulatively from 1 to 365. Thus I can tell at a glance how long TR gnashed his famous teeth over Congress's refusal to act on some prime piece of presidential legislation.

TR on the campaign trail, 1912

● *The Letters of Archie Butt* (1924) A best-seller in its time; Archibald Willingham Butt was military aide to TR in 1908-1909, and he wrote splendid gossipy letters home to his mother and sister-in-law. They were published posthumously after Major Butt went down in the *Titanic*.

● Jay Martin's *Who Am I This Time? Uncovering the Fictive Personality* (1988) A revelatory book, sent to me by the author in the aftermath of last year's controversy over *Dutch*. It is so persuasive in its argument that all of us—presidents, poets, teachers, reporters—see reality subjectively that I wish I'd been able to quote from it when Republican ideologues accused me of overemphasizing Reagan's dreamy persona.

● *Fields for President* (1939) A rare primer by W.C. Fields. *The Washington Post* asked me to do a piece about what President Clinton should do when he leaves office. I think Mr. Clinton will be inspired by this Fields formula for self-advancement: "1. Find out how much they gut. 2. Git it. 3. Git!"

● My own black-bound, red-cornered "Commonplace Book" of literary quotations copied out over the years. Opening it at random, I find this line from one of Keats's sonnets: "Oh! What a power hath white simplicity."

● *The Oxford American Dictionary* A necessary reference book for me, because I was educated in English English, and still need to be reminded that words like *pecker* alter in meaning when they cross the thirtieth meridian.

● Sylvia Jukes Morris's *Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Portrait of a First Lady* (1980) This elegant biography is indispensable to me—not just because I am married to its author, but because she has (through the cool refracting prism of Edith's personality) a feminine "take" on TR that is often more subtle than my own masculine one.

● Earle Looker, *The White House Gang* (1929) Another former best-seller, forgotten now, but the most delightful of all White House memoirs. It's a boy's eye view of what went on upstairs and downstairs at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in the early years of the twentieth century.

● Volume Five of *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (1952) There are eight volumes, each of them about a thousand pages long, in this prodigious collection.

● *The Poetry of Edwin Arlington Robinson* This great and unjustly neglected American poet (1869-1935) was saved from starvation in 1905 when TR read his *The Children of the Night* and appointed him to a federal office, on the understanding that he do nothing but write poetry.

● *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907) Adams, who lived just across Lafayette Square from TR, was incomparably qualified both to weigh the President seriously as a political phenomenon ("Power when wielded by abnormal energy is the most serious of facts") and savage him with hilarious malice ("The devil is whirling me round, in the shape of a grinning fiend with tusks and eye-glasses").

● *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (new paperback edition, 2000) This is on my desk, not just because every author likes to see his latest publication fresh from the press, but because I rejoice in what my editor writes in her attached note: "Beautiful, portable, flexible, profound." The second and third adjectives augur well for the book's success as a bug swatter.

This article is from contentville.com, where the full text can be found.

The Son also rises

Bob Guccione Jr. says his men's magazine, *Gear*, is both sexy and serious. His challenge is competing in a crowded field while contending with the legacy of his estranged father, *Penthouse* founder Bob Guccione Sr. By Abigail Pogrebin

Hello, Luv—great to see you!"

It's Bob Guccione Jr., gap-toothed, open-shirted, British-accented, calling out to a friend over deafening music and the crush of halter-topped women smoking and schmoozing in the disco-purple light. Guccione's the host of this party—he's rented out a Manhattan club, Spa, to celebrate the second birthday of his men's magazine, *Gear*. He stands out in this throng—not just because he's the editor and publisher but because he's one of the few people in the room over 40.

Make that 30—this is a kids' bash, and the crowd pressing around the open bar is so deep that Guccione Jr., who is 45, can't get a beer. "This is not easy," he says, smiling, as he snakes his way to the *Star Trek*-y counter. The bartender happens to be an exquisitely beautiful Asian woman, and Guccione Jr. shouts to her over the din: If she models, she should stop by the *Gear* office.

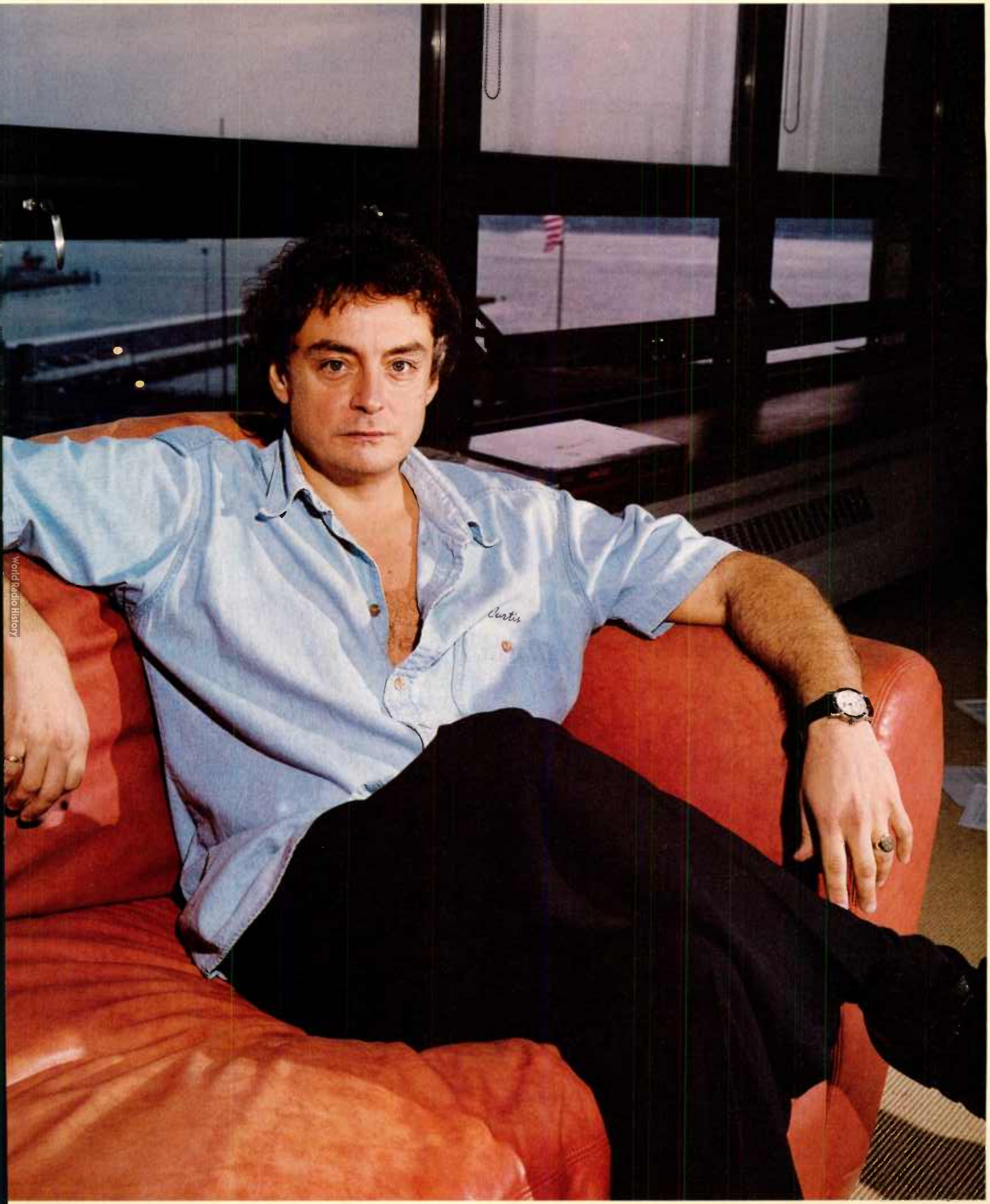
Hours later, the room has grown steadily smokier and the floor stickier, but Guccione, with his sneakers and unkempt helmet of hair, is indefatigable, warmly greeting anyone who taps him on the shoulder, whether a model or an advertiser. His clingy ex-girlfriend (who clearly hasn't quite absorbed the concept "ex"—she tells me they want a family together) hovers close by. "I can't let him out of my sight," she says with a laugh, not quite joking.

He's a toucher, a double-kisser; he pulls people close, keeps a hand snug around a woman's waist or a man's shoulders, introduces me to everyone from his best friend, with whom he skipped most of high school, to the color separators for the magazine.

By 11 P.M., I'm beginning to fade, but Guccione is trotting to the next party—his private dinner for 20 at Da Silvano, a favorite Greenwich Village trattoria and media hangout, which for years has functioned as his second dining room. The gregarious proprietor, Silvano Marchetto, rents his house in Tuscany to Guccione Jr. every summer. "I'm most myself there," Guccione Jr. says of his ancestral country, the one place, he says, where he manages to sit still. "I do nothing; tectonic plates move faster than I do in Italy," he adds, laughing.

Watching him, however, it's hard to imagine that Guccione Jr. ever decelerates. As he hops up from the table to make sure his guests have ample salami and wine, you can't help thinking he's a restless bon vivant, the image of his father—

Bob Guccione Jr. at the Manhattan offices of his magazine, *Gear*. Photographs by Jessica Wynne



the notorious *Penthouse* magazine publisher and editor in chief Bob Guccione Sr., gold-chained defender of free speech, free love, and pubic hair.

And it's true that, superficially at least, the son and the father have plenty in common. Both are iconoclasts: self-taught, tireless publishing mavens who skipped college, loved to flout taboos, and created edgy alternatives to dominant magazines. Guccione Sr.'s *Penthouse*, launched in 1965, proved a more impudent, seamier foil to *Playboy*, and Guccione Jr.'s magazine *Spin*, started in 1985, would identify, before *Rolling Stone* noticed, a sea change in popular music: the moment when rock became grunge (Nirvana, Hole, Nine Inch Nails) and grunge became a lifestyle unto itself.

What's more, both were determined to change the genre they had reinvigorated. Just as his dad had featured real journalism—articles challenging the Mafia, the pharmaceutical industry, and traditional cancer science—alongside nude pictorials, Guccione Jr. juxtaposed music and serious reporting: articles that questioned prevailing AIDS research at the height of the pandemic, the alleged financial scam surrounding Live Aid, and the Atlanta child murders. He invited guest editors—from Spike Lee to the head of Amnesty International—to oversee issues of the magazine.

Guccione Jr. calls the parallel between his and his father's landmark magazines "ironic." "To go up against this monolithic market with this completely maverick take—this long shot, and everyone saying, 'You know, we're just waiting for you to die,'" he continues. "This is the big similarity."

Left: Muriel and Bob Guccione Sr. in 1957, celebrating Guccione Jr.'s second birthday. Right: Guccione Jr. with his mother at a benefit, 1995.

But those likenesses haven't necessarily inspired an editorial and emotional communion. *Spin* was a success, but it marked the nadir of the fractious relationship between father and son. Guccione Sr. provided *Spin*'s initial funding, but in the second year of publication he pulled the plug. Father and son haven't spoken in the 13 years since. Guccione Jr. won't explain exactly what happened. "I never have and neither has he," says Guccione Jr. "I'm not being coy. It's just that so few things are ever left in their appropriate place. And family stuff really should be left in the family—imperfections and silliness intact." (Guccione Sr.'s spokeswoman, Jackie Markham, nixes the possibility of an interview with her boss without even consulting him. "He usually doesn't cooperate on anything to do with his son," says Markham. E-mailed questions weren't answered.)

Still, his father's legacy is clearly always lurking beneath the surface, especially as Guccione Jr. faces the challenge of honing *Gear* in the shadow of both his father's name and all its associations—and in a magazine culture redefined by *Maxim*, the three-year-old men's magazine phenomenon that has set the standard for sex, sass, and service. The irony, of course, is that *Maxim*, the current sensation, which other men's publications must ignore or try to outwit, is to a great degree a direct descendant of *Penthouse*. And despite what media critics deride as its frothy fare and frathouse humor, last June *Maxim*'s total average paid circulation hit an astounding 2.2 million for the previous six months. *Gear*'s readership for 2000—459,000, according to the U.S. Postal Service—seems puny by comparison, but that number is actually eminently respectable for a magazine in its infancy. "It's not fantastic," says circulation expert Dan Capell, "but it's good." And getting better, according to Guccione Jr., who says circulation as of the December/January issue was up to 500,000—420,000 subscriptions with an average of 100,000 newsstand sales. If his numbers are accurate—they will be confirmed by the Audit Bureau of Circulations in early 2001—it would mean the magazine has reached the industry's magic number of a half-million. (By contrast, the last audit for *Details* magazine—before its revamp—showed its circulation at 583,000; *Esquire*'s was 676,000 at last count.) As as for ad pages, *Gear* falls well below the industry benchmark of 1,000 pages per year: In 1999, it sold only 335, according to Publishers Information Bureau.

The men's magazine marketplace is as cutthroat as it is crowded—*Maxim* shares the field with *FHM*, *Stuff*, *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Details*, among others—so it is crucial that *Gear* have a successful third year. *Esquire* and the new *Details* both enjoy the resources of their flush corporate parents—Hearst and Fairchild Publications, respectively—but *Gear* is wholly self-funded: This year will determine whether its mix of sex and seriousness will be able to claim its niche in the category.

It's as if Guccione Jr.—after selling *Spin* in 1997 for $43 million—jumped immediately into a venture that flirts with his inheritance. "It has been my vision," says Guccione Jr., "to put out a men's magazine that dealt with popular culture and fashion and which regarded sex as part of pop culture." And the sex is not *Penthouse*'s brand of sexy: "[We] don't show nudity; it's mystery," says Guccione Jr. "We're saying, 'Here's a beautiful woman; her shirt's open, but you don't see what's inside.' You don't want to see what's inside. Because you know what's inside."

When it comes to his own magazine, Guccione Jr. seems more focused on content than what's inside the shirt. Indeed, where his father is often pegged as a pornographer, Guccione Jr. is more readily called a journalist. His zeal for the tough exposé, the memorable interview, is unambiguous. "He has a very strong sense of story," says James Truman, who was the executive editor of *Spin* for a short period and is now editorial director for Condé Nast Publications. "[He] has an absolute fearlessness, both in challenging authority and in disregarding what's parochially hip and cultish." He is also not easily denied, Truman adds. "I admire his determination," he says. "*Spin* could have gone under many times, and it was always his strength of will that kept it going."

Indeed, Guccione Jr. kept *Spin* breathing on his own after his father withdrew support. After supplying the start-up money, Guccione Sr. welcomed it into the family empire (which at that time included *Omni* and *Longevity* magazines) when the first issues proved solid. But he disowned it just as

Spin was a success, but it also marked the nadir of father and son's fractious relationship. Guccione Sr. provided _Spin_'s initial

Bob Guccione Sr., founder of *Penthouse*, at home in 1990 in Manhattan. 'He's a tough Sicilian bastard,' says Guccione Jr. of his father, 'and I mean that lovingly.'

DEREK HUDSON/CORBIS OUTLINE

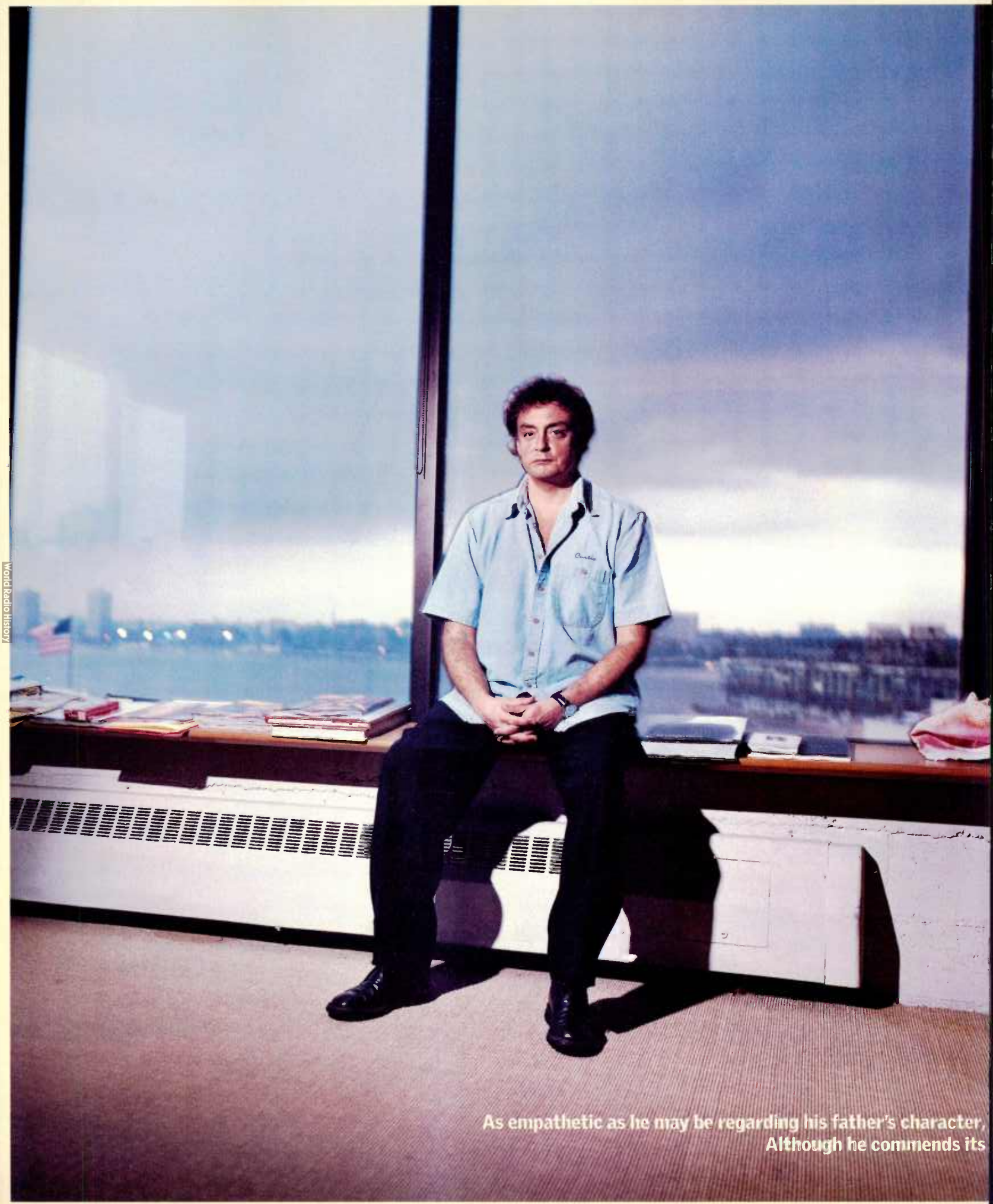
quickly, when his company, General Media International, Inc., hit a financial dip. His son was devastated, and, after a year of struggling on his own, nearly gave up. "I just broke down," he recalls. "Wept, 'I can't go on....I'm destroyed; I'm so sad.'" He managed to relaunch the magazine after only a few missed issues, thanks to a loyal staff and a benevolent investor.

Gear's sex columnist, Eurydice, a former *Spin* staff writer and Brown University creative-writing professor, says Guccione Jr. never folds his tent, whether he's being sued for sexual harassment or advertisers are threatening to back out, as they did when Eurydice wrote about lesbian "blood sports," which involve bloodletting to enhance orgasm.

The December 2000 issue, featuring Paula Jones

"He had every reason to say, 'Well, this [concept] was a mistake,'" Eurydice says, "but he didn't." She will always be grateful that Guccione Jr. asked her to "go around the country to get the sexual state of the union" after she left academia six years ago. Her reporting in both *Spin* and *Gear* has been explicit, but she insists *Gear* is no *Penthouse*. "I don't see many similarities. I don't think that Bob's [Guccione Jr.'s] interest is either to sensationalize or just to sell copies. The *Penthouse* legacy is the objectification of the genitals....The good side of [*Penthouse*] is, of course, freedom from repression, freedom of speech, freedom of having it all out there. Which I'm all for. But the negative side of it is this objectification, the fact that there is no voice behind it, no gaze...Bob-the-son has tried to turn that equation around: My whole column is exactly the opposite—to find the voice, the vocabulary for the sexual self."

funding, but in its second year of publication he pulled the plug. The two haven't spoken in the 13 years since.



As empathetic as he may be regarding his father's character,
Although he commends its

Two weeks after the Spa bash, Guccione Jr. is in a black T-shirt and nylon running pants, sautéing vegetables in his downtown-Manhattan triplex—a description that belies the apartment's modesty. Situated on one of the few unpretty streets in Greenwich Village, the lobby is grim, and the elevator is dicey. For the past 13 years, he's been living in this cozy, cramped, unpretentious apartment—prefab kitchen on the ground floor, bachelor's de rigueur black leather couch on the second, a king-size bed filling the third, and last—the reason he says he's kept the apartment so long—the outdoor terrace, which offers a twinkling view of the city.

Guccione Jr. seems entirely at ease as he moves energetically about his kitchen, coring tomatoes and crushing garlic, occasionally folding a piece of prosciutto into his mouth or sipping red wine. He's a happy cook, and his regular dinner parties seem to function as informal salons, with past guests as diverse as rock star John Mellencamp and beat poet Allen Ginsberg; it seems every friend or colleague has at one time been invited.

Tonight he's preparing what he calls his "handcuff pasta."

"I beg your pardon?" I ask.

"I call it that because the first time I made it for a woman, she asked me to handcuff her afterwards," he says with a laugh. He says I probably shouldn't print that, but I plead.

He doles out generous servings, tears off paper towels for napkins, and guides me up to the patio to eat. It's a nice setting, but the deck furniture is rusty and the plants are dead, and I can't help wondering if this lifestyle is in deliberate, defiant contrast to his father's palace 57 blocks uptown.

Guccione Sr.'s villa-in-the-city is an extravagance on the Upper East Side. The night I get to play voyeur, he's opened his doors to a benefit for Fighters' Initiative for Support and Training (FIST), an organization that assists retired boxers. Guccione Sr., who is somewhat of a recluse, is absent, but his presence is unmistakable in the stretches of marble, the countless chandeliers, the '70s white shag rug. Beefy ex-boxers and women in gowns peer in and out of more than 30 magnificent rooms. The indoor swimming pool stretches between stone medallions that date from before Christ. I climb the stairway feeling underdressed, and catch my breath when I notice I'm inches from a Botticelli, a Chagall, a Matisse—a few pieces from Guccione Sr.'s legendary multimillion-dollar art collection.

Jane Homlish, who has been Guccione Sr.'s executive assistant and art curator for nearly 30 years, explains that it took Guccione Sr. three years to complete the mansion, for which he hired Italian artisans. The machismo of the night's event seems appropriate—there's cigar smoke from an array of complimentary cigars, two perfect *Penthouse* Pets available for posing (or draping, as the case may be), and Michael Imperioli, a star from *The Sopranos*. Famed chef Larry Forgione is there to oversee his hors d'oeuvres.

But Guccione Jr. didn't grow up in this opulence. His father, who was born in Brooklyn, raised his family in London, where he settled after many lean years as a struggling painter in Europe. When Guccione Sr. finally took a job at a local newspaper, he noticed *Playboy*'s success on British newsstands and decided he should offer something saltier. He took the photographs for *Penthouse* himself. His son was 10 when the magazine launched. "I was very young," says Guccione Jr., "so I wasn't very much aware of what it meant to be the son of the publisher of *Penthouse*. I never saw a *Penthouse*—I never saw a *Penthouse* photo shoot; my father didn't want any of us boys to see it." The magazine exploded (at its height in 1979, *Penthouse* sold 4.7 million copies), and Guccione built an empire that, for a time, dwarfed Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* and put Guccione on the annual *Forbes* list of the world's wealthiest. (In 1991, General Media was estimated to be worth $200 million. The company's 1999 sales were $78.8 million.)

After his parents divorced, Guccione Jr., then 15, moved with his mother—with whom he remains close—to Tenafly, New Jersey. Two years later, after an argument with his father ("No surprise there," he notes dryly), he returned to England and published his first magazine, *A Step-by-Step Guide to Kung Fu*. "I called my mother to say I was alive and well and I'm doing this magazine," he recalls. "She said, 'Oh, I told your father, and he said he didn't care what you did, as long as you don't use his name.' I said, 'Fine; tell him I'll use mine.'" He smiles. "That's really how I feel about the name: It's my name. It's not about what baggage he carries; God knows I carry enough of my own." Is it a daily burden? "Uh, no. Absolutely not," he declares, then immediately reverses himself: "But it probably is." He pauses, then adds: "But I don't feel it."

Back in America at 19, Guccione Jr. created *Rock Superstars*, a monthly magazine that unfolded into a rock band poster, a clever gimmick that never took off. In 1978, he started working at Dad's General Media International. In 1980, he was managing the company's marketing and circulation departments, when, to his father's disappointment, he rejected the company he was being groomed to run. "He was supposed to be the heir apparent," says Eurydice. "He was the oldest. And he chose to break away."

It's not as if he's the only one in the family who has clashed with the patriarch: Although his sister, Nina, is still in the family business and his brother Nicholas runs General Media's porn film division, his brother Anthony's relationship with their father makes Guccione Jr.'s look like a love connection: Anthony is being sued in federal court by General Media, which alleges that Anthony and a college friend set up fake corporations to swindle General Media into fraudulent contracts from which they profited. Anthony is countersuing.

Messier still, Anthony's feud with his father became public record in September 1999, after he and his mother were quoted in the *New York Post*'s Page Six gossip column (which Guccione Jr. says his mother and brother now regret). The item, titled "Guccione's Ex: He Won't Help Me," concerned Muriel Guccione's claim that her ex-husband was cutting her off because she took Anthony in after his father evicted him from his $1.5 million loft for back rent. "Bob is an evil, wicked man," Muriel Guccione told the *Post*. "He is intent on persecuting my son, who is dead broke and [CONTINUED ON PAGE 165]

Opposite: Guccione Jr. in his office. Right: *Spin* magazine proved a major success. Guccione Jr. hopes *Gear* will be as influential.

Guccione Jr. is less forthcoming about his father's magazine. 'graphic genius' and pioneering sexual frankness, he also says that at some point, it fell out of touch.

WRONG TURNS

Defects on Firestone tires, the biggest consumer-safety story of the decade, were first reported by a local TV news station four years ago. Why did it take so long for the national media to catch on?

By Jim Edwards

Local Houston television reporter Stephen Gauvain and his cameraman, Dwight Payne, finished their field report for KTRK-TV's 6 P.M. newscast and prepared to head home, south on Interstate 45, to Houston. It was June 17, 1996, and Gauvain, a bearded, professorial man who had just celebrated his 51st birthday, was covering the trial in Huntsville, Texas, of a man accused of kidnapping and murdering a 12-year-old boy. Testimony in the case had ended for the day, and Gauvain and Payne packed their equipment into their Ford Explorer and pulled onto the interstate.

The car was traveling at about 70 miles per hour in clear weather. Without warning, the Explorer skidded off the road and onto a grassy embankment, where it flipped end over end, coming to rest on a feeder road. Payne, the driver, was held inside the tumbling vehicle by his seat belt and avoided serious injury. Gauvain, who hadn't buckled up, was ejected 60 feet and killed instantly.

Gauvain had worked at KTRK, Houston's ABC affiliate, for 14 years, and when staffers learned of his death they were too distraught to air their show unassisted. Don Kobos, then a reporter and now assistant news director, remembers, "Even during the funeral service, the other media provided cameras and gave us pictures and covered some other general news events to help us get our show on, because we were all emotional wrecks."

According to the police report, "Unit #1's left rear tire tread separated from the tire causing the driver to lose control." The tire itself, a Firestone, had not deflated.

A Firestone tire from a sport utility vehicle after its tread peeled off

LEFT RICK GRAVES/TONY STONE RIGHT ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY/AP PHOTO

Gauvain's widow, Jan, sued Bridgestone/Firestone Inc. three months later. The suit claimed, "The tire [a Firestone ATX] which caused this accident was defective and unreasonably dangerous in its design...."

KTRK investigative reporter Wayne Dolcefino says he had suspected that the event might be worth exploring: "We took all those [Firestone] tires off our news trucks immediately." Richard Longoria, the news director at the time, explains, "We wanted to make sure we were protecting our employees."

But except for changing the tires, nobody at the station acted on the suspicions.

"It was not a secret in our newsroom what happened and what we thought had happened," says Dolcefino. "I think we were the ones who should have carried the baton, but...I don't even remember it being discussed...it was so personal."

Eventually, another Houston station did a story on the cause of Gauvain's death. The piece aired on KPRC, the NBC affiliate, four months after the accident, and it was the first report on tread-separation problems with Firestone tires. Over the course of four years, three local TV stations in other parts of the country and, most notably, another Houston station also reported on the danger of tread separation. During that time, several prominent news organizations—including NBC's *Dateline*, ABC's *20/20*, and *CBS Evening News*—were presented with evidence that the tires used as standard equipment on Ford Explorers were killing people, but each chose not to pursue it.

Firestone's tire defect finally made headlines this past summer—four years after the KPRC story raised the issue—spurring a recall of at least 6 million tires and a congressional inquiry. The death count has surpassed 100.

In the Information Age, when even the most flimsy snippet of news or gossip can ricochet from the Internet to cable TV to the broadcast networks and major newspapers in a matter of hours, it's telling that this story took so long to surface

nationally. There was no sex, no celebrity, no obvious villain. Yet one of the most common consumer products, the humble car tire, was literally killing people, and more immediate national attention would no doubt have saved lives.

Retracing the Firestone debacle reveals a trail of missed opportunities and in many cases a lack of energy on the part of the media—energy that is readily devoted to stories that are far less important. Just by broadcasting a consumer-protection agency's phone number, for instance, a local station could have made all the difference. The tale also reveals flaws in how the media interact with the government officials responsible for consumer safety—and that journalists who rely heavily on official pronouncements may be missing stories that are crucial to their readers and viewers.

Chris Henao, Anna Werner, and David Raziq, the KHOU team that finally prompted the government to investigate Firestone

Local TV stations eventually pushed the story into the national consciousness. They were in a perfect position to pick up on the problem: Only a local station would find a flipped truck newsworthy and then notice that a tire had failed in an odd way. But precisely because local news first reported the problem with Firestone tires, the story fell into a black hole. Even when a significant local story does get broadcast, it can easily become lost in an ocean of crime segments, accident reports, and weather updates. Unlike newspapers or magazines, local TV news archives are, for the most part, not easily accessible. Unless the right people are watching at the right time, a report can disappear forever.

But most important, the missed opportunities are the result of a self-defeating, circular relationship between watchdogs in the media and the government. It took the media years to suggest that consumers contact the government about problems with Firestone tires. And because the government hadn't received any product-safety complaints, it didn't know there was a problem. So when other media called the government to inquire about a potential defect with the tires, officials told them they hadn't received any complaints. The media, as a result, often decided to drop the story.

In retrospect, it seems obvious that Houston would become the epicenter of the Firestone saga. It's no coincidence that three of the network affiliates there had crucial roles in the scandal. Each uses Ford Explorers equipped with Firestone tires to ferry staff and reporters around—the cars' size and versatility make them a perfect camera crew vehicle. Also, the weather in Houston is hot almost all year round—residents say that the period when it's "not hot" lasts for a few weeks in January. Consequently, tires are under climate stresses that don't exist to the north. What's more, Houston is ground zero of this country's devotion to sports utility vehicles. Take a drive in a sedan on Interstate 610, which isn't an interstate at all because it goes in a giant circle around the city, and you can't see past the suburban assault vehicle in front of you.

Brette Lea, the station's former afternoon anchor and occasional reporter at Houston's NBC affiliate, KPRC, looks like the stereotype of a female newscaster—she's an attractive blonde with a serious tone who can highlight her Southern lilt when she needs to turn on the charm. Lea's career has taken her away from reporting and toward anchoring. She left the station in 1997 to work full time as an anchor in Nashville.

Growing up in Houston, Lea had watched Stephen Gauvain from her living room, so she paid special attention to the news of his death. "I remember seeing video of the tire and it being called a blowout, and looking at the tire and going, 'Hmmm, they call it a blowout but it's full of air,'" Lea recalls. "I thought that was odd. So I filed it away in the back of my head."

Brette Lea, KPRC's former anchor

Lea was not in the best position to investigate the Gauvain accident or Firestone tires. Her digging had to be done between the makeup chair and the anchor desk, without a producer or photographer to help her. In September 1996, the month Jan Gauvain filed her lawsuit, Lea covered another accident involving a Ford Explorer. A young man and his buddy had been driving along Beltway 8, another of Houston's orbital freeways, when the Ford went out of control and plummeted from an overpass. The passenger was killed, and the driver was left in a full-body cast. Lea noticed that the tread was missing on one of the car's Firestone tires. "I can't remember if it was the left rear or right, but whatever it was, all the accidents, it was in the exact same position, exact same wheel," she said. She found it "disturbing." (Four years later, Ford Motor Company vice-president Helen Petrauskas confirmed Lea's misgivings when she testified to Congress: "Across the board in tread separation cases...there has a been a predominance of it occurring on the left side....You know, our engineers have spent a lot of time brainstorming that idea....But we don't really have a good explanation for that.")

The driver of this Explorer also sued Firestone. At the end of September 1996, Lea found herself reporting on yet another flipped Explorer. She noticed, again, that the damaged tire had not deflated. Instead, the tread had simply peeled off. Lea had heard that this problem was associated with hot areas, so she called the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for information. "It came back there was no complaints," Lea said. (NHTSA representatives do not dispute Lea's recollection, but can't confirm it, either. They don't remember her call.)

One month later, Lea broadcast the results of her probe.

TOP: ROBYN HUGHES. BOTTOM: COURTESY OF WKRN NASHVILLE

The report was remarkably prescient, stating the Firestone-Explorer connection explicitly. The issue of tread separation—an obscure problem for the layperson—was prominently described. But with the lengthy rebuttal from Firestone and without any mention of NHTSA, it's easy to see how the story could be dismissed as a sensational take on a run of freak accidents.

Nevertheless, viewers' response, says Lea, was "the oddest thing I've ever experienced in my journalism career."

"I estimate we got dozens of calls through the switchboard. I spoke personally with about 24," Lea says. Of those, "about half actually applied to the ATX [Firestone] and Explorer mix...most of those were minor cases" with no fatalities. The story might have triggered an investigation and recall, but, crucially, the broadcast did not include NHTSA's phone number. The former Houston anchor also says that she didn't forward any of the callers to the government, though she did refer some to Firestone. "I don't even remember," she says. "We didn't know it was a gigantic thing."

Sue Bailey, NHTSA's director, sat in front of Congress four years later and explained that her agency's efforts to respond to the defect were "not enough." Indeed, NHTSA has only about 20 investigators to cover the entire auto industry. As a result, the agency gets much of its information on possible defects from consumers who contact it.

The tread separated on this Ford Explorer's left rear tire—just as Brette Lea had noticed.

Because KPRC didn't publish the NHTSA's phone number or refer callers to the agency, NHTSA had little chance of knowing there had been about 12 Firestone-related accidents in the Houston area alone. (NHTSA launched an investigation four years later based on about 30 accidents nationwide.) And no other news organizations were interested in advancing Lea's stories. "To the best of my recollection we did not get calls from newspapers or other TV stations," says Nancy Shafran, KPRC's news director. Although Lea's story—essentially just four spookily similar accidents—was not worthy of national news, Shafran says that "we thought we were onto something here," so she called *Dateline NBC*. Lea recalls that *Dateline* phoned her back, "but nothing ever came of it." (*Dateline* has declined to comment.)

KPRC, like the other stations that confronted the defect, changed the tires on all its Explorers. Most members of the public, however, still weren't informed enough to take similar precautions.

Lea left KPRC in 1997 to take a job at the ABC affiliate in Nashville, the home, coincidentally, of Firestone's headquarters. After Lea arrived in Nashville, she did more research but couldn't find any new cases. "They lack the heat [necessary to stress the tire] in Tennessee," she says.

Before she left, KPRC changed the tires on all its Explorers, as KTRK had following Gauvain's death. Most members of the public, however, were still not informed enough to take similar precautions.

For the next three years, only one news organization reported on the tire separation problem, even though the accidents—and lawsuits—were piling up. In February 1997, Chicago WMAQ-TV reporter Dave Savini, a former tire salesman, did a story demonstrating how a ballpoint pen can be inserted between the tread and the understructure of a tire that has begun to separate. Savini's piece, which reported on an "industrywide problem," referred to "dozens of lawsuits" across 11 states, including "Texas 1996, three serious crashes, this one a fatal rollover"—a reference to the accidents in Lea's stories. The report made no mention of NHTSA—maintaining the circle of silence that started at KPRC.

Nobody picked up on Savini's story. "I don't recall it making much of a big hit," he says. But one national news organization was interested.

Attorney Bruce Kaster, a source for Savini's story, has filed about 50 complaints against tire companies over the past decade, including six suits against Firestone. In late 1998, Kaster, who lives in Ocala, Florida, got a call from Mary Van Horn, a producer at *20/20*. Kaster says that she "was trying to find out from me whether this was a more significant problem than the traditional tread belt separations that I had been talking about for over a decade." (Indeed, stories about tread separation on radial tires have been knocking around the business press since 1978, when 14 million Firestone radials were recalled.)

Kaster says he told Van Horn, "I don't know at this point whether [the Firestone ATX] is just a continuation of the generic problem. I suspect that it [CONTINUED ON PAGE 168]

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY/AP PHOTO

Discussing a new volume of his correspondence, Hunter S. Thompson sounds off on drugs, his influence, and the myth of himself as America's original Gonzo journalist. By Seth Mnookin

Fear and Writing

Thirty years ago, Hunter S. Thompson, like H.L. Mencken before him, forced America to look at journalism as an organic literature. He wrote as if he had to bare his soul: The inherent chaos of his style (run-on sentences, bizarre addenda, personal digressions) and the breadth of his subject matter (the Kentucky Derby, presidential politics, orgiastic binges) made Thompson's writing as intimate as it was revelatory.

This month brings the publication of *Fear and Loathing in America*, the second volume in a planned trilogy of Thompson's letters. The 700-plus-page book spans from 1968, one year after the release of *Hell's Angels*, a savage account of life with the legendary outlaw biker club, made Thompson an instant icon of America's edgy, subjective New Journalism, to 1976, by which time Thompson had literally become a cartoon character, the inspiration for Doonesbury's "Uncle Duke." In between, the 1971 publication of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Thompson's quasi-fictional account of a drug-soaked adventure covering a motorcycle race and district attorneys' conference, confirmed Thompson as an American genius, a satirist and cultural critic to be compared with Mark Twain and Norman Mailer; and *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*, Thompson's coverage of the 1972 presidential election, became a brilliant, if not baroque, display of political reportage. Reviewing *Las Vegas* in *The New York Times*, Crawford Woods wrote that Thompson had "written himself into the history of American literature in what I suspect will be a permanent way.... [H]e moves with the cool integrity of an artist indifferent to his reception." The cool artist, the fiery populist, the inimitable agitator and the drugged-out freak all live on in this new volume of letters, with writing as vivid as anything Thompson has ever produced.

IT WAS THOMPSON—not Woodward and Bernstein, not Ben Bradlee, not James "Scotty" Reston nor Jimmy Breslin nor Mike Royko—who fueled my dreams of becoming a journalist. One story in particular sealed the deal: "The Great Shark Hunt," which appeared in *Playboy* in December 1974. I was 16 when I first read it and have returned to it—as a way of recharging my professional batteries—at least two dozen times since then. It's a long, twisted tale that starts in the hours before dawn, when many of his stories begin, with Thompson staring at the ocean from a hotel room. Within a couple of pages, Thompson describes the adventure that will consume the rest of the narrative: He and his "technical advisor," Yail Bloor, need to escape from Cozumel, Mexico, without ponying up for any of their numerous hotel, rental car, or other sundry bills, all of which are left unpaid when the PR team for a local fishing tournament decides Thompson is "too weird" to be what he claims—a writer on assignment for America's premier men's magazine. In his relentless, jackhammer prose, Thompson uses himself as the fulcrum for a portrait of "white trash run amok on foreign shores; an appalling kind of story, but not without a certain human-interest quotient." Of course, Thompson did not journey to Mexico only to cover a sport-fishing event: A month earlier he had left 50 units of pure MDA, a hallucinatory tranquilizer, stashed in the shark pool of a Cozumel aquarium.

As journalism, "The Great Shark Hunt" falls far short of the sublime level Thompson achieves elsewhere; uncovering the depravity of rich, tasteless gringos isn't exactly a scoop.

PAUL HARRIS/LIAISON

Hunter S. Thompson in his cabin at Woody Creek, Colorado, 1992. 'I don't think I'm the one who should be assessing my influence,' he says. 'More-qualified people have.'

And the writing, although invigorating and often hysterically funny, isn't up there with Thompson's best. But the exuberance is infectious—the love of adventure palpable—and the realization that you could make a career seeking this kind of adventure sold me more than clandestine encounters with Deep Throat ever could.

And then there were the drugs. Thompson's clear-eyed debauchery, and the immediacy with which he described it, thrilled me, as it has many acolytes over the past three decades. As the writer Timothy Ferris, Thompson's former *Rolling Stone* colleague, says, "Hunter has remained out on the frontiers of extreme and indulgent behavior when most people either rode back or perished. In terms of drugs, and high-speed driving, and alcohol, and explosives, and firearms, in terms of that constellation of risk, very few people ever get into all of that in the first place. A vanishing few stay there and survive for decades....Hunter's living for a lot of people now. I think there's a certain vicarious identification, particularly [among] males, who think they would like to do what he does but can't."

Indeed, Thompson has long served as a kind of inspirational anti-hero, an embodiment of youthful disdain for the establishment. That Thompson's conclusions often feel so much fresher, so much more prescient and insightful than those of quotidian journalists, gives him a gravitas missing from the countless writers who seem to write about drugs for drugs' sake. Thompson's writing has a wild-edged brilliance and comes with the apposite implication that his reckless indulgence fueled, if not fermented, his best work. Take the ending of "The Great Shark Hunt," in which Thompson, ripped on a ferocious combination of acid, speed, cocaine, and booze, staggers through customs in San Antonio, Texas, leaving a trail of bright-orange amphetamine pills in his wake: "Well a lot of madness has flowed under our various bridges since then, and we have all presumably learned a lot of things. John Dean is in prison, Richard Nixon has quit and been pardoned by his hand-picked successor, and my feeling for national politics is about the same as my feeling for deep-sea fishing, buying land in Cozumel or anything else where the losers end up thrashing around in the water on a barbed hook."

As a teenage journalist-to-be, I wanted to write like Thompson: ellipses signifying the ever-charging quality of my thinking, capitalized words broadcasting Greater Truths. I wanted to live like Thompson: too many drugs, too much whiskey, too loud rock 'n' roll. I emulated his affectations, smoking Dunhill cigarettes—the brand Thompson still chain-smokes—with a small cigarette holder, which he has made his trademark. And for a long while I thought that drugs would help make me a great writer, would help me bypass the necessary years of labor and tortured revisions. It took years, and many painful lessons, to rid myself of this notion. But that's another story.

Most contemporary profiles of Thompson are either lionizing or mocking

I was thinking about "The Great Shark Hunt"—about drugs and adventure and losers thrashing around on a hook—as I drove down Snowmass Mountain one moonless night this August on my way to Owl Farm, Thompson's myth-besotted compound outside Aspen. The trip had the feeling of a pilgrimage, but one that was coming a decade too late. I was going to Owl Farm to talk to Thompson about *Fear and Loathing in America*, and about his legacy, and about journalism, and I didn't know what to expect or even what I wanted to find. It's been years—decades, really—since Thompson has written anything that truly inspired me. Most contemporary profiles of Thompson are made up of either rank lionization or condescending mockery; for a generation of journalists raised on the mythologies of Hunter S. Thompson, he is either a god or a hack, an idol or a childish fancy. I wasn't sure which caricature I was hoping for: Would I prefer to find Thompson a half-mad, incoherent buffoon? Or would I rather that Thompson continue to confound expectations, a 63-year-old committed degenerate who's still the smartest guy in town?

DAVE ALLOCCA/AP PHOTO

Johnny Depp, Thompson, and Matt Dillon at the 25th-anniversary celebration for *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, New York, 1996

FEAR AND LOATHING IN AMERICA provides as vital a snapshot of American journalism in the '60s and '70s as any book ever will. As a historical document, it offers copious raw material. Magazines were born—*Rolling Stone*, *Scanlan's Monthly*, *Aspen Wallposter*, *True*—and many of those magazines died. Journalism reached the peak of its power with the resignation of Richard M. Nixon. Political movements, such as the hippie-, biker-, and youth-fueled "Freak Power," erupted and then just as suddenly flamed out. And Thompson was in the midst of it all, squabbling with Jann Wenner, *Rolling Stone*'s publisher and one of Thompson's earliest and most ardent boosters, over money and insurance; running for sheriff of Colorado's Pitkin County on a Freak Power ticket; threatening to sue *The Washington Post*'s Sally Quinn for having flippantly misquoted him in *Esquire* to the effect that "at least 45%" of what he writes is true.

But *Fear and Loathing in America* is more than a document of the times. Thompson put as much energy and care into his epistolary efforts as he did into his journalism (and, with an eye toward the future, saved carbon copies of his correspondence). And although Thompson's prose often seems to be spun from whole cloth, a kind of primal outpouring of twisted genius, the letters show just how much the originator of Gonzo journalism—who once professed that his aim was "to buy a thick notebook and write everything down as it happened, and then send it in, unedited"—struggled with his craft. In a long 1970 missive to Jim Silberman, his editor at Random House, Thompson wrestles with a follow-up assignment to *Hell's Angels*. In the letter, Thompson tries to work through some of his ideas about journalism and his own craft. "I've had a lot of trouble with the notion of

mixing up a fictional narrative with a series of straight journalistic scenes," he writes. "I'm convinced it can work, and I've done it before, but the problem now is that I'm so self-conscious about the mixture that I can't let it work. The fiction part strikes me as bulls–t and the journalism seems dated and useless [....] It's embarrassing to think that I can't compete, in book form, with cop-outs like [the films] *Medium Cool* and *Easy Rider*...but the compulsion to write something better and more real than those things has left me with what amounts to nothing at all—except a bundle of weird article carbons."

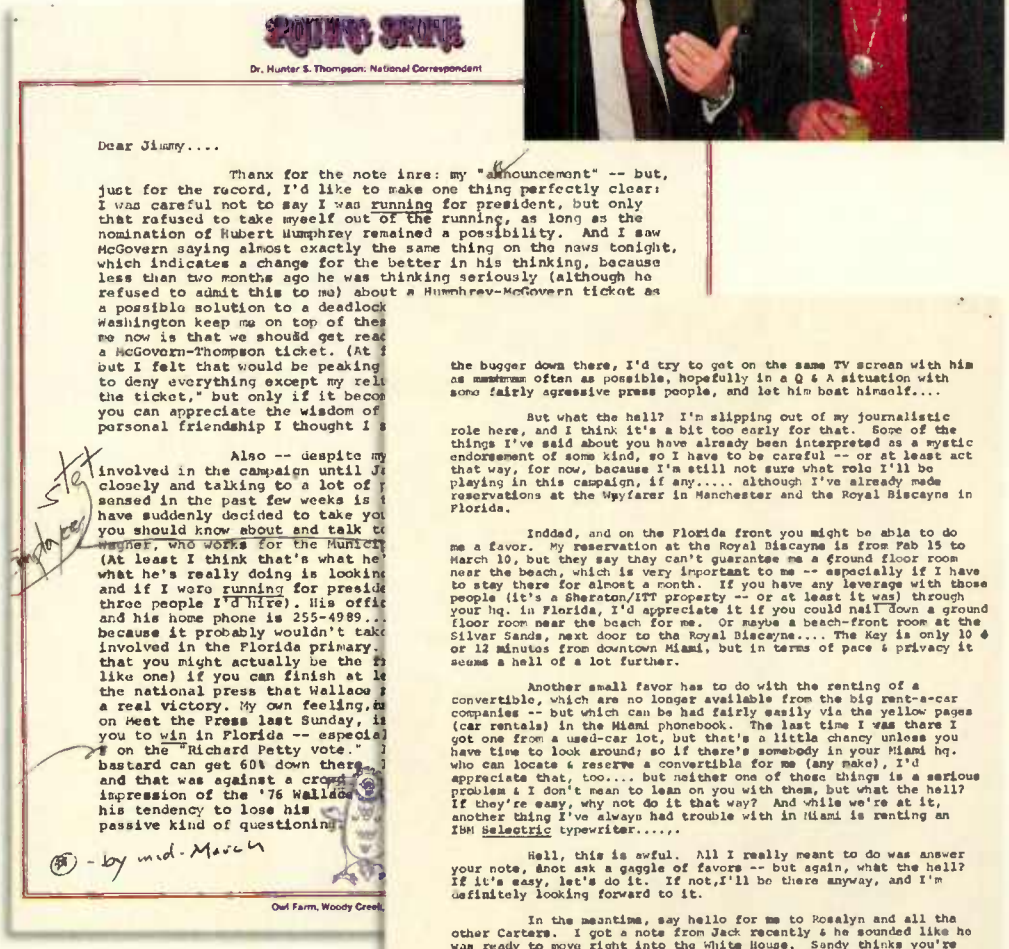
Another letter to Silberman, written a year later, contains what seems to be *Fear and Loathing in America*'s biggest revelation: that Thompson was not on drugs during either the "reporting" or writing of *Las Vegas*, a book with this legendary opening line: "We were somewhere around Barstow on the edge of the desert when the drugs began to take hold." The book goes on to describe the contents of a car trunk filled with "two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers...and also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of Budweiser, a pint of raw ether, and two dozen amyls." In the June 1971 letter, Thompson writes that he is depressed that Silberman says he can tell the book's drug use is a contrived pose: "All I ask is that you keep your opinions on my drug-diet for that weekend to yourself. As I noted, the nature (& specifics) of the piece has already fooled the editors of *Rolling Stone* [where the piece originally ran as a two-part series]. They're absolutely convinced, on the basis of what they've read, that I spent my expense money on drugs and went out to Las Vegas for a ranking freakout. Probably we should leave it this way; it makes it all the more astounding, that I could emerge from that heinous experience with a story."

It's unlikely that these letters are the ones that will receive the most attention. The ferocious back-and-forths with Wenner will interest gossip columnists more, and the correspondences with Jimmy Carter and Pat Buchanan will interest the history buffs. But it's Thompson's letters about the writing life that the myth of Hunter S. Thompson as a drugged wild child, vomiting out perfect prose. In fact, he has always been more of a workman—and stylist—than he is given credit for. While still in his twenties he would sit at his typewriter and copy pages from Hemingway and Faulkner and Fitzgerald word for word, just to get the feel for the rhythms of the language. He still refuses to write on a word processor, because he believes that computers divorce writers from their labor.

IT WAS THAT LAST LETTER to Silberman that Thompson was reading when I first walked into his kitchen that moonless night in August. *Fear and Loathing in America* was scheduled to be released in less than four months, and Thompson was still culling the volume's final selections. Marysue Rucci, Thompson's editor at Simon & Schuster (and a friend of mine—she was my entrée into Owl Farm), was there, as was Douglas Brinkley, the University of New Orleans historian who was overseeing the project. Anita Bejmuk, one of Thompson's two full-time assistants, was serving oysters and booze, and a couple of local Thompson aficionados were making suggestions and filming the proceedings. The television was turned to ESPN, and taped to each side of the set was a hand-lettered sign that read, "No Music + Bad TV = Bad Mood + No Pages." Thompson's house is a kind of living museum, with faxes and postcards and photographs and scribblings attached to every available surface. As I walked in Thompson was saying, about that day's squabble with Jann Wenner, "I'm clearly the most reasonable person, maybe in the nation, to deal with." (Thompson and Wenner communicate like an old married couple, bickering with a fond familiarity. The next night, Thompson cracked that Wenner's autobiography could be titled *I Screwed Them All*.)

Thompson was wearing an Indianapolis Colts jersey with his [CONTINUED ON PAGE 169]

Right: *Rolling Stone* founder Jann Wenner and Thompson celebrate the publication of the first volume of Thompson's letters in 1997. Below: A 1975 letter to Jimmy Carter.



ROLLING STONE

Dr. Hunter S. Thompson: National Correspondent

Dear Jimmy....

Thanx for the note inre: my "announcement" -- but, just for the record, I'd like to make one thing perfectly clear: I was careful not to say I was running for president, but only that refused to take myself out of the running, as long as the nomination of Hubert Humphrey remained a possibility. And I saw McGovern saying almost exactly the same thing on the news tonight, which indicates a change for the better in his thinking, because less than two months ago he was thinking seriously (although he refused to admit this to me) about a Humphrey-McGovern ticket as a possible solution to a deadlock

Also -- despite my involved in the campaign until J closely and talking to a lot of sensed in the past few weeks is have suddenly decided to take yo you should know about and talk t Wagner, who works for the Municip (At least I think that's what he what he's really doing is lookin and if I were running for preside three people I'd hire). His offic and his home phone is 255-4989... because it probably wouldn't tak involved in the Florida primary. that you might actually be the f like one) if you can finish at l the national press that Wallace a real victory. My own feeling, on Meet the Press last Sunday, i you to win in Florida -- especial on the "Richard Petty vote." bastard can get 60% down there, and that was against a cro impression of the '76 Wallac his tendency to lose his passive kind of questionin

- by mid-March

Owl Farm, Woody Creek,

the bugger down there, I'd try to get on the same TV screen with him as maximum often as possible, hopefully in a Q & A situation with some fairly agressive press people, and let him beat himself....

But what the hell? I'm slipping out of my journalistic role here, and I think it's a bit too early for that. Some of the things I've said about you have already been interpreted as a mystic endorsement of some kind, so I have to be careful -- or at least act that way, for now, because I'm still not sure what role I'll be playing in this campaign, if any..... although I've already made reservations at the Wayfarer in Manchester and the Royal Biscayne in Florida.

Indded, and on the Florida front you might be able to do me a favor. My reservation at the Royal Biscayne is from Feb 15 to March 10, but they say they can't guarantee me a ground floor room near the beach, which is very important to me -- especially if I have to stay there for almost a month. If you have any leverage with those people (it's a Sheraton/ITT property -- or at least it was) through your hq. in Florida, I'd appreciate it if you could nail down a ground floor room near the beach for me. Or maybe a beach-front room at the Silver Sands, next door to the Royal Biscayne.... The Key is only 10 & or 12 minutes from downtown Miami, but in terms of pace & privacy it seems a hell of a lot further.

Another small favor has to do with the renting of a convertible, which are no longer available from the big rent-a-car companies -- but which can be had fairly easily via the yellow pages (car rentals) in the Miami phonebook. The last time I was there I got one from a used-car lot, but that's a little chancy unless you have time to look around; so if there's somebody in your Miami hq. who can locate & reserve a convertible for me (any make), I'd appreciate that, too.... but neither one of these things is a serious problem & I don't mean to lean on you with them, but what the hell? If they're easy, why not do it that way? And while we're at it, another thing I've always had trouble with in Miami is renting an IBM Selectric typewriter.....

Hell, this is awful. All I really meant to do was answer your note, &not ask a gaggle of favors -- but again, what the hell? If it's easy, let's do it. If not,I'll be there anyway, and I'm definitely looking forward to it.

In the meantime, say hello for me to Rosalyn and all the other Carters. I got a note from Jack recently & he sounded like he was ready to move right into the White House. Sandy thinks you're all crazy for wanting to live in Washington, and I tend to agree... but good luck my anyway, and I'll see you in New Hampshire.

Hunter

PHOTO: MARINA HARNEY; LETTERS: COURTESY OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON ARCHIVES

The diary of an unlikely game-show contestant—who, despite his pop-culture cluelessness and aversion to prime-time TV, couldn't escape the media mania that is *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. By Joe Kelleher

The Player

MY NAME IS JOE. I'm 45 years old. And I have a confession: I'm a nerd.

Until July, I was living a happy existence as an anesthesiologist with a wife and two kids in San Diego. My friends and colleagues knew nothing of the affliction that had haunted my early years—memorizing all the U.S. presidents at the age of 8, for instance, or my compulsions involving the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—and I liked it that way.

Then I fell off the wagon.

In August 1999, my wife, Darci, handed me the phone and a 900 number. "Try putting all that junk in your head to use," she said.

"What's this?"

"*Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*."

"What's that?"

Four years of med school, four years of residency, and seven years of parenthood had added up to a 15-year period during which I barely watched TV: I didn't know Regis from Remus (or even Romulus). But I dialed.

An automated female voice began: "Arrange these four words into the title of a novel: (1) sun (2) rises (3) the (4) also."

Huh? I was confused. Which number was "the"? Two? Three? I punched the keys in a panic.

"I'm sorry; that was an incorrect answer!"

They allowed two calls per day. Five days and ten phone calls later, I was still trying.

I SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT COMING. Although I'd been functioning well in a stable job, it masked a shady past. In the mid-seventies, I majored in philosophy and went on to earn a master's in it, too. Then I got accepted to law school. That lasted ten weeks. But after a few more years of aimlessness, I was ready to shape up. I focused my ambitions and plowed through med school. It helped that I'd fallen in love. My wife, who is also an anesthesiologist, was good for me.

Until she became an enabler, that is.

The infernal phone quizzes she nudged me into require a variety of skills—individually easy, collectively not. Three different questions are posed each time you call in. If you're smart, you write down the choices as they are read. Then you order them in your head, translate that order into a numerical sequence—2-4-3-1—and punch that sequence into the keypad. And you

The author pondering the questions on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. Photographs by Adrian de Lucca

have to do it all in ten seconds. After several tries I was getting to the third and hardest question much of the time—but never past it.

When I was asked to place the acting Baldwin brothers in order of their birth, earliest first (Alec, Daniel, William, and Stephen), I banged in a random sequence. *Ask me about the periodic table or something!* I thought.

"I'm sorry; that was an incorrect answer! You must correctly answer all three questions to continue. Thanks for playing!"

The next day, Darci told me that the phone lines were closed. The show had all the contestants it needed.

"Cool," I said, and went on with my simple life.

MAY 26—NINE MONTHS LATER: The show was seeking contestants again. There had been complaints about the toll charge for the 900 number; now an 800 number limited callers to once a day.

"Not again," I said to Darci. "This ain't my thing."

She dialed the new number and put the phone in my hand—again.

"Place these European cities in clockwise order...." Bang-bang-bang-bang. "I'm sorry...!"

"There's some writing on the wall here," I said. "We need to be reading it."

But I kept calling. The next day, the show's automated voice asked me to put some words in alphabetical order. Then she wanted four states ranked by size, biggest to smallest. Then she wanted four scientists arranged by the years of their birth.

Bang-bang-bang-bang.

"Now you'll select a tape date!"

"Darci!" I yelled. "I made it!" But she didn't answer. She was on the other side of the house putting our 5-year-old son, Thomas, to bed.

"Each contest day, 40 players for each episode are randomly selected from among all players who choose the same episode!"

Oh, I thought, deflated. *There was more.*

If my name was drawn, I would be called tomorrow between noon and 3 P.M. Eastern time, I was told. The voice read a list of tape dates.

That night I checked the ABC website and found the official rules. The program opens the phone lines for about ten days (this time it was for six) every month or two, and during each period they average 240,000 callers per day; roughly 6 percent answer the questions correctly and qualify to select from a list of tape dates. The producers randomly whittle down the several thousand people asking to be on each episode to more than 200 by the end of the call-in period.

I decided I wouldn't exactly be hanging by the phone tomorrow.

IT WAS A LAZY DAY, a Saturday. During the first half of the crucial 9-to-noon period Pacific time, I was lying around the house, but only by virtue of Newton's First Law of Motion: Objects at rest tend to stay that way.

Eventually I got restless and told my son I'd take him out. "These yahoos aren't calling," I said to Darci. "Page me if you need to."

Thomas and I hit Mitch's Surf Shop on Pearl Street in La Jolla, then stopped at Baskin-Robbins for an ice-cream cone. I took a lick. The pager went off.

My wife told me that the phone lines were closed. *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* had all the contestants it needed. 'Cool,' I said, and went on with my simple life.

Our physician group has a priority code for pages, which Darci and I use domestically as well. A phone number followed by a 3 means "answer when you get around to it," which describes 90 percent of the calls. The remainder are 2s, which means "call right now." Theoretically there's also a 1, which is a screaming emergency and had never been invoked.

This was a 1.

I ushered my bewildered son into the car, gunned it, and got on the cell phone.

"They called," said Darci. She told me that I blew it by not being there, but they were going to call back in ten minutes for their only follow-up. "If you're not here, you forfeit."

Minutes later, I crashed through the front door. The phone rang, and a man told me that I'd qualified for the second round. I'd be doing a second phone quiz—the same five questions for all 240 whose names were drawn. Ten of us would go to New York as finalists.

He fired off a series of qualifying questions: Was I a candidate for political office? Did I work for ABC, Disney, or Valleycrest Productions (the company that produces the show)? He told me I should begin thinking about my "phone-a-friends." I could call one to help with a single question on the show, but I could line up as many as five friends in advance and then choose the one I thought was best at the time.

When I hung up, Darci said: "You've got another quiz? You need to get ready."

"There's nothing you can do to get ready for this thing," I said. "You either know stuff or you don't."

She gave me a look. It was at about this time that her name changed from Darci to Coach.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14: the second round. I called the number and punched in my ID. I turned on the speakerphone. I'd been warned against it—room noise can cut off the speaker momentarily—but I didn't want a receiver shoved against my ear while taking dictation.

First, I answered a relatively easy mathematical question, followed by one about film, then one on geography. So far, so good.

"List these authors in order of their birth, earliest first: (1) E – (CLICK) – ong."

E-ong? What? I'd bumped the phone!

"(2) Sebastian Junger (3) Ernest Hemingway (4) Ezra Pound."

I tried not to panic. Who the hell is E-ong? Ten seconds! Help! Erica Jong? Bang-bang-bang-bang!

I breathed. One more.

"List these TV sitcom characters in the order of their debut, earliest first."

Bastards.

"(1) Latka Gravas (2) Max Klinger (3) Screech Powers (4) Balki Bartokomous."

I threw Darci a desperate glance. She shrugged.

I give up, I thought. I punched Screech-Max-Latka-Balki and said, "Game over."

"Thank you! You must be by your phone between 4 and 8 P.M. Eastern time to find out if you qualified!"

Two hundred and forty people took the quiz. Ten would go to New York. Those who

got all five questions correct had first dibs; a random drawing would choose from the ranks of those who'd gotten four.

I SAT AT MY DESK that afternoon, paying bills, ruminating over Balki Bartokomous's cosmic significance. I had checked Ezra's and Ernest's birthdates. I had gotten those right. Assuming no miscues other than Balki, I had four. I found out that Balki was Bronson Pinchot's character on *Perfect Strangers*, a late-eighties TV show that aired while I was an overworked intern. How was I supposed to know about him?

The phone rang, and to my amazement it was a woman from *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*.

"I'm sure glad to hear from you," I said as suavely as possible.

She laughed, read me a travel release agreement, and told me to bring two changes of clothes to the studio.

"So I'm really going to New York?"

"Yes, you are! You'll be a finalist, one of the ten people at the start of the show, waving at the camera. Congratulations."

I sat back and tried to let it sink in. I'd just won the chance to make a complete ass of myself in front of 30 million people.

A CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED WALL of serene fatalism stood between me and the game. As I told Darci, you either know the question or you don't. What's the point in preparing?

This wall crumbled brick by brick, then all at once. The easygoing dad, the kindly anesthesiologist, disappeared. I relapsed into a grind, a compulsive, trivia-breathing nerd.

Within days, I had acquired the *World Almanac*, *The New York Times Almanac*, and *People* magazine's *People Almanac*. Soon the *Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows* and the New York Public Library's *Book of Answers* followed; my mother mailed Wallace and Wallechinsky's ancient *People's Almanac*. I scoffed at that one until I flipped it open and my eye fell on the answer to a million-dollar question from the samples we had ("How long does it take for the light from the Sun to reach the Earth? Eight minutes"). I turned around immediately and bought *The People's Almanac Presents the 20th Century* for good measure.

My family and I found ourselves in the grip of something fierce. We got the CD-ROM

Above: The author gets a handshake and a fake check from Regis and (below left) a hug from his wife, Darci. Below right: Displaying the check for the camera.

ALL PHOTOS MARIA MELIN/ABC

Millionaire game, useful for honing "lifeline" strategies. We amassed a databank of previous show questions. We developed a couple hundred "fastest finger" questions, which were crucial to my training. To get in the "Hot Seat," across from Regis, I would have to win a fastest-finger qualifying round by answering a multiple-part question in the quickest time, beating out the nine other contestants.

Relaxation during this period consisted of kicking back in front of the tube with the whole family and watching *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. During one such moment of family togetherness, I sat on the couch, preparing to watch a fastest-finger competition, when a disconnected computer keyboard dropped into my lap. I looked up and saw Darci holding a stopwatch.

"Ready?" she said.

"Hey, I'm relaxing here." Did she really expect me to practice—again—by playing along with the show's contestants?

She glared at me. "Answer it."

"List these states of the Confederacy in order from east to west," read Regis. "(A) Louisiana (B) Georgia (C) Mississippi (D) Alabama."

I sighed and punched them in.

"Six-point-one seconds. Why so long?"

"My brain's resting. Sorry."

"Not good enough, Joe."

"Hey, look at their times! I'd be second out of ten!"

"Not good enough."

She took the keyboard away. Julia, age 8, ever ready to comfort a dumb animal in distress, snuggled up to me and whispered, "Don't worry, Daddy. She says that about my homework all the time."

WE APPROACHED THE PHONE-A-FRIEND LIST, like everything else, as if it were the invasion of Normandy. Five friends and I would have to cover the world of trivia. I rated my strengths and weaknesses on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 = blithering idiot, 10 = genius): authors, literature, pop fiction: 8; sports: 3; anything in *People* magazine: 2.

We needed a mix of trivia generalists and pop-culture specialists. For the first generalist, I reached far back into my philosophy-grad-student past and called Kurt, now a San Francisco State faculty member with a Ph.D. in philosophy and [CONTINUED ON PAGE 170]

Out of sight is out of mind
IS TRUE OF MOST WE LEAVE BEHIND A.H. Clough

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BOOKS

Getting a handle on Christopher Hitchens • Media coffee-table books for the holidays • Images of rock and roll on the tube • The business of Christmas books • How the Democrats almost wrapped up Silicon Valley • Spinning the public-relations experts • A masterful biography of Alistair Cooke • The last word: Eugene L. Pogany on his new book, the Catholic Church, and Jews

ESTABLISHMENT RADICAL

BY JONATHAN MAHLER

Christopher Hitchens is one of the most prolific products of what he once dubbed "the vulgar industry of journalism." Rarely does a week pass when his silky prose and sneering charm aren't oozing out of one periodical or another. Every couple of years, these columns are either expanded into mischievously titled books such as *The Missionary Position*, his screed against Mother Teresa, and *No One Left To Lie To*, his polemic against the Clintons, or assembled into dense collections, including *For the Sake of Argument*, a compendium of his political writings, and the new *Unacknowledged Legislation* (Verso), an assemblage of his literary criticism.

So where to begin? How about with two books that he has not yet written but merely threatened to write: *Guilty as Hell: A Short History of the American Left*, and the companion volume, *Soft on Crime: The American Right from Nixon to North*. Whose camp does that leave him in? Well, that's just the point. You could call Hitchens a self-styled Trotskyite with a chronic libertarian twitch. But let's make this easier: Hitchens is, at bottom, a deliberate provocateur, a punditocrat who subscribes to the belief that it's better to be unpredictable than right.

"[I]t is sometimes necessary for a radical critic to be contemptuous of 'public opinion,'" Hitchens wrote a few years back in an essay on H. L. Mencken. "Cynicism, which is most often the affectation of conservatives, can also be part of the armor of those who are prepared to go through life as a minority of one." Hitchens is not merely prepared to go through life that way; he has made it his mission to do so, and thus far he's doing a mighty fine job. He's the perpetually embattled loner, a professional controversialist, the Steve Dunleavy of the highbrow set.

There's a time-honored tradition here; it's the freebooting British radical loosed on Washington. Erik Tarloff, who parodied the genus in his beltway-based novel *Face-Time*, defined it thus to *The Washington Post*: "They're usually well educated, usually Oxbridge, from the upper middle class or better but affecting a seedy or raffish quality and fairly cynical about American politics." Assuming that "fairly" was intended ironically, it's not a bad approximation of Hitchens. He's an Oxford man, with raffishness to spare, but there are some critical differences between him and his fellow Fleet Street expatriates. Hitchens's father wasn't upper-crust; he was a Navy man, and Hitch's blood doesn't exactly run blue. In the late 1980s he discovered that his mother was Jewish (her family's original name was...Blumenthal), a discovery that dovetailed rather conveniently with his consistently anti-Israel perspective.

More to the point, Hitchens has achieved a status unknown to his transatlantic peers such as Alexander Cockburn, James Wood, and Anthony Haden-Guest. He is The Beatles to their Dave Clark Five, a phenomenon, an institution. Hitch may make his living playing the role of the radical outsider—"in Clinton's Washington, it is a positive honor to be despised," he once wrote—but preaching the poor man's gospel does not prevent him from taking the rich man's money. He is the radical from Condé Nast, and the paradox could not be richer. His two principal outlets are *The Nation*, the left-of-liberal weekly, and the mother of all glossies, *Vanity Fair*, whose meat and potatoes is celebrity profiles and high-society crime. It gets better: For several years, Hitch's work for *Vanity Fair* appeared under the header "Cultural Elite"—recent subjects include *The Great Gatsby*, re-enactors of the Civil War, and Dorothy Parker (the last of which provoked an

Christopher Hitchens believes it's better to be unpredictable than right.

STEVE BRODNER

accusation of literary appropriation addressed in this magazine; see "Talk Back," March 2000). His *Nation* column, a soapbox for his campaign against the death penalty, soft money, and Clinton's mishandling of Kosovo, is called "Minority Report."

Hitchens's penthouse in the swanky Wyoming condominiums on Columbia Road was, until recently, the site of the glamorous *Vanity Fair* bash following the annual White House Correspondents' Dinner. When asked by Molly Ivins a couple of years back about his participation in a most unusual *Nation* fund-raiser—write us a check and sail around the Caribbean with a handful of our writers—Hitchens replied, "Nothing's too good for the working class." As Leon Wieseltier of *The New Republic* dryly remarks, "He puts the social back in socialist."

HITCHENS IS THE PERPETUALLY EMBATTLED LONER, A PROFESSIONAL CONTROVERSIALIST.

Like the poet James Fenton and the novelist Julian Barnes, Hitchens made his name writing for the *New Statesman* in 1970s London. He came to America in the 1980s, and with the help of Ronald Reagan, an ideal foil for his dismissive snort, he hit the ground running as a pundit. Another Hitchens soon emerged as well in the pages of *The New York Times Book Review* and *The New York Review of Books*, one who was considerably more nuanced and insightful. With a few exceptions, the snideness that courses through his purely political writing is largely absent from his new collection: Reading the introduction to *Unacknowledged Legislation*, you can hardly believe that it was clacked out on the same word processor that produces his over-heated political ruminations: "I read and re-read the writers who have allowed me to phrase these imperfect critiques and appreciations, and am grateful for the role they have let themselves play in my own inner life. Perhaps, with effort, we could begin to transcend the pessimistic definition of poetry that describes it as the element lost in translation."

Hitchens writes inspiringly of Oscar Wilde—"May he ever encourage us to think that the bores and the bullies and the literal minds need not always win"—and of one of my heroes, Murray Kempton. Nearly all of the essays are implicitly political (the title is taken from a Percy Bysshe Shelley quote describing poets as the world's "unacknowledged legislators"), and Hitchens's disdain for American populism shines through in a pair of particularly nasty attacks on the two Toms—Wolfe and Clancy. But for the most part, Hitch heeds his own warning: "[H]esitate once, hesitate twice, hesitate a hundred times before employing political standards as a device for the analysis and appreciation of poetry."

Such generosity is all the more surprising when you recall Hitchens's rabid pursuit of his favorite bête noir, Bill Clinton. Week after week, Hitch hammered away at the American president, accusing him of being a crook, a coward, a conservative...a rapist. Think of any left-wing critique of Clinton—the hiring of Dick Morris, the firing of Joycelyn Elders, the abandonment of Lani Guinier, the execution of Rickey Ray Rector—and Hitch leveled it. Then came the impeachment fight. When most of the president's critics, from both right and left, stepped back and acknowledged the constitutional problems with the office of the independent counsel, Hitchens stepped up his attacks, turning his vendetta against Clinton into an indictment of American liberalism and the democratic process that elevated him to office. "The essence of American politics consists of the manipulation of populism by elitism," he wrote. (Hitchens had so much fun with this trope that he's deploying it again in 2000: "Some things may be true even if Pat Buchanan says them, and the inescapable fact is that the 2000 presidential election has so far been a rigged affair, bearing more resemblance to a plebiscite in some banana republic than to anything recognizable as a democratic contest.")

For sheer shock value, though, not even Hitch's most hyperbolic words could compare with a single deed—the infamous affidavit in which he and an "associate" (his wife) swore that White House aide Sidney Blumenthal had, over a social lunch, called Monica Lewinsky a stalker. Talk about a minority of one. Even Hitch's old friend Alexander Cockburn wrote a column denouncing him as "a Judas."

How did Hitchens justify this betrayal? The answer is illuminating. Hitch was no snitch—he was an ideological martyr, the proud progeny of two of his intellectual heroes, Whittaker Chambers and George Orwell. It's tempting to laugh off the comparison. When they pointed their respective fingers, Chambers and Orwell weren't manifesting a compulsive need to provoke; they had in their crosshairs one of the greatest threats to liberty of the 20th century, which is not easily confused with adulterous fellatio.

Still, there was something charmingly anachronistic about Hitch's stab at martyrdom. Historian and author Todd Gitlin once described Hitchens as a "man who affects revolutionary virtue, marooned in the 90s," and he is nothing if not a throwback to an age when writers and thinkers saw the world as a place of clashing ideas and ideologies. So it's no surprise that Hitchens understands the greatness of men like Orwell and Chambers. Trouble is, to be an ideological hero, you need to have an ideology. ■

STEICHEN'S LEGACY **(Alfred A. Knopf) Joanna Steichen, the legendary photographer's widow, says, "I knew for 40 years I'd have to do a book." Of the portrait done in 1929 of columnist Walter Winchell (above), she says, "It's no accident that Steichen made him look like the devil incarnate."**

ART IS WORK **(The Overlook Press) Artist and designer Milton Glaser's first book, *Graphic Design*, is the all-time best-seller on the subject. This second book, coming just over a quarter of a century later, "is much more ambitious," he says. In the portrait above, done in the '70s, Glaser (founding design consultant for this magazine) says he sought the "classical ideal of beauty in, of all people, Elvis."**

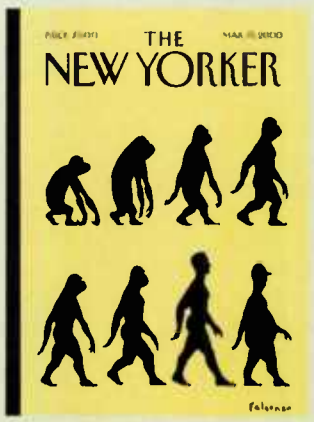
HOLIDAY HEAVYWEIGHTS

This time of year brings tomes that test the strength of any coffee table—from Renaissance men Milton Glaser and Edward Steichen to *Vanity Fair* in Tinseltown and *The New Yorker*'s newer covers.

Sisters Jackie and Joan Collins photographed by Annie Leibovitz in 1987 for *Vanity Fair*

VANITY FAIR'S HOLLYWOOD (Viking Studio) This book is nothing if not lavish. Iconic images and key pieces of reporting from the magazine's archives show just how inside La-La Land *Vanity Fair* was between 1914 and 1936, and has been since its 1983 relaunch. Graydon Carter and David Friend, *Vanity Fair*'s editor in chief and editor of creative development, respectively, slogged through each page of every issue of the magazine. They chose 294 pictures, depicting, among other things, 157 tuxedos, 10 Oscars, 1 bearskin rug, and a whopping "87 cleavages," Friend says. *Vanity Fair* is renowned for publishing photos of celebrities whose images have leached into our collective unconscious—think of Greta Garbo or Rudolph Valentino, and odds are that your vision comes from the magazine. Friend says that the photograph above, of novelist Jackie Collins and her sister, actress and, um, novelist Joan, "is *the* picture of the grand cliché of Hollywood—the limousine, the sunglasses, the bronzed flesh." More-vintage Hollywood writers than the Collins sisters are reprinted in the book—D.H. Lawrence on Lillian Gish's sex appeal, P.G. Wodehouse on movie villains—and with portraits of stars ranging from Louise Brooks (by Edward Steichen) to Madonna (by Herb Ritts), this book may be the ultimate visual primer on the subject of Hollywood.

COVERING THE NEW YORKER (Abbeville Press) Françoise Mouly, the art editor of *The New Yorker* since 1993, has compiled a book of mostly recent—in that magazine's terms— covers. Today's frequent cover artists, such as Art Spiegelman, Harry Bliss, and Ian Falconer, are inspired by *The New Yorker* of the '20s and '30s, when it was a humor magazine. "It's a rejuvenation of that approach," Mouly says, "and there's less prejudice between fine art and commercial art in today's generation of artists." Falconer, who has done 13 covers for the magazine ("It might have been done close to Father's Day," he says of the one at left), says, "One of the joys of working with *The New Yorker* is that illustrators don't have to have anything to do with what's inside."



A recent cover by Ian Falconer

OPPOSITE TOP: *STEICHEN'S LEGACY*, BY JOANNA STEICHEN ©*VANITY FAIR*/CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS INC. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: MILTON GLASER/OVERLOOK PRESS THIS PAGE TOP: VIKING STUDIO BOTTOM: *THE NEW YORKER*

VALLEY OF THE INDEPENDENTS

BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

The Internet, we can all agree, has changed everything: how we learn, how we work, how we communicate. Industry and capital markets have also been transformed. But if the rest of the world has gone digital, politics remains stubbornly analog.

In her first nonfiction book, *How to Hack a Party Line: The Democrats and Silicon Valley* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), San Francisco-based journalist Sara Miles chronicles the Valley's first, tentative steps toward politicization. Miles, who has covered technology and politics for *Wired* and *The New York Times*, argues that between the 1996 election and the first stirrings of campaign 2000, the Democrats had a good chance of winning Silicon Valley's political allegiance.

Though California, especially the Bay Area, traditionally swings left, most of Silicon Valley remains defiantly independent—fiscally conservative, pro-business, and socially liberal. Most techies, says Miles, were and are suspicious of Washington. The Valley boys (and a few girls) are cynical: They see Washington culture as old-fashioned, bureaucratic, and inefficient. Members of the tech industry, in contrast, see themselves as Western mavericks who are energetic, hardworking, and optimistic.

Although they aren't natural Democrats, these men and women aren't natural Republicans, either. In the '90s, as the Democratic party tried to reinvent itself, in order to scoop up swing voters alienated by the religious right, a few party operatives nearly claimed Silicon Valley. Miles focuses on the work of one of these young political consultants, Wade Randlett. Backed by a handful of powerful friends in the industry, chiefly John Doerr, a high-profile venture capitalist, Randlett almost succeeded in convincing the entrepreneurs and bankers who fuel the "New Economy" that the "New Democrats" were on their side. This would have been a tremendous coup for the Democratic political machine—akin to securing the allegiance of labor unions a century ago.

But Randlett didn't entirely succeed in winning over Silicon Valley. Its residents are ultimately too diverse and unpredictable to be swayed by any single party's ideology. Miles's book is a record of the first phase of a shifting paradigm. As politics drags itself out of the 20th century, what will the government represent to a society transformed by technology? Silicon Valley's continued resistance to the overtures of both parties suggests that party politics as we know them may not be long for this brave new world. ◘

POP GOES THE DEMOGRAPHIC

BY BOB ICKES

Among the various modes of artistic expression, surely none has spawned more ludicrous overanalysis than popular music. As if to apologize for the genre's ephemerality, many critics lard their reviews with similes and Derrida—hoping that even if the performer is forgotten (or convicted) next week, the 50-word blurb will dispense higher truths.

What a relief, then, that pop-music writer Marc Weingarten—who once wrote, in an *Entertainment Weekly* review, that the drums on a Guns N' Roses single "roil like skulls in a cauldron"—has delivered a media-culture masterpiece: *Station to Station: The History of Rock 'n' Roll on Television* (Pocket Books). It's an essential analysis of how television (from *American Bandstand* to *The Partridge Family* to VH1's *Behind the Music*) co-opted rock culture for ratings and revenue, and how rock (from Elvis to The Beatles to Beavis and Butt-head) returned the favor.

It is Weingarten's novel contention that "[h]istorically, too much emphasis has been placed on the role of radio as pop music's mass cultural transmitter, and not nearly enough on television as the true idolmaker, the medium that helped shape rock's cult of personality during the genre's formative years." Although radio may have broadcast the sound of rock, he adds, television supplied the iconography.

The godfather of soul, James Brown, dances with lip-synch king Lloyd Thaxton, the first postmodern rock-show host, in the mid-'60s.

In sane, smart prose—the tone pitched between a sneer and a guffaw—Weingarten has his way with the seminal pop stars and programs of the past 40 years. To illustrate the sometimes uneasy détente between the two aesthetics, he recounts Jimi Hendrix's legendary 1969 appearance on *The Dick Cavett Show*. Hendrix, wearing a wraparound blue kimono and seated next to the actor Robert Young, holds forth on the metaphysics of grooviness while Cavett, trying to understand, is distracted by the feedback from Hendrix's amplifier. Finally Cavett, frustrated, interrupts Hendrix and says, "What is that sound we hear irritating us so dreadfully?" ◘

BEHIND THE BOOK

THE BUSINESS

The Christmas season isn't just a blockbuster time for booksellers—it has spawned a mini-publishing industry all its own. The holidays are traditionally a time when publishers market "gift books"—specialty titles with photographs or illustrations that shoppers might not buy for themselves but will spring for as a gift. Recently, publishers have rediscovered the success of books about the season that sell for only a few months out of the year. In 1994, *The Christmas Box*, a self-published novella about a workaholic father who rededicates himself to his family, by an unknown author, Richard Paul Evans, caught the eye of the book industry. A bidding war ensued, and for $4.25 million Simon & Schuster walked away with a property that sold millions of copies. The book still sells between 100,000 to 200,000 copies per year, and it kick-started a section of the industry that had been dormant. "It spawned a thousand imitators, none of which performed as well," says Laurie Liss, the agent who represents Evans. Successful spawn include *The Christmas Tree*, by Julie Salamon; *The Christmas Wish*, by Richard Siddoway; and *The Modern Magi*, by Carol Lynn Pearson. Despite the dangers of putting out a book that has such a narrow selling window, publishers are still trying to capitalize on consumers' appetite for treacly Christmas fare. These titles usually follow the *Christmas Box* formula: shorter than most novels, a smaller format, and a highly decorative cover. This strategy works best when combined with a familiar author—the publishing equivalent of getting the Backstreet Boys to record "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

This year, new titles include *Deck the Halls*, by Mary Higgins Clark and her daughter, Carol Higgins Clark. The Clarks' book has an initial press run of 700,000 copies—100,000 more than Anne Rice's latest, *Merrick*. Those are big expectations for a book that must be off the shelves by the time the tinsel comes down. ELIZABETH ANGELL

TOP: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE.COM

OLD FLACK TRICKS

BY KAJA PERINA

If you object to a rendering plant—a factory that disposes of spoiled remains from slaughterhouses—moving into your neighborhood, most people would consider you completely reasonable.

But not James Cox, a consultant to rendering plants, who coined the term "hypermotivated complainant" (HMC) to describe their opponents. HMCs, Cox says, react abnormally to offal and odors, because they suffer from a "form of Parkinsonian madness."

The ridiculous claims of "experts" like Cox pop up in amusing vignettes throughout *Trust Us, We're Experts! How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles with Your Future* (Tarcher/Putnam), a meticulously researched book by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, who work for the Center for Media & Democracy, a nonprofit organization that monitors the public-relations industry and published the team's previous books: *Toxic Sludge Is Good for You!* and *Mad Cow USA: Could the Nightmare Happen Here?* In *Trust Us*, Rampton and Stauber focus on people like John Cox, whose expertise lies in equivocation and junk science.

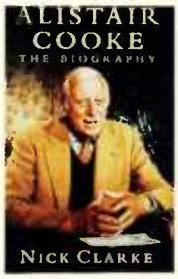
Trust Us is in part a historical overview: Edward Bernays, "the father of public relations" and Sigmund Freud's nephew, employed his uncle's theories in his work in the early twentieth century. The book then examines the evolution of spin from the cover-up at Hawk's Nest, a mine in West Virginia where thousands of men contracted a fatal lung disease in the 1930s, to the Bhopal disaster in 1984. There, Union Carbide's PR brass attempted to explain the poison gas leak that killed and maimed thousands by suggesting that a disgruntled employee, not corporate negligence, was responsible for the fatal accident.

The book focuses even more on those who marshal multi-million-dollar PR campaigns. One flack, a "human ecology" professor turned "risk communications expert," charges hundreds of dollars per hour to help corporations manage public outrage. Another, a co-founder of a PR firm that has represented Monsanto and Philip Morris, started his career as a journalist.

The authors' predilection for sarcastic book titles notwithstanding, their examination of these public relations gladiators is far from venomous—and it doesn't need to be. This is in part because the tactics of those who would cover up a Bhopal or a Hawk's Nest speak for themselves, and in part because Rampton and Stauber's documentation of PR campaigns proves that they are the real "experts," in a book that might nauseate all but the most "hypermotivated" flack. ◘

MASTERPIECE

BY JESSE OXFELD



To most Americans, Alistair Cooke is just another television personality—if, as a PBS host, one with a loftier place in our culture than, say, Regis Philbin. White-maned, well-mannered, and the epitome of English elegance, Cooke presided over *Masterpiece Theatre* for more than two decades, from its debut in 1971 until his retirement in 1992.

From a new biography, though, we learn there was much more to Cooke's life. *Alistair Cooke: The Biography*, by Nick Clarke (Arcade Publishing), is indeed, at more than 500 pages, *the* biography. Clarke, a BBC Radio host, explains the tremendous length and variety of his subject's career. Cooke arrived in the United States in the 1930s on a fellowship to study theater at Yale and then linguistics at Harvard; by 1941 he had become an American citizen and was living in New York. Cooke excelled at explaining American culture to a British audience—as a newspaper correspondent, as a television host, and, for 54 years and continuing today, as the presenter of a BBC Radio program called *Letter from America*, in which he reads a weekly essay on stateside life. But Cooke didn't just explain America to Britain; he explained America to itself in the classic television show *Omnibus*, which aired from 1952 to 1961 and mixed high-culture offerings—Gilbert and Sullivan scenes, original television plays—with news pieces. It wasn't until late in his remarkable career, however, that Cooke settled into his overstuffed *Masterpiece* armchair and began to explain the British to Americans.

Cooke was so successful in his role at *Masterpiece* in large part because he seemed such an ideal window on those films' aristocratic world. It's interesting to learn, then, that this legendarily ideal English gentleman was actually nothing of the sort: He comes from solidly blue-collar Northern English stock and exchanged his given Alfred for the more debonair Alistair while reinventing himself at Cambridge. ◘

BEHIND THE BOOK

THE LAST WORD

AN AUTHOR'S THOUGHTS AFTER THE BOOK COMES OUT

BY EUGENE L. POGANY

March 21, 2000, was the day of Pope John Paul II's arrival in the Holy Land. It was also the fourth anniversary of the day my 84-year-old father and I stood at his parents' graves in the Catholic cemetery in Szarvas, Hungary, and said Kaddish. A Jewish-born convert to Catholicism, my grandfather had died in 1943; my grandmother perished as a devout Catholic convert in Auschwitz in 1944. Like his brother and sister, my father had been baptized in childhood. Unlike them, his experiences during the war led him to return to the religion of his birth. While my father witnessed and suffered the wrath of his countrymen, his identical-twin brother, an ordained Catholic priest, was out of harm's way in a benevolent Christian community in Italy. This rather complex family story, which I told in my book, *In My Brother's Image* (Viking), has provided me with a unique lens through which to observe the evolving thaw between Catholics and Jews and the more recent, if temporary, chill that has occurred between our two communities of faith.

No pope more than John Paul II has so passionately redressed the indignities historically conferred on the Jews by Catholics. This courageous man has moved his church to confront the ways in which the historical Catholic hatred of Jews nourished the roots of the Nazi genocide. I rejoice at these efforts toward acknowledgment and forgiveness, even while the Church itself and the pope are consistently held above moral reproach. Yet if the pope can confess the sins of his flock but will not and cannot acknowledge the failures of his church and his office, what then? And it gets even thornier.

In a recent declaration, *Dominus Iesus*, the Church has effectively opposed religious pluralism by pitting the salvation offered through Christ against other "imperfect" Christian and non-Christian faiths. As such, this statement from the Vatican is a throwback to the Church's triumphalist insistence that Roman Catholicism is the only true religion—precisely the reason my uncle was so upset with my father's "apostasy." The seemingly blatant disregard for Jewish and non-Catholic sensibilities is an unsettling signal that the Roman Catholic Church is impelled by self-preservation and political aggrandizement rather than pure self-reflection and a desire for peaceful coexistence.

Eugene L. Pogany

I want to imagine that were my uncle still alive during the momentous events of this, his church's millennial Jubilee Year, he might embrace the spirit of his pope's Lenten prayers at the Wailing Wall and personally take upon himself the effort to redeem the disappointment, distrust, and indifference toward his twin brother that he inherited from his church. But at times I fear I expect too much of him and his church; namely, that they begin to understand how a formerly devout Catholic could reject Christianity, with its promise of salvation, and embrace the faith and fate of Jewish victims and fellow survivors. For then Jewish and Catholic brothers, the one humbled by suffering and the other by human and moral failure during the Holocaust, could certainly respond to this good pope's prayers for forgiveness with a resounding "Amen." ◘

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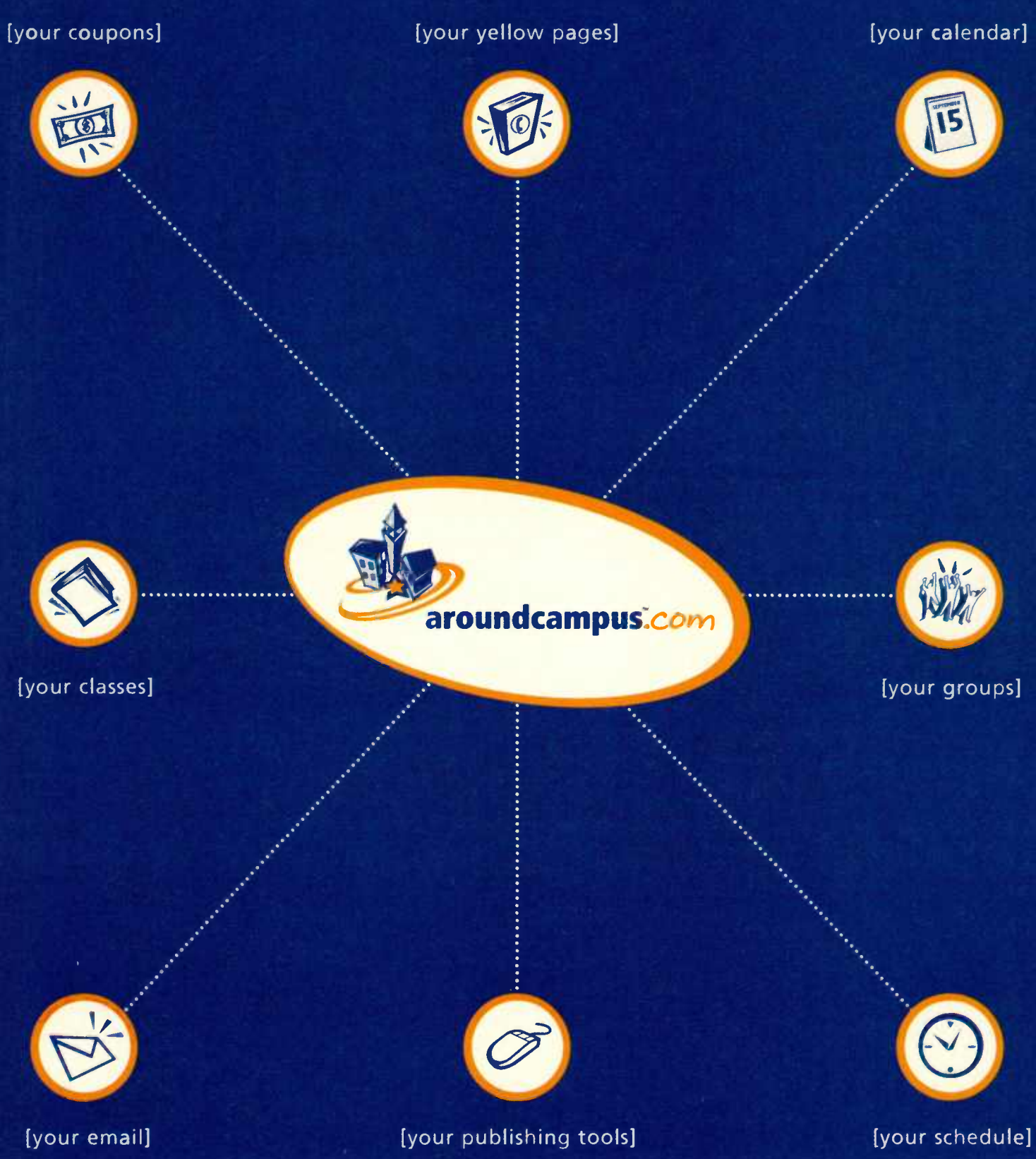
POGANY MARCIE SCUDDER



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ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO SAVE

Novelist Nicholson Baker is best known for such highbrow works as *Vox* and *The Fermata*. He's also a dogged antiquarian—which led him to rescue the last great archive of 20th-century American newspapers. By Jesse Oxfeld

Rollinsford, New Hampshire, is not a major academic center. It has neither the intellectual Volvoness of Cambridge, Massachusetts, nor the overeducated activism of Berkeley, California. It is, essentially, a decaying New England mill town. Which is why it's surprising that Rollinsford is poised to become a destination for scholars, a sort of Jerusalem for students of American history.

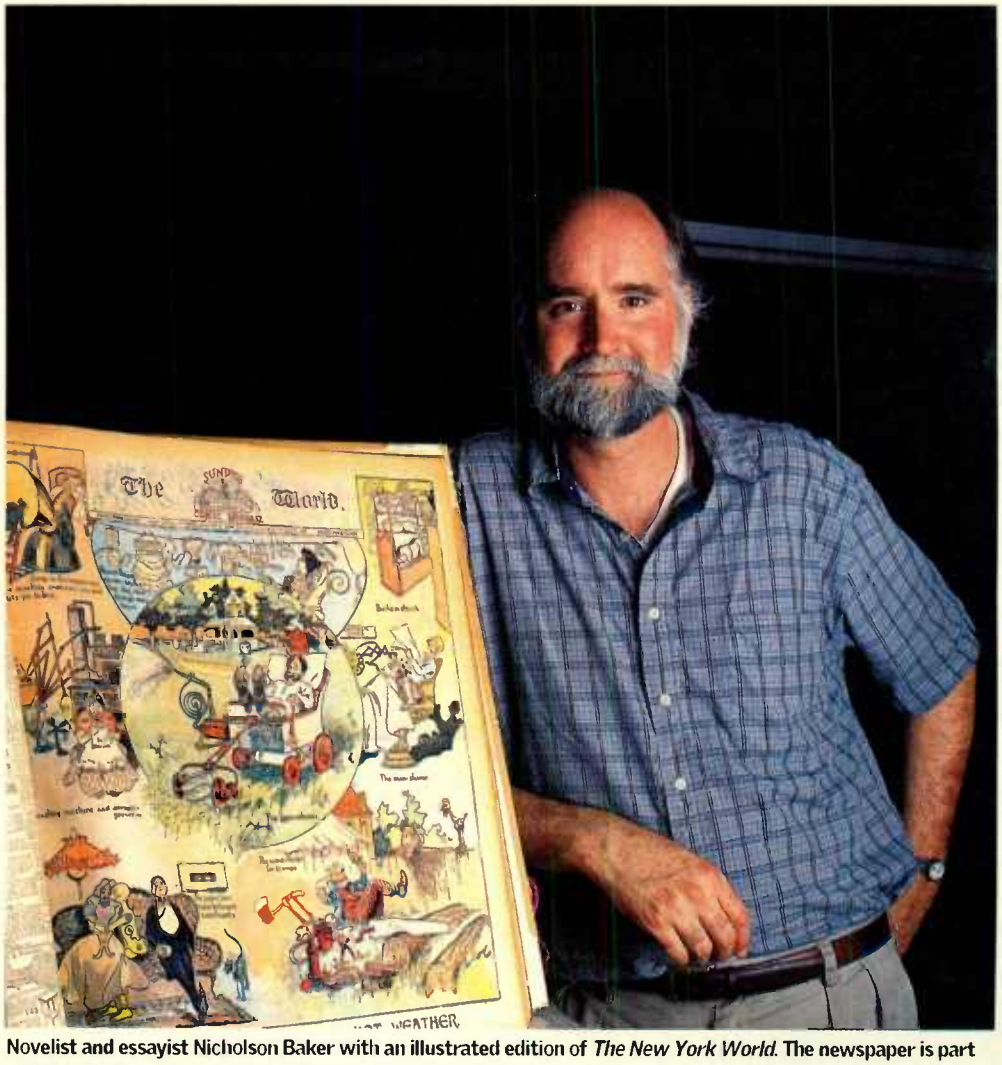
The town is home to the American Newspaper Repository, an institution whose physical presence is far less impressive than its portentous name suggests. There is an old mill in Rollinsford—a tall, long, narrow building built in 1848—that sits alongside the Salmon Falls River, the border between New Hampshire and Maine. Like a postcard view of a picturesque New England town, the building is surrounded by greenery and attached to a dam in the river. Textiles are no longer made there, but it doesn't sit empty. It has become the Abandoned Mill of Good Causes: Two and a half of its four floors are filled with discarded medical equipment, collected from American hospitals by the International Medical Equipment Collaborative and awaiting shipment to needy Third World hospitals and clinics. On the first floor, a visitor must navigate a jumble of incubators and gurneys before reaching a plywood wall with a locked door. On the other side of the wall is the Repository, one of the country's largest archives of original, post-1870s newspapers.

Since World War II, great libraries across the country—including the Library of Congress, Harvard's Widener Library, and the New York Public Library—have thrown out their collections of print newspapers from the late 19th century onward. They are content to rely on microfilm that is shot in black and white, is frequently illegible, and, as words speed by on illuminated screens, often induces nausea. One of the few remaining notable collections of American papers was, until recently, in London, at the British Library. But last year, facing a space crisis, the Brits decided to deaccession their collection of post-1850 non-Commonwealth papers. Much of the British Library's collection—perhaps the last remaining continuous, decades-long runs of the *Chicago Tribune* and Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, along with dozens of other papers—now resides in Rollinsford. It's an amazing cache, and it promises to bring visitors interested in American history—whether professional historians, undergraduates, or dedicated amateurs—to the eastern edge of New Hampshire.

The American Newspaper Repository is the brainchild of the novelist and essayist Nicholson Baker, though perhaps *brainchild* isn't the right word. It's Baker's creation, but there's something so passionate, so desperate, about his efforts that the term is insufficient. The Repository isn't just a project for Baker; for the moment, at least, it's his cause. Fortunately for the newspapers, Baker is just the sort of man you'd want leading your cause. When he sets off, in his essayist mode, to write about an issue, he doesn't merely do his research and reporting and write that things are going to hell in a handbasket. He often grabs a pitchfork and leads the peasants to the barricades.

Baker has a primary career as a literary novelist. He's well regarded and occasionally best-selling, the kind of writer whose books are described in *The New York Times Book Review* with encomiums like "masterly work of art." Many of his books are almost uncomfortably sexual (*Vox*, about phone sex, turned up in the Ken Starr report as one of Monica's gifts to President Clinton), and they are also known for their intriguing quirks: The entirety of *Vox* transpires as one telephone conversation; the narrator of *The Fermata* can stop time; and *U and I*, a work of nonfiction, analyzes Baker's admiration for and obsession with John Updike.

It is Baker's second career, as a somewhat reactionary essayist—the products of which are equally quirky—that led directly to the founding



Novelist and essayist Nicholson Baker with an illustrated edition of *The New York World*. The newspaper is part of Baker's vast archive, one of the largest of its kind in the country. Photographs by Jimmy Cohrssen

of the Repository in the mill and has brought me, on this cold, rainy summer day, to his home, just east of the Maine–New Hampshire border.

ON THE WAY TO BAKER'S HOUSE you pass a large sign before exiting Interstate 95: "Welcome to Maine. The Way Life Should Be." You can't help thinking that's exactly why Baker moved to his 18th-century farmhouse, in bucolic surroundings, with a charmingly run-down barn out back and a cop—not a light—directing what traffic there is in the center of town. He is, his nonfiction writing suggests, a strong believer that The Way Life Should Be is a simpler way, an older-fashioned way, or at least a way that is modern but with a good deal of respect for the simpler and older-fashioned ways.

Examining Baker's collection of work for *The New Yorker*—in which, this past summer, he published a piece that detailed the history of American newspaper microfilming and presented the case for why he had no choice but to create the Repository and buy the British Library's newspapers—one sees clearly, even early on, the author's strong affinity for Luddism. All the nonfiction reported pieces Baker has contributed to the magazine—whether the nominal subject is movie projectors, or card catalogs, or toenail clippers, or microfilming—deal with a similar theme. "I like writing about mature technologies," he tells me in the kitchen of his farmhouse, over the tuna-salad sandwiches he has whipped up. He seems far more the crusading essayist than the sexualized novelist, looking very L.L. Bean in his green Oxford, green chinos, and moccasinish brown leather shoes. He's interested in technologies, he says, "that have reached a high level of development but are now on the verge of being replaced by something." In many cases, it turns out, he does not see the imminent replacement as a good thing.

The first reported piece Baker wrote for *The New Yorker*, in early 1994, was a history and cultural analysis of the movie projector. No longer, Baker wrote, did theaters use the traditional film-unspools-from-one-reel-and-winds-up-on-the-other system; instead they operate on a far simpler "platter" system, which eliminates reel changes and rewinding. But despite this and other technological advances over a century of cinematic history, Baker learned, the heart of the movie projector—the Maltese cross, which, frame by frame, places the images to be projected in front of the light source—has not changed. He seemed to take solace in that continuity, and the piece did not lead him to any crusades.

In November 1994, he wrote a story on the design of the nail clipper. As he had with the Maltese cross, Baker once again discovered an old technology that was still going strong. The nail clipper, it turned out, was perfected in the 1940s and had changed little since; indeed, the imminent advances in nail-clipper design involved only superficial improvements on the reigning form. That made Baker happy, and once again, there was no cause to take up arms.

He must have been pleased, in that case, to find himself pleased, because he really didn't have time for another cause just then. In the months between the movie projector and the nail clipper, Baker had launched what was perhaps his defining campaign. In April 1994, *The New Yorker* ran a 21-page Baker article titled "Discards." Initially, he says, he had planned just a nail clipper–style treatment of the library card catalog: "I started wanting to write an appreciation, and then I learned they were being thrown out." American libraries were moving from paper card catalogs to computerized versions, and this caused Baker concern. It's not that he was opposed to online card catalogs or that he thought libraries should continue to expend the effort to keep print catalogs up to date. But he was indignant that many libraries tossed out their old catalogs after converting to electronic ones. He argued that the specialized information on many of the cards did not make it into the formulaic electronic entries—notes, many handwritten, that had been added over the years by local librarians. He argued that some libraries were eliminating their print catalogs before the electronic ones were complete. And he argued that catalogs should be kept intact as artifacts to be studied by future historians.

Baker had found his issue. He became Card Catalog Man, a bibliographic boll weevil devoted to questioning newfangled library practices. Conveniently, an archnemesis soon appeared in the form of the San Francisco Public Library. Baker had moved to Berkeley a few years earlier, and the city across the bay was moving from its old Main Library to a new building, designed by noted architect James Ingo Freed. At the same time, the city's old manual card catalog was to be junked and replaced with a fancy new online version. This, of course, was a case for Card Catalog Man, and according to the account of the controversy Baker wrote for *The New Yorker*, a librarian e-mailed him asking for help: "You are the only one who can save it now." Like any good crusader, he obliged.

Baker soon found a potentially larger problem: New Main may or may not have had significantly less space for books than old Main, and library officials may or may not have thrown out extra books to make them fit. Baker and a wildcat crew of bibliophiles managed to get into the locked old Main one day to measure shelf space and found it to be far larger than the new building's. A few days later, they admitted they'd miscalculated but said the old library was still slightly bigger than the new one. Library officials replied that although the new library was not as big as they had hoped, it was still larger than the old one. Baker said the staff was ordered to throw out less-used books to make the collection fit in the new library; library officials said it was just a standard process of library "weeding," carried out on a somewhat larger scale because it had been done insufficiently in the past. The size question was never really

About 7,500 bound volumes of old newspapers rest on

60 or so pallets in the Salmon Falls mill in Rollinsford, New Hampshire. Next on the repository's agenda: finding shelves.

resolved, but Baker saved some rare books and wrote about the battle. There were lawsuits and court orders, Library Commission hearings and public debates, and San Francisco's card catalog was granted a reprieve. It now sits in off-site storage, where curious patrons can page through its contents drawer by drawer.

Since then, we haven't heard much from the bearded crusader; he published a novel in 1997 and did a shortish *New Yorker* piece in the movie projector/nail clipper vein singing the praises of the traditional Venetian gondola. He moved to southern Maine and stopped championing causes. Until last year.

That's when Baker decided to write about the fate of America's great newspaper archives. "I thought I'd write a piece about newspapers and that that would give me a chance to find out what happened to them," he explains to me in his kitchen. "The piece grew out of control, really, and became a book." The book is now scheduled for a spring release, but back in mid-1999 Baker's research and writing came to a stop. In April of that year, he'd contacted the British Library about its policy on saving newspapers and learned of its plans to sell off the collection. When he realized the rarity of some of the papers to be sold, he sent an e-mail message to the library asking it to reconsider. Through July, there was no answer. "I'd hoped what had happened was they said, 'Whoops, these are rarer than we thought,'" he recalls. Instead, in a letter dated July 30, a staffer told Baker the library intended to proceed with the sale. After futile appeals, Baker founded the American Newspaper Repository and set out to buy the papers—and also some magazines—in its collection. "A journalist does his best to master his subject," Baker says. "At some point you find out something bad is happening." The question, then, is whether to merely document it or do something about it. "I guess the journalist in me bowed out to the reformer."

Back in crusader mode, Baker placed bids on almost all of the papers and ended up with about $32,000 worth. But he was outbid on some of the most prized volumes by a Pennsylvania newspaper dealer, Timothy Hughes, who runs a business that cuts up bound volumes of papers and sells individual editions from notable dates. Baker found himself so distraught at the prospect of Hughes's selling off what is probably the last remaining multiple-year run of the *Chicago Tribune*, or one of the few long runs of *The New York Times*, that he agreed to buy those two runs from him—70 years of the *Tribune* and 43 years of the *Times*—for a total of $119,000. Including various shipping costs, Baker's total expenditures came to about $175,000.

The home of the American Newspaper Repository, in Rollinsford, New Hampshire

'CAN YOU IMAGINE BEING THE BRITISH LIBRARY AND DECIDING THIS IS WORTHLESS?' BAKER ASKS, AMAZED.

But Baker didn't have that money on hand: He had to liquidate a retirement account to save the newspapers. "Retirement accounts are a wonderful thing," he says, "but how often do you get to stand in front of Penn Station before they tore it down and say, 'If I risk my retirement I can save this'?" He continues, contemplatively: "There's just a few times in life that a writer gets to write a book that sells a lot of copies. But I did. It's a sum of money; it's a theoretical thing. When you're looking at these newspapers, which are tangible things, it doesn't seem like a very difficult decision."

Months later, Baker received two grants, one for $50,000 from the MacArthur Foundation and another for $100,000 from the Knight Foundation. He's got some private donations as well, which means he and his wife are out only about $16,000, plus the penalties for early withdrawal from their retirement account.

SO WHAT NOW? The American Newspaper Repository occupies about 6,000 square feet of storage space in the old mill and pays $2,216 each month to rent it. After lunch, Baker and I drive there. The Repository owns some 1,700 years' worth of newspapers and magazines, in about 7,500 enormous bound volumes sitting on 60 or so pallets evenly spaced across the mill storage room, like, as Baker put it, Easter Island monuments. Right now it's not a library; it's a storage locker.

The next task before Baker is an immense one. But it's also awe-inspiring. We leaf through some of the newspapers, and they're remarkable. They've been archived in bound volumes; each is the length and width of an open sheet of broadsheet newspaper, and they range from one to three inches thick. Many have lovely black-and-red-marbled covers. The papers inside, even some more than 100 years old, are in fine shape. They're fragile, of course—the edges are yellowing and a bit brittle—but Baker and I can easily flip through the volumes. At his house, we'd looked at some copies of *The New York World* from the 1890s, full of color illustrations and full-page graphic design—which don't reproduce on microfilm. At the mill, we find an edition of a San Francisco paper called the *Argonaut* from the 1906 earthquake and the issue of *Newsweek* from the week in 1963 when JFK was killed. Baker is almost giddy as we look at the *New York Herald-Tribune* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York American*. "Well, I can't believe it," he says as he flips the pages. "They're here, finally." We look through more papers, including many of the foreign-language papers that served America's immigrant communities. "Can you imagine being the British Library and deciding this is worthless?" He is amazed.

First, the Repository will have to buy shelves, or build them. Still working in piles on the floor, Baker has begun the long process of organizing. "Probably the shelving will go title by title—big runs first—*Herald-Tribune*, *Chicago Tribune*," he writes in an e-mail message the week after our meeting. "Possibly early visitors will be willing to help out by shelving the run in which they're interested, who knows?" When we correspond again in early fall, Baker tells me he has finally arranged for some assistance: Students from a local school will help organize the collection as part of a community-service day, and he has found a library-school intern to help with sorting and conducting an inventory.

The plan is to make the collection open by appointment to anyone who wants to see it. "I want this to be used. I want people to know about it," Baker says. He believes the more people who see the papers that are being thrown out, the more who will convert to his preservationist cause. He doesn't yet have full funding for his operating costs, but he's committed for the long haul. It also seems likely the collection will grow: Baker showed me an e-mail, for example, from a librarian at Harvard offering a collection of Soviet newspapers she'll soon "be forced to discard." At some point, he says, he might donate the collection to a research institution, but only if the papers stay together and he can be assured the institution will hold on to them. "I have a responsibility to act in the best interests of this historical landmark," he says. "If we were to transfer this collection, there would have to be some sort of requirement with it, some sort of legal mechanism set up so that libraries holding irreplaceable and fragile things will make decisions that are in the public interest."

"Libraries are supposed to hold on to big, complicated, bulky things so that people can get rid of them. The saving of a tiny fraction of a whole allows for people to give things up," Baker had told me when we were at his house. "It's only out of desperation that people take these things on their own." That desperation led Baker to risk many thousands of dollars and, now, devote an enormous amount of time. It also turned one of American libraries' gadflies into a librarian himself. ◘

TULSA - 11:50 am

15-year-old mutual fund going under.

15-year-old spreading rumors in chat rooms.

WINNING THE BLAME GAME

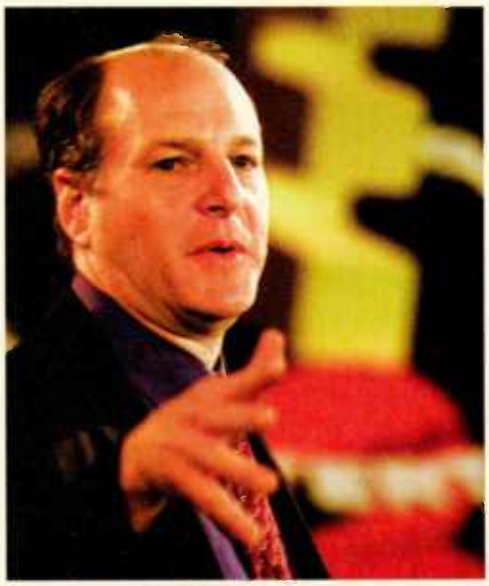
In the wake of the Columbine killings, the media blamed violent videogames, and the president vowed to investigate the industry. But a year later, after an intense spin campaign, the games have emerged relatively unscathed. By Mark Boal

In April 1999, two teenagers at Columbine High School shot and killed 12 of their classmates and a teacher. In the aftermath, videogames—in particular, violent ones known as "first person shooters"—became the subject of lengthy, soul-searching articles and the target of political saber-rattling. The press, scrambling to impose a narrative line on a senseless crime, found its villain in Doom, a game favored by the gunmen, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris. Hours spent killing virtual enemies had blurred the difference between fantasy and real life, or so the theory went. The media repeated this line, and politicians stepped in with calls to regulate the videogame industry.

At a Rose Garden press conference in June 1999, President Clinton addressed the subject directly. "We ought to think twice about the impact of ads for so-called 'first person shooter videogames,' like the recent ad for a game that invites players to—and I quote—'Get in touch with your gun-toting, cold-blooded murdering side,'" he said, holding up advertisements from a videogame magazine for a game called Armored Core. He then announced initiatives to curb youth violence, among them an investigation by the Federal Trade Commission into the marketing practices of media companies. Movies and music were to be investigated in the report, but because of the role Doom was thought to have played in Columbine, videogames were expected to be "first under the magnifying glass," as *USA Today* put it in a front-page article.

What a difference a year makes. In September, 15 months after President Clinton's speech, the FTC released its report. All three industries—movies, music, and videogames—were criticized for marketing violent entertainment to children, but it was the film, not videogame, industry that received the brunt of the report's criticism. Indeed, the report's rebukes of the $6.1 billion videogame industry were tempered with praise; videogames may be marketed to children, but they also came labeled with stickers that described their violence levels and suggested an appropriate age group. The report also mentioned that the industry had its own code of conduct, which dictates that "advertisements should be created with a sense of responsibility towards the public." It concluded that videogames were governed by "the most comprehensive of the three industry systems studied by the Commission."

EVEN BEFORE THE REPORT was released, the dialogue was shifting. But the biggest change came in September, when the Senate held hearings to address the FTC report's findings about media violence. Democrats and Republicans put aside their differences and came to a consensus: Violent films and albums were being inappropriately marketed to children. Videogames, however, were conspicuously absent from the discussion. Senator Joseph Lieberman, by then a vice-presidential candidate and the Democrats' chief culture warrior, typified the new attitude. In his opening remarks to the Senate hearing, Lieberman said the gaming industry's efforts to publicize its rating system were "a significant step in the right direction, and I think the gamemakers deserve credit for taking it." He then went on to give his harshest criticism to the film industry.



IDSA's Doug Lowenstein: warding off the attacks

DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP PHOTO

Senator John McCain, for his part, blasted Hollywood for its lack of "corporate responsibility." The papers followed their lead, with *The New York Times* putting the issue of violent films on the front page.

You could call it a fluke, this abrupt shifting of blame, but that doesn't adequately explain why videogames moved from being public enemy number one to returning to the relatively low profile they held before Columbine. The videogame industry's "system" for regulating advertising and labeling was, it turns out, essentially the same in September 2000 as it had been at the time of Columbine. Some of the industry's remarkable turnaround can be attributed to shifting political tides, which worked in the industry's favor. But the key reason for videogames' newly polished image is a savvy public relations campaign, which was launched after Columbine and continued through the compiling of the report.

Much of the repositioning was achieved by Doug Lowenstein, who, as president of the Interactive Digital Software Association since 1994, is the man responsible for negotiating the videogame industry's relationship with Washington and the press. What Jack Valenti does for Hollywood, Lowenstein does for videogames. At 49, he is at once unassuming and confident. He has the Dockers-and-blazer demeanor of someone who has spent a long time working at the nexus of media and politics. Early in his career Lowenstein was the Washington correspondent for Cox Newspapers, then a staffer and legislative director for Senator Howard Metzenbaum. He went on to private practice as a principal in the Washington policy consulting firm National Strategies Inc. and became a vice-president at the P.R. firm Robinson Lake Sawyer Miller Inc. before being recruited by the IDSA.

After Columbine, Lowenstein realized that if he was going to improve the industry's image, he'd have to move fast. "Once you get over the shock of seeing the president of the United States holding up gaming magazines," he says, "you realize this is the greatest threat the industry has ever faced in terms of perception and how things work in the marketplace." Tackling that threat meant taking on a man who had appeared out of relative obscurity to become the most mediagenic expert on videogame violence, retired Lt. Col. David Grossman, a self-proclaimed anti-violence crusader and founder of an institute called the Killology Research Group. Grossman's chief credential was that he had taught psychology at the United States Military Academy, but his many post-Columbine media appearances led Lowenstein to believe that he had influenced the president and other elected officials. In television news programs and in editorials across the country, Grossman called videogames "mass murder simulators" and accused the industry of teaching kids to become killers.

Lowenstein prepared a five-page white paper attacking Grossman and sent it to reporters. "Many of the basic claims Mr. Grossman makes to support his views are contradicted by the facts," Lowenstein wrote in a passage that went on to tackle Grossman's talking points. The document noted that, contrary to Grossman's claim, combat simulators used by the Marines were substantially different from videogames sold through retailers. It also pointed out that national crime rates had fallen as videogame usage increased. Referencing the most comprehensive review of the scientific literature pertaining to videogames and violence—a four-year study conducted by the Australian government—Lowenstein noted that "despite several attempts to find effects of aggressive content in either experimental studies or field studies, at best only weak and ambiguous evidence has emerged."

Next, Lowenstein oversaw the production of a widely watched public-service announcement starring Tiger Woods (who was promoting his own videogame at the time), which touted the industry's labeling system. To put the finishing touches on the campaign, Lowenstein commissioned a poll, which found that most parents were unaware of the rating system. He reached out to public interest groups such as the YMCA and Mothers Against Violence in America and recruited them to distribute promotional material stating his case.

BY MAY 2000, THE PRESS WAS RUNNING POSITIVE STORIES ABOUT THE VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY

The effect of the campaign was unmistakable. By May 2000, Grossman had all but vanished from the media landscape, and the press was running positive stories about the industry. A May 12 story by the Associated Press that reported that videogames were played primarily by adults, which quoted industry statistics prominently, was picked up by hundreds of papers around the country. Adding to the positive coverage was an industry-sponsored study that found that gaming was "a family activity." The study claimed that 59 percent of games were played with friends, that most games were played with family members, and that gaming relieved stress. From the *Bridgeton News* in New Jersey to the *Chattanooga Times Chattanooga Free Press* in Tennessee, the new word was out. In fact, not even the likes of Max Payne, a strikingly violent videogame released this year, attracted much attention beyond trade magazines.

Finally, unlike Hollywood and the recording industry, Lowenstein ducked further blows from Washington by sending congressional and agency staffers the message that the videogame industry was acting in good faith and was committed to reform. "It's a big part of why they said we were doing a good job," he says. "We updated the FTC, either informally or in meetings, along the way." The message got through. Eric London, a spokesperson for the FTC, characterizes the videogame industry as "[a leader] in developing a self-regulatory system," adding that "in some ways, their system is a model."

A scene from Max Payne, a recent violent videogame that escaped press criticism

Lowenstein not only worked closely with the FTC but also opened lines of communication with Lieberman's staff; for years, Lieberman had been a critic of the industry, perhaps the most vocal voice of opposition in Washington. In 1994, he held the first of what would become an annual press conference about the videogame industry's violent content. After the first conference drew media attention, Jack Heistand, who is the senior vice-president of Electronic Arts, a major game developer, foresaw the kind of trouble the industry might encounter. He founded the IDSA "as a way to work with Lieberman." Over the next few years the IDSA and Lieberman danced an elaborate waltz; Lieberman would criticize the industry's marketing and labeling practices, and the IDSA (whose members include new media giants such as Activision, Inc., Disney Interactive, Nintendo of America, Sega of America, and Sony Computer Entertainment of America) would respond with an incremental change, such as making the labels more prominent on videogame boxes. Both sides grew so nimble that by the time the Senate held its hearings in September, it seemed as though the videogame industry executives who testified were working in close partnership with Lieberman. Whether that cooperation will be enough to rescue the industry from the next crisis of public perception remains an open question.

Videogames have come a long way since the days when Pac-Man and Donkey Kong were state of the art. The advances made over the past two decades—in graphics, story lines, and sound—have transformed "gaming" from a mere pastime into something much more interactive and closer to an art form. As anyone who's played them can attest, videogames can be as engrossing as a novel and as visually rewarding as a film; what they lack in depth they make up for in emotional immediacy. But the few studies concerning videogames are so rudimentary that neither psychologists nor art historians fully understand what happens when someone enters a computer-generated reality. Until mainstream art critics and psychologists come to see videogames for the emerging art form that they are, they will remain a scapegoat. Not even an increasing economic profile—sales nearly rival those of Hollywood's box office—will insure their immunity in the culture wars.

"I could live to be a hundred or even five hundred," says Lowenstein, "and there would still be somebody talking about videogames and violence." The pessimism in that statement may be appropriate. If there's ever another Columbine, politicians and the press will no doubt find videogames and the youth culture they represent an easy target. As for Armored Core, the game President Clinton singled out before the nation, it's still on the shelves and rated by the industry as appropriate for teens aged 13 and above. Just as it was back in June of 1999. ■

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dept. SOURCES

CONSUMER ALERT

The holiday season is approaching, bringing panic about good products and bad deals. We've found the sources to help you shop smart. By Emily Chenoweth

It's been said that anything is worth what its purchaser will pay. That's logical, perhaps, but not necessarily comforting—especially when you're saddled with a purchase that hasn't worked out.

Fortunately, there are sources to help you shop smarter—whether you're looking for a car, a computer, a bank, a moving company, or just a nice, warm scarf. *Brill's Content* has done the comparison shopping and come up with a list of the best, most interesting references and guides to help you become a better consumer.

WEBSITES

CONSUMERWORLD.ORG

CONSUMER WORLD

Edgar Dworsky of Consumer World has been in the consumer-protection business for more than two decades. What began five years ago as a list of his personal bookmarks on consumer-related issues has grown into a free website with more than 2,000 links—a soup-to-nuts directory of information that gets more than a million visitors a year. Dworsky himself updates the front page every Monday; he's still the only employee and maintains the site as a public service. It contains news, alerts, and a deal of the week—for instance, a recent clearance sale at Nordstrom's online store. Basic categories of links are listed on the left of the screen ("Bargains," "Consumer Agencies," "Travel"); on the right are the "Hot Sites"—links that Dworsky thinks will be interesting to a large number of consumers, such as sites with wholesale car prices or information on low-rate credit cards. Would-be consumers can connect to factory outlets, comparison-pricing search engines, the offices of state attorneys general, and everything in between. Consumer protection "really is my life," Dworsky says, "and on top of that I'm a great bargain hunter."

SLATE.COM

THE SHOPPING AVENGER
BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

Jeffrey Goldberg, who has written about the Middle East and law enforcement for *The New York Times Magazine* and is now a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, has an alter ego: Donning tights, cape, and codpiece, he becomes the Shopping Avenger. His mission is "to save you from the dark forces of turbo-charged capitalism and shoddy customer service." Every reader is encouraged to e-mail him a "tale of woe," whereupon he calls the offending company to see if his superpowers can resolve the matter. Sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't, but those he tries to help are lucky anyway, since they have the undeniable pleasure of reading about his intervention. There are seven Shopping Avenger columns archived in *Slate*, touching on topics such as the evils of voice-mail routing systems, "corporate arrogance," and the Shopping Avenger's archnemesis—U-Haul. (U-Haul is "the devil," he says. "They just never turn down a reservation, even if they have no truck.") Though the Shopping Avenger is on hiatus, frustrated consumers can take heart. "Watch the sky at night," he says, "and when you least expect it, the Shopping Avenger will return to protect you."

BBB.ORG

BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU

This website links to Better Business Bureaus around the country. These private, nonprofit organizations are funded primarily by dues from the local businesses and professional groups they monitor. At their local BBB site, consumers can access company reliability reports, get background information on a charity, and file complaints about a business. (Complaints about cars or charities can be filed electronically on the national site.) The BBB Dispute Resolution page gives consumers who are battling a company information about conciliation, arbitration, and mediation. The site also contains scam alerts, tips on charitable giving, and links to hundreds of publications, from "Outlet Malls: Are They a Bargain?" and "Learn to Identify Deceptive Ads" to "Canadian Scams" and "Beauty Pageants: Runways to Fame?"

PUEBLO.GSA.GOV

FEDERAL CONSUMER INFORMATION CENTER

The website of the Federal Consumer Information Center—part of the General Services Administration—has an inviting format, goofy graphics, and encyclopedic content. It's more user-friendly than its cousin, consumer.gov, which compiles information from many government agencies. Features include an FCIC publication of the week; a "consumer focus" topic of the month, such as cosmetic surgery or tire safety; tips about the latest product recalls, scams, and frauds; and even an FCIC word search and puzzle. "We want our visitors to feel welcome on our site," says a spokesperson, "to learn from the information and to have fun too." The full text of the *Consumer Action Handbook*, a 148-page reference with advice on everything from calling cards to complaint letters to telemarketers, can be downloaded here, as can the *Consumer Information Catalog* and all its listed publications.

TELEVISION

DIGITAL DUO

THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK

Stephen Manes and Susan Gregory Thomas are "two analog people in a digital world," and together they host *Digital Duo*, a public-television program (presented by Thirteen/WNET New York at 2 P.M. on Saturdays, and also aired nationally) that's dedicated to reviewing the latest hardware, software, and Internet and digital technology. In each half-hour program, Manes, a technology columnist for *Forbes*, and Thomas, a columnist for *Time Digital*, sit on opposite sides of a large desk

Shop till you drop with these consumer guides.

PETER BERSON

and debate the merits of personal technology products ranging from wireless phones to high-definition TVs to so-called expert sites, such as AskMe.com and ExpertCentral.com. Hardly fans of technology for technology's sake, Manes and Thomas are unafraid to announce when a product fails to live up to its promise. "The tone we're going for, in the best sense of the word, is irreverent," says Manes. Thomas concurs. "It's my responsibility as a technology journalist to be on the side of the consumer and to ask the kinds of questions that the average intelligent consumer would," she says. The duo test all the products themselves; information about their conclusions, as well as a list of stations carrying the program, can be found on their website, digitalduo.com.

RADIO

THE CLARK HOWARD SHOW

NEWSTALK 750 WSB, ATLANTA

Clark Howard has the goal of "helping you pack a punch in your wallet by teaching you to spend less, save more, and avoid getting ripped off." He's the host of *The Clark Howard Show*, syndicated to more than 100 stations in more than 30 states. Howard opens each segment of his show with a quick consumer-information feature (a recent broadcast had him sounding off on health plans, free online music, and the phenomenon of the sponsored wedding). He spends the rest of the time taking calls from frustrated or confused consumers, who ask about things such as car repairs, satellite TV, and wireless services. Although Howard might be accused of being more informative than entertaining, he's passionate, articulate, and kind to his callers—whether they've bought a car they can't afford or lost $100,000 in a pay-phone scam. Listeners who miss one of his Monday–Friday broadcasts can check out previous program notes in the "Clarchives" at clarkhoward.com, which also lists stations that carry the show.

BOOKS

WHY WE BUY: THE SCIENCE OF SHOPPING

BY PACO UNDERHILL

(TOUCHSTONE, 2000, $15)

For anyone who has ever looked at a past purchase and wondered *What ever possessed me to buy that?* this book will begin to provide the answers. Underhill, who studied with urban anthropologist William H. Whyte and has been called "the guru of retail consulting," has investigated our shopping habits for almost 20 years. The information in this book, culled from thousands of hours of videotaped shoppers, logs of consumer behavior, and extensive customer interviews, offers excellent lessons for retailers (avoid the "butt brush effect" by positioning racks so that shoppers don't get jostled, for example). But the book also gives consumers insight into the psychological, sociological, and physical reasons behind their purchases. You can read about the difference between male and female shoppers (men buy the jeans they take to dressing rooms 65 percent of the time, whereas women do so only 25 percent of the time), find out that Blockbuster puts its new releases on the back wall to force customers to walk past the older videos, or learn how the "boomerang effect"—in which shoppers walk halfway down an aisle and turn around—affects product placement. Entertaining and educational, *Why We Buy* enables consumers to view stores—and themselves—through a more critical lens.

A THEORY OF SHOPPING

BY DANIEL MILLER

(CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1998, $16.95)

Those who prefer to understand shopping on an academic level might reach for *A Theory of Shopping*, which uses elements of ethnography, anthropology, and cultural studies to discuss "routine provisioning": the purchase of necessities that form "the bulk of shopping" (as opposed to the "mindless materialism" of binge shopping). After a year of interviewing shoppers as they went about their errands on a North London street (and plenty of reading: Bataille, Hegel, etc.), Miller, an anthropology professor at University College London, has arrived at a theory of "shopping as sacrifice." To put it bluntly—and oversimplify a bit—the choice, purchase, and consumption of a particular kind of condensed soup is analogous to the selection, killing, and eating of a sacrificial water buffalo. Both shopping and sacrifice, Miller says, create and sustain relationships, be they with a deity or a loved one. Though Miller admits that shopping, love, and sacrificial ritual are an "odd trilogy," his argument is a cogent one: The contents of the cart—the brands, the "treats"—show how shoppers feel about themselves and the people closest to them.

Radio-show host Clark Howard

THE CONSUMER BIBLE

BY MARK GREEN

(WORKMAN PUBLISHING, 1998, $15.95)

Mark Green, New York City's Public Advocate, a Democratic mayoral hopeful, and sometime consumer commentator on CNN, first published *The Consumer Bible* in 1995. This updated version, coauthored by Nancy Youman, is a 768-page, 65-chapter tome that purports to be "the only consumer guide anyone will ever need." That claim might be justified: *The Consumer Bible* helps consumers make educated purchasing decisions about groceries, pharmaceuticals, cable television, child care, insurance, banks, funerals, and countless other products and services. Clever subtitles such as "Deception in Conception" or "Look Before You Lease" seem to suggest that consumers are eternally—and dishearteningly—vulnerable to scams. For a discussion of the problems that women, minorities, the elderly, and people with disabilities can encounter, there's a "Bias in the Marketplace" section. Also helpful are appendixes listing state consumer agencies and hundreds of additional sources. Though crammed with information, *The Consumer Bible* is highly readable and comes, appropriately, with a money-back guarantee.

MAGAZINES

LUCKY

(CONDÉ NAST, $2.95/ISSUE)

If many of our sources fall under the category of "consumer advocacy," *Lucky* belongs to the category of "shopping advocacy." The distinction is an important one: *Lucky* isn't about bargains, product ratings, or comparison pricing. Instead, it's about pleasure—the excitement of the search, the thrill of the prize, and the fulfillment of the fantasy—mainly as experienced by young, fashion-conscious women. Though the test issue appeared at newsstands in May and a holiday issue arrived in November, the magazine won't publish monthly until February. In addition to glossy spreads on shoes and beauty products, *Lucky* offers the "Ask Dr. Shopper" column ("Do you have a shopping-related problem? A run in your pantyhose, even? No issue is too trivial for Dr. Shopper"); the "Hot Tickets" feature (for the "low-down on when sure-to-sell-out items hit the stores"); and the "Do It Yourself" section (pick out the perfect wine, dessert...puppy). A colorful, well-laid-out travel section on London features three "shopper's walking tours," since "travel, loosely translated, means shopping." There are even stickers to mark where future purchases are pictured. The problem? *Lucky* has so many delicious-looking items in its pages (and comparatively little copy) that it sometimes feels more like a catalog than a magazine.

CONSUMER REPORTS

(CONSUMERS UNION, $3.50/ISSUE)

The grandfather of consumer guides (published since 1936 by Consumers Union, an "independent, nonprofit testing and consumer-protection organization"), *Consumer Reports* has more than 100 testing experts in 50 labs who rate everything from luxury sedans to car wax, from pasta brands to electric ranges. Monthly issues have a dizzying array of information, including new product or safety-related columns in the "Front Lines" section and full-blown features complete with sidebars, art, and—of course—the famous charts, in which products' strengths and weaknesses are indicated by colored circles. The magazine also sends out yearly product-satisfaction surveys to its 4.2 million paid subscribers and publishes the results. A January 2000 redesign and snappier headlines ("When good parts go bad") have made *Consumer Reports* inviting rather than intimidating. "We've been working very hard to make the magazine more accessible," says editorial director Julia Kagan. "We think you can be thoughtful and careful and straightforward without being dull." *Consumer Reports* also has a website, ConsumerReports.org, with free access to safety and public-policy information. ■

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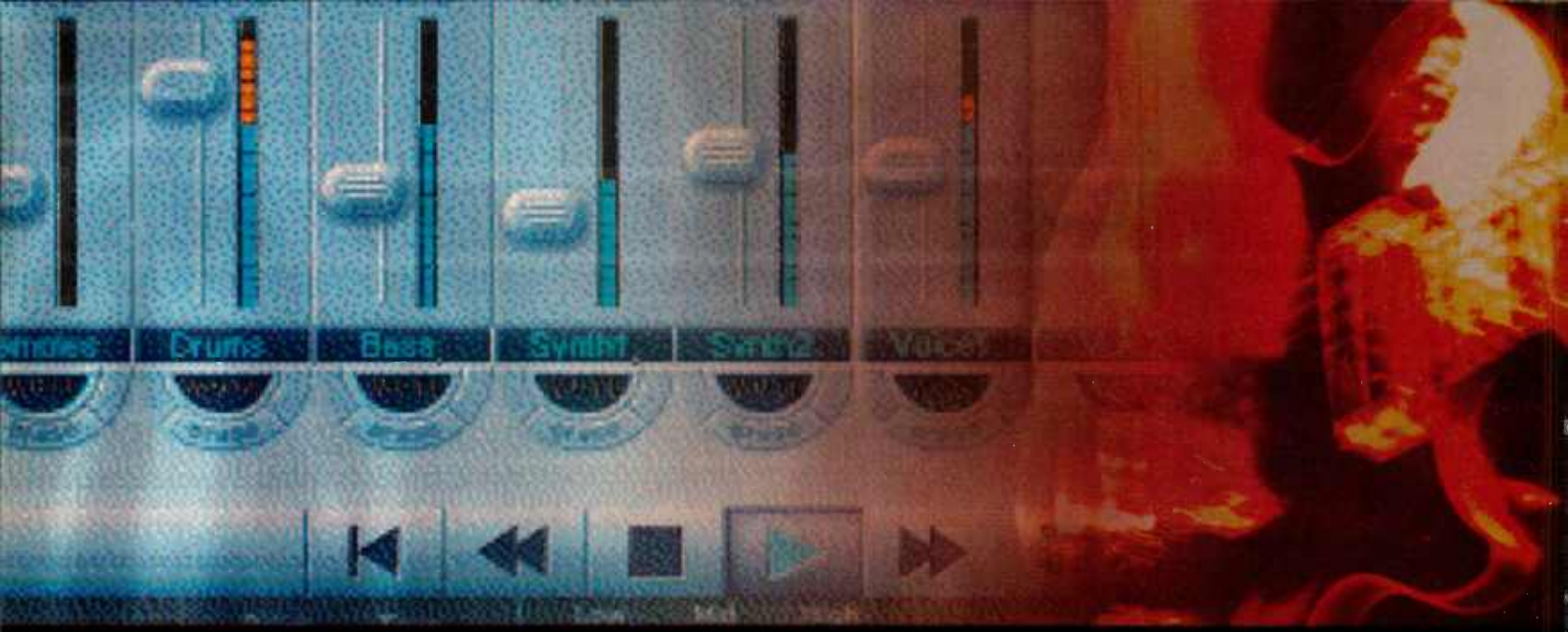

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DIAGNOSING A LETHAL LEGACY

When James Stewart learned that a discredited physician was again treating patients, the journalist began an investigation that helped bring a serial killer to justice. By Julie Scelfo

James Stewart, the Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist and author of *Den of Thieves*, which brilliantly traces the insider-trading fiasco of the late 1980s, gets plenty of tips from old friends and neighbors. Typically, he says, the advice is well-meaning—but useless. So when Stewart, who lives in New York, got a call in the summer of 1997 from a hometown acquaintance in Quincy, Illinois, he expected nothing more than local gossip. Instead, he found a story that would take him through four states and southern Africa as he helped to bring to justice Dr. Michael Swango—who, after a brief imprisonment for aggravated battery, returned to practice medicine for a decade and may have fatally poisoned as many as 60 patients.

In November 1997, *The New Yorker*, where Stewart is a staff writer, published his first account of the Swango case, an article widely credited with bringing national attention to the crimes. Stewart pressed on with his reporting and in 1999 published his findings in his sixth book, *Blind Eye: How the Medical Establishment Let a Doctor Get Away with Murder* (Simon & Schuster).

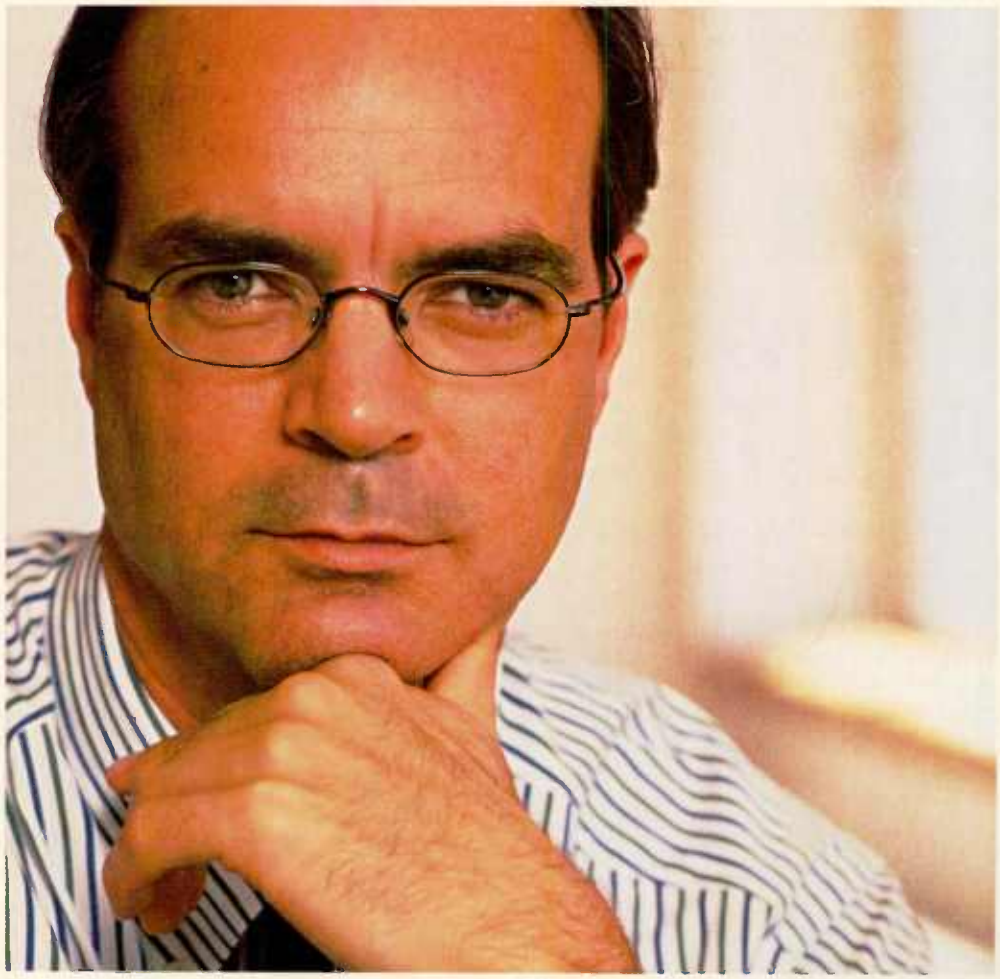
The initial tip came from circuit court judge Dennis Cashman, who in 1985 convicted Swango, then working as an ambulance paramedic in Quincy, for having dissolved ant poison in his colleagues' iced tea. Cashman was outraged that Swango, after serving two years in prison, had resumed a medical career that included stints at three hospitals in the United States, two in Zimbabwe, and one in Zambia. At each, a disproportionate number of patients died under his care. Although Swango was invariably dismissed, hospital officials rarely notified other medical institutions, and he continued working.

"When I first heard the story, I thought, *There must be some simple explanation*," says Stewart, 49, whose elegant looks and six-foot-four-inch frame are commanding. With the aid of two researchers, Stewart tracked down hundreds of people who had known or worked with Swango, a search that led the journalist from Ohio to Virginia, then on to Africa. Although federal authorities claim that they had been investigating Swango since 1993, it wasn't until this past July, close to a year after *Blind Eye* was published, that Swango was charged with murder. (In September, he was convicted in federal court and sentenced to three consecutive life terms.)

As Stewart stood in a Zimbabwe cornfield—"face-to-face with one of Swango's victims," he wrote in his book—he became convinced that Swango was a murderer. "That Keneas Mzezewa [a patient who survived a poisoning attempt] would tell substantially the same story as [Ohio victim] Rena Cooper, a woman [Mzezewa] had never met or heard of, who spoke a different language, and who lived a hemisphere away, could not be coincidence," Stewart wrote. "I would interview these people throughout this book...and none of them had ever been contacted by the FBI. So if this investigation was so intensive all these years, then where were they?"

A Harvard-trained lawyer who practiced briefly at a Wall Street firm, Stewart's reporting career took off at *The American Lawyer* (which was founded by this magazine's CEO, Steven Brill, who remains a close friend of Stewart's). He then moved on to *The Wall Street Journal*, where the stories he wrote with Daniel Hertzberg on the 1987 stock-market crash and insider trading were awarded a 1988 Pulitzer Prize (and led to *Den of Thieves*). "I'm persistent," Stewart says. "[A] story or a book is mostly the result of sheer willpower. You just dig in and you won't let anything stop you."

Stewart's tenacity served him well as he reported the Swango story, since hospital officials and physicians were often reluctant to discuss one of their own. When Stewart visited Ohio State University to learn why Swango had been expelled from its medical residency program in 1984, he "felt stonewalled on every front," he says. According to Stewart, Malcolm Baroway, then the university's press representative, and his assistant "would act like they were very nice in that Midwestern way, being very polite...but were in fact blocking me at every turn." (Baroway denies



James Stewart says that when he first heard the story he 'thought there must be some simple explanation.'

SIGRID ESTRADA/CORBIS OUTLINE

the allegations, saying that many people didn't want to talk to Stewart.)

The victims' families were so upset and in some cases so fearful of Swango's retribution that they also were reluctant to talk. "I had a hard time really sharing [my daughter's death] with much of anyone," says Sharon Cooper, the mother of Kristin Kinney, a former fiancée of Swango's. Kinney committed suicide, but at the time of her death, she was suffering from depression, severe headaches, nausea, and disorientation—symptoms that Stewart discovered are common in cases of arsenic poisoning. (Cooper says that a lock of Kristin's hair recently tested positive for the poison.)

Stewart felt that interviewing Kinney's mother was humbling—"Someone has shared something so painful and personal with you," he says—but he wasn't averse to using his charm and credentials to get the story. When Stewart contacted Cooper, she resisted. "I said, 'Excuse me, I have no idea who you are,'" Cooper recalls. Stewart patiently introduced his qualifications—besides his *New Yorker* work, he was the page-one editor of *The Wall Street Journal* and remains an editor at *Smart Money*. "He added, 'I have a Pulitzer Prize; does that help?' And I said yes," remembers Cooper, who eventually let him read her daughter's diary.

"Jim is such a gentleman and such an empathetic, understanding person, if anyone was going to interview me about the death of a child, I would want it to be him," says John Bennet, his editor at *The New Yorker*. "He doesn't bluster. I can't even imagine Jim blustering."

This fall, Stewart's efforts paid off. On September 6, Swango pleaded guilty to three counts of murder in federal court on Long Island, New York, and confessed to three other poisonings. Federal prosecutors gave accounts of the Swango killings that mirrored Stewart's descriptions: During patient visits, Swango would administer lethal injections, sometimes even while others, who were oblivious, watched. In exchange for Swango's plea, prosecutors agreed not to seek the death penalty or to extradite him to Zimbabwe, where an indictment for murder had been issued for his arrest.

Swango, escorted from court

Two weeks later, on September 20, Stewart testified before a congressional hearing on the Patient Protection Act. The hearing also examined the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB), a repository of information that began operating in 1990. It lists disciplinary actions and malpractice claims filed against doctors; only physicians and hospital officials have access to the information.

"A fraternity of doctors often rallied around Swango, forming a white wall of silence that makes the police blue wall seem porous by comparison," Stewart told members of Congress and an audience that included the president-elect of the American Medical Association. He argued that the public should have access to the NPDB and proposed that it be extended to include residents who are not yet licensed.

Peter Sheffield, a spokesman for the House of Representatives' commerce committee, which sponsored the hearing, says that *Blind Eye* galvanized committee members: "The beauty of this book was he had done the reporting, but he went on to make recommendations."

Stewart insists that his advocacy isn't at odds with his role as a journalist. "[E]very once in a while I think things are so obvious that to *not* say them would be like a dereliction of duty," he says. "I've never encountered such a glaring problem that in my view can be so easily remedied."

The FBI in New York says that Swango wasn't charged sooner because it took years to acquire the necessary physical evidence. Bodies were exhumed and in some cases new toxicology tests had to be developed to detect the poison. But some of the victims' families consider the delay unconscionable and Stewart's book the catalyst for Swango's final imprisonment. "[F]rom our point of view they kept dropping the ball because we'd lead them to things and they just wouldn't do anything," says Cooper, Kristin Kinney's mother. "[W]ithout that book, I'm not so sure that Swango would be going to life in prison today." ◘

PRIME TIME, ALL THE TIME

Second-generation personal video recorders promise to change the way you watch television. And unlike earlier models, they deliver. By John R. Quain

It is the most hackneyed cliché in technology: the blinking 12:00 on a VCR. Having set and reset hundreds of VCR clocks while reviewing recorders over the years, I have finally tired of resetting my own. So now it, too, helplessly blinks 12:00, making it impossible for me to record a program in advance.

The personal video recorder, or PVR, is supposed to conquer my laziness, and it has. The PVR—a black box containing a modem and a computer that records programs onto a hard drive—pauses live programming, skips recorded commercials, lets owners record a week's worth of their favorite shows at the push of a button, and, yes, sets the clock automatically.

About a year and a half ago I took a look at the first two bleeding-edge PVRs on the market ["Fast-Forward, Rewind—and Take Control," Tools, September 1999]. Although I was impressed with the technology, the early machines had a number of bugs and weren't ready for prime time.

Now several big consumer-electronics firms—including Panasonic, Sony, and Philips—have introduced a second generation of PVRs. The new boxes, based on the original competing designs from ReplayTV and TiVo, are easier to operate and offer more recording time and several new features. So with PVRs second only to Sony's PlayStation 2 on many holiday wish lists, I decided it was time for a second look.

PANASONIC PV-HS2000 SHOWSTOPPER

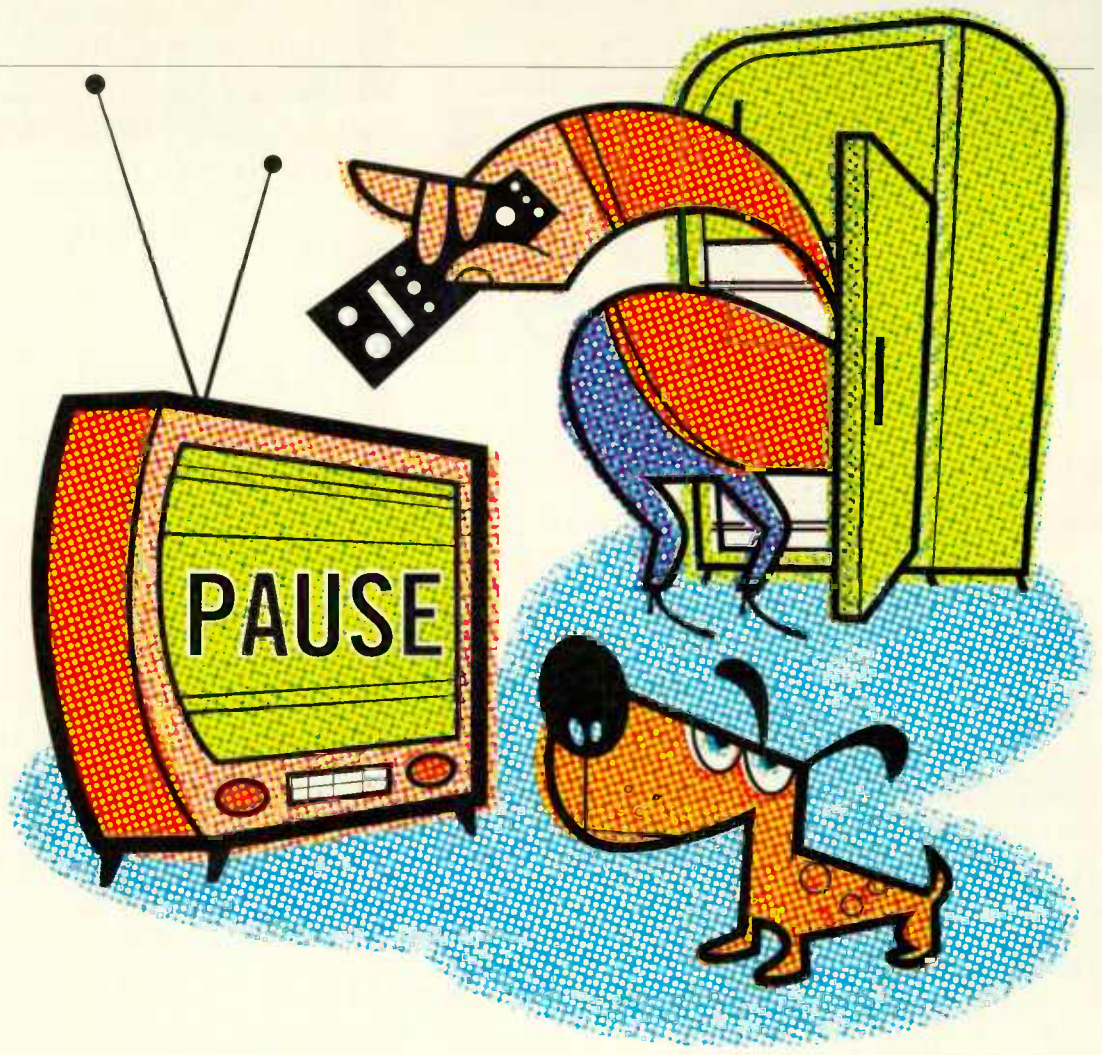
Panasonic's PV-HS2000 ShowStopper is a version of the original ReplayTV box. The first time I tested a ReplayTV recorder it wouldn't work with my Time Warner cable box. Panasonic's ShowStopper ($699.95) solves that problem and smooths out some of the first generation's rough edges.

The ShowStopper offers more recording time—30 hours—for less money (the first ReplayTV model cost nearly $1,500 and recorded only 28 hours). Because the programs are stored on a hard drive rather than on a tape, recording times are finite. At the highest-quality picture setting, you can record only about 10 hours. After that, if you want to keep a copy of the shows you've recorded you have to dub them onto a VCR.

To set up the ShowStopper, you connect it to your television much as you would a VCR, with a few extra steps. The ShowStopper must be plugged into a telephone line to download program listings and updated software. You must also stick a tiny infrared controller onto the front of your cable box so that the PVR can communicate with your cable converter. The first time you turn on the ShowStopper you'll have to navigate several setup screens and wait about 20 minutes for the system to download programming data. From then on, the ShowStopper calls ReplayTV in the middle of the night to update daily listings.

Once you're set up you can channel-surf using the ReplayTV onscreen

ED BETZ/AP PHOTO



program guide, which can combine listings from cable TV, an antenna, and a satellite receiver. When you see something you want push a button and the box will record it—no need to enter the time, the day, or the week. After you've recorded several shows, the ReplayTV system lists them. And when you play them back a handy 30-second advance button lets you pretend that commercials don't exist.

The true revolution, however, is the ShowStopper's ability to change the way you watch live programs. Because it continuously records the incoming television signal, you can pause live TV. It allows you, for example, to stop Jim Lehrer in mid-interrogation, take out the garbage, and then saunter back without having missed a single equivocation. You can also rewind up to half an hour of live TV, then go back to where you left off and not miss a punch line. And for sports fans, there are slow-motion/single-frame advance features for close calls and a seven-second instant replay. You can even let the kids watch a recorded episode of *Buffy* while the box records a Redskins game in the background.

I also had a chance to preview a test version of ReplayTV's upcoming MyReplayTV, which should be available by the time you read this. The new service lets you control some ShowStopper functions from the Internet. Whether you're procrastinating at the office or stuck in another country, you can check out how many minutes of recording time are left on your machine and search program listings for your area. MyReplayTV also lets you set recording times via the Web, but because your PVR won't collect that information until it dials up the ReplayTV service in the middle of the night, you can't record remotely for the current day. The ReplayTV folks promise that their service will soon let you do that.

SONY SVR-2000 DIGITAL NETWORK RECORDER

The other PVR I was eager to try was Sony's box, the SVR-2000. It's based on the much-advertised TiVo system. The TiVo technology is virtually identical to ReplayTV's system. Under the recorder's silver lining is a computer with a hard drive that records digitally compressed programs. For $399.99 you get most of the features available on the more expensive Panasonic ShowStopper: 30 hours of recording time, instant replay, and the ability to pause live programs.

What you don't get is the necessary TiVo onscreen program guide. For that you have to pay either $9.95 a month or $199 for a "lifetime" subscription. Still, even with a lifetime subscription, the total cost of the Sony PVR is about $100 less than the Panasonic—although I've seen store discounts that put the Panasonic in the same price range as the Sony.

Sony's system has a couple of features that the Panasonic model lacks. One addition, Auto VCR Transfer, lets you automatically archive a PVR recording to tape, although it works only with Sony VCRs. The Sony also has a List button on its remote control—which, with a single press, brings up a screen of all your recorded programs. Before this feature was added, you had to work your way through several onscreen menus to find out what was recorded on the box.

Another difference between the two models is that the Sony takes longer to set up: nearly three hours, in my case, to download the listings and process all the information. But the ReplayTV service offered on the Panasonic ShowStopper has only local toll numbers for the downloads (for which you may be charged if you live in a remote area). The TiVo service used by Sony offers toll-free numbers.

TiVo also likes to tout its Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down option. After you tell the system which programs appeal to you and which don't, the TiVo guide tries to predict other shows you might like. However, these automated systems rarely work, and TiVo's is no exception. I like some Clint Eastwood movies, for example, but I hate Chuck Norris. My paranoia also made me shy away from the Thumbs Up and Thumbs Down buttons, because the system relays the information back to TiVo, providing the company with marketing data about me that I'd prefer to keep to myself. (Both ReplayTV and TiVo can also tell exactly which programs you recorded and when you watched them.)

PAUSING LIVE TELEVISION so that you can get a cup of coffee from the kitchen or answer the phone is a relief for couch potatoes who've been shackled to their Barcaloungers for years. So in many ways, PVRs finally deliver on the time-shifting promise of VCRs. But once the novelty of time-altered TV wears off, you will notice a few shortcomings.

Even the second-generation models affect the picture quality, for example. Because the incoming video stream is constantly moving through the digital encoding and decoding process, the image looks a touch grainier than a live incoming signal taken directly from your cable box. The result looks as good as VHS tape, though.

The other drawback of the Panasonic and Sony PVRs is that they still don't integrate perfectly with the rest of your home entertainment gear. There's the awkward infrared hookup that has to be stuck on the top of a cable box, for example, and the need to connect the system to a phone line.

The functionality of the personal video recorder will eventually be built into everything from satellite receivers to America Online cable and Internet boxes. But why wait? This year, I'm putting the Panasonic ShowStopper at the top of my wish list. ■

CHIP WASS

dept. **CREDENTIALS**

THEY'RE ALL BOOKED UP

The reviews of these six influential book critics speak—and can move—volumes. By Jane Manners

ALAN CHEUSE
***ALL THINGS CONSIDERED* (NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO), 1981–**

B.A., English and comparative literature, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey (New Brunswick), 1961; Ph.D., comparative literature, Rutgers, 1974

Work highlights: Toll collector, New Jersey Turnpike, 1961; assistant editor, *Women's Wear Daily*, 1963–64; caseworker, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (New York City), 1966–67; teacher, Bennington College (Bennington, VT), 1970–78; freelance journalist (Knoxville, TN), 1978–84; professor of English, George Mason University (Fairfax, VA), 1987–present

Author (selected works): *Fall Out of Heaven* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987); *The Tennessee Waltz and Other Stories* (Peregrine Smith Books, 1991); *Lost and Old Rivers* (Southern Methodist University Press, 1998)

Does being a writer affect how you review books? *Anybody who says they really don't care [about being reviewed] is lying. It's like a surgeon going under the knife....I don't think you really ever develop that kind of thick skin.*

What is your primary goal as a reviewer? *I try to write a review as much to the writer as I do to the reader....I don't want to say anything that the writer isn't going to understand.... I try to give the feeling of reading the book. Radio passes so quickly that people can't stop and rewind the way they can in a newspaper....We're so fortunate that we can do books at all on the air that I don't want to waste time on some book that's not worth reading anyway. The negative reviews I do are [on] books that I worry people are going to read.*

PAUL GRAY *TIME*, 1981–

B.A., English, University of Mississippi (Oxford), 1961; M.A., English, University of Virginia (Charlottesville), 1962; Ph.D., English, University of Virginia, 1965

Work highlights: Assistant professor, English, Princeton University (Princeton, NJ), 1967–73; *Time*: contributing editor, staff writer, associate editor, 1972–81

Have you ever changed your mind about a book after you've reviewed it? *I've never done so in print, but there are times in hindsight when I felt maybe I was too harsh or too kind. It doesn't happen that often—not because I think I'm infallible but because the rush of deadlines doesn't allow too much time for hindsight.*

Do you have a favorite writer? *I love to read Faulkner and Joyce and Jane Austen and Thomas Pynchon. Graham Greene is another one...and Evelyn Waugh.*

What do you see as your primary responsibility as a reviewer? *I feel I have two obligations. One is to* Time *subscribers....I'm telling them, "Here is a new book that some of you might well be interested in."...And also to the book itself, getting the book right and not misrepresenting it. I've got to be true to the book, and I've got to be useful to the reader.*

MALCOLM JONES *NEWSWEEK*, 1989–

B.A., English, Wake Forest University (Winston-Salem, NC), 1974

Work highlights: Editorial assistant, *Twin City Sentinel* (Winston-Salem), 1974–77; editorial writer/Sunday book-page editor, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, 1978–83; book editor, *St. Petersburg* (FL) *Times*, 1983–89

Co-adapter: *Jump!* (Harcourt Brace, 1986)

Does having written your own book affect how you review? *Not so much having written books as just writing in general. The more you write the more sympathetic you become to other writers.*

Have you ever changed your mind about a review? *Lots of times. I have found myself overpraising books, but what's more interesting are books that I didn't give great reviews to at the time turning out to be unforgettable.*

MICHIKO KAKUTANI
***THE NEW YORK TIMES*, 1983–**

B.A., English, Yale University (New Haven, CT), 1976

Work highlights: Vacation relief reporter, *The Washington Post*, 1976; staff writer, *Time*, 1977–79; culture news reporter, *The New York Times*, 1979–83

Author: *The Poet at the Piano* (Times Books, 1988)

Declined to be interviewed.

JOHN LEONARD
***THE NATION*, 1998–; *CBS NEWS SUNDAY MORNING*, 1988–**

English, University of California, Berkeley, 1960–61

Work highlights: Teacher, War on Poverty after-school program (Roxbury, MA), 1964–66; editor, *The New York Times Book Review*, 1970–75; culture critic, *The New York Times*, 1976–82; TV critic, *New York* magazine, 1983–present; columnist, *Newsday*, 1987–93; co-literary editor, *The Nation*, 1995–98

Author (selected works): *Wyke Regis* (The Dial Press, Inc., 1966); *Cry Baby of the Western World* (Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969); *Black Conceit* (Doubleday, 1973)

Does your fiction-writing background affect how you review books? *I stopped writing [fiction].... I have a very lively sense that the people who write original creative work are always infinitely more important than the critics who rely on them to give them something to write about. I consider reviewers lower down on the food chain.*

CAROLYN SEE
***THE WASHINGTON POST*, 1993–**

B.A., English, Los Angeles State College, 1957; M.A., American literature, University of California, Los Angeles, 1963; Ph.D., American literature, UCLA, 1965

Work highlights: Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles) English department: assistant professor, associate professor, professor, 1971–85; professor, English, UCLA, 1986–present; book reviewer, *Los Angeles Times*, 1981–93

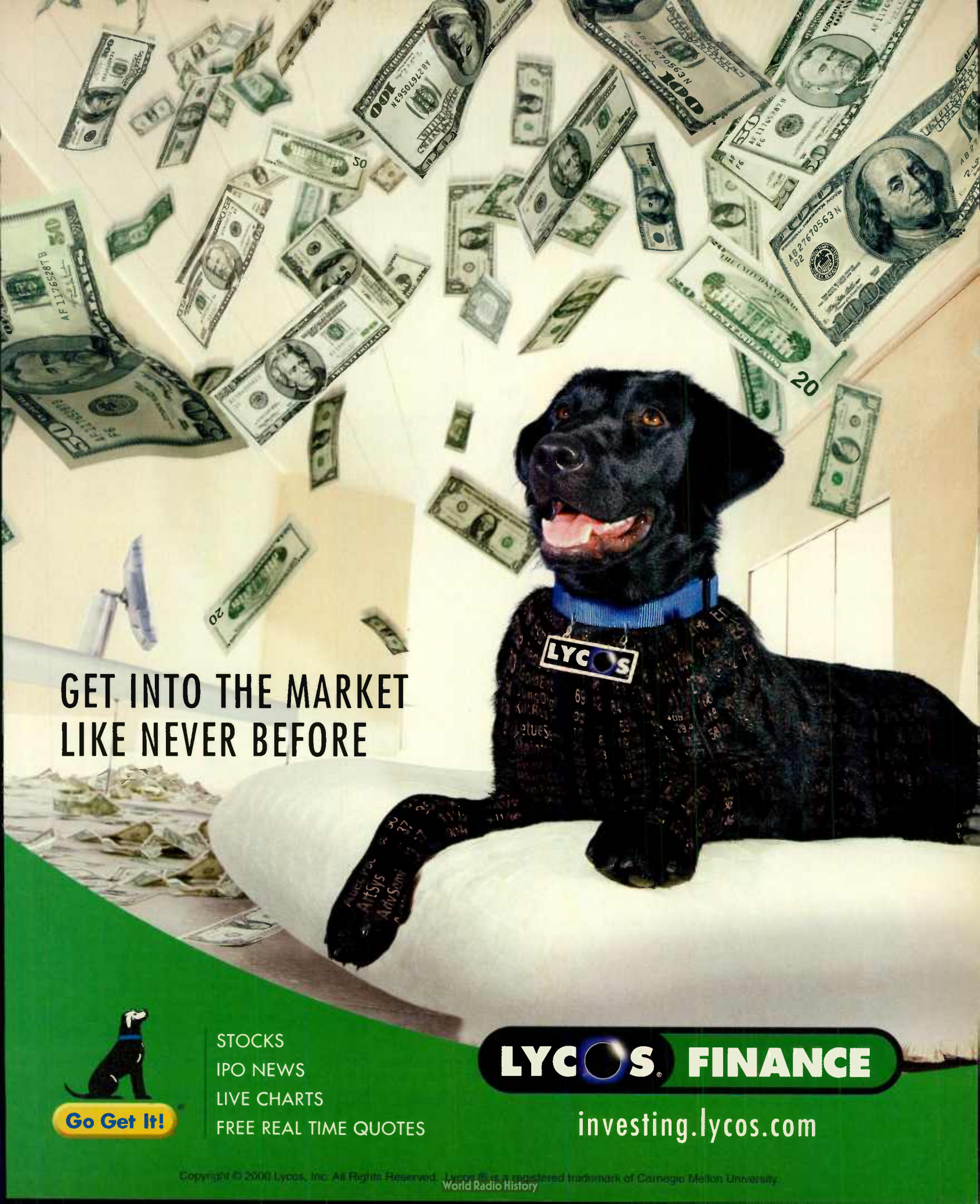
Author (selected works): *Dreaming: Good Luck and Hard Times in America* (University of California Press, 1996); *The Handyman* (Random House, 1999)

How does being a novelist affect your reviews? *I think it gives me a little more compassion and sympathy....I know how tough it is to write a book...and how a morning's work can seriously undo that.*

Have you ever changed your mind about a review? *Laurie Colwin's* Family Happiness. *I gave it a bad review, and I came to recognize that I was wrong. If you're a reviewer...you don't claim to be infallible. You just claim to talk about how that book seems to you on a particular day.*

Favorite writer? *Overall, E.M. Forster. I love each one of his books in a different way....I think Evelyn Waugh's* Scoop *is one of my favorite books because it makes you laugh so hard and it's so mean-spirited.*

CHEUSE: GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY; GRAY: TED THAI FOR *TIME*; JONES: CLIFF CHASE; LEONARD: JOHN FILO; SEE: MARILYN SANDERS



[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34] Christmas, poor St. Nicholas, they sh--ed all over his beard." Mr. Eichenwald reported all this the moment it became evident.

"Though Eichenwald's reporting was later questioned by some columnists, it is hard to imagine how he could have been more thorough at the time," writer Alison Frankel concluded in a 12,433-word article on the Texaco case in March 1997. (Talk about thoroughness! Twelve thousand four hundred and thirty-three words is nearly five times the length of this lengthy essay.) That article appeared in *The American Lawyer*, which was then owned by Steven Brill, who is the Brill of *Brill's Content*.

Mr. Eichenwald should be given space to vent, so here are the final three paragraphs of a two-page letter he sent to *Brill's Content* (a letter he ultimately declined to let run for reasons too Byzantine to get into here):

"I acknowledge that the point about me was a small one in Mr. Mnookin's article. And indeed, he informed me in a voice mail after publication that he felt no need to check his information with me because it played such a minor role. But to me, this is a new standard in journalism—how many pejorative sentences are required until we must seek comment from those we are writing about? I had always thought the answer was one.

"Yet, while Mr. Mnookin could not be bothered to call me, he did have time, according to his article, to approach the Pulitzer board members and besmirch my reputation on the basis of his lazy, incomplete reporting. Somehow, I doubt he'll be calling them back to say that he was wrong—all I can hope for is a correction or a tortured explanation following this letter that justifies his sloppiness.

"But there is also a bigger point here. Is *Brill's Content* advocating that reporters subjected at any point in their careers to criticism—no matter how irrelevant, inaccurate or wrongheaded—must submit that information to the Pulitzer committees? I hope not. I cannot think of a better way to reduce much of American journalism to pablum—working to avoid offense rather than to challenge the way we think."

Again, a simple phone call or a check of the clips might have allowed Mr. Mnookin to give readers a more rounded story—or prompted him to find a better example to prove his thesis.

And that raises the most troubling issue of all. Was that thesis based on solid reporting or on some preconceived notion of the editors or of founder Brill? They will have their say at the end of this column, and I hope it's convincing. To the outsider, the facts look pretty bad.

In the fall of 1997, almost a year before this magazine was launched, a promotional piece urged would-be subscibers to "reserve your free premiere issue now!" Below that was a mock-up of a potential cover. "Tarnished Pulitzer," it said in big type that stretched across the cover. "Back scratching, conflicts of interest, no checking for accuracy. Is this any way to run a journalism award?"

That didn't go unnoticed by Mr. Topping of the Pulitzer board. He sent a copy to board members, noting that there had been "no approach by reporters or editors of the magazine to indicate whether such a story was, in fact, scheduled." In June 1998, Mr. Topping sent board members another note. He referred to his earlier memo and noted that "since that time we have had no contact with the staff of [*Brill's*] *Content*. However, the current issue of *U.S. News & World Report* has an interview with [Steven] Brill in which brief mention is made of what he is said to have in mind. [Mr.] Brill told the reporter he plans a series of stories based on fact checking of Pulitzer Prize–winning stories."

Now comes Mr. Mnookin with just such a story, and Mr. Topping, for one, thinks the *Brill's Content* reporter "came into my office with a preconception." Of course, some preconceptions turn out to be true. There's nothing wrong with preconceptions as long as reporters and editors are willing to abandon them when the facts intervene. Still, it doesn't look good.

Even touts should rely on facts. (Speaking of facts, Mr. Mnookin added the gratuitous sentence that Pulitzer Prizes "catapult workaday hacks onto management tracks." There were no names, no examples, no specifics.)

So was Mr. Mnookin's story right or wrong? Both, probably. Mr. Eichenwald, despite being labeled with a sin he didn't commit and being lumped with sinners he doesn't approve of, thinks Mr. Mnookin's "story was right—but [in its own reporting] it reinforced the problem that we're sloppy, we repeat other people's errors, we don't let the facts get in the way sometimes." Mr. Topping, on the other hand, says, "I didn't like it. I thought it was in many ways an unfair story....I thought there were so many holes in it. So many questions and so many holes in it. I thought at first of writing something, [but I concluded it's] such a bad story it's not worthy of us to reply."

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH PRECONCEPTIONS AS LONG AS REPORTERS AND EDITORS ARE WILLING TO ABANDON THEM WHEN THE FACTS INTERVENE.

In fact, it was not a bad story. It was a strong story with some weak reporting, a good story with some bad examples. (And some good ones. One long example was about The Associated Press's Korean-massacre story that relied in part on a source who had lied. The AP had its say in a letter in the last issue, and Mr. Mnookin effectively rebutted—make that refuted—the points made in that letter. The AP story was deeply, deeply flawed.) Some more phone calls, some more research, some more care would have produced for *Brill's Content* a story that was stronger and fairer—and that might have prompted the Pulitzer board to do what it should have done decades ago: disclose the names of the finalists the moment they're chosen so that everyone knows who's in the running and critics—competitors, sources, experts, whoever—can make their case before rather than after the fact.

The Pulitzer process is as clean an operation as I've ever seen. It's run by honest men and women of goodwill and strong instincts. But that's not always enough to ferret out sham and shame. A little more openness would go a long way.

It would unearth the criticism before it's too late.

And it would end a month of rumors and gossip in newsrooms and saloons.

All that would solve two other problems.

The first is this: Journalists shouldn't keep secrets.

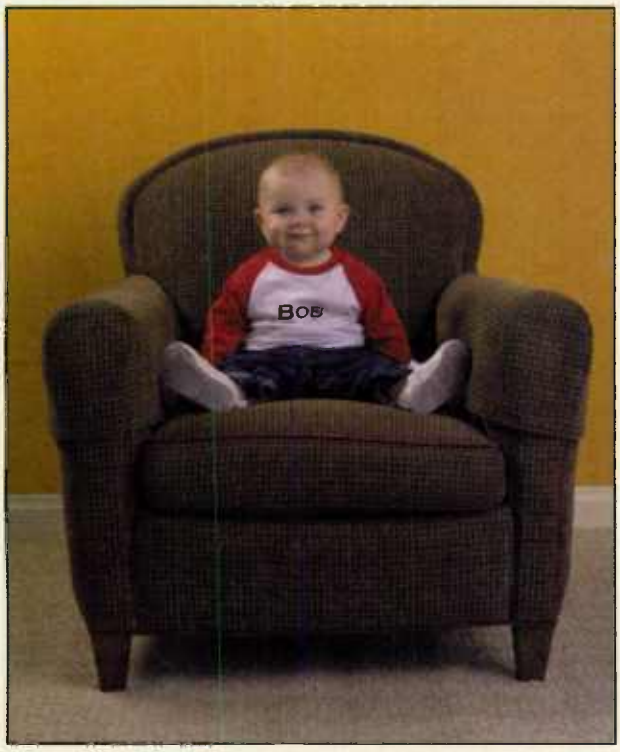
The second is this: Most can't.

SETH MNOOKIN RESPONDS

Michael Gartner points to two examples in my piece that he feels raise questions about my own "fairness and accuracy." Both of the cases deal with muddled, ongoing disputes.

Although Brush Wellman Inc. submitted dozens of pages of documents to the Pulitzer organization (regarding the *Blade* series), neither the jury nor the board got to examine these documents. My point in writing about this case was to illustrate that the Pulitzer juries and board are not given any context or history in which to make their decisions. I did not make a judgment as to whether the newspaper or Brush Wellman was correct, though this is a topic that continues to

PROFILE



NAME: Bob

AGE: 8 months

HEIGHT: 28"

WEIGHT: 24.5 pounds

HOME: Seattle, Washington

IQ: 140

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

MARITAL STATUS: Single

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

DISLIKES: Dirty diapers and wet willies

HOBBIES: Bongos, stamp collecting, pigeon racing

FAVORITE COLOR: Red

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

NICKNAME: Bobaloo

ADVICE TO READERS: Never pay for anything you don't have to. (i.e. Internet service)

elicit pitched emotions on both sides. Instead, I wanted to illustrate how even after the subject of an investigative dispatch submitted a lengthy report disputing *The Blade*'s work, the Pulitzer jury was not given access to this information and was instead offered a brief summation by the Pulitzer board secretary, Seymour Topping. Mr. Gartner—who, as he points out, knows about the Pulitzer process, having served on the Pulitzer board for almost a decade—confuses the issue here. After writing in his column, "Mr. Mnookin takes Mr. Topping to task for not passing the Brush Wellman complaint along to the Pulitzer jury," Mr. Gartner goes on to say, "Mr. Topping says he did indeed pass along the file to the Pulitzer *board* [italics added] as soon as Brush Wellman allowed him to—and before the board met to award the prizes this spring." As Mr. Gartner knows, the Pulitzer juries and the Pulitzer board are two different things: The juries are the people that are supposed to examine stories in depth and present their selections to the board; the board then chooses the winners. Furthermore, Mr. Topping's version of the chronology of these events to Mr. Gartner differs from what Mr. Topping told me on two separate occasions. Whatever the case, Mr. Gartner again muddies the waters by writing that "Topping says that he '*presented* the full report...to the *board* [italics added] and discussed its contents.'" Mr. Topping told me he had summarized the report for the board. Mr. Gartner's own column quotes Mr. Topping's personal views on *The Blade*'s series: It "was a very good one" and it "surfaced a very bad situation." If I were representing Brush Wellman, Seymour Topping is not the man I would want summarizing my concerns. Nothing Mr. Gartner writes changes my view that Brush Wellman's concerns were either ignored or summarily dismissed.

MNOOKIN'S EXAMPLES WERE MEANT ONLY TO ILLUSTRATE THE CONTROVERSIES THE JURY DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT OR IGNORES, NOT TO TAKE SIDES IN THOSE CONTROVERSIES.

On one point, I agree with Mr. Gartner. Although my *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* lists "to deny the truth or accuracy of" as a definition for "refute," it is not the first definition. "Refutation" is a loaded word, and was a poor choice in this instance. I apologize.

As for Mr. Eichenwald, some commentators continue to believe that he was guilty of bias or overzealousness; some believe that he did everything a good reporter should do when working on a hard-hitting story. Indeed, the contretemps in this column shows how this dispute continues; the point I was making is that nowhere in the Pulitzer process were people made aware of this history. (An aside: Mr. Eichenwald is not accurate when he writes that I left him a voice message saying I didn't call him because he played such a minor role in my story. I told him, in several voice messages, that I had not called because I had no interest in getting in the middle of his feud over his articles; instead I wanted to illustrate how these back histories were routinely overlooked. And although Mr. Gartner quotes liberally from Eichenwald's letter and writes that Eichenwald "ultimately" refused to let us run his letter "for reasons too Byzantine to get into here," the reason is actually quite simple: Eichenwald would not let us run his letter unless he had a chance to vet my response.) Mr. Gartner seems to believe that there is no further disagreement over Mr. Eichenwald's reporting in the Texaco case. That is simply false. Mr. Gartner writes that "a simple phone call or a check of the clips might have allowed Mr. Mnookin to give readers a more rounded story." The implication here is that I was unaware of the March 1997 *American Lawyer* article on the Texaco case. In fact, I was aware of that article. As I told Mr. Gartner in a telephone conversation, I read that article and discussed it with my editors. That article serves only to illustrate that there are different points of view about this case.

In regard to the Eichenwald and *Blade* passages, Mr. Gartner and I disagree about both the need for and appropriateness of a phone call. In recounting the fact that there had been either a controversy about or an objection to an author or article under consideration, I was not taking sides—indeed, I did not want to take sides—but was illustrating how the Pulitzer board does not present these disputes to juries to consider. For this reason, I didn't call a number of the historical figures I dealt with in my article: Patricia Smith, the reporters behind a Lawrence [Kansas] *Eagle-Tribune* Pulitzer Prize, or Mr. Eichenwald's writing partner, Gina Kolata. I was writing not about ongoing journalistic feuds but about the Pulitzer Prize process. However, I do agree that I should have made my implicit neutrality more explicit. Since the history in both cases is fraught, this neutrality should have been highlighted more.

Finally, to address the question of how this story came about, I initially proposed a piece on Mark Schoofs, a *Village Voice* reporter who had won a Pulitzer Prize for international reporting. That idea then evolved, over a series of discussions with my editors, including Steven Brill, into a larger story about the Pulitzers. I had no knowledge of previous promotional material dealing with the Pulitzer Prizes. I would have told Mr. Gartner this had he asked.

Since Mr. Gartner served for a decade on the Pulitzer board and won a Pulitzer Prize in 1997, perhaps it is not surprising that he defends the process so vigorously, writing, "The Pulitzer process is as clean an operation as I've ever seen. It's run by honest men and women of goodwill and strong instincts." Fine. I don't think, nor do I ever imply, that the Pulitzer process is run by bad-willed crooks with weak instincts. I do write about how flawed the process is. And to rip down this argument, Mr. Gartner takes two minor, supplementary examples—two examples that total 416 words in a 6,573-word story—and uses those to cast aspersions on the entire piece. Indeed, I find it ironic that Mr. Gartner begins his column with the sentence "Seth Mnookin paints—or maybe tars—with a broad brush." Mr. Gartner never addresses two of my main points—that the Pulitzer process is rushed and that conflicts of interest abound—and yet feels comfortable writing "Well, maybe" in response to a rhetorical question as to whether my story delivers what it promises in a headline.

Michael Gartner assumes I was assigned to do a hatchet job. In response, he gives Seymour Topping—the man who oversaw the Pulitzer board that awarded Mr. Gartner his own prize—an opportunity to belittle my piece and to lament that he would have written a letter but concluded that my piece was "such a bad story it's not worthy of us to reply." This is a cop-out. If Topping has problems with my story—indeed, if there is a single factual inaccuracy or misrepresentation—he should say so.

STEVEN BRILL RESPONDS

Michael Gartner's and Seymour Topping's reactions to our piece about the Pulitzers warmed my heart. For it reminded me of why I started this magazine. Imagine how these two journalists and every other journalist would react if they heard about the tire industry meeting annually to give awards for the safest tires and found that the awards were handed out 1) by executives at the companies that make the tires and 2) without anyone ever testing the tires for safety—whereupon the winners touted the awards with all kinds of self-congratulatory advertising. Or imagine the journalists' reaction if awards were given for medical breakthroughs that cured cancer by a group that never

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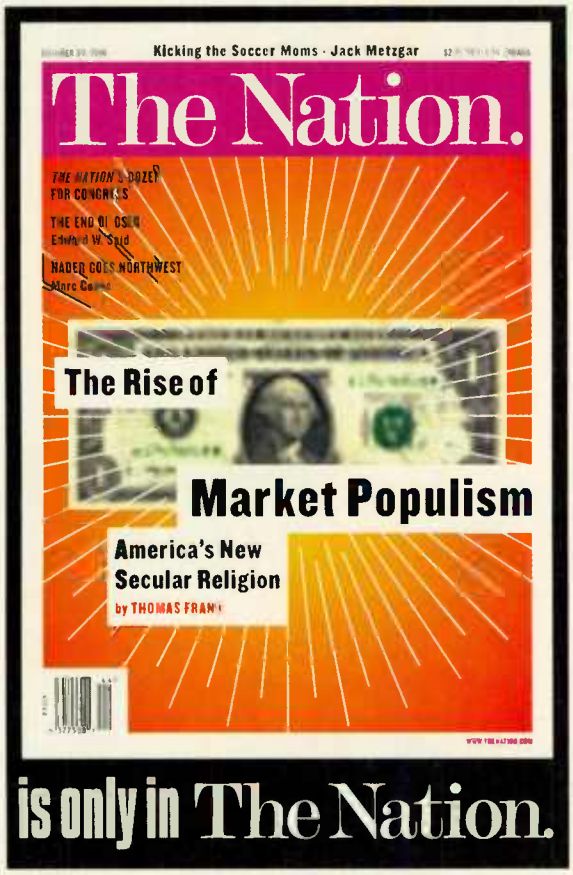
About Bertelsmann's Hidden Nazi Past In an exposé trumpeted coast to coast, *The Nation* revealed that Bertelsmann - the largest book publisher in the U.S. - has carefully hidden its stalwart complicity with the Third Reich.

About the Secret History of Lead In an exhaustive special report, *The Nation* showed how General Motors, Standard Oil and Du Pont colluded to make and market gasoline containing lead - a deadly poison - although there were safe alternatives. Abetted by the US government, they suppressed scientific evidence that lead kills. Still sold in countries all over the world, leaded gasoline continues to poison the planet.

About *The Wall Street Journal* Contrary to its self-assessment as "the world's most important publication," Gore Vidal noted for *The Nation* "just how unknown this cheery neofascist paper is to the majority of Americans."

About Arts Funding As columnist Katha Pollitt wrote, "the right-wing attack on the National Endowment for the Arts is playing to a small, if ferocious, constituency. Contrary to stereotype, Americans *like* the arts, and the more access they have to them, the more they like them."



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checked to see if the cures actually cured anything. Then imagine if in each case those involved simply assured some skeptical reporter asking about the awards that "those who decide on the awards are fair, honest people."

I will bet Michael Gartner ten tickets to his minor-league baseball team's opening day next spring that every single reader of ours who is *not* a journalist understands this, whereas lots of journalists won't. It's exactly the way lots of lawyers—to take another example of a group seen by outsiders as self-protective and unaccountable—don't get it when the public complains about them.

The point of our article was simple and indisputable—so simple, in fact, that, yes, it made for a logical and easily understood example of stories *Brill's Content* would tackle that I could cite in the materials we used before launching the magazine. And that point is that an award that doesn't focus on any issues related to the values inherent in the award itself—accuracy and fairness—is just not a credible award and, in fact, is emblematic of the arrogance and lack of accountability of who are responsible for it. Seth's examples, as he explains, were meant only to illustrate the controversies the jury doesn't know about or ignores, not to take sides in those controversies.

Michael's suggested solution to the problem—publicizing the finalists in order to elicit comments from those who might be critical of the articles—is an excellent idea, as would be sending a questionnaire to the main subjects of any article submitted for an award (an idea I suggested in a column here a year ago). But I'll bet Mr. Topping will oppose both suggestions, and I hope that before responding below to our responses, Michael will ask him about that and include his reaction in that response.

MICHAEL GARTNER RESPONDS

I have read the responses and reread my column. Neither response is persuasive. I rest my case.

Beyond that, I accept Steven's bet. His check, for $90, should be made payable to the Iowa Cubs. Opening day is April 13. ■

Walking The Line

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 95] But there are those who—however much they respect Stephanopoulos—disapprove of his latest incarnation. More to the point, they are chagrined that Stephanopoulos had such an option in the first place.

Argues *The Washington Post*'s David Broder, often called the dean of Washington columnists, "The revolving door is a problem in two respects: One, it sends the wrong signals inside the business as to how you get to the top of the journalism ladder...[that you] now can parachute in from the political ladder and the public relations ladder, and I think that sends a bad message."

"And, two," Broder says, "the whole idea of the First Amendment rests on the notion that you need some institution, however flawed, that is independent from the political and governmental structure to keep an eye on that world. The more people see political and governmental folks as interchangeable with journalists, it is harder to maintain the argument that journalists deserve special constitutional privilege. So I think that the blurring of the lines of the revolving door sends too dangerous a message, both inside the business and to the public at large. George is not the only example, but he is conspicuous."

'Is there something about working in government that disqualifies someone permanently from the craft of journalism...that prevents you from observing and analyzing and presenting the facts in a clear way? I just don't buy that,' says Stephanopoulos.

"The other side of the argument," Broder concedes, "is that we get very talented people into journalism, whether it be George or Bill Safire, Bill Kristol or Tim Russert. But there is a price you pay for that."

To some the price is far too high, and they cite Stephanopoulos's situation as particularly disturbing, given his relatively rapid progression from a pundit to a reporter who is covering a campaign involving an administration for which he worked. "There have always been all sorts of revolving-door arrangements," says Michael Kelly, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. "And in recent years, because of the financial lure of TV, it has grown." But Kelly maintains that the networks realize "that these people who do it are partisan. They are openly acknowledged and labeled as commentators. That gives you some license....A commentator does not have to pretend to be neutral in his or her ideology....But what ABC did with Stephanopoulos is highly different. They have made him a reporter, and that is the line of all lines. It is a huge line to jump."

For his part, Stephanopoulos stresses that, for one thing, "I have been out of the administration for a while—almost four years. There is no question that people forget that." For another, he is not a beat reporter but rather an analytical one, and he emphasizes that his transition into the current position took place over a period of several years. "Is there something about working in government that disqualifies someone permanently from the craft of journalism...that prevents you from observing and analyzing and presenting the facts in a clear way?" he asks. "I just don't buy that. Opinions like Broder's are principled positions that rest on the idea that somehow serving in government makes you incapable of working objectively as a journalist. But, again, I just don't buy it...if viewers saw me as a flack I would not survive."

THE WAR ROOM

Stephanopoulos's latest career move might surprise those familiar only with his passion for politics, a world he was immersed in for years. In 1986, when he returned to the United States from Oxford (which he attended on a Rhodes scholarship), Stephanopoulos took a job as chief of staff for Ohio Democratic congressman Ed Feighan. From there he went to Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis's 1988 presidential campaign. After Dukakis lost, Stephanopoulos joined the staff of House majority leader Dick Gephardt, for which he worked as executive floor director until 1991, when he signed on with presidential hopeful Bill Clinton. His years of proximity to power undoubtedly inform Stephanopoulos's news coverage, and it has also led to an incessant scrutiny of his work—more than others might be subjected to. In that sense, Stephanopoulos is almost held hostage by his status as a celebrity Washington insider.

The 1992 campaign and early months at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue thrust Stephanopoulos into the limelight, spawning phenomena such as *The Stephanopouletter*, a fan club newsletter out of Berkeley, California. Stephanopoulos's romance with the actress Jennifer Grey was fuel for the gossip columns, and Greek-American mothers all

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1. Paid/Requested outside county subscriptions	266,897	307,174
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over the country wished their daughters could somehow meet George. Stephanopoulos was also appropriated by Hollywood as the model for, among others, Michael J. Fox's character, New York City deputy mayor Mike Flaherty, on *Spin City*. "With George, like many folks, his celebrity rose as did the cartoon of George Stephanopoulos as the young, eligible White House aide, a Michael Fox–like character," says his good friend Mark Gearan, the former director of the Peace Corps who is now the president of Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. "That is a caricature, because he is deeper...and more centered than that. But the celebrity culture does not allow for that window into him."

At the same time that he was becoming a fixture nationwide, a familiar face in the administration, Stephanopoulos gained a reputation as one of President Clinton's most ardent and ubiquitous defenders. "Early on in the administration there was some flash of George on the news," recalls his friend Erik Tarloff, a novelist and former political speechwriter. "And my son, who was only 8 or 9 at the time, said, 'I really like that man. He is my idol.' And I said, 'Elliot, do you know what he does?' And he replied, 'Sure. When something goes wrong, it is his job to explain why it is not Clinton's fault.' I told George, and he laughed and said, 'He is right.'"

'A certain group is going to feel that I am biased no matter what.'

Stephanopoulos's visibility was heightened by the Academy Award–nominated documentary *The War Room*, about Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign, which captured and contrasted the volatile campaign veteran "ragin' Cajun" James Carville with a bubble-gum-chewing, baby-faced, and tousle-haired Stephanopoulos. Throughout, the film shows a quietly peripatetic Stephanopoulos in full spin. After the third debate between Clinton, President George Bush, and Ross Perot, the camera follows Stephanopoulos through the halls instructing his colleagues to brandish "Bush was on the defensive. Bush was on the defensive" as their media mantra. "Keep repeating, 'Bush was on the defensive all night.'"

On the morning of Election Day, with Clinton's win clearly in sight, Stephanopoulos whispers into the phone to Paul Begala, "Paulie, I got up this morning. As I was driving to work, I started to cry." Later that night, before the victory rally, Stephanopoulos, talking to Clinton by cell phone, bristles with wonder, anticipation, disbelief—and sheer gratitude.

SUNDAY MORNINGS AND $2.75 MILLION

By the end of 1996, Stephanopoulos, burnt out by the grueling pace and roller-coaster life of the West Wing, was ready to move on. "George did not make a big production out of leaving," says the writer Christopher Hitchens, whose friendship with Stephanopoulos might strike some as ironic, given Hitchens's well-known antipathy toward President Clinton. "And when he was in power he never tried to use his knowledge for social reasons." Hitchens pauses and laughs. "I had an Inauguration party [in 1993] for *Vanity Fair*. A lot of people came—Madeleine Albright and so forth. But when George appeared, now that was a big coup."

Once he decided to go civilian, Stephanopoulos was inundated with opportunities, including a reported $2.75 million book contract with Little, Brown and Company and an agreement to write occasionally for *Newsweek*. In addition, both ABC and CBS came calling. ABC won out largely because executives there convinced Stephanopoulos that the network had a track record of nurturing talent, including those new to television. Stephanopoulos indicates that he had always been interested in and intrigued by journalism, and he often cites his admiration for Bill Moyers, whose career took a similar path some 30 years ago. Moyers had worked for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson before going into broadcasting.

"He saw me as a model," Moyers says, "somebody who finally forged an independent entity in journalism." About the inherent loyalties that are required for a tour of duty in the White House, Moyers remarks, "When you are working for a prince, you are in the prince's circle, his shadow; you are doing his bidding. You are seen and you see yourself as a projection of the prince....If you are young and eager to get into the action, you suddenly find yourself in a place where you can make things happen. But you are doing it in someone else's name."

Recalling his early days at ABC, Stephanopoulos says, "At first, the bulk of my work was for *This Week*. It was limited, and I would be on other shows but clearly as a commentator and analyst." He adds, "Whether or not it would evolve over time? We hoped that it would, but the attitude was very much 'Let's wait and see what is happening.' I was clearly starting a new life." He pauses. "I just did not know where it was going."

"George has the potential to be a major TV talent," says Dorrance Smith, the former executive producer of *This Week*, who was most recently executive producer for elections at MSNBC. "When we first hired him, George was such a lightning rod, he was hated by conservatives," Smith notes. "His Q ratings [which register recognizability] were as high as Sam Donaldson's, but so were his negatives."

"But that," Smith pauses, "that all changed with impeachment. That all changed when he got so tough on Clinton."

A TROUBLING TIME

On January 21, 1998, Stephanopoulos appeared on *Good Morning America* to discuss the charge that the president had had an affair with Monica Lewinsky and lied about it under oath. When asked about his appearance that day—his uttering of the word "impeachment" on the air—Stephanopoulos's soft voice raises just a notch. "I demand that you go to the transcripts on this one," he says.

On the show, Stephanopoulos's exact words were "[T]hese are probably the most serious allegations yet leveled against the president. There's no question that...if they're true, they're not only politically damaging, but it could lead to impeachment proceedings. But they are just questions right now, and that's why I think we do all have to take a deep breath before we go too far here, without underestimating their seriousness."

Looking back on that episode today, Stephanopoulos stresses, "On the show that day I said that these are very serious charges. And if—and I mean if—they are true, they could lead to impeachment. I did not call for impeachment. I did realize the power of those words coming from my mouth, but the fact that I said them did not cause the impeachment. If you take out the connective tissue and just pull out the word, it gives you a different impression of what I actually said."

Context notwithstanding, the Capitol was buzzing about Stephanopoulos's use of the "I-word," and his comments mushroomed into myth. The word around Washington was that Stephanopoulos had gone "off the reservation" once and for all.

Brian Kelly, managing editor of *U.S. News & World Report*, recalls going to lunch with a colleague at The Palm shortly after the Lewinsky

RANDY HARRIS

story broke. "I got to the restaurant and said to the maitre d', 'Tommy, who is here?' and he said, 'Carville is in the back room with Stephanopoulos and [then Clinton senior adviser] Rahm Emanuel.' We went back there and it was like coming in on one of those mob movies, where the mobsters in *GoodFellas* are talking to some poor guy right before they stick him in the trunk and drive him to Jersey. It definitely had the feeling that their agenda was to tell George to shut up. It really felt that they were muscling the guy....I don't think [Carville] was too upset. He was joking about it, saying, 'Yeah, here is our little traitor.' But this was a time when the White House was in major damage control. Everybody was walking around with their mouths hanging open...and when Stephanopoulos started talking about the possibility of impeachment, that added fuel to the fire."

When asked about that infamous lunch, which was mentioned in *The Washington Post*'s "The Reliable Source" column, Stephanopoulos, a hint of a resigned smile in his voice, says that his old friends were not, in fact, muscling him. "It's true that we were having lunch, but the mythology that has been built up around it is crazy. Were we talking about what was going on? Absolutely. In a way it does not matter that the tenor of the lunch was different than what was assumed; the larger point is that anybody who saw us together would come to that conclusion."

But by the time the Starr Report was released in September of 1988, Stephanopoulos's disappointment in his old boss had calcified—and was more than resonant. "What you read about the president makes it impossible to respect him," he said on *This Week*. He went on to describe the president's behavior toward Lewinsky as "profoundly depressing."

"Look, it was a very painful time for all of us," says Paul Begala. "It was really terrible....George and I had some difficult days and conversations, and one thing that we kept saying was that we can't end a friendship over this. I was very rough on him."

Then there was the March 1999 publication of Stephanopoulos's book, *All Too Human: A Political Education*, which further infuriated many Clinton loyalists—including some of Stephanopoulos's friends—but captured the public's attention, selling more than half a million copies and spending 15 weeks on *The New York Times* best-seller list.

"I used to be friends with him, but I lost a lot of respect for Stephanopoulos in regards to how he handled himself after he left the White House," says one former White House official. "But I think he is a good commentator and is good on TV. He is a smart guy. But I was really offended by him when I was in the White House. I did not go after him, though. I did not want to help him sell books."

Stephanopoulos sighs when asked about such comments. "Again, how was I disloyal? The decision to do the book was made before the Monica Lewinsky scandal, and I discussed it with the president, and I never heard one word of criticism about it until the scandal broke. Some people say it is wrong to write books while the president is still sitting in office. Okay, but there is plenty of precedent for that. And it did not come out until after the impeachment, and I think that it is a sympathetic view of the president. I am proud of the book. So much of the debate about my book was, in the end, not about my book."

In one of his most pointed criticisms in *All Too Human*, Stephanopoulos wrote, "I was angry at Clinton for selfishly risking his presidency on a foolish dalliance and arrogantly trying to fix it himself, for lying about it and sending others out to lie for him, for paralyzing his policy agenda and making his accusers look like prophets instead of fools. The 'new covenant' heart of Clintonism now seemed hollow. Apparently the rule of personal responsibility applied to every American except the president himself."

"I think that George feels kind of bad about the Clinton stuff," says Joe Klein, the *New Yorker* writer and author of *Primary Colors*, whose character Henry Burton is in part based on Stephanopoulos. "But I think that in a way he faced a choice between loyalty and integrity. It is the kind of choice that journalists make all the time—not so much between loyalty and integrity but friendship and integrity."

'YOU WERE THERE—REMEMBER, GEORGE?'

After he returned from his book tour in the late spring of 1999, Stephanopoulos says, he "made a conscious decision with ABC to do more," and he started working on longer pieces and interviews. "Once the book was behind me I was free to do something new. It was nice to be out and about with people and not talking about myself but rather themselves," he says, smiling.

Stephanopoulos's first longer piece, which aired on July 20, 1999, was on how the Internet was affecting electoral campaigns. The following month Stephanopoulos did a piece for *Good Morning America* on the intersection of politics and comedy, in which he trailed presidential hopeful Dan Quayle as he prepared for his appearance on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. In September, Stephanopoulos interviewed Bill Bradley after he announced his candidacy. "With [that] I was mostly nervous," Stephanopoulos concedes.

'I think that George feels kind of bad about the Clinton stuff,' says *The New Yorker*'s Joe Klein. 'But I think that in a way he faced a choice between loyalty and integrity. It is the kind of choice that journalists make all the time—not so much between loyalty and integrity but friendship and integrity.'

Toward the end of last year, Stephanopoulos explains, he, along with *Good Morning America* executive producer Shelley Ross and ABC News senior vice-president Phyllis McGrady, "mapped out a lot of the things that we could do with the upcoming campaign year." Among other things, they decided to pour resources into two weeklong series for *Good Morning America*: "Your Family, Your Vote," which ran in June and analyzed how vice-president Gore's and George W. Bush's proposed policies on taxes, social security, education, health care, and prescription-drug benefits for the elderly would affect everyday people; and in September Stephanopoulos traveled to the "battleground states" of Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Florida and talked about issues with undecided voters.

In addition, Stephanopoulos took to the campaign trail. Todd Harris, who was the traveling press secretary for Senator John McCain's campaign bus, "Straight Talk Express," recalls seeing Stephanopoulos in a packed New Hampshire town hall last winter. "I remember George standing in the back of the room, taking notes," Harris says. "As soon as I saw him, we talked to him and asked if he wanted to go on the bus," which he did.

On the bus, McCain started to hold forth on the normalization of relations with Vietnam. At one point during the conversation, the senator turned to Stephanopoulos and asked him about a certain meeting at the White House that he was referring to, which both he and Stephanopoulos—in his capacity as senior adviser to the president—had attended. "McCain turned to me and said, 'You were there—remember, George?'" Stephanopoulos says, chuckling.

"I remember thinking that this was weird," Harris says. "And that it showed the convergence of his worlds."

Harris agrees with others who say that Stephanopoulos has proved to be fair in his campaign coverage—some say more so than

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they had expected. "Yeah, he has surprised me," Harris says. "I was not really sure what to make of the fact that I myself was inviting him on the bus!"

ABC correspondent Terry Moran, who covered the Gore campaign, says, "I know that there are a lot of issues about who George is and where he was and what he was doing. But the proof is in the pudding....Sure [his work] is informed by his background in partisan politics....Maybe I'm not old-school enough, but I think George is helpful to the viewers. And that can only be good for ABC. I missed the meeting where they handed out licenses to become journalists."

Like others at ABC, including Diane Sawyer, Moran indicates that he turns to Stephanopoulos for insight and analysis off-camera. "Back in the primaries, I could not get a handle on who Al Gore was as a person, because he is very guarded," Moran says. "This was after being with him for weeks....I just could not get a fix on the guy. I called up George and said, 'Can you help me out? I have absolutely no idea who Gore is.' And he kind of laughed. And George laid out a pretty good sketch of who Gore was and, in particular, the relationship between Gore and Clinton, which he described as like a big brother and a little brother. Sometimes it was inside and gossipy but it was very insightful...three-dimensional, nuanced, and very fair."

Moran is one of many who praise Stephanopoulos's quick and cogent analysis. For example, consider his coverage of the selection of the two parties' vice-presidential nominees. On a July 25 special report, Peter Jennings asked Stephanopoulos about Governor Bush's choice of former defense secretary Dick Cheney: "What do you think the Democrats will say?" Stephanopoulos replied, "A good man with a bad record....What they're going to point to is his very conservative voting record on issues like anti-choice, gun control, against the Department of Education and Head Start."

Stephanopoulos was particularly insightful about the importance of the choice of the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, Connecticut senator Joseph Lieberman: "I think it's critical—in a couple of ways. Number one, we found out, just over the weekend [from] ABC focus groups [and] a lot of polls, that this Clinton fatigue is still real, and the vice-president wants to be able to show that he doesn't approve in any way of the president's personal mistakes. And so I think that Joe Lieberman does that. Secondly, he helps move the vice-president to the center on a whole range of value issues, not just the Clinton issue. Joe Lieberman has spoken out on sex and violence in the media....So he brings that strong centrist-values component to the ticket." Stephanopoulos went on to speculate (accurately, it would turn out) on the Republicans' strategic response. "[They will] try to...point out the difference between Al Gore's record and Joe Lieberman's." Stephanopoulos ended his report by giving insight into Lieberman's weaknesses, notably that he is "not particularly well known; he's not known as a particularly dynamic campaigner."

Despite Stephanopoulos's having taken on a less overtly partisan role, there have been times when his comments were personally quite revealing—and it is clear that separating his television work from his political roots is not always easy. On August 15, when asked by *Good Morning America* co-anchor Charles Gibson for his reaction to President Clinton's valedictory address to the Democratic National Convention the previous night, Stephanopoulos said: "Oh, like everything having to do with Bill Clinton, I had real colliding emotions and real pride hearing him going through that litany, pride and gratitude for what's been accomplished, awe at his political skill and how much he loves to do what he does. But, finally, you know, pulling at this is some melancholy, because I couldn't help wondering, *What would this speech have been like for everybody else watching at home if all those troubles hadn't happened in the last couple years?*"

DOUBLE TAKES

At one point during ABC's post-presidential debate analysis on October 3, anchor Peter Jennings asked, "George, you've been there on campaigns before you were a journalist; how much of tonight's debate is going to be seen in the ads?"

Upon hearing Jennings use the word "journalist," some of Stephanopoulos's friends from his Democratic party days did a double-take, and the implicit, larger message was not lost on them. It was official and public: Stephanopoulos's position had really changed—perhaps irrevocably. "That totally struck me," notes Lisa Caputo, former press secretary to Hillary Rodham Clinton and now the president of Women & Co., a new business at Citigroup.

"Now that you mention it, it struck me as well," Stephanopoulos says. "And it probably made me happy. It's funny. At the time, I was just so focused on answering the question."

Stephanopoulos stresses that politics and journalism require many of the same talents. "The overwhelmingly transferable skill," he says, "is that often in the White House you are a reporter inside the institution to try to get all of the facts together and tell the story. Obviously in the White House you are engaged in advocacy, and in journalism, analysis. The skills are directed toward different ends, but they are still the same skills," he says. "It is very much the same process. You talk to many people about the same subject, but you are just on a different side and working toward a different end."

'It takes a while, but George is getting there,' observes Bill Moyers. 'You can't just walk across the street and think that you will do well at one thing just because you did well at the other....He will look at his service in government as a graduate school of sorts for journalism.'

"ABC did a smart thing to make that deal, even though some people thought that there should be a cooling-off period," says Lawrence O'Donnell, former chief of staff for New York senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and now a producer for NBC's *The West Wing* and senior political analyst for MSNBC. "But he has done it....And he is in a field that is desperately in need of his kind of experience and facility of explanation and illumination of otherwise tricky concepts."

"I have gone from being a commentator to an analyst," Stephanopoulos points out. "When you are a commentator you are basically giving your opinion grounded in facts, but still from a much stronger ideological point of view. But when you serve as an analyst you are trying to explain a situation based on your perspective and experience—but not so much on your ideological opinion."

"It takes a while, but George is getting there," observes Bill Moyers. "You can't just walk across the street and think that you will do well at one thing just because you did well at the other. He is paying his dues slowly and carefully....He will look at his service in government as a graduate school of sorts for journalism. That is how I look at it—as post-graduate work for journalism. I was preparing for lifelong work in journalism, although I did not know it at the time."

Stephanopoulos—who is known for somewhat tortured introspection—has the aura of someone who has gone through a period of at times tumultuous change and self-exploration. But he appears the better for it. When asked about this, Stephanopoulos seems momentarily lost for words. "I suppose so. I would not trade a second of what I did, although I may have done some of it differently. But I came out with a strong desire to stand on my own as opposed to stand with a party or a

person or an individual. Obviously when I finished the book and that time of my life was done, I had the strong desire to take on a new challenge, and learning to do this new job is a big one."

Stephanopoulos pauses. "And I still don't know where it will lead."

NOT LONG AFTER HE JOINED ABC, Stephanopoulos underwent something of a rite of passage. He took the shuttle from New York to Washington, along with Ted Koppel and Tom Bettag, then the executive producer of *Nightline*. In the cab on the way into D.C., Bettag surprised Stephanopoulos with a gift of a laminated card that had belonged to Fred Friendly, the legendary former president of CBS News. On the back of the card was a 1939 quotation from Ed Klauber of CBS News:

What news analysts are entitled to do and should do is to elucidate and illuminate the news out of common knowledge or special knowledge possessed by them or made available to them by this organization through its sources. They should point out the facts on both sides, show contradictions with the known record, and so on. They should bear in mind that in a democracy it is important that people not only should know but should understand, and it is the analyst's function to help the listener to understand, to weigh, and to judge, but not to do the judging for him.

To this day, Stephanopoulos carries that card in his wallet—a talisman of sorts. "I'm looking at it right now," he says, talking by phone from a plane 35,000 feet up. He's on his way to Portland, Oregon, on assignment for *Good Morning America*. "One of its edges is frayed." ◘

With additional research by Anna Schneider-Mayerson

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[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 101] have recognized the beginnings of trouble at that meeting. Brown is a stalwart supporter of the Fangs (earlier this year, he declared September 8 "Florence Fang Day" in San Francisco) and made that fact quite clear to the *Examiner*'s publisher. According to White's e-mail, "Willie...reflected that it was really not smart for us to have something like [the Fangs'] predatory pricing case 'hanging around' when we're trying to get something big done like an acquisition or merger....[Brown] observed that funny, undesired consequences often ripple from something like this.

"Implicit in all of this," White continued in his e-mail, "was the message that support of our efforts in the acquisition would be influenced by our ability to come to some terms in the Pan-Asia case. Whether that means support from the Fangs, or support from Willie, I can only speculate." During the meeting, Brown urged White to meet with Florence Fang to discuss the case, which White would eventually do in February. "Willie seems like a friend in all this," White wrote, "but I am forewarned and often reminded that he's a lot closer to the Fangs than he is to us." (Florence Fang declined to comment for this article.)

Ted Fang bought *The Independent* when he was 24 years old. The local myth is that John Fang bought his son the paper as a birthday gift. "My mother likes to tell that story," says Ted, explaining that he in fact decided to buy it himself because, he says, he saw the neighborhood newspaper as a "way to talk to people." So he set about transforming the paper into a profitable broadsheet with a focus on neighborhood news. When he bought the paper, Fang says, it had a circulation of about 40,000; today it stands at 379,000. But in the process, he transformed his tiny giveaway—and, in turn, himself as its editor and publisher—into a political player in the city.

Fang and his paper—with its front-page columnist, Warren Hinckle—were first recognized as a force to be reckoned with during San Francisco's 1991 mayoral campaign, when it displayed an increasing willingness to turn its pages over to political advocacy.

Hinckle has been an institution in San Francisco political and journalism circles since the 1960s, when he was an editor at the seminal left-wing journal *Ramparts*. But mostly, it seems, he's been an institution in the city's bars. After unsuccessful columnist stints at the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* (the former employed an editor whose job description included shepherding Hinckle and rounding him up from the bars around deadline time), Hinckle landed at *The Independent* just before the 1991 mayoral race heated up. (Hinckle did not return phone calls seeking comment.)

That election pitted liberal incumbent Art Agnos against Frank Jordan, a law-and-order former police chief. Political consultant and Fang ally Jack Davis was running Jordan's campaign, and *The Independent* threw its support behind Jordan. Hinckle wrote a series of highly personal front-page columns excoriating Agnos as arrogant and cowardly. Shortly before the election, Fang collected all of Hinckle's columns into an anti-Agnos booklet called *The Agnos Years*, which he distributed to households along with *The Independent*. Jordan won that election, and many credited *The Agnos Years* with his victory.

But of all the San Francisco politicians, District Attorney Terence Hallinan is arguably the most indebted to the Fangs. Hallinan, a former boxer and grandson of a cable-car operator, befriended the Fang family in 1989, when he sought and received John Fang's endorsement in running for the city board of supervisors. After John died, he developed a friendship with Ted, whom he calls a "boy genius." In 1994, when Hallinan was still a supervisor, he supported Proposition J, a citywide ballot initiative conceived by Jack Davis that gave free papers owned by women or minorities preference in bidding for the contract to publish San Francisco's legal notices. Since Florence Fang owns the family business, Proposition J guaranteed that *The Independent* would win the contract year after year. It's now valued at more than $1 million per year.

When Hallinan ran for district attorney in 1995, with Jack Davis as an informal adviser, Ted Fang repaid the favor. *The Independent* ran a series of news articles attacking Hallinan's opponent, Bill Fazio, with above-the-banner headlines like "D.A. candidate's underworld ties." These articles are almost universally derided as baseless smears against Fazio, who lost the race.

Four years later, when Hallinan ran for re-election, against Fazio once again, he continued to receive *The Independent*'s support, and won. He then promptly hired Darrell Salomon, an attorney (and occasional *Independent* legal columnist) who represented the Fangs, to be his deputy. Salomon stayed at the district attorney's office until last August, when he left to become the in-house lawyer for the Fang *Examiner*.

For his part, Ted Fang says he's "proud" of any role his paper may have played in Hallinan's electoral success. And Hallinan, when asked whether *The Independent* did campaign work in the guise of journalism, responds: "Like the *Chronicle* did for Fazio? What the *Chronicle* did to me was way beyond anything *The Independent* did to Fazio," he says. "I'd have traded places with him in a flash of your eye, for sure."

From the start of its negotiations to purchase the *Chronicle*, Hearst understood that the deal would attract scrutiny from the Justice Department's antitrust division. (And in fact, that investigation was coordinated with none other than the San Francisco D.A., Terence Hallinan.) On August 20, 1999, Mayor Brown wrote another letter to Janet Reno, this time expressing concern that the proposed sale could injure San Francisco's "third newspaper."

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In late September 1999, a Hearst attorney wrote to the Justice Department's antitrust division and argued that shutting the *Examiner* down would not violate antitrust laws. The letter detailed Hearst's attempt to sell the *Examiner*, reporting that two potential buyers had emerged: the Fang family and a firm that specializes in buying distressed properties. The Fangs, who, according to the letter, initially appraised the value of the *Examiner* at between $6 million and $8 million, eventually balked at the notion of paying money to take over a paper in such a weak position. And under political pressure to maintain San Francisco as a two-newspaper town, Hearst considered the other buyer unacceptable—it was likely to shut the paper down and liquidate the assets, inviting potential antitrust problems the company wanted to avoid.

At the same time, *The Independent* was characteristically bombastic in its opposition to the Hearst purchase of the *Chronicle*. The paper launched a series of blistering articles under the banner "The Hearst Chronicles" attacking Hearst for attempting to monopolize the newspaper market in San Francisco. The series included an ongoing cartoon, written by Hinckle, called "Mr. Sharon Stone" that tastelessly lambasted Bronstein and his wife.

Still, by all accounts, Hearst thought it had everything lined up: It had attempted to secure local political support for the deal, it had provided the Justice Department with ample evidence of why the *Examiner* was simply an unviable business, and it had even tried, unsuccessfully, to sell the thing. The *Examiner* ought to be allowed to die in peace.

On October 18, political consultant Jack Davis entered the fray. Through the rumor mill, Tim White had heard that Davis was making veiled threats about preventing the *Chronicle* acquisition. As White put it in an e-mail to his boss, George Irish: "Davis...[an] all-around bright, devious, dangerous strategist, and well-known consigliere to the Fangs, was overheard saying that he wouldn't be surprised if there were at least three lawsuits filed over the proposed acquisition in court of the *Chronicle*....Davis speculated that these suits could tie-up the acquisition for at least a couple of years." Davis admits that he made the comment to a *Chronicle* editor over lunch, but says that he meant it as an honest assessment rather than a threat. Nonetheless, Davis's remark unnerved Hearst.

'Davis...[an] all-around bright, devious, dangerous strategist, and well-known consigliere to the Fangs, was overheard saying that he wouldn't be surprised if there were at least three lawsuits filed over the proposed acquisition of the *Chronicle*,' Tim White wrote.

On December 2, 1999, Ted Fang's lawyer, David Balabanian, called senior vice president and Hearst counsel James Asher. On behalf of his client, Balabanian offered, as Asher explained in a memo that later was admitted into the court record, to "take the *Examiner* off [Hearst's] hands" in exchange for a cash subsidy of $35 million per year for roughly six years. For their part, "the Fangs would use their extensive political connections to assist [Hearst] in completing [its] purchase of the *Chronicle*," the memo says. A few days later, according to Asher, Balabanian called back to add that "Ted Fang would be a preferred buyer of the *Examiner* from the DOJ's perspective." Hearst rejected the offer. (Balabanian told *Brill's Content*, "That is all Mr. Asher's language and not mine." Asher declined to be interviewed.)

A few weeks later, a roadblock went up that would make Hearst reconsider the offer: The Justice Department informed Hearst that its first sales effort had been inadequate—as one official made clear to Hearst in correspondence, the sale of "Hearst's current position in the Joint Operating Agreement" was the best way to test the *Examiner*'s viability. In other words, the Justice Department wanted Hearst to let someone else siphon off half of both papers' profits, just as Hearst had been doing to the *Chronicle* since 1965.

Hearst executives believed that the Justice Department wasn't going to allow them to shut down the *Examiner*, and political opposition to the *Chronicle* acquisition was growing in San Francisco. "Funny undesired consequences," as Willie Brown had put it to Timothy White, now appeared to be rippling all over Hearst's deal. Something had to give, and in this case, that something turned out to be Hearst.

In January, Hearst offered the *Examiner* up for sale again, this time including physical assets to sweeten the pot. Still, there were no takers. Around the same time, Clinton Reilly—a San Francisco real estate magnate, a former mayoral candidate, and a longtime foe of the Fangs, Willie Brown, *and* Phil Bronstein—filed suit in federal district court, claiming that Hearst's purchase of the *Chronicle* violated antitrust law, another obstacle for Hearst. All this Sturm und Drang was leading Hearst executives to the decision that they were "better off selling the *Examiner*," as Asher testified in the trial, "even if it required a subsidy, than we were closing it."

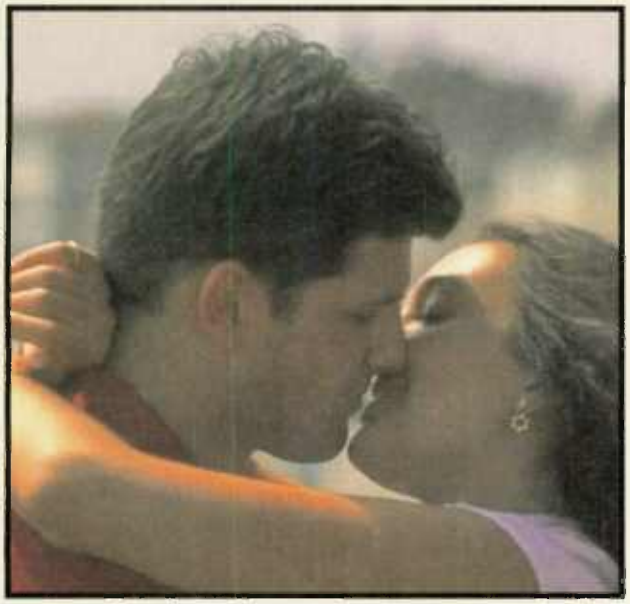
Ten days later, Timothy White finally met with Florence Fang, as Willie Brown had hoped. At San Francisco's Villa Taverna, a private club in the financial district, the two were joined for lunch by U.S. senator Dianne Feinstein, the former San Francisco mayor and a friend of the Fangs, who, according to White's testimony, had set up the meeting. According to White's notes, he encouraged Fang to buy the *Examiner*. "I assured her that Hearst very much wanted to sell the *Examiner*," he wrote. "That we were exploring ways to offer a more complete package of assets to Ted." White's notes on the lunch end with Florence Fang "repeating that 'this was a good start.'"

Meanwhile, the Justice Department wasn't budging. Just weeks after the White-Fang lunch, on February 24, Hearst executives met with Justice officials to plead their case once again: Nobody was buying the *Examiner*. The officials were adamant. As Hearst's James Asher testified at the trial (with considerable understatement): "[T]hey really preferred us to find a way to sell the *Examiner* rather than close it."

On March 17, seven months after the *Chronicle* purchase, Hearst caved, announcing that it had sold the *Examiner* to the Fangs. The purchase agreement is extraordinary: The JOA will be dissolved, and the Fang family will transform the *Examiner* into a morning paper. The two newspapers will compete independently, and the Fang *Examiner* will move to a new location. The *Chronicle* will annex the old *Examiner* space to use for its newly enlarged staff. Instead of a share of the JOA (which was to expire in 2005), Hearst agreed to reimburse the Fangs' expenses in operating the *Examiner* for up to $66 million over three years. If the *Examiner* keeps costs down, the Fang family gets half of the savings, up to $5 million each year, no strings attached. (Ted Fang says: "I intend to spend as much of Hearst's money as possible.")

Within two weeks of the transaction's announcement, the Department of Justice issued a press release announcing that the sale to the Fangs had "resolved the department's antitrust concerns" over the *Chronicle* purchase, and the department closed its investigation.

Hearst's by-now-epic struggle to buy the *Chronicle*, however, was not over. Clint Reilly's antitrust suit against Hearst commenced soon after the *Examiner* sale, and the Fangs were drawn into the litigation as well. The result was utterly demoralizing for San Francisco journalism.



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It started with a bang on May 1: On the first day of testimony, Reilly's lawyer, Joseph Alioto—who happens to be the son of a revered former mayor—called *Examiner* publisher Timothy White to the stand. On that day, White testified, by all accounts freely and without seeming to realize the gravity of his admission, that he had offered Mayor Brown support on the *Examiner*'s editorial pages—over which White, as publisher, had final authority—if Brown would support Hearst's acquisition of the *Chronicle*. Under direct examination by Alioto, White testified that at an August 30 lunch with Mayor Brown, he told the mayor that "it was going to be difficult if on the one hand he was beating us up [over the *Chronicle* deal] and...on the opposite side of the fence [we were] championing his initiatives." Alioto then asked, "[I]f [Brown] went along with the acquisition...then when you folks were writing about him...you wouldn't be as harsh as you otherwise would be?" White responded, "No, that wouldn't affect the journalism side. It would affect the editorial side." As if it weren't painfully clear enough, Alioto asked, "You were doing a little horse-trading yourself; weren't you?" To which White answered, "I was."

'There was no negotiation of press coverage,' says *Examiner* executive editor Phil Bronstein.

White's testimony was a public relations disaster for Hearst. Although Hearst's lawyers didn't seem to realize it at the time; according to one source who was in the courtroom, a Hearst lawyer greeted White on his return from the stand with the words, spoken in earnest, "That went well."

Even more embarrassing was the fact that Phil Bronstein was present at the lunch in question, and that White had dutifully reported the substance of his lunch—horse-trading and all—to his bosses in New York via e-mail the day it happened. The e-mail was sent to Hearst CEO Frank Bennack and Hearst newspaper division chief George Irish, and Alioto introduced it as evidence in the trial. (Irish and Bennack declined to be interviewed for this article.)

Hearst immediately placed White on paid leave, named Irish acting publisher of the *Examiner*, and sponsored an independent review of the *Examiner*'s editorial integrity by a retired federal judge. (At press time, the report was pending after nearly six months of investigation.)

"There was no negotiation of press coverage of any kind," asserts Bronstein, who says the exchange White testified to did take place, but describes it as an offhand remark that was not to be taken seriously. "I didn't find that remark to be particularly bothersome."

Although Judge Walker approved the *Chronicle* purchase and Reilly lost his antitrust suit against Hearst, the judge's decision includes a scathing indictment of the Fang-*Examiner* deal, which he called "malodorous." "Hearst has no economic reason or justification for the [*Examiner* sale] except its belief that this transaction was necessary to shake loose political and regulatory approval of the [*Chronicle* purchase]," Walker wrote, attacking the DOJ for insisting with "no legal justification" that Hearst sell its "full interest in the JOA." He pointedly noted that Dianne Feinstein sits on the Senate Judiciary Committee, which oversees the Justice Department, adding that "these observations lead the court to the uneasy inference that the cronyism that fueled the Fang transaction at the local level also exerted influence over the DOJ investigation."

The Justice Department, of course, took issue with Judge Walker's ruling. On August 10, two weeks after Walker decided the case, Joel Klein, who ran the department's antitrust division at the time, wrote him a strong letter asserting that "any suggestion that we supported favorable treatment for [the Fangs] is unfounded" and requesting that Walker "vacate all portions of the opinion that contain any statements about the Department of Justice's motives...[in] the Hearst matter."

As for why the DOJ seemed to have been more demanding than it had been in dozens of other similar cases, Klein's letter cited "significant statutory restrictions on our ability to disclose" information that may explain its actions, even if the information has been requested by a federal judge. Klein did specifically deny, contrary to Walker's decision, that the DOJ told Hearst it would approve the *Chronicle* sale only if Hearst offered to sell its share of the JOA along with the *Examiner*. (In fact, a DOJ staffer wrote a letter in February stating that selling an interest in the JOA "was analytically the most appropriate marketplace test" of whether the *Examiner* was a failing paper.) Judge Walker responded with an August 14 letter inviting the Department of Justice to reopen the case in order to reintroduce evidence and correct the record if it so desired. (A DOJ spokeswoman offered no comment when asked whether the Department had any plans to do so.)

Dianne Feinstein has similarly denied the implications of Walker's ruling. Through a spokesman, she told *Brill's Content* she never had any communications with any Justice officials regarding the Hearst investigation.

Mayor Brown simply says: "Judge Walker doesn't know what the hell he's talking about." But did the mayor stack the deck so the Fangs would get the *Examiner*? "There was a position taken by every politician in San Francisco that this be a two newspaper town," he says.

"I'm a big believer in fate," says Ted Fang, the new owner of one of those newspapers. "Somehow the fate of the *Examiner* and the fate of Ted Fang were destined to intertwine." As for Walker's allegations of "cronyism," Fang insists that he never asked Brown or Hallinan for their help in acquiring the *Examiner*.

His latest acquisition has not yet moved into its new home; *The Independent*'s offices in Bayview—an antiseptic and sedate section of San Francisco far from downtown—are serving as a staging area until the *Examiner*'s new space is ready. The paper's main entrance is flanked on each side by red statues of Chinese lions, and next to one is an enormous trash bin overflowing with copies of *The Independent*.

I am here to meet Martha Steffens, whom Ted Fang has named the executive editor of the new *Examiner*. Steffens comes to the job from Binghamton, New York, where she made a living as a consultant to websites and newspapers. Before that, she had been the executive editor of the Binghamton *Press & Sun-Bulletin*, a Gannett paper. Although she agreed to meet me, Steffens clearly would rather be getting ready to launch her new paper than answering questions about *The Independent* and Ted Fang.

"The *Examiner* is going to be a very credible paper," she says. "I'm responsible for the news operations and Ted's responsible for the editorial pages. So if he wants to focus on some particular issue in the editorial pages, he can do that." Steffens insists that the *Examiner* and *The Independent* are different papers. But the papers will share an editor and publisher: Ted Fang. *The Independent* will continue to appear three times a week, with Ted Fang at the helm.

Steffens cites "philosophical differences" as the reason she left her last job (and declines to elaborate), so I ask her what her philosophy is.

"Ah, do things fairly. Do things honestly....I'm a big issues-based person.....I'm also very innovative. That's what I do. It's what the paper's going to be like, too."

The innovations, she tells me, will include a color layout and a

DAN KRAUSS/AP PHOTO

"fresher looking" design that is "not going to look radically different from today's *Examiner*."

Aside from that, all Steffens will tell me about the new *Examiner* is that it will aggressively cover San Francisco for people who live and work in the Bay Area. Like the *Chronicle* and the old *Examiner*, the new *Examiner* will use wire services for national stories. It will have 50 reporters and editors on staff in November and build from there. It will publish in the morning. That's it. One thing that may give an indication of the character of the new *Examiner* is the fact that vituperative Warren Hinckle will have a twice-a-week column. My conversation with Steffens continues in the same vein until I leave Bayview to check out the new *Examiner* building downtown, at Sixth and Market streets. It's in what you might call a transitional area. Immediately adjacent to the building is the Crazy Horse Gentlemen's Club, which features, as one might expect, "Girls, Girls, Girls."

Of course, the *Examiner* is also in transition, and most journalists I spoke to are withholding judgment until they see the new Fang paper in action. "I wish her luck," Bronstein says of Martha Steffens, adding quickly, lest he be misunderstood, "and I mean that. She's a real journalist, which I think is good." The *Chronicle*'s managing editor, Jerry Roberts, says: "I think the hiring of Martha Steffens is a step in the right direction," but later adds, "It's going to be interesting to see how successful you can have a city neighborhood newspaper if it's intent on being uncritical of the mayor and the district attorney and the entire political establishment."

Of course, this being San Francisco, the saga is not yet over. On October 10, another antitrust lawsuit—this time against the Fangs and Hearst—was filed; a printing firm based across the San Francisco Bay in Union City was alleging that the Hearst subsidy will allow the Fangs' printing operation to undercut competitors. At press time, the case had been assigned to Judge Vaughn Walker, and the plaintiffs had requested a preliminary injunction hearing on December 7 to bar Hearst from making any payments to the Fangs.

"Willie Brown thinks this whole thing is hilarious," says Bronstein. "He got what he wanted, and he stirred up a s---storm in the process."

When asked how the mayor of a major American city could do in broad daylight what he seems to be alleging, Bronstein gets excited. "This is the big secret," he says conspiratorially. "This is what no one can really understand outside San Francisco. How can a group of half a dozen or fewer people have this kind of clout?....They have been very effective in leveraging the myth of their influence to the point where people believe it. So whether or not anybody knows who they are outside of politics and journalism, inside politics and journalism they wield the big stick."

Even Jack Davis, the Fangs' self-described "warlord" who views Ted as the underdog in this story, says: "The Fangs have managed to survive in a hostile environment not just by good newspapering, but by creating strategic alliances." Terence Hallinan, one of those allies, denies that he or anybody else used political muscle to deliver the *Examiner* to Ted Fang. He did, as district attorney, coordinate with the Department of Justice's antitrust investigation, but he declines to discuss it. "I'll just say that we fulfilled our role to see that the law was abided with," he says patiently after repeated questioning about the investigation.

Hallinan is insistent, in his quiet way, that *The Independent* was only doing what the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* have always done—play favorites with a candidate. But what does this say about the state of journalism in San Francisco? I ask. Doesn't it bode ill for the future of the Fang *Examiner*?

'I would rather that newspapers were objective and didn't get heavily involved in partisan political positions,' says San Francisco District Attorney Terence Hallinan. 'But I don't know any of them that haven't done that for the whole history of the Hearst family.'

Hallinan looks at me as if I have asked a stupid question. "I would rather," he says, a bit wearily, "that newspapers were objective and didn't get heavily involved in partisan political positions. But I don't know any of them that haven't done that for the whole history of the Hearst family."

To illustrate his point, he tells me a story—about the *Chronicle*, not the *Examiner*, but the point gets across just the same. In 1879, *Chronicle* cofounder Charles de Young was opposed to a mayoral candidate named Isaac Kalloch. So he shot him. Kalloch survived, and won the election. Hallinan pauses before saying, "Then [Kalloch's] son killed the editor of the *Chronicle*." He lets out a laugh. "This is San Francisco." ■

The Son Also Rises

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 111] up to his ears in debt....For 30 years I've kept my mouth closed. I'm a very private person. But this is the last straw!" Guccione Sr. fired back, noting that he still supports his ex-wife and that "Tony is 38 years old, he graduated cum laude from Harvard, and he has done nothing since. He will not, or possibly cannot, get a job. He has leeched off me his whole life, and never earned a dime of his own. If his mother wants to put up with that, fine. But I will not."

"He's a tough Sicilian bastard," says Guccione Jr. of his father, "and I mean that lovingly. He comes from Sicilian peasant stock. That's what he is. My grandfather was an Italian peasant. My father is just a *smarter* Italian peasant." Guccione Jr. seems, at times, to maintain an active, civil relationship with his father, albeit in absentia. "And since we're all taking a turn at psychoanalysis," he continues, "I'd say he's desperately insecure. Believes nobody loves him. He's hardest on the people he loves the most. And that's definitely speaking from personal experience. But I think he's creatively a genius. But a flawed genius. One who seemed to distract people from his accomplishments by his insistence that he was always right."

As empathetic as he may be regarding his father's character, Guccione Jr. is less forthcoming about his father's magazine. Although he commends *Penthouse*'s "graphic genius" and pioneering sexual frankness, he also says that at some point, it fell out of touch. "I said to my father in 1984, 'Take the nudes out of *Penthouse*. Just do great pictorials of great-looking models; that's what people want to see.' He says, 'No, you're crazy.' I said, 'No, think about it: *Sports Illustrated* outsells both *Penthouse* and *Playboy* with its swimsuit issue. That's what guys want.' Of course, he didn't believe me. It's hard to let go...when you're selling millions of copies a month by a formula, it's hard to say, 'You know, maybe the kid's right. Maybe we should just dump what works and take a flyer on this *Sports Illustrated* format.' Well, you know what? I was probably not right in the macro, but I was right ten years later."

When asked if *Penthouse* is an important magazine, he pauses. "At its worst, it was offensive but it had merit."

Guccione Jr.'s friend Jack Thompson puts it less delicately. "He's very explicit in disapproving of what his father does for a living," says Thompson, a conservative attorney who assisted in the fight against the rap group The 2 Live Crew for obscenity and warmed to Guccione Jr. when they debated each other on college campuses. "He doesn't like his

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father's journalistic pursuits. Bob has nothing to do with his father's business by choice....He is an acorn that fell very far from that tree."

When told this, Guccione Jr. lights up. "Nice to hear that," he says, "Very nice. It's exactly correct." And then he seems to catch himself: "I want to be careful with this," he hesitates. "It's not that I don't approve of what my dad does, because that would be moralizing; and I rail against moralizers so I'm not going to become one. I don't personally consume what he does. I don't *need Penthouse*. When I was 15, 16, I did....A whole generation did. It's what made it a success...I think it was a very good magazine at that time—the '70s. I think around the '80s, it was no longer necessary."

He suggests *Penthouse* suffered from his father's bouts of cultural tone-deafness, pointing to his handling of the outcry over the Vanessa Williams photo spread that caused her to lose her Miss America title in 1984. Even *Penthouse* loyalists felt the publisher had gone too far in purchasing and running lewd pictures of the just-crowned, first African-American Miss America. "I remember saying to him," says Guccione Jr., "'Go on television and say if you'd known it was going to be this much of a controversy, you wouldn't have done it.' I said, 'If it's not true, it doesn't matter: You already sold all the magazines....Just give people a reason to let off their anger.'" Why were readers so riled up? "Well, because they masturbated over Miss America," says Guccione Jr. "And I said, just say, 'Oh, I wish I'd known it would upset people; I'd never have done it. I'll never do it again.' And people would say, 'Fine; I feel better about it.' It's just simple psychology....They want you to atone for their sin, for what they think is defiling an icon.

"He didn't do it—he went on television and he forced it down everybody's throat—and said, 'I had the right to do this, and you bought it; if you feel bad about yourself, that's not my problem.' *Penthouse* never recovered....Now, he might say I'm just totally full of s--- and wrong. But I remember that time very well. And I remember being very worried for him, saying, this is really going to hurt you. Because I'm out in the street and he's never out in the street. And I was talking to people who were normally liberal who were really upset."

Not that Guccione Jr. is a stranger to upsetting—or provoking—both readers and industry insiders. "He is subversive," says freelance writer and former girlfriend Celia Farber. "He wants to change the world. I just *know* that about Bob. Not many people do. He sees journalism as having that role." Farber's column in *Spin* on AIDS, which Guccione Jr. midwifed and published for ten years, was some of *Spin*'s most divisive journalism, and Guccione Jr. is proud of it. The stories gave voice and credence to the renegade science that held that HIV does not cause AIDS and AZT was killing more patients than it was saving. Critics called the message dangerous and irresponsible, but Farber and Guccione Jr. made the column a crusade, and fell in love in the process.

Some of Guccione Jr.'s staff didn't like the reporting or the romance. "They were peas in a pod when it came to writing and conceiving that column," says one former *Spin* colleague, "and a lot of people had a big problem both with their methods and their politics."

"Ideological warfare," Guccione Jr. says of his office's AIDS debate. "I just plowed on. I don't care about the political temperature. I don't care if a bunch of people I'm paying have their nose out of joint because they disagree with it...I always said if anyone can prove HIV causes AIDS I want to be the first to publish it. It's a great story."

Farber said the backbiting atmosphere, which she likens to *Lord of the Flies*, gave rise to what she calls The Lawsuit: In 1996, Guccione Jr. and his company were sued by Staci Bonner, a fact-checker, for sexual harassment and discrimination. (Six years earlier, Guccione Sr. had been sued successfully for sexual harassment; he was found guilty of pressuring a *Penthouse* Pet to sleep with his business associates.) A *Spin* ex-employee, a harsh critic of Guccione Jr.'s, concedes that Bonner was not, as she contended, passed over for writing opportunities because Guccione Jr. favored paramours such as Farber; she was simply not as promising a talent. Not true, says Hillary Richard, Bonner's attorney: "[Farber] and Staci were similarly situated at that point in their careers. Certainly one was no more experienced than the other. One got an opportunity; the other never did. One slept with Bob; the other didn't." Guccione Jr.'s critic also says that he condoned a ribald tone in the office, one that demeaned women. "[There was] snapping of bras," says Richard, "and requests for sexual favors." Eurydice disagrees. "Yes, it was a boy's culture," she concedes, "but women could give it back....I am absolutely convinced that Bob would never give or take substantial professional power in exchange for sexual favors. He doesn't have to."

Guccione Jr. insists that in *Gear*, sex doesn't fight the substance—that in fact, substance can be sexy. 'One of the ways to entertain is to startle, and to inform and to open the eyes of and to amaze...Kosovo, for instance: It's an adventure story.'

Farber says it's ironic that Guccione Jr. was accused of promoting by libido: "Nothing meant more to Bob than the copy," she says, clearly piqued that their relationship remained secondary. "He would always choose the story."

Ultimately, Guccione was cleared of the count of quid pro quo harassment, but his magazine was found liable for not paying the plaintiff comparably to a man in the same position, and for fostering a hostile work environment. The jury awarded the plaintiff $110,000 in damages. "He's very injudicious," Farber allows, but thinks the sensitivity was "hyper-hygienic." Guccione says he was always careful about language he used in the office, but Richard notes that "based on comments he made to the press...Guccione [doesn't] understand what the problem had been in the workplace, and gave no indication he would recognize it if it happened again." Guccione, though, acknowledges the lawsuit was a wake-up call. "The world has changed," he says, "and people are now ionized to the notion of language in the workplace. I'm very careful now."

Guccione Jr. says he started *Gear* to create a sexy, smart read for young men in their late 20s—a menu of fashion, music, sports, cooking, design, cheeky journalism, and of course, beautiful women, often in damp or minimal clothing. But he's careful to note that despite its cursory resemblance to the behemoth *Maxim*, *Gear* is "not a laddy's magazine." Some of Guccione's star *Spin* writers came along for this next enterprise, among them audacious reporter and novelist William T. Vollmann, who says he appreciates that despite strong differences of opinion, Guccione Jr. has let him report that the Burma opium king was "an okay guy," and that the Serbs had a point.

But Guccione Jr. knows *Gear* needs to tantalize to make money, and he's betting that young men in their 20s want a magazine that serves both Penélope Cruz and Kosovo in the same meal: "I separate my readers from the readers of *Esquire*, which are older, and the readers of *Maxim* and *Stuff* and *FHM* that don't want to be challenged," says Guccione Jr. He insists that in *Gear*, sex doesn't fight the substance; in fact, substance can be sexy. "One of the ways to entertain is to startle, and to inform and to open the eyes of and to amaze....Kosovo, for instance: It's an adventure story." He also points to articles that have covered the nation's gun culture, homophobia in the NFL, the danger of setting foot in Algiers, and a new feature, "My So-Called Life," which offers a snapshot of a quirky profession—the man who cleans up after homicides, or a professional domi-

RON GALELLA

natrix. "I've heard people say, 'Well, you put articles in there just to justify the sex,'" says Guccione Jr. "That's stupid. Why bother?" Talk-show host and *Gear* contributor Bill Maher agrees: "If you really want to take home a stroke book," says Maher, "there are 50 others that will do you better. If you really want just that, get his father's magazine."

But even sex columnist Eurydice, despite an unshakable faith in her publisher's ingenuity, concedes that *Gear* must straddle a difficult line: "to be classy, not trashy....That edge which made *Spin* important," she says, "is not there in *Gear* yet. And I'm hoping that it will be—that *Gear* will be in a way newsworthy." To some extent, the tone undermines the mission. For instance, in last September's issue, alongside a smart piece on the arrival of the amphetamine drug ya ba in America, there's an article on an Asian pop phenomenon that's billed in the table of contents this way: "Is she the next big crossover star? Probably not, but f-k it, she's cute." And in an otherwise intelligent feature called "The History of Sex," subtitled "From Cleopatra to Charlie Sheen: 5,000 years of excess" (which, curiously, excludes any mention of *Penthouse*), a photo caption next to a model explains: "Tyra Banks inserts finger in mouth, 2000. (Not the first time this has happened, but still notable.)"

Gear's puckish sensibility landed the magazine in a legal skirmish when TV producer Aaron Spelling didn't fancy being listed as "senior editor" in a mock table of contents in the March 2000 issue, where *Gear*'s editor and publisher was listed as Bob Pinochet, Jr. It featured the heretofore-innocent star of Spelling's show *7th Heaven*, Jessica Biel, sexed up in heels and perched on a bathroom sink. Libel lawyer Victor Kovner, who has the distinction of representing both the Guccione companies, says of the Spelling gag: "It is a satiric reference; I'm not going to judge how humorous."

New York Times media reporter Alex Kuczynski suggests that combining cleavage, journalism, and attitude can be bold but confusing. "There's definitely something disjunctive there," she says, describing Guccione Jr. as "the trashy kid in school who reads Voltaire. There's a dreamer quality. He's this solitary swashbuckler....He's struggling against the specter of his father's legacy, probably."

Guccione Jr. says he's chosen to sacrifice popularity for intelligence. "I want to be around 20 years later....And for that to happen, *Gear* has to be a substantial magazine. [*Maxim*] hasn't got the intellectual range, the emotional range, the visceral range of a *Gear*."

"Range, shmange," scoffs *Maxim* owner Felix Dennis. "Show me a pink sheet, Bobby. [A reference to the officially audited circulation report.] *Maxim* readers earn more money than any other magazine in the category, period. Are you saying that men with an average household income of $60,000 a year are buying and subscribing by hundreds of thousands a month because it's a flash in the pan? It's a good magazine, Bob."

Guccione Jr. says he's reconciled to being less of a crowd-pleaser. "The likelihood is, as a result of that, I will not be as rich as [Felix Dennis]. Or as my father. Because I'm not likely to create the product that will be as widely accepted in the marketplace. But I don't need to be that rich."

He also doesn't seem to need the approval of the so-called media elite. And so far, with *Gear*—unlike *Spin*—he isn't getting it. "What is it called—*Gear*?" asks Art Cooper, editor of *GQ*, the magazine Guccione vows *Gear* will ultimately eclipse. Though Cooper says he doesn't read the magazine, he dismisses it as a "beer and boobs" publication: "Don't give them anything too difficult to read or anything too long, anything that, God forbid, might provoke an original thought," says Cooper, who once edited *Penthouse*.

But *People* magazine founding editor Richard Stolley has followed Guccione Jr.'s magazines closely and is a fan. "Bob has that touch of being able to entertain and educate," says Stolley. "*Gear* does give [young men] some of the gladiators and the lions in the pit, but at the same time tries to convince them that there are issues they ought to think about."

It's a rainy afternoon in *Gear*'s industrial-chic headquarters near the meatpacking district overlooking the Hudson River, and Guccione Jr. is sitting—or bouncing—on his orange leather couch, in an office that dwarfs any room in his apartment, flipping proudly through the pages of his newly redesigned magazine. He obsessed over every decision, down to the width of the headlines. "1/2 a point there, a 1/4 point there—it makes a real difference," he says earnestly. "We looked at a page sometimes for two hours." Above all, he says, a men's magazine has to be visually arresting. "It's not that we [men] have short attention spans," he says, "it's the opposite: We pay attention, quickly divine whether it's interesting or not, and move on. Guys do fixate on something eventually—they get the nutrients out of it, and if they get nothing more, they move on."

One wonders, then, when Guccione Jr. will be sated with *Gear* and ready to move on himself. Though he jokes that he's no longer a young man, it's clear that another project lies ahead. "I want children very badly," he says. Married once, he doesn't leave a lot of time for the possibility. Aside from late dinners and the occasional pasta gathering, he spends most of his time, including weekends, at the office. "I'm insecure," he says. "So I work extra hard....I don't want to leave anything to chance. I know I have talents—whether or not I use them right....All the talent in the world is useless if you're not prepared to work hard."

And there's other unfinished business: Guccione Sr., at 69, is battling an aggressive throat cancer, which has made speaking difficult for him. "When I heard he was sick, I contacted him," says Guccione Jr. "Through his girlfriend I said I loved him and was praying for him and hoped he was better and hoped to see him. She said she'd pass the message on. And I spoke to my sister later, and she was told he was happy to hear from me."

Son and father flank Kathy Keeton, Bob Guccione Sr.'s late wife, in 1982.

But Guccione Jr.'s attempts to reconcile with his father have, he says, been rebuffed. "It's terribly painful to me," he says simply. "I have yet to meet a parent who hasn't said to me, 'I can't understand this.' I don't know what it is to be a parent, so I can't imagine it."

When asked whether he thinks his dad is proud of him, he answers eagerly. "I would love to know the answer," he says. "My guess—my instinct, would be yes...deep down. Because I did what I would hope a father wants for his son, which is go out and make something out of my life. And I don't just mean success, because you know, none of that matters. I think making something of your life and standing up for what you believe in and fighting your battles and not wimping out—I think that's what you have to do in life."

And despite the years of silence, the son continues his lively conversation with his father, a continuation, perhaps, of an open letter he wrote to his father in *Spin*'s first-anniversary issue in 1986: "It's well known—partly because I never stop telling everybody—that my father lent me the money to start *Spin*," Guccione Jr. wrote. "It is less well known—because how could it be—that this tough man who I love so much gave me so much more, more than I can tell you here. Of course we fought too, maybe harder than most, but at the end of the day my biggest debt to him, which is the wisdom and love he gave me, is the only one he doesn't want repaid. If, someday, my kids feel about me the way I feel about him, I will consider my life a great success. Thanks, Dad, I love you." ◘

Wrong Turns

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 115] is." Kaster added that Van Horn "continued investigating that story very diligently and uncovered a substantial amount of information," but *20/20* held the story.

Van Horn has declined to comment, but a spokesperson from the newsmagazine told *Brill's Content* that holding the story "was an editorial decision that made sense at the time based on the information we had and the information we still needed to present an accurate report."

Kaster also notes another self-defeating relationship that prevented the problem from being publicized: Since lawyers aren't required to notify NHTSA of a client's suits, Kaster says, he stopped volunteering information to NHTSA years ago, because "all they would do is find a 'no-defect,' which then the [defending] company would wave around and say, 'The federal government found our tire was not defective.'" Of course, if NHTSA didn't get this information, it couldn't pass it on to the media.

During the next two years, Houston TV stations became engulfed in a ratings war that reshaped the area's news broadcasts. KPRC, Brette Lea's former station, introduced a flashy, graphic-heavy product referred to in the business as the Miami influence, a nod to the style of Miami's Fox Channel 7. The station also added a full-time investigative reporter.

The new KPRC broadcasts are a whirlwind of dramatic cuts and animated logos. The reporting has a tabloid sensibility: One of its recent scoops was a "hidden-camera exclusive" of Houston's rave scene, which described "music without melody and designer drugs...teens and 20-somethings sucking on infant pacifiers. The question: Why?"

Other Houston stations expanded their investigative units. "I-teams," as they are known, produce easily marketable, often sensational stories that are heavily promoted before they air. I-teams don't have the daily chore of breaking news and can focus on an investigation for weeks. As a result, Houston stations have been spending a lot more time looking for uncovered stories to trump their competitors.

In 1998, KHOU, the CBS affiliate, launched The Defenders, an investigative team comprising a well-respected reporter, Anna Werner; a former *20/20* producer, David Raziq; and photographer Chris Henao, who had staked out Richard Jewell while at an Atlanta station. Werner had made national news before. She had done a story at the CBS Indianapolis affiliate in which she confronted state workers who had been abusing developmentally disabled patients; it later aired on *CBS Evening News* and CNN. "Is that video of you hitting that kid over the head with a clipboard?" Werner asked on camera. Whereas Brette Lea's career had headed toward anchoring, Werner had left an anchor's desk in Peoria, Illinois, to become a full-time reporter. "I was never a great anchor type because I don't have that anchor charisma," she says. On-camera, she comes across as serious and stern, which contrasts with her easygoing off-camera manner.

Raziq, for his part, is obsessive about reporting. He keeps his hair long and straight—it makes him look like a member of Black Sabbath. He says it's purely for undercover work: It can hide a wire coming from a hidden camera in a hat.

In November 1999, Werner received a tip about a lawsuit against Firestone. She was skeptical. "It didn't necessarily sound like a big story; you know how tips are on stories—you never know." The plaintiff's attorney recommended speaking to another attorney on a similar suit. The second lawyer gave her the name of a tire-failure expert who told her about still other lawsuits alleging the same problem.

Werner's research was slowed by the number of cases that Firestone demanded be sealed as a condition to settle. "It was a big handicap," Raziq says. "We really wanted to get hold of some really hard data." Eventually they gathered nearly 30 cases involving deaths caused by Firestone tires and took the information to Joan Claybrook, the director of Public Citizen, a Washington, D.C., consumer safety organization started by Ralph Nader. Claybrook was the head of NHTSA during the 1978 Firestone recall. Werner remembers her first conversation with Claybrook: "She said, 'If you on your own have found that many cases the real number is probably 20 times that.' And frankly I was shocked."

And so, like Lea before her, Werner called NHTSA. Although she knew of dozens of cases, "[b]asically the response was 'We don't know what you're talking about,'" Werner recalls. Four years after Lea first called, there had been many more Firestone accidents, but the media still hadn't picked up on the story or referred any consumers to NHTSA. The agency, therefore, said it didn't know of a defect with the tires.

Werner and Raziq decided to run the story anyway, and KHOU aired it on February 7. Citing "as many as 30 deaths," the piece included Claybrook, a tire expert testifying to the tread separation problem, and a factory whistle-blower who claimed that the tires were made with substandard rubber. NHTSA declined to have a spokesperson speak on camera, explaining that KHOU wouldn't share its information before the interview. But the agency did ask the station to add its telephone number at the end of the report, which KHOU did.

"The reaction was overwhelming," says Werner. The next day, "the voicemail was full. I had 27 voicemails on my line; [Raziq] has a bunch on his, The Defenders' [voicemail line] was filling up with people saying, 'I had this happen to me!'"

Just as KTRK and KPRC had done, KHOU changed the tires on all its company Explorers, says KHOU general manager Peter Diaz.

For the next six months, no major national organization picked up on KHOU's story. "The day after it aired I did talk to a CBS producer, I believe in Washington, about the story," says Werner. "I believe CBS got a copy of the story also." KHOU, in fact, has a contractual relationship with both CBS and CNN that requires it to share its stories with the networks. Mike Devlin, KHOU's executive news director, says he even sent Werner's story via overnight mail to *CBS Evening News* in Washington, D.C. But nothing happened. (Janet Leissner, the network's D.C. bureau chief, says she has "no knowledge that anyone ever called.")

Once a national newspaper had legitimized the story, everyone else followed. On August 9, Firestone bowed to pressure and recalled more than 6 million tires.

Residents of Houston, however, began calling NHTSA after seeing its phone number on KHOU. And in April, NHTSA began investigating the tires because of what it has since described as a surge of complaints from Houston.

Still, the national press was virtually silent. The story resurfaced haphazardly through June and July—localized by a Florida newspaper here, recycled on The Associated Press wires there. CBS stations in Los Angeles and Miami did their own versions of the story. But for three months the only national story on the agency's investigation was a small report carried by a number of Crain Communications' automotive trade publications, which simply noted that NHTSA was looking into the potential defect. (A few days before the agency announced its investigation, *Rubber and Plastics News*, a Crain paper, published a package of stories noting Firestone's 100th anniversary.)

The process might have been expedited had the *Houston Chronicle*—which claims to be the sixth-largest daily in the U.S.—looked at the story. But managing editor Tommy Miller says the paper blew it. "The city desk normally is the desk that monitors the local stations each night," he says. "We didn't follow up on that one. In retrospect obviously we should have." On April 30, the *Chicago Sun-Times* ran two stories examining tread separation across the industry, but Firestone was mentioned only in passing—though that didn't stop the paper from trumpeting its role in breaking the story.

It wasn't until July 31, two months after NHTSA began its investigation—and six months after Anna Werner and KHOU connected the faulty tires to nearly 30 deaths—that the story finally became national news. KHOU, which had continued to broadcast stories on the defect, reported that Ford had already recalled Firestone tires on its trucks in Venezuela. Sean Kane, a consultant who works with plaintiffs who have sued Firestone, also heard about the recall and put out a press release the same day.

The media still weren't biting. "I had contacted a number of media people to let them know we were doing a press release," says Kane. "And frankly...I got a lot of yawns." Kane declined to name which news organizations passed on the story, saying only, "Look at a lot of these big guys. They were all pretty slow on the draw."

Sara Nathan of *USA Today*, however, wrote about it as soon as she got the press release, and on August 1, the paper ran the first national story identifying Ford and Firestone as a target of consumer-safety advocates. Once a national newspaper had legitimized the story, everyone else followed. On August 9, Firestone bowed to pressure and recalled more than 6 million tires.

At KTRK, where it all started, a seedling planted in Gauvain's memory is now about 20 feet high. The current news director, Dave Strickland, shrugs off his station's decision not to investigate the cause of Gauvain's death. "It was like having to report on your brother dying and they felt it was just inappropriate," Strickland says. "If we took a hit journalistically...then so be it," he says. Far from a cause of regret for opportunities missed, the recall is giving new meaning to Gauvain's death. "It wasn't a freak type of accident; there may have been some reason for it," says Don Kobos, the assistant news director at Gauvain's station. "His death has a purpose for helping to save other people."

Since working on the Firestone story, Brette Lea, who is still an anchor in Nashville, has made headlines mainly in Nashville's celebrity gossip columns, which reported her adoption of a baby from Kazakhstan earlier this year. Lea spends more time anchoring than reporting, and she finds it hard to believe that she was the first to look at the problem with Firestone's tires. "In sitting here and watching all this unfold, I think I mumbled something to my 10 o'clock producer, 'I broke that story'...and he looked at me, like, 'Go ahead and take your medication,'" says Lea. "I saw the death toll climb and climb and climb, and that's when it broke my heart." ◘

Fear and Writing

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 119] name on the back, a gift from owner Jim Irsay, who is one of the writer's ardent fans. There's something almost gentle about the six-foot-three Thompson in his home, framed by a lampshade strung with reading glasses and a wall adorned with pincers he used to grab objects following a hip replacement a couple of years ago. Thompson stays for the most part perched in one chair facing the television and is always swaying and bobbing, his arms constantly swimming through the air. He's usually surrounded by an array of remote controls: for the TV, the air conditioner, the stereo. As I quickly learned, being around Thompson can be infantilizing to both parties. He has come to expect that his needs are attended to, and most people—myself included—seem inclined to go along with his demands rather than risk an outburst.

Thompson in Montana, 1969

COURTESY OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON ARCHIVES

That first night, everyone took turns reading Thompson's letters out loud. I didn't say much, and I couldn't stop thinking I'd come late to the party. I quit drinking and drugging years ago and knew that Thompson would spend the weekend smoking hash, snorting coke, and drinking Chivas Regal. Instead of boozing with my onetime idol, I'd be sipping seltzer water and soft drinks. The night ended at about 4 A.M. Thompson wanted to go up the road for a swim.

The next night everyone was a little more at ease. We started earlier—at about 7—and at 10, Brinkley, Rucci, Thompson, and I went for burgers at the Woody Creek Tavern. By now Thompson seemed to have decided that I was acceptable company, and at one point he asked me when I was going to interview him, adding, "Let's get this thing over with." I began by asking Thompson about his legacy, which is not a subject he likes to talk about, and when I pressed throughout the night, he would either ignore me, stop talking, or whack his fist against the table. "I knew this question was going to come right up," he said the first time I asked him about his influence on journalism. "I don't think I'm the one who should be assessing my influence. More-qualified people have." Later he turns the question back on me: "It's assumed that I have had a large impact or influence, is it not?"

Of course, Thompson is not unaware of his impact or his image. When I ask him about publishing his letters, he says he knows that writers don't usually get epistolary retrospectives until they're dead. (Implicit, at least to me, is the corollary: and not writing anymore.) It reminded me what my friends asked when they heard I was going to visit Thompson: Is he a brain-dead acid casualty? But Thompson is not a sorry product of the drug era. He seems as smart—and as twisted—as ever, and, although he's not pounding the pavement or on the campaign trail, he still writes a lot, churning out letters and occasional pieces for national magazines. "A lot of outlaws have been killed," he says. "I probably should have been killed a while ago. I would have been a lot more popular....I kind of feel a little bit like the Rolling Stones. I don't think they thought they'd be on the road in 2000."

Still, Thompson's best Gonzo journalism seems to be in his past. Part of that has to do with the circus that results when Thompson makes one of his rare appearances outside Colorado. "I've never quite figured out a way to capitalize on or enjoy fame," he says. "I can't resent and curse it. I'm not sure what to do about it." It's a hackneyed line, but there's truth in it. Thompson never got rich off his work and for the most part stays secluded in Woody Creek, shunning the groupies and rubberneckers who flock to his occasional readings. When I asked him whether he considered going out and covering this year's presidential race, he said, "When I went out it was a job, and this time it would have been sort of an

Fear and Writing

appearance....Once I signed more autographs in a room than the candidate, then I got a little edgy about it."

A couple of weeks later, I called Thompson and asked him about the letter to Silberman in which he says he wasn't on drugs during the conception of *Las Vegas*. "People make too much of it," he said. "At that time, it wasn't outlandish to sample even the drugs that I mention. It actually seemed quite logical: We lived in a drug culture, so if you go to Las Vegas, let's have some drugs. Now it would be like you had rabies."

Indeed, the drug use in *Las Vegas*—and in all of Thompson's work—does seem almost preordained. It's part of what makes *Las Vegas* a vital historical document as well as one of the best pieces of writing in the past 30 years. The world Thompson was writing about was confused and often illogical. "Drug use, in a way, was about controlling your environment. That's always been important to me."

"I THINK HE'S A VERY DANGEROUS MAN. We're all afraid of him. He's irresponsible and reckless as a human being, and so we all live in fear," says Walter Isaacson, the managing editor of *Time* magazine, about the man he refers to as Doctor Thompson. Isaacson met Thompson a couple of years ago and sometimes tries to persuade him to write for his magazine. Isaacson has succeeded only once, in 1997, when Thompson wrote "Doomed Love at the Taco Stand: Fear and Loathing in Hollywood" for *Time*. Isaacson's delight at Thompson's antics is as pure as any fan's. Talking of "Fear and Loathing in Hollywood," Isaacson describes the scene that unfolded at deadline: "He showed up with the piece and with Johnny Depp and with a bottle of whiskey, and perhaps some other substances that I made clear weren't appropriate for my office. Soon there was a crowd, and Johnny Depp was reading the piece out loud while a dozen staffers crowded around and the good Doctor was playing air drums to accent the rhythm of his writing as Depp was reading it. And then Lyle Lovett somehow showed up because he was part of the good Doctor's entourage, and it was a totally surreal closing night."

And like any fan, Isaacson wishes there were more new material coming out of Owl Farm. "I'd love to see what happened if he dove into the Net," Isaacson says. "He writes off the top of his head in a sort of electric way, and the best dose of Doctor Thompson is unfiltered, which is what the Web is all about." I had asked Thompson about the Web when I was at Woody Creek, and he blanched. "It seems to me like more of a—and this is simplistic—but more of a 'me, me, me, me' thing," he says. "Like a teenager, you know, self-centered. And you don't really learn much about the subject....I'm sure people got tired of some of the 'me, me' in my campaign coverage, but it was important. It was a building block of the story." So Isaacson makes do with the missives that sputter out from his fax machine. "The joy of trying to get him to do a story is mainly the faxes back and forth, or mainly forth. It's just this full-throttle thinking," Isaacson says. "If he could just put into print what he's able to put into his faxes, he'd be more productive."

In a way, that's what Thompson is doing with these volumes of letters. Since he was a teenager, Thompson has treated writing as his life's work, and he says there's a certain "poetic justice coming home to roost" that he's getting paid for writing he did 30 years ago. "Writing letters was not going to pay the rent back then. And little did I know that it would be paying the rent now....I think [it's] a wonderful thing...I'm a workman. I've always been a workman. I think God is a workman."

THOMPSON AND RUCCI AND BRINKLEY finished editing down the final selection of letters just before 2:30 in the morning on my second night in Woody Creek. There was some champagne, some absinthe (sent from Europe by Johnny Depp), and I raised a glass of water and then drove off. Hunter S. Thompson is a sybarite, and a drug fiend, but above all he's a workman. It's what I didn't understand when I was growing up; somehow I thought Thompson's genius was connected to drugs. I was confused when dropping acid (or shooting dope, for that matter) didn't have the same effect on me. "Drugs snatch us out of everyday reality," Octavio Paz wrote in *Alternating Current*, "blur our perception, alter our sensations, and, in a word, put the entire universe in a state of suspension." Very few people can translate this new reality into literature. Thompson is one of a handful of American writers over the past century who have pulled off the feat. ■

The Player

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 123] a law degree.

In college, Kurt was a historical-trivia fiend. I'd sit with an almanac and give him a state (Kentucky) and a presidential election year (1908).

"William Jennings Bryan," he'd reply.

For some inexplicable reason, Kurt knew that Kentucky's electoral votes went to Bryan in 1908. I'd fire state-and-year combos at him for an hour, and he was never, ever wrong.

Now, 25 years later, I had him on the speakerphone. "That was a long time ago," said Kurt. "I don't know if it's quite like the old days."

"That's okay. I doubt they're going to ask who carried Arkansas in 1832."

"It wasn't a state then," Kurt said. "Try 1836."

Darci's eyebrows shot up as they never had for me.

"Jesus, Kurt, why don't you go on the show yourself?"

"You kidding?" he said. "I wouldn't do that sh-- in a million years."

He agreed—reluctantly—to be a phone-a-friend. But his words reverberated: I'd set in motion a chain of events that would culminate in nationwide airtime—a realization that was becoming difficult to ignore.

I know what people like Kurt said about *Millionaire*: The show reflects how greedy our society has become. But I don't buy it. It's natural to be interested in a shot at a million dollars and always has been. And what's greedy about watching other people try to win? I'd become a fan of *Millionaire* because it simultaneously manages to engage both the trivia maven and the lover of drama in me. All the contestants elicit some mixture of sympathy and Schadenfreude, depending on their demeanor and my mood. If you want a show that panders to the tawdriness of human nature, try *Survivor*.

But being on the show and watching it were two different things. I'd never wanted my face on prime-time TV, let alone on a show that had become a cultural phenomenon.

I resolved to remain in denial as long as I could.

I MENTIONED TO A COUPLE of operating-room nurses that in one form or another, I was going to be on the show. In ten minutes the whole place was buzzing.

I finished a case and went to the locker room. My friend Ira, a surgeon, stopped me, wagged a finger, and said: "The Limpopo River is in Africa. Remember that. It sounds like it's somewhere in Asia, but it's not."

I went back out to start the next case. Mike, a fellow anesthesiologist, took me aside: "What do you know about the Three Gorges Dam?"

I became a lightning rod for inquiries about how to get on the show. It seemed that every nurse, technician, and patient in the place had been quietly trying to qualify for months.

TUESDAY, JUNE 27: the flight to New York. In the terminal, Darci and I strolled past posters of San Diego sports heroes. My fevered brain

automatically scanned each passing bio—Dan Fouts, Ted Williams—extracting the facts without conscious effort.

This was my approach to the world now. Every brute artifact of human culture, each TV ad or magazine feature, cried out to be mined and processed and stored. On the flight I worked out, putting James Bond flicks in order of their release. Darci and I believed that who-did-Bond-when was going to be crucial.

MINDFUL THAT THE VAST MAJORITY of contestants would be returning home without reaching the Hot Seat and playing the main game, Valleycrest Productions sprung for everything: plane tickets, accommodations, and even the driver who took us from the airport to the hotel in Manhattan that houses contestants and serves as command post for the show. Close to ABC Studios and Lincoln Center, the hotel even has an office for the production company on the top floor.

In the hotel lobby, Darci and I met another contestant. He introduced himself: "I'm Gary. You on the first taping or the second?"

"I'm Joe," I said, shaking his hand. "Second."

"Me too. We'll be on together. Where you from?"

"California."

"New York."

Coach and I immediately irradiated the guy. *New Yorker, huh? Looks smart. Talks quick. Is quick.*

Shut up, I told myself.

We'd arrived just in time for the contestant orientation on the 11th floor of the hotel. The first show's contestants had consisted of an unprecedented eight women and two men, unlike the typical, mostly male group. For some reason, my show would have only nine people: eight men and one woman. I seemed to be the oldest.

I know people say *Millionaire* reflects how greedy our society has become. But I don't buy it. If you want a show that panders to the tawdriness of human nature, try *Survivor.*

The meeting was run by a preternaturally nice person named Susan. She told us, "Tomorrow you'll go to the studio at 7 A.M. In the morning you'll check out the fastest-finger setups and try out the Hot Seat—which is tricky to get into. In the afternoon we'll tape the two shows. Dress in layers, because the studio is freezing. Security will make sure you don't bring any cameras, books, computers, notes, cheat sheets, almanacs, or sets of encyclopedias."

She asked to see the clothes we had brought, and we each displayed our two sets. Susan rejected my green shirt. The stitching pattern might look fuzzy in a close-up, she said, though the blue one passed her inspection.

After the meeting, Darci and I grabbed a quick bite and holed up in the room.

"What's the biggest hydroelectric project in the world, now under construction?" asked Darci, flipping through an almanac.

"Heck if I know."

"The Three Gorges Dam."

"Fascinating."

I was distracted. The birth names of popes had replaced James Bond flicks as my latest awful premonition: I was convinced that a pope would nail me right between the eyes tomorrow.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28: A bus took us to the studio at 7 A.M. Contestants and their companions entered a discreetly marked door and climbed a few stairs, past security.

We hung our "game clothes" in a changing room, where an affable guy named J.P. told us, "You are now in contestant isolation."

I tried to relax, but deadly fear was taking hold. It would be ramping up steadily all day. I stood in the greenroom, a holding tank of sorts for the contestants, clutching a cup of coffee that I had no intention of drinking. My stomach was the size of a Ping-Pong ball; I had just emptied my bladder for the eighth time. "Balki Bartokomous," I heard people muttering. "Ezra Pound."

"You look pretty calm," Richard, a fellow contestant, said to me. He was lanky and bearded, and looked even tenser than I felt. "I guess seeing all those traumas helps you handle pretty much anything."

"Wrong," I said. "Traumas feel routine. This feels like a matter of life and death."

AS WE MOVED DOWNSTAIRS through the catacombs of ABC Studios, a wall of arctic-like air hit us. We rounded a corner. There it was: the famous circular set.

We took our assigned seats around the rim of the circle. I sat in No. 5. Then we heard our stage directions, with a crew member standing in for Regis, who was nowhere to be seen.

"If you win the fastest-finger, do us a favor," the crew member told us. "Give us some kind of a reaction shot—that's all we ask. Then come out of your seat, walk over to here, and shake Regis's hand. Then the two of you walk to the center and you take the Hot Seat."

The Hot Seat was very high up. To keep it from swiveling, you had to face away from it, boost yourself up with both arms, and sit down.

Then we moved on to a fastest-finger practice. The A-B-C-D buttons looked clunkier than the computer keys I'd been practicing on. I tried pushing them; they required about 20 times the force. You didn't bang these buttons or hit them. You attacked them. It was like activating an old-style TNT detonator box: two hands and a lot of downward force.

Now I realized why people on the show always used their thumbs. They were bracing the button box from behind with the flats of their hands. If they didn't, the force required to depress a button might break the whole box off.

I got nervous. Instead of firing with precision, as I had done hundreds of times in practice, I would have to push hard with my thumbs. This would cut my best time, I estimated, from 4.5 seconds to a worrisome 5.5 seconds.

"Question one." For no good reason, my heart was pounding about 130 beats a minute.

"Place these units of measurement in order, shortest to longest: (A) yard (B) foot (C) inch (D) mile."

Piece of cake, right? C-B-A-D. Push-push-push-push.

Except when I looked at my readout, it said I'd punched C-A.

Huh?

On the next question, I told myself to press *really* hard.

This time the readout said A-D. I was in trouble.

When I announced this to a staffer, he told me to be sure to push each button individually. I tried, but it took me a couple more questions before I realized what this meant: Push the button down. Then wait for it to come all the way back up. Then you can start pressing the next one.

Now I understood how to do it, but how was I going to do it quickly?

MICHAEL DAVIES, the show's executive producer, then took the stage. "Each of you," Davies told us, "has sat in the safety of your living room, pointed at the screen, and yelled, 'You moron! How could you not know that?' Now you will have the opportunity to be that moron.

"Don't let Regis try to sway you. He doesn't know the answers. After you've committed to a choice, we flash a green light on his monitor if you're right, a red one if you're wrong."

The Player

Where was Regis, anyway? Getting his beauty sleep?

We didn't see him until after we'd eaten in the greenroom, visited "hair and makeup" (particular attention was paid to my 2 o'clock shadow and the dark circles under my eyes), and returned to the big round set—now a packed house being warmed up by a stand-up comic. On the big-screen studio monitor, we watched the comic yield the floor to Davies, who in turn presented "the man who saved ABC—Regis Philbin!"

The stands exploded. Regis strolled onstage, impeccably made up, soaking it in.

THE NINE OF US TROOPED in designated sequence to the perimeter of the set. We stood single file between two sections of seats near the fastest-finger stations. Then Regis, nattily dressed, slight of frame, came over to greet us. He worked us one by one: a handshake, a two-line exchange. "How ya doin', Joe," he said to me. "Good luck." And that was all the face time most of us would ever get. Regis was under quarantine—from both the questions and the finalists.

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"You'll go out one by one and take your seats," J.P. said. "We'll introduce each of you. Wave or something. Get them on your side. Ready?"

Contestant No. 1 went out. The crowd roared. Then No. 2, No. 3. Someone behind me was barking: "Jump...jump...jump."

I went. Seats No. 5 and 6 flanked the entryway. I did several things at once: walked, made a hard right to seat No. 5, looked up into the lights, and waved, distracted all the while by the trompe l'oeil floor and the sloping girders beneath. I nearly tripped, but I covered my clumsiness up—I think.

I sat there and played with my buttons. I pushed them down and up in random sequences, practicing the feel. No one else was pushing buttons. I didn't care. As far as I was concerned, in that moment, those buttons were the fulcrum of Western civilization.

A crew member came out and swooped his arms, condor-like, shushing the crowd.

Lights down. Music up.

Showtime.

REGIS READ OFF OUR NAMES and hometowns at four-second intervals, and we got down to business.

"Put these game-show hosts in order of their birth, starting with the earliest."

In the two seconds between when the question registered in my brain and the choices appeared, I tried, like all good players, to anticipate who might be listed. Regis Philbin? No, they wouldn't. But it'll be a range. *Start with the earliest, damn it,* I reminded myself.

The choices flashed onto my screen. Skittering music struck up.

(A) Tom Bergeron. *Who? If I don't know him, he's new.*

(B) John Davidson.

(C) Gene Rayburn.

Okay: Davidson's fairly recent. And Gene was a primordial memory; *The Match Game* had me hooked as a 7-year-old.

(D) Monty Hall.

I pushed the buttons C-D-B-A as carefully and quickly as I could. The synapses for this question were well wired. I had a shot. I think I checked the readout to make sure all four had registered, hit OK to lock it in, and looked up.

People were still punching buttons.

Maybe everybody?

"And the player with the fastest time is..."

The one from seat No. 5, the guy whose brain was imploding.

I GOT IN THE HOT SEAT, and there was an immediate break in filming. I soon learned that there would be a break after just about every question. I swiveled around and saw them move Darci down to the "companion seat" in the audience, some 20 feet behind me. I gave her a thumbs-up.

"No contact with the audience," a producer told me.

The cameras rolled.

Regis introduced me as an anesthesiologist and mentioned that my wife is one as well. "So," he said, sitting back, clearly pleased, "who puts who to sleep?"

Anything would've done. "We take turns," I could have said. Or "I have a natural gift for it, Regis. I've been putting people to sleep my whole life."

Instead, I realized that I'd been sitting there with a vacant grin for—oh, maybe three minutes.

"Heh, heh," laughed Regis. "Just kiddin' ya."

(This exchange didn't live up to the standards of good TV. It would be deleted for broadcast, as would a fair amount of what followed—anything that slowed the flow.)

THE FIRST FIVE QUESTIONS were, fortunately for me, the customary formality. I whizzed through them: I knew that the answer was a fly in the ointment, not a wildebeest; sauerkraut was for hot dogs, not pizza. The sub-$1,000 music skimmed along, busy and a touch suspenseful, intimating that although danger is never far and caution is always the watchword, we should really get going, shouldn't we?

Against all expectations, I wasn't preoccupied with the studio audience or the millions of potential viewers. It was just me and Regis, and I hoped to keep it that way.

Then my winnings reached $1,000. This is where things get serious. This is the game proper. The music changes to the stuff that drives you nuts. The room lights go down and the spots sweep and converge. This is where they draw blood.

"Which of the following children did not live with Mr. Drummond on *Diff'rent Strokes*?" Regis asked me for $2,000. "(A) Willis (B) Kimberly (C) Arnold (D) Webster."

Never watched it. No clue. This was a bad sign.

After several seconds of clear, calm, and unproductive reflection, I said, "Well, I didn't think I would be talking to the audience so soon, but here we are." I told Regis I wanted to use the "audience" lifeline. Regis asked them to vote. They turned to their keypads, and 89 percent answered "Webster." I breathed. They always know this stuff.

The next three questions, which can be tricky, were blessedly easy for this player. For $4,000, a scabbard holds a sword, not a bow and arrow or a mace. For $8,000, the name of the North Star is Polaris. For $16,000, it was Vivaldi who wrote the "Four Seasons" concertos.

And just as I was noting with some satisfaction that the questions had strayed only once into the realm of *People*, I got the following for $32,000: "Which of the following actresses never appears in the *Scream* movie series? (A) Jada Pinkett (B) Sarah Michelle Gellar (C) Jennifer Love Hewitt (D) Parker Posey."

It was enough to make me scream.

I'd never seen *Scream* or its sequels, but the name Jada Pinkett

jumped out at me. I tried to put it back.

This was a classic phone-a-friend situation. I had no business guessing here.

Hadn't Steve, one of my five phone-a-friends, a talk-radio host and sports-trivia expert, said, "I'm very good on movies"? Movies, yes—but how about teen horror flicks?

"Time to call my buddy Steve," I told Regis.

He answered the phone, and a 30-second clock popped up on my screen. I read the question as clearly as I could. The 30 seconds were flying by.

After I finished reading, Steve just said, "Wow."

There was a two-second pause.

"I'm gonna have to say Jennifer Love Hewitt is my guess," said Steve.

"How confident are you?" I asked.

"I would say I'm about—"

A buzzer sounded. The audience groaned.

There was an eyelash in my eye. I tried to blink it out.

I said: "Okay, so we're at 16; this is for 32...."

"You still have one lifeline left," said Regis. "That's that '50-50.'" Using it would remove two of the four possible answers.

"I'm gonna use it," I said without hesitation.

A commonly held fallacy about the 50-50 lifeline option is that the two choices that are removed are randomly eliminated. Davies told us that the show decides which two to remove—and it always tries to leave the most vexing wrong choice.

An orchestral hit from the soundtrack, and now my screen read:

(C) Jennifer Love Hewitt (D) Parker Posey.

"Well," said Regis idly, "Steve did say Jennifer Love Hewitt, and then you've got Parker Posey in there too."

"Mmm-hmm," I said, but it threw me into a panic. Why did he say that about Steve? Did he know something? *No!* I told myself. *Don't let him sway you—he doesn't know the answers!*

I looked at him: an innocent poker face.

"Well, that's two more pieces of info than I had before...." I began. "So I'm gonna go for (C) Jennifer Love Hewitt. It's a guess. Final answer."

"Hey, Joe," Regis said. "He was right—you won $32,000!"

The lights came up, and all my lifelines were gone.


The author confronts the $32,000 question.

With the cameras off, I tried to rub away the eyelash. "There's something in my eye," I told a crew member, and she hurried to find Visine.

Now I was at the $64,000 question, which has a special place in *Millionaire* strategy. It's a "free guess," the one high-dollar point from which there's no incentive in walking away. Whether you walk or guess wrong, you leave with the same $32,000. Accordingly, the question is frequently one of those dope-it-out affairs: You may not know the answer, but think and you'll get it anyway.

"What is the name of the dog that is one of the tokens in the board game Monopoly? (A) Tiger (B) Spike (C) Ranger (D) Scotty."

The chords, which had slowly climbed in key from $2,000 to $32,000, now ratcheted the tension up a notch.

My response faithfully reflected the incoherence from which it came. "I can't remember what the token looks like, unfortunately, but uh, I figure maybe it looks like a Scotty dog, and if it does, it would be named Scotty. So it's a guess."

Regis made sure it was my final answer. "He says Scotty," he said. "He guessed it for $64,000!"

I thought I hadn't been nervous, and as far as my brain was concerned I still wasn't. But my body had its own ideas. On the threshold of the six-digit zone, I was beginning to get the shakes in my arms and legs. They seemed like somebody else's.

I shouldn't even have made it this far, I thought, *so what the hell. Bring it on.*

But when I heard the $125,000 question, I thought it was a bad joke. "What river is the home of the Three Gorges Dam, the largest hydroelectric project in history? (A) Yellow (B) Yangtze (C) Ganges (D) Amazon."

Two people had specifically quizzed me on this very topic! But when I searched my head, the river was dry.

"It's in China," I said. "So it's either (A) or (B)."

A nice, long pause.

The Yellow sounded right. The Yangtze sounded more right. Actually, I was pretty sure it had been the Yellow. Well, fairly sure.

"I may have known it once and crammed a bunch of other trivia in there and it fell out the other ear, you know?"

An indulgent chuckle from Regis: Another minute and he'd be clipping his nails.

I decided—it would have to be the Yellow. "Okay," I said. "It's just another flat-out guess. I'm gonna say the Yangtze River."

Where'd that come from?

"Final?" said Regis.

I wondered.

"Yeah."

He played it cool for the customary interval.

"Just won $125,000!"

The crowd was with me. We were into the serious money. And I was doing it without a clue.

THE EYELASH HAD BECOME a large grain of sand. I was blinking constantly, but it simply would not roll off the middle of the cornea.

Back on the air, Regis told me that I'd done a fabulous job of guessing and then moved on to the $250,000 question. "Three away from 1 million," he said, and asked the next question: "Which of the following philosophers said *Cogito ergo sum*?"

I couldn't believe it. My luck was holding. "I want to say this to all my ex–philosophy professors out there," I said. "Finally, my degree is counting for something. Here it is: Rene Descartes, (A)...final."

"That's right, too, for a quarter-million dollars!"

The place erupted. My eye was also erupting. Tears were welling up on the wrong side. I knew what was going on now: A smidge of makeup had gotten in, and I was evidently allergic to it. The inside of my upper eyelid was, literally, erupting in little zits. Every time I blinked they were scraping the cornea.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS SCURRIED about in advance of the next question.

I was well into capital-preservation mode now. The $500,000 question would have to be a pretty sure thing for me to venture a guess.

"What is the surname of the septuplets born in Iowa in 1997? (A) Dilley (B) Adams (C) McCaughey (D) Davis."

Not in the files.

The name McCaughey stood out as newsworthy, but it connected to nothing.

I stared at the screen.

"Big medical story," observed Regis.

"I almost think I know this, but I'm tempted to just...to hang back," I said. "McCaughey was the name of some...I think it was some sort of famous multiple birth around then...but I think there was more than one of them around those couple of years."

ADRIAN DE LUCCA

The Player

"Septuplets...Iowa...1997," Regis said.

"Boy, this is tough," I muttered. "It's one of these 60 percent deals, you know?"

I thought I saw Regis relax almost imperceptibly. I knew what he was thinking: *The player's done. He's gonna walk.*

I said, "For that kind of money..."

Regis nodded.

"...I've gotta take at least another few seconds. I know 'McCaughey' something or other was in the news. I just don't know why."

"Go ahead. Think about it."

The suspenseful music looped on.

"Let me just see. McCaughey septuplets. McCaughey septuplets." (I was saying 'McCaw-hy,' as in Craig McCaw, the telecommunications magnate.)

"Well, actually," said Regis, "it's pronounced *McCoy*."

(This exchange was edited from the show.)

Someone in the audience laughed.

"McCoy septuplets" had no ring to it at all. "McCaw-hy septuplets" sounded better than that.

It did?

Why?

Maybe I hadn't heard it, but read it? And read it thinking "McCaw-hy"? Then maybe I'd seen "McCaughey septuplets"?

No, too flimsy.

Nothing but that music. I'd run out of rope.

"I'm gonna go for it."

Someone gasped, maybe several people out there. I think even Regis reacted.

"What changed your mind?"

"I dunno. None of the other names sound right. McCaughey was something around then. I'm betting it's this. (C) McCaughey, final answer."

"Hang on to your seat, Joe—you're right for half a million dollars!"

I winced at the pure absurdity of the universe.

THE MOOD DURING THIS BREAK was electric. The crew and staff members who'd shepherded me this far now approached, one at a time, to offer support—mainly of a cautionary kind.

A producer came up to me. "You've got a lot to win," she said, "and a lot to lose."

"Hey, I may look like a loose cannon out there," I said. "But anybody who thinks I'm fooling around with this question is crazier than I am."

She looked me in the eye. "Good," she said.

No one to date had blown the million-dollar question—they either knew it or they walked—and I had no plans to be the first. No one on the staff wants to see it happen, either. The drop from $500,000 to $32,000 is a downer. Downers are bad TV.

An assistant ran up with the Visine bottle. "How's your eye?"

They wanted a clean game here. No second-guessing how it'd have gone if not for the eye. But in truth, I noticed it only during breaks. I might have missed an alligator clamped onto my leg.

The set went quiet. The APPLAUSE sign flashed.

"One million dollars." Regis craned his neck, looked up into the audience. "Darci? Any special requests before we go into this?"

"Let's do it," came her voice behind me.

My recent three-week cramfest—which had helped me on all of one-half of one question (Three Gorges Dam)—had taught me that "Let's do it" was just what Gary Gilmore had said in 1977, right before a Utah firing squad executed him for murder.

"All right, big guy, you ready to go?"

The words flashed on the screen, and the music came up. For the million bucks, they'd removed the suspenseful melody—leaving only the heartbeat.

"What best-selling author..."

An author question! I had a shot!

"...was born Howard Allen O'Brien?"

Nope.

"(A) Danielle Steel (B) Anne Rice (C) J.K. Rowling (D) Toni Morrison."

Four women?! I said nothing and stared. And stared.

"Literature and novels is something that I thought I was kind of strong in," I said. "I have no clue in this. No clue."

Let's see. Toni Morrison is African-American: least likely, perhaps, to be born O'Brien. J.K. Rowling is Scottish, or perhaps has been living in Scotland—not O'Brien country but near it—what if she'd come there from Ireland? Anne Rice lives in New Orleans—aren't Southerners a tad more likely to tag their kids with family surnames, like Howard? Danielle Steel—likely a pseudonym, but so what?

One of the names glowed faintly, inexplicably, with promise: J.K. Rowling. Nowhere near enough.

"Yeah," I said. "No clue. You gotta know when to fold 'em. I'm walking. Thank you."

Lights up.

I remembered to shake Regis's hand and accepted the fake check. They'd brought Darci front and center, and as we hugged amid the bedlam, I knew that someone somewhere was superimposing a graphic on us: Total Prize Money $500,000. All too weird.

For the first time I could remember, Regis had not asked what the player would have guessed. I'd have said Rowling, and he'd have praised my discretion at quitting. The answer was Anne Rice.

We were whisked offstage, and the setup for the next game began. The show went on.

THREE AND A HALF WEEKS would pass before the show aired. In the meantime, ABC had asked that I not disclose the outcome. I had no problem with that. Darci and I didn't tell our families—not even our kids. My stock reply: "I didn't blow the first question, and I didn't go all the way."

I was about $250,000 richer (after federal and state taxes), but hewing to some outmoded ethic of modesty and plain living, I wanted to be as little changed as possible by the experience. That wasn't hard. I earmarked the money for such unsexy priorities as paying off the mortgage and future college tuition. I drive a '92 Toyota Camry wagon, and although I considered walking into a Jag dealership and driving something new off the floor, I decided against it. My car still runs, and if I had a new one, I'd just have to wash it.

I snuck comfortably under the media radar, which these days registers only the million-dollar winners. There were a couple of local news stories and radio interviews—notably one with my phone-a-friend, Steve Hartman of XTRA-AM in my hometown of San Diego—but nothing more. I got only one crank phone call, and it wasn't even that cranky.

On Sunday, July 23, my family gathered around the television and watched.

"You're smirking," said Darci, pointing at my televised image.

"You call that a smirk?" I said. "That's fear."

"You're blinking three times a second."

I don't even like being photographed. Now tight close-ups of my every blink, smirk, and flub were being beamed across the nation. I'd spent the past few weeks wondering how that happened, why I had really done it. The promise of riches? Maybe, but that wasn't enough.

Now I got it. As my onscreen avatar dredged up its last useless fact, as Regis pointed and the crowd whooped and my onscreen self walked offstage waving, I didn't even look. I was watching the faces of my kids as they registered utter shock, then exultation.

I did it for the reaction shots. ◘

LETTERS

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24]
bemusement, that "one commercial offers a full minute of footage of aircraft carriers taking off and landing...." Personally, I find the sight of fighter aircraft taking off and landing quite amazing.

RICHARD BECK, SAINT JOHNSBURY, VT

Stephen Totilo responds: More than a dozen *Brill's Content* readers echoed Mr. Beck's regret that I buried the news about flying aircraft carriers in an offhand reference. Unfortunately, this apparent technological breakthrough was, in fact, an editing gaffe. It is currently impossible for 40,000-ton warships to take flight. I was aboard a Navy carrier for a week this past summer and although the ship was swift enough to cross the Pacific in just seven days, its hull never did lift fully from the ocean.

APPLAUDED EFFORT

Your assertion that sloppy journalism ["Lies and More Lies," The Military and the Media, October] has contributed to the creation and perpetuation of the many myths now slandering the character of the Vietnam veteran is right on point.

Although I think it's fair to say that veterans themselves have also been complicit in the dissemination of these lies, it has been the media's consistent failure to properly research what are often outlandish claims before publishing them as fact that has triggered the greatest harm.

MICHAEL KELLEY, SACRAMENTO, CA

BIASED JOURNALIST

The excerpts from Ted Koppel's diary ["The Koppel Chronicles," October] reveal, among other things, Mr. Koppel's extraordinary bias against President Clinton. It is summed up in the statement "Maybe I'm doing the president a great injustice, but I am hard-pressed to think of a single act of his, throughout what I guess will come to be known as the Lewinsky matter, in which he put the nation's welfare ahead of his own."

Yes, the intrepid reporter is doing the president a great injustice; his sweeping statement leaves out all the work that Mr. Clinton did for the nation as its president.

During the year that elapsed between the breaking of the Monica Lewinsky story and the Senate vote to acquit the president, it seemed that the majority of *Nightline* programs were devoted to simplistic, moralistic attacks on President Clinton. Most of Koppel's guests on these programs were openly biased legal shills for Kenneth Starr. On the few occasions that there was a guest sympathetic to the president, the guest was subjected to Mr. Koppel's bullying cross-examination.

Ted Koppel has been in the vanguard of TV "pundits" who helped Kenneth Starr parlay a sordid sex story into a reckless attempt to bring down a popular Democratic president, and thus create a national nightmare.

MORTON WACHSPRESS, WOODMERE, NY

SLOPPY REPORTING

I take issue with your story "The Powers That Were" [Rewind, September], by David Halberstam, "the journalist that was," judging by the reporting he did on the *Chicago Tribune*.

I once admired Mr. Halberstam, particularly for *The Best and the Brightest*, a brilliant piece of reporting on Vietnam. So it was depressing to see a journalist of his caliber resort to the sloppy and superficial reporting that characterized his piece in your publication.

In his piece, Mr. Halberstam yearns for the good old days at the *Chicago Tribune*, the mid-1980s and "another ownership team," one that had turned the *Tribune* from an isolationist rag into a classy newspaper. He then says the current *Trib* ownership has no faith in the future of newspapers and "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."

His statements are wrong on three counts. One: The parent company of the *Chicago Tribune* went public in 1983. The "ownership team" of the newspaper in the mid-1980s and -1990s is the same; there's been no change. Two: The Tribune Company has just invested $8 billion and its future in the acquisition of newspapers. It strains credulity to say that the company is not interested in the future of newspapers. Third: Mr. Halberstam really demonstrates his ignorance of his subject when he describes the *Tribune* of the 1990s as a paper "without genuine passion or purpose." Consider just a few examples of the staff's work: In "Killing Our Children," *Tribune* reporters drew national attention by investigating the circumstances surrounding the death of every child under the age of 14 (there were 62 of them) killed in the city during 1993; a team of *Tribune* reporters spent more than two years traveling the globe on "The Miracle Merchants," a 1998 project that exposed fund-raising abuses in some of the nation's most powerful children's charities; and *Brill's Content* recently reported on the *Tribune*'s stellar reporting on the inequity of the death penalty.

This list could go on, citing everything from our prizewinning assessment of the Human Genome Project to [a series on] misconduct by prosecutors. For its work in the 1990s, the staff won four Pulitzer Prizes and dozens of other awards, including the George Polk Award and the Overseas Press Club Award (four times).

Here in Chicago, we teach cub reporters an elementary lesson that Mr. Halberstam might heed the next time he sits down to write about a newspaper he obviously hasn't read: "If your mother says she loves you, check it out."

JAMES O'SHEA, DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR/NEWS, *CHICAGO TRIBUNE*, CHICAGO, IL

David Halberstam responds: Let me respond at length, because I think O'Shea has touched on the central question of this era both in American journalism and in American capitalism—who are your real customers, the people who buy your product or the people who buy your stock? I apologize to Mr. O'Shea and my readers for one slip—I spoke of a change in ownership at the *Trib* some ten years ago when I should have referred to a (dramatic) change in management. Other than that I think I'll stick with what I said about the *Trib* in the post-Brumback/post-Squires era—some very good reporters, occasionally excellent reporting, but a lack of passion on the part of the people in charge. That lack of passion is hardly by happenstance and reflects ever harsher economic norms prevalent in chains throughout the country, following the quite predatory model set by Gannett, a model the *Trib* has tended to follow with not inconsiderable financial success in the Madigan era.

Though O'Shea quotes at length from my article, he fails to deal with the most important sentence I wrote: of an ownership that has "carefully figured out the precise return on investment needed to keep stockholders happy and [has] adjusted the quality of the paper accordingly—that is, journalism adjusted to economic needs rather than economic needs adjusted to journalistic ones." That's the most elemental issue in journalism today; it's why we in this profession have suffered through a dreadful decade when the talent pool should be getting better but newspapers are in general becoming thinner. I suppose the difference between us is that he accepts the new baseline set by the economic publishing powers, and I don't. Although it's nice that Mr. O'Shea (brought in by the Squires regime, and a man oddly enough who reflects the values and virtues of the previous era) does not think it's a problem at the *Trib*, there are a great many people who know the paper quite well who disagree with him—they think the talent for a much better, much more energized paper is readily available. As for my knowledge of the paper, about which he is so dismissive, I spent a good deal of time in Chicago three years ago while working on a book on Michael Jordan, read the paper very carefully, got to know a number of its better reporters, as well as their competitors from the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Many of them feel even more strongly than I do about what I wrote. ◘

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BY ELLIS WEINER

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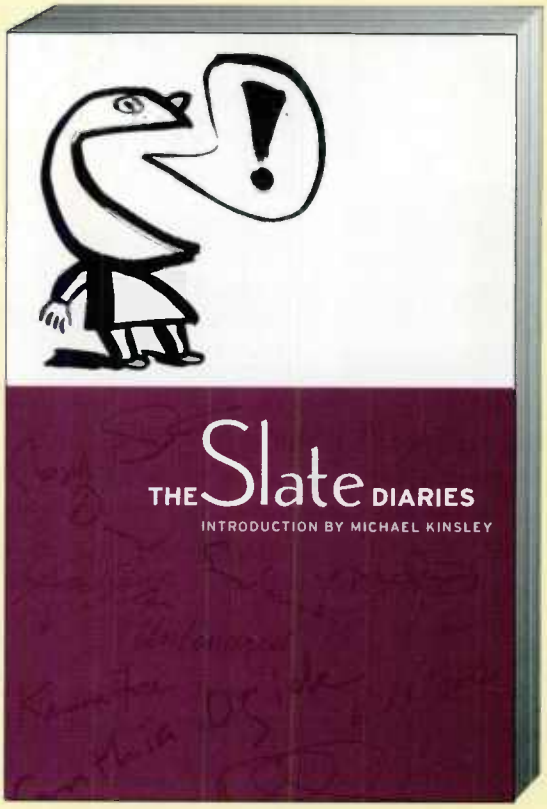

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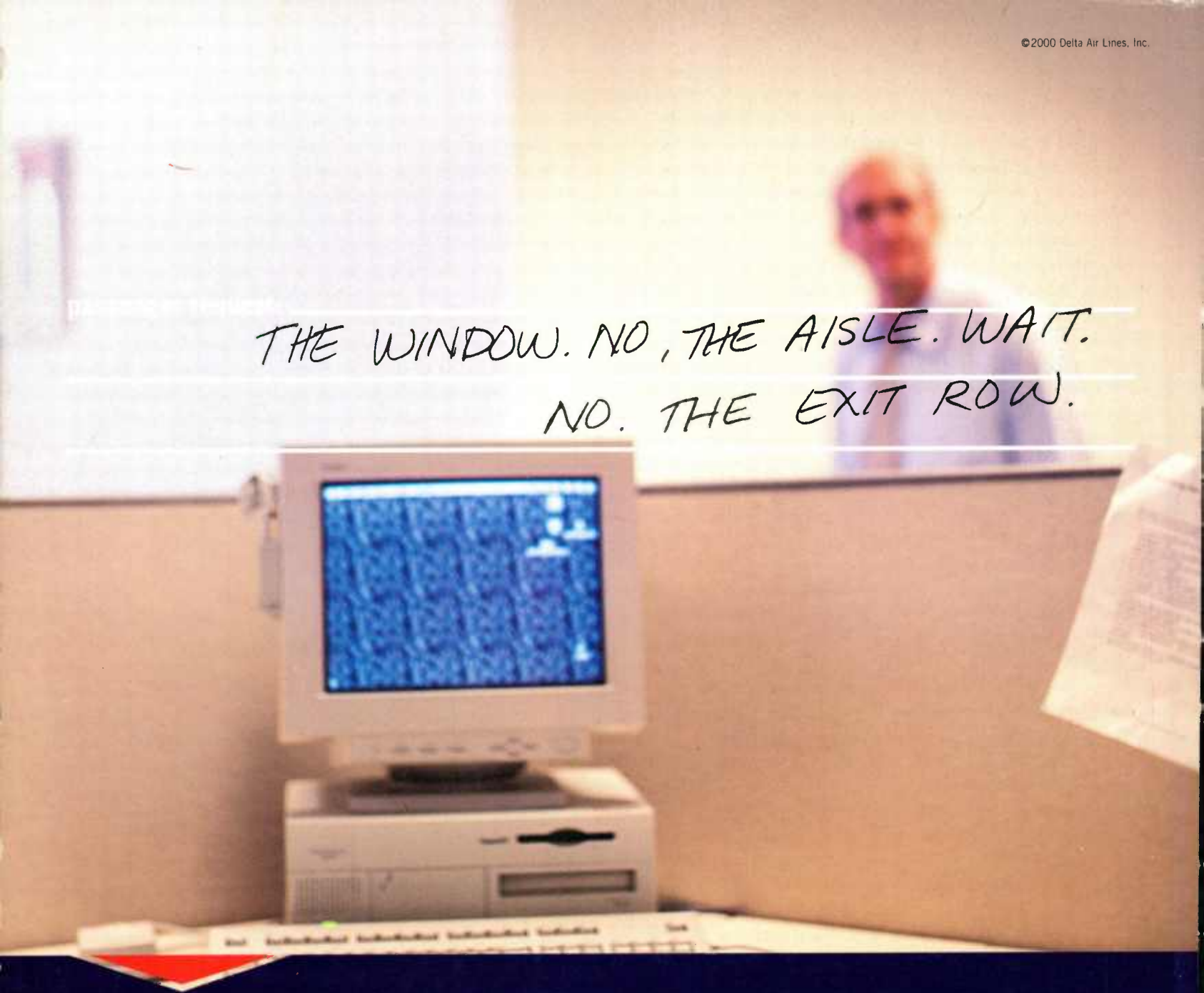

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