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SPECIAL REPORT
WEB 2001
SITES WE LIKE
SITES THEY LIKE
AND MORE...

THE FLACKING OF DENISE RICH

NADER AND GINGRICH FACE OFF ON THE MEDIA AND TAXES

McCALL'S: COMING UP ROSIE

CLEANING *60 MINUTES*'S CLOCK

MEET THE PORN CZARINA

THE CULT OF NPR

SKEPTICISM IS A VIRTUE

HUMAN PORTALS

How people with an obsession—and a website—are upstaging big media

MetaFilter.com founder Matt Haughey

MAY 2001
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my new PC doesn't raise the bar. it obliterates it.

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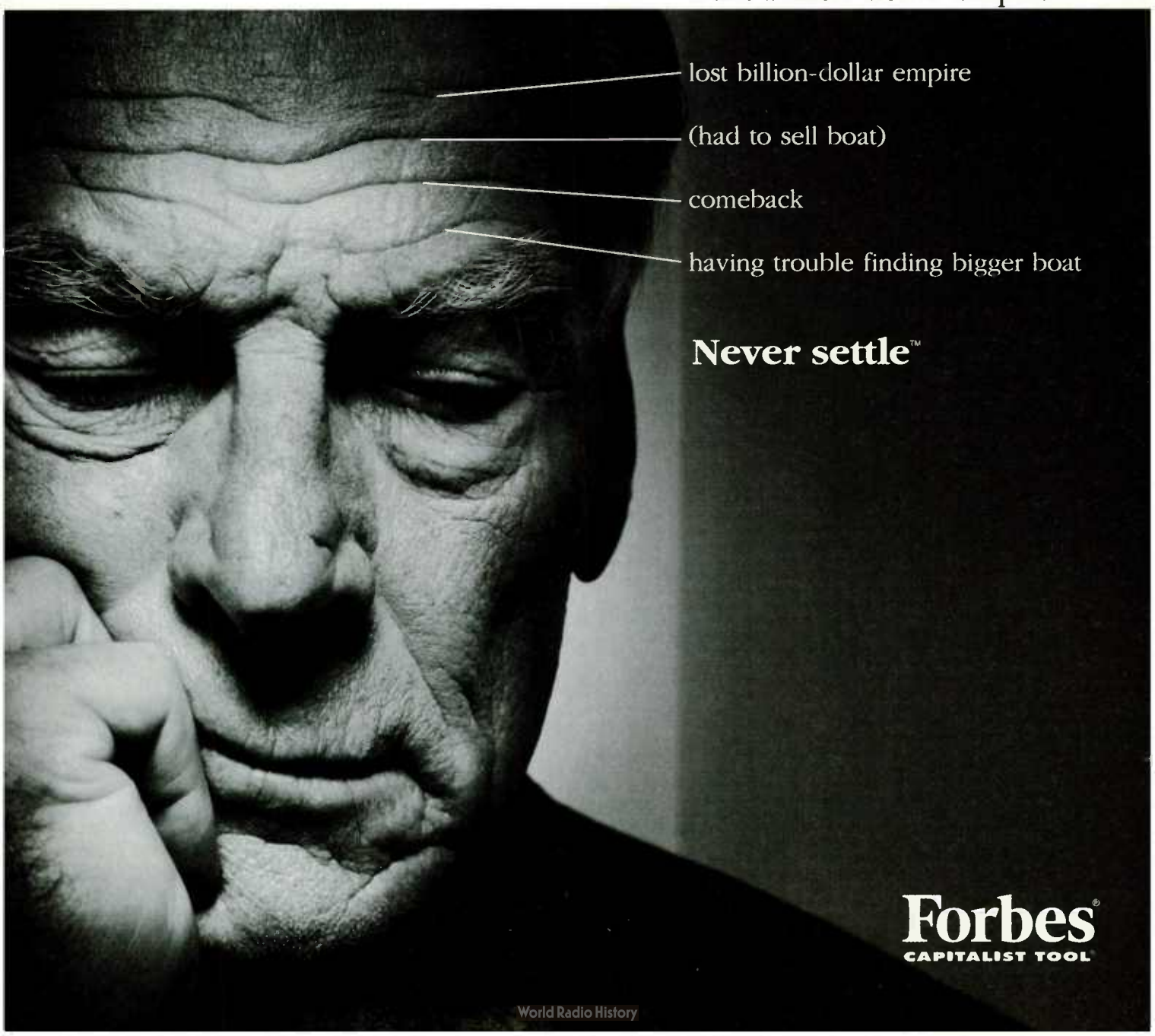

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HAROLD BLOOM ("Words on the Side," page 96), a professor at Yale and New York University, has written two dozen books, including the recent *How to Read and Why.*

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MODERN HUMORIST ("Kicker," page 136) is a daily online magazine (modernhumorist.com), where "Kicker" author Martha Keavney is an associate editor. *My First Presidentiary: A Scrapbook by George W. Bush* is Modern Humorist's first book.

RALPH NADER ("Face-Off," page 22), a contributing editor to *Brill's Content,* is the founder of numerous public-interest groups and was the Green Party's 2000 presidential candidate.

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SCOTT MENCHIN

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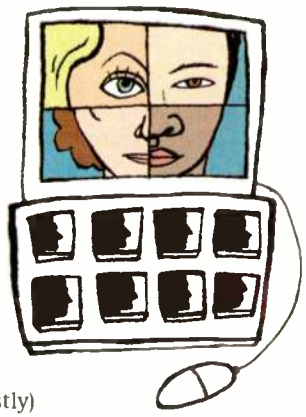
FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

PERSONALITY PLUS

Reflecting on the demise, last January, of Disney's giant Web portal Go.com, contributing editor Austin Bunn notes in this month's cover story (page 70) that "the problem with big-door portals" is that the Internet developers who created them "became so concerned with 'personalization' that [they] forgot that personality is what drew people to websites in the first place." This, in turn, has spurred the exponential growth of the "blog" (a contraction of "web log"), which is no more and no less than a page of links to content on other sites. Blogs are highly idiosyncratic and launched by people with passion, a point of view, and the free Blogger technology necessary to create them. Since the software was introduced, two years ago, some 100,000 people have registered for it, and many bloggers are finding an Internet audience that is vastly out of scale with their (mostly) solo operations. Although CBS's *Survivor* site got 254,000 visitors on its peak day in August 2000, Paul Sims's one-man SurvivorSucks.com got, on average, as many as 100,000 a day that month. Sims's site offered more original information for *Survivor* fanatics than the program's official site. Bunn has dubbed people like Sims "human portals" and suggests that their sites' popularity could teach big-media portals a lot about engaging their audience.



The reason people are drawn to blogs—the attraction to information often curated by one person—informs some of the other elements in our Web 2001 package. The 31 sites we highlight in our Best of the Web section (page 76) are, unlike those of previous years, not necessarily the best of the biggest in their categories (since you probably know those sites by now) but rather those that, however obscure, we think have distinctive personalities (everything from Bust.com to Pulitzer.org). We also asked some leading cultural figures—from Nora Ephron to Martina Hingis—to reveal their favorite sites ("Sites They Like," page 77). It takes one personality, we realized, to recognize another.

Indeed, it's a relief that in this age of corporate merging and converging, personality still counts for something. Senior correspondent Abigail Pogrebin's fascinating profile of public-relations guru Bobby Zarem (page 82) is a case study in how one personality—Zarem's is legendary—can influence the press to create another. Zarem put his P.R. smarts to work over the course of a decade to make Denise Rich, the ex-wife of the tainted fugitive Marc Rich, into a gossip-column fixture lauded for her parties, charitable giving, and songwriting talents. Rich may now be a household name due to the recent pardon of her ex-husband, but Zarem's handiwork had put her name in boldface well before the Clinton pardon scandal.

The potency of personality is also central to Austin Bunn's profile of multimedia queen Rosie O'Donnell (page 98), who this month is poised to extend her brand into magazines with the launch of *Rosie,* a reincarnation of the venerable women's magazine *McCall's.* In the wake of Oprah Winfrey's *O* and *Martha Stewart Living,* O'Donnell and her corporate partner, a subsidiary of the German megaconglomerate Bertelsmann AG, hope to cash in on the recent success of magazines based on the cult of their editors' star power.

On page 96, literary titan Harold Bloom, in his essay about marginalia, analyzes the act of imposing one's own personality on a book—by daring to write in its margins. And cultural critic Neal Gabler's review of the new memoir by *60 Minutes* founder Don Hewitt (page 109) deconstructs what is perhaps Hewitt's most lasting contribution to the blurring of news and entertainment: the idea that you can get better ratings by turning journalists into personalities.

DAVID KUHN

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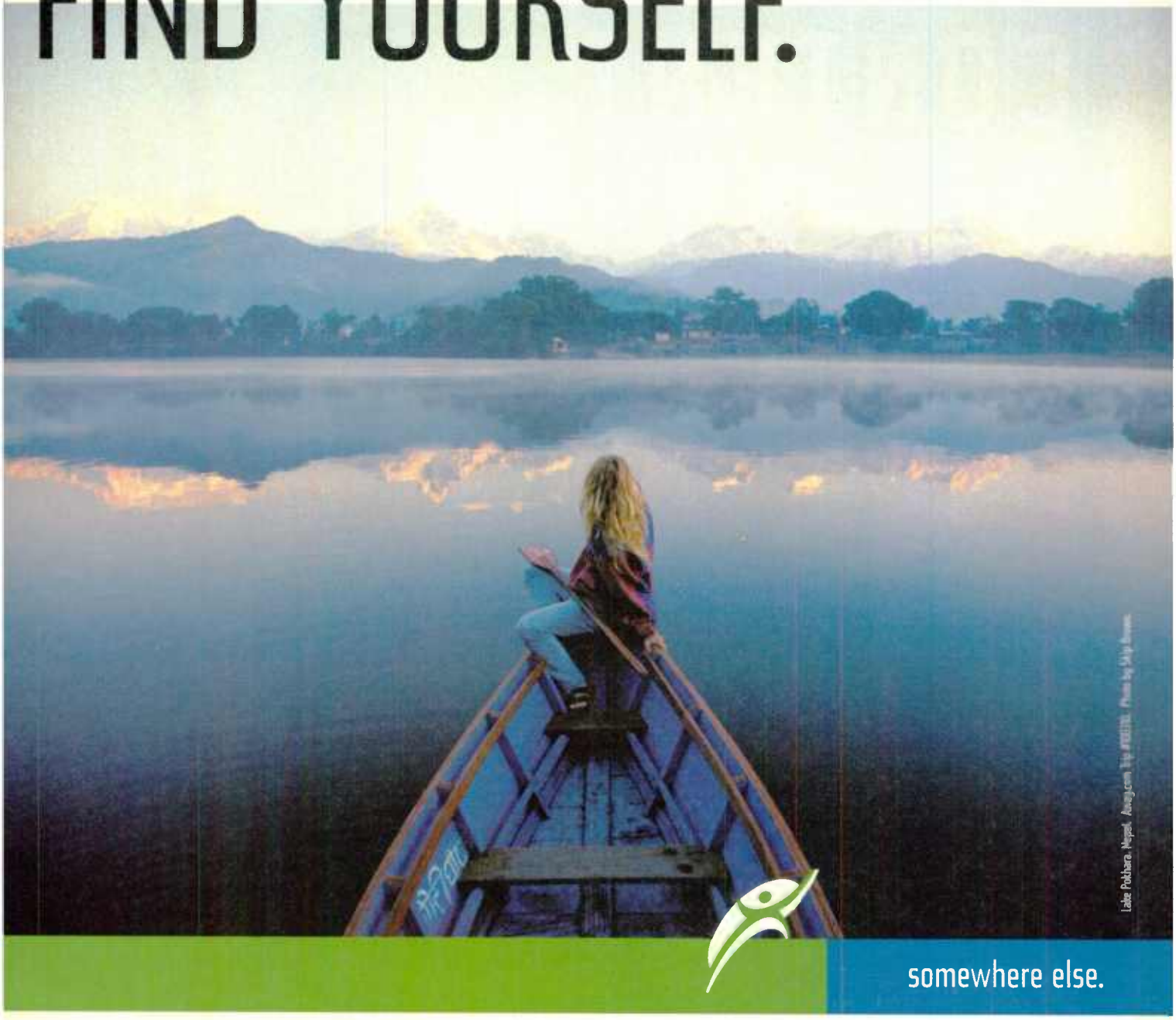

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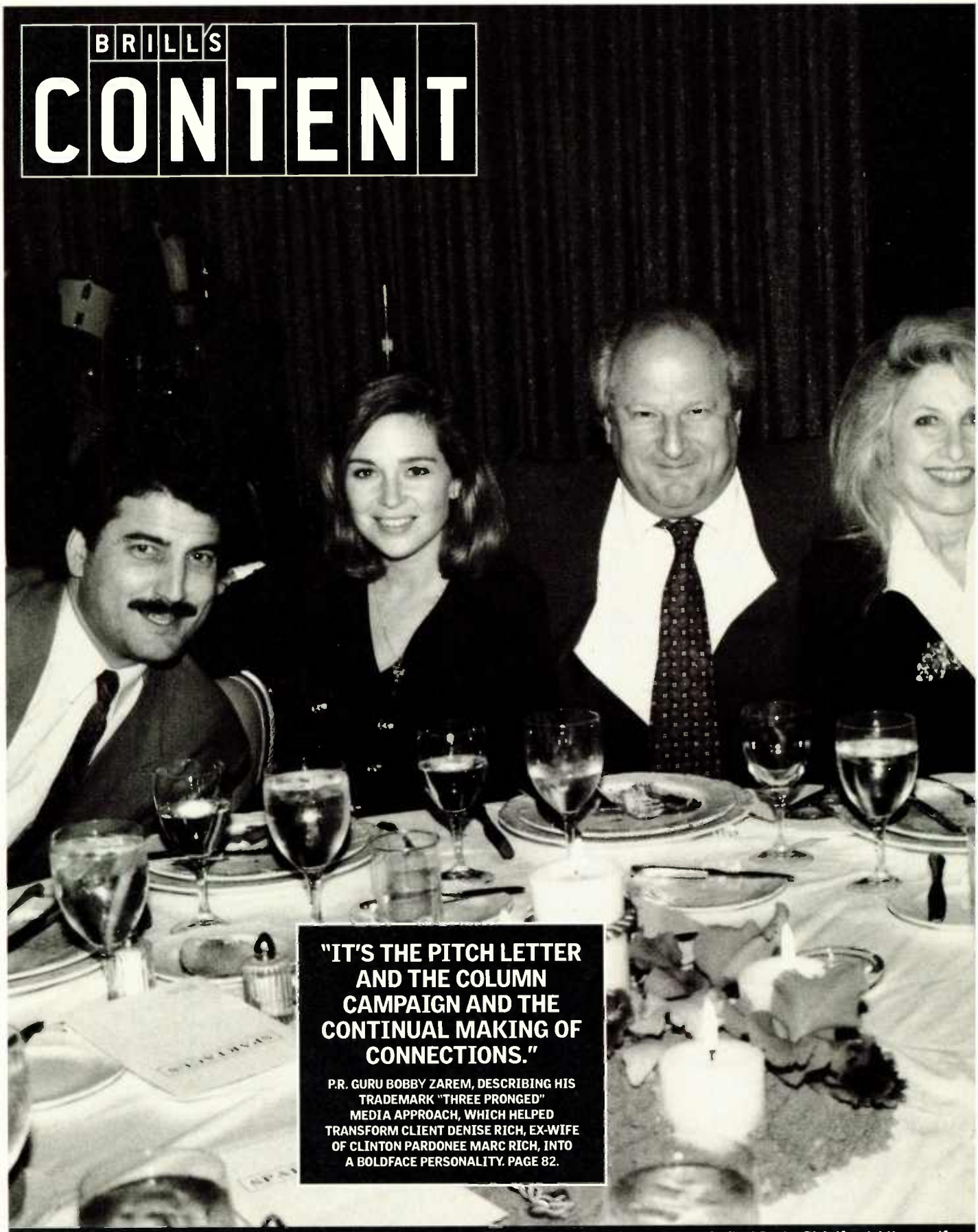

"IT'S THE PITCH LETTER AND THE COLUMN CAMPAIGN AND THE CONTINUAL MAKING OF CONNECTIONS."

P.R. GURU BOBBY ZAREM, DESCRIBING HIS TRADEMARK "THREE PRONGED" MEDIA APPROACH, WHICH HELPED TRANSFORM CLIENT DENISE RICH, EX-WIFE OF CLINTON PARDONEE MARC RICH, INTO A BOLDFACE PERSONALITY. PAGE 82.

Superflack Bobby Zarem (third from left), here holding court at New York's Pierre Hotel in the early nineties, with client Denise Rich (far right), ex-wife
Also pictured (from left): former New York Met Keith Hernandez, an unidentified woman, Andy Warhol muse Jane Holzer, and Houston Oilers safety (turned

MARY HILLIARD, COURTESY OF BOBBY ZAREM

of pardon-scandal financier Marc Rich. actor) Bo Eason. Story, page 82.

MAY 2001
VOLUME 4
NUMBER FOUR

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WEB 2001: A SPECIAL REPORT

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM TAVEE

"WHAT STACEY STILLMAN IS SAYING IS 'I AGREED TO BE A CONTESTANT ON YOUR SHOW AND ENTERED THIS CONTEST ON THE CONDITION THAT IT WAS FAIR.' BUT IT WAS FRAUDULENT."

STILLMAN'S ATTORNEY, DESCRIBING THE FORMER *SURVIVOR* CONTESTANT'S LAWSUIT AGAINST THE SHOW'S PRODUCER. NOTEBOOK, PAGE 27.

Stacey Stillman (left) alleges that *Survivor*'s producer asked contestant Sean Kenniff (right) to vote her off the show last summer. Page 27.

UP FRONT

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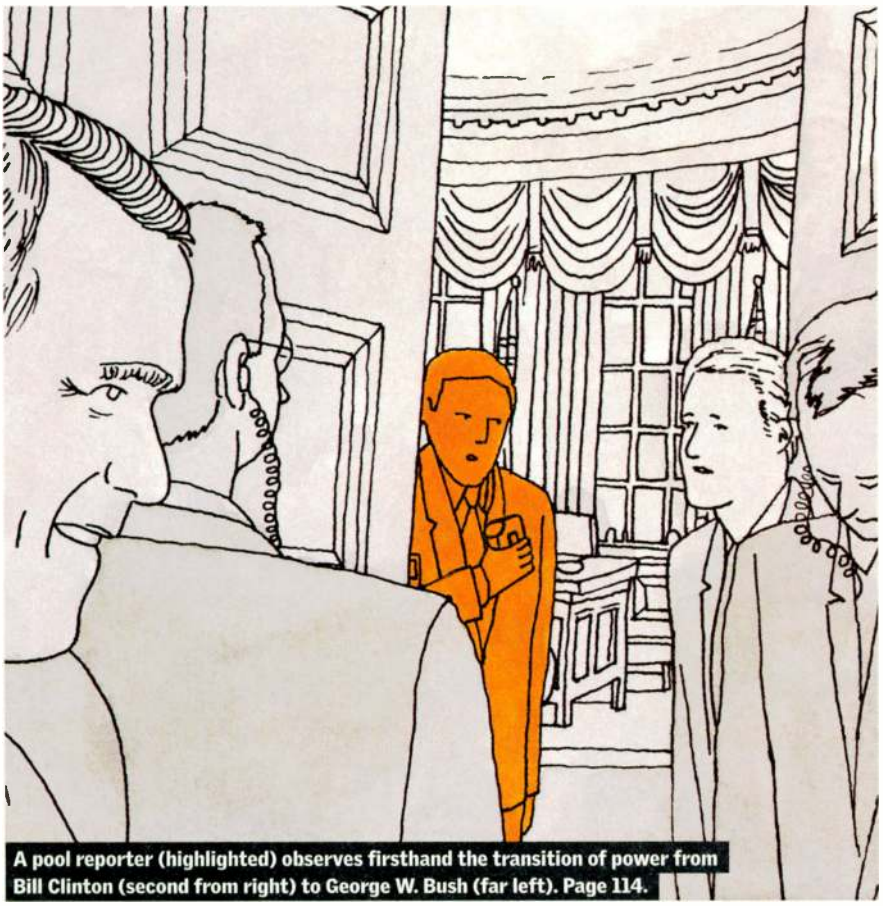
"THE BASIC POINT OF A POOL IS IN CASE THE PRESIDENT IS KILLED."

VETERAN WHITE HOUSE REPORTER MURIEL DOBBIN, A GRANDE DAME OF THE WASHINGTON PRESS POOL, EXPLAINING THE TEAM OF PRINT AND BROADCAST JOURNALISTS WHO COVER THE PRESIDENT 365 DAYS A YEAR. NEWSMAKERS, PAGE 114.



A pool reporter (highlighted) observes firsthand the transition of power from Bill Clinton (second from right) to George W. Bush (far left). Page 114.

DEPTS.

PETER ARKLE

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.

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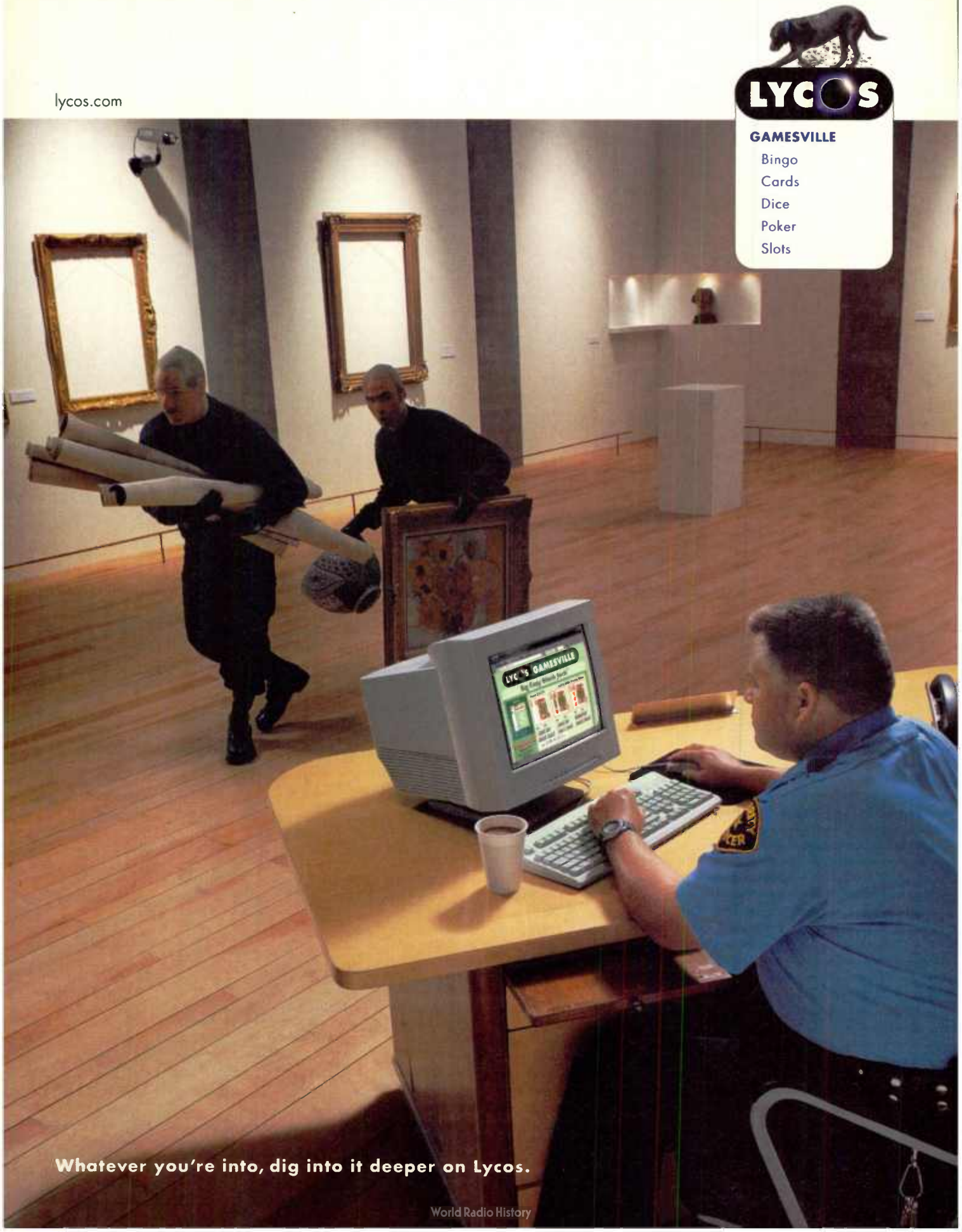

LETTERS

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

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

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

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6. Separately or in addition, readers are invited to contact our outside ombudsman, Michael Gartner, who will investigate and report on specific complaints about the work of the magazine. He may be reached by voice mail at 212-332-6381; by fax at 212-332-6350; by e-mail at mgartner@brillscontent.com; or by mail at 5315 Waterbury Road, Des Moines, IA 50312.

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A CONSUMER'S FRIENDLY BOYCOTT; DEFINING "EXCLUSIVE"; AND A BOOK-BUSINESS DEBATE

WHO'S WATCHING TV?

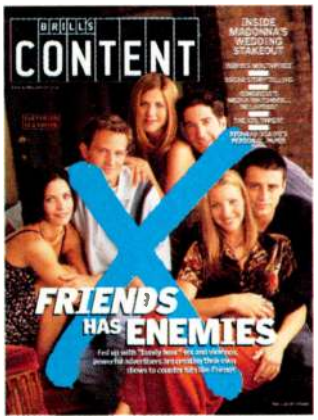
*So the Family Friendly Programming Forum is reintroducing censorship ["Nice TV," March]. How special. Not only does it plan to put financial pressure on the networks by threatening to take its bucks elsewhere, but it's also getting into the development of "family friendly" TV shows.

Who are *they* to tell *me* what is family friendly? I'm sure my idea of what is acceptable differs vastly from theirs. Once again, it all boils down to parents' providing supervision. If there's no supervision, it doesn't matter what time you air the show; the kiddies will be watching it. [Parents] should use their power as consumers to let networks and advertisers know what they want more of, [and] I'll exercise *my* choice. [Advertisers,] join the consortium if you will, but your name goes on the list of products I will actively boycott.

DONNA NEWMAN, MERCED, CA

GET OUT THE DICTIONARY

*In "Exclusivity Clauses" [Notebook, March], Mark Boal rehearsed as his own the complaint of Babelfish Productions, a documentary-film company. Babelfish had asserted that *Vanity Fair* inaccurately claimed an "exclusive" on the nine photos of war atrocities in Sierra Leone we published along with an article by Sebastian



Junger in our October 2000 issue. (Babelfish obtained the same photos *Vanity Fair* did in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and included, in flashes, three of them in its movie *Last Chance for Peace*.)

Mr. Boal neglected to point out that the film has never been distributed theatrically or received any showing on television in the United States. Since *Vanity Fair* is an American magazine with a predominantly American audience, we believe we were not inaccurate in our claim to our readers that we were presenting these photos to them for the first time.

In an initial conversation, I gave Mr. Boal the phone numbers of our sources at the State Department and Human Rights Watch who had helped us prepare the article. Mr. Boal called back to say he was writing "a short humor piece on the nature of exclusives" that would "in no way be a gotcha." I gave him my home phone number in case *Vanity Fair* had to respond on the record. He assured me there would be no need. Two months later, his article was posted on your website and then in your magazine; it is in every way a "gotcha," without *Vanity Fair*'s response.

Worse still, Mr. Boal quotes an anonymous State Department source to imply that the photos we published are not important. When I spoke to this source, he assured me that he had confirmed to Mr. Boal the importance of the photos and said he was concerned by how his words had been misused. I feel that when a journalist sets himself up as a watchdog, his methods must be impeccable. I submit that this was far from the case here.

DOUGLAS STUMPF
SENIOR ARTICLES EDITOR,
VANITY FAIR, NEW YORK, NY

Mark Boal responds: At the core of this matter lies a question of terminology—namely, what is

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LETTERS

meant by an exclusive. The formulation I use includes only pieces that a) contain unique information and b) are newsworthy or revelatory. It's pretty clear that Sebastian Junger's piece does not fully fit either part of that definition.

Mr. Stumpf and I agree that some of the pictures labeled as "new" in the October issue of *Vanity Fair* had in fact appeared in *Last Chance for Peace*, produced more than a year earlier and shown at the World Conference on Religion and Peace, which was attended by 600 world religious leaders and members of the press. The film was then distributed to the Vatican and sent to churches and archdioceses around the world. These international airings alone deflate entirely *Vanity Fair*'s claim that "barely a handful of people knew" the photos existed.

And it's not true that I took Babelfish's story at face value. In addition to conducting 12 hours' worth of interviews with the principals quoted in the story, I interviewed on background two high-ranking U.N. officials, two human-rights activists, and three experienced foreign correspondents. It was based on those conversations that I wrote that the magazine could lay claim only to a narrow sliver of a U.S. scoop (and then only if you exclude Babelfish's website, where part of the film was, and still is, posted) and that it failed to deliver a true exclusive.

As for Mr. Stumpf's source at the State Department, he revealed no dismay when I read his quote back to him before the story went to press.

Mr. Stumpf is correct when he says that I told him that I planned to write a lighthearted piece. If I did lose my sense of humor, it probably happened somewhere in the runaround Mr. Stumpf and Sebastian Junger's various representatives gave me when I sought comment from them the first, second, and third times. I find opaque Mr. Stumpf's remark that he had no opportunity to comment. He had three of them.

A PUBLISHER'S POWER

*It's about time somebody illuminated [Pittsburgh *Tribune-Review* publisher] Richard Scaife's shortcomings in ethical behavior ["All the Views Fit to Print," March]. My father, Tom Wertz, was an award-winning reporter for the Greensburg, Pennsylvania, *Tribune-Review* in the early seventies when Scaife took over. When another young journalist made a few untoward remarks about Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew during the Watergate fiasco, he was soon terminated. In response, a group of *Tribune* employees, including my father, demanded justice for the young man and offered their resignations if he wasn't offered his job back. Unfortunately, Scaife got his way, and my father, too, was unemployed.

THERESA WERTZ, PITTSBURGH, PA

PRESS FINANCE REFORM

*In his article "Viva Las Vegas" [At Work, March], John R. Quain missed an opportunity to comment on the ethics of reporters accepting gifts from public-relations people. Readers who rely on trade-press and popular-press periodicals for unbiased information about high-tech products need assurances that writers and editors don't swap coverage for a good time. It's difficult to tell whether a company got a good review because the product is good or because an editor took a helicopter ride for lunch at the Grand Canyon.

JONATHAN TITUS, MILFORD, MA

Pittsburgh *Trib*'s Richard Scaife

KEITH SRAKOCIC/AP PHOTO

BOOKS FOR SALE

*I'm surprised that *Brill's Content*, a magazine devoted to criticizing unfair coverage in the media, should have run a review by James Atlas that is so filled with distortion [The Culture Business, February]. Anyone who wishes to read my book [*The Business of Books*] can see how consistently inaccurate he has been. I would like, though, to limit my comments here to the distorted way in which Atlas has presented the catalog of [my imprint] The New Press.

What Atlas has sought to do is to mislead readers by using the titles of books such as *The People's History of the United States* or *Growing Up Poor* to suggest that they are of an esoteric and specialized nature. Whatever personal animus Atlas may wish to vent, he owes it to his readers to be a little more accurate. Had he mentioned that these books were written respectively by the distinguished historians Howard Zinn and Robert Coles (of Harvard University), your readers would have realized that the books are in fact addressed to a very broad audience. Atlas goes out of his way to avoid mentioning any of the 400 books that we've published since the press was launched, some nine years ago. He does not mention that John Dower, whose *Embracing Defeat* we published last year, was awarded the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Neither does he mention distinguished historians whom we've published or our award-winning fiction writers, ranging from Marguerite Duras to Ingmar Bergman. By excluding the names of our authors—all of whom, I assume, he would be proud to have in his own catalog—Atlas has sought to give a totally false impression of our publishing.

ANDRÉ SCHIFFRIN, DIRECTOR, THE NEW PRESS, NEW YORK, NY

CORRECTIONS

In March's "First-Lady Tales" [Books], we stated that "America learned" of Nancy Reagan's use of astrology from her memoir, *My Turn*. In fact, Americans learned of this from former treasury secretary and White House chief of staff Donald Regan's memoir, *For the Record*.

In March's "*Maxim*-um Spin Control" [Notebook], we misspelled Burberry.

James Atlas responds: As an avid reader of letters to the editor, I can never once recall having seen an invitation to reply that elicited anything other than a bellicose refutation by the author whose facts had been challenged. So let me break precedent and admit that André Schiffrin has a valid point, however limited. It doesn't lend credibility to his case when he fails to mention that John Dower's prizewinning book was published in partnership with W.W. Norton. I am willing to concede, however, that The New Press has published some good and important books.

I am not willing to concede my larger point: that the titles The New Press publishes, however laudable, would most likely not have found a home at The New Press had they not been in sympathy with a specific political agenda. "Nothing wrong with that," I write—it's an agenda with which I myself happen to sympathize. But The New Press, as a largely foundation-subsidized imprint, has opted not to struggle with the hard issues of publishing in the real, profit-driven world. Why should it be shielded from these realities? Why not fight it out in the marketplace? No one's talking big profits here, but if Schiffrin's list is so good, why can't it at least break even? ■

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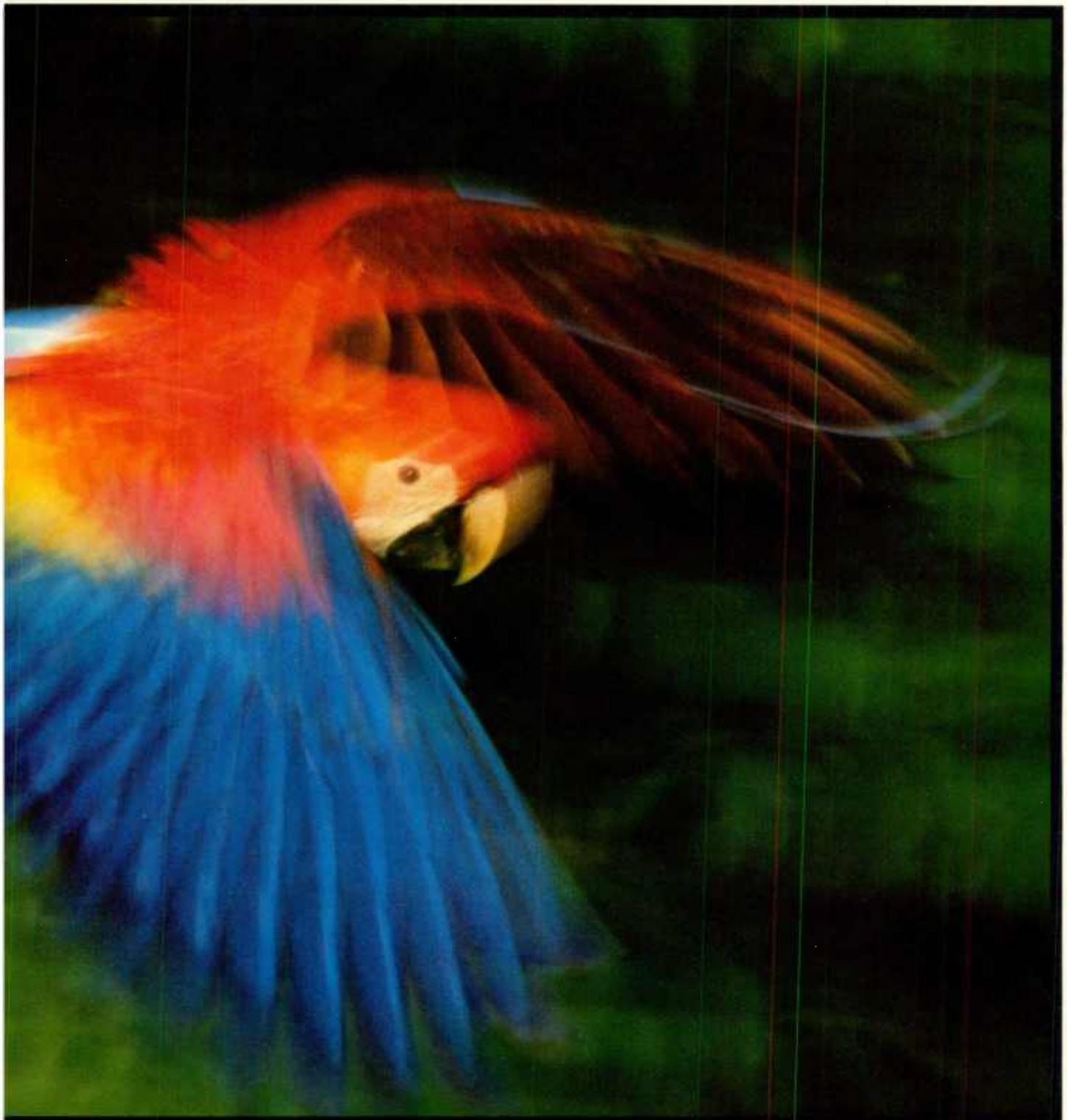
FLYING HIGH

Renowned nature photographer Frans Lanting spent months hidden in treetops to capture this fleeting image of a rare bird

Frans Lanting has made a 20-year career of getting close to the animals he photographs—not by using telephoto lenses but by blending in with the wildlife. To produce his intimate brand of nature photography, he has crawled to within striking distance of lions and beached himself among 7,000-pound elephant seals. For his pictures of the scarlet macaw, a rare jungle bird, Lanting established a vantage point high in the treetops of the Peruvian rain forest.

The scarlet macaw inhabits the Amazon River basin in southeastern Peru, where it is poached for sale on the black market. In the early nineties, Lanting accompanied a team of scientists studying the bird to the remote jungle area of Tambopata. Traveling by truck and cargo canoe, they brought two tons of equipment—including the 100-foot tower (above left) from which Lanting would take his pictures.

Lanting began by studying the macaw's



flight patterns and assembling his rickety tower. Then he hid alone, amid the branches at the top of the tower, day after day, beginning before dawn so as not to frighten the birds. Surrounded by stinging wasps and dripping with sweat, he would wait for hours. "The birds are very smart," he says. "Very wary. It's a combination of trying to outwit them and gaining their trust." But during Lanting's first three weeks in the tower, he was unable to get the ideal shot. "I was beginning to fear for my reputation," he says. Lanting was aiming for an impressionistic effect, he says, which he finally achieved by panning his camera past a streaking macaw, using a flash and a slow shutter speed. His macaw photos were originally published in *National Geographic* magazine, and this one appears in a new book of his work, called *Jungles* (Taschen).

A few years after Lanting's trip to Peru, the Tambopata region was declared a national park. The preservation effort thrills Lanting, whose pictures may well have helped the cause. The vivid beauty of the macaw makes it an ideal ambassador for the rest of the jungle, he says: "It has become an icon that will continue to attract attention for decades to come."

STEPHEN TOTILO

Photographs by Frans Lanting

REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

This month the ombudsman explores the phenomenon of journalists who decline to comment; plus, more on sources—some anonymous, some not quite anonymous enough. BY MICHAEL GARTNER

Candy Crowley of CNN "did not return calls seeking comment."

Brit Hume of Fox News "did not return calls seeking comment."

Author Sebastian Junger "was unavailable for comment for this story."

Sean McManus, head of CBS Sports, and Russell Pillar, head of Viacom Interactive, "did not return calls for comment."

Richard Scaife "denied *Brill's Content*'s interview requests and didn't respond to faxed questions."

All of those quotes are from the March issue of *Brill's Content*, but they aren't surprising. Go to the Google.com search engine, enter the name of almost any prominent journalist or media executive along with the words "declined comment," and you're likely to find many listings.

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A sampling: Last year during journalism's momentous "Is Leonardo DiCaprio a journalist?" crisis—was the actor qualified to interview President Clinton for an ABC News show?—New York's *Daily News* reported that ABC's Ted Koppel "declined to comment." Sam Donaldson's assistant told the newspaper, "At this time, Sam has no comment."

In 1999, when an ethical issue arose at San Jose's *Mercury News* about a reporter's investments, the paper's executive editor at the time, Jerry Ceppos, "declined to comment," according to the online journalism review of the University of Southern California's Annenberg School.

In 1998, when Dan Rather took a glancing shot at Connie Chung during an interview with the *American Journalism Review*, the magazine added: "Through a spokesman, Chung...declined comment."

And last year, when *New York* magazine's gossip column wrote about "discontent" at *Brill's Content*, it reported that Steven Brill "did not return calls."

Overall, what does this mean? Often it's as simple as this: Journalists can dish it out, but they can't take it. Many journalists—the print ones and the microphone ones—are thin-skinned. They pry, they meddle, they snoop, but they don't want to deal with other priers, meddlers, or snoopers. Their attitude doesn't do much to enhance the image of the arrogant press.

Specifically, though, what does "declined to comment" mean? It can mean lots of things. It can mean "You've caught me in an embarrassing situation, and nothing I say will make it better, so go away." Or "I know you're doing a negative story, and you'll twist around anything I say or take it out of context, so to hell with you." Or "It's not going to do me any good to comment, so no comment." Or "I don't talk to your ilk." Or "I don't like your publication [or boss or owner or editorial position], so get out of here." Or "I could get in trouble with [my boss, my readers, my viewers, my lawyer] if I said anything, so I'm not saying anything."

The reader has to decide. When you're reading a story and you come across a "no comment," it's worth pausing and trying to figure out the reason. Look at everything in context. Does the story seem fair or unfair? Is it balanced or hyped? Are the quotes fully sourced, or are they cheap shots? If the story is fair and balanced and sourced, you can bet a "no comment" means "You've got me—anything I say will simply confirm I'm a jerk or a crook or something in between. Nothing I say is going to help my case." If the story is unfair and hyped and anonymous, you can bet a "no comment" means "You've already made up your mind about me, and nothing I say will change that, so I'm not going to waste my time talking to you."

A "couldn't be reached for comment" can mean a couple of other things. It can mean that the person truly couldn't be reached—adding to their arrogance, famous newspeople rarely have listed telephone numbers—or it can mean that the reporter waited until the last minute to check because he didn't want to take the chance of ruining a good story by getting the other side.

It's tough being a reader these days. I've long thought that future journalists shouldn't take journalism courses in college, that they would better spend their days studying history or economics or Spanish and earning a liberal-arts degree from someplace like Dartmouth or Mills or the highly regarded Carleton College. Now I'm beginning to think that future readers should take journalism courses—to learn the codes of the brotherhood and the tricks of the trade.

ANONYMOUS QUOTES

Brill's Content continues to sprinkle its articles with anonymous quotes, ignoring the complaints of its ombudsman, but the use of anonymous quotes in one March story seemed particularly odd. Usually the anonymous speaker is identified in some general way that puts him in a group so big he can retain his anonymity. Kimberly Conniff's fascinating article on Mr. Scaife, for instance, cites "one staffer," "one former employee," "one reporter," "one former reporter," and the like. Unless you happen to know the speech patterns of Mr. Scaife's detractors, it would be impossible to identify who was saying what.

But the uncomplimentary anonymous quotes in the story on Ari Fleischer—also a fascinating [CONTINUED ON PAGE 124]

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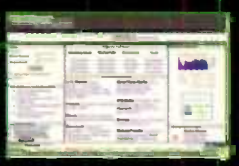

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pardons pressed

The aggressive, investigative (in the true sense) coverage of Bill Clinton's last-minute pardons has been just what the story—and the country—deserved. BY STEVEN BRILL

During the early weeks of the Clinton-pardon controversies, I was one of the prospective guests of choice for the scream-TV cable shows. The producers apparently thought I'd come on to say that the press was overreacting to the former president's pardon of Marc Rich and assorted other undeserving felons—a position it was assumed I would take based, I guess, on the general positioning of this magazine and on the fact that almost three years ago I'd done a piece attacking the press for lapping up Ken Starr's leaks in the Lewinsky investigation. Yet when I was pre-screened for such appearances to make sure I'd provide the necessary contrarian fireworks, I always blew it—because I'd say that, leaving aside nits I might pick with some particular piece of coverage, this is one instance in which the press has acted exactly as it should. Indeed, I'd seal my fate as a reject by adding that as far as I was concerned the press could not cover this story too much.

There are two reasons:

First, in instances where one person in the government has absolute power, the press is the only protection the people have. A presidential pardon is exactly that situation. Only the press can present any check on the president. Ideally, this should happen before the decision, as it apparently did in the case of President Clinton's rejection of a pardon for Michael Milken. The advance coverage of the Milken case, particularly a piece by James Stewart in *The New Yorker* detailing how Milken might have violated various aspects of his probation and his Securities and Exchange Commission consent decree, probably dissuaded the president from pardoning Milken; he knew it would be heavily criticized, and assuming he read or heard about the article, he knew the criticism would have merit. True, it would have been better if more reporters had snooped around before the night of the final pardons to see who else was being considered and what the process was. (I bet a story or two about how former White House counsel Jack Quinn was lobbying for Rich in clear violation of the spirit if not the letter of revolving-door lobbying prohibitions would have sent Quinn scurrying away.) But the after-the-fact coverage was also healthy, even vital. No president will now ever make a pardon decision again without thinking about how a wrong move, while irrevocable legally, might derail his post-presidential future by cutting into his book advance, his speaking fees, and his place in history. The Marc Rich pardon, and the pardons and commutations of many others, including members of a Hasidic sect whose votes aided in Hillary Clinton's election and the felons who retained her brother, were the outrageous acts of a man who thought he was accountable to no one. It's great that the press piled on and in the process perhaps cut into Bill Clinton's earnings; it's a classic instance where the power of the press not to affect votes (except for future votes for Hillary) but simply to embarrass someone and diminish his reputation clearly had a potent benefit.

WHEN ONE PERSON HAS ABSOLUTE POWER, THE PRESS IS THE ONLY PROTECTION THE PEOPLE HAVE.

Second, this is a case where the press really did the kind of work it's supposed to do. In recent years, many in the press and much of its audience have come to think of "investigative reporting" as the reporting of leaks from government investigators. In fact, that's the opposite of what an independent press is supposed to do. An independent press lives up to its purpose *not* when it spreads leaks from government prosecutors (thereby undermining the rights of those being investigated) but rather when it finds wrongdoing on its own that the government doesn't know about or is covering up. That's exactly what happened with the pardons. Dozens of press organizations—from *The National Enquirer* to *The New York Times*—fanned out, made calls, rang doorbells, checked records, and raised all kinds of questions about several of the pardons, thereby giving the government (in this case congressional committees and the U.S. attorney in Manhattan) a road map for their own investigations.

The process was, of course, made easier and more obvious by the nature of the event: Unlike many government activities, the Clinton pardons produced a list, in this case of felons with court files, to be checked out. There was a clear point of departure, a clear path for reporters to go down.

Which brings us to a larger lesson we and the press can learn from its good work here. There is another list, actually two lists that crop up almost every day when it comes to politicians making decisions for us. It's the list of votes they take on issues and the list of contributors to their campaigns. Politicians often take positions consistent with those of their donors for perfectly

DEAN ROHRER

legitimate reasons; on the other hand, the Marc Rich pardon and some of the others were unambiguously outrageous and unambiguously done for reasons having nothing to do with the public interest. So I don't want to stretch this analogy too far. But the method used by the press—checking the list of those pardoned with benefits that might have accrued to the man giving the pardons—is exactly what the press should do every time a president or member of Congress takes a position on a vital piece of legislation. Lately, I've noticed a few such stories; for example, Frank Rich of *The New York Times* recently did a column that discussed how big-business donors to President Bush are benefiting from a variety of decisions he has made early on in matters that are important but might otherwise get decided below the public radar. But the lesson of the press's success in awakening the public to the pardon scandal is that there should be lots more of this kind of journalism. No story should include mention of a congressman's vote on a bill affecting the fees banks can charge without matching it with his or her list of bank company contributors; no story about a position taken on school vouchers should mention a senator's vote without matching it to a list of his or her teachers-union donors. These conflicts of interest—these mini-scandals amid the macro-scandal of our election-finance system—should be pursued the way the pardons were. For in these cases the press's power goes beyond the power to embarrass and cut into some speaking fees. It could become the power to change the system. ■

As Congress again considers repealing the estate tax, our new columnists offer starkly different takes on how the press has missed the story.

'death tax' diversion

RALPH NADER ARGUES

That there is even a public debate about the repeal of the estate tax is a testament to the influence of corporatist conservatives. That they actually succeeded last year in having Congress pass legislation repealing the estate tax reveals their organizational savvy. But it also speaks to something else: the failure of the media to cover the issue adequately.

In the past two decades, we have seen a startling concentration of wealth in this country (and around the world). To take just one example, the wealth of the 400 richest U.S. families grew by an average of $940 million each year between 1997 and 1999, an increase of $1,287,671 per day.

The goal of the estate tax, as Congress said back in 1916 when it enacted the levy, is to "break up the swollen fortunes of the rich." The tax counterbalances, modestly, the ability of the rich and superrich to create dynasties in which family members, by virtue of birth and birth alone, have insuperable economic advantages over the rest of society. It helps us to live in a land of at least some opportunity.

Although taxes rarely win popularity contests in the United States, the inheritance tax should be one of the few that do. It affects only a tiny portion of the population. Any estate worth less than $675,000 (soon to rise to $1 million) is exempt—and effectively double that amount for the estates of married couples. In fact, of all Americans who died in 1997 (the most recent year for which IRS figures are available), only 2 percent left behind a taxable estate.

The conservative effort to repeal the tax, of course, ignored this fact. It led its battle with a label: The estate tax was renamed the "death tax." Sounds bad. Then the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, Americans for Tax Reform, and other corporate-backed organizations made up a story about why regular people should support its repeal. They spun fanciful tales of the immense burdens imposed by the estate tax on family-owned businesses and farmers. (As Citizens for Tax Justice points out, fewer than 1 in 20 farmers leave a taxable estate.)

The media have done a mixed job of keeping the false rhetoric at bay. Print reporters generally use the formal, correct name, the estate tax. But headline writers at major newspapers frequently use the term "death tax." They typically put it in quotes ("House Approves Proposal to Phase Out 'Death Tax,'" *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 2000) and often incorporate it into a pun, as in *The Washington Post*'s February 18 article "Some Want to Keep the 'Death Tax' Alive." Still, the effect has been to legitimize the opponents' characterization of the estate tax. After all, to call it a death tax implies—falsely—that everyone will eventually have to pay it. Television reporters have also lapsed into using the misleading phrase. I remember watching TV recently and seeing Maureen Bunyan, a quality news anchor at the local ABC affiliate in Washington, D.C., employ the misnomer.

The major newspapers deserve some credit for including important background information on [CONTINUED ON PAGE 24]

estate of confusion

NEWT GINGRICH ARGUES

In the fight to repeal the death tax, the most interesting story is the effort by a handful of extraordinarily wealthy people to come across as populists—and the extraordinary coverage they have received as a result of their misleading campaign. In February, when a group of more than 200 ultrawealthy liberals, including George Soros and David Rockefeller Jr., was set to run an advertisement in major newspapers across the country arguing that the death tax shouldn't be repealed, the ad became huge news before it even ran. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today* all published stories about the ad, which stated that "repealing the estate tax would enrich the heirs of America's millionaires and billionaires while hurting families who struggle to make ends meet." The piece in the *Times* liberally quoted legendary investor Warren Buffett, who did not sign the petition because he felt it didn't go far enough. "'Without the estate tax,'" he told the paper, "'you in effect will have an aristocracy of wealth.'"

These high-profile liberal millionaires could afford to deliver their opinions about the tax right to journalists' desks. But reporters, in failing to go out to the heartland and see the tax's effects on small businesses, missed the real story.

Liberals love the death tax because it fits their model of government confiscation of wealth. They argue—and the media repeat—that the death tax is fair because it takes from those who have too much and gives to those who have too little. The reality is that it takes money from those who have worked and saved all of their lives and gives it to those who haven't, in the form of government-funded programs. In other words, the death tax is just another way for politicians to take your money so they can fund their projects and their bureaucracies.

A survey of likely voters nationwide conducted by the Zogby polling group in December 2000 reflects how unpopular the tax is. Seventy-one percent called the estate tax unfair to heirs and said it should be eliminated. In a 1982 referendum, California voters rescinded the state death tax by a margin of two to one despite the opposition of virtually every newspaper in the state. The death tax is so unpopular that 65 Democrats in the House voted to repeal it last June. (President Clinton vetoed the bill nearly three months later.)

Opponents of a repeal languished and didn't get much attention, until a small band of ultrarich gave the media a fresh angle. Seemingly, here were people eager to be taxed. Here were patriots committed to not giving their money to their children. The media gave them their full attention. Nearly all of the country's 50 largest papers—from *The Buffalo News* to *The San Diego Union-Tribune*—reported on these seemingly quixotic death-tax supporters.

But there is a big snag to all this hype that went unreported: Using their lawyers and accountants, the superrich employ mechanisms such as foundations to avoid paying much of the tax anyway. By creating complicated financial structures, they have been able to retain control over their empires throughout several generations (take the Rockefellers, for example). [CONTINUED ON PAGE 24]

WESLEY BEDROSIAN

RALPH NADER

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22] the tax, including how a tiny number of estates pay the bulk of it. But many papers have also done a less-than-thorough job of exposing the myth that the estate tax burdens small-farm and small-business families. Take the *Los Angeles Times*'s well-reported article about eroding support for repeal of the tax ("Drive to Kill Estate Taxes Loses Steam," February 15, 2001). Though the story noted that critics of the tax contend it hurts family farmers, the paper didn't devote any space to debunking that fallacy. Nor do papers regularly mention that the rich often avoid the estate tax. (One notable exception was *The New York Times*'s "The High Price of Estate-Tax Cheating," December 17, 2000.)

THERE WAS ALMOST NO REPORTING ABOUT THE PROPOSED REPEAL UNTIL THE HOUSE PASSED IT LAST JUNE.

Other stories were missed, too. For example, nonprofits may have been deterred from opposing the repeal because many wealthy people sit on their boards. And if anyone in the media has addressed how the Bush-Cheney appointees will personally gain from estate-tax repeal, I've missed it.

But the biggest failure in media coverage of the estate-tax debate isn't what's in the stories, it's *when* they were published. There was almost no reporting on the proposed repeal in the major media until the House passed it last June. (One month later the Senate also passed the repeal. Clinton, though, vetoed it in August.) In the six months before the vote, the nation's top 50 papers filed fewer than a dozen stories about the estate tax. In the few months after the House passed the repeal, the number of stories mushroomed to hundreds.

For months, while Congress considered the tax repeal, instead of reading objective reporting on the issue, we were limited to hearing about it from its opponents, as they spread misinformation through Rush Limbaugh's radio show and on various other networks.

Recent reports on the tax have been fueled by public opposition to the proposed repeal from Bill Gates Sr., Warren Buffett, George Soros, and other members of the superwealthy, as well as by the late, but increasingly vocal, opposition from nonprofits that recognize how the repeal will undermine bequests and from the insurance industry, which stands to lose sales of policies used to skirt the tax.

The growing opposition to estate-tax repeal and the steady stream of news reports that explore the multiple harmful consequences of repeal have finally produced some momentum against it—though the final outcome has yet to be determined.

This shift is good news for our democracy. But it is also a sign of the weakness of one of our democracy's underpinnings—a vibrant and effective Fourth Estate. We need the media to take up the substance of fundamental issues, well before a vote occurs. ■

NEWT GINGRICH

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23] Yet when I looked at the coverage of the ad, I didn't see any papers mention that many of the wealthy pro-tax folks largely avoid paying the tax—not *The New York Times*, which ran its story on the front page; not *USA Today*; and not *The Washington Post*. A *USA Today* editorial about the ad—headlined "Even Billionaires Aren't Buying the Estate Tax Hype"—even portrayed William Gates Sr., the petition's organizer, as a hero. The editorial approvingly quoted Gates saying that repealing the tax, would be "'bad for our democracy, our economy and our society.'"

THE PRESS HAS BEEN OVEREAGER TO PROMOTE THE VIEWS OF ANTITAX BILLIONAIRES.

What is so heroic about a man willing to forgo the chance to leave an untaxed estate to his son, one of the richest men on earth?

Also absent from many of the stories about the death tax has been an exploration of the core premise behind what I call "Buffett's compulsory philanthropy theory," the idea that taxpayers should be forced to give away their wealth either to nonprofits (in order to get tax breaks) or to the government. The liberal ultrarich see philanthropy as the appropriate alternative to taxation. They are cheerfully prepared to force their fellow citizens to choose among losing their money and their family businesses to the IRS, locking their assets in a trust, or giving the money to foundations.

The media were happy to help these pseudopopulists get their message out. At the same time, the media ignore the fact that there may be an element of self-interest on the part of the philanthropists in preserving the status quo to protect the tax-exempt domains they have constructed.

On February 27, *The New York Times* ran a story with the headline "Rich, Yes, but Even More Different: Liberal and Fun" profiling multimillionaire Agnes Gund, president of the Museum of Modern Art, and her enthusiastic commitment to retain the death tax. Of course, there was no mention of the small family businesses that are devastated by the tax Ms. Gund wants them to keep paying while she herself probably avoids much of it.

The media have consistently failed to report the fundamental facts surrounding the tax. The article about Ms. Gund is typical: I have yet to see a single news story asking the avid anti-repealers if it's fair that the megarich avoid getting soaked by the tax while small-business owners and farmers may be forced to liquidate their assets to meet the death-tax obligation. Nor have I seen an article that points out that the millionaire club in question also often steers clear of paying the wage tax that funds Social Security.

The reason is simple: The supposedly noble commitment of a few liberals to be taxed has exempted them from critical media analysis. ■

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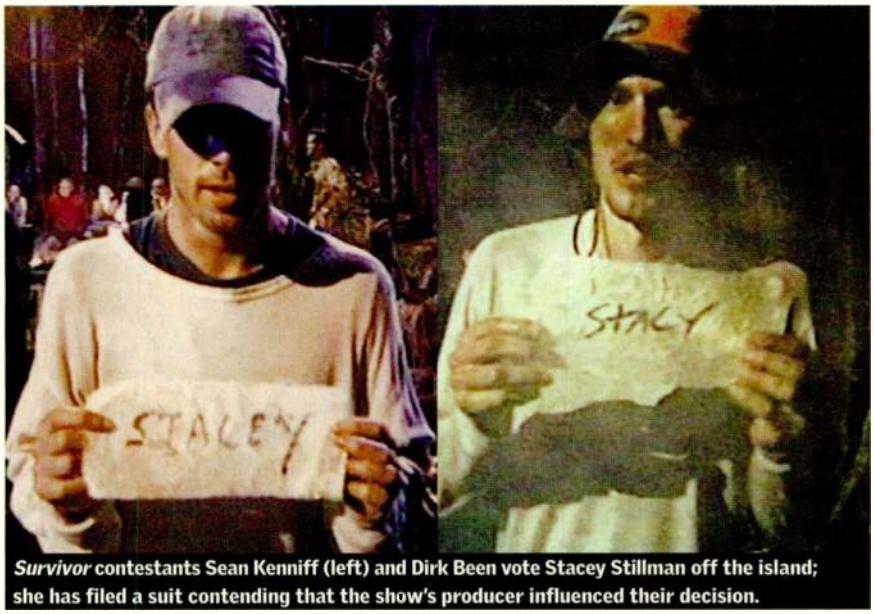


Survivor contestants Sean Kenniff (left) and Dirk Been vote Stacey Stillman off the island; she has filed a suit contending that the show's producer influenced their decision.

REGULATING REALITY TV

LITIGATION

Of course there was a lawsuit. *Survivor* is the TV phenomenon of the moment, and litigation goes hand in hand with colossal success. So in February, when former *Survivor* contestant Stacey Stillman filed suit against the show, executive producer Mark Burnett, and CBS for fraud and breach of contract—she claims the show was rigged—observers dismissed Stillman, the third cast member to be booted off the island during the first season, as a sore loser. CBS called the charges "groundless," and *Survivor*'s production company, SEG, Inc., shot back with its own $5 million suit charging Stillman with a "campaign of falsehoods, extortion, and contract violations."

So why would Burnett and CBS respond so forcefully to what they claim are baseless allegations? Because if Stillman's charges turn out to be true, Mark Burnett may have committed a federal offense.

It's no secret that reality TV shows like *Survivor* do not, in fact, reflect reality. They are slickly produced records of contrived events—"fiction embedded within fiction," as former Federal Communications Commission chairman Reed Hundt puts it. Still, there are federal laws and regulations requiring that much of what is presented on television as true must actually be true.

These laws were a reaction to the quiz-show scandals of the 1950s, when it was discovered that producers on *Twenty-One* and other game shows were giving contestants the answers to questions or ordering them to take dives. "When the news broke," says Hundt, "the chairman of the FCC was called on the carpet by Congress and asked why he doesn't ensure that TV is true."

The FCC reacted by issuing a suite of regulations designed to do just that. The regulation that CBS might need to worry about is Section 73.1216, which proscribes any broadcast license-holder from presenting any "scheme in which a prize is offered or awarded, based upon chance, diligence, knowledge, or skill to members of the public" in "false, misleading, or deceptive" terms. There is no doubt that *Survivor* is such a "scheme": Members of the public are encouraged to apply, the final survivor is awarded $1 million, and diligence and skill are essential to winning.

But according to Stillman, diligence and skill got her only so far: [CONTINUED ON PAGE 28]

ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

SWEEPS NEWS

COVERAGE

During TV's sweeps periods, when audiences are measured and advertising rates are set, local stations compete fiercely for a share of the audience, and local newscasts air some of their most attention-getting features. Sometimes this translates into solid journalism (last year KHOU Houston broke the Firestone tire story during February sweeps), but it can also result in sensational or downright silly "news." Here, some recent examples:

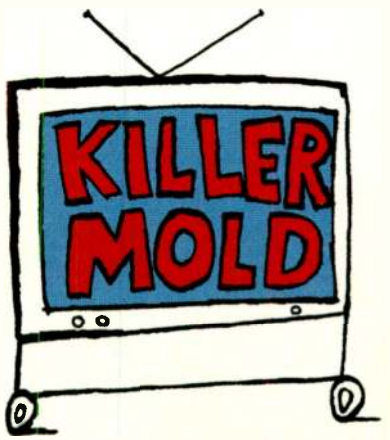
WTVJ MIAMI (NBC) **A hidden-camera investigation exposed private parties attended by local women who were illegally injected with silicone to erase wrinkles. "They meet secretly...a gathering of elite women, but this is no tea party."**

KCAL LOS ANGELES (INDEPENDENT) **The "SexPerts Share Secrets to Sex Appeal" story asked, "Is it in the eyes or the hair? Does it come with long legs or perhaps buff biceps?"**

KHOU HOUSTON (CBS) **The "House of Mold" story warned of a potentially toxic fungus menacing South Texas homeowners. "The problem has families fearing for their lives and insurance companies bracing for an epidemic."**

WTAE PITTSBURGH (ABC) **A consumer-watch segment reported that children can buy and rent sexually explicit cartoons—Japanese anime. "When children buy or rent one on videotape, they may get more than they bargained for."**

ELIZABETH ANGELL



NOTEBOOK

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27] On day 9 of the 39-day contest, Stillman's suit says, four of the seven members of Stillman's tribe told a camera crew that they intended to vote Rudy Boesch, a 73-year-old retired Navy SEAL, off the island. Later that day, the suit says, producer Burnett approached two of those tribemates—Dirk Been and Sean Kenniff—and "directly solicited" them to switch their votes to Stillman. Stillman's suit notes that Boesch, with whom Burnett had worked before, attracted a key demographic and was a salty character who made for good television. That evening Stillman was voted off by a majority that included Been and Kenniff. (Boesch went on to place third.) According to Stillman's suit, Been corroborated this version of events and had written Burnett a letter after the contest's completion expressing his "disappointment that he was solicited and manipulated into voting" Stillman off the island. In addition to $75,000 in restitution and unspecified damages, Stillman's suit seeks a "judgment declaring that the Survivor contest was unfairly and fraudulently...predetermined in violation of law."

The regulations may sound esoteric, but the FCC has taken action under Section 73.1216 before. In 1978, it penalized CBS over a series of "winner-take-all" tennis matches starring Jimmy Connors. The winners were to take home the purse, CBS said, and the losers were to get nothing. In fact, all players were paid for their participation. The FCC responded by renewing the broadcast license of KNXT (now KCBS), a CBS-owned Los Angeles station, for just one year, rather than the usual three years.

Hundt, who headed the FCC from 1993 to 1997, doubts that the agency would consider taking similar action in the case of *Survivor*—even if it were a total fabrication. "The cheesy nature of so-called reality TV does not dignify regulatory intervention," he says. "There's nothing more hoked up than the fundamental premise of *Survivor*, so why should you regard any of it as remotely similar to reality?"

A SUIT AGAINST *SURVIVOR* COULD THREATEN THE VERY IDEA OF REALITY TV.

"What Stacey Stillman is saying," says Donald Yates, Stillman's attorney, "is, 'I agreed to be a contestant on your show and entered this contest on the condition that it was fair.' But it was fraudulent." Yates plans to depose all the former *Survivor* cast members "in a relatively short time," he says. Yates notes that only a tiny fraction of *Survivor* footage saw air and implies that among the thousands of hours of outtakes will be evidence of manipulation. "There's going to be a lot of information in those tapes that will be relevant to this lawsuit," says Yates. "And I think we will get access to them." Stillman's tribemate Dirk Been declined to comment, but a spokesperson says, "Dirk will cooperate in any way that's requested. He's an honest guy." Fellow castaway Sean Kenniff could not be reached.

CBS, Burnett, and their attorneys declined to comment on the record for this story. But there are some indications that CBS and Burnett are keeping the feds in mind. The FCC regulations apply to "contests," a word that appears in *Survivor*'s suit against Stillman only in reference to her initial claim. When referring to *Survivor*, CBS's and Burnett's lawyers describe it as a "program" in which Stillman and her island companions were "participants." In February, CBS spokesman Chris Ender told *The Dallas Morning News* that CBS had never considered *Survivor* a game show. But CBS has in the past referred to it as a contest, and as *The Dallas Morning News* noted, a *Survivor* promotional videotape featured Burnett saying, "Nothing on *Survivor* was staged. There are FCC rules, since quiz-show problems of the '50s, that, as a prize-giving show, technically we fall under game show rules....Every contest was won fair and square, and there [were] no retakes or setups."


Ex-*Survivor* Stacey Stillman

Even if the FCC decides not to look into Stillman's allegations, the Department of Justice might. Title 47, Section 509 of the U.S. Code makes it a felony to rig the outcome of a "purportedly bona fide contest of intellectual knowledge." The offense is punishable by a fine of up to $10,000 and up to one year in jail. It's debatable whether *Survivor* qualifies as an intellectual contest—there is certainly an intellectual component—but Yates says he intends to refer the case to the Justice Department. "I think as we begin turning over rocks, we'll find more snakes," he says. "I think the DOJ would be interested."

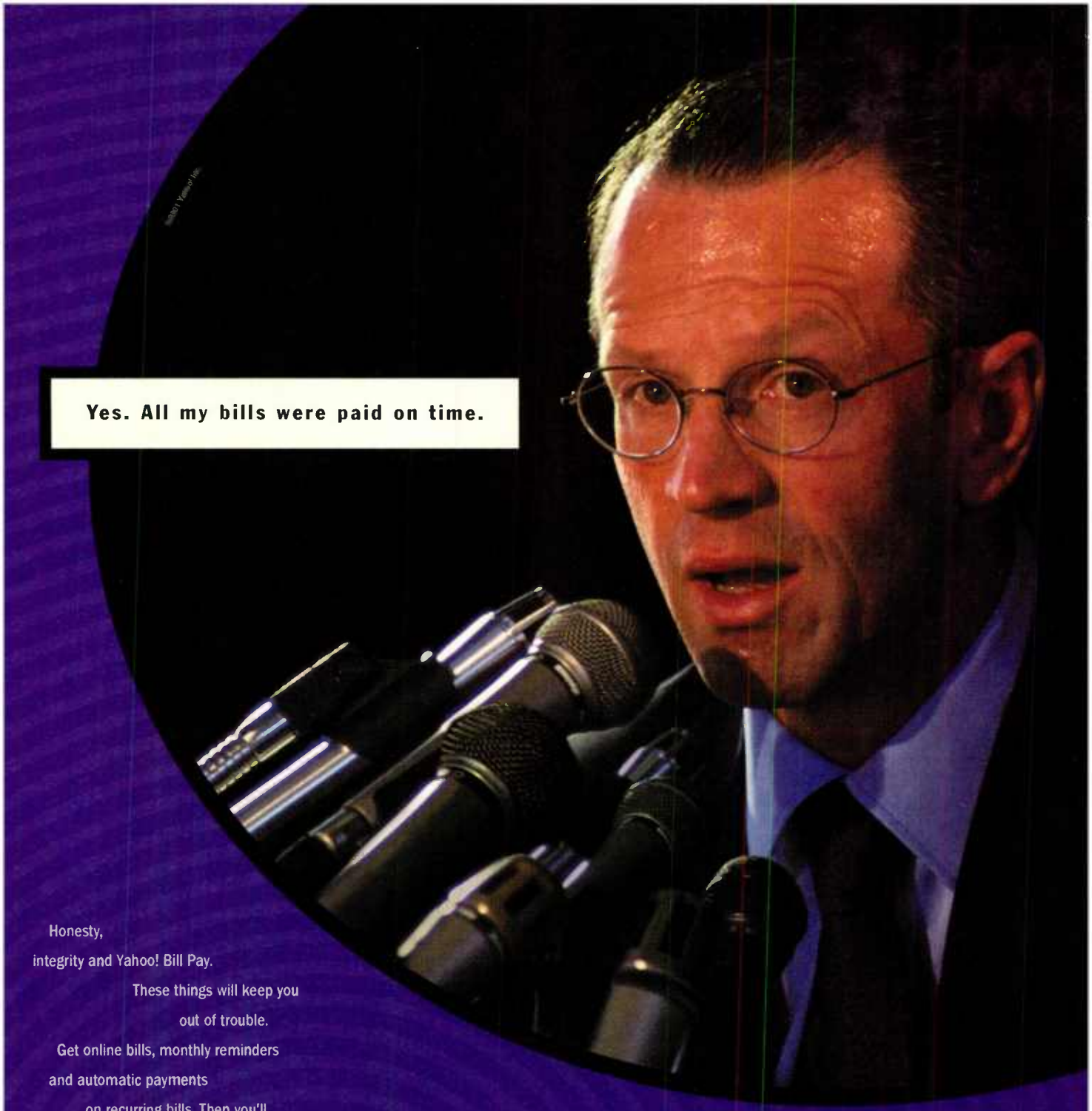
A DOJ spokesman couldn't point to any prosecutions under the law, and another DOJ official who asked not to be named said prosecutors have more important things to attend to than television. But not all of their government colleagues agree: Over at the Federal Trade Commission, regulators have kept themselves busy for years worrying about misleading contests and unsupported product claims broadcast on TV, and they aren't afraid to go after seemingly minor infractions—like a Coca-Cola promotional quiz in which some questions had more than one correct answer. FTC associate director for advertising practices C. Lee Peeler says that the *Survivor* charges are the sort of thing the agency would go after, except for one problem: The FTC regulates only those promotions or ads that pitch a product. *Survivor* isn't selling anything—its advertisers are. If the contest were created by a tuna fish company solely as an inducement to buy tuna, then the FTC would probably take action.

Perhaps someone should take a close look at *Survivor*'s suit against Stillman, though. Among the charges lodged against her is that of "product disparagement." JOHN COOK

TAKING STOCK

It was around this time last year that the stock market began to decline, led by the collapse of many tech and Internet stocks. Investors who turned to personal-finance magazines for stock advice, however, may be wishing they had consulted a Magic 8 Ball instead. The May 2000 issues of *Money*, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, and *SmartMoney* all ran stories recommending stocks: How much would $10,000 invested in each magazine's group of stock picks be worth today? *SmartMoney*, at least, was true to its name. STEFANI LAKO BALDWIN

MAGAZINE	ADVICE	STOCK-PICK EXAMPLES	VALUE ONE YEAR LATER
Money	"Stocks to watch in the post-PC era: Winners to buy now."	Gateway, National Semiconductor	$4,077, a loss of 59 percent
Kiplinger's Personal Finance	"Go Global....Here's how to ride the wave."	Nokia, Philips Electronics	$7,664, a loss of 23 percent
SmartMoney	"Red-Hot bargains in blue chips."	Avon Products, Hershey Foods	$11,945, a gain of 19 percent



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ALL QUIET ON THE PUNDIT FRONT

PUNDIT SCORECARD

Our contestants' clairvoyance is clearly contagious. We at Pundit Scorecard—which tracks the accuracy of weekend-chat-show prognosticators' predictions—picked up enough predictive ability to add *Fox News Sunday* to our lineup in time for that show to pull off the Russertian feat of driving several days' news coverage with one headline-grabbing quote. "I think we talk about race too much," declared antique West Virginia senator Robert Byrd on that show March 4. "I've seen a lot of white n---ers in my time; I'm going to use that word." To which his interrogator, Tony Snow, rejoined—and remember that we added this show to our lineup because we suspected its hosts would take bolder stances than those on ABC's *This Week*—exactly nothing.

ON THE BALL
Margaret Carlson

Fox News Sunday isn't just making the news; it's also leading the Pundit Scorecard pack. The latest trend is toward predictive conservatism: making just a few calls and making them well. The Fox show tops our team standings for a second consecutive month, and for a second consecutive month, it does so with only a few predictions. Likewise, more than half of our pundits are batting a thousand—and more than half the perfectionists are doing so with only one or two guesses, some of them ridiculously easy. Take *Fox News* trendsetter Mara Liasson: She earns a check for her bold February 25 prediction that Democrats would call George W.'s proposed tax cut too big.

SILENT LOSER
Tony Snow

Lest you think the experts are getting lazy, though, remember *The Capital Gang*'s positively pundilicious Margaret Carlson. She tops our list for the umpteenth time, making the third-highest number of predictions and scoring with them all. JESSE OXFELD

	PLAYERS		
1	Margaret Carlson, *CG*	(4/4)	1.000
2	Tony Blankley, *MG*	(3/3)	1.000
2	Robert Novak, *CG*	(3/3)	1.000
2	Juan Williams, *FNS*	(3/3)	1.000
5	Mara Liasson, *FNS*	(2/2)	1.000
6	Michael Barone, *MG*	(1/1)	1.000
6	Brit Hume, *FNS*	(1/1)	1.000
6	Lawrence O'Donnell, *MG*	(1/1)	1.000
6	Clarence Page, *MG*	(1/1)	1.000
10	Al Hunt, *CG*	(5/6)	.833
11	Morton Kondracke, *BB*	(3/4)	.750
11	Kate O'Beirne, *CG*	(3/4)	.750
13	Fred Barnes, *BB*	(3/6)	.500
14	Eleanor Clift, *MG*	(1/2)	.500
14	Mark Shields, *CG*	(1/2)	.500
16	John McLaughlin, *MG*	(1/3)	.333
17	Tony Snow, *FNS*	(0/1)	.000
	TEAMS		
1	*Fox News Sunday*	(6/7)	.857
2	*The Capital Gang*	(16/19)	.842
3	*The McLaughlin Group*	(8/11)	.727
4	*The Beltway Boys*	(6/10)	.600

BB: The Beltway Boys; CG: The Capital Gang; MG: The McLaughlin Group; FNS: Fox News Sunday. Covers predictions made between December 15, 2000, and March 4, 2001. Team scores based on total predictions made on each show.

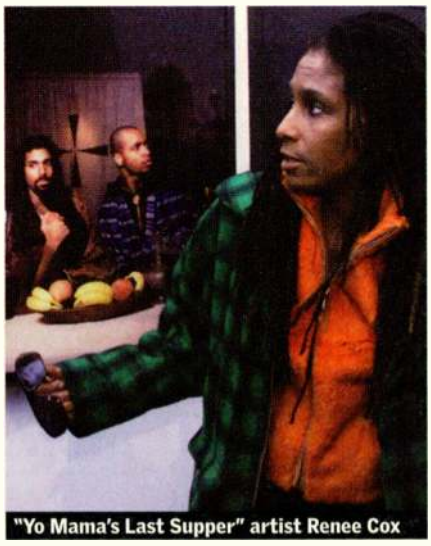
THE ART OF REPORTING

BACK STORY

"Fine Art of Controversy"—that was a page 5 headline in the February 15 edition of the New York *Daily News*. The article's lead said that the Brooklyn Museum of Art, which drew widespread criticism for its "Sensation" exhibit last year, "could be in the thick of controversy again" due to a photograph by Renee Cox titled "Yo Mama's Last Supper." The picture featured a nude Cox posing as if she were Christ.

Cox's picture had been shown in exhibits in Ridgefield, Connecticut, and Venice, Italy, without protest. Perhaps that's because reporters in those places aren't as enterprising as *Daily News* staffers are. After it got wind of the picture, the *Daily News* called a press-friendly Catholic activist, William Donohue of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, and asked him for his reaction.

"I had to go out and find the catalog for the exhibit at Barnes & Noble," says Donohue, who was the only person opposed to the exhibit quoted in the article. (In the piece, Donohue said the photograph was "scurrilous" and the work of an "admitted anti-Catholic.") "I knew the *Daily News* had a pretty good scoop on its hands," he says, explaining why he didn't put out a press release about the museum exhibit until the next day. "I knew the *Daily News* was going to play it big, because there's a [tabloid] war going on [between the *Daily News* and the *New York Post*]." Asked whether he would have noticed the work without the call from the *Daily News* reporters, Donohue says, "I think it probably would have come to my attention at some point. But probably not for a while. Who knows?"



"Yo Mama's Last Supper" artist Renee Cox

COX: ED BAILEY/AP

Within days, New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani was proposing a decency commission to determine standards for local museums that receive city money. *Daily News* reporters did not respond to calls or an e-mail about their role in the controversy. SETH MNOOKIN

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A REVIEWER'S DUAL ROLE

NONDISCLOSURE

New York Times Book Review **editor Charles McGrath didn't look far afield for a writer to review Michael Tomasky's *Hillary's Turn*, a chronicle of Hillary Clinton's quest for the Senate: He assigned the job to the *Times*'s own Adam Nagourney, who covers New York state politics. The review suggested that the book contained few fresh insights about the former first lady, little that could not "have been gleaned by anyone following the daily course of the campaign"—in the *Times*, say, where Nagourney wrote about it. In fact, as a prominent member of the press on the Hillary beat, Nagourney is mentioned numerous times in the book. This went unmentioned in his review.**

Should the reviewer have disclosed the fact that he appears as a subject in the book? Nagourney referred questions to a *Times* spokeswoman, Kathy Park, who dismissed the idea: "It is likely that we are quoted in most nonfiction books published about contemporary American life. It would look odd for us to mention such citations in all our book reviews." The *Book Review* has no ironclad rule regarding who can review what, but McGrath says that "if somebody figures considerably in a book, that rules them out." McGrath says he is cognizant of "the potential for the appearance of conflict," that he personally eyeballed each reference to Nagourney, and that he concluded that "in every case, it was a completely neutral mention." In his book, Tomasky, *New York* magazine's chief political commentator, simply quotes his colleague's coverage and notes that the Clinton campaign catered to the *Times* reporter. McGrath decided no disclosure was necessary.

Tomasky says that the *Times*'s handling of the review struck him as "strange" and feels that Nagourney's assessment of the book was colored by the reviewer's role as a competitive fellow reporter on the same beat, something *Book Review* readers should have been told. "I thought it was a little unfair," he says.

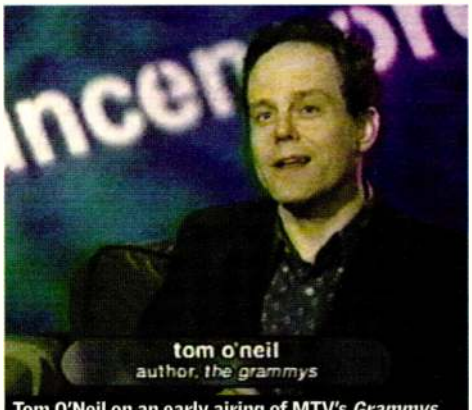
EVE GERBER

LOST IN THE REMIX

INFLUENCE

This past winter, MTV aired a documentary called *Grammys Uncensored*. The show was an entertaining look at assorted amusing moments from past Grammy Awards shows: presenters missing their cues, singers tripping over the scenery, and artists generally making fools of themselves. But the Grammys weren't merely the subject of the show: The National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, the group that awards the Grammys, also helped produce the program and, in fact, used its clout to have a vocal Grammys critic removed from the telecast after its first airing.

When the program first aired on Saturday, February 10, it featured 22 appearances by Tom O'Neil, author of *The Grammys: The Ultimate Unofficial Guide to Music's Highest Honor*. Most of O'Neil's comments, which were used as segues between sections of the hourlong documentary, were innocuous. But O'Neil's book does take some shots at the academy, and he often argues that the awards' voting process is deeply flawed.



Tom O'Neil on an early airing of MTV's *Grammys Uncensored*. He was edited out of later broadcasts.

MTV apparently found O'Neil's contributions worthwhile. Before the broadcast, MTV segment producer Angela Day sent him an e-mail message thanking him for his help: "[You] have become something of a narrative backbone. Teenagers all over the nation will recognize you as 'that Grammy guy!'"

But when the show was rebroadcast two days later, and in numerous subsequent airings, there was no sign of O'Neil. Instead, his quotes were replaced with nearly identical comments by *MTV News* veteran Kurt Loder.

The academy, it seems, had him banished.

According to an MTV spokeswoman who asked not to be named, the academy "brought to our attention that there were last-minute editorial concerns. We reviewed the matter and decided that the changes were valid. We do not feel any of these changes substantially altered the final version." The spokeswoman would not elaborate.

Michael Greene, president and CEO of the academy, wouldn't comment directly when asked why his organization wanted O'Neil removed from the program. Instead, he sent *Brill's Content* a statement: "Our editorial responsibility, with regards to content that we produce, to our members and community, dictates that those who agree or disagree with us come from positions of knowledge and direct experience. To ensure accuracy and credibility, the academy alone is the official source for any such information."

THE GROUP THAT AWARDS THE GRAMMYS HELPED SHAPE A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE AWARDS.

It may be surprising that the subject of the documentary had this kind of clout, but viewers who kept their eyes peeled during the credits would have seen that the show was "produced in association with" the academy. Indeed, such arrangements are fairly common. Documentaries produced by music channels like MTV and VH1 often rely on a single source—artists or record labels, for instance—to grant permission to use footage (as the academy did in this case). The result is that the sources—frequently the subjects of the program—are in a position to influence the content of the shows.

Those documentaries, says Lauren Zalaznick, VH1's senior vice-president of original programming and development, simply won't happen "unless [the sources] want it to." That's not troubling, she argues, because the shows aren't intended to challenge their subjects. "It's our job to function as part therapist, part confessor," she says.

Tom O'Neil, though, is troubled, and not just because he was denied air time. "What's scary is it goes beyond my situation," he says. "It makes you wonder if the whole system is corrupt."

JIM EDWARDS

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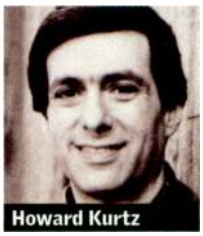
LAYING OFF CNN'S LAYOFFS

THE MEDIA BEAT

When CNN laid off about 400 employees in January in the wake of parent company Time Warner's merger with AOL, the firings made headlines across the country. *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and others ran detailed news accounts of the layoffs and their impact at the network. But at *The Washington Post*, the news was relegated to a short item in the daily TV column, and it wasn't even the lead.

The *Post*'s news judgment was puzzling for a number of reasons. First, many of those laid off worked in the network's Washington bureau, right in the *Post*'s backyard. Second, the *Post* employs one of the nation's most prolific and high-profile media-beat reporters, Howard Kurtz. And if anyone should have a good vantage point on the CNN story, it's Kurtz, who has cohosted CNN's weekly media program, *Reliable Sources*, since 1997. Did Kurtz's moonlighting arrangement with CNN—which has drawn criticism in the past—have anything to do with the paper's relative silence on the layoffs?


Howard Kurtz

Kurtz says the answer is no. In fact, he says, he was disappointed with his paper's lackluster coverage. "I think we underplayed the CNN layoffs," says Kurtz, adding that he expected the story to be covered more vigorously by the *Post*'s TV columnist, Lisa de Moraes. "I wasn't consciously avoiding the story. I was told she was handling it," he says. Kurtz adds that he didn't cover the story himself because he doesn't write straight news stories about layoffs—though a search of his clips since 1990 turns up at least ten stories in which he did just that. For her part, de Moraes says she "covered it as well as [she] was able to that day" and notes that she was busy covering a conference when the story broke.

THE WASHINGTON POST'S HOWARD KURTZ DIDN'T COVER LAYOFFS AT CNN. WHY NOT?

The editor of Kurtz's media column, deputy style editor Deborah Heard, says she disagrees with Kurtz's view that the story was underplayed and that it never crossed her mind to involve him in the coverage. "Lisa de Moraes covers TV news for us," Heard says, adding that whenever Kurtz does cover CNN, his relationship to the network never comes up. "We're conscious of it," says Heard, "but Howard has such integrity that it's never an issue."

Kurtz points out that he did mention the layoffs in forums other than print, including, ironically, *Reliable Sources*. Of course, that hardly qualifies as reporting, and it doesn't satisfy some critics. CNN is "getting a pretty good bang for their buck," says Charles Kaiser, who teaches at Columbia University's journalism school and thinks Kurtz is often uncritical of the network. "It's not a complicated issue," Kaiser says. "If you want to be a press critic, you write for one publication. It's simple." JOHN COOK

THE ART OF INVENTION

When the 92-year-old figurative painter known as Balthus died in Switzerland in February, obituaries made note of the artist's predilection for self-invention. He'd changed his name more than once and encouraged much confusion in the press about his family background. Here's a quick look back across four decades of biographical mystery.

TIMELINE

1961 Balthus is "descended from the Gordons of Scotland, the most notable of whom was Lord Byron." —*Time*

1961 "Balthus's parents are the German poet Rilke and a Polish countess. Byron is his great-uncle." —*L'Express* (French newsweekly)

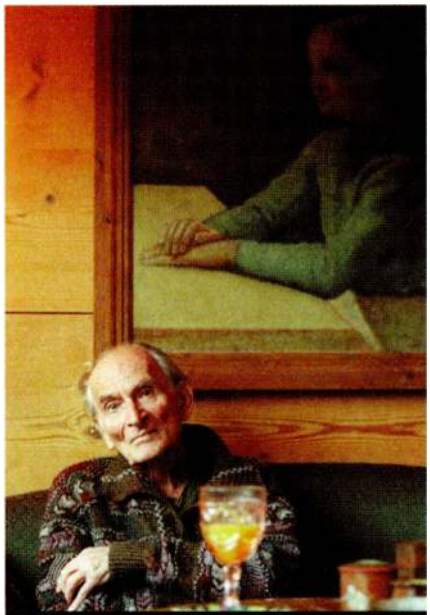
1968 "Balthus is a painter of whom nothing is known." —Balthus's reply to a request for biographical information from London's Tate Gallery

1977 "A somewhat reclusive man, the 69-year-old Balthus seems like an émigré from the ancien régime. He likes to be called by his title, Count Balthasar Klossowski de Rola." —Mark Stevens, *Newsweek*

1977 The artist is described as "Count Balthasar de Rola, a French aristocrat of Polish extraction better known by the name Balthus." —Robert Hughes, *Time*

1984 "One can follow his appetite for grandeur as the name evolves: plain Balthasar Klossowski to start, then Balthasar de Klossowski, then Klossowski de Rola, and now, in his eighth decade, the 'Comte de Rola.'...The big secret turns out merely to be that he is part Jewish." —Robert Hughes, *Time*

2001 Balthus dies on February 18—11 days short of his 93rd birthday. Obituaries chronicle with bemusement the evolution of Balthus's persona. KAJA PERINA


Balthus and one of his paintings in 1998

BALTHUS: JEAN BERNARD SIEBER/REUTERS/ARC

ON THE RECORD

"As a company, we're not interested in angst and edginess and scandal."

—DISNEY CEO MICHAEL EISNER, DESCRIBING HIS APPROVAL OF *US WEEKLY*'S CELEBRITY-FRIENDLY CONTENT, AS QUOTED IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES* IN FEBRUARY. EISNER HAD JUST ANNOUNCED THAT DISNEY, WHOSE PROPERTIES INCLUDE ABC NEWS, WAS TAKING A 50 PERCENT STAKE IN THE MAGAZINE.

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Content

This Month Online

From concept cars to up-and-coming production models, the North American International Auto Show in Detroit is the place where dreams are born. Take a look at a few fantasies, a couple of nightmares, and all points in between.

Automobile MAGAZINE

TICKER

16.3 Minutes of "clutter"—ads and promos—during an average hour of prime-time programming on the four major networks in November 2000

17.3 Minutes of clutter per prime-time hour on NBC, the most cluttered network, in November 2000

11.5 Minutes of clutter per prime-time hour on NBC, then the least cluttered network, in November 1989[1]

38.8 Percentage decline in the number of CD singles shipped to retailers from 1999 to 2000, a decrease the Recording Industry Association of America attributes largely to online file-sharing

34.2 Number, in millions, of CD singles shipped to retailers in 2000

0.4 Percentage increase in the number of full-length CDs shipped to retailers from 1999 to 2000

942.5 Number, in millions, of full-length CDs shipped to retailers in 2000[2]

528 Number of R-rated movies released in 2000

36 Number of G-rated movies released in 2000

15 Percentage increase in the number of R-rated movies released from 1995 to 2000

44 Percentage increase in the number of G-rated movies released from 1995 to 2000[3]

75 Percentage of major-network prime-time shows featuring sexual content during the 1999–2000 season

67 Percentage of major-network prime-time shows featuring sexual content during the 1997–1998 season[4]

$17.7 Amount, in billions, of magazine advertising revenue in 2000

162 Percentage increase in magazine advertising revenue from 1990 to 2000

18,611 Magazine advertising pages sold in February 2001

9.7 Percentage decline in magazine advertising pages sold from February 2000 to February 2001[5]

COMPILED BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

1) 2000 Television Commercial Monitoring Report 2) Recording Industry Association of America 3) Motion Picture Association of America 4) The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 5) Publishers Information Bureau

Roscoe Betsill prepares some food for its moment in the spotlight.

ANNE KATRINE SENSTAD

FEAST FOR THE EYES

MEDIA LIVES

ROSCOE BETSILL
FOOD STYLIST

Roscoe Betsill learned to cook at one of France's finest culinary institutes, La Varenne, and it was there that he was trained in the art of the three-star meal. Curiously, though, preparing food for consumption was never Betsill's intention: He wanted to be a food stylist, a person who makes meals not to be eaten but to be photographed. "The French thought I was crazy," jokes Betsill, but for the past 15 years, he's been proving them wrong, cooking and arranging food for the photographers of glossy magazines like *Vogue*, *Food & Wine*, *Gourmet*, and *Bon Appetit*.

Betsill's day begins early in New York City, where he's based. "Weather permitting, the farmers' market is my favorite place to shop for produce," he says. He combs the booths in search of the right shade of Granny Smith green (or McIntosh red, depending on the recipe's color scheme). Preparing the dishes himself, Betsill sticks to the recipe as it will appear in the magazine, doctoring the ingredients as little as possible. Because readers are cooking along at home, Betsill notes, "it's pretty much to my advantage to have the food look like what the home cook is going to get."

But Betsill admits that he has, of necessity, mastered the tricks of the food-styling trade. Grilled meats, for example, tend to dry out under the hot lights of a studio, so he douses them in clear Karo syrup (a gelatinous, sugary goo) to enhance their sheen. A combination of Crisco, Karo, and food coloring stood in for ice cream at a children's-magazine photo shoot at Jones Beach, New York. And for milk, which turns sour and clots if left out all day, Betsill uses a special substitute—Wildroot hair cream.

A perfectionist, Betsill uses tweezers to arrange sesame seeds and Krazy Glue to shape sliced cheese. In one of his finest nit-picking moments, he made a total of 18 cheesecakes in his quest for one with the perfect texture. "Even the crew got sick of eating the leftovers!" he remembers. Every job has its occupational hazards.

LARA KATE COHEN

John is lonely.

Mary is bored.

John's friend tells him about Nerve...

Mary's friend mentions Nerve...

...the community of thoughtful hedonists!

John posts an ad and responds to Mary's.

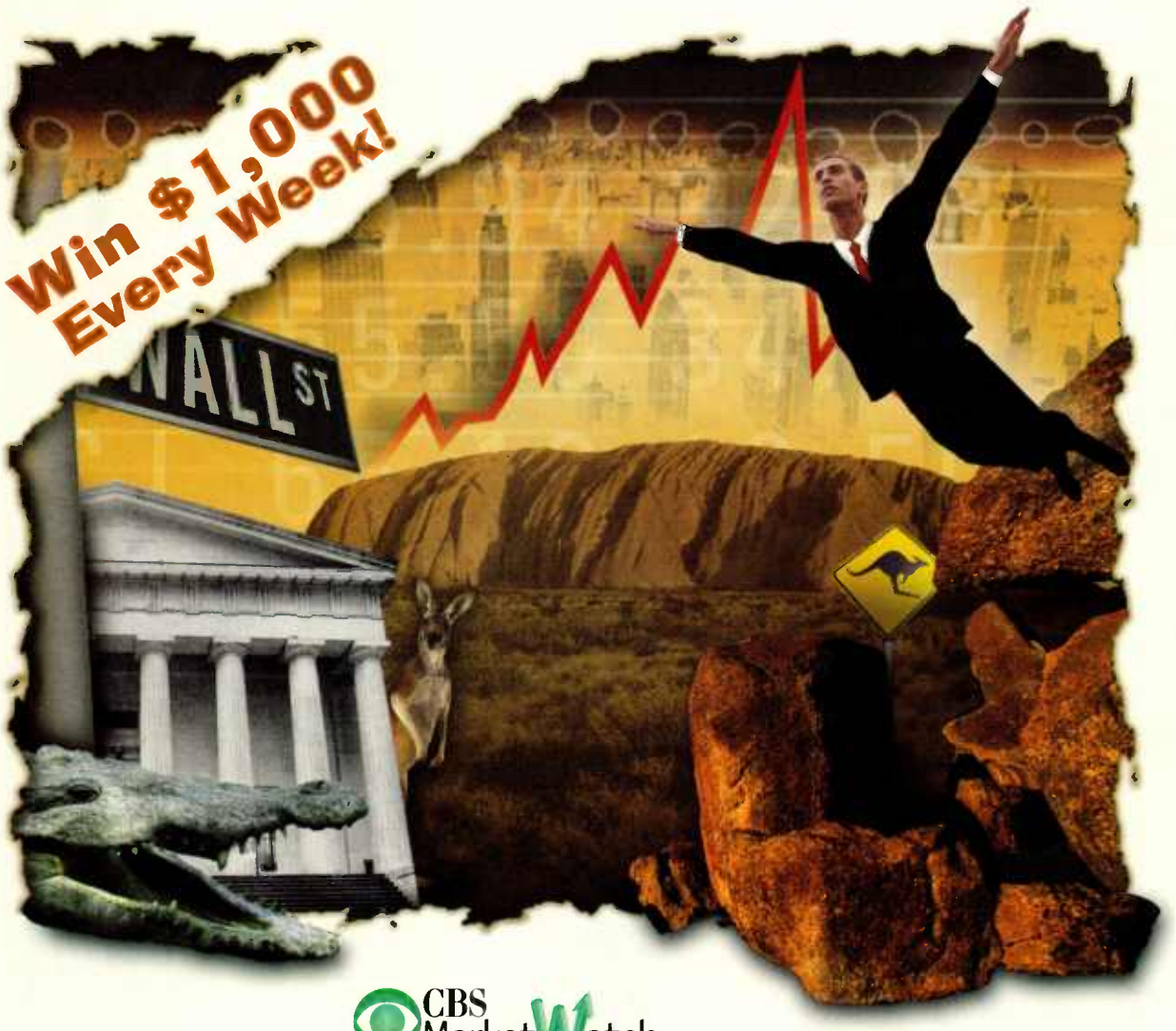
Mary posts an ad and responds to John's.

John is excited for his date with Mary.

John and Mary hit it off!

Mary can't wait for her date with John.

And spend the rest of their lives having mind-blowing sex together.



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The story behind the numbers.

AOL Keyword: Financial Survivor

scout's honor

I often concoct outlandish tales about public figures, so why would anyone believe that I really went to camp with pardoned financier Marc Rich? BY CALVIN TRILLIN

While I was growing up in Kansas City, I went to Boy Scout camp with Marc Rich. We were in the same tent. In 1983, when Rich was indicted for crimes that included the largest tax swindle in the history of the United States of America, I was doing a column every three weeks for *The Nation*, and I revealed our acquaintanceship in a piece that I called "Marc Rich and I at Camp Osceola." Given the tone of what I customarily wrote for *The Nation*, I knew that readers might assume that I had invented an acquaintanceship with Marc Rich ("What's supposed to be so funny about saying he went to Boy Scout camp with Marc Rich?"). So I included a lot of facts about Camp Osceola that someone who hadn't been a camper there would not have known—that the director of the camp was called Skipper, for instance, and that Skipper often said "fine and dandy." I quoted verbatim from a story my hometown paper had just run on the interlude Rich and his family spent in Kansas City—during what the reporter called, with a bit of local-angle pride, Marc's "formative years"—before settling in Brooklyn. None of that convinced anybody. My next column was called "Marc Rich and I at Camp Osceola—Really." Nobody believed that one, either.

In the sort of column I was doing for *The Nation*—the column I later did in newspaper syndication and then, for five years, in *Time*—not being taken seriously was ordinarily the goal. It was not always met. I often wrote something that was meant as a joke only to have a lot of people take it seriously. (In my quiet moments of reflection, which I try to make time for almost annually, I occasionally contemplate the possibility that the prevalence of this problem said something about the quality of the jokes rather than the reading comprehension of the audience.) When Ronald Reagan started asking voters in various congressional districts to "win one for the Gipper," for instance, I happened to mention in my newspaper column that the real George Gipp, unlike the character the president played in the movie, had, in fact, recovered from his illness, an impacted wisdom tooth. (I also mentioned that in real life, Notre Dame, despite Knute Rockne's legendary pep talk about the Gipper, lost the game—to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, whose coach had fired up his players by saying, "Win one for the principle of logarithmic functions!") I heard from so many readers who claimed to have read an article in *Reader's Digest* confirming the death of Gipp at Notre Dame that I had to print up a postcard in response: "Who are you going to believe—*Reader's Digest* or me? It's not even a full-sized magazine."

In other words, I'm willing to admit that, just playing the percentages, there would have been no reason to accept anything I wrote in a column as true. In my first Marc Rich column,

TONY MILLIONAIRE

My column was called "Marc Rich and I at Camp Osceola—Really." Nobody believed me.

as a way of building my credibility, I acknowledged that in a previous column about whether the Reagans were the sort of close family that the president's speeches on family values might suggest, I'd made up the report that a photographer who was following Ronald Reagan Jr. on Fifth Avenue observed him waving and yelling "Hiya Dad" to a man who turned out to be Joel McCrea. In those days, I regularly published pure fabrications about the Reagan administration—the experiences, for instance, of a couple who during a Caribbean vacation had witnessed an actual voodoo-economics ceremony. I have concocted similar fabrications about every administration since Jimmy Carter's. Why should readers believe anything I wrote about Marc Rich? You might say that columnists who write the sort of thing I have written for the past couple of decades are in the position of the boy who cried wolf—or, more specifically, the boy who was constantly making tiresome wolf jokes.

I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT MARC RICH, BUT I CAN TELL YOU A FEW STORIES ABOUT SKIPPER THE CAMP DIRECTOR THAT ARE NOT GENERALLY KNOWN.

But occasionally there actually is a wolf. I was given a third opportunity to convince people of that when Bill Clinton pardoned the person who had grown up to assume the name Fugitive Financier Marc Rich—making Marc once more the best-known Osceola camper and an obvious subject for my commentary. In those two Marc Rich columns in *The Nation*, I had held back some facts about Camp Osceola, just in case I was later subjected to closer questioning—I didn't say anything about the latrines having been known as lollies, for instance—and I thought about sprinkling some of those facts around a new piece, to add verisimilitude. I also considered phoning Dave Barry and asking permission to use the phrase he employs to label facts as authentic when they sound suspiciously like the inventions of a smart-aleck newspaper columnist: "I'm not making this up."

I figured that, assuming I could solve my credibility problem, I might be able to sell *The New Yorker* a piece about Marc Rich of the sort it runs under the heading "Shouts & Murmurs." By chance, that week's *New Yorker* had just arrived at my house, and I noticed that it included a "Shouts & Murmurs" piece by Ian Frazier, a humorist I always look forward to reading. I turned right to Frazier's piece. It began, "In the mid-nineteen-seventies, I was married for a time to the actress Elizabeth Taylor." My heart sank. I happen to know Ian Frazier, and I know that he has never for a moment been married to Elizabeth Taylor. I'm hardly in a position to deny someone the literary device of his own choosing, but I couldn't help feeling that claiming to have been married to Elizabeth Taylor is just the sort of thing that makes it all the more difficult for those of us who, every so often, have reason to tell the truth. I decided not to try a Marc Rich piece for *The New Yorker* after all.

The next week, while I was still feeling rather dejected about all of this, I got a phone call from a young woman who was part of a team working on an oral history of Marc Rich for *Talk* magazine. She had phoned, she said, in the hope that I, as someone who had grown up with Marc, might be able to provide some anecdotes about him. She stated this matter-of-factly, as if informing me that she was gathering impressions of my favorite Kansas City barbecue restaurant from people who were known to be longtime customers. Apparently, the implicit warning on my old *Nation* columns to consider the source had evaporated with time. I told her I was thrilled to hear from her.

"Then you remember some anecdotes about Marc Rich?" she said.

"Not exactly," I said, "although I can tell you a few stories about Skipper that are not generally known." ◘

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a novel approach

A "memoir" of a fictional columnist reveals some harsh truths about punditry and raises a tricky question about what happens when art imitates journalism. BY ERIC EFFRON

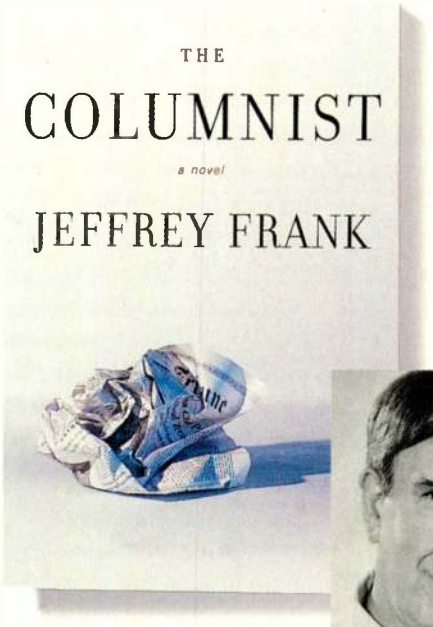
This magazine is in the business of reporting on the media, so it was with great interest that I read an advance copy of Jeffrey Frank's *The Columnist*. And then I got an uneasy feeling.

The Columnist is a "memoir" spanning the 30-year career of the fictional Brandon Sladder, a nationally syndicated columnist and TV pontificator. The central conceit of the book is that Sladder is unbearably self-important and self-centered but barely self-aware. So without realizing it, he describes a life littered with people he used and discarded. His wildly successful media career seems to have been built not on particularly good work but rather on his willingness to be a mouthpiece for certain politicians, along with his prodigious name-dropping and social climbing. "As my column became more popular, so did I, and I found myself being drawn deeper into the social life of Washington," Sladder reveals. "All at once, I knew everyone (occasionally I even sensed a small stir when I entered a room)."

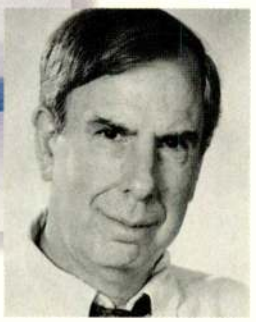
SOMETIMES WORKS OF FICTION TELL TRUE STORIES THAT CAN ELUDE JOURNALISTS.

The book is smart and funny, and I'm guessing it will be a major source of buzz in political and literary circles because many of the characters—most notably the memoirist himself—seem awfully familiar.

Why would such an amusing, seemingly harmless book make me uneasy? The answer has to do with a secret I think many journalists harbor: We get uncomfortable—humbled, even—when, despite all our probing, all the time spent developing and charming informed sources, all those obnoxious questions, a work of fiction hits the market that seems to get closer to the truth than our journalism does.



BOOK: PETER BERSON



The novel's author, Jeffrey Frank, a senior editor at *The New Yorker*

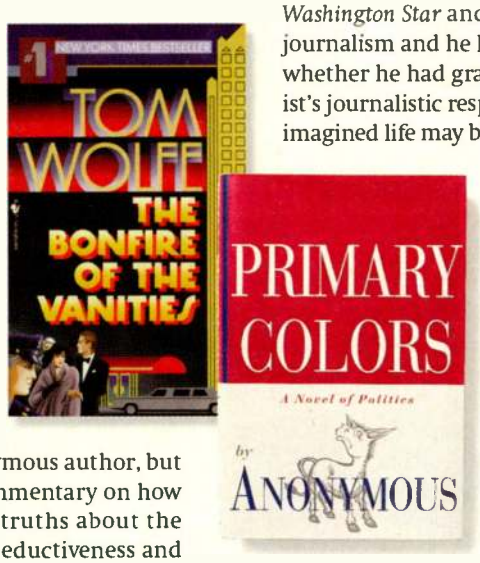
The Columnist takes us inside the world of Washington media—from a money-losing opinion journal (aren't they all?) to a powerful daily whose crusty, well-connected editor swears a lot, from Georgetown dinner parties to the horsey Virginia countryside. Sladder is used by politicians, and he uses them.

In one great scene set early in his career, Sladder, shortly after writing a newspaper editorial defending Lyndon Johnson, is called to the White House for a tête-à-tête with the president. "I quickly understood why Johnson had summoned me," Sladder remembers. "From my few kind, anonymous words, he had come to view me as a friend...." As Sladder recounts the tale, it's clear (although not to Sladder) that while he's busy being flattered by the president's attention, the president is subtly prying information out of him about an enemy (a colleague of Sladder's) before giving him a scrap of a quote—"Get your notebook out, son," the president commands—so that he can go home with a scoop.

"Moments later, a young Marine helped me find my way to a door, and from there to the Pennsylvania Avenue gate. I looked back at the whitewashed mansion and realized, almost dizzyingly, that I was in possession of news," Sladder recalls. "My heart beat with a wild thump-thump, and it pounded that way until I'd returned to the office and wrote about my exclusive interview with all the speed and joy of a police reporter covering his first major crime."

There's no shortage of journalism, in this magazine and elsewhere, about how the media do their job. But Frank has captured some fresh, if dark, insights about Washington punditry and media careerism, particularly how *who you know* often can matter more than *what you know*. Why didn't I think of that?

I had the same feeling in 1987, when I read Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. At the time, my beat was the criminal justice system, and I was, I thought, pretty well informed both about local courts and about larger justice issues. But nothing I wrote or edited came remotely close to capturing the absurdities, the large and small corruptions, the interplay among politics and ethnicity and justice, as Wolfe's book. A lot of *Bonfire*'s impact comes from the author's command of language, of course, and you can't be too hard on yourself for not matching that talent. But the book's force also derives in great measure from Wolfe's skills as an observer—and that's supposed to be journalism's bailiwick, too.



***The Bonfire of the Vanities* and *Primary Colors* both benefited from their authors' skill at observation as well as invention.**

Some journalists had a similar reaction in 1996, after Joe Klein's *Primary Colors* introduced the nation to a fictional presidential candidate whose personality, background, strengths, and weaknesses were highly reminiscent of a certain actual former presidential candidate (and then-sitting president). At first, much attention was focused on the identity of the then-anonymous author, but there was also a considerable amount of commentary on how Klein's work of fiction had captured some truths about the campaign, as well as about the candidate's seductiveness and neediness, that had eluded the press.

Obviously, fiction is "easier" than nonfiction in the sense that fiction writers don't have to worry about facts getting in the way of a good story. But like *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, *Primary Colors* got a lot of juice from its apparent authenticity, from the fact that a skilled observer—and not simply a good storyteller—was at work. This is hardly a new idea, of course; one hallmark of all great fiction—whether it involves political intrigue, pivotal historical events, or dysfunctional families—is that it rings true.

But when fiction draws directly on real people doing real things, it not only may resonate more, it also may breed confusion about where the reality ends and where the art begins. (Thanks to *Primary Colors*, for instance, I have a hard time remembering whether that scandalous behavior between the presidential candidate and the young female constituent involved Governor Jack Stanton, Joe Klein's creation, or the real guy.)

JEFFREY FRANK ACKNOWLEDGES A RESPONSIBILITY "NOT TO MESS AROUND WITH HISTORY."

Similarly, although Frank's vivid portrayal of how ambition and pomposity shape our media is certainly revealing, there's a downside. Especially if your name is George Will.

I'll explain. The fictional Brandon Sladder tends to drop a lot of literary and scholarly quotations into his columns. He often uses baseball metaphors. He wears a bow tie. Because of these and some other attributes, it's hard to keep the ABC News and *Newsweek* commentator out of your mind when reading about Sladder—which really isn't fair, because there's no way Will could be that despicable. It raises a question particular to this genre of fiction: Does the writer have any responsibility to his fictional characters' apparent role models?

Jeffrey Frank is a veteran journalist, currently a senior editor at *The New Yorker*, formerly a writer and editor at the defunct *Washington Star* and then *The Washington Post*. He knows journalism and he knows Washington, and I was curious whether he had grappled at all with the issue of a novelist's journalistic responsibility in cases where real life and imagined life may blur in readers' minds.

First, Frank wanted to be clear about one thing: His main character was not based on George Will, although he understands that people may perceive certain similarities. "This was not a roman à clef," he says. "It was always seen as a work of fiction. People are seeing George Will, but also a lot of other people, too." He also notes that Brandon Sladder gets fat and bald in his later years, which hasn't happened to Will.

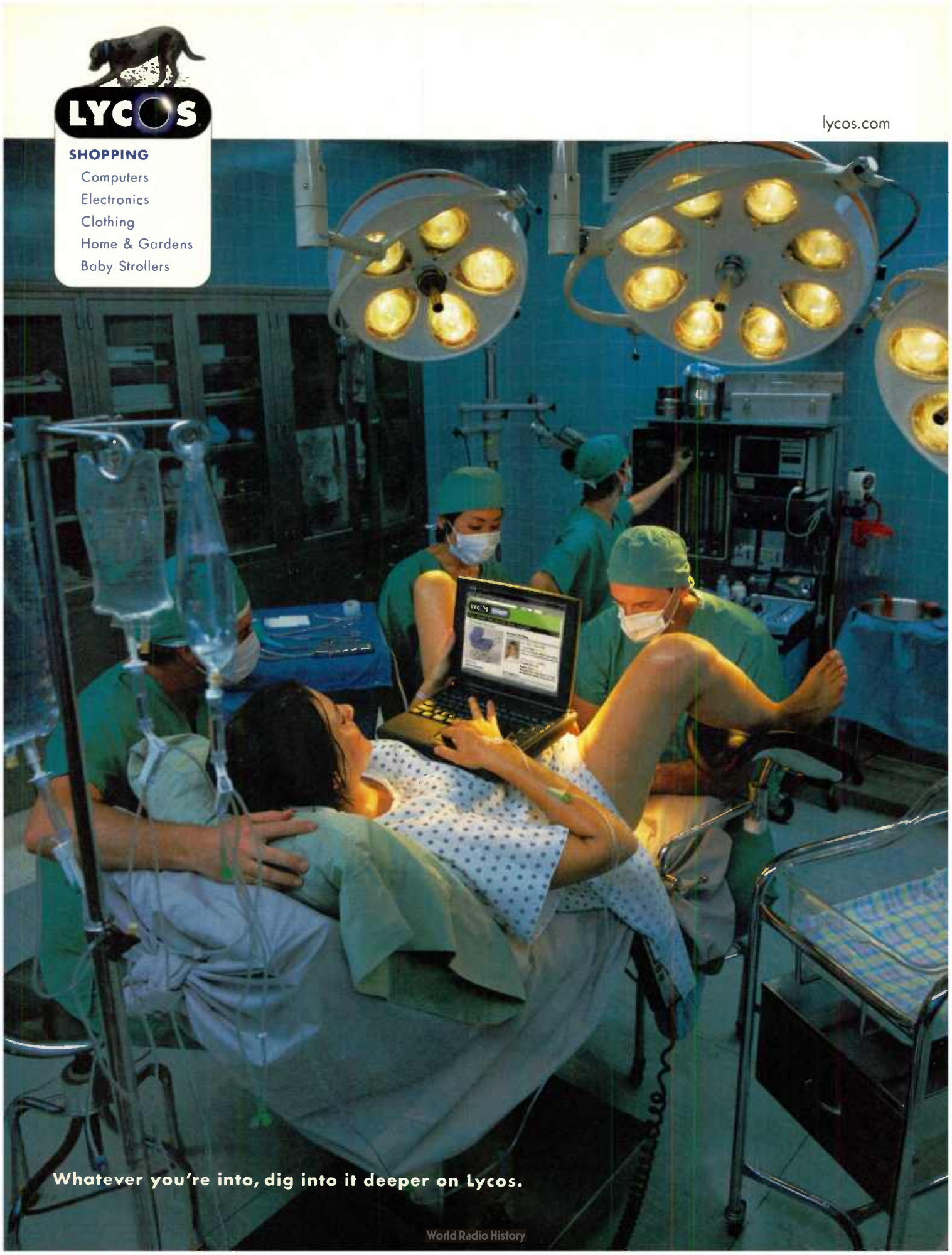
Frank acknowledges a responsibility "not to mess around with history." So, he explains, he resisted any temptation to have John F. Kennedy engaged in an affair with one of Frank's fictional creations, and he labored to have the descriptions of real people (such as LBJ in the above-mentioned scene) comport with what is known to be true about their actions and modi operandi.

Frank says he's well aware that his book, set for a June release, will probably benefit from any speculation about who may be whom. In fact, that has already started, even before any reviews of the book are out, with short pieces that have appeared in *The Washington Post* and elsewhere. "In media and political circles," the New York *Daily News* reported, "the parlor sport this spring may be linking real names to the characters" in Frank's book.

"I'm not so dumb that I'm not grateful for any buzz," Frank says. "But the book was not written to stir things up. I imagined these characters."

Imagined them, sure, but he may know them, too. Or people a lot like them. And that makes *The Columnist* irresistible and informative—and it just may, despite Frank's protestations, stir things up. Just like good journalism—I mean, fiction—should do. ◘

PETER BERSON



listener loyalty

In this era of endless media options, what is it about National Public Radio—30 years old this month—that has spawned such devotion among its audience? BY BEN YAGODA

I recently wrote a history of *The New Yorker* called *About Town:* The New Yorker *and the World It Made*. One of the things I wound up focusing on was readers' remarkable attachment to *The New Yorker* during its heyday—roughly the late forties through the early eighties. As part of my research, I had run an author's query in *The New York Times Book Review* asking to hear from "longtime *New Yorker* readers" and was struck when more than 700—most of them from the professional, educated classes—responded. They described a far closer bond to *The New Yorker* than one could imagine from subscribers to, say, *Mademoiselle*, *Popular Mechanics*, or *U.S. News & World Report*. Many suggested that life without *The New Yorker* would be unthinkable. As one respondent put it, "I've always felt sort of *nourished* by *The New Yorker*, finishing an issue feeling not only entertained (transported in some cases) but enlightened, learning something about a subject that was written by a master of his craft."

I got a definite sense that many *New Yorker* readers had strong, almost emotional relationships with the magazine and its contributors. At cocktail parties, in faculty clubs, and in suburban living rooms across postwar America, if you mentioned the latest contribution by J.D. Salinger, Jean Stafford, A.J. Liebling, John Updike, John McPhee, Pauline Kael, Ann Beattie, or Woody Allen, you could be sure that a good three-quarters of those present not only would have read it but would have an opinion about it.

By the time I was working on the book, in the late nineties, *The New Yorker* had long lost this totemic quality—it was simply a good magazine. It occurred to me that the only cultural or journalistic enterprise with a similar pull on a similar audience was National Public Radio, and I made an offhand comment to this effect in the introduction to my book, which was published in February 2000, to coincide with *The New Yorker*'s 75th anniversary.

This month NPR celebrates an anniversary of its own: Its first and still-flagship program, the afternoon newsmagazine *All Things Considered*, debuted on May 3, 1971. The occasion has prompted me to mull over the NPR/*New Yorker* parallel, and the more I look into it, the more striking it seems to be. I am convinced that a great many of NPR's core listeners—about 6 million or 7 million of them, according to the media research and ratings service Arbitron—are precisely the same kind of people who would have read *The New Yorker* just decades ago. And they feel just as strongly and personally about the people who come across the airwaves as those longtime *New Yorker* readers did about the magazine's stable of writers and artists.

ALMOST NO OTHER CULTURAL ENTERPRISE HAS A SIMILAR PULL ON ITS AUDIENCE.

Not long ago I spent a day and a half at NPR's headquarters, in a nondescript office building on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, D.C. The seven on-air figures I interviewed, all of whom have been at the network at least since the late seventies, unanimously said that listeners, as *ATC* cohost Linda Wertheimer put it, "seem to feel that we have a relationship. They call me by my first name," she added, in roughly the same tone with which she would describe someone eating off her plate.

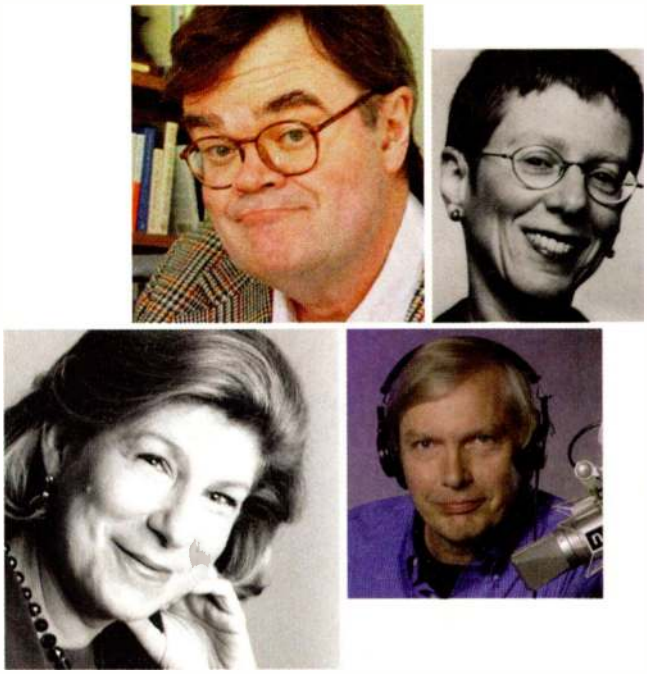
Susan Stamberg has been at NPR since the beginning, most prominently as *ATC* cohost from 1972 to 1986 and currently as special correspondent. "People think we're family," Stamberg said. "I'm always being told, 'You don't know it, but you're one of my best friends.' When I get a cold, people don't just send me chicken soup recipes; they bring in chicken soup!"

I've been using the term "NPR" broadly, but to give this anecdotal evidence empirical heft, some background and definitions are in order. National Public Radio is a private, nonprofit corporation that provides programming and other services to a roster of about 650 member stations, all of them noncommercial and almost all of them FM. Through membership dues and programming fees to NPR, the member stations provided about half of NPR's $86 million in revenue in fiscal year 1999; most of the rest came from grants and contributions. (None came directly from the federal government.) On average, each station receives almost a third of its programming from NPR. This slate almost always includes *ATC* and *Morning Edition*, which run for two hours each weekday—including cutaways to local news—and attract about 8 million and 9 million listeners per week, respectively, according to Arbitron. NPR also distributes several dozen other shows—from *Fresh Air*

The NPR demographic: Serious and engaged cultural consumers
Illustration by Jorge Colombo

and *Car Talk* (which have about 3 million listeners each) to *Talk of the Nation* (2 million) and *Thistle and Shamrock* (500,000) to *NPR Playhouse* (39,400). Member stations produce about half of their programming themselves (often jazz or classical music), while the remainder of what they air comes from other sources—primarily, Minneapolis-based Public Radio International. In addition to its signature program, Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*, it distributes somewhat edgier or quirkier fare, including *The World*, *American Routes*, *Marketplace*, and *This American Life*.

Like many other media organizations, NPR polls and surveys its audience frequently, and there is clearly a high degree of listener loyalty. According to Arbitron, 63 percent of *Morning Edition*'s and *ATC*'s audiences are "core" listeners, meaning that they spend more time listening to that station than to any other. Sixty percent of listeners "strongly agree" with the statement that NPR "offers better quality than other news organizations." According to the Arbitron figures, since 1983 the average amount of time spent listening to radio as a whole has declined by more than 11 percent; yet the average amount of time spent listening to NPR stations has remained almost exactly the same.



Clockwise from top left: *A Prairie Home Companion* host Garrison Keillor, *Fresh Air*'s Terry Gross, *Morning Edition* host Bob Edwards, and legal-affairs correspondent Nina Totenberg, who broke, among other stories, Anita Hill's charges against Clarence Thomas in 1991

NPR has also commissioned endless studies on listener demographics, which reveal striking parallels with *The New Yorker*'s affluent, educated readership. Mediamark Research conducted one such study for NPR in 1999, which found that almost two-thirds of NPR listeners have at least a college degree (the national figure is 22 percent), and their median household income is $75,088, compared with the national median of $45,156. Some other attributes (comparative figures for the U.S. as a whole are in parentheses): 50 percent of listeners are employed in "professional/managerial" positions (20 percent); 53 percent bought wine in the last year (33 percent); 58 percent use e-mail (29 percent); 49 percent drive an imported vehicle (32 percent); 21 percent purchase classical music (7 percent); and 18 percent like hiking or backpacking (8 percent). Their median age is 46.2 years. Compared with the population at large, they are 5.7 times more likely to read *The New York Times* on a regular basis and 6.3 times more likely to read, yes, *The New Yorker*.

NPR LISTENERS READ, AND THEY ESPECIALLY LIKE BOOKS BY NPR PERSONALITIES.

They are also about twice as likely as the typical American to have bought a novel or a history book in the past year, a fact that has not escaped the publishing industry. NPR listeners read, and they especially like to read the words of NPR personalities, hence the striking publishing success of such public-radio stalwarts as Keillor, senior news analyst Cokie Roberts, and commentators Bailey White and Andrei Codrescu.

One day in the early nineties, Geoffrey Kloske, then an editorial assistant at Little, Brown (now a senior editor at Simon & Schuster), was listening to *Morning Edition* when he heard a sardonic piece he loved. He didn't catch the credit at the beginning or end of the piece, but he called the producer, Ira Glass, and learned that the storyteller was a professional apartment cleaner named David Sedaris; in short order, Kloske signed Sedaris to a two-book deal. Sedaris, who is now a regular on Glass's *This American Life*, has sold more than 200,000 hardcover copies of his latest book, *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, and draws rock-star-like crowds to his bookstore readings around the country.

The NPR effect works for "civilian" authors, too. Viking Penguin's vice-president of publicity, Paul Slovak, says, "For a publisher like us, an interview on an NPR show, especially *Fresh Air*, is the best thing you can do." *Fresh Air*, hosted by virtuoso interviewer Terry Gross, is an hourlong program produced by WHYY in Philadelphia and distributed by NPR.

The results of NPR attention can be dramatic and instantaneous; the tales of moribund or even out-of-print books being given jolts of life by it are legion. "One day I was filling in as host of *Morning Edition*," says correspondent Neal Conan, "and I decided to do an interview with Samuel R. Delany about my favorite science-fiction book, *The Stars My Destination*, by Alfred Bester. Two hours later, the phone rang. It was Bester's publisher, asking, 'What just happened?'" The publisher had been besieged with calls from people who wanted to know how they could get a copy of the book. (Conan is currently on leave from NPR to write a memoir about his experience as a play-by-play announcer for a minor-league baseball team. He had little trouble

KEILLOR: ANN HEISENFELT/AP

securing a book contract, as did other NPR journalists such as Scott Simon, Jacki Lyden, and Daniel Schorr.)

IN 1971, AM RADIO was still the high-profile band. All that FM had, really, was the orchestral easy listening of the conductors Mantovani and Andre Kostelanetz, a classical station or two in the big cities, some of the new "progressive" rock stations (which became "classic" rock just a decade later), and a motley group of "educational" stations, many connected with universities, that in the forties had been graciously allotted the far left of the dial by the FCC. A consortium of these stations created a news operation and commissioned a Minnesota public broadcaster named William Siemering to provide a rationale. Siemering, universally described by public-radio types as a visionary, eventually emerged with a manifesto that, if you strip away some sixties rhetorical flourishes, reads remarkably like a description of NPR today. "National Public Radio will not regard its audience as a 'market' or in terms of its disposable income," he wrote at one point, "but as curious, complex individuals who are looking for some understanding, meaning and joy in the human experience."

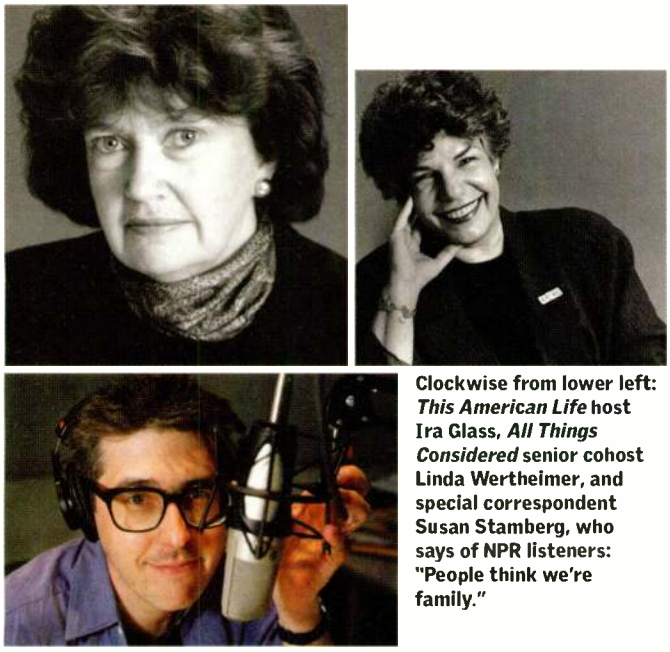
IN THE EARLY YEARS, NPR WAS A SHOESTRING OPERATION WITH A CULT FOLLOWING.

One hundred four stations carried the first broadcast of *All Things Considered* in 1971. In the early years, NPR had lofty ambitions but was essentially a shoestring operation with a cult following. Reporters and producers had a lot of leeway and put together creative and often quirky pieces—and predictably, this period is viewed by many NPR veterans as a golden age. By the end of the seventies, NPR had 250 member stations and millions more listeners. The growth was due in part to the quality of its programming and in part to a bit of technological serendipity. In 1970, almost no cars had FM radios; by 1980, almost every car did. Also, the Walkman was about to arrive, and most important, AM would soon become the radio wasteland; the worthless real estate at the far left of the FM dial had turned prime, and people with FM radios were looking for good stuff.

In the eighties and nineties, *ATC* and *Morning Edition* steadily increased their listenership—the most dramatic jump came during the Reagan-era deregulation of broadcasting, when most commercial radio stations dropped their previously required information programming and essentially handed over the field to NPR. The network faced several financial crises, in part because legislators charging left-wing bias kept cutting its budget. It responded with a canny restructuring in which revenues now flow through member stations—less visible and vulnerable targets. Today the most successful NPR affiliates, in cities such as Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, and Denver, are in the top three or four ratings slots in their markets during morning drive time.

This success has led to a bigger national and international news staff for NPR and consequently more emphasis on comprehensiveness and exclusives. NPR's arrival as a news organization to be reckoned with probably occurred in 1991, when legal-affairs correspondent Nina Totenberg broke the story of Anita Hill's charges against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. (Four years earlier, Totenberg had revealed that Reagan nominee Douglas Ginsburg had used marijuana in his younger days.) NPR was also first with a full explanation of the space shuttle *Challenger*'s explosion, a synopsis of the Salt Lake City Olympic scandal, and a detailed account of rapes and mass killings in Bosnia.

Today NPR has 16 bureaus around the world, access to the news staff at its member stations, and working relationships with reporters in dozens of other cities. Many of NPR's correspondents are recognized as being at or near the top of their field: among them Totenberg; Peter Overby, who covers campaign finance and lobbying issues; Tom Gjelten, at the State Department; political commentator Daniel Schorr; and White House correspondent Mara Liasson. Some NPR hands have gone on to more lucrative careers in commercial news organizations, such as Robert Krulwich, Martha Raddatz, and Jackie Judd, all now at ABC News, and Judith Miller of *The New York Times*. Still others—Liasson, who also appears on Fox News Channel and PBS's *Washington Week*; Cokie Roberts, of ABC's *This Week*; and Totenberg, who was for a time also on *Nightline*—have been able to



Clockwise from lower left: *This American Life* host Ira Glass, *All Things Considered* senior cohost Linda Wertheimer, and special correspondent Susan Stamberg, who says of NPR listeners: "People think we're family."

GLASS: SCOTT OLSON/NEWSMAKERS

retain their NPR affiliation while simultaneously taking advantage of the TV networks' visibility and lucre.

NPR HAS ITS DETRACTORS, needless to say, and liberal bias is their most common charge. If you polled all the people who work for NPR, you would no doubt find views more liberal than the general population, maybe even more liberal than their counterparts at *The New York Times* or *Newsweek*. But do those views result in slanted coverage? I would answer no, with this caveat: The stories any news organization elects to cover can reflect the underlying values of the people who work there. That NPR has a reporter (Overby) covering the political-money beat full-time but nobody tracking the doings of corporate chieftains makes a statement about what NPR thinks is and isn't important. More generally, NPR exudes a kind of sympathetic humanism—what used to be called "bleeding heart." It gives much more airtime than does *The New York Times* or *Newsweek* to poor people, prisoners, Alzheimer's sufferers, illegal immigrants, and so forth and implicitly asks us to feel their pain. *ATC*'s recent series "Prison Diaries" endorsed no position with respect to the American justice system, but it gave voice—and therefore sympathy—to five inmates, four corrections officers, and one judge. (To NPR's discredit, no crime victims or victims' families got any airtime.)

NPR HAS ITS DETRACTORS, AND LIBERAL BIAS IS THEIR MOST COMMON CHARGE.

More than anything else, NPR is serious. Occasionally that seriousness leads to solemnity or to excessive scrupulousness about avoiding anything that smacks of celebrity, sensationalism, or glitz. No question, this quality can be annoying. But it appears negligible if you compare NPR, once again, to *The New Yorker*. From 1952 to 1987, William Shawn edited the magazine according to a set of principles he once described as follows: "If *The New Yorker* could be everything we want it to be, it would unfailingly combine thorough, accurate, fresh, inspired reporting with fiction that runs deep and says something that hasn't been said before; it would be funny as frequently as possible; it would contribute something of worth to the national discourse; it would cast light; it would be well-wishing and it would be humane. At an age when television screens are too often bright with nothing, we value substance. Amid chaos of images, we value coherence. We believe in the printed word. And we believe in clarity. And we believe in immaculate syntax. And in the beauty of the English language." Shawn wrote these words—in an unsigned "Talk of the Town" piece—in 1985. By that time his view of the magazine as a bulwark against creeping barbarism was too often leading it to self-indulgence, solemnity, and even a kind of arrogance (in subjecting readers to endless treatises on subjects Shawn thought were "important"). Shawn's reaction against the hype, coarseness, and celebrity fixation he saw in the culture at large eventually became overreaction.

Shawn set down his 1985 credo to assure readers that even though *The New Yorker* had then just been sold to media magnate S.I. Newhouse, it would always retain its values. He was wrong, of course: Two years later, Newhouse fired him. Five years after that, Tina Brown became editor of *The New Yorker* and turned it into a very different magazine.

Even since the early nineties, cultural barbarism has crept a good deal farther; I give you *The Drudge Report*, *The McLaughlin Group*, *InStyle* magazine, Eminem, *Temptation Island*. Commercial radio news is, for the most part, dead; news holes have shrunk at many newspapers and magazines; "analysis" often appears to be the journalistic equivalent of professional wrestling. Clearly, we need bulwarks more than ever. It seems to me that if you cut out the references to fiction and the printed word, NPR fits Shawn's criteria quite well—in some respects better than *The New Yorker* did. It has a far bigger audience, for one thing; *The New Yorker*'s circulation in the Shawn heyday was never much more than 500,000. Paradoxically, given that NPR is a nonprofit operation, it is much more solicitous to its audience. Although it never panders, it strives in each piece to take hold of listeners' interest and never let go.

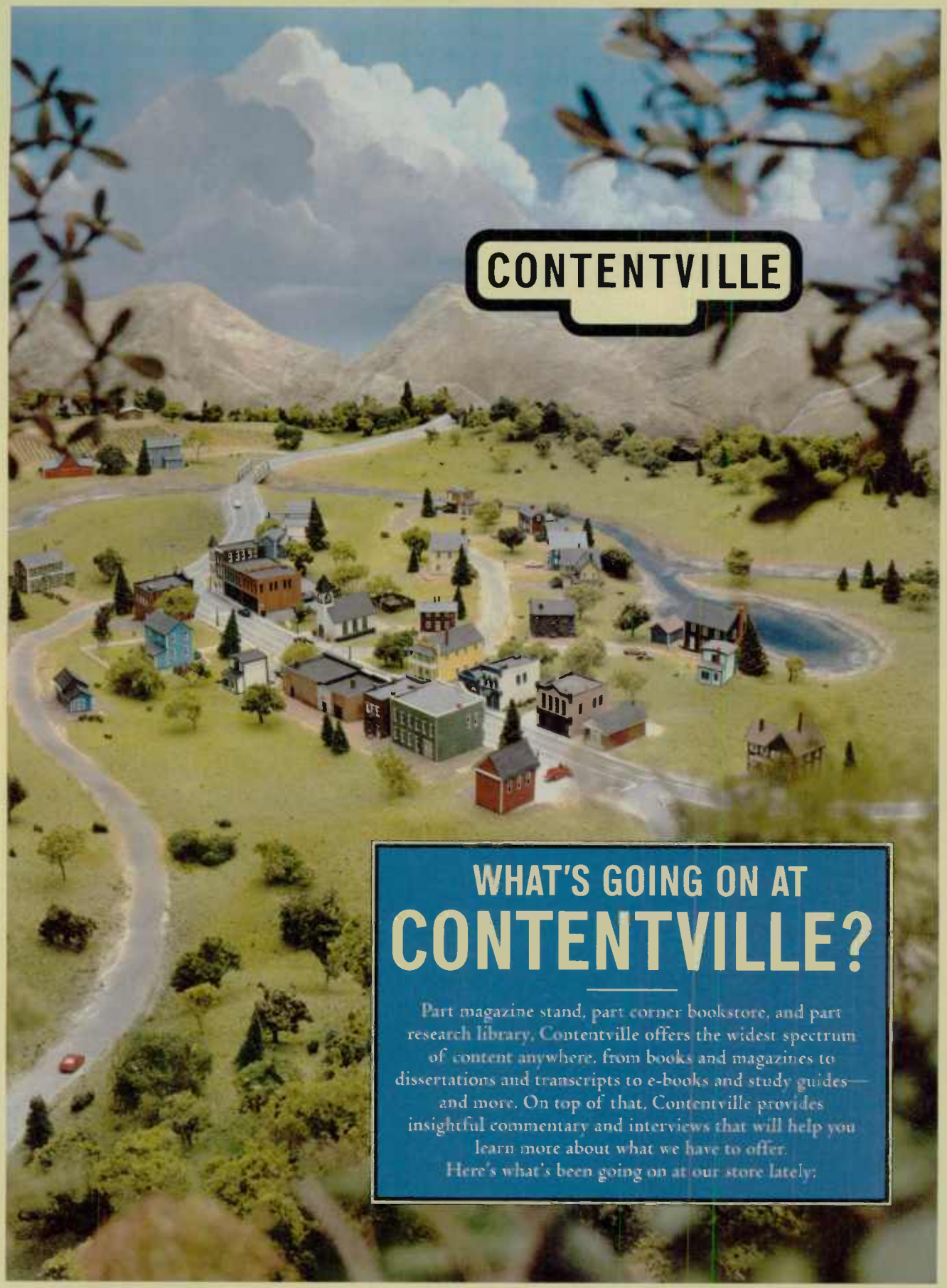
What sets NPR apart, above all, is sound. William Siemering's mission statement said NPR would "provide listeners with an aural esthetic experience which enriches and gives meaning to the human spirit." A key to the operation from the beginning has been the sound quality that FM clarity lets it indulge and develop: the "actualities," or bits of tape from the field, and the voices of the on-air personalities and their interview subjects. There is something about sound, especially people talking in their natural voices, that gets in your head the way print or pictures simply cannot do. "We look for a way to tell a story that takes you to a place," *ATC* cohost Linda Wertheimer told me. "TV pins you with a picture so that you don't embellish it in your head. In radio, you conjure up the image."

Add to that another quality of the medium: Unlike a print article, a radio report doesn't allow you to skip the ending, or the entire piece, if it's too dull. Radio must compel you from beginning to end; it is a quintessential storytelling medium, and NPR has learned to tell all kinds of stories very well. The peak of a great radio story is what NPR people call the driveway moment: the part that's so compelling that you're forced to wait behind the steering wheel until it's over, even if it's cold in the car and dinner needs to be made. For me and most NPR listeners, it's a familiar phenomenon.

WILLIAM SHAWN WAS AN NPR LISTENER, Susan Stamberg told me. In 1985, when E.B. White died, Stamberg called Shawn for a reaction.

"He told me he had just finished writing White's obituary," she said. "I said, 'Let's record it.'"

Shawn was a shy man—shier than anything even Garrison Keillor could dream of. In his first 16 years as *New Yorker* editor, he gave precisely zero interviews. I had thought that he had never appeared on radio or television. I was wrong: At Stamberg's prompting, he read his lovely tribute to White over NPR's air. ◘



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LITERARY WANDERER Author Geoff Dyer sets out to read Montaigne and contemplates the best strategy, examining the differences between competing editions and the merits of reading the selected versus the collected works.

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Myth, Media, and the Southern Mind (1985), by Stephen Smith
The South Through Time: A History of an American Region, Volumes I and II (1998), by John B. Boles

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WANG PING, Women's Rituals in China (Macalester College)
JOHN SHELTON REED, Southern Culture (University of North Carolina)
ELIZABETH REIS, Witch-Hunting in Colonial America (University of Oregon)
HAL K. ROTHMAN, Las Vegas (University of Nevada)
ROBERT RYDELL, World Fairs (Montana State University, Bozeman)
ELAINE SHOWALTER, Feminist Criticism and Women's Writing (Princeton University)
KENNETH L. SHROPSHIRE, Athletes and Race (University of Pennsylvania)
PETER SINGER, Ethics and Animals (Princeton University)
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DEBORAH TANNEN, Language in Daily Life (Georgetown University)
GIL TROY, First Ladies (McGill University)
MICHAEL WALZER, Jewish Political Thought (Institute for Advanced Study)
STEVEN WEINBERG, History of War (University of Texas, Austin)
G. EDWARD WHITE, History of Baseball (University of Virginia)
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Like a first novel, a Ph.D. dissertation is a revealingly intimate creation. *Lingua Franca*'s "Dissertations Deconstructed" brings these treasures to light every month. Read their analysis of dissertations by the following notable people:

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AN EXCERPT: From her time on President Bush's campaign team until her appointment as national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice must have endured a pedagogical challenge more difficult than any she had ever faced as a professor. President Bush claimed last year that Stanford's former provost can "explain foreign policy matters in a way I can understand." By that standard, Rice's dissertation, written in 1981, proves of considerable interest—even beyond the allure of its title. For one thing, it was completed with the assistance of one of her mentors, Dr. Joseph Korbel, the father of former secretary of state Madeleine Albright.

LINGUA FRANCA'S JOHN PLOTZ PROVIDES AN ANALYSIS OF LYNNE CHENEY'S "MATTHEW ARNOLD'S POSSIBLE PERFECTION: A STUDY OF THE KANTIAN STRAIN IN ARNOLD'S POETRY" (1970).

AN EXCERPT: In her many years as a leading conservative pundit, Lynne Cheney has made it her mission to attack academic leftists, political correctness, and relativism. In her recent book *Telling the Truth: Why Our Culture and Our Country Have Stopped Making Sense, and What We Can Do About It*, for example, she excoriates those who "in rejecting an independent reality, an externally verifiable truth, reject the foundational principles of the West." It may come as no surprise, then, that in 1970 Cheney received her Ph.D. for a dissertation on the poetry of Victorian social critic Matthew Arnold, whose canon of "the best that has been thought and said" is a trusty weapon in the traditionalist's armory. Cheney's dissertation, however, praises Arnold as poet, not pundit, and not for the reasons you might expect.

When Tom Wolfe writes of the cocktail party as "the focal point of writers' aspirations for interpersonal deference," it's hard not to think of his recent spat with Updike, Mailer, and Irving.

Dissertations Deconstructed by David Glenn, *Lingua Franca*

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"We believe the justices have used the bench to change Florida's election laws and usurp the authority of Florida's election officials."

George W. Bush, November 22, 2000

George W. Bush, Nov. 22, 2000—Governor Bush Delivers Statement Regarding The Florida Supreme Court Decision. **AN EXCERPT:** Two weeks after the presidential election, a court has decided that Florida's deadline for counting votes and certifying votes was not a deadline at all. The court has decided that the selective recounting of votes that have already been counted at least two times, and in some cases three or four times, will continue more than a week after the law says it should. And the court has ordered that the secretary of state must accept all this. The court had cloaked its ruling in legalistic language. But make no mistake, the court rewrote the law. It changed the rules, and it did so after the election was over.

E-BOOKS

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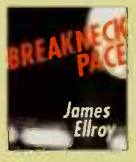
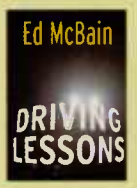
Charlotte Abbott

The E-Book Report, by Charlotte Abbott, covers the latest news in e-publishing. **AN EXCERPT:** Legions of Stephen King fans thought they'd been offered a windfall last autumn when he used his website to publish serial installments of *The Plant*—a book he started in the '80s and then abandoned. But the stiff plot made some readers wonder if the horror master had left it unfinished for a good reason. In any case, the serialization withered on the vine due to King's dissatisfaction with his experimental payment system, the expense and burden of publicizing each installment, and, perhaps, even his reluctance to finish the novel. In the end, King's second e-book (no longer available on his site) was more notable for the implications it raised about publishing in the digital age than for its innovations in electronic storytelling.

SOME ORIGINAL E-BOOKS FROM CONTENTVILLE PRESS



BREAKNECK PACE BY JAMES ELLROY



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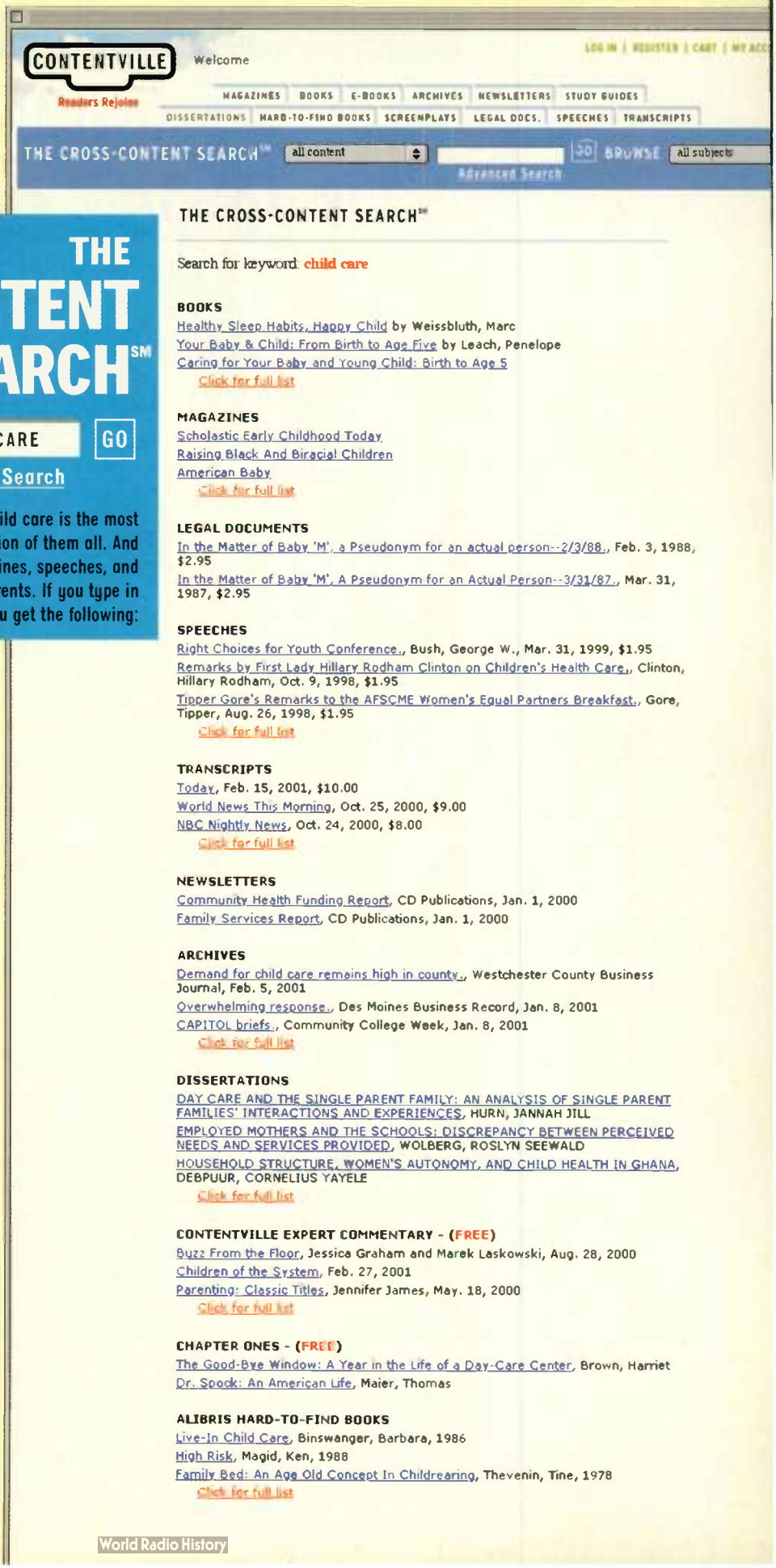

STUFF WE LIKE

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F-84 Thunderjets, the U.S. bombers used in the Korean War. Inset: A recent edition of *MHQ*.

MILITARY HISTORY QUARTERLY

SPECIAL-INTEREST JOURNAL

Popular writing about history is often a mishmash of politics and socioeconomics, with a compelling hero or villain thrown in to move everything along. We all know that the Allies won on D day and the South lost at Gettysburg, but most of us can't get more specific than that—battles and military strategy are left to the fringe enthusiast. *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* offers an excellent primer in what we've been missing. The lavishly illustrated, hardcover quarterly features pieces by both journalists and academics, and its contributing editors include Stephen E. Ambrose, Caleb Carr, and John Keegan. "We try for scholarly but accessible military history," says associate editor Christopher J. Anderson. *MHQ*'s appetites are wide-ranging: The spring 2001 edition contains a profile of a young, Civil War–battle artist and a piece on the modern American highway system, begun in 1919 after a transcontinental convoy—led by young Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower—highlighted the need for modern roads. A regular department, "Fighting Words," describes common terms that have leaked from military usage into the vernacular: The phrases "eyeball to eyeball" and "brainwashing," for example, both originated during the Korean War. ELIZABETH ANGELL

CAROLYN HAX

***WASHINGTON POST* COLUMNIST**

Four years ago, *Washington Post* news editor Carolyn Hax, then 30, complained about the dearth of decent advice columns for teens and twentysomethings. "I said to my editor, 'We should have a snotty 30-year-old writing one,'" she remembers—someone like herself. Soon Hax was signed up to write "Tell Me About It," which runs twice a week in the *Post* and is now syndicated to about 90 newspapers around the country. Hax says her interest in giving advice was born of personal frustration: "I was extremely shy and used to cower a lot from things that scared me." (Things like giving strangers advice.) That has changed. As Hax wrote in a recent column, "Don't reach down, reach up—for the bright and groovy guy, for the promotion, for the moon. Try to get that drivelly essay published. Audition for everything. Apply to a hot college. Wipe out, look stupid, try again." SETH MNOOKIN

Unlikely advice columnist Carolyn Hax

TOP: UNITED STATES AIR FORCE; CENTER: PETER BERSON

STUFF WE LIKE

JALOUSE

FASHION MAGAZINE

The three-year-old French magazine *Jalouse* launched an American edition in March with an eye toward exchange—not just across what editor in chief Stephen Todd calls the "glamour axis" between New York and Paris, but among the people featured in its pages. In its premiere issue, *Jalouse* publishes a transatlantic phone call between director Sofia Coppola and designer Stella McCartney and records a dinner-time chat among a group of art- and fashion-world denizens; the reader eavesdrops on the twists and turns of such gossipy and lightweight conversations. The magazine also offers book and art reviews, profiles (director Wong Kar-wai, musician Mekon), and features about French-envy and Old Navy pajamas. The articles are brief (presumably to make room for all those clothes) and quirkily juxtaposed: A celebration of eighties designer Claude Montana, for example, is directly followed by a piece on "the spooky science of Biometrics." EMILY CHENOWETH

***Jalouse* straddles the "glamour axis."**

THE DARTMOUTH

COLLEGE NEWSPAPER

Student newspapers are proving grounds for aspiring reporters, but the hottest story is often some esoteric academic squabble or the furor over a campus drinking crackdown. Last winter, however, students at *The Dartmouth*, Dartmouth College's daily independent newspaper, got a crash course in covering a major story: the gruesome January slayings of Dartmouth professors Half and Susanne Zantop in their home near the college's Hanover, New Hampshire, campus. *The Dartmouth* broke the story on its website the night the bodies were found, and although police and prosecutors have been unusually tight-lipped, Dartmouth reporters have diligently covered the case ever since.

The students have held their own against the major dailies investigating the killings—including *The Boston Globe*, the *Boston Herald*, and the Manchester, New Hampshire, *Union Leader*—by reporting exclusive stories on the authorities' leads. According to *Dartmouth* managing editor Mark Bubriski, a junior at the college who broke the story, the paper's coverage has been cited five times by The Associated Press and twice by the *Globe*. "It's been rewarding," says Bubriski. "Since we got the story out first, and broke a lot of information, the police and DAs and investigators have respected us. They've called us back." Bubriski says that between *The Dartmouth* and his classes, he was getting only a half-hour of sleep in the days following the murders. Since then, things have quieted down a bit, but Bubriski says he didn't mind being at the center of the action: "It was kind of nice covering not just the regular college stuff." JOHN COOK

An archive of The Dartmouth*'s Zantop coverage can be found online at thedartmouth.com.*

SPORTSWRITING WE LIKE

DAN SHAUGHNESSY

***BOSTON GLOBE* WRITER**

The Boston sports press is one of the toughest in America, and Dan Shaughnessy, columnist for *The Boston Globe*, reflects the town's unforgiving but always faithful relationship with its professional teams. Shaughnessy's hallmark is unreserved candor, and he has drawn the ire (and expletive-laced tirades) of such Boston sports stars as Wade Boggs, Mo Vaughn, and Carl Everett. Although Shaughnessy enjoys picking a fight, he's not all doom and gloom—he writes evocative color commentary as well. "The death of Dale Earnhardt was nothing less than a presidential assassination," he wrote from Winter Haven, Florida, after the recent NASCAR tragedy. "Jeep dealers flew their American flags at half-staff and radio stations played a lot of Lynyrd Skynyrd in Earnhardt's honor." JOSEPH GOMES

Dan Shaughnessy enjoys a fight.

"THE SCORE"

***THE VILLAGE VOICE*'S SPORTS SECTION**

Tucked in the back of *The Village Voice*, the paper's two-page sports section—called "The Score"—offers articles and analysis that routinely skewer the sporting establishment. Much of the section is what you'd expect from a left-wing alternative weekly: coverage of protests about Nike's overseas labor practices and criticism of public funding for private sports stadiums. But at its best, the *Voice* celebrates sports at its quirkiest—covering underground table-tennis tournaments, for example, or synchronized swimming teams, a gay hockey association, and the world bike messenger championships. A regular feature is "Uni Watch," which tracks the most minute of style changes in athletic uniforms (yes, the San Francisco Giants did indeed narrow the piping on their pants during the 1999–2000 off-season). The *Voice* takes sports seriously but not reverently: During the NCAA basketball tournament, the paper rates top college basketball programs not by their prospects but by the magnitude of their scandals. STEPHEN TOTILO

CONQUISTADORS

DOCUMENTARY

In the early 1500s, small groups of Spaniards landed in the New World and toppled two of its largest civilizations, the Aztecs and the Incas. In the four-hour series *Conquistadors*, British historian Michael Wood retells this story as he follows in the footsteps of Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, and other explorers. Wood visits Extremadura, Spain, the home of Cortés, and then tracks the conquistador from his Yucatán landing to his triumph over the Aztecs in what is now Mexico City. Wood follows the tortuous travels of Cabeza de Vaca, shipwrecked on an island off present-day Texas in 1528, where he was cared for by Native Americans.

From *Conquistadors*: Michael Wood (left) builds a balsa raft in Ecuador.

TOP LEFT: PETER BERSON; RIGHT: BBC TWO

De Vaca reappeared eight years later on the Pacific coast of Mexico, where he became a champion of the region's indigenous peoples. Wood calls his work "history as adventure travel," adding that he quickly realized "500 years is a very short time in history. We're still living with the effects of the conquistadors. You can see them everywhere." ERIC UMANSKY

Conquistadors *airs in May on PBS.*

ENTERING GERMANY

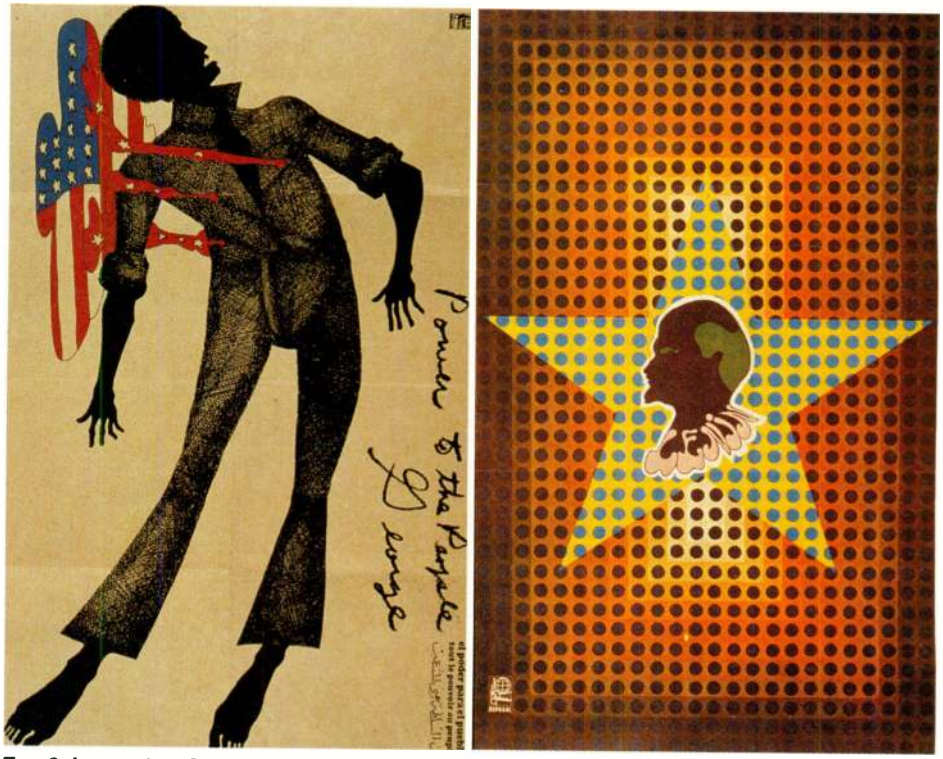
PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK

In 1945, at the end of World War II, American soldier Tony Vaccaro chose to remain in Germany—and take pictures. Vaccaro, who photographed the country during its occupation, says he was looking to document the human side of postwar reconciliation: "Would the Germans—when faced with the Americans in the occupation—become friends with the Americans?" From 1945 to 1949, Vaccaro, who went on to shoot for *Look* and *Life*, took the pictures now collected in *Entering Germany* (Taschen). The black-and-white photos show Germans rebuilding their lives and businesses amid the cemetery-like ruins of Frankfurt and Berlin; German children are seen playing with and embracing American GIs. Vaccaro says the children, too young to comprehend politics or lingering resentments, "cut right through the lies." *Entering Germany* records the rebirth, and rebuilding, of a nation.

DEREK LOOSVELT

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: ALFREDO GONZALEZ ROSTGAARD, SUSANNA RAAB, TONY VACCARO

Tony Vaccaro's *Entering Germany* depicts a legless veteran working in 1948 Frankfurt.



Two Cuban posters from the American Institute of Graphic Arts show in New York

"¡PROPAGANDA!"

CUBAN ART SHOW

The images from the exhibition "¡Propaganda! Cuban Political and Film Posters" look like contraband: After all, the United States suspended formal relations with its Caribbean neighbor more than 40 years ago. Yet the posters seem familiar, too—the strident, anti-imperialist messages are laid out in designs that draw from pop art, Latin American religious etchings, and psychedelia.

An inexpensive way of broadcasting political ideology, posters have long been popular with Cuban revolutionaries and their government. Indeed, the medium has become one of Cuba's most internationally recognized art forms. The 100-poster exhibit includes many images of guerrilla fighter Che Guevara, as well as Warholian caricatures of Nixon (advertising a Marxist conference in 1969) and Lenin (depicted against a dotted, psychedelic background). The tiny, silk-screened icon of Lenin's balding head typifies the cult of personality prevalent in Cuba.

"With billboards the message is to sell; the poster is used to influence," says Ric Grefé, executive director of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, which is hosting the exhibit in New York through June (the show may travel afterward). The Cuban poster artists, says Grefé, "were advertising something bigger."

ANNA SCHNEIDER-MAYERSON

JAKE TAPPER

POLITICAL PUNDIT

Jake Tapper is an incendiary chronicler of politics. During the past year, his dispatches on *Salon.com* made for some of the most colorful—and dishy—reading on the heated Bush-Gore battle. So it's surprising to hear Tapper say he didn't feel comfortable arguing the side of the left on CNN's *Crossfire* last November. "I'm more middle-of-the-road," he says, and his campaign reporting took both sides to task with equal relish. But Tapper now has a new venue in which to shine: CNN's *Take Five*, a political talk show featuring younger pundits like *The New Republic*'s Michelle Cottle and the *New York Post*'s Robert George, set to launch in March. With a new book

Jake Tapper, a host of *Take Five*

STUFF WE LIKE

on the 2000 presidential campaign, *Down and Dirty*, out as well, Tapper looks to be the rarest of political pundits: one who reports and also opines. SETH MNOOKIN

UNIFORM

BOOK ON CLOTHES

Uniforms can be erotic and inspire fear. They can equalize and differentiate. They can signal authority and rebellion. With such double-edged power, they often become a shorthand for identity: An oversize beret transformed Patty Hearst into Tania just as a crew cut morphs a rebellious teenager into an Army recruit.

Uniform: Order and Disorder (Charta/Pitti Immagine) explores this transformative potential and argues that military style is fashion's "subterranean constant," from Mao jackets to infantry boots, camouflage, cargo pants, and khakis. "We had to come to grips with the opposite poles of the mythology of the uniform," write editors Francesco Bonami, Maria Luisa Frisa, and Stefano Tonchi. Deploying an eclectic collage of war reportage, advertisements, movie stills, propaganda, and sometimes sarcastic commentary, the book catalogs how uniforms have influenced universal icons and global patterns of dress over the past 50 years. Who is Castro without his faded fatigues? What's a punk rocker without a dog collar? The answers and the discussion of how fashion has co-opted what should be its antithesis—mass-produced, industrial uniformity—conclude that we are what we wear, and that eventually, on the battlefield of fashion, we all wear uniforms.

JECA TAUDTE

Two models in 1986 wearing Thierry Mugler, from *Uniform*

BELLEVUE

DOCUMENTARY

There are few more disturbing places than emergency psychiatric wards, where trauma is thick in the air but the injuries are invisible, inside people's heads. This is one reason mental illness is so often misunderstood and feared: It is seen as not quite real, its victims somehow to blame. And how can demons and delusions be treated by modern medicine, anyway? The new documentary *Bellevue* depicts the mental-health-care system in action, offering an intimate, humanizing view of patients in crisis. The message of the documentary, says Maryann DeLeo, its director, is that "mental illness can happen to anyone."

DeLeo filmed at New York City's Bellevue Hospital for an entire year (1999), following patients and doctors, tracking progress and setbacks, and learning the rhythms of daily life at one of the most famous mental hospitals in the country. She was the first person ever allowed to film there (the hospital was persuaded by her long-term commitment to the project), and the patients seen in the documentary gave permission to be filmed, as did their doctors. We meet a wide range of people—from professionals to the homeless—who are depressed or schizophrenic or obsessive-compulsive. The film is sometimes hard to watch: Terrified patients are seen tied down with restraints, screaming. But success stories are also included, patients for whom medication and therapy begin to work, a life pieced together again. DeLeo says she already misses her time in the hospital: "You get addicted to it." LUKE BARR

Bellevue airs on HBO in May.

A patient in the Bellevue Hospital emergency psychiatric ward, as seen in *Bellevue*

STUFF *YOU* LIKE

MOUNTAIN GAZETTE

The iconic Denver monthly *Mountain Gazette* had a great run between 1972 and 1979, when it published such noted authors as Edward Abbey, Wendall Berry, and George Sibley. The newly resurrected *Mountain Gazette*—which features "Politics and the Power of the F-Word," an article by Dr. Hunter S. Thompson—is a grassroots effort by M. John Fayhee of Dillon, Colorado, a former contributing editor at *Backpacker* and author of seven books, and Curtis Robinson, a former editor of *The Aspen Daily News*. In a small office in Breckenridge, Colorado, the two oversee the operation, from editing to writing to selling ads. They also drive all over the Rockies and the Sierras to deliver the newsprint-stock magazines.

The newly resurrected *Mountain Gazette*

What's most appealing about the *Gazette* is its refusal to pander to the Mountain Dew generation, with its Xtreme sports mentality that shouts, "Get out of my way." The *Gazette* fosters an anti-Xtreme mind-set (see the article "Cheap, Simple and Three-quarters Dead: A Case for Resurrecting the A-Frame" in the March/April issue). Several hundred thousand mountain lovers have already read enough magazine stories about 20-year-olds kayaking off 100-foot waterfalls.

FROM DAN DUNN, IN LOS ANGELES

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LEFT: PETER BERSON

Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition

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NO-RISK MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE!

divorced from reality

Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman wouldn't talk about their divorce. Still, stories had to be written. So bring on the rumors, conjecture, and contradictions. BY KATIE ROIPHE

On February 5, a spokesperson from the public-relations firm PMK issued the following statement: "Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman announced today that they have regretfully decided to separate. The couple, who married in 1990, stressed their great respect for each other both personally and professionally. Citing the difficulties inherent in diverging careers which constantly keep them apart, they concluded that an amicable separation seemed best for both of them at this time." Neither Cruise nor Kidman said a word, yet because they're such prominent stars, a story had to be written.

So what happens when a story about celebrity divorce must be wrung from a few terse sentences in a press release? How does the script unfold when the actor and actress involved don't have speaking roles? In the absence of a real story, certain conventions come into play. First, there are always eyewitness accounts of how the couple appears to be taking the situation: the written equivalent of paparazzi shots. The British tabloid *The Sun*, in one of the more than 300 articles about Cruise and Kidman, reported that Cruise "looked very tense...he looked like a man with a huge weight on his shoulders." Rival tabloid *The Mirror* reported that "Tom didn't seem to have a care in the world as he drove." In their desperation for copy, reporters inflate the most obvious elements of a narrative into breathy exclusives. *People* magazine reported Kidman's mother's statement—"We are all very upset"—as a scoop. The fact that the mother of a woman in the midst of a divorce should be upset was perceived as so newsworthy that other publications—*USA Today*, *The Mail on Sunday*, and *The Mirror* among them—immediately picked it up.

IN THE COVERAGE OF CELEBRITY CULTURE, IDEALIZATION AND CONTEMPT CAN EXIST SIDE BY SIDE.

Another convention of journalism about celebrity divorces is to write about how perfect the marriage seemed—CNN called it "that fairy tale romance"; *Entertainment Weekly* called it "this storybook romance"; and Fox News called it "our Norman Rockwell portrait"—and then declare how shocking the disintegration is. The New York *Daily News* reported that "the sudden bust-up stunned Hollywood insiders." *The Sun* reported that the announcement "stunned Tinsel Town," and in the *Los Angeles Times*, "the news seemed to catch many in the industry by surprise." But many articles also speculated about the marriage's demise: rumors about Cruise's sex life, rumors of the couple's consultations with a sex therapist. Often, within a single article, the marriage is portrayed as a sham and a fairy tale: The breakup is shocking and yet the marriage was doomed all along. The tone is alternately snide and flattering, as in an article in the *New York Post* that expressed surprise at the couple's separation just before it quoted Cruise's first wife's complaints about his sexual performance, or similar articles that ran in the *Daily News* and *Entertainment Weekly*, among others. The logical inconsistency reflects a confusion at the heart of the coverage of celebrity culture: that idealization and contempt can exist side by side.

The plot of a celebrity divorce has to be simple, which means there has to be a reason the couple broke up. Not many reasons. Not a slow decline over time. Not the ineffable drift of two people out of love. There has to be one clear cause. They broke up because Cruise wanted to raise their children as Scientologists and Kidman didn't. They broke up because "Kidman has changed" (in the *Daily Mail*); because Cruise had become "weirder and weirder" (in the *Sunday Mirror*); and because "Kidman was jealous of her husband's superstar career" (in the *Daily News*).

In order for any divorce story to be dramatic, there needs to be a victim, and if the victim isn't obvious, the newspapers and magazines invent one. In this situation Kidman became the wife potentially left penniless by a cruel husband. *People* reported that "Cruise, in fact, has gone so far as to ask the court not to even consider his paying any alimony." Much was made in many publications of Cruise's request, even though those same publications report that Kidman is herself worth more than $100 million. The plight of the victim is further embellished by a collection of vaporous "friends," "insiders," and "sources," none of whom is named and many of whom offer conflicting reports. In the *Sunday Mirror*, Kidman "has been left 'traumatized and shocked' by the speed of the divorce

action," and in the *Daily Mail*, "there are signs she is far from devastated." The *New York Post* reported that "Cruise...stunned Kidman...by filing for divorce." But in the British personality magazine *Hello!*, "she was the one who actually pushed for the split."

Another way to create drama is to make the divorce as ugly as possible. And the best way to do that is to fabricate a betrayal. The *Daily Mail* reported that "Hollywood insiders" hinted that Kidman was having an affair with George Clooney. The New York *Daily News* also reported that "one source said Cruise had developed a romance with another woman, but [Cruise's spokesperson] denied that a third party might be involved in the breakup." If an infidelity can't be concocted, the next best thing is for the couple to be betrayed by their friends. Drumming up a little intrigue to that effect, the *New York Post*'s "Page Six" gossip column reported, "With friends like Martin Sheen, Tom Cruise might become a recluse." And what did Martin Sheen do? He appeared on *Access Hollywood*, a national television show, and said, "If I could see him right now, I would say, 'Hang in there, man.'"

In the absence of news about the Cruise and Kidman split, journalists were left speculating.

The most analytical convention of the genre is delving into the breakup's origins. The journalist tries to find the telling moment at which the marriage started to unravel. Because no one—aside from Kidman and Cruise—really knows what happened, the media have to drag out bits of previously observed trivia and imbue them with significance. Like when *The Sunday Times* of London reported: "When they flew to Australia just over a year ago...Cruise is said to have danced 'provocatively' with a young model." *The Sunday Times* also reported that Kidman was spotted just before Christmas in a restaurant, "'looking unhappy.'"

Why is this breakup so irresistible? Why do commentators who have nothing to say feel called upon to say something? For one thing, divorce is the place where celebrity worship collides with schadenfreude, where people who spend their lives in bitter fawning get to unleash their own resentment. On CBS's *The Early Show*, a gossip columnist for the *Daily News* observed: "I think, really, you're dealing with very narcissistic people," a statement that would have been no less true a month earlier, but not something the columnist would have been able to say if the news were about the actor earning $50 million for his next picture.

And why do people want to read these stories? The recycled trivia, the incoherent, patched-together theories, the psychological analysis from "friends" who may not be intelligent enough to read the directions on a bottle of hair dye, the harlequin clichés about "shattered Nicole" and "heartbroken Tom"? It may be simply the desire for bad things to happen to famous people. These stories contain no solid information: They are filled, instead, with gauzy speculations and bits of rumor, which are contradicted later by other gauzy speculations and other bits of rumor. Reading these stories, then, is less about consuming information than it is about reveling in the ordinary pain of extraordinary people. The only thing we learn, really, is right there in the press release: "Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman announced today that they have regretfully decided to separate." ◘

DAVID C. WONG

found in translation

The translator of Ryszard Kapuściński's latest book tells how caring for the words of a literary star is solitary, obsessive—and just plain scary. BY KLARA GLOWCZEWSKA

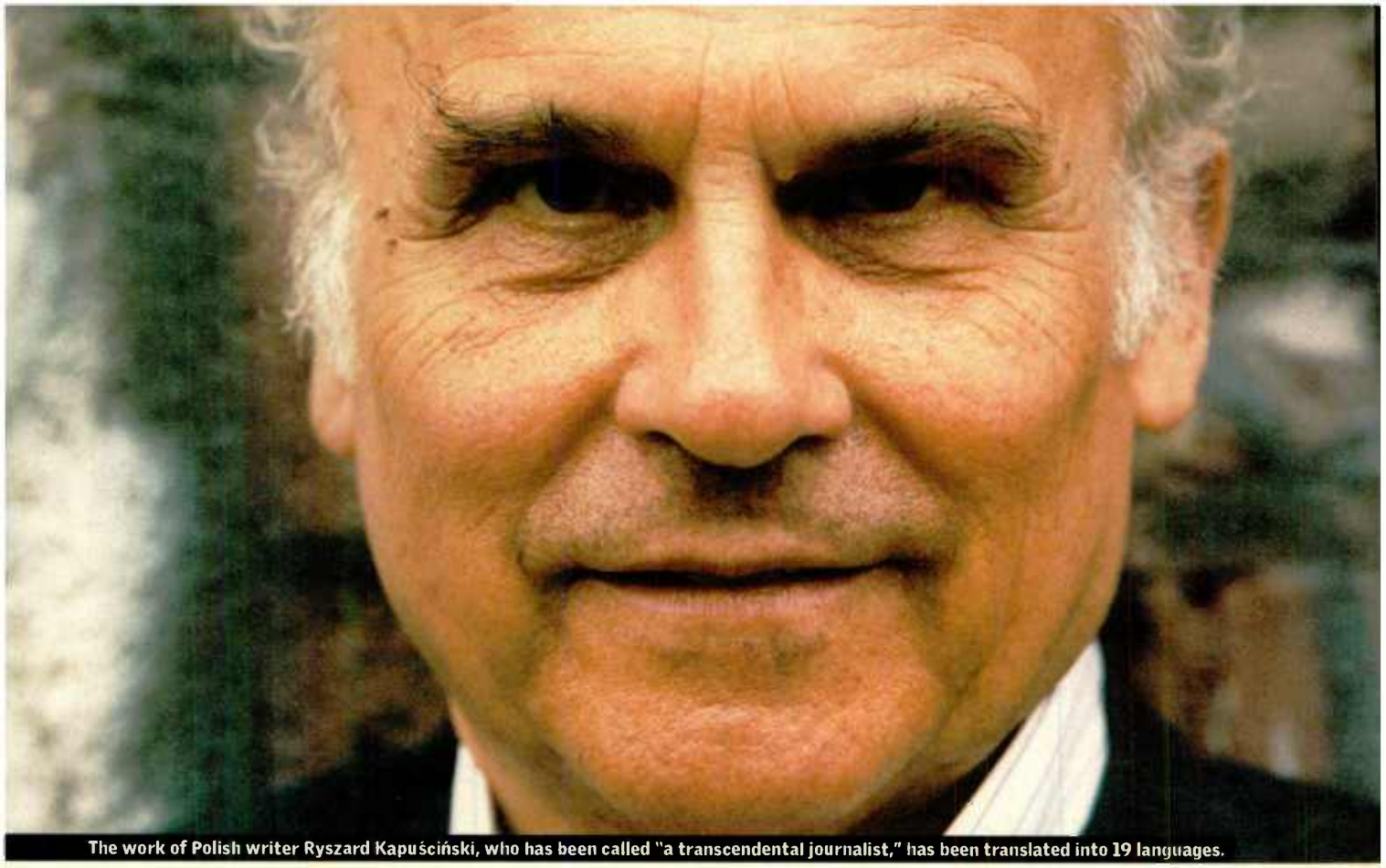
Several months ago I finished translating from the Polish *The Shadow of the Sun*, by Ryszard Kapuściński, a cult figure in literary circles worldwide. This, his sixth book in English, is about Africa and is based on his four decades of travel throughout the continent. On a corner of my desk still sits the first translated—it would be a stretch to call it "English"—draft: some 600-plus, essentially inchoate manuscript pages. English words, yes, but interspersed with parentheses containing alternates and synonyms and notes to myself about echoes and redundancies, even the occasional obdurate Polish phrase, and with a syntax and grammatical structure that is neither Polish nor English. I shudder to think what Kapuściński—not to mention the book's editors at Knopf, who had issued the translation contract and who would be paying my fee—would have thought had they ever demanded a look at the work-in-progress. The first draft is a mess, a sort of verbal primal soup out of which, I hoped as I "wrote" it, something coherent and shapely would eventually emerge. The sole disciplines imposed upon this draft were that every word and turn of phrase of the original text be accounted for (there is arguably no translating sin greater than the accidental or intentional skipping of words or passages) and that the various possible English renderings of each be considered and duly noted.

I have now translated three books from Polish: a novel, *The Beautiful Mrs. Seidenman*, by Andrzej Szczypiorski (Grove Press, 1989); Kapuściński's *Imperium*, a personal, detailed exploration of the bewildering complexities of the Soviet empire (Knopf, 1994); and now *The Shadow of the Sun*. With each the first phase has always been a process of roughing up the polished sentences of the original work, distressing them, shaking out potential meanings and phrasings (although I can easily imagine other translators having other methods—say, needing to perfect each paragraph before so much as glancing at the next). Having committed this outrage upon the original, I then put aside the Polish text and never look at it again. So, too, my dog-eared Polish-English dictionary, an indispensable crutch in stage one, helpful not for understanding Polish, my first language, but for quick access to the words' English counterparts, a kind of bootleg thesaurus. Translation is a process of metamorphosis: To succeed, words and meaning must be made to inhabit a different language as comfortably and organically as they did their native one. For this to occur, the original language must, in a sense, be left behind. It must recede, or the new language will never come fully and successfully to the fore. And so with the cadence and flavor of the Polish text only a memory—albeit a strong and compelling one—my focus from here on is the English alone.

What this means in practice is revision after revision, rewriting once, rewriting again, and then one more time—hundreds of hours before the computer screen. It's solitary; it's obsessive; and in a compulsive sort of way, it's deeply satisfying. You're Adam before the Fall, naming everything in the garden. How exactly should I render *bujne bugenville*? Bougainvillea that is "riotous" or "lush" or "dense" or "exuberant"? Even after I pick one, I can change my mind later—and then change it again. Should *miażdżyć* be "crush," "smash," "grind," or "pulverize"? The Polish *biedny*: Should I say simply "poor," or is something harsher, more dramatic called for, like "wretched" or "destitute"? In a given context, is *szałas* better written as "shanty," "hut," "shed," or "lean-to"? Is an activity "hazardous" or "risky"? Sometimes the choice depends on nuances of meaning; at other times, it's purely an aural thing. I chose "risky" over "hazardous" in the sentence "Traveling the roads of Ethiopia is often arduous and risky" because I didn't like the sound of "arduous" and "hazardous" so close together. Hundreds of thousands of minuscule decisions, each one perhaps insignificant in and of itself, but in the aggregate directly determining the book's entire verbal texture

Klara Glowczewska starts by "roughing up" the text.

BRIGITTE LACOMBE



The work of Polish writer Ryszard Kapuściński, who has been called "a transcendental journalist," has been translated into 19 languages.

GILLES PERESS/MAGNUM PHOTOS

and whether the English version will come out wooden and pedestrian or smooth, elastic, well-paced, resonant.

Kapuściński's style is normally concrete, spare, almost minimalist. But this economy of expression is at times interrupted by long, complex, almost phantasmagoric riffs, more difficult and time-consuming to translate: the sensation of impending heatstroke while lost in the Serengeti, for instance. The words, images, metaphors follow one another fast and furious—relentless, convoluted waves of them. It's good, but it's tricky. Another translator of Kapuściński once succumbed to the temptation to nip and tuck. A lyrical page or two was reduced to a few sentences of unadorned fact. Mr. K. noticed.

Here is my first pass at translating Kapuściński's description of what brings relief to a victim of malaria:

"Really the only thing that can immediately help us is if someone covers us. But not simply cover us with a blanket or quilt. The point is (*chodzi o to*) that this covering crush us (press down upon us, bear down upon us, weigh heavily) with its weight, that it enclose us (shut us, hem in, hedge in) in some compressing (cramped, clenched, clasping, constricting, squeezing) form (shape; forma), that it crush (smash, grind, crunch) us. At that moment, we dream of such a situation of being crushed. We want so much that a planing roller (*WALEC DROGOWY*) would roll over us!"

And here is the final version:

"The only thing that really helps is if someone covers you. But not simply throws a blanket or quilt over you. This thing you are being covered with must crush you with its weight, squeeze you, flatten you. You dream of being pulverized. You desperately long for a steamroller to pass over you."

But here's the thing: Far from being a solitary, solipsistic act—as this sifting and weighing of words suggests—translating is a profoundly connected one. To translate is to enter into an intimate relationship both with the original text and with its author. As a translator you are responsible, as any writer is, to yourself. And of course you want the book to read well; your name is on it, too. More important and problematic, however, is your responsibility to the author whose book you are translating. Every decision you make must have one goal only: to showcase as effectively as possible the sense and style of another, to mimic the author as much as you can.

There are moments of panic. Will I ever get this right? Will Kapuściński like it? (He is a proficient English speaker and reader.) Will it still be his book? It is daunting to be, to a certain degree, the keeper of a writer's reputation. And this is especially nerve-racking with a writer like Kapuściński, who, despite his personal modesty and charm—he must be the most unassuming person I know—is unquestionably a literary superstar, about whom John le Carré once effused: "If García Márquez is the grand wizard of modern fiction, Kapuściński is the conjurer extraordinary of modern reportage."

Ryszard Kapuściński was born in 1932 in the small town of Pińsk, in what was then eastern Poland and is now Belarus. Reporting for decades for the Polish news media from Asia, Latin America, and Africa, he witnessed 27 coups and revolutions and was sentenced to death no fewer than four times. Except for *Imperium*, about the Soviet Union, a subject close to home, his books chronicle his decades of experience in the Third World: *The Emperor* (about the fall of Ethiopia's Haile Selassie), *Shah of Shahs* (about the Iranian Revolution), *Another Day of Life* (about the last days of Portuguese Angola), and *The Soccer War* (a wide-ranging collection of reports from the Third World). His books have been

translated into 19 languages and universally acclaimed for their exquisite storytelling and a prose at once poetically simple and seductively knowing. Kapuściński is a fearless reporter—why sip cool drinks by a hotel pool chatting up dignitaries when instead you can embark on a weeklong trek with nomads across the burning desert and learn viscerally what it means to pray you'll reach the next well in time?—and his eye is finely and infallibly tuned to the human drama behind the headlines. It is no accident that he has been compared to an earlier, equally peripatetic and famous Polish writer, Joseph Conrad. (*That* Mr. K., however—Conrad in Polish is Konrad—wrote in English, and I would like to assure everyone that despite suggestions I've received to the contrary, there will never be a need for a new translation of *Heart of Darkness*.)

It is scary to tackle the text of a writer whom a reviewer has been inspired to call "a transcendental journalist." (Kapuściński himself was certainly—and understandably—cautious about me. He didn't ask me to translate a book, *Imperium*, until I had done a handful of shorter pieces for magazines.) But it is also the high quality of Kapuściński's prose that, paradoxically, makes the work easier. If the original text moves and delights you, it lightens the sheer hard labor that translation so often is: the interminable to-ing and fro-ing, the trying out, discarding, adopting of words. It is gratifying to see how, by dint of myriad small decisions, adjustments, substitutions, interpretations, the English equivalent of a pleasing passage starts to take shape. Translating must be, to some extent, a labor of love (one would certainly never do it for the money), and it is satisfying finally to render in English Kapuściński's prose and imagery. Take the way he describes an everyday African miracle: the elegance and agility with which a countrywoman, balancing an immense bundle on her head, one child strapped to her body, leading another by the hand, executes the "maneuver of a tightrope walker taking his first step above the abyss" and, smoothly finding her equilibrium, disembarks from a crowded bus and disappears down a narrow path into the bush. The graphically evoked horrors of Idi Amin's Uganda are counterbalanced by the description of a shirt being ironed by a villager outside the capital: "It is a masterpiece of patchwork, of collage and pop art, a testament to the heights of imagination attained by those hardworking tailors whose little shops we passed driving here along the road from Kampala. For this shirt had its holes patched so many times, there are so many bits and pieces of the most varied fabrics, colors, and textures sewn into it, that it is no longer possible to ascertain the color and material of that original, primary, ancestral shirt, the one that had set into motion the long process of alterations and transfigurations."

The translator is like those tailors, only her mission is to ascertain that beneath all the alterations and transfigurations, that original primary text remains, clearly visible and alive below its screen of new sounds and the imperatives of a different language.

BY DINT OF MYRIAD SMALL DECISIONS, THE ENGLISH EQUIVALENT OF A PLEASING PASSAGE STARTS TO TAKE SHAPE.

You can depart from the original where absolutely necessary—but only to more accurately serve the original intent. (There is only one element of *The Shadow of the Sun*, in fact, that required a radical reimagining: the title. It was *Heban*, or "ebony," which in Polish is free of the sociocultural baggage the word carries in English. Kapuściński himself proposed the English title.)

So one has sweat every word, every sentence, every paragraph and passage. It's all there now, down to a more sensible 400-plus manuscript pages (once all the parenthetical synonyms have been resolved and removed, the flabby constructions expunged). I send the manuscript to Kapuściński. By now I'm not too nervous. It's probably just that we've done this for so long. I'm fairly certain of what will happen after he reads the manuscript. He'll call from Warsaw. "Good," he'll say. "Thank you. You make my book sound good in English." Still, every time I hear it, it's an enormous relief. He responds quickly. Although I've never asked, my guess is he skims, getting a sense of the flow and the flavor rather than comparing the original against the translation word for word. I can't blame him—what a job that would be. Still, it's a supreme act of faith, when one considers that the English edition of his book, as he reminded me only recently, will be the most widely distributed (and therefore read) version in the world, not only published in the United States and Britain but also distributed throughout Asia, India, Australia, and Africa.

Then it's off to the editor. Some grammatical lapses (at times the pull of the Polish language is just too hard to shake) and some factual queries from the copy editors need to be looked into. These I convey to Kapuściński. Most have to do with matters of obscure geography. His proper names are rarely those of capital cities, but more often those of forsaken hamlets, small towns in the middle of nowhere, riverine tributaries, stretches of desert, refugee camps, fierce and remote borderlands. So from the copy editors: "Are you sure that Gambela [near Ethiopia's border with the Sudan] is a town as well as a region? We've found the region in Encarta, but the region only"—a question only Kapuściński could answer, which he does promptly, decisively, and at times a tad impatiently ("Of course it's the name of the town. It's the town and the region! I was there!").

And then it's over. Almost. The book jacket arrives (a publisher's courtesy), then the page proofs, then a bound galley. In a 1941 essay, Vladimir Nabokov wrote that the translator must, among other things, "be able to act, as it were, the real author's part." He was referring, of course, not to a *Talented Mr. Ripley* moment, but to the necessity of being able to mimic the author's "tricks of demeanor and speech, his ways and his mind." Still, in his notion of acting the part of the real author, I confess, lies the vaguely illicit thrill of translating. For a brief, shining moment, when the finished book reaches my desk, the first reviews appear (oh please, please don't fault the translation!), why, I can almost imagine that I wrote *The Shadow of the Sun*. ◘

web 2001

Last year—the same year that brought so many Chapter 11 filings, office fire sales, and pink slips to the dotcom world—150 million people, half of all Americans, went online. As the numbers swelled, our expectations did, too: We crave something more refined—and less impersonal—than what the big-media sites and corporate portals can offer. As this special Web 2001 report shows, the next chapter of the Internet may be about websites that are smart and intimate and, most important, reflect the folks behind them.

HUMAN PORTALS

Giant Internet portals are struggling. News outfits have cut staffs. So why is the Net getting more interesting? A surge of independent-thinking Web enthusiasts—the human portals—are cataloging data and news on their sites and making us rethink how we get information.

BY AUSTIN BUNN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSÉ LUIS MERINO

In the summer of 1999, during a mercifully brief (and wildly overcompensated) tour as an Internet consultant, I sat with executives from Go.com, Disney's Web portal, trying to understand who Go users were, what they liked to do online, and why these executives didn't know this kind of thing already. At the time, I worked for a subsidiary of Disney and had explored Go.com a grand total of twice before I was called in to this meeting. For advice and answers, we called a Jupiter Communications (now Jupiter Media Metrix) analyst, which, if you know something about Jupiter and its Internet "analysis," means we were a desperate group of people. Jupiter provides clarity the way a Magic 8 Ball divines the future: "Could Work," "Can't Tell," "There's a Metric Here Someplace."

Mostly these days, it comes up "Looks Dark." When Disney, after reportedly dumping about $150 million into Go.com, announced in January that it would abandon the portal, the news was all too predictable. (In March, Disney reversed its position, promising to keep the URL live.) Still, portals seem to be a dying breed. *Maxim* knockoff TheMan.com and the Latino-targeted QuePasa.com—deemed niche portals until they realized their niches couldn't care less about them—are now extinct. Online divisions of news-media companies such as The News Corporation and NBC have slashed their staffs in an effort to bring their operations to scale with their audiences. By now the term "portal" has become almost archaeological, buried alongside "fire hose of eyeballs" and "co-branding experience." The word *portal* might be out of fashion, but the impulse to create a front end to the Internet thrives in a fertile, ungovernable form. The problem with big-door portals like Go.com, with its tools and news tickers fixed into every available inch of space, was self-evident. Internet developers (like those of us that day at Go.com) became so concerned with "personalization" that we forgot that personality is what drew people to websites in the first place.

Over the past two years, a wave of individual personalities—something between editors and conduits—has emerged, eager to curate the world via sites called "web logs." These one-person human portals are cultural antennae, a vital part of the constantly shifting terrain of information online. By definition, a web log (or its contraction, blog) is a collection of links on a single

page chosen by its author. Some blogs are incredibly personal, just a hair shy of exhibitionistic, but others are as civic-minded as a newspaper. All are unpredictable, sampling the Internet with restless curiosity and personality to burn. These folks are the merchants of buzz. No commercial site could afford to be so porous, pointing its visitors off-site as soon as they've arrived; MSNBC and NBCi make their money based on how long visitors stick around. But web logs succeed based on how relevant they become, how intellectually adventurous they can be. And they don't seem to care about money, or at least have no real prospect of making any.

The blog form is as basic as HTML code gets. In fact, Web browser Mosaic's "What's New" page began as a first-iteration web log back in 1993. Since then, blogs have undeniably matured, to the point where there is one for nearly every idiosyncrasy and interest (if yours isn't out there, what are you waiting for?). There are blogs for trial lawyers, graphic designers, even Canadian aliens working in the United States. Blogs' creators tend toward the techie side of life: You've got to be really comfortable with the Net—and committed to its possibilities—to divulge your lives and interests online in daily dispatches.

Blogs multiplied in part because of Blogger, a free software that has made the process of creating your own blog close to foolproof. Released in 1999 by a tiny San Francisco company called Pyra Labs, Blogger was initially a sort of sidelight for Pyra, the slag from a business application the company was developing; since then more than 100,000 people have registered Blogger. But I suspect that Pyra Labs's success is no mere Internet fad. In Blogger, Pyra Labs has created something deeper and more enduring than a clever distraction.

Take MetaFilter.com, created by Matt Haughey, who used to work as a developer at Pyra Labs. Haughey, 28, is a sedate, self-effacing programmer with the eye of a graphic designer. (For our interview, he showed up wearing all gray—gray pants, gray shirt, gray jacket, gray sneakers.) MetaFilter is, as its name implies, a filter of filters. It picks out items from the day's info stream on the Web—half news and half evocative ephemera—and offers links to about 20 stories or sites. In a random 24-hour window in January, for example, MetaFilter offered such fare as an article about a 3-year-old boy who tried to ape a stunt from the MTV show *Jackass* and suffered third-degree burns as a result (from *The Washington Post*); a commercial that was dropped from the Super Bowl (courtesy of AdCritic.com); a short film about life inside the offices of Amazon.com made by a former employee (courtesy of the filmmaker); a junkie's diary discovered on the sidewalk in San Francisco and transposed to the Web (by the person who found it); et cetera, with the emphasis on the et cetera.

At this point, says Haughey, the site claims about 50,000 hits a day, which translates into a regular readership of about 5,000 people. Compared with MSNBC.com's 9.7 million monthly visitors or CNN.com's 7.7 million (according to Media Metrix [see sidebar, page 74]), MetaFilter is but a droplet in that gushing fire hose. But MetaFilter has no television component, employs no one, and never advertised. Imagine if it did. Haughey, for one, would have problems. He wrote the software and runs the site on a freebie server that his father built. By the time this magazine—with Haughey on the cover—hits the stands, he may have come up with something a little sturdier, but only reluctantly. Haughey doesn't get paid for this, after all; he maintains MetaFilter during his free time from his day job at an Internet startup.

What distinguishes MetaFilter from major-media news sites is that it's created with material solicited by its own audience—it is a "community blog." Haughey started MetaFilter in 1999 as a way of saving himself the work of finding material, which is the real work of running a good blog. "At the time, there were only 30 or so...blogs," he says, "and they were amazing, but I didn't think I could do all that content myself. I thought I could find only one or two good links a day—but four or five people could create one decent log." The site's "members" earn the privilege of suggesting stories to the site after engaging in the conversations that trail from each link. Haughey himself doesn't filter the posts—what's on the page is the raw data of people's ideas—which makes MetaFilter a rowdy, constantly amusing mix. It's astonishing, frankly, that the site is this good, considering how democratic it is.

On MetaFilter there are no ads; the site has no commercial ambitions of any kind—just the gossipy instinct to share news. And it's not news in the traditional sense. The news on MetaFilter can come in any form—reports of an anthrax threat alongside the latest release of MP3 player Winamp, bittersweet obituaries next to

Best of the blogs: The author's list of some interesting web logs.

METAFILTER.COM
A gimlet-eyed and impossible-to-categorize collection of links (with commentary) to stories from around the Web, contributed by the site's some 4,000 "members."

PLASTIC.COM
This site is a commercial take on the blog concept. Stories are suggested by readers and then curated into shape by editors from "indie" Web ventures like Suck.com.

STORMWERKS.COM/LINKED
Voted "Weblog of the Year" in the first annual Bloggies, the whimsical usr/bin/girl is the enthusiastically open, chatty blog of Zannah, "digital girl."

ROBOTWISDOM.COM
Jorn Barger is one of the grandfathers of blogging. His spare, lightly updated Robot Wisdom site is packed with good information, from book reviews to satellite photographs.

SEARCHREQUESTS.WEBLOGS.COM
A running list of riotous but misdirected search queries, from "acne fetish" to "dirty jokes about *The Jetsons*."

KOTTKE.ORG
Jason Kottke, a Web designer from San Francisco, muses about graphic design, media, and PlayStation 2's SSX on this elegant blog.

A.JAUNDICEDEYE.COM
Ex-pizza delivery boy, carpenter, programmer, and editor Steven Champeon documents his life and includes parallel entries from his grandfather's diary, circa 1931.

BLOGGER.COM
The storefront for free blogging software. You register, choose a template for the site, and begin building your blog. If you're using a Mac, prepare for interface weirdness.

AUSTIN BUNN

web 2001

CELESTIAL SITES

Stars of all kinds are creating their own websites in a bid to bypass the press, speak directly to their fans, and engage in some spin control. BY JOSEPH GOMES

Last November, **Melanie Griffith** walked into a hospital in Marina del Rey, California, with her husband, Antonio Banderas. Griffith, who has a history of drug problems, was struggling with dependence on painkillers and checked herself in to rehab. The story of her treatment began to make the rounds of the various tabloids—but it wasn't *The National Enquirer* that broke and kept updating this celebrity scandal. It was melaniegriffith.com, the star's personal website.

It has become ever more common for celebrities to preempt the tabloid press with personal websites, on which they can spin news about themselves on their own terms, respond to rumors, and reach their most loyal fans directly. Griffith, for instance, chronicled her recovery in an online journal, where she sent readers her "newly detoxified love and light" and thanked them for their "beautiful messages."

Michael Douglas, meanwhile, has issued corrections about his and Catherine Zeta-Jones's wedding plans (michaeldouglas.com); **Cindy Crawford** has addressed rumors of a videotape that allegedly documented the delivery of her baby (cindy.com); and **Sean "Puffy" Combs**, on trial this past winter for gun possession and bribery, has published articles on his official website (puffdaddy.com) that present his side of the story. **Barbra Streisand**'s website features a "Truth Alert!" that rebuts tabloid stories about the diva (barbrastreisand.com).

Sports stars are also bypassing the press and going directly to fans in growing numbers. Until it went out of business in February, Broadband Sports hosted more than 300 athletes' sites, including those of **Barry Sanders**, **Alex Rodriguez**, and **Roger Clemens**. (These athletes will most likely find new host servers for their sites in the coming months.) In 1999, when Sanders retired from the NFL—mid-career and without warning—for no apparent reason, he disappeared from public view without ever speaking to the press. It wasn't until last fall that Sanders broke his silence by issuing a long statement on his personal website. "You can't play forever, so I wanted to take a chance to refocus my priorities in life," he wrote. During shortstop Rodriguez's rancorous contract negotiations last year, the press paid close attention to comments the baseball star posted on his website. And when Clemens threw a broken bat at Mike Piazza during the 2000 World Series, he turned to his personal website to make a statement about the controversy.

The British royal family has begun to go online as well. **Louise Robey**'s split in January from the Earl of Burford became public not in the tabloids but on her personal website (louiserobey.com). And even the **Prince of Wales** has set up his own site (princeofwales.gov.uk), though it contains no gossip or spin and lists only his official activities. A recent installment of the site's "Latest News" section tantalizingly revealed that Prince Charles had "planted a tree in Green Park, London." ■

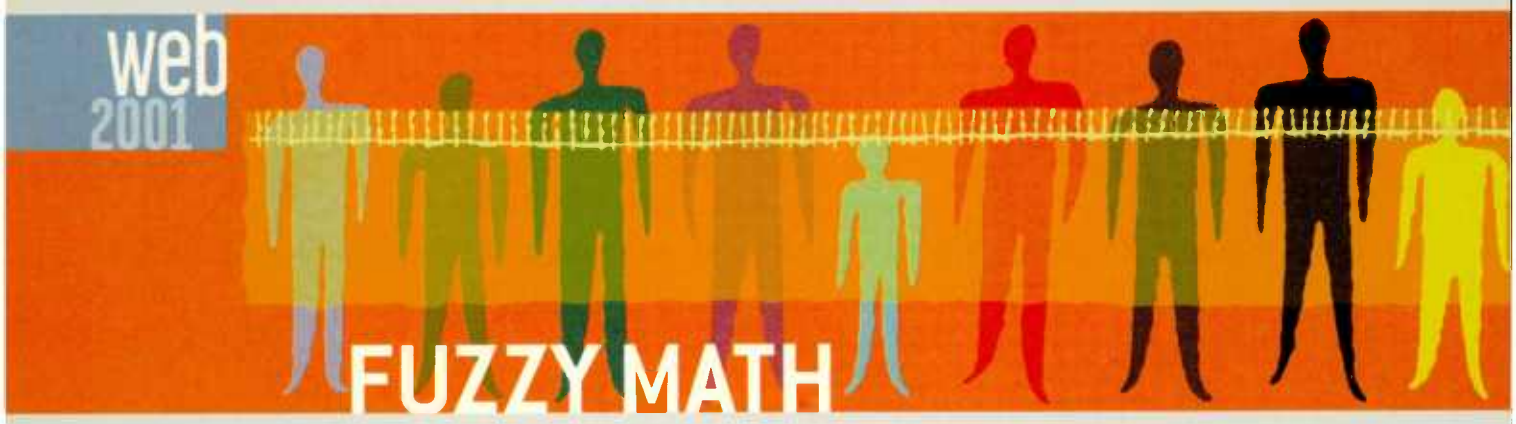
Melanie Griffith's personal website, where she posts news about herself

Dubya jokes. While traditional news outlets spend time trying to divine what constitutes "news," MetaFilter lets readers determine it for themselves. There's a critical design element here as well. Compared with mammoth media sites such as CNN.com and MSNBC.com, minimedia blogs like MetaFilter or Slashdot.org (a tech-news site for self-proclaimed nerds; see "Sites We Like," page 76) are practically transparent, only a handful of pages deep. You don't come to muck around as much as to leap off—to other sites or into the conversations that spark like stray voltage from the stories. The diversity of source material and radical shifts in tone, at first disorienting, are exactly what keep you coming back.

This ferocious collecting instinct long predates the Web. Blogs are often likened to Wunderkammer, the "cabinet of wonders" that Renaissance-era amateur scientists fashioned as a way to showcase the superabundance of discoveries in exploration. It's an apt simile for how web logs help us map a vast and growing continent, arranging their lists with treasures and obscure curios. But it tells us little about their implications for major news media sites, which, I think, are dramatic and instructive. As blogs establish themselves in the information hierarchy, the proprietary news media might end up competing with the better-networked, smaller-scale parasites living off of them.

The difficulties of portals such as Go.com can't be attributed strictly to a lack of personality. Their problem is that they have no idea how to build a front door. Sure, such traditional news agencies as MSNBC, *The New York Times*, and CNN are still responsible for much of the news we read online. MetaFilter and other web logs, such as the recently launched Plastic.com—effectively a commercialized MetaFilter.com—depend on them to provide prime material. (The company that owns Plastic.com is funded in part by Advance.net, the Internet arm of Advance Publications, which owns Condé Nast.) Sometimes they're too dependent. A scan of the Plastic.com home page this February revealed that three of seven stories were from the *Times*. But in blogs, the news agencies are strictly producers of the news, *factories* of information, not arbiters or organizers. I can't remember the last time I actually went to the front page of MSNBC or CNN, which is precisely where they, as businesses, need us to go.

The major media companies know this and are working around it. Peter Dorogoff, spokesman for online-news front-runner MSNBC.com, admits that most of the site's traffic "comes in through links to individual stories and not through the cover at all. That's the beauty of the Web—to link from story to story." As Dorogoff points out, MSNBC's response is to make every page a



FUZZY MATH

The press gives Media Metrix and its data on Internet usage a lot of ink. But the figures are afforded a legitimacy they may not deserve.

BY STEFANI LAKO BALDWIN

"According to Jupiter Media Metrix, Walmart.com was the sixth-most-visited retail site in December, with 7.07 million unique visitors that month." Anyone who even casually follows the fluctuating Internet economy is no doubt accustomed to seeing Web ratings—like this one in a March 6, 2001, article in the *San Jose Mercury News*—quoted as if their accuracy and authority are beyond reproach.

Media Metrix, the counting arm of Jupiter Media Metrix, is generally considered the gold standard by the Internet industry and by the press in part because it entered the business three years before any of its rivals. As a result, much of the debate over the reliability of Web ratings has focused on this five-year-old company, which is based in New York City. Its numbers lend an air of scientific certainty to an arena that is often rife with wishful speculation. And it's understandable that industry players—who depend on billions of dollars of advertising—and journalists are desperate for any sort of measure to help them get a handle on who's doing what online.

But as numerous critics of Media Metrix and other Web-traffic counters point out, the measuring system upon which the ratings are based is flawed. They are supported by samples too small to capture the breadth and scope of Web use. Moreover, industry insiders complain that Media Metrix and its main competitors—Nielsen//NetRatings and PC Data—inadequately track Web usage at the office (as opposed to at home) and outside the United States.

"Anyone you talk to would tell you that the importance afforded Media Metrix...and the like far exceeds the accuracy of the data they provide," says Ralph DiMuccio, former senior manager of industry marketing at search engine AltaVista.

To understand the concerns about Media Metrix's numbers, it's necessary to analyze its methods. Media Metrix is best known for its "Unique Visitor" rankings, which supposedly measure the number of different visitors to a site in a 30-day period. This ranking—a monthly list of the most popular sites according to unique visitors—is crucial in determining how attractive a website is to advertisers and how much it can charge them.

Media Metrix, which is hired by Internet companies to count and describe the people who visit their websites, resembles television's Nielsen Media Research ratings and in some ways was modeled on it. Nielsen, however, relies on viewer diaries to assess television audiences (a practice that has also been derided as vulnerable to manipulation and errors), while Media Metrix uses computer software to measure Web traffic. Though theoretically more reliable, this method is not without problems.

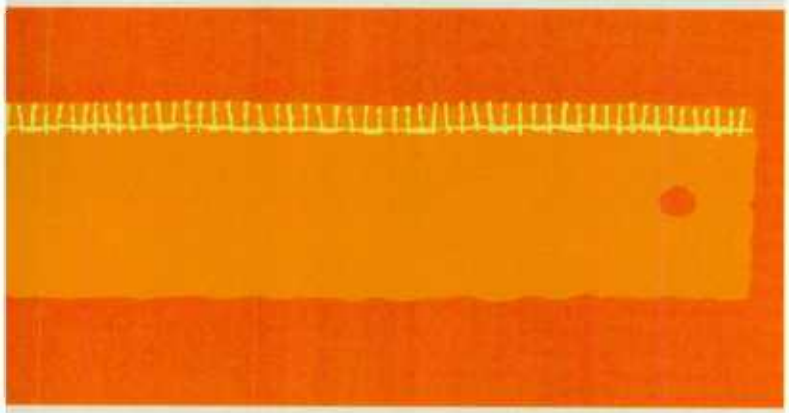
Like Nielsen's, Media Metrix's numbers are based on the usage habits of volunteers. The company compiles what it terms "panels" of 55,000 to 60,000 U.S. Internet users; the members of the panel allow the company's software to "follow" them around the Internet. To reflect accurately the universe of Web users, the panels must somehow be representative of that wider universe. Media Metrix conducts a monthly telephone survey to determine the demographics of the U.S. Internet population, then tries to construct panels that mirror that picture. But as Jerrold Katz, a statistician and founder of J.P. Katz & Associates, a financial and statistical evaluation firm, points out, "the concern is that they are not getting a broad enough [sample]." Furthermore, the type of person using the Internet changes continuously yet the panels are far more constant, says Katz, who is working with both established and startup websites to develop new ways to count visitors.

DOUGLAS MCFARLAND, president of Media Metrix, is eager to counter the criticisms levied at his company. "I don't think it does anybody any good to constantly critique the research," he says. "We are trying to help the industry understand what it is doing well, what people like."

The industry, meanwhile, is trying to help Media Metrix understand what the company doesn't do well. Critics argue that because the Internet is young, there is little historical data on who uses the Web, what users do while on the Web, and how long people stay online. Although McFarland agrees, he says it's still possible to draw concrete conclusions about usage, adding that the volunteer panels are altered to reflect new findings. Though corrections are commendable (and critics note the improvements), Media Metrix's results are suspect because of the evolution of the Web.

McFarland maintains that his company's methods mirror accepted practices in counting television viewers. But this is a weak argument, says Eric Meyer, an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who studies Web traffic. "We do know how demographics apply [in television]," Meyer says, but with online use, "we really don't know [enough]."

Moreover, many websites contend that Media Metrix undercounts their traffic. They say that if numerous Internet sites get their highest visitor numbers during work and school hours or, in many instances, from workers using the Web in foreign countries, then the Media Metrix formula is flawed because it doesn't take into account a large enough group of work, school,



and international users (Media Metrix doesn't count international workplace users at all). "The work samples are the biggest Achilles' heel of those services," says Beth Baldwin, director of marketing information at the Internet company Terra Lycos. McFarland replies that the number of international and work users followed by Media Metrix is adequate.

PICK UP TODAY'S PAPER and the odds are pretty good that some story will cite Media Metrix numbers: Despite all the criticism about the validity of its findings, the company's rankings get a lot of ink. Journalists quote Media Metrix—as opposed to its competitors—because the company has been around the longest, and industry sources tell them that Media Metrix has the most reliable figures. Many journalists, including media reporter Felicity Barringer of *The New York Times*, say that they know the numbers aren't perfect but that there's not always enough time or space to put the numbers in context for the reader or to point out discrepancies in how the findings were determined. What's more, says Ariana Eunjung Cha, a reporter at *The Washington Post*, Web ratings provide an outside authority to supplement websites' own visitor calculations.

Nonetheless, some journalists have cut back on citing Media Metrix or refuse to use the company's numbers altogether. Jon Swartz, a technology reporter for *USA Today*, has questioned the accuracy of Internet numbers and rarely uses them in his stories. "I don't think there is any way to accurately count [Web traffic]," Swartz says.

For all its blemishes, Media Metrix and its competitors aren't going away. Even the websites that denounce Media Metrix for undercounting their visitors use its numbers to measure themselves against competitors. As the *Times*'s Barringer notes, "Whatever the flaws of existing methodologies, I think we've got a situation where in the country of the blind men, the one-eyed man is king." ■

Ever wonder how many visitors a website gets?

eBay is probably still wondering. In January 2001, three Internet-traffic-counting companies came up with three different tallies of U.S. visitors to the online auction site.

PC DATA*
24.33 million

MEDIA METRIX**
18.84 million

NIELSEN//NETRATINGS
15.18 million

*PC Data tracks the usage of 120,000 people in the U.S. compared with the 55,000 to 60,000 tracked by Media Metrix and the 62,000 tracked by Nielsen//NetRatings.

**Media Metrix's total includes both "at home" and "at work" visits. PC Data's and Nielsen//NetRatings's numbers reflect only "at home" users.

front page, heavy with "rather sophisticated interlinking" to other articles on the site and, of course, advertising. MSNBC has started using interstitial ads—big, garish graphics that appear and disappear before their stories come up—and ads that run in the middle of a column of text to capture those readers who enter the site through a side entrance.

It's important not to underestimate how crucial these design compromises are when it comes to reading news online. Major news sites are full of clutter, the excesses of trying to accommodate every possible interest. Strictly on an aesthetic level, spare, streamlined blogs (like Slashdot, MetaFilter, and MediaNews, a web log for journalists and other mediaphiles) are the antidotes. Jim Romenesko's MediaNews (which claims 5,000 readers per day) and Slashdot (which claims 482,000 unique visitors per month) both offer big "buffets" of material, in Romenesko's words, with little ornamentation. Who wants to dig for stories in a mess of ads, graphics, and "sophisticated interlinking" when the same information can be scouted and simply arranged by an editor as fixated on the subject matter as you are?

Who wants to dig for stories when they can be scouted and simply arranged by an editor as fixated on the subject matter as you are?

And *fixated* is the operative word. MediaNews, which has become a staple of the publishing elite's media diet, has a particularly dedicated following. Romenesko, 47, has even noticed that a sizable contingent of his audience visits MediaNews up to ten times a day. There are a couple of reasons people come back every other hour. First, Romenesko, whose venture is funded by The Poynter Institute, a journalism think tank, is great at what he does. He sorts through 150 sites and dozens of e-mail tips a day. (About four or five of these leads end up as stories.) But Romenesko's MediaNews is also successful because it is the kind of site you can check ten times a day without being assaulted by ads.

In contrast, MSNBC.com has a total staff of about 200 (with another 460 on the TV side). Obviously, it has financial pressures that nonprofiteers Matt Haughey and Jim Romenesko do not. The foremost is enticing people to, and keeping them within, MSNBC's network. But in a world saturated with available information, those fences become an immediate liability. No reader wants to respect them, and why should they when the interesting material—the real discovery—is often at the fringes? One of my favorite sites, TvTattle.com, is a particularly good quarry of TV news and opinion pieces from newspapers across the country. Curated (somewhat less regularly than you'd like) by a twentysomething college student named Norman Betito Weiss, TvTattle ferrets out the interview that *West Wing* creator Aaron Sorkin did with the *St. Petersburg Times* or the thoughtful profile of *ER* producer John Wells from the [CONTINUED ON PAGE 125]

SITES WE LIKE

Brill's Content **editors and writers scoured the Internet for new favorite sites. Ranging from the obscure to the famous, these online destinations informed, challenged, and surprised us.**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ZACH TRENHOLM

ADCRITIC.COM

WHAT IT IS An archive of great TV commercials.
USE IT FOR Sheer entertainment: You can watch practically any commercial you've ever seen—and lots of good ones you haven't.
THE BACK STORY CEO Peter Beckman says he founded the site in 1999 after seeing a clever commercial for Bissell vacuums and thinking, "How cool would it be to have a website that had the greatest TV advertising for anyone to see, day or night?" AdCritic.com's motto is "All Ads, All the Time," but there's a door policy: You won't find run-of-the-mill ads like Tylenol's here. "We post ads that people have seen and want to see again or ads that people haven't seen and we think would want to see," Beckman says. In addition to the huge archive of slick commercials for beer, cars, tennis shoes, and the like, there's a terrific political-ad archive where, among other things, you can freeze-frame the Republican Party commercial that briefly flashes the word *RATS*, and a Super Bowl XXXV archive where you can watch what you missed during refrigerator runs.
BEST FEATURE The music section. AdCritic.com tells you the name and performer of more than 200 songs used in commercials (product jingles not included). Yes, that was "Pink Moon," by Nick Drake, in the moody Volkswagen ad, but you probably didn't know that J.P. Morgan Bank used Hooverphonic's "Wardrope" in its commercials or that American Express pushes its wares with Moby's "Find My Baby." Neither did we.

SNOPES.COM

WHAT IT IS The site of Urban Legends Reference Pages—a treasure trove of pop-culture myths and rumors, from schoolyard classics (i.e., Life Cereal's "Mikey" blew up after ingesting Pop Rocks and Pepsi) to modern Internet sludge (Nostradamus called the 2000 election). Trenchant essays explore various legends, usually debunking them.
USE IT FOR Finding out whether that chain e-mail that begins with "I swear this really happened..." really happened.
THE BACK STORY The ULRP was founded six years ago by Barbara and David P. Mikkelson, a husband-and-wife team who met through an online urban-legend bulletin board. Today, Barbara says, the site gets about 8 million visitors a month. The legends are meticulously organized into 26 categories, including "Disney" (Walt isn't frozen), "Cokelore" (Coca-Cola won't dissolve a tooth overnight), and "Titanic" (its sinking was not caused by a cursed mummy on board).
BEST FEATURE "The Repository of Lost Legends"—for those "who don't let the truth get in the way of a good story," which explores the origins of the bogus legend that Mr. Ed was actually a zebra, undetectable on black-and-white TV.

HARLEM.ORG

Jazz greats at Harlem.org

WHAT IT IS A fan site devoted to Art Kane's famous 1958 photograph of the era's great jazz musicians, "A Great Day in Harlem."
USE IT FOR Taking a fascinating look at the history of jazz and photography.
THE BACK STORY *Esquire* magazine commissioned Kane to take the photograph in the summer of 1958, to accompany a story on the Jazz Age. Kane assembled 57 musicians, from Dizzy Gillespie to Count Basie, Art Blakey to Coleman Hawkins, Charles Mingus to Thelonious Monk. Web designer Wayne Bremser launched Harlem.org in 1995 after seeing a documentary about the photograph. Harlem.org, he says, "is the only place some of these artists exist on the Web."
BEST FEATURE The function that lets you click on the face of a musician in the photograph and zoom in, get biographical information, and find links to sites devoted to the artist's music.

CRYPTOME.ORG

WHAT IT IS A continually updated archive of secret, prohibited, leaked, classified, and public documents from the realms of national security, intelligence gathering, cryptology, and technology.
USE IT FOR Discovering the alleged names of alleged agents of the CIA, MI6, and other official espionage organizations.
THE BACK STORY John Young, a 65-year-old New York architect who runs this dense, text-heavy site, has been criticized for revealing information that could jeopardize the safety of undercover agents, but he doesn't mind. "We just go with it, and it's up to other people to figure it out, whether its genuine or not," Young says. He points out that if he can get the information, America's enemies probably already have it.
BEST FEATURE The transcript of the trial in absentia of accused terrorist Osama Bin Laden.

IWPR.NET

WHAT IT IS The U.K.'s Institute for War & Peace Reporting's online hub for its self-described efforts to "use the power of the Internet to give voice to people who live in conflict zones."
USE IT FOR Reading the work of independent journalists from some of the most troubled and unstable regions of the world: the Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, and former Soviet republics.
THE BACK STORY Before launching this multilingual, award-winning site, IWPR published its reports in a street paper that, according to website director Tony Borden, was an attempt to counterbalance the "jingoistic" tone of the British media during the Gulf War. It evolved into an outlet for journalists caught up in the Balkans conflict, and now IWPR.net is one of the best places to read original-source reports from strife-ridden, undercovered regions. "The vast majority of sites are aggregators," Borden says. "If you look at conflict areas, frankly, it's Reuters or bloody A.P.-agency copy recycled or redone. We think we show that local voices have a tremendous amount of insight, information, and capability."
BEST FEATURE "The Tribunal Update," which posts weekly comprehensive bulletins on the progress of war-crimes proceedings at The Hague.

THISLIFE.ORG

WHAT IT IS The online home of *This American Life*, Ira Glass's quirky public-radio show that

makes ordinary people sound fascinating.
USE IT FOR Browsing through the full audio library of *TAL* shows, outtakes, and pictures, and getting a behind-the-scenes look at how Glass crafts his pitch-perfect storytelling.
THE BACK STORY The three-year-old site is much more than an archive with staff bios: It's a charming and detailed extension of the show, the goal of which, Glass says, "is to get these stories out to the people." If you've never heard of Glass or *TAL*, click on the site's "Never heard us?" link to understand why the show has such a loyal following: "We like stories that are both funny and sad," a description reads. "Personal and sort of epic at the same time." Thislife.org lets you spend as much time as you want exploring those stories.
BEST FEATURE The illustrated panels in the site's comic book, *Radio: An Illustrated Guide*, which show *TAL* staff members conducting interviews and talking through their ideas.

SPORTSJONES.COM

WHAT IT IS An elegant sports site with smart fare for fans.
USE IT FOR Reading stories that go beyond the standard scores, previews, and recaps found on ESPN.com, CBS.SportsLine.com, and the other big sites. Here you might read an analysis of the Yugoslavian World Series, Jackie Robinson's correspondence with Malcolm X, or Karl Malone's basketball stats—all on the same day.
THE BACK STORY Sports fan Royce Webb launched the site with a few friends in 1998 to create the Web's first daily sports magazine to combine intelligence with popular appeal. That's why among the essays, you'll also find a list of all the players in the National Basketball Association who are more than 7 feet tall. "I'll discuss *X*'s and *O*'s with you," says Webb, "but we're all intrigued by the cultural implications of sports."
BEST FEATURE SurfJones, a daily digest of colorful sports stories from around the Web and the world; look to Ms. SurfJones for stories about female athletes.

SLASHDOT.COM

WHAT IT IS News for nerds, by nerds, about nerds.
USE IT FOR Getting the best word-of-mouth on technology.
THE BACK STORY Since 1997, Slashdot.org has been the CNN for code jockeys. Run by open-source poster boy Rob Malda (a.k.a. "CmdrTaco"), the continually updated site is the product of its maniacally well informed—and just plain maniacal—audience. Readers recommend links to stories, and Malda (with the help of two others) chooses from among them to create the site's rowdy, self-described "omelette" home page. Even better, you can pick your ingredients with precision, excluding specific subject matters and authors (such as resident gasbag Jon Katz).
BEST FEATURE Its source code is free. (Plastic.com, a more mainstream version of slashdot.com, is built on it.)

SMARTERTIMES.COM

WHAT IT IS An eagle-eyed, errata report on *The New York Times* dedicated to the proposition that the newspaper of record "has grown complacent, slow and inaccurate."
USE IT FOR Receiving a daily reminder that even the *Times*'s reporting is occasionally unfit to print—and that the paper commits factual, syntactic, and spelling errors.
THE BACK STORY Ira Stoll is the 28-year-old know-it-all who rises at dawn every day to beat up on the *Times* from his basement studio apartment in Brooklyn. A former managing editor of the Jewish weekly *Forward*, Stoll attacks the gray lady from the right and sometimes catches the paper leaning left. For instance, he regularly objects to the *Times*'s reliance on liberals—such as the Reverend Al Sharpton—as spokespeople for African-Americans. Stoll's encyclopedic griping (he critiques nearly every section of the paper, from The Arts to The Week in Review) is both irritating and addictive.
BEST FEATURE Stoll's complaints, which are archived according to his pet peeves: i.e., "New York, Lack of Basic Familiarity With."

MSNBC.COM/MODULES/THEWEEKINPICTURES

News-making images at MSNBC.com

WHAT IT IS MSNBC's slide show of the best news photos, updated every Friday.
USE IT FOR A visual tour of the stories that dominated the news during the past week: the human faces behind the headlines, the media moments you might have missed, and the world events that never reached America's front pages.
THE BACK STORY MSNBC inaugurated "The Week in Pictures" in 1998; today, MSNBC director of multimedia Brian Storm and eight multimedia producers select the 8 to 16 weekly images from a pool of more than 15,000. "It's definitely a celebration of photography," Storm says, "but it's not about pictures for picture people. It's about informing, inspiring, entertaining, and educating a mass audience."
BEST FEATURE Direct links to two other great online photo galleries: *Newsweek*'s and *The Washington Post*'s.

EONLINE.COM/GOSSIP/AWFUL

WHAT IT IS "Ted Casablanca's The Awful Truth"— Eonline.com's weekly gossip column.
USE IT FOR Getting a heaping dose of celebrity dish from a straight-shooting gossip who delights in flouting the Hollywood spin machine.
THE BACK STORY Casablanca is the embodiment of the old saying,"If you can't say something nice, come sit next to me." As he puts it: "There are three different levels of information in this town: what's in the press release, what's behind the press release, and what's really behind the press release. I tend to go for the latter." He's not afraid to hit A-listers where it hurts, which has earned his online-only column a grateful following. Casablanca's skewering style enrages some, but judging by the amount of his hate mail—which he

SITES THEY LIKE

A diverse group of luminaries—from artists to academics to athletes—reveal where they like to hang out online and why.

NORA EPHRON

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR

I am addicted to eBay (**ebay.com**). I have bought a huge variety of things on eBay, most of which I didn't need at all. Cups, saucers, plates, silverware, Stork Club memorabilia, Laurel & Hardy memorabilia, glassware, postcards, copies of books I've written, copies of cookbooks I've worn out—I could go on and on, and that's the point: I can't stop. Someone told me that there is a special area in eBay for people like me, and when I finish writing this ode, I will go to the site and take a halfhearted stab at finding it. Perhaps it's what the "Help" button means. But first there are some blue glass swizzle sticks I have to look at.

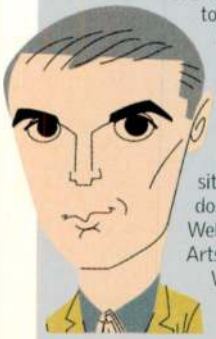
MALCOLM GLADWELL

JOURNALIST/AUTHOR

I've been a library junkie all my life. I love the idea of prowling around in the stacks and reading journals and biographies from the turn-of-the-century. One of the very first things I did when I came to New York, in fact, was to buy a reader's card for New York University's library, which I love. So my favorite site is BobCat (**nyu.edu/library/bobst/cat.htm**)—the online catalog of NYU's Bobst library. I can't get over the fact that I can browse their collection from anywhere. Who would have thought that the achievement of the information age would boil down to the fulfillment of my nerdiest impulses?

DAVID BYRNE

MUSICIAN



I check out *The New York Times* Quick News (**nytimes.com/yr/mo/day/late**) over morning coffee. I often go to FNAC (**fnac.com**)—a French music, book, and electronics site—to hear music I'm curious about. I listen to the RealAudio clips to see if the music fits the hype. I also go to sites where artists have done projects for the Web—like Dia Center for the Arts (**diacenter.org**) and the Walker Art Center (**walkerart.org**) in Minneapolis.

web 2001

JOSHUA BELL
VIOLINIST

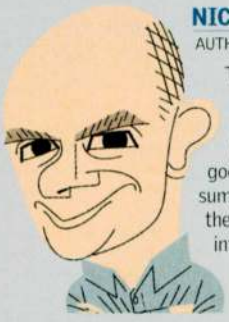
I love movies and everything about them, and The Internet Movie Database (**imdb.com**) is a great source of information. I find myself going there when I'm trying to remember the name of a particular actor or if I want to know more about a director whose work I've just seen. I also enjoy reading people's comments about films I'm about to see.

MARTINA HINGIS
TENNIS PLAYER

America Online (**aol.com**) is great for keeping in touch with friends when I'm traveling, and for accessing up-to-the-minute results from tennis tournaments around the world. I also enjoy the World Health Organization's site (**who.int**), because I am involved with their Match Point Against Polio campaign and like to check on the status of the program.

PETER SINGER
PHILOSOPHER/AUTHOR

The site for The Great Ape Project (**greatapeproject.org**) is meant to stimulate people to think about whether the badge of entry to the charmed circle of "beings with rights" should always be worn by a member of the species *Homo sapiens*. Whatever conclusion you come to, this site is well designed and contains lots of information and resources about these remarkable beings, the other great apes.



NICK HORNBY
AUTHOR

The site for the British football team Arsenal (**arseweb.com**), is good because it summarizes Arsenal in the day's news internationally, so you get all the European stuff. I buy a lot on Amazon (**amazon.com**). I'm a big "one-clicker," and I've just discovered videos, so I'm doing even more damage than I used to.

BUCK HENRY
SCREENWRITER/ACTOR

For a guaranteed laugh I go to *The Onion* (**theonion.com**); to cram for moments of staggering pretension, I look in on the MacTutor History of Mathematics archive (**www-groups.dcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/-history/**); and for sheer fantasy, I click to Meet-An-Inmate (**meet-an-inmate.com**). Of course these are just my morning visits.

SITES WE LIKE

gleefully publishes and responds to—even his detractors are reading his columns.
BEST FEATURE The scoops he gets from his ubiquitous sources on practically every movie set and studio lot from coast to coast. In a recent report on the troubles plaguing Matthew Perry on the set of *Servicing Sara*, Casablanca quoted a source who heard a film exec growl, "We need to figure out how to keep this from that damn Casablanca a--hole." Happily for us, they didn't.

PULITZER.ORG
WHAT IT IS A catalog of every Pulitzer Prize winner, in every category, since the award's inception, in 1920.
USE IT FOR Reading the full-text articles and perusing the cartoons and photographs of every honoree and winner in the journalism categories since 1995.
THE BACK STORY The site is maintained by the Pulitzer Prize Foundation of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, which realized, says site manager Claudia Weissberg, that it "needed to do something more than just hand out awards." Weissberg adds, "We had to educate consumers of news as to what it was we found meritorious about a certain winner." The site avoids the aged-in-formaldehyde tone and design of most academic online ventures: It's cleanly designed and easy to navigate. Visitors can send e-mail queries about Pulitzer trivia and arcana; most are answered promptly. Some of the questions, Weissberg says, are stumpers—like those from users wondering where on the site they can find details of Sean Connery's award. "In *Finding Forrester*, apparently, Sean Connery plays some writer who's won a Pulitzer," Weissberg explains. "I had to remind people it was, like, a movie."
BEST FEATURE The search function, which enables you to scour hundreds of winners and finalists for a specific word, topic, or name.

AJRNEWSLINK.ORG
WHAT IT IS A media supersite with links to some 8,000 newspapers, magazines, wire services, and TV and radio stations across the world.
USE IT FOR Getting news from the local media outlets where it's happening. Monitor South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the South African Broadcasting Corporation; find out what *The Jerusalem Post* has to say about the Palestinian peace talks; track California's energy woes in *The Fresno Bee*.
THE BACK STORY The monthly *American Journalism Review* began posting its in-depth articles online in 1996 and added the global media links and a journalism job bank shortly thereafter.
BEST FEATURE The penetrating special reports *AJR* commissions from some of the biggest names in journalism—Ken Auletta contributed "The State of the American Newspaper"; Peter Arnett penned "Goodbye World."

TIMVP.COM/TV.HTML
WHAT IT IS A deliciously deranged roster of every television series to air on network television, from *Mission: Impossible* to *Cheers* to *Special Victims Unit*. The site tells you the date the series premiered, how long it ran, the cast list (including snazzy guest stars), cool souvenir photographs (all downloadable), theme-song sound bites, and links for purchasing show memorabilia.
USE IT FOR Absorbing trivia, prime-time scholarship, and confronting the TV shows that defined your adolescence.
THE BACK STORY The eponymous Tim, 41, works for Kentucky Fried Chicken in Plainfield, Indiana, and maintains the exhaustive site from his den in Mooresville, Indiana, about six miles away. Tim says he basically decided that network television is a brilliant sociological time capsule of how we live. Visitors are greeted by his voice—"Welcome!"—and proceed to the site's five "channels," arranged by genre. Scores of links lead you to other TV databases, rabid fan clubs, and network P.R. offices.
BEST FEATURE The "Notable Off-Site TV Series" link, which escorts you to unofficial home pages. Our favorite: the one for *Charles in Charge*, an eighties sitcom starring Scott Baio.

ADFLIP.COM


Chicks and cars at Adflip.com

WHAT IT IS A searchable database of print advertisements from the forties to the present.
USE IT FOR Exploring the myriad ways we've been talked into buying stuff for the past 60 years. Search Adflip.com's archive by date or by product and then pull up the full-color images.
THE BACK STORY Adflip.com delivers more than just kitsch—it's no less than the history of print advertising in America. Click through more than six decades of archives and discover how advertising has evolved and how it has adapted its pitch to fit the social mores and cultural standards of the time.
BEST FEATURE The ability to enlarge the ads and read the copy. A 1960s ad offers "Your Very Own Dick Clark Jewelry—Life-like 3-Dimensional Sculptured Head of Dick Clark. Be the envy of your friends." All for $1.

SOUNDPORTRAITS.ORG
WHAT IT IS The place to hear award-winning public-radio documentaries that bring neglected American voices to a national audience.
USE IT FOR Taking an auditory trip to another world—one that's probably tougher than yours—with firsthand accounts of people who, though marginalized and downtrodden, are courageous enough to tell their story.
THE BACK STORY Sound Portraits is a nonprofit radio-production company led by producer and MacArthur Fellow David Isay, and its site is the

perfect place to find out more about stories told in his multilayered documentaries—otherwise heard only on National Public Radio. From life on the Bowery to life on death row, you can read about the production of each piece and listen to the entire audio file.
BEST FEATURE A sneak preview of *The Yiddish Radio Project*—1,500 recordings from "the golden age of Yiddish radio...rescued from garbage cans and attics" that Isay is developing into an NPR documentary. Soundportraits.org has posted an audio file that lets you sample the historic recordings.

ARTSANDLETTERSDAILY.COM

WHAT IT IS Ground zero for cultural studies—summarized links to current essays, articles, and book reviews culled from an eclectic mix of foreign and domestic websites.
USE IT FOR Revisiting the controversies and movements you studied in college.
THE BACK STORY Editor Denis Dutton and a small staff curate the lively mix of intellectually rich articles, including many that you probably wouldn't otherwise bump into on the Web. Where else could you find a piece on Batman's sexual orientation or how the Marxist theory of value relates to Michael Jordan's sneaker contract?
BEST FEATURE The archive of links. If you can't remember where you read an article you liked, you know where to look.

DAILYNEWS.YAHOO.COM/FC

WHAT IT IS A site where hundreds of news stories have their own individual page of coverage containing dozens of related links.
USE IT FOR Becoming an expert on everything from the Sean "Puffy" Combs gun trial to ethnic violence in Indonesia—in about 20 minutes.
THE BACK STORY Yahoo! News Full Coverage started in August 1995, in the wake of what was, at least for some people, a seminal news event: the death of Jerry Garcia. Editors sifted through the huge volume of Web content related to Garcia and the Grateful Dead and compiled the best links, with summaries, onto one page. Now a staff of editors does the same for most national news stories each day—choosing and posting links to related news stories, magazine articles, editorials, video clips, audio files, official websites, and background information. And they move as fast as breaking news does: Just minutes after the Seattle earthquake in February, Full Coverage links had been posted.
BEST FEATURE Full coverage on complex topics—like health care—that other news sites bypass in favor of the big story of the day.

FOODTV.COM

WHAT IT IS A virtual kitchen stocked with 15,000 recipes, menu suggestions, and culinary tips from the Food Network's chefs and cooking personalities.
USE IT FOR Tossing whatever ingredients you have in your fridge into the site's recipe finder and getting back a recipe suggestion.
THE BACK STORY Foodtv.com is the perfect companion to the Food Network; if you miss a recipe from a show or need to make dinner for your boyfriend's parents, come here for friendly step-by-step instructions. The recipe archive is massive—122 choices for "duck" and 21 for "mac 'n' cheese"—culled from the kitchens of chef Bobby Flay, *Gourmet* magazine, even TV's Iron Chef. On the recipe page, you can click on one of seven cleverly titled recipe rubrics—international, meatless, easy, carnivore's, sociable, hedonist's, and light—and get a menu suggestion. There's even a calorie counter to answer questions such as "Just how fattening were those nachos?"
BEST FEATURE The "Ingredient Obsession" feature provides the history of a food item and a slew of recipes that use it.

IMDB.COM

WHAT IT IS The mind-bogglingly exhaustive Internet Movie Database—a film resource that contains voluminous details on virtually every movie ever made.
USE IT FOR Settling bets and finding out the name of that character actor who pops up everywhere.
THE BACK STORY IMDb.com began as an online bulletin board (rec.arts.movies) where cinephiles gathered to discuss movies. In 1990, founder Col Needham fed the information on the board into a database, and the IMDb was born. Today the details on more than 1 million filmographies and hundreds of thousands of movies fill this ever-expanding movie-information resource.
BEST FEATURE Hyperlinked film credits that allow users to click from this actor to that movie to that director in a kind of free-form "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon."

BUST.COM

Feminism with a twist at Bust.com

WHAT IT IS An online offshoot of *Bust* magazine, a neofeminist cult 'zine-turned-glossy.
USE IT FOR Remembering that "feminist" and "sense of humor" need not be mutually exclusive.
THE BACK STORY *Bust* magazine was founded in 1993 by proto girl-power advocates Debbie Stoller, Marcelle Karp, and Laurie Henzel. They established the site in 1995 and have remained committed to multimedia world domination long after most shaky startups have folded. Bust.com is built around a frequently updated news page that tracks stories about women's rights around the world. The site also offers an exhaustive compendium of feminism on the Web (the "Girl Wide Web"), the "Lounge," where visitors can pick from dozens of topics to discuss, and a contributor-driven travel guide to restaurants and shops that girls can enjoy the world over ("Let's Go Girl!").
BEST FEATURE The witty headlines: A story

ROLAND JOFFÉ

DIRECTOR

In some ways the website for the Louvre Museum (**louvre.fr**) is even better than going to the actual museum because it's less crowded. The real Mona Lisa is a blessed thing, but it's difficult to see through the hordes of tourists. Touring the site is easier on the legs, too; a visit to the real thing can be quite a workout. The site for *National Geographic* (**nationalgeographic.com**) is also magnificent. It reminds you how much beauty there still is on this planet, and strengthens our desire to experience where we really live.

GLORIA STEINEM

ACTIVIST/AUTHOR

The Feminist Majority Foundation's site (**feminist.org**) is the smart and political hub of the women's movement—it offers action alerts on everything from women in Afghanistan to girls in sports. The *Ms.* magazine [which Steinem founded] site (**msmagazine.com**) encourages your voice on what is and makes you an early warning system on what should be.

JOAN DIDION

AUTHOR

I use *The New York Times* Navigator (**nytimes.com/library/tech/reference/cynavi.html**) a lot because it has links to a lot of research.

DAVID BROWN

FILM AND THEATER PRODUCER

Money is my only interest so far as websites are concerned. My Yahoo! personal portfolio (**my.yahoo.com**) tells me my net worth as of 4 P.M. Eastern Standard Time. It is either a message of joy or one of desolation. No other site interests me. If this suggests that I am a computer retard, so be it.

GRETCHEN MORGENSON

NEW YORK TIMES BUSINESS REPORTER

For serious research I go to 10k Wizard (**10kwizard.com**), which allows you to type in a name and see where it turns up in every Securities and Exchange Commission filing ever made. So you can instantly find a person's significant stock holdings, all the companies he or she is involved in, even related lawsuits mentioned in company filings, because they may have an impact on the company's operations. It is a fabulous one-stop shop for a curious financial reporter. For fun and laughs I love the Wall Street Follies site (**markpoyser.com**). The guy who does it puts up fearless and hilarious cartoons lampooning Wall Street and corporate America. Everybody needs a laugh and this site really delivers.

web 2001

DAMIAN LOEB

ARTIST

I go to *Drudge Report 2001* (**drudgereport.com**) because despite Matt Drudge's negligent—and at times fraudulent—politics, it has great articles that keep me abreast of how the right sees the world. Google (**google.com**) is probably my favorite because it exemplifies all that is good about the Web: information at my beck and call—very democratic. And Kozmo (**kozmo.com**) because I love movies. It is too bad they stopped 24-hour a day delivery.

ALEX KOZINSKI

FEDERAL JUDGE

Overlawyered (**overlawyered.com**) provides pointers to legal-system horror stories: the accused rapist who pockets disability checks for his "sexual compulsion"; the drunk who climbs a voltage tower and sues the utility company when he gets injured; the guy who murders his mom and sues his shrinks for not stopping him. The site is run by Walter Olson, who likes nothing better than reporting on legal overkill, and he's compiled serious research tools for anyone interested in trends and abuses within the civil litigation system.

LAUREN BUSH

STUDENT/MODEL/GEORGE W. BUSH'S NIECE

My friends and I like to look up horoscope websites, but just for fun. At Pogo (**pogo.com**) you get to play backgammon, chess, and all different games with other people who are also on the site. My family is obsessed with backgammon, and I'm a bit competitive. It kind of runs in the family.

ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

SCREENWRITER/DIRECTOR

I check Ain't It Cool News every day (**aint-it-cool-news.com**). The guy who runs it, Harry Knowles, is a friend and fellow Austinite; we have similar movie likes, and his site has updates on movies and other things cool. It gets you excited about movies and ideas that different artists are coming up with, and champions smaller pictures that studios aren't paying much attention to. It's more influential than you can imagine.

SITES WE LIKE

about a British proposal to allow women onto the front lines of combat is titled: "Female British Fighters to the Fore: Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!"

ANDREWSULLIVAN.COM

WHAT IT IS Archives of articles by the contrarian journalist Andrew Sullivan.
USE IT FOR Reading cogent, well-argued missives on culture and politics.
THE BACK STORY Sullivan launched this site in October 2000, on a shoestring budget, partly to address the oft-heard charge that there are multiple contradictions in his worldview; he says his posted articles demonstrate that these contradictions are "merely complexities." Just a couple of mouse clicks away from Sullivan's argument for gay marriage are his thoughts on Pontius Pilate and Sir Thomas More—a paradox that characterizes the openly gay, conservative Brit quite well.
BEST FEATURE His constantly updated stream-of-consciousness musings (click "Daily Dish"), which he says attempts to "try out a kind of intellectual interactive diary in real time."

FINANCE.YAHOO.COM

WHAT IT IS Yahoo!'s financial news and information site.
USE IT FOR Tracking stocks, studying companies, reading real-time business news, and accessing stock records.
THE BACK STORY Yahoo! launched the site in April 1996 to focus on investment information. Since then it has moved into the realm of personal finance with bill-paying services, chat rooms, and a tax center.
BEST FEATURE The "create your own portfolio" function. Users design their own portfolio to keep track of stocks and companies they're interested in. Each time the portfolio is opened, up-to-the-minute headlines about the companies are pulled together from sources like The Associated Press, CBS MarketWatch, and Reuters. Even *The Wall Street Journal*, which has a subscription-only website, recognizes the feature's popularity: It makes some of its content available for free on the site.

HIGHWAYPROJECT.COM

Our vanishing roadside at highwayproject.com

WHAT IT IS A collection of photographs that document the disappearing culture of the American roadside.
USE IT FOR Traveling down the blacktop of history, before fast-food restaurants blighted our view.
THE BACK STORY The American Highway Project site is a virtual road trip, with images of gas stations, motels, billboards, diners, and other roadside attractions of a bygone era—photographed mostly by site founder Edgar Praus, and a few contributors. Some of the photos are accompanied by short, essayistic descriptions; others are identified only by state and town, leaving the rest to the reader's imagination. Few of the photographs in the site's gallery contain people—making the overall effect a haunted world, long since past. Says Praus, "You feel the presence of people, without the people."
BEST FEATURE The link page, which is a superb starting point for taking a sentimental journey through Americana: Relive the corny collection of Burma-Shave slogans ("His cheek was rough/his chick vamoosed/and now she won't/come home to roost") or pull up a stool at HoJoLand and peruse the unofficial Howard Johnson restaurant appreciation page.

ALLMUSIC.COM

WHAT IT IS A useful resource for music lovers combining vast amounts of raw information with savvy commentary.
USE IT FOR Finding out which Journey album features "Don't Stop Believin'" (answer: *Escape*), learning more about your favorite musician or a future favorite musician you haven't heard of yet.
THE BACK STORY Since 1991, allmusic.com has compiled information about music releases in what it calls a "relational database." It tracks nearly 50,000 artists and 500,000 albums, including information on bootlegs and imports. What's more, the majority of allmusic.com's listings are accompanied by insightful columns that help users evaluate the music.
BEST FEATURE The "Related Artists" listings—a great way of discovering bands similar to the ones you already like.

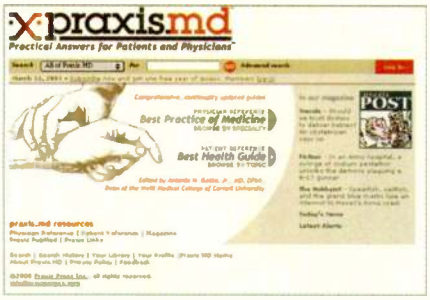
INDYMEDIA.ORG

WHAT IT IS A network of grassroots newsgroups with a liberal bent.
USE IT FOR Keeping up with the stories that matter to the people who brought you Ralph Nader.
THE BACK STORY The Independent Media Center was founded in 1999 by a collective of individuals and groups just before the World Trade Organization's Seattle meeting. During the protests by opponents of globalization, the IMC updated its website with logistical information for activists. Today there are 48 IMCs, from Finland to Urbana-Champaign; IMC Chiapas chronicles the activities of Mexico's most politically active indigenous people. There is no single editor for the IMC (and no paid employees), and all decisions are made collectively, according to contributor Michael Eisenmenger. "The IMC is not about charting an ideological program," he says. "It's about hearing all the voices that are out there and making sure that people get the message."
BEST FEATURE The right-hand column, where anyone can post anything; the result is a chaotic collage of lefty trivia, from a nascent food cooperative in Chicago looking for volunteers to critiques of Bill Clinton's pardons.

MOREOVER.COM

WHAT IT IS A site that extracts and filters breaking news from more than 1,600 news sites like CNN and the BBC—in other words, all the legwork, or mousework, of searching.
USE IT FOR Digging for news that happened in the past 48 hours.
THE BACK STORY Moreover.com's "News Portal" is the news wire of news wires. Using a "dynamic indexing technology" (basically software that closely monitors hundreds of news outlets), the site slices and dices the news into 328 different categories, from top stories to "human resources" and "Jewish" news. It's a giant storehouse of scoops—a free NEXIS search. Individual news sites like CNN could never be this targeted, and search engines like Google don't capture current news stories. "When my bookmarks file started crashing my computer, that's when I decided to start Moreover,"says cofounder Nick Denton. "There were just too many links in there—I needed something else to keep track." *The Economist* and *The Financial Times* (Denton worked for both) license Moreover's technology to ensure that their own sites' "breaking news" is up-to-the-minute, and companies like Wells Fargo use it to keep tabs on the competition.
BEST FEATURE The regional and science categories—like "Bay Area" and "Cancer News."

PRAXIS.MD



Friendly medical advice at praxis.md

WHAT IT IS A reference guide for both patients and health professionals, with an online magazine that blends medical news with opinions, profiles, essays, poetry, and art.
USE IT FOR Pulling back the curtain on the medical world and getting the latest information on health conditions and treatments.
THE BACK STORY Praxis.md was founded by two former medical-journal publishers to provide an easy way for patients and doctors to get updated information on a huge variety of health topics. Edited by Dr. Antonio M. Gotto, the dean of Weill Medical College at Cornell University, and written in a clear educational tone, the site's Best Health Guide is geared toward patients, who can click on basic symptoms and treatments for most major conditions and find links (usually with an independent review) to other relevant sites. The site's *Praxis Post* is a totally new kind of magazine about medicine: The tone is more *Vanity Fair for Doctors* than *New England Journal of Medicine*.
BEST FEATURE The eclectic articles, including the updated diary of a first-year medical student, a column on ethics and medicine, and thoughtful pieces on the intersection of medicine and real life. A recent issue included both an essay arguing for increased government funding of church-based health services and a poem about giving a urine sample at the doctor's office.

PAGESIX.COM

WHAT IT IS The online version of the daily filings of the New York *Post*'s venerable celebrity-news columnists, including Neal Travis and Liz Smith.
USE IT FOR Reading about the lives of the rich and famous—whom they're dating, where they're eating, what they're wearing.
THE BACK STORY Pagesix.com is sexier than the paper's version: for one thing, the site carries more photographs—and they're in color. "One of the big draws there for our huge population of illiterates is the celebrity photos," jokes "Page Six" editor Richard Johnson. The site's stories are linked to The Associated Press's entertainment news wire, in addition to other celebrity-related articles in the paper.
BEST FEATURE Its willingness to report items that you don't really need to know—e.g., that the New York strip club Scores has ended its ban on former *Beverly Hills 90210* actor Jason Priestley, who was caught trying to have sex in its bathrooms—but love to find out anyway.

ESPN.GO.COM/GAMMONS

WHAT IT IS Peter Gammons's weekly ESPN.com column chronicling the baseball universe.
USE IT FOR Baseball, baseball, and nothing but.
THE BACK STORY Gammons, who wrote for *The Boston Globe* for nearly 30 years, signed an exclusive online contract with ESPN.com in 1999. During his lengthy career, Gammons seems to have acquired the trust of every scout, manager, executive, and player in the baseball business, which means his hefty columns are packed with revelations. When he reports that a certain shortstop is disgruntled or losing a step, or that a general manager is on his way out, consider it gospel.
BEST FEATURE The Apolitical Blues side feature, where Gammons frequently uses rock and roll lyrics to categorize obscure baseball trivia and notable quotations.

DISOBEY.COM/GHOSTSITES

WHAT IT IS An online catalog of e-commerce sites that have crossed over to the other side—what Ghostsites dubs the "cyber-necrotic."
USE IT FOR Keeping track of the accumulating dotcom carnage.
THE BACK STORY Ghostsites was brought to life in 1996 by Steve Baldwin, who wanted to capture the history of the Web visually, something he calls "webilology." His site is a grim reminder of the Web's glory days. Baldwin's "e-failure museum" contains more than 140 screen captures of the home pages of e-commerce sites that went under in the year 2000.
BEST FEATURE The ability to view the HTML hulks of sites such as Petstore.com and Urbanfetch.com. It almost makes you misty-eyed. ■

VERONICA WEBB

MODEL/JOURNALIST

The site that always brightens my day is Sanrio (**sanrio.com**)—the home of Hello Kitty. There's always a little chichi ironic handbag or appliance that makes the perfect gift for a girlfriend or a guilt-free indulgence for myself. The Hello Kitty stereo is a favorite—it's pink and girlie so if you're not into that, with a big heap of kitsch to go with it, this site is not for you.

AL FRANKEN

COMEDY WRITER/POLITICAL SATIRIST

Like a lot of journalists (although, technically, I'm pretty sure I am not one), I find NEXIS (**nexis.com**) indispensable. I probably use it differently, though. The weekend before the election, the George W. DUI story hit. Bush's spokesperson, Karen Hughes, called a hasty press conference, which I watched with great interest. She was kind of on her heels, and there was a moment when someone asked why Bush had been pulled over. It seemed to me that she sort of panicked and made something up, or essentially lied. So the next day I used NEXIS to download the CNN transcript of the press-conference broadcast. Here's what it said:
QUESTION: "Do you know why he was stopped, Karen? Was he driving erratically or anything?"
HUGHES: "I believe they—I don't know exactly, no. I don't know. There was no—there was no incident—there's—I don't know exactly. There was some discussion that he appeared to have been driving too slow—too slowly."
The moment I was interested in, where I thought she panicked, was right after her second "I don't know exactly." It appeared to me—and remember this is just my conjecture—that she quickly thought to herself: *Drunk driving? What's wrong with drunk driving? You could kill somebody!* So she decided to make up the driving too slowly thing. "There was some discussion...." *Hard to prove there was no discussion.* "...that he appeared to be driving..." *with too much regard for people's safety. Yeah, that's it! He was driving with excessive regard for other people's safety. That's evidently illegal in Maine. That's why he was pulled over.*

The real answer to the question? He drove off the road and into a hedge. (At the insistence of *Brill's Content*, I called Hughes—three times—to ask her what her thinking had been at that moment during the press conference. Finally, her assistant called me back to say that Hughes was very busy and wouldn't have time to speak with me.)

Denise Rich (left) presents then-president Bill Clinton with a saxophone as Hillary Clinton looks on in New York City last year.

Bobby Zarem and Denise Rich in New York City in July 1993

Zarem with Rich in New York City in 1999

Isn't It Rich? Aren't They a Pair?

When publicity guru Bobby Zarem first met Denise Rich ten years ago, she was just the enormously wealthy ex-wife of a fugitive. Not even Zarem could have imagined how famous his client would actually become. **By Abigail Pogrebin**

On Inauguration Day, January 20, 2001, at about 12:30 P.M., *New York Post* gossip columnist Neal Travis hurriedly phoned his friend Bobby Zarem, the legendary press agent. Travis had just heard that billionaire fugitive Marc Rich had been pardoned by President Clinton, and he knew that for almost a decade Zarem had represented Rich's ex-wife, Denise, a songwriter and social powerhouse. Not only were Rich and Zarem client and spokesman, they were close friends. "I had all her phone numbers," says Travis, "but I called Bobby first."

Zarem was pedaling away on one of his seven stationary bicycles in his childhood home in Savannah, Georgia, when Travis reached him. "I said, 'Marc's just been pardoned,'" Travis continues in his languorous Australian drawl. "Bobby fell off his exerciser. He said, 'You're kidding.' And I said, 'Do you want me to call Denise [for a comment]?' And he said, 'Please, leave it with me.'"

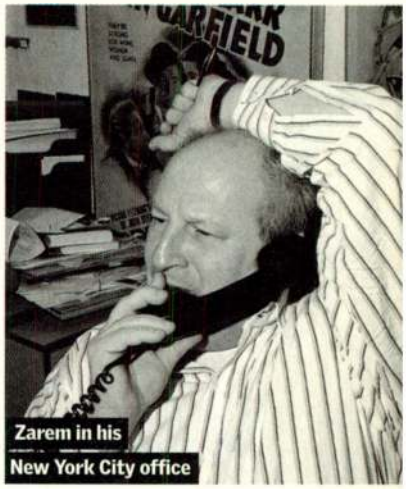
"I called her," Zarem recalls now, "and said, 'What the s--t is this?...Denise said, 'I was as surprised about it as anybody.'"

And then the story gets muddy.

Zarem says he interpreted Rich's surprise to mean she had done nothing to engineer the pardon. And that's what Zarem told Travis when he called him back. "I went into print Monday morning," says Travis, "and wrote, 'I know for a fact she did not call, write or anything.'" Zarem had never steered him wrong.

But Rich *had* written something. Her letter to former president Clinton on her ex-husband's behalf was released by Marc Rich's attorney two days later, and Travis's "scoop" fell apart. "I can't get myself off that hook," says Travis, still smarting. "I got f--ed on that one." He let off steam three days later in a follow-up column titled "When a Friend Lies to You," in which he characterized the erroneous piece he'd written as "totally embarrassing." Travis doesn't blame Zarem, though. "Bobby didn't lie," he says. That obviously leaves Rich as the misinformant, whom Travis forgives ("I don't think there's a bad bone in her body," he says) but whom he does fault for not having leveled with Zarem. "He got as big an egg on his face as I did over this thing."

"I, in all innocence, added that she knew nothing," Zarem insists. "She never said that to me." But he had already stoked the story, giving the same impression to the New York *Daily News*, which quoted him as saying the pardon was "not something she would have used her clout for," and to The Associated Press, whose story was picked up by papers around the country.



Zarem in his New York City office

"It's created some problems to some extent," Zarem admits with uncharacteristic understatement. "It made it look like one of us was not telling the truth." Even after Denise Rich distributed her letter to the press, the *New York Post* was unsparing: "At first, she said she didn't—now she says she did," wrote reporter Todd Venezia. "What a difference a day makes."

What a difference a decade makes. In 1991, Denise Rich returned to New York City from Switzerland, where she had been living in exile with her husband since 1983. Marc Rich, a commodities trader,

L: CLOCKWISE: MARK LENNIHAN/AP; ROBIN PLATZER/TWIN IMAGES; RON GALELLA LTD. R: MILES LADIN

Zarem is "smarter than a lot of reporters and editors when it comes to spotting a news angle," says *Daily News* columnist George Rush.

had fled the country with his wife and children in the face of charges that he evaded $48 million in taxes and flouted a U.S. embargo by trading oil with Iran. Eight years later, after 25 years of marriage, it was Denise Rich's turn to flee—in her case from an allegedly psychologically abusive relationship. (Marc Rich did not return calls for this article.) Rich came home with her three daughters, saddled with the infamy of her husband—not just his shadowy business reputation but his public adultery with a German woman who, *Forbes* magazine reported in 1993, had been dubbed a "tigress" by the German press.

After a bitter and highly public divorce battle, Denise Rich ended up with a reported half-billion dollars and a dubious reputation of her own. Few were aware that years earlier she had launched a respectable career as a lyricist and had had a No. 1 hit song in Britain, "Frankie," recorded by Sister Sledge. "When she moved back here," says journalist Lisa DePaulo, who spent weeks with Rich for a *New York* magazine profile two years ago, "she was 'Denise Rich, The Fugitive's Wife.' And she needed desperately to attain some kind of credibility for her songwriting career, her social aspirations. I think she came back [to New York City] bound and determined to make a name for herself without Marc Rich, in the one area that she feels great passion."

So what do you do when you have $500 million, no social clout, and no visible career?

You hire a publicist, of course.

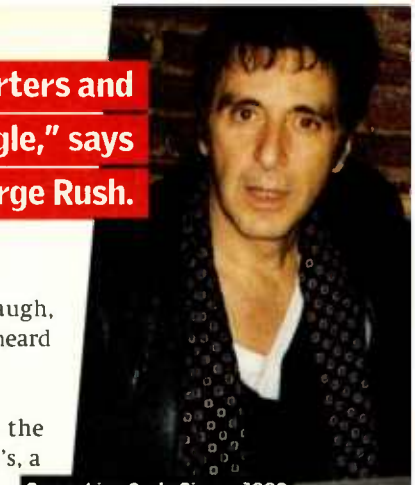
Not just any publicist. Rich hired Bobby Zarem, the foul-mouthed, twinkle-eyed promotion impresario who has chased glamour—or tended its flame—all of his life. Zarem grew up in a wealthy Southern family, enamored with the movies, treasuring the autographed playbills and menus his parents toted back from their trips to New York. After graduating from Andover, the tony boarding school, and Yale University, Zarem hurried to New York in 1958 to plunge into the world he had idealized from afar. A decade later, at the public-relations firm Rogers & Cowan, he represented Ann-Margret and Dustin Hoffman before forming his own company. Zarem's client roster has, at various points in his career, included James Caan, Cher, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, Mick Jagger, Michael Jackson, John Travolta, Diana Ross, Raquel Welch, Michael Douglas, and Alan Alda: the kind of stars that gossip columnists refer to without irony as A-list.

By the late seventies, Zarem had become renowned as the rumpled, inventive, pugnacious guru to the stars. In 1977, both *Time* and *Newsweek* ran breathy profiles of Zarem with headlines that dubbed him "Superflack." *Time* wrote that Zarem had "become Manhattan's unquestioned master of the movie premiere, an opening-night party giver whose bashes are often better than the pictures they publicize." *Newsweek* said he served entertainment reporters "with efficiency, speed, and noteworthy honesty."

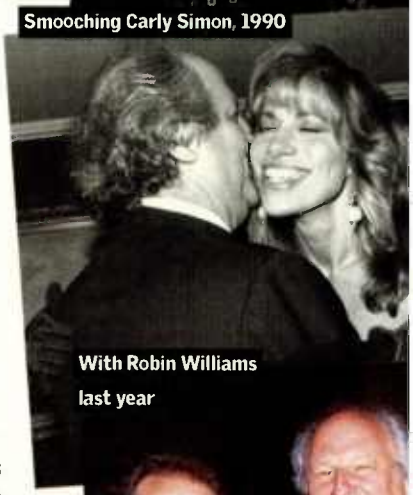
"Bobby's a great source for all sorts of stories," says Neal Travis, "because he knows everybody, and he *listens*. He doesn't drink, either," he says with a laugh, "so he doesn't forget what he's heard last night."

I meet Zarem for lunch at the stale, dimly lit P.J. Clarke's, a 110-year-old pub in midtown Manhattan frequented by people who eschew trendier spots in favor of checkered tablecloths and food they recognize. Watching him munch on an ear of corn, I have to remind myself that this solicitous bear of a man was once a ferocious, phone-juggling, slang-slinging titan. Overdue for a haircut and a shave, today's Bobby Zarem is—unself-consciously and unapologetically—not in a hurry. During our three-hour lunch, Zarem, who is 64 and a bachelor, checks in with his office just once (the office consists of his assistant and two other full-time employees). "The day-to-day routine aspect seems to be slowing down," Zarem says. "That's how it appears, but I've never been more involved or more active in my life than I am now." I ask what he's been proudest of in the past decade. There's a long pause. "I don't know when *Dances With Wolves* was," he muses. "Maybe 1992?..." He trails off.

When Zarem drops a name, it tends to be that of someone over 60. "I like the past better," he confesses, smiling. He seems to relish rehashing the old days the way he does his out-of-season corn on the cob, retelling stories that have been well documented in previous Zarem profiles: his blockbuster party for the movie *Tommy*, in 1975, for example (700 VIPs at a black-tie supper in a subway station); Michael Douglas asking him to guide his career from television star in *The Streets of San Francisco* to movie lead in *The China Syndrome* ("His father told him he'd be an a--hole if he didn't retain me," says Zarem); his entreaties to the entertainment media not to dismiss John Travolta as television buffoon Vinnie Barbarino but to give him a



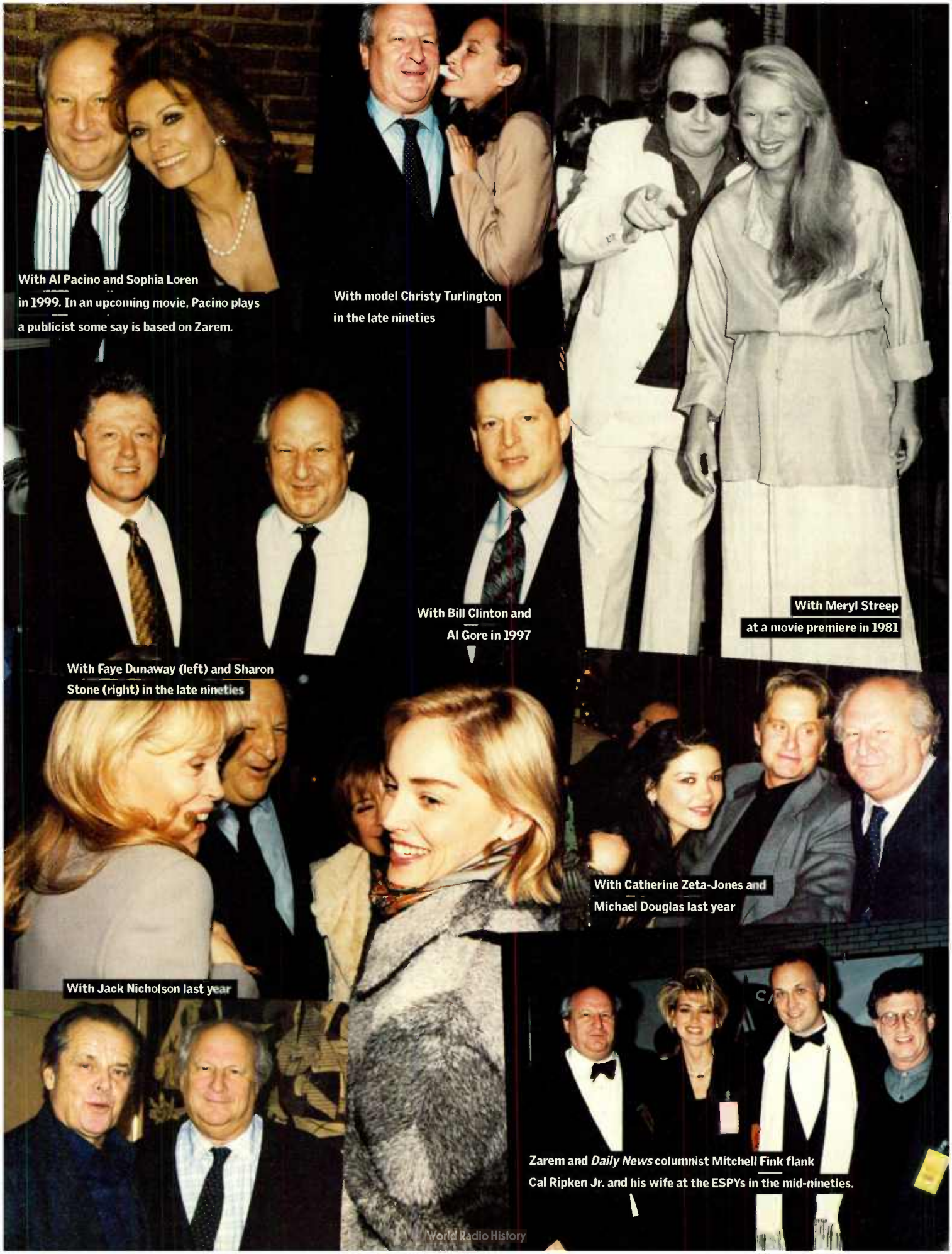
Smooching Carly Simon, 1990



With Robin Williams last year

With Kevin Costner at a hockey game in 1989

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY BOBBY ZAREM; SIMON MARYANNE RUSSELL/HBO; COSTNER: KEVIN WINTER/DMI



With Al Pacino and Sophia Loren in 1999. In an upcoming movie, Pacino plays a publicist some say is based on Zarem.

With model Christy Turlington in the late nineties

With Bill Clinton and Al Gore in 1997

With Meryl Streep at a movie premiere in 1981

With Faye Dunaway (left) and Sharon Stone (right) in the late nineties

With Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas last year

With Jack Nicholson last year

Zarem and *Daily News* columnist Mitchell Fink flank Cal Ripken Jr. and his wife at the ESPYs in the mid-nineties.

Above, from left: Susannah York, Zarem, and Dick Kahn with the poster for *A Man for All Seasons*, 1966

With Faye Dunaway circa 1966

second look in *Saturday Night Fever* (Zarem's 1977 pitch letter—a letter from a publicist that tries to persuade journalists to write about his client—to *Time* magazine read, "There is a fabulous, fabulous story in John...."); his unprintably virulent loathing of Dustin Hoffman and powerful gossip columnist Liz Smith ("There's always a good reason why I hate somebody," says Zarem); and, above all, his engineering of the "I Love New York" campaign in 1975, a blueprint for resuscitating New York City that he says "saved" his adopted town by brightening the city's image and drawing "billions" in tourism. "It single-handedly put this city on its feet," Zarem asserts.

Later he reminds me of some of his more recent projects: Miramax's 1999 Oscar campaign for *Shakespeare in Love* (it ultimately won for best picture) and his publicity campaign for the ill-fated theme-restaurant chain Planet Hollywood, which went bankrupt in 1999. But he has obviously downshifted, no longer sending his inimitable pitch letters, which he would carefully craft and spoon-feed to a reporter or editor as a ready-made story angle for covering a client. His scrupulousness and enthusiasm have won him the respect of media insiders. "He's smarter than a lot of reporters and editors when it comes to spotting a news angle," says *Daily News* columnist George Rush, who adds that Zarem is particularly skilled at placing "items"—short pieces about the activities or whereabouts of a client that a publicist wants in the papers.

Reigning gossip emperor Richard Johnson, who edits the *New York Post*'s "Page Six," agrees. "There are so few publicists out there who know how to pitch an item—who even know what an item is," he says, grumbling. "I don't think that a lot of these people who call me up even *read* the column, because if they did, they wouldn't be so incredibly stupid." Johnson says that when Zarem pitches, he's hard to ignore. "He's brilliant and he's also very persuasive," says Johnson. "And if you don't do what he says, you're in trouble. He has a volcanic temper."

People in Zarem's business say that he could have more clients today if he wanted them. But publicity is a different game than it was in his heyday. Zarem comes from the tradition of grand, eloquent press agents such as the 1940s publicity magician Ben Sonnenberg, who represented movie producer Samuel Goldwyn and was known for his Chesterfield coat and the elegant parties he hosted in his 37-room Gramercy Park mansion. But Sonnenberg and his type have been replaced by a different breed of publicists: young, overexposed, fashion-savvy party hoppers who appear in the gossip columns as often as their clients and aren't likely to spend seven weeks on a pitch letter. Richard Johnson's wife, press agent Nadine Johnson, concurs. "Now [publicity's] so fast—it's like, in and out," she says. "Bobby would give his heart and soul to make it happen. He would give two weeks on a press release....That's probably why Bobby's a little tired of what's happening now in publicity."

"I finally saw the process for what it was," Zarem says of his creeping disillusionment with the publicity game. "You have some schmuck, some obsessive a--hole like myself, breaking his back and busting his balls and killing himself to perpetrate the glamour and excitement that—" He stops. "I didn't realize until late in life that it wasn't genuine. That's what I was trying to tell you: I *believed* in all of this."

And so Zarem spends more of his time in Savannah with old friends. He hasn't handled an individual client since John Leguizamo, some ten years ago. "[Zarem's] reached the stage where he wants to enjoy life," says George Rush, "and he has a fabulous life. He's out just about every night to the opera or ballet or a premiere and then it's on to Elaine's [the decades-old celebrity hangout]." Neal Travis puts it more succinctly: "He doesn't want to handle so many a--holes anymore, so he cut himself back to clients and projects that he likes."

Denise Rich was one of those clients. Zarem met the Worcester, Massachusetts–born Rich (née Eisenberg) in 1991 through art dealer and onetime Andy Warhol muse "Baby Jane" Holzer. "Jane was working with Denise just as a friend," says Zarem, "helping her to find some important art pieces." Back then Rich was working hard on her lyrics but was hardly established in the music industry. Holzer decided Rich and Zarem would be good for each other. "She simply told Denise that I'm the single greatest person in the world at what I do," Zarem says with a laugh, "and she told me how much I'd like Denise and that she wanted to do some constructive things and establish herself as a songwriter." They all had lunch at Rich's palatial apartment. "We hit it off at the first meeting," says Zarem. "I liked her enthusiasm....I realized we had an opportunity to do some exciting things and have some fun. It wasn't some vacuous empty social person who wanted to be on the social scene."

Zarem and Rich's first project, launched that year, was essentially a grasp at past glory: "I Love New York" redux. Zarem called it "New York: It Ain't Over," and it was intended to invigorate a

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY BOBBY ZAREM; DUNAWAY: JILL KREMENTZ

Zarem circa 1990 at a party in Los Angeles

"I took a building and treated it like Cher," says Zarem. He says he applied the same principles to Denise Rich.

gloomy city. "It was during the Dinkins administration," Zarem explains. "There was no excitement, no color. And Denise and I decided to start this campaign and make sure the rest of the world knew that New York was exciting and alive." She wrote the lyrics for the campaign's title song ("Where do you go to be alone but not lonely?/Walk in the park, it's like one big family"), and Zarem held a few star-studded events to promote it. He then made sure the items he placed in *USA Today* and The Associated Press mentioned "songwriter Denise Rich." (Amazingly, he seems to remember every column appearance of every client he's ever had.)

"I applied the same mechanics to her that I apply to a movie, to a building," Zarem says. He was referring to when, in 1986, he represented Metropolitan Tower and *The New York Times* wrote about it on the front page of its business section in an article headlined "Lush Tower Gets Star Billing": "I took a building and treated it like Cher," says Zarem. He says he applied the same principles to Rich, using his three-pronged strategy: "It's the pitch letter and the [gossip] column campaign and the continual making of connections." More specifically, it's about telling reporters why someone's a story, then persuading the city's powerful gossip columnists to mention her in the way Zarem wants. Next, it's creating "an event," a celebrity-packed, buzz-generating party, at which the press can meet the client. It's Zarem's job to ensure that the party is "important and glamorous" enough to attract coverage. Brick by brick, a celebrity is built.

In 1995, perhaps with that in mind, Rich opened up her spectacular, 25,000-square-foot penthouse on Fifth Avenue for a party to celebrate the film comedy *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*, for which she had written the theme song. The movie was about cross-dressing, and Rich invited the drag divas of New York to mingle with, among others, socialite Georgette Mosbacher, model Carol Alt, and Arista Records' then-president Clive Davis. "The purpose of a party," Zarem explains, "is as a catalyst to everything that you've done up until then....Everything the press has been told up until then, everything they've read; and then all of a sudden they see it in reality for themselves and are dragged in by it and then hopefully run out and do something about it."

George Rush and his columnist partner and wife, Joanna Molloy, did in effect "run out," and two days after the *To Wong Foo* party, they wrote it up as the lead item in their *Daily News* column. In fact, Denise Rich would appear in their column almost 50 times over the next five years. "Once he takes on a client," says Rush, "Bobby is relentless at making sure they're in the columns if they want to be. He and his staff would just make follow-up call after follow-up call."

Zarem offers his rundown of which gossip reporters matter and why: Richard Johnson's "Page Six" in the *Post* is the first thing any publicist or magazine editor looks at in the morning, followed by Neal Travis's column, which faces "Page Six"; Mitchell Fink is important because his column runs next to "Rush & Molloy" in the *Daily News*, and they're usually read consecutively; Jeannie Williams's column in *USA Today* is "read in every city in the world"; *Variety*'s Army Archerd "reaches the entertainment industry before they pee." But "neither Cindy [Adams] nor Liz [Smith] has ever played a role in any campaign I've ever mounted." Both are syndicated columnists, but Zarem says their readers "are not people who are part of what's going on in the world anymore." (Asked if she wanted to comment, Liz Smith said through her spokesperson, "Thanks for the offer, but why bother?" Cindy Adams declined to comment entirely.)

I refer to when Aileen Mehle (a.k.a. "Suzy") mentioned Denise Rich in her *Women's Wear Daily* column, but Zarem corrects me immediately. "I'm not sure she ever did," he says, still aware of that lost battle. "I remember trying a number of times. As good a friend as Suzy is, there is no guarantee." (Reached at home, Mehle is dismissive: "I don't know [Rich] at all. I've only seen her I think twice in my life....So she wouldn't be—she would not be in my sphere.") But Zarem is consoled when I tell him that by my count, before the recent media bombardment prompted by the pardon controversy, Rich had been mentioned 6 times on "Page Six," 14 times in Mitchell Fink's column, 9 times in Jeannie Williams's column in *USA Today*, 24 times in Archerd's *Daily Variety* column, and 16 times in James Barron's *New York Times* column (together, these columns add up to a thick stack of "merchandise," lingo for the clips a publicist sends to his client to assure her he's getting her the mentions she's paying for). "I'm gonna increase my fee right now!" Zarem declares, chuckling. But then he clarifies: "Every time you see a column item doesn't mean Bobby Zarem designed it. I have only ever done a column item if it's part of a campaign."

"Bobby totally invented [Rich] as a media personality," says Fink, though he admits that if it weren't for the stars around her, Rich would never have made it into his column. "That Denise even is a songwriter is known only because of the columns; certainly not because of the songs." Zarem fed juicy tips about his more famous clients to the [CONTINUED ON PAGE 125]

Reading British press about the European Union can seem like a futile search for the truth. Illustration by Guy Billout

Euro myths

The British media are sounding the alarms over the "Europeanization" of the United Kingdom. But on closer inspection, many of the stories are short on fact and long on bias—reflecting a nation's simmering identity crisis.

By Sarah Lyall

Sitting in his cookie-cutter office in one of the many labyrinthine buildings that house the European government in Brussels, Steve Morris is describing his short-lived plan to decorate his wall with anti-Europe articles gathered from British newspapers. "I was going to have a Euroskeptic wall of shame," he says a bit ruefully. "But I got so bored." He realized, he says, that his wall would soon have been covered in articles, trapping him in a tomb of negative press.

So the wall of shame was downsized to the small area of shame, featuring articles that Morris, who is a British spokesman for the European Commission (the executive body that governs the 15-country European Union) and a Europhile by profession, considers particularly anti-Europe. Many are from the *Daily Mail* and its sister publication, *The Mail on Sunday*, hugely popular British tabloids that thrive on outraged scare stories of how the United Kingdom is drowning under a tidal wave of bureaucratic regulation imposed by the commission. In their sensational "Save Our Passports" series last fall, for example, the papers urged readers to rise up in protest of the plan to Europeanize traditional British passports—that is, to strip them of their emblem of Britishness, the queen's crest, and decorate them instead with the generic symbol of Europe, 12 stars in a circle.

From Morris's point of view, the problem with the "Save Our Passports" series was simple. The premise on which it was based—that British passports were in danger of being replaced by the EU with universal European passports—was wildly misleading, he says, emanating as it did from a germ of a proposal tentatively floated several years ago that was rapidly relegated to the category of Dumb Bureaucratic Ideas That Never Got Anywhere.

"It's hard to imagine that they really believed Europe wanted to ban the British passport, ban the British toilet, or ban slides and swings in British playgrounds," says Morris, referring to some of the other stories the *Daily Mail* has written in recent years. "There's a whole catalog of things of that nature which they claimed would happen but never did. It's hard to think they actually believed it themselves, rather than just having an ideological bias against all things EU."

Among other Euromyths—European regulations that anti-Europe Britons contend are imminent and that pro-Europe Britons say are complete hogwash—that have circulated in recent years are the notion that brandy butter will be renamed "brandy spreadable fat"; that eggs will no longer be called eggs; that British cheese will be banned; that British fishermen will have to wear hair nets; that condom dimensions will be standardized; and that dead pets will be pressure-cooked in special ovens. Probably the most notorious of the Euromyths was gleefully circulated in 1994, when the papers reported that, as *The Sun* put it, "Brussels bureaucrats proved yesterday what a barmy bunch they are by outlawing curved bananas." In truth, European officials said, they had merely set common standards for banana shapes, bringing the existing standards in individual countries in line with one another. "The regulation says a banana should not have an abnormal shape," a commission spokesman said at the time. "In no sense does it ban curved bananas, because a curve is a normal shape for a banana."

Some of the anti-Europe media don't exactly deny they have an agenda. The *Daily Mail*, for instance, freely admits to an ideological bias. "We are skeptical and antifederal" when it comes to Europe, says Robin Esser, the *Mail*'s executive managing editor, who stands by the paper's stories 100 percent. "They do say that,

Anti-Europe protesters demonstrating in London's Trafalgar Square last August

STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA PHOTOS

but they're not telling the truth, are they?" Esser says of Morris's contention that the European-passport proposal was an old, discarded plan. "The proposal was there, and the fact that the proposal's been around for some time doesn't alter the fact that the *Daily Mail* readers don't want it to happen."

It is impossible to generalize about the British press, because it is such an infuriating mix of the smart and the dumb—often all at once, within the pages of the same paper. Britain is a newspaper-crazed country that boasts 13 daily London-based national papers with editorial slants ranging from *The Sun* on the populist right to *The Guardian* on the snobbier left. Each has a different constituency to please, and each has a different way of approaching the serious business of keeping newsstand sales up at a time when papers are losing readers to, among other things, television and the Internet. Depending on their own often idiosyncratic politics, the papers also vary widely in their editorial approach to Europe, with the *Mail*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, and *The Daily Telegraph* taking an anti-Europe stand and *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Mirror*, and the *Financial Times* on the pro-Europe side. But the antis generally get much more space in newspapers than the pros. Noisy, quarrelsome, sensationalistic, and in some cases shockingly slipshod when it comes to getting the facts right, the coverage in British newspapers as a whole makes it almost impossible for readers to fully understand what is happening in Brussels.

Even if the Euromyths sound frivolous, the debate itself is a serious one that speaks to Britain's self-image and to its future in the world. How much to be a part of Europe—and how much to remain separate from it—are questions that have bedeviled British politicians since 1992, when Prime Minister John Major's government signed the Maastricht Treaty, which created the European Union and split Britain's Conservative Party into two ideological camps, the Europhile and the Euroskeptic. With many Britons Europhobic by temperament, for reasons of national pride and a historical sense of superiority, the national debate over the country's relationship to the Continent reflects the extreme unease many Britons feel about a collective identity that seems besieged from all sides.

With the European Union increasing in economic power and social influence, many Britons worry that their heritage and their customs, their very Britishness, are in danger of being buried under an avalanche of Europeanization—led by the dreaded Germans and the detested French—that will replace their singular identity with a bland Euro-uniformity. Such a view is bolstered by public-opinion polls that invariably show that a majority of Britons do not want Britain to give up its pounds and pence for the euro, the single European currency that is already in place for certain kinds of transactions and is to replace most national currencies on the Continent beginning next year. Although Britain is a member of the European Union, the country has refused to adopt the euro in large part because of the government's fear of upsetting the anti-Europe public.

There are many who sincerely believe that getting closer to Europe is the worst thing that has ever happened to Britain. "My fear for the whole project is that you have 15 different countries speaking 11 languages, all with different cultures and different traditions," says Nigel Farage, who belongs to the U.K. Independence Party and is a member of the European Parliament, the legislative branch of the European Union. "The attempt to force them into one entity is damned dangerous. We're being harmonized, homogenized, pasteurized," says Farage, who quit the Conservative Party in protest after the government signed the Maastricht Treaty. "They can tell you till the cows come home that Britain will retain its national identity, but membership in

The British press can be an infuriating mix of the smart and the dumb—often within the pages of the same paper.

the European Union kills and destroys tradition, and it kills and destroys small businesses."

Farage's party, which favors Britain's removal from the EU, is on the far right of the debate (even most conservatives don't tend to go so far). But his views reflect those of many members of the public and are both expressed in and encouraged by the coverage in the papers. Meanwhile, the government tries not to say too much, not wanting to provoke anti-Europe sentiment.

"If you have a government which is supposed to be supportive of the European project and of the euro and it chooses never to talk about it, it is not surprising that the shrill and often rather silly and hysterical coverage is the dominant voice in the newspapers," says Peter Cole, a journalism professor at The University of Sheffield, in north central England. This is why newspapers are chock-full of stories such as those involving Steven Thoburn, the so-called metric martyr. Thoburn, who runs a produce stall in Sunderland, in northern England, was fined by local officials last year for selling his products in pounds and ounces rather than in kilos and grams, as required by European law. Or at least that's what the papers said. But the stories weren't completely accurate. Among other crucial points: The law governing the country's switch to the metric system was not imposed by Europe but enacted by the Wilson government in 1965.

"It's a straight-on lie," says Geoffrey Martin, a Briton and the European Commission's chief representative in the U.K., about coverage of the Thoburn case. "Forget about it. The record has gone straight out the window. It's flown away. How can people have any confidence in what they read? They can't."

In the past few years, Martin has declared war on Euroskeptic reports in the press and sent a flurry of outraged letters to various editors. He has also considered bringing a formal complaint about what he considers wanton inaccuracies in the *Daily Mail* to the Press Complaints Commission, the independent body that determines whether newspapers are adhering to the industry's voluntary code of conduct. (He lost an earlier case against *The Mail on Sunday*.) But he is having trouble being heard—the *Daily Mail*, for one, is loath to print his indignant letters.

"We subscribe to the principles of accuracy," says the *Daily Mail*'s Robin Esser. "If we print something which is demonstrably inaccurate—as opposed to a difference of opinion—then we correct it."

Like most other British papers, the *Mail* has no corrections column per se and tends to correct errors of fact only in extreme cases whenever, for example, there's a possibility of a lawsuit. "We put corrections in according to the pressures of space," Esser says. "We have also run the odd letter from Geoffrey Martin. God knows what the percentage is, because mostly his letters are a load of old obfuscation. He has an attitude, and we have an attitude editorially, and the two don't coincide."

If reading about European issues in the British press can feel like a futile search for the truth, writing about them can be just as frustrating. Brussels correspondents (those working for serious, nontabloid British papers, that is) complain that it is hard to convince their editors that day-to-day stories about the workings of the European Union are important enough to warrant coverage—unless the stories feed into the negative preconception of Europe.

"If it's not a Euro-bashing story, it doesn't get big play," says a Brussels correspondent for a British paper that is generally considered skeptical on the matter of Europe. The correspondent blames the situation in part on the editors' ignorance of Europe. "Hardly anyone in London has actually been here. There's a vision of Brussels as peopled by devious continentals, and everything has to fit into that mind-set."

Like most other British papers, the *Mail* tends to correct errors of fact only in extreme cases.

Correspondents invariably complain that their pieces are often rewritten in London as domestic political stories, with the slant of the day from Parliament added at the eleventh hour so that the version that appears in the paper becomes a completely different, anti-Europe version of what was actually filed. A story about some new piece of legislation, for instance, might become a story about British Euroskeptic outrage. "Most stories have to feed into domestic stories," the Brussels correspondent says. "[Brussels] is a city of dull shades of gray—but the editors want it in black and white."

A large part of the problem, of course, is that the EU government, even when compared with other classically dull bureaucracies, can be spectacularly boring to cover and to read about. Much of its work has to do with the minutiae of agreements on such matters as trade, competition, the environment, and industrial standards. In a cutthroat market where newspapers fight daily for readers, most editors are understandably reluctant to fill their papers with material that seems [CONTINUED ON PAGE 128]

OWEN HUMPHREYS/PA PHOTOS

Steven Thoburn (right), the "metric martyr," with his friend Neil Herron at Thoburn's produce stall in northern England

Meet Paula Houston, Utah's first-ever Obscenity and Pornography Complaints Ombudsman. In a state where many are offended by the likes of *Seventeen* and *Redbook* magazines, that's a job in which religious sensibilities and constitutional freedoms seem sure to clash. By Seth Mnookin

PORN CZARINA

Three days after starting her job as Utah's first-ever Obscenity and Pornography Complaints Ombudsman, Paula Houston was ready for a day off. It had already been a crazy week for Houston, who's been dubbed the Porn Czarina by one local newspaper. She had been busy fielding calls from legislators, activists, and homemakers, all eager to know how she planned to wipe out smut in what is arguably the most socially conservative state in the nation.

Exactly what Houston will be doing in her much-discussed new job, which was created by the Utah State Legislature and is overseen by Attorney General Mark Shurtleff, remains a little unclear. Houston, 41, a graduate of Brigham Young University's law school, will have the power to prosecute. But the legislation that created Houston's position lists her responsibilities as mainly educational and advisory: "develop and maintain expertise in...laws designed to control or eliminate obscenity or pornography"; "advise citizens and local governments about remedies to address...obscenity and pornography"; "advise... about ways to strengthen local laws and ordinances." The list continues, calling for arbitration and mediation between citizens and businesses to resolve complaints about obscenity or pornography and ends with a directive to "draft a comprehensive moral nuisance law for Utah and a model ordinance for municipalities and counties to provide an effective mechanism to abate and discourage obscenity and pornography."

One of Houston's first orders of business involves placating local antipornography activists, who hold enormous power through their ability to marshal tens of thousands of vocal—and voting-age—supporters in a state of only 2.2 million people. Indeed, one of Houston's early meetings was with JoAnn Hamilton, a housewife who is involved with a number of antipornography groups, including Homes Offering Moral Empowerment (HOME) and American Mothers, Inc. The meeting went well. "[JoAnn's] done a lot of great work, going to stores, asking them to move magazines and stuff. That's the kind of thing that I think is very impressive," Houston says.

Like many other Utahans, Houston is a fervent Mormon, and like most issues in Utah, her job is tied to the state's tight embrace of Mormonism. About 70 percent of Utah's residents identify themselves as being affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (as the Mormon Church is known officially), and half of those people say they are devout practitioners. The LDS church has different cultural and moral standards than does much of the country; church literature dictates that members "don't attend or participate in any form of entertainment that is vulgar, immoral, suggestive, or pornographic in any way." Mormons take edicts like this seriously, and they are looking to Houston as a new weapon in their fight against what the state's most vocal family advocates call "filth."

Filth means something different in Utah from what it does in most other parts of the country, and although the Mormon Church may prohibit "pornographic" entertainment, the United States Supreme Court has ruled that pornography is protected speech. (Utah's state law closely mirrors the Supreme Court ruling on obscenity except for an important semantic change: What the U.S. Supreme Court defines as "obscenity" the Utah law refers to as "pornography" and is therefore subject to restrictions.) JoAnn Hamilton, meanwhile, is looking to limit far tamer fare than triple-X movies and hard-core magazines, both of which are virtually impossible to find in Utah anyway. Hamilton is more worried about magazines such as *Jane* and *Redbook*.

As Hamilton said after her meeting with Houston, "There's two kinds of pornography: hard-core, which we have to go after legally, and soft-core, which is determined by community standards. There are areas where they do not allow *Cosmopolitan* to be sold. We want to do more of that."

Houston agrees. "You certainly don't want to give the impression that you're going to force [business owners] to do something that you really don't have the legal right to force them [to do]," she says. "But I think you can work as an advocate for [citizens] in letting [business owners] know you're there to help out this group, just expressing their concerns. One of the things that the [pornography-ombudsman legislation] actually says is that you act as an arbitrator, kind of mediating

Paula Houston shows off the handiwork of the stamp her friends made for her. Portrait by Lance Clayton

between and reaching a resolution without having to deal with the courts or the laws."

But if Houston tries to help activists like Hamilton further limit the places in Utah where *Cosmopolitan* can be sold, she runs the risk of legal challenges. Houston's mediation between businesses and antipornography advocates could be seen as creating a "chilling effect" on free speech and would therefore almost certainly be declared unconstitutional if challenged. Indeed, Floyd Abrams, a prominent lawyer who specializes in the First Amendment (and whose clients include this magazine), says that although the legal definition of obscenity is "reasonably well defined...in the area of state investigative activities having a chilling effect on speech, that is still a surprisingly inchoate area....If [Houston] is making calls or putting pressure on stores to stop carrying material that is constitutionally protected, that raises deeply troubling First Amendment issues."

Salt Lake City's downtown is organized in a grid around Temple Square, the spiritual nexus of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. One block south of Temple Square is 100 South Street, two blocks east is 200 East Street, and so on. Temple Square can be seen from miles away; Utah's state capitol is set at a remove, about a half-mile north.

Since Mormons first arrived in Utah, more than a century and a half ago, they have dominated the state's civic and cultural life. The church's influence in Utah is even more conspicuous on a governmental level than it is in the general population: About 90 percent of the state's legislators, every member of the state's congressional delegation, and most statewide elected officials are members of the church. This lopsidedness prompted the country's leading non-Mormon scholar of the church, Jan Shipps, to remark recently that Salt Lake City has a "de facto established church." Shipps, a professor emerita at Indiana-Purdue University, went on to say that "separation of church and state seem[s] more like a legal fiction" in Utah.

Houston's mediation between business and antipornography advocates could create a "chilling effect" on free speech.

Since the church's founding, in 1830, its members have had difficulty assimilating into society. Early Mormons landed in Utah in 1847, after being chased out of New York and persecuted in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. The church's practice of polygamy and its distrust of the federal government led to early conflicts—the 1858 Utah War was a result of Mormons' alleged disregard for federal authority.

For the past several decades, Utah's struggles with the rest of the country have had more to do with social mores and popular culture than with encroaching federalism and multiple wives (the church officially renounced polygamy in 1890). Mormons emphasize the sanctity of the family; they don't declare "till death do us part" in their marriage ceremonies because they believe that husbands and wives remain together throughout eternity. The church prohibits premarital sex, and devout Mormons don't swear or consume caffeine or alcohol.

Over the past 30 years, Utah has waged a series of ill-fated battles against nudity, gambling, and even sexually oriented speech. "Utah has a long history of losing its balance over pornography," says Rod Decker, a reporter at Salt Lake City's KUTV-2. "There's a history of prosecuting and going after stuff without much regard for the Constitution and common sense." This history includes bitter disputes between the state's highest court and the U.S. Supreme Court and seemingly comical controversies, such as the Brigham Young University Rodin exhibit that excluded four sculptures—including "The Kiss"—on the ground that they showed a "lack of dignity." Utah is certainly the only state in the country whose Supreme Court referred to U.S. Supreme Court justices as "mentally deficient, mind-warped queers," which happened in 1977 after a Utah pornography law was voided for being draconian. In 1981, the Utah legislature passed a law making it a crime for cable operators in the state to distribute to subscribers "indecent material," which was defined to include any nudity. (A federal court declared that law unconstitutional in 1982.) In 1983, the legislature passed the "Utah Cable Television Programming Decency Act," which imposed fines for people who distributed "indecent material." This time, the definition of "indecency" included verbal descriptions of sex. (A federal district judge overruled this law in 1985, saying it was "unconstitutionally overbroad and vague, and void on its face.")

On a root level, these disputes all challenge the nation's legal definition of obscenity. For the past 28 years, legal tests for obscenity have relied on a 1973 Supreme Court ruling, *Miller* v. *California*, which said that unlike pornography, obscene material is not protected by the First Amendment. It then went on to establish a three-pronged test for obscenity: whether the work in question depicts or describes sexual conduct or excretory functions in a patently offensive way; whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value; and whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work appeals to prurient interests. In its ruling, the Supreme Court said a jury could measure "the essentially factual issues of prurient appeal and patent offensiveness by the standard that prevails in the forum community, and need not employ a national standard."

It is the third prong—the one dealing with community standards—that Utah lawmakers have focused on in their efforts to decide which content they must allow into their state and which they can keep out. And yet the three-pronged test is inclusive, not exclusive: To be considered obscene, a given book or movie or magazine must meet all three of the U.S. Supreme Court's criteria. (It is easier to meet these three prongs in Utah than in the rest of the country: Where *Miller* refers to sexual conduct and excretory functions, the Utah state law also includes material that is "patently offensive in the description or depiction of nudity." As community activists in Utah point out, many Utahans view any

Clockwise from top left: Gayle Ruzicka, of Eagle Forum's Utah chapter; Salt Lake City's Temple Square, the spiritual nexus of the Mormon Church; and Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff

descriptions or depictions of nudity as patently offensive.)

Utah's most recent high-profile fight against pornography came in the form of a prosecution of the owner of a Utah County video-rental store. The store, Movie Buffs, was renting "cable-cut" movies, sex-oriented films that had been edited so they stopped short of showing the three *E*'s: ejaculation, erection, and entrance. Movie Buffs's owner had applied for a business license and made clear what types of titles he was renting, and his cable-cut movies were kept in a separate room of his store. The owner was charged with distribution of pornography, but the Movie Buffs prosecution collapsed because of the lack of clearly delineated community standards. After all, the owner's lawyer pointed out, there were hotels in the area—Mormon-owned Marriott hotels, in fact—that showed some of the same cable-cut movies that were charged with being pornographic.

The Movie Buffs case helped galvanize public opinion in Utah behind the idea that something needed to be done so that such cases could be prosecuted successfully. Paula Houston says she thinks most people were "surprised" that the Movie Buffs prosecution wasn't successful and that it pointed to the need for codified community standards. "[Utah's pornography law] is written based on the *Miller* case, and they tried to prosecute Movie Buffs under that," she says, noting that there were no concrete community standards in Utah County at the time.

On a blustery Thursday that marks the one-year countdown to the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, Gayle Ruzicka is in the state capitol pushing for a bill that would make it illegal for teachers to answer students' questions about homosexuality. Ruzicka, a devout LDS member, is the president of the Utah chapter of the Eagle Forum, a nationwide conservative group.

Ruzicka, who says she's "almost 60," has 12 children and 16 grandchildren. She wears three gold pins on her lapels: one pin of a pair of footprints that she says represent the feet of an 8-week-old unborn baby, one large Eagle Forum pin, and one pin of two parents and three children with the words "Family Advocate" inscribed underneath. Many people in the state—including Ruzicka herself—point to her relentless activism as a prime reason Houston has a new job. "We wanted to have a pornography ombudsman to find out 'What can communities do and what can parents do?'" Ruzicka says.

The answer, Ruzicka and Houston both say, lies in drafting ordinances that set "community standards" around the state. "One of the magazines I probably get the most calls about is *Seventeen*," Ruzicka says. She speaks quickly, bounding over her sentences, sometimes skipping words. "[Parents will] buy a *Seventeen* magazine and get home and not pay attention and all of a sudden [their kids are] reading in there detailed descriptions of sexual activity, homosexual activity," Ruzicka says. By that Ruzicka means that *Seventeen* acknowledges, and occasionally writes about, both premarital sex and gay relationships. "I think parents want to be able to call Paula [and ask], 'What are my rights with this magazine? Do I have any, or how can we just get the word out there's just a lot of things to look out [for]?' I don't anticipate that there'll be any laws passed that we can't have *Seventeen* or *Cosmopolitan* in the stores, but I do think we can set standards with warnings on these magazines or covering up the covers that have exposure [of cleavage] on them....What are the rights of communities, that even if magazines are sold in their community to keep them off the shelves." (This isn't as far-fetched as it sounds: Recently the supermarket chain Giant Food Inc. began placing *Cosmopolitan* behind opaque plastic panels in response to consumer complaints that the magazine's covers were too graphic for young people.) It's not only the slick glossies that concern Ruzicka; the local alternative paper, the *Salt Lake City Weekly*, runs personal ads that include solicitations for same-sex partners. Ruzicka wants to explore limiting its distribution. "Maybe we're going to take them out of all the government buildings...maybe they'll have to say, 'If you're going to give those away there's going to have to be some way to make sure children don't access them.' I don't know. But we'll find out."

Ruzicka is confident that she speaks for many people and that officials like Houston are well aware of her clout. "On issues that have to do with morality, whether it's a homosexual issue or pornography, we get a few thousand people in a hurry," she says, referring to her phone campaigns. "I'll have a legislator say, 'I couldn't even get to bed last night because my phone was ringing....' That's how we want it."

JoAnn Hamilton is also poised to [CONTINUED ON PAGE 129]

TOP TO BOTTOM: DOUGLAS PIZAC/AP (2); KENT C. HORNER/AP

Words on the Side

A renowned professor of literature examines the curious history of what we scrawl in the margins of books.

By Harold Bloom

Illustration by Elvis Swift

E-books, our latest affliction, come with programs that allow annotation, though since there is no book to write in, I take this as another involuntary mockery. The old world of real books will die hard, but I fear that the dying has begun and that in my final years I will have to be content with rereading old books—not the worst of fates.

A few months back, I participated in a symposium on the slouching-toward-us of the e-book and since then have lamented on radio broadcasts the second coming of the scroll. Economics and the habits of the young favor the e-book, and there is also the irrefutable argument about saving space, particularly effective in a house where my wife rightly deplores the pragmatic conversion of living room and dining room into tidal waves of books.

H.J. Jackson's subject in her splendid book *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (Yale University Press) is therefore a picture of a departing world, where actual margins in printed, bound books could overflow with the insight and eloquence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, and Michel de Montaigne, and of many lesser figures. *Marginalia*, as a word, was borrowed from Latin by Coleridge, when he published some of his own "things in the margin" in 1819. Professor Jackson, who teaches at the University of Toronto, is at her best on the taboo against writing marginalia, still widely regarded as the Crime Against the Book. We have also suffered the taboo passively, when we discover that a library copy or a secondhand volume has been defaced by a yahoo. My own library abounds in books purchased used that can still infuriate me when I turn a page, and come upon a barbarism. The taboo is so intense within oneself that for decades I jotted my thoughts in reaction to reading only in notebooks. At some point, doubtless with no notebook handy, I violated the taboo, and now scatter marginalia freely, provided that the book is my property. Jackson says that Coleridge's marginalia converted her to writing in books. As a child enthusiast for William Blake, prince of marginalia, I am surprised I converted so relatively late. I suspect that my lifelong debt to the marvelous Bronx branches of The New York Public Library gave me a religious sense of the book as icon, a sense I cannot fully transcend, which may inform my hostility for the imminent triumph of the e-book.

Jackson, a scholar of the history of reading, wants everyone to compose marginalia in their books, but there I shudder and part from her. She believes that marginalia are intended always for others, but that is not my own experience. Perhaps our difference is that she follows Coleridge, while I prefer Blake. Annotating Swedenborg, Sir Francis Bacon, the translator Boyd's notes on Dante, Spurzheim's *Observations on Insanity*, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Wordsworth, Blake mounts to his customary greatness, but with a freedom partly dependent upon his belief that he prophesies only to himself. Commenting on the reactionary, anti-Thomas Paine *An Apology for the Bible* by Bishop Watson, Blake begins by snapping: "To defend the Bible in this year 1798 would cost a man his life. The Beast & the Whore rule without controls." The counterrevolutionary English government was fiercely repressing dissent, and Blake, not wishing imprisonment or transportation to Australia, had to be content with crying out in the margins.

Blake hated the empirical and time-serving Bacon, and that makes his Bacon marginalia too angry for true eloquence. Where he is ambivalent, Blake becomes the greatest of marginalists, as when Dante provokes him to proclaiming:

The grandest Poetry is Immoral the Grandest characters Wicked. Very Satan.

Or, in an even more ironic mode, he reacts to Wordsworth's Prefaces:

I do not know who wrote these Prefaces they are very mischievous & direct contrary to Wordsworths own Practise.

Still, my disagreement with Jackson is limited: I scribble my marginalia for myself, but sometimes come back and rework them for a book that I find myself perpetually writing, a defense of the idea of genius with examples from the last 25 centuries. Perhaps everything a critic who truly loves great literature can write is marginalia, whether or not he places it within a copy of Dante or Shakespeare or Cervantes, in defiance of the Marginalia Taboo.

Blake's marginalia moves us into the area of influence and to its anxieties. I pick up family Bibles when I visit people on the road and rarely find marginalia, except for family records in front or back. Defacing the text of the Bible must seem infamy to most people, in a country as supposedly religious as ours. The ancient Hebrew formula for whether a book was canonical was to say: "It defiles the hands," meaning that our touch defiles the Bible.

At pessimistic moments, I reflect that this late in literary history, fiction, poetry, and drama are also a kind of marginalia. After Shakespeare, nearly everything in English can seem to fit itself into his margins. But a more positive view keeps returning: Rarely but strongly, what is written in the margins finds a way of entering the body of the ongoing book that never seems to get itself written out.

Marginalia is no less virtuous than skepticism; it, too, is always asking: "What does the author know, and what do I know?"

Jackson usefully reminds us that Virginia Woolf developed an array of reading notebooks in order to avoid marginalia, which she regarded as a kind of violation, doubtless with sexual overtones. I seem to weave back and forth between Woolf and Coleridge, vacillating between notebooks and margins, but almost never relying upon both in the same time span. Molesting a book is too strong a metaphor for me, and yet most of us feel an intrusion when marginalia keep us from being alone with a book and an author. There are erotic overtones in that feeling also.

Teachers write a different kind of marginalia, which I find all over the books I use for teaching Shakespeare. Sometimes an edition of *Hamlet* or of the *Henry IV* plays falls open before me, in or out of class, and I have difficulty in deciphering my marginalia, because I face a palimpsest, layer written over layer. Hamlet and Falstaff change every time I read and teach them, and I stare at the impacted marginalia with the puzzlement that my own handwriting has turned into hieroglyphics.

Emerson said that there was no history, only biography, and I tend to apply that to reading. The biography of reading seems to me the story of each individual life, which I am aware is now an archaic assumption. We read in order to live, even if in dark passages we read in order to survive. It may be that Jackson is right. Moses said to Joshua: "Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets!" Perhaps it would be good if all readers violated the Marginalia Taboo. ◘

***McCall's*, the venerable women's magazine, is being replaced by *Rosie*, spearheaded by the thoroughly modern Rosie O'Donnell. Can this odd pairing translate TV fame into a publishing hit? By Austin Bunn**

The Subject Is Rosie

The September 1949 issue of *McCall's*

Dani Wayt and her mom have something they need to share with Rosie O'Donnell. It's a manila envelope with a piece of notebook paper stapled to the outside, a note handwritten in Dani's elementary-school scrawl. "Dear Rosie, I have a younger brother Caleb who has a disease called histiocytosis," it reads. "Most people who have this disease died [sic] from it. If you say something about this disease on your show, people will learn about it and give money for research. You could save my brother's life and others like him....Love, Dani Wayt." There's an arrow drawn to the lip of the envelope, where the words "Information and Photo of Caleb Inside" are written in big letters and underlined.

On this Friday in February, Dani and her mom have driven from their house outside Orlando to Disney-MGM Studios, where ABC's *The Rosie O'Donnell Show* is taping for a week in the amphitheater where *Beauty and the Beast* is performed. Under the brilliant midday sun, they're holding hands, waiting in a giant queue of 1,600 people angling for seats. Screams peal out from the Tower of Terror ride next door. A woman and her friend, holding placards that read "Rosie: Roses are Red, I'll be Blue, If I Can't Do The Opening Announce For You," briefly talk to Dani and her mom before they move forward in the crush. Dani shows Caleb's photo to anybody who will listen to her, while Mrs. Wayt seeks advice from one of the crowd-handlers about how best to get O'Donnell this dispatch about her family's heartache. About 100 feet ahead of them, right past the metal detectors, is a table covered in black felt with a motley array of wrapped boxes, flowers, and trinkets.

This is the "Gifts for Rosie" table, but they're not gifts as much as messages, transmissions upward from her audience. There's a single rose with a card attached ("Rosie, I got my mammogram today, Angie Kuhns"); a tiny, suspicious-looking box ("Rosie, Open This Immediately—It's Very CRAFTY"); and a two-foot-tall reindeer piñata made of gilded beads that only Elton John could love. Mrs. Wayt and Dani don't want to leave their letter on the table, which they know is a dead end. "We want to try to hand it to her," Mrs. Wayt says before they vanish into the crowd amassing in the holding pen in front of the theater.

People constantly want to hand things to Rosie O'Donnell. But now, she has something to hand back. After working the stand-up-comedy circuit and embarking upon an uneven (*A League of Their Own*, *Exit to Eden*) movie career, and five years of hosting a talk show that promised to improve daytime TV's image, O'Donnell has become editorial director of *Rosie* magazine, which lands on newsstands in April. Presented as a system reboot of the flagging *McCall's*, *Rosie* hopes to capture in print O'Donnell's television persona. On her show, O'Donnell is the celebrity-next-door, a laid-back mom who admits to reading *People* magazine and who can work Depends undergarments into a conversation and sweatpants into a fashion statement. No copies of her magazine were available at press time, but O'Donnell and her editors described its contents: interviews with O'Donnell's friends, such as comic Fran Drescher, who talks about surviving uterine cancer; an "Adoption Page," which highlights kids looking for homes; a pro/con consideration of gun control; the advice column "Mom Squad" by actress Jane Seymour and comedienne Tracey Ullman; and a piece written by Madonna.

The glossy, extroverted *Rosie* will be a sincere and strategic bit of merchandising from O'Donnell's syndicated show, which was ready-made magazine material to begin with: one part famous-

Rosie O'Donnell's fans know her as a star of the stage, not the kitchen. Illustration by Anita Kunz

THIS PAGE: PETER BERSON

Rosie O'Donnell isn't eager to package herself. "At some point you deny your own humanity by making yourself a consumer product," she says.

Above: Rosie O'Donnell taping her show in Orlando this year. Below: O'Donnell in her stand-up days.

person interview, one part local hero, and one part domestic how-to. (The singing segments, unfortunately, had to go.) It's also a calculated spinoff of her personality. O'Donnell is an omnimedia kind of woman. With magazine/TV phenoms Queen Oprah and the Great Eggshell-White Hope Martha Stewart leading the way, O'Donnell knows that these days, as a media personality, if you're not everywhere, you're nowhere. Beyond her regular film and TV gigs, O'Donnell has ventured into territories that her heroines of brand extension wouldn't go near, like the Broadway musical (O'Donnell plays the Cat in the Hat in *Seussical the Musical* and has served as the host for the Tony Awards). After all that, how hard could this editing thing be?

But unlike shelfmates Oprah and Martha, there is one aspect of celebrity editing O'Donnell isn't eager to master: becoming the product. "At some point you deny your own humanity by making yourself a consumer product," she says, sitting in an enormous, blindingly white photo studio in Manhattan. For a consumer product, O'Donnell is definitely not gift-wrapped. At noon, she's in her offscreen uniform of T-shirt, blue sweatpants, and sandals. The first thing she tells me is that an "acid reflux" problem is making her mouth taste like stomach acid. Still, she's here, grudgingly, for one of the rare magazine photo shoots to which she'll yield. "I literally loathe photo shoots," she says. "I'd rather have a root canal. You sit there, and they go, 'Can we get rid of that chin?' You feel like every single bad thing about you is on display."

This reluctance is part of what makes O'Donnell's personality so appealing—a reason her imperfect fans see so much of themselves in her imperfect self. She sits for a few magazine covers, timing them to all-important TV-sweeps months. But O'Donnell doesn't want to be a cover model, and she's not enthusiastic about having to do it for *Rosie*. She wants to reflect fame, play the secondhand celebrity. "I like being able to say this, this other thing is the product," she says, "not me." That attitude is a good summation of what got her famous in the first place: her cheerful self-effacement, an unabashed love of stars, and a skill at shilling their products.

O'Donnell grew up on Long Island, and after her mother died from cancer when she was 10, she turned to sitcoms and soap operas for sustenance and stand-up comedy as an outlet. She shuffled through colleges and toured small venues in the 1980s, but her major break came during a winning streak on *Star Search*. That led to a supporting part on the television show *Gimme a Break*, a stint as a VJ on VH1, and roles in the films *Car 54, Where Are You?* and *Sleepless in Seattle*. The debut of *The Rosie O'Donnell Show* in 1996 earned her a *Newsweek* cover story and a loyal audience of 3-million-plus viewers. Still, the only star in her mind has always been the guest in the chair to her right. "When I go to the mall with my son [6-year-old Parker]," she says, "people say, 'Are you Rosie O'Donnell?' And Parker says, 'Rosie O'Donnell is a show.' I like that."

Only Parker, bless his heart, could get away with that logic. Rosie O'Donnell is a show, a comedienne, a mother, a fan, an enthusiastic amateur, a philanthropist, and an armchair politico. At this point, people know her as much for her emergent and self-publicized "annoying Democratic" (her words) politics—as seen in her onscreen détente with NRA member Tom Selleck or her airing, right before Election Day, of a videotaped pro-Gore statement by Barbra Streisand—as for her comedy.

But more critical for *Rosie* publisher G+J USA, the Bertelsmann AG subsidiary producing the magazine in conjunction with her company, KidRo Productions (see sidebar, facing page), is that O'Donnell embodies what womanhood looks like in 2001, which is to say unmarried, undermothered, and completely unreserved. Though O'Donnell has been on the cover of *McCall's* in the past, she is at some level the inverse of what the 125-year-old magazine once stood for. She's an unorthodox single mom—three of her four children are adopted (one is a foster child)—and her love life is famously not for public consideration. Bringing her in as editor of the reimagined *McCall's* signals just how far G+J USA was willing to go to remake *McCall's*. The magazine needs it. After spectacular circulation numbers in the 1960s, its figures have been declining steadily. Now, the stagnant image of *McCall's* will be updated with a more contemporary, if unconventional, choice. "Most women's magazines are not in the new century or not hitting that younger demographic," she says. "I knew we had to update it for educated women who want to talk about things other than '30 Days to Thinner Thighs.'"

The question of whether *Rosie* will have an impact in the short term is largely moot, because even before its launch, it is, according to *Mediaweek*, the tenth best-selling magazine in the country. With an inherited *McCall's* subscriber base of more than 4 million and "well above 100 pages" of advertising (significantly more than its typical issue) sold for the first issue, says publisher Sharon Summer, *Rosie* will be the magazine

BOTTOM NEAL PETERS COLLECTION

SIZE MATTERS

Daniel Brewster, head of G+J USA, is faced with the challenge of moving the No. 7 magazine company up a few notches. *Rosie*, and a big bankroll, should help.

By Stefani Lako Baldwin

Daniel B. Brewster Jr., president and chief executive officer of G+J USA, thinks that size matters in today's magazine industry. Seated at the head of a conference table on the tenth floor of the magazine publisher's midtown Manhattan office, Brewster lounges confidently in shirtsleeves, his silver hair contrasting with his youthful face and wiry physique. "I really do believe by the end of the day there will be a handful of media giants," he explains. "This is not a business where you want to be the No. 6 or No. 7 player."

Brewster, 45, has been tapped by G+J's parent company, German publishing behemoth Bertelsmann AG, to bring G+J USA, a company that has languished at the No. 7 spot among U.S. magazine publishers, to the top five in five years—just as the business has been hit by a slowdown in sales and advertising. Brewster acknowledges that the industry may be heading into a slump, but as a self-described optimist, he sees possibilities. "The current market environment is very, very tough," he says. "I think that for G+J that could represent an opportunity to acquire [new titles]."

If you're looking for the source of Brewster's optimism, go directly to the bank. Although Brewster is quick to dispute that he has a blank check for acquisitions, what he does have is cash—as much as $7 billion. (Bertelsmann made the $7 billion off the sale of its stake in AOL Europe.) With that cash in hand, Brewster has embarked on a strategy he developed as head of American Express Publishing Corp.: Acquire someone else's titles, alter existing titles, and create new ones. Indeed, during his seven-year stint as American Express Publishing's president and CEO, he built off the popularity of *Travel + Leisure*, creating two new titles.

Spread before Brewster on the conference table are eight of G+J USA's nine magazines, including *Fast Company* and *Inc.*, two new and, some would argue, expensive acquisitions that represent Brewster's decision to lessen G+J's dependence on the women's-magazine market (G+J paid more than half a billion dollars for the two). The titles make up the company's new Business Information Group, headed by David Carey, former publisher of *The New Yorker*. Next there's *Family Circle*, *Parents*, *Child*, *Fitness*, *Homestyle*, and *YM*. Brewster says that five of the six either have been or will be redesigned and given a stronger editorial voice. *Child*, for example, was competing with its own sister magazine *Parents*, says Brewster, so he plans to change *Child*'s content to reflect issues not discussed in *Parents*, such as vacations, apparel, and education.

Then there's G+J's oldest publication, *McCall's*, soon to be *Rosie*. Brewster may have respect for *McCall's* place in magazine history, but sentimentality can't save a publication bleeding more than a million dollars a month. Enter Rosie O'Donnell. "We decided to take advantage of the power of television and the power of Rosie as a personality and the ability to cross-promote and give a really distinctive voice to the magazine," says Brewster. The partnership between O'Donnell and G+J is 50-50; each is putting up half the production money ($10 million apiece) and each owns half of the profit and assets. O'Donnell brings special resources to the arrangement, including celebrity friends and a TV show—with 3.6 million daily viewers—on which to hype the magazine. Brewster says that "Rosie" the show and *Rosie* the magazine will openly promote each other.

A prototype of *Rosie* was missing from Brewster's table, as was a copy of *Friday*, a new women's magazine that G+J USA may launch. G+J's other women's titles are geared toward teens and moms; *Friday* looks to capture the working woman in her 20s and 30s. While the *Rosie* deal gets the majority of the press, *Friday* could represent Brewster's gutsiest move—bankrolling a startup in a soft magazine market.

Then again, taking on AOL Time Warner and Condé Nast is not a job for the weak or timid, and Brewster's survivor instincts are on full alert. He's betting that he can move G+J USA up the charts. It's amazing how much confidence a multibillion-dollar bankroll can buy.

Left: Daniel Brewster has high hopes for G+J USA. Above: The final issue of *McCall's*.

industry's biggest launch so far this year. And the dedicated crowds at Disney World suggest O'Donnell's allure is enduringly real: It takes a strong personality to inspire 1,600 people to skip work, gild a reindeer, and kill three hours to participate in the creation of a 45-minute TV program.

Rosie's long-term success is another matter, considering the fact that just as her cross-media platform is being established, O'Donnell is stepping out of the spotlight. The contract for her talk show expires next year, and she's not going to renew it, planning instead to migrate to Florida to raise her kids away from the paparazzi's flashbulbs. She'll edit *Rosie* mostly via e-mail: "Yeah, we bitmap," she says. "We JPEG." The magazine will hold her place in New York media until she feels like coming back. She's circumspect about the magazine's chances, the same way she was about her show when it began. "When we were selling the TV show, people said, 'What if it's not successful, will you do "My Mom Dresses Too Sexy" and all of those single-topic shows?'" she remembers. "I said, 'No. If it doesn't sell, we're done.' Same with this—if this doesn't sell, we're not going to do 'How to Be Sexy for Your Man.' We're just not doing it."

In light of that casual confidence, the story here isn't so much the fate of *Rosie* but the failure of *McCall's*, one of the few American-legacy publications well into its second century. There's something notable in the fact that *McCall's* persevered until this point to have Rosie O'Donnell—the ultimate mom, albeit without husband, biological kid, or even public love interest—be its executioner. One of O'Donnell's favorite crafts is decoupage, the art of pasting cropped images, postcards, beads, sequins, and shells onto furniture or home accessories and then lacquering them to a sheen. She loves it so much that it's [CONTINUED ON PAGE 130]

TOP: PETER BERSON; BOTTOM: BETTMAN/CORBIS WIRE PHOTO

Nixon and the Chandler Dynasty

The Chandlers, Los Angeles's preeminent publishing family, discovered Richard Nixon, propelled him to the White House, and eventually lost faith in him. The feeling was mutual.

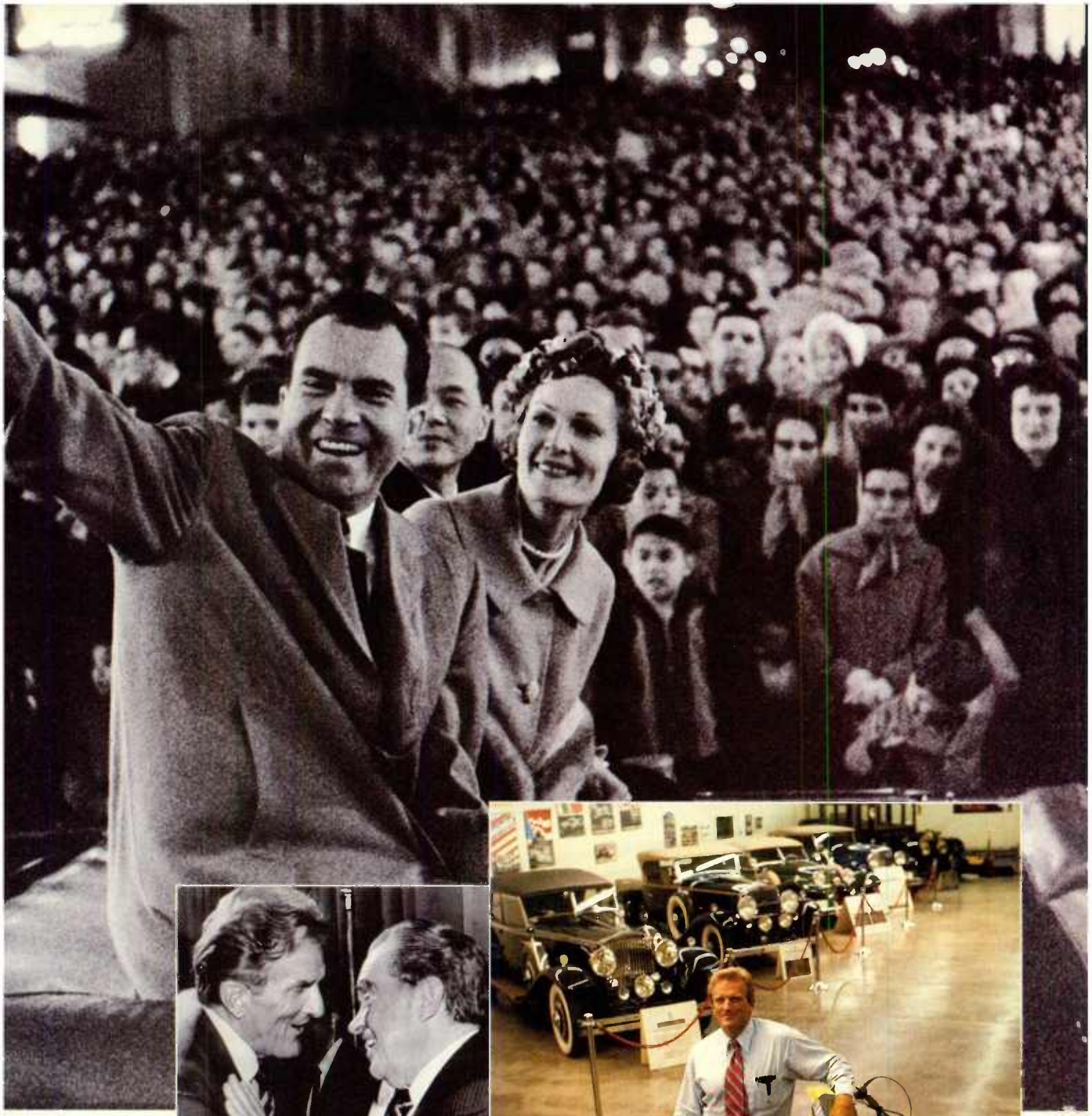
By Dennis McDougal

By the age of 11, Richard Milhous Nixon had become a passionate reader of his hometown paper, the *Los Angeles Times*—and dreamed of becoming a newspaperman himself. In 1924, before he was even old enough to deliver the *Times*, young Nixon sat himself down and wrote the following letter:

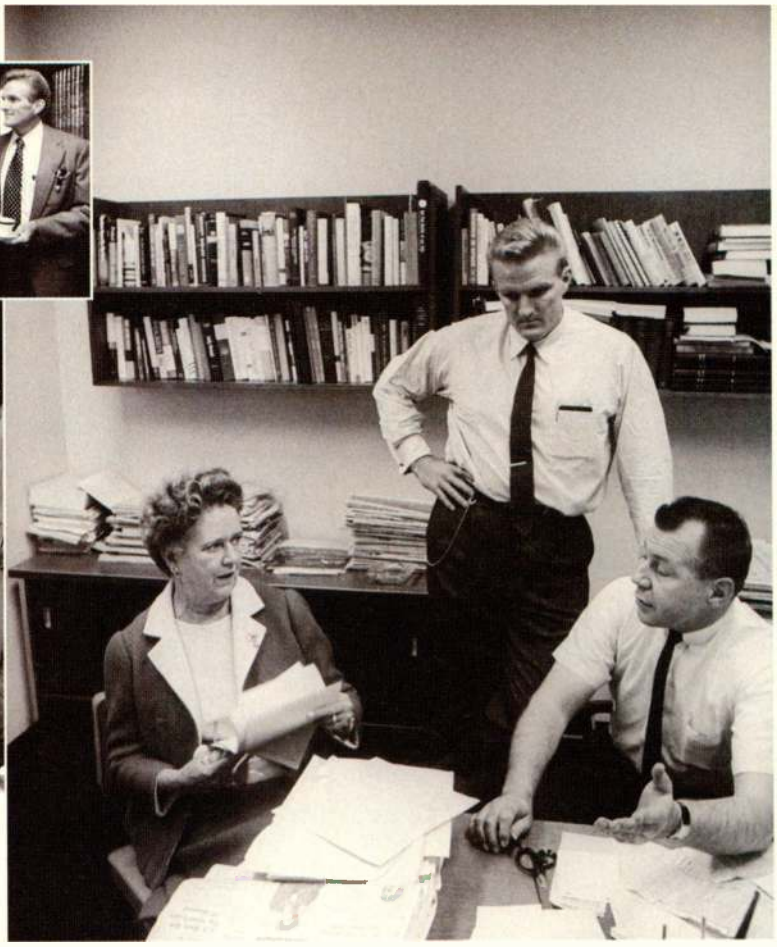
> Times, Office K, Box 240
> January 24, 1924
> Dear Sir:
> Please consider me for the position of office boy mentioned in the Times paper. I am eleven years of age and I am in the Sixth grade of the East Whittier grammar school. I am very willing to work and would like the money for a vacation trip. I am willing to come to your office at any time and I will accept any pay offered. My address is Whittier boulevard and Leffingwell road. The phone number is 5274. For reference you can see Miss Flowers principal of the East Whittier School. Hoping that you will accept me for service, I am,
> Yours truly,
> Richard M. Nixon

Nixon didn't get the job and soon abandoned his publishing ambitions. But the letter was hardly his last appeal to the *Times*. Indeed, it foretold his sweeping, 50-year relationship with the paper—certainly the longest, most intimate bond between a politician and a periodical. The legendarily conservative Chandler family—which owned the *Los Angeles Times* from soon after its founding, in 1881, until it was acquired by the Tribune Company, in 2000—launched Nixon's political career and mapped its ascent, essentially using him to expand their own dynastic social, cultural, and political reach from Sunset Boulevard to Pennsylvania Avenue. The often unholy alliance, which ended in betrayal and revenge, offers a roiling history of American media mores and is perhaps the perfect prism through which to view the ever-evolving symbiosis between the presidency and the press. But ultimately, Nixon's intersection with the extraordinary private and public personalities who ran the *Los Angeles Times*—a hardened, backroom politico; a formidable charity-circuit socialite; a fair-haired surfer jock who became the nation's most unlikely newspaper publisher and expelled Nixon from the family circle—illustrates the transience of power, its definite arcs and cycles.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP R: RALPH CRANE/TIMEPIX; GUNTHER; UPI/BETTMAN; MURRAY GARRETT/ARCHIVE PHOTOS



Opposite: Norman Chandler, who published the *Los Angeles Times* from 1944 to 1960. Clockwise from top: Richard Nixon, with his wife, Pat, campaigning for governor of California in 1962; Norman's son, big-game hunter and motorcycle enthusiast Otis, in 1979; Otis Chandler with Nixon at a 1984 newspaper editors' convention.



Above: Otis Chandler greets Walt Disney (left) and Bob Hope at a 1960 fund-raising event; top: Chandler (right) with England's Prince Philip (center) in 1993; right: Dorothy Chandler, Otis (standing), and an unidentified man at the *Los Angeles Times* in December 1964

For most of the 20th century, the *Los Angeles Times* and its publishers dictated southern-California politics. It wasn't until relatively late in the century, however, that the paper, by far the largest publication in one of the world's fastest-growing cities, was respected for its journalism. General Harrison Gray Otis, who ran the *Times* from 1882 until his death, in 1917, often watched his favored political candidates go down in defeat. But the general's son-in-law and successor, Harry Chandler, worked his political will by directing the reportage of such *Times* journalists as Al Nathan, Bill Henry, Chester Hanson, and Carlton Williams. Chandler used his political pull and the headlines to beat the drums for Herbert Hoover when he sought the Republican Party nomination in the late twenties. And when novelist and socialist muckraker Upton Sinclair ran for governor on his famous End Poverty In California (EPIC) platform in 1934, it was a *Times*-led smear campaign that defeated him.

As both the city and the newspaper grew during the first half of the century, so did the *Times*'s political influence. The newspaper's earliest publishers and editors tended to champion social change only if it directly—and preferably materially—benefited the Chandler family. Harry Chandler's top reporters were supervised by *Times* political editor Kyle Palmer: a short, unkempt operator whose glib manner and penchant for political poker seemed to meld the worst qualities of corrupt Louisiana politician Huey Long and Dickens's malicious Uriah Heap. When Harry Chandler died, at the age of 80, in 1944, his 45-year-old son, Norman, replaced him. Norman changed little during his tenure, which lasted until 1960; he let Palmer and his minions perform their duties unchecked.

After joining the *Times* in 1919, Palmer wormed his way into the halls of power in both Sacramento and Washington, D.C., where he served the Chandlers briefly as the *Times* bureau chief before returning to Los Angeles. It was Palmer who oversaw the *Times*'s editorial page (he wrote "The Watchman," one of its regular columns) and news coverage, which so heavily influenced public opinion that the paper's favored candidates for county supervisors, state legislators, and city officials were virtually rubber-stamped into office. It was Palmer, too, who decided which candidate measured up to the Chandler criteria: antilabor, pro–private property, and, above all, Republican.

Kyle Palmer rarely regarded any politician as anything more than a public—meaning *Times*—servant. Thus, when the habitually jaded political editor rushed excitedly into the publisher's suite one spring day in 1946, Norman was doubly attentive. Palmer announced that he had just met with that November's Republican candidate for the strongly Democratic 12th Congressional District: a bright, ambitious young man from the Los Angeles suburb of Whittier. His name was Richard Milhous Nixon, and Palmer wanted Norman to meet him, too.

Nixon, hoping to join J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, had graduated second in Whittier College's class of 1934, won a scholarship, and gone on to law school at Duke University. But the FBI wasn't interested in a modest middle-class Quaker from southern California, and neither were the premier East Coast law firms where he'd applied. Discouraged but never defeated, Nixon served in the navy as a lieutenant during World War II before returning home to Whittier in 1945. It was then that Nixon decided to pursue the congressional seat; he paid $500 to a savvy L.A. attorney named Murray Chotiner to help him figure out how to win. Chotiner, already a well-known Republican operative who was busy working on other campaigns, had just

CLOCKWISE FROM R: JULIAN WASSER/TIMEPIX. THE OTIS CHANDLER COLLECTION (2)

enough time to give Nixon two valuable bits of advice: Persuade five-term Democratic incumbent Jerry Voorhis to debate him and suck up to the publishers of every newspaper, big or small, in the 12th Congressional District, which then comprised several cities at the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, east of Los Angeles.

"I called in on every local newspaper office, however small, usually spending several hours talking with the publisher, the editor, the reporters and sometimes even the printers," Nixon recalled in Jonathan Aitken's *Nixon: A Life*. His precampaign press tour paid off. Twenty-six of the 30 newspapers that circulated in the 12th District endorsed Nixon, including the *Times*.

Kyle Palmer, in an interview with historian Bela Kornitzer shortly before his death, in 1962, remembered, "My first impression of Nixon was that here was a serious, determined, somewhat gawky young fellow who was out on a sort of giant killer operation. But it wasn't too long after he settled down that we began to realize that we had an extraordinary man on our hands."

After meeting Nixon, Norman Chandler enthusiastically agreed. "His forthrightness, and the way he spoke, made a deep impression on me," Norman told Kornitzer. "After Nixon departed, I told Mr. Palmer, 'This young fellow makes sense. He looks like a comer. He has a lot of fight and fire. Let's support him.'"

Once Nixon's campaign had been launched, Voorhis accepted Nixon's invitation to debate. The two faced off five times during the campaign; Nixon drew blood at every match. What's more, Nixon had the support of Kyle Palmer and the *Times*, which meant increased campaign donations from supporters as well as fawning headlines. Nixon won the election—65,586 votes to 49,994—in a campaign that has been denounced by political scientists and historians for its breathtaking smear tactics. On election night, the new congressman stopped by the *Times* to pay his respects and first met Norman's wife, Dorothy "Buff" Chandler, the emerging doyenne of Los Angeles society. Congressman Nixon's entourage that evening included his wife, Pat, his parents, his brother, and his sister-in-law; when Norman asked what they'd like to drink, the straitlaced Quaker family answered, "Milk."

"And so I [was going] into the kitchen [to] tell the cook everybody wanted milk," Buff recalled in a 1977 *Esquire* interview, "when Nixon came out into the hall and said, 'Buff, could you get me a double bourbon? I don't want Mother and Father to see me take a drink.' It showed a funny, cheating quality that has never changed through the years."

The *Times* supported Nixon's reelection in 1948, praising his work as the outraged junior member of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Nixon's grandstanding prosecution of Alger Hiss brought him national attention, and he won an even larger victory than he had in 1946.

Throughout the fifties, the *Times* backed Nixon's rapid rise through the Republican Party. Political power at the paper during the early part of the decade remained vested in kingmaker Kyle Palmer and his reporters, and the extent of Palmer's dominance was signified by Los Angeles's rapid growth during the previous generation. Although the region's population exploded from 100,000 in 1900 to nearly 2 million in 1950, its politics and newspapers remained basically unchanged. No new voice arose to challenge the *Times* or its closest rivals, the Hearst-owned *Examiner* and *Herald*. With rare exceptions, most major California officeholders were Republican, the *Times* controlled the Republican agenda, and Norman Chandler deferred to Palmer on most political questions.

Palmer made no secret of his absolute control of the California legislature: In Sacramento, he was known literally to walk a selected bill through both the senate and the assembly, then lay it on the governor's desk for signature. One of Palmer's many nicknames, in fact, was the "Little Governor." No Republican ran for anything much more powerful than dogcatcher in California without Kyle Palmer's approval. So even though the Alger Hiss case had catapulted Richard Nixon into the national spotlight in 1948, Palmer never let the brash young congressman forget who had brokered his political rise. Palmer masterminded Nixon's 1950 U.S. Senate campaign against the well-respected Democratic congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, the wife of actor Melvyn Douglas. Gahagan Douglas was both a liberal and a woman, and Kyle Palmer and the *Times* immediately went to work using both labels to destroy her.

Los Angeles Times publisher Norman Chandler recalled of Richard Nixon, "This young fellow makes sense.... Let's support him."

In his "Watchman" column, Palmer demeaned Gahagan Douglas as "a veritable political butterfly, flitting from flower to flower." Although he didn't call her a communist—Nixon had labeled her the "Pink Lady"—he did slam her as too "emotional." But what did the voters expect of a female politician? Palmer shrugged off criticism of the *Times*'s pro-Nixon news coverage by pointing out that "from time to time, as space allows, news accounts of what [Gahagan Douglas] has to say and what she is doing will be published." Palmer wrote many of Nixon's speeches and counseled him on such seemingly mundane matters as keeping a smile pasted on his face at all times, even while eviscerating a political foe. Palmer's advice was considered so crucial that Nixon's chief strategist, Murray Chotiner, often copied confidential internal campaign memoranda to "CC: Kyle Palmer." Nixon won the Senate race handily, defeating Gahagan Douglas by more than 650,000 votes.

In July 1952, just before the Republican National Convention began in Chicago, Buff Chandler persuaded John S. Knight, the publisher of the *Chicago Daily News*, to predict in a front-page headline that Dwight Eisenhower would choose Richard Nixon as his running mate. "I was the one who threw Nixon's name in the ring," Buff was fond of saying, and the headline gave Nixon the edge over such formidable California Republican rivals as Governor Earl Warren and the state's senior senator, William F. Knowland, the publisher of *The Oakland Tribune*. Eisenhower did indeed pick the 39-year-old Nixon to run with him in 1952, and a Republican victory appeared certain until less than two months before

Election Day. That's when the *New York Post* reported that a group of southern-California supporters had secretly paid Nixon $18,000 for miscellaneous campaign expenses. Ike began to think about dumping his running mate but continued to support Nixon publicly. During the first three days after the story broke, the *Los Angeles Times* buried news of the Nixon slush fund on the third page. The Republican National Committee, meanwhile, defended the candidate by buying a half-hour of prime time on three networks for $75,000, and Nixon delivered his famous "Checkers" speech. Although viewers learned little about the slush fund, they did come to know that the Nixons were so strapped for cash that Pat Nixon had to wear a plain cloth coat during the harsh Washington, D.C., winters. They also learned about a dog named Checkers that a campaign supporter had given to Nixon's two little girls. "Regardless of what they [Democrats] say about it, we're gonna keep it," he said resolutely.

Norman told Nixon that running for governor was not a good idea. Besides, he was no longer publisher of the *Times*. Otis was.

While Washington pundits and the New York intelligentsia uniformly panned Nixon's performance as a maudlin appeal to the cheapest of human sentiment, most of the 58 million Americans who watched the "Checkers" speech sided with the Nixons, their daughters, and their dog. And so, of course, did the *Los Angeles Times*. In a front-page editorial, headlined "WE STAND BY NIXON," that ran the following day, the same *Times* that had relegated its original story of the scandal to the inside pages declared, "The personal tragedy of an upright man sacrificed unjustly to satisfy the clamor stirred by the cunning objectives of his political enemies would by no means be as deplorable as would be the loss to the public of a career genuinely dedicated to the public interest." Nixon's place on the Republican ticket was secured.

It was unlikely that Otis Chandler had read his father's front-page editorial or anything else the *Times* published regarding the 1952 presidential election. Except for the sports section or news of the Olympic Games, he wasn't much interested in newspapers; he was far more interested in surfing.

The only son of Norman and Buff Chandler had celebrated his 25th birthday in 1952 but was still not certain what he wanted to do with his life: After graduating from Stanford, Otis and a fraternity pal seriously considered a career in pig farming. He served as an air force lieutenant for two years but had no aspirations to make the military his career. And although he toyed with the idea of medical school once he'd finished his stint in the air force, Otis finally acceded to his parents' wishes: He would undertake a seven-year training program in preparation to become the fourth publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*. His father remained chairman of the board of the Times Mirror Company, on which his mother also sat.

In April 1960, Otis Chandler stepped up to the publisher's suite and enacted a host of radical editorial shifts that began to win the *Times* some respect. "It was a major redo of the paper from section to section—typeface, Washington Bureau, foreign bureau, and all of that," remembers the 73-year-old Chandler, who retired from the Times Mirror Company in 1986 and now owns and operates the Vintage Museum of Transportation and Wildlife in Oxnard, California. "I was reading the other papers around the country, and I was saying, 'We're just not very good.' So I had a set of blueprints."

One of Otis's first departures was his front-page condemnation of the ultraconservative John Birch Society, of which his own aunt and uncle, Philip and Alberta Chandler, were ardent members. To Birchers, Dwight Eisenhower had been a Soviet patsy, the United Nations was a communist conspiracy, and Norman Chandler's old friend (and now chief justice) Earl Warren was nothing less than a card-carrying Red draped in black Supreme Court robes. By condemning the Birch paranoia, Otis also condemned his right-wing family members. He next turned his attention to Kyle Palmer. "I didn't want another kingmaker," says Chandler, who saw Palmer as symbolic of the *Times*'s antiquated approach to political reporting.

The *Times* blanketed the 1960 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles (which nominated John F. Kennedy) with its own reporters that year, but their eyewitness accounts rarely made it into the paper. Palmer simply tossed their notes in the trash and rewrote younger reporters' copy into the same dull, doctrinaire, and biased Chandlerese that he had always produced on his old upright Underwood. But Otis was watching, and the election proved to be Kyle Palmer's last hurrah.

He gracefully faced his forced retirement the following year, philosophizing that the new publisher "was young and full of beans and I was old." Palmer died shortly thereafter, from leukemia, in January 1962.

Otis acted quickly to improve the paper's journalistic reputation. Targeting *The New York Times* as the newspaper to beat, he spent most of the sixties rebuilding the staff, using his family's deep pockets to lure better reporters. From his days as an Olympic-qualifying shot-putter to his ascension to the board of The Associated Press, Otis Chandler could never bear to finish second.

And yet the reactionary *Times* of Norman and Harry Chandler did not vanish all at once; its editorial pages moved slowly from the political right to the center. From their seats on the *Times* board, Norman and Buff continued to wield their conservative influence over their independent-minded son, but when it came to Richard Nixon, they never had Otis's ear. When the former vice-president tried to jump-start his stalled career in 1962 by seeking the Chandlers' blessing to run for governor, Norman told him between thoughtful puffs on his pipe that it was not an especially good idea. Besides, Norman said, he was no longer publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*. Otis was. Nixon ignored Norman and one morning, just before he announced his candidacy, awoke to *Times* headlines questioning how he had been able to purchase a $300,000 home in the Trousdale Estates of Beverly Hills for a mere $90,000.

As David Halberstam recounted in *The Powers That Be*, his classic analysis of the media business, Nixon was perplexed. "What's

Right: Dorothy "Buff" Chandler with Richard Nixon at the Hollywood Bowl in 1955. "I was the one who threw Nixon's name in the ring," she said of Nixon's 1952 Republican vice-presidential candidacy. Below: Buff in a 1958 formal portrait.

Above: For their 1970 family Christmas card, lifelong surfing buff Otis Chandler (far right) and his family posed on the beach.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP R: MUSIC CENTER ARCHIVE/OTTO ROTHSCHILD COLLECTION; THE OTIS CHANDLER COLLECTION; WALLACE SEAWELL

wrong with what I did?" he demanded of Frank McCulloch, then the managing editor, who patiently explained that Nixon's whopping discount looked and smelled like a political payoff.

"I'm a private citizen," Nixon added huffily.

"Well, you're not entirely a private citizen, Dick," said McCulloch. "You have been vice-president of the United States and you may well have a political future."

For their part, Norman and Buff continued to distance themselves from their political creation. In his typically oblique fashion, Norman tried to warn Nixon that when Kyle Palmer had died that January, Palmer's prevailing sensibility had died with him. But Nixon continued to play by the Palmer method, assuming that unflattering facts would be obscured.

When, in a Freudian slip, Nixon announced that year that he was running for "governor of the United States," the *Times*'s Carl Greenberg reported it, underscoring Nixon's not-so-subtle goal of making Sacramento his stepping-stone to the White House. Equally hard-edged front-page coverage followed throughout the campaign, and despite a lukewarm *Times* endorsement, Richard Nixon lost the governorship to the incumbent Democrat, Edmund G. (Pat) Brown.

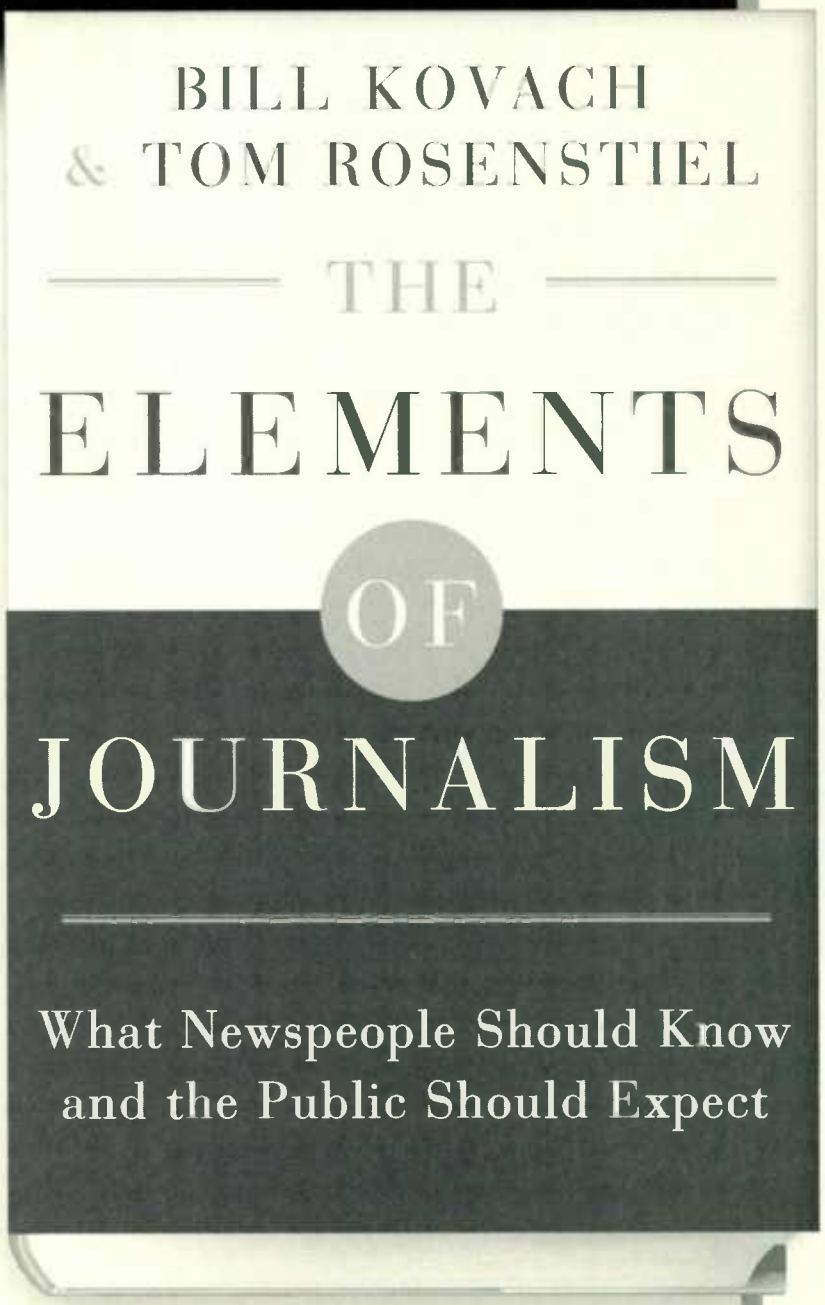
Nixon let off a now-famous diatribe against the press the day after his defeat. During a crowded press conference, he bitterly denounced the media for its no-holds-barred coverage and declared that this would be his last race for political office.

"He was very resentful," Buff told *Esquire* in 1977. "Very. The blast was at the *Times* when he said, 'You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore!'"

A few days later, Nixon canceled his *Times* subscription.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 133]

Who determines what's true?



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THE *60 MINUTES* MAN

BY NEAL GABLER

As a boy growing up in suburban New Rochelle, New York, in the 1930s, Don Hewitt would go to the movies and ponder whether he wanted to be Hildy Johnson, the fast-talking, intrepid newspaper reporter of *The Front Page*, or Julian Marsh, the manic theater impresario of *42nd Street*. When Hewitt landed at CBS in 1948 as a news director, after having reported for *Stars and Stripes* while serving as a merchant marine during World War II, he says he found the solution to his dilemma: As a television journalist, he could be both Johnson and Marsh.

Or so Hewitt, the legendary creator and executive producer of *60 Minutes*, claims. Approaching 80, Hewitt has become an elder statesman of journalism and one of its most honored practitioners precisely because he has shown journalists a third way. However, *Tell Me a Story: Fifty Years and* 60 Minutes *in Television* (PublicAffairs), his loping, loose-jointed, anecdotal memoir, tells another tale, one that chronicles the strange, tension-ridden relationship between the mission of journalism to inform and the imperative of show business to entertain. Hewitt unwittingly provides an account of the slow demise of traditional journalism at the hands of entertainment; it could be subtitled: "How Marsh Strangled Johnson."

In the beginning of broadcast journalism, of course, there was that icon of integrity, Edward R. Murrow, and Hewitt pays his obligatory respects to the CBS of Murrow and, later, Walter Cronkite, where the emphasis was on getting the story, telling it accurately, and telling it well. Even though broadcast news was mandated by an activist Federal Communications Commission, which required the networks to provide it in exchange for the use of the airwaves, members of the Murrow generation took the public interest seriously. They saw themselves not as pioneers for a new kind of journalism but as legatees of the stolid old journalism found in *The New York Times* or the *Herald Tribune*. As Hewitt puts it, they "weren't the best journalists in broadcasting—they were the best journalists in journalism."

But if Murrow and company were seen—and saw themselves—as paragons of journalistic virtue, Hewitt also points out that it wasn't long before these stalwarts lost some of their piety. When Murrow's showcase public-affairs program *See It Now* couldn't even survive in the vast emptiness of Sunday afternoon against *Amos 'n' Andy*, Murrow realized that he could no longer fight entertainment—he would have to join it to save his franchise at CBS. And so Murrow made like Barbara Walters and began hosting *Person to Person*, a celebrity-interview program. The wall between news and entertainment was breached, but the breach was inevitable once broadcasters stopped thinking of news as a public service and started thinking of it as programming, and once

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

***60 Minutes* executive producer Don Hewitt reviews the lineup for a late-seventies broadcast.**

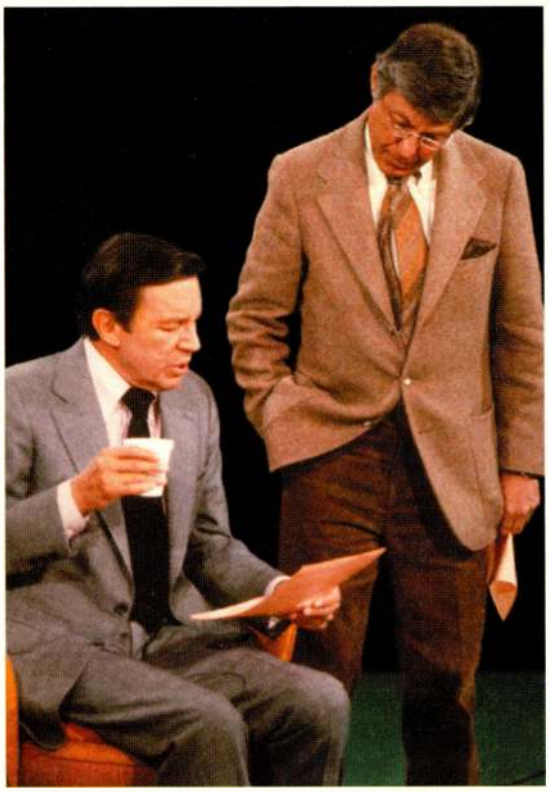
journalists felt they had to please as well as inform an audience to stay on the air.

Hewitt, who comes across in this memoir as anything but introspective, seems never to have agonized much over the sanctity of journalism. After all, his model was *The Front Page*'s tabloid reporter Hildy Johnson, and he can write without malice, "Of course, it's not only about journalism anymore. If it were only about journalism, they wouldn't pay these incredible salaries." Early on, Hewitt's mind was so impregnated with the movies and with drama that even as a merchant marine watching two RAF planes escort his ship after the convoy had been attacked by Germans, all he could think was: "Where's the music? Without a Hollywood score to go with it, it wasn't happening."

Later, as producer and director of the *CBS Evening News* and of special events, including the first Nixon-Kennedy debate, Hewitt was a bare-knuckled journalist of the yellow-press school who viewed journalism as competition. Knowing that he was going against the Murrow tradition, Hewitt takes a certain pride in the fact that his idea for a television newsmagazine program was initially rejected by the CBS News pooh-bahs before a new news-division president green-lighted it in 1968—largely to antagonize his predecessor. He appears to take a perverse pride, too, in the fact that when *60 Minutes* began landing regularly in the top-ten ratings after being shifted from Tuesday to Sunday evenings, it demonstrated that a network could actually reap huge profits from its news division. "For a while," he writes, "we were the single most profitable hour in the history of television," and he admits that his first thought when Mike Wallace once collapsed during a flight they were on was: "Now we're never going to catch *Cheers*!" Thus did Hewitt introduce a new standard of value against which broadcast journalism would henceforth be measured. Of course, it was the same standard against which entertainment programming had always been measured: ratings cum profit.

As Hewitt puts it in *Tell Me a Story*, the basic concept of *60 Minutes*, inspired by *Life* magazine, was variety-show journalism. Instead of the traditional hourlong, single-subject documentary made famous by Murrow, there would be different pieces—shorter, tighter, more easily digestible, and always, as the title of the memoir suggests, with a strong story line to keep viewers engrossed. Hewitt also introduced a star system in which his reporters played themselves getting the story: aggressive Mike Wallace, wry Morley Safer, homespun Harry Reasoner. The typecasting was as reliable as that of any Hollywood movie: As soon as you saw Mike Wallace, you knew someone was going to squirm.

It is likely that the *60 Minutes* aesthetic would have dominated television journalism sooner or later, even if Hewitt hadn't invented it, because it is entertaining—certainly more entertaining than Murrow's solemn *CBS Reports*—and entertainment always triumphs when ratings are the objective. Still, Hewitt remains enough of a traditionalist that when onetime CBS News head Van Gordon Sauter snarls, "You're not in news, you're in television," Hewitt takes umbrage. There may be a thin line between entertainment and news, Hewitt says, but he insists that he knows how to walk it.



Hewitt (right) with Mike Wallace on the *60 Minutes* set

CARL MYDANS/TIMEPIX

But he seems to recognize that he is exercising some willful blindness here, saying at one point that his segments had to be "edited down to a manageable twelve to fifteen minutes to deal with the viewers' attention span," and at another asserting of his new variety blend, "Entertaining? Wasn't that a dirty word when used in connection with the news? Not to me." Story journalism and information journalism are by no means mutually exclusive, but neither are they identical. Story journalism obviously gives priority to those subjects that lend themselves to drama, while large and complex issues, like the savings-and-loan scandal or nuclear proliferation, aren't as easily adaptable or likely to be covered. And if they are covered, they are likely to be forced into a dramatic mold that often simplifies and distorts them. Moreover, the idea of variety-show journalism—a celebrity profile, followed by an exposé, followed by a human-interest story, with a comic *digestif* by Andy Rooney—is itself a value judgment. It suggests that these are equally deserving of our attention, an implied equivalence that can make the important seem trivial or the trivial seem important. More significant, the techniques of entertaining storytelling can change the story and our attitude toward it just as surely as those old movies changed Hewitt's attitude toward the war. Now, as then, it may not seem to be a story without the music.

Most of all, though, entertainment journalism replaces the reporter's sense of what the public needs to know with his sense of what it wants to know. In denying this, Hewitt is being just plain disingenuous. He may say of *60 Minutes* that "by getting awards and making money, we proved you can do good and do well at the same time," but he also knows that the only way to make money is to lure the public. "We could look into Marilyn Monroe's closet so long as we looked in Robert Oppenheimer's laboratory, too," he writes, without adducing any journalistic reason for peeking into Marilyn's closet. In that vein he defends *60 Minutes*'s airing of the Kathleen Willey story by insisting that Willey was telling the truth when she claimed that President Clinton groped her in the Oval Office. How does he know? Because she told the same story to the grand jury under oath. What he avoids saying is why he ran the story in the first place—especially since he pointedly claims later in the book that the public's right to know doesn't translate into the media's obligation to broadcast. But anyone can pretty much guess his motives: He ran it because it was good and salacious and

would get ratings, as did a videotape of Dr. Jack Kevorkian enabling a suicide. Hewitt's reason for airing it? The "tape might reopen the debate over physician-assisted suicide." Yeah, sure. How about that it was great and highly promotable TV?

Hewitt does most of his tucking and filling when it comes to the Jeffrey Wigand case, which was the basis for the film *The Insider*. As the movie told it, Hewitt knuckled under to CBS brass when Wigand, a former vice-president of research for the Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation, reluctantly agreed, in response to the prodding of a *60 Minutes* producer named Lowell Bergman, to break a nondisclosure agreement with the company and reveal what he claimed was evidence that B&W not only knew cigarette smoking was harmful but also had deliberately spiked cigarettes with additives to keep smokers hooked. When CBS's legal department told Hewitt that the network would be potentially liable to B&W for billions of dollars for inducing Wigand to break his agreement, Hewitt, by his own admission, didn't much protest. "There were a hundred people who worked there and depended on me," he writes, "and I wasn't about to let them down." Still, Hewitt goes on for pages about the broadcast *60 Minutes* did air, which enumerated the dangers of tobacco and openly admitted that CBS couldn't show the real story. It was, brags Hewitt, the first time "a network-news broadcast" held "its own management's feet to the fire," though the words sound a bit hollow given the cop-out.

Hewitt later learned that at the time of the Wigand interview—which eventually aired after *The Wall Street Journal* broke Wigand's story—then-CBS chairman Laurence Tisch was negotiating with B&W to buy six of its discount brands for another Tisch holding, the Lorillard Tobacco Company, and Hewitt suspects that that influenced the decision not to air Wigand. The real wall breached seems not to be the one between news and entertainment but the one between news and business—the so-called church and state of journalism.

FOR NETWORKS AND JOURNALISTS, THE MONEY, GLORY, AND POWER ARE IN ENTERTAINMENT.

Hewitt rightfully bristles at Tisch's apostasy, yet it is not so easy to distinguish the effects of this kind of overt corporate pressure from the more subtle effects of getting ratings to make money. And it is harder still to distinguish either of these from the even more insidious pressure from journalists themselves to report stories that will land them big salaries and stardom—a desire that may actually have a more profound effect on the nature of news than any corporate pressure. As Hewitt candidly says, "We want the companies we work for to put back the wall the pioneers erected to separate news from entertainment, but we are not above climbing over the rubble each week to take an entertainment-size paycheck for broadcasting news."

Hewitt himself is a kind of object lesson in the fact that the values of broadcast journalism didn't just change because journalism became beholden to ratings and profits but that journalism became beholden to ratings and profits because the values of the people attracted to broadcast journalism had changed. Obviously, Murrow and Cronkite weren't immune to the blandishments of money or fame. But one senses that for them, at least at the outset, journalism was the end, not the vehicle, whereas for Hewitt, a child of the entertainment age, one can't be so sure. For networks and journalists alike, the money and the glory and the power are in entertainment. And that is where journalism continues to be headed—just where Don Hewitt has led it. ■

BEHIND THE BOOK

THE BUSINESS

THE PULITZER PRIZE BY THE NUMBERS

The internationally flavored Nobel Prize in literature is more rarefied, and the National Book Awards get more attention within the publishing industry. But when it comes to helping move books off store shelves—especially titles by little-known authors—the Pulitzer Prizes, announced this year on April 16, beat any other award.

The gold Pulitzer sticker is a surefire way to make a title stand out amid the tens of thousands of books released each year, publishers say. "It broadens the audience so quickly in a way that you can't possibly do on your own," says Teri Kelly, vice-president and director of sales for Houghton Mifflin. "For somebody who hasn't read about the book, who doesn't know the author, the Pulitzer is this great seal of approval that makes someone pick it up." Last spring, Houghton Mifflin watched sales soar for *Interpreter of Maladies*, the first collection of short stories by Jhumpa Lahiri, after it won the fiction Pulitzer. Published as a paperback original, the book had already sold 45,000 copies before the prize, but Lahiri was still unknown beyond a relatively small, literary-minded audience. The book now has 354,000 copies in print. "For an author who is sort of on the cusp of becoming famous, the prize can be definitive," says Jonathan Galassi, publisher of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, who brought out Michael Cunningham's third novel, *The Hours*, which won the Pulitzer for fiction in 1999. After the award, hardcover sales went from 35,000 copies to more than 100,000; the paperback has sold 600,000 copies so far. "There's a certain attention that a new phenomenon gets," Galassi says. "He was one of those people who benefited from the fact that he wasn't as well known. If someone is widely known, it doesn't have as much effect." So when the award goes to an author like Philip Roth, who won in 1998 for his 22nd book, *American Pastoral*, or John Updike, who won twice, for *Rabbit Is Rich* in 1982 and *Rabbit at Rest* in 1991, the sales increase tends to be less dramatic. "There's a core audience of Americans that are generally responsive to literary prizes; if you're dealing with a brand-name author, you may have already reached that audience," says Paul Bogaards, senior vice-president and executive director of publicity for Alfred A. Knopf, publisher of 49 Pulitzer-winning books. That may help explain why John McPhee's *Annals of the Former World*, a Farrar, Straus title that won for nonfiction in 1999, didn't get nearly the boost that *The Hours* enjoyed. "We certainly sold more copies, but it wasn't anything like that," says Galassi, who declines to give sales figures.

A surefire literary seal of approval

AP PHOTO

The Pulitzer is a less reliable sales barometer for nonfiction than for fiction. After winning in 1998, W.W. Norton's *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, by Jared Diamond, tripled hardcover sales, then went on to become a long-running best-seller when the paperback was released a year later. As of mid-March, it had spent 92 weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list. But *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, by John W. Dower, a Norton/New Press title, has not had the same success since winning last year. Hardcover sales did increase, but a paperback version released in June 2000 has yet to crack the best-seller list. Even in the best cases, the effect of a book prize is tiny compared to the impact of awards in other entertainment industries. "What publishers would like is something like the Academy Award, where you get an extra hundred million copies sold," Bogaards says. KAREN JENKINS HOLT

REPORTING LATIN AMERICA

Alma Guillermoprieto's new collection of loosely linked essays, *Looking for History: Dispatches From Latin America* (Pantheon Books), assesses the countries (Cuba, Colombia, Mexico) and mythic personalities (Eva Perón, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara) that have long dominated the American political and pop-culture landscapes. In spite of her obvious affinity for the region, Guillermoprieto—who writes for *The New York Review of Books* and *The New Yorker*, where these essays were originally published—is careful not to overdramatize the cultures and problems of our close neighbors. Nor is she didactic; these essays have a pleasantly meandering quality: A piece about prostitution in Havana, for example, wends its way toward a discussion of the lonely lives that Cuban dissidents lead once they've been released from prison. That Guillermoprieto rarely draws any conclusions from her observations feels almost purposeful, as if she is determined to await further evidence before making any neat pronouncements. This is the opposite of the kind of journalism we're used to reading about Latin America, which is too often depicted as a hotbed of drugs, poverty, and political megalomaniacs. Guillermoprieto's occasional lack of specificity suffuses her stories with a hazy timelessness that makes some of her anecdotes feel dreamy and unreal. But in her profiles of some of Latin America's most iconoclastic figures, Guillermoprieto is at her best; the reader senses her love for Latin America, in all its ruinous, messy, historied glory. HANYA YANAGIHARA

LITERARY AFFAIRS

In 1960, Newton Arvin, the renowned literary critic and English professor at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, was arrested for possession of pornography and "unmasked" as a homosexual, a combination of incidents that nearly destroyed his career. Barry Werth's *The Scarlet Professor: Newton Arvin—A Literary Life Shattered by Scandal* (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday) is a penetrating and compassionate look at one of the more prominent victims of this "hidebound, old-fashioned, and darkly repressive" era. The scandal is the focus of the book, but Werth also examines Arvin's life prior to that, which included diligent bouts of writing, his bold flirtations with leftism during the twenties and thirties, and his homosexual liaisons, most notably with the young Truman Capote. Indeed, to a post-Stonewall audience that is used to homosexuality as an unobjectionable fact of life, Arvin's liaisons are generally as unremarkable as that of any heterosexual series of affairs would be; they are compelling only because Arvin would one day be persecuted for them. Since Arvin rarely ventured outside the cozy Smith campus, Werth colors this as a story of the repressive Northeast. As the title suggests, the story of Arvin's unmasking resonates the puritan repressiveness that Hawthorne—a major subject of Arvin's work as a literary critic—took as his topic in *The Scarlet Letter*. It's strange that so little could have changed between the 1642 Boston of Hawthorne's novel and the 1960 Northampton of Arvin's undoing. MARTIN SCHNEIDER

Truman Capote (right) and Newton Arvin: "Newton was my Harvard," Capote once said.

FATHER AND MURDERER

In *Facing the Wind: A True Story of Tragedy and Reconciliation* (Random House), Julie Salamon tells the story of Bob Rowe, an attorney who killed his wife and three children in a psychotic stupor in 1978. Salamon, a critic for *The New York Times*, gives an evenhanded account of Rowe's madness and recovery. She spent four years writing and researching the book—she was intrigued by the "fine line between happy families and tragic ones." Bob Rowe died in 1997, before Salamon had a chance to interview him, but fortunately for Salamon, he was a prolific diarist and letter writer, and she was able to interview Rowe's second wife as well as members of a support group for families with handicapped children in which the Rowes had participated. From these we get a picture that's incongruous with the savagery of his act: Rowe was a devoted, loving husband and a successful lawyer. But he experienced bouts of extreme depression and psychotic behavior; he says he heard his dead mother instruct him to kill his family. (He was found not guilty by reason of insanity and spent two and a half years in an institution.) Salamon also deals with Rowe's attempt at redemption in the eyes of society after his release; while she sometimes sketches the thorny issues of culpability, remorse, and atonement unevenly, her almost reverential tone toward such unseen forces remains a powerful constant. "We do what we can to hold chaos at bay," she writes, "but what if we can't?" JOSEPH GOMES

TOP: LISA LARSEN/TIMEPIX

BEHIND THE BOOK

THE PROFESSOR

It may seem implausible for an unpublished writer to land a book contract in less than six months, but in Samuel G. Freedman's book seminar—an intensive course (eight hours per week for 15 weeks) in reporting, writing, and publishing at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism—it happens all the time. Freedman, a former *New York Times* reporter and the author of four nonfiction books, has made his boot camp for writers a gateway to publishing. Since 1991, 17 of Freedman's students—seven in the past two years alone—have secured book deals as well as praise. In 1994, Freedman's first student to sign a contract, 1991 graduate Leah Hager Cohen, landed on the cover of *The New York Times Book Review* with *Train Go Sorry: Inside a Deaf World*, published by Houghton Mifflin. In 1999, Philippe Wamba and Leslie Chang were finalists for PEN awards; Wamba for *Kinship: A Family's Journey in Africa and America* and Chang for *Beyond the Narrow Gate: The Journey of Four Chinese Women from the Middle Kingdom to Middle America*, both of which were published by Dutton. And graduates have signed with other major publishers such as Random House, HarperCollins, Alfred A. Knopf, and Farrar, Straus and Giroux. A major factor in the students' success is Freedman's contacts within the publishing industry: If he senses a "good match" between a writer and an agent he knows, he'll set them up. Likewise, agents and editors are frequently picking Freedman's brain for leads on promising new writers. "I tell the agent or editor, 'I'll play as much or as little role as you want,'" he says. "But I'm always available if you want a blurb, or another eye on the manuscript.'" KIMBERLY CONNIFF

Samuel G. Freedman

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POLITICS IN THE WHITE HOUSE POOL

Press pool reports—detailed accounts of the president's every move written by and for reporters—offer a candid glimpse into the presidency. That's why White House staff peek at them, too. By Joshua King

"That's all. Thanks and good-bye." With those words, Susan Milligan of *The Boston Globe* provided a terse ending to a long and colorful story—a story that had been told directly to a select group but which in subtle ways had reached millions of readers across the nation.

Milligan had filed the final pool report of the Clinton presidency.

It was January 20, 2001, and Milligan was taking her turn as the newspaper member of the White House press pool, a group of about 10 to 30 reporters and technicians drawn from a press corps comprising 2,000 print, television, radio, and photo journalists who cover the president of the United States every day of the year. Major presidential events are often attended by dozens—if not hundreds—of journalists, but most of the president's activities are witnessed only by the press pool. The reports from the newspaper poolers—written for their colleagues, who are free to use the pool reporting in their stories as if it were their own—often provide the details as well as the editorial spin that can determine how the press in general and, by extension, the American people view a president.

I had only a vague notion of the press pool's role and influence when I went to work for the Clinton White House in 1993 as an aide in the press office. Because my job involved managing the press pool, I saw firsthand how this little-understood institution affects the flow of information to the public as well as how it affects the White House staff. I quickly discovered that officials in the White House were almost as eager as the journalists to get their hands on the daily pool reports. And why not? They provided a raw, unfiltered assessment of the commander in chief's every public move and offered a look at how his style and his substance are "playing" in—or with—the press. It was also a handy way to keep track of the president.

The standard pool—organized by the White House press corps but shepherded by the White House press office—consists of a television correspondent (with a cameraman and a soundman); reporters and photographers from wire services (The Associated Press, Reuters, Agence France Presse); a reporter and a photographer from one of the three big newsmagazines (*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*); a radio reporter; and a newspaper reporter. The newspaper reporter (colloquially called "the scribbler") is responsible for writing the pool reports, and when a presidential activity can accommodate only one journalist, the scribbler is the only press-pool member present. Pool standards and practices are set out in guidelines established by the White House Correspondents' Association—an organization that serves as a mediator between the press and the White House—and cover such matters as ground rules for identifying sources and a requirement that pool reporters prepare and file their reports before filing their own stories. (Peer pressure keeps most people honest on this score.)

Virtually every morning during the Clinton administration, the pool would convene at a time prescribed by a press-office aide. A voice-mail recording often would list the events on the president's schedule, the news organizations on tap for pool duty, and, the least welcome news of all, an absurdly early "pool call time" (usually 5:45 A.M. through most of 1993 and 1994, to accommodate Clinton's unpredictable jogging schedule).

Pool reports are typically half a page to three pages long, single-spaced, dated, and signed by the reporter. Written, as they invariably are, under the duress of 18-hour days, pool reports can be riddled with typos, mangled syntax, unbridled cynicism, and punch-drunk humor. They usually spew forth from word processors but occasionally come from an old-fashioned typewriter or are even written by hand. When the pool is racing to keep pace with the president, the scribbler may resort to dictating the reports over a cell phone to a White House press aide. On average, about three unique pool reports were filed for every day Clinton appeared in public, though there were often far more. When the president hosted Israeli and Palestinian negotiators for the Middle East peace talks at Maryland's Wye River Conference Center in October 1998, for instance, the Baltimore *Sun*'s David Greene, on pool duty that day, filed 11 reports in 24 hours.

Newspaper reporters rotate into pool duty in alphabetical order according to their publication—the Baltimore *Sun* precedes *The Boston Globe*, which precedes *The Christian Science Monitor*, and so on—and pool duty on the final day of the Clinton presidency belonged to the *Globe* and Susan Milligan, who had returned to the White House beat in 1999 after several years overseas.

On the morning of the inauguration, the White House press office arranged pool access for the final hours of the administration. As is typical for events of such magnitude (but rare on most other days), the world watched the action over the pool's shoulders, through live television feeds of the inauguration via a few fixed-camera positions. Most of the press corps remained at their bureaus or sequestered inside the White House briefing room, but the pool was on the move. Milligan, following pool protocol, took note of the atmospherics: the sights and sounds she

Pool duty on a Clinton golf outing often meant hours under the sun with no news. Illustrations by Peter Arkle

was able to witness. Like any other day in the pool, her duty would end only after she typed her notes in a detailed communiqué for her colleagues.

But in this instance there would be no call time the next day—just a last look at the departing president, a final report to file before the transfer of presidential power ushered in a reconfigured press corps (many news organizations use the occasion of a presidential transition to bring in someone new on the White House beat). In a departure from the norm, in which a Clinton press aide would photocopy and distribute the pool report to the awaiting White House press corps, Milligan typed a longer-than-usual report and sent it via e-mail to all of her colleagues for whom she had addresses. Reporters could use her material as they saw fit, so whether you read about Clinton's last day in office in *The Boston Globe*, the *Chicago Tribune*, or *The Miami Herald*, chances are it was Milligan's handiwork that informed the report.

"Nobody did what we usually do, which is to scream out blunt questions as quickly as we can because you don't know when we're going to see him again," says Milligan. "The rules were different. It was just too austere, and no one wanted to tamper with the solemnity or dignity of the situation."

THERE ARE LOTS OF different ways of looking at any presidency, and the Clinton administration no doubt will attract more than its share of historical interest. I suggest that in addition to the volumes of policy arcana, national-security memos, speeches, and independent-counsel reports, historians might want to consider the contents of ten loose-leaf books I assembled as the administration wound down. They contain the majority of those pool reports—from the early days of the administration through the middle of 2000. The collection amounts to about 5,000 pages of pool reports from the likes of Maureen Dowd of *The New York Times*, Howard Fineman and Eleanor Clift of *Newsweek*, Doyle McManus of the *Los Angeles Times*, and hundreds more—each of whom reported for the Clinton press pool during his or her stint as a White House correspondent. There's often a looseness, an informality, that's missing from the news stories these journalists ultimately filed, so they are less polished but in some ways more authentic. If journalism is considered a rough draft of history, then the pool reports can be seen as a rough draft of a rough draft of history that provides an unadulterated look at how the president was viewed by and portrayed in the press.

A rafting trip with the Clinton family was simply another workday for a pool reporter.

One reason senior White House staff under Clinton were always eager to read the pool reports is that the reports served as an unofficial "suggestion box" for officials charged with protecting the president's image and projecting his message. Doug Sosnik, a White House political director and later Clinton's senior adviser, says he was an avid consumer of pool reports because they helped him do his job. "I tried to read the pool reports every day to see who was writing what," Sosnik says.

Since Sosnik traveled regularly with Clinton but couldn't always keep up with the president's late-night forays, copies of pool reports were slipped under Sosnik's hotel-room door so that he could "see what the president was up to." If the evening venue was a local restaurant, for instance, the pool report told Sosnik where the president ate, whom his guests were, and when he came home. Sometimes the reports revealed the attendance of an unexpected guest, like a big-city mayor or a Hollywood celebrity, whose connection to the president might need to be explained later.

Between 1993 and 1997, I held the title of director of production for presidential events. That's a fancy way of saying I was responsible for creating scenes that made the president look more presidential. My job involved keeping the pool close, but not too close, to the president—finding some kind of balance between the press's need for access and the president's need for space. We could never really control the pool, but by providing the right atmosphere, the right backdrops, we could sometimes shape the pool coverage and, by extension, the president's image.

On August 12, 1996, Martin Kasindorf, then writing for *Newsday*, was on pool duty for a Clinton family hike at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. The trek was meant to buttress the president's announcement that the government had reached a deal to halt gold-mining near the northeastern corner of Yellowstone. Here's how Kasindorf's pool report captured the scene: "Uneventful but scenic motorcade uphill to above the timberline, seeing lots of trees still bare from the 1988 fire that burned 800,000 acres of the park's 2.2 million acres. The presidential party had lunch inside the large fire lookout at the top of Mt. Washburn, which yields spectacular views of rolling mountain country. Pool was held on a rocky ledge 100 feet below, bag-lunching." Kasindorf went on to relate that coming down from the 8.3-mile hike, with "sometimes steep and dangerously loose-graveled trails" (the Clintons had opted for the longer, more challenging path instead of the easy 3-mile walk down a dirt road), "we saw two fires in the distance, natural ones, one pretty big," as well as vegetation, including "phlox, fox lupine, yarrow, Indian paintbrush, monk's-hood, cow parsnips [and] yampa root, which the grizzlies dig up for food."

News stories across the country used Kasindorf's pool report of the Yellowstone expedition to portray Clinton as an energetic president communing with nature, in contrast with his rival for the presidency, 73-year-old Republican Bob Dole. (Some background: Clinton adviser Dick Morris had argued earlier that a presidential respite in the shadows of the Grand Tetons—as opposed to another week

on the beaches of Martha's Vineyard—would be far better for the president's image.) The hike, and the trip as a whole, did the job, and Kasindorf's pool report probably helped.

But there are occasions when a pool report can just as easily trip up a White House as it can help it. One of the famous moments of the first Bush presidency (or infamous, from the point of view of the Bush people) had its origins in a pool report that many believe was spun out of proportion by the press.

On February 4, 1992, as President Bush was beginning his reelection fight, he visited the National Grocers Association Convention in Orlando and, as part of the event, toured a display of new grocery-store technology. The pooler on the tour, Greg McDonald, who was then with the *Houston Chronicle*, noted in his pool report a "look of wonder" on Bush's face as he reviewed supermarket checkout scanners. Bush also said in his speech that he was "amazed by some of the technology." McDonald himself didn't use the scanner material in the story he wrote for the *Chronicle*, but other journalists seized on it as evidence that George Bush was unfamiliar with grocery-store scanners and therefore out of touch with average Americans.

Asked about this recently, McDonald says that after he filed his report, other White House reporters talked to him about the scanner incident and he cautioned them about reading too much into it. "I encouraged people to read what I wrote again and to also talk with other reporters who where there," he says.

One day later, *The New York Times* published a page-one article by Andrew Rosenthal under the headline "Bush Encounters the Supermarket, Amazed." The story skewered the president, stating

In the Pool With the Bush Team

BY EVE GERBER

On February 20, President George W. Bush invited the White House press pool on assignment that day—five photographers, three wire writers, a radio reporter, a television crew, a newspaper correspondent, and a newsmagazine journalist—into his Air Force One office. As the plane made its final approach, the president read a short statement about the arrest of suspected Russian spy Robert Hanssen. In his pool report, James Gerstenzang, the *Los Angeles Times* correspondent on pool duty, wrote that as he tried to query the president, he "was encouraged physically to leave." Then, "Bush cracked, 'We timed it so you wouldn't be able to ask questions.'"

Bush's quip, and Gerstenzang's reporting on it, are part of a time-honored postinauguration dance: After each transfer of power in the White House, the administration attempts to minimize media access, while pool reporters try to maximize it. In the process of getting to know one another, there are often a lot of missteps.

As is customary, the White House press office circulated Gerstenzang's pool report to the White House press corps so that Gerstenzang's colleagues could use his observations in their articles. But, as Joshua King notes in the accompanying article, journalists aren't the only ones interested in pool reports. In the Bush administration, as in the Clinton administration, White House press officers regularly read pool reports to monitor the media's mood. White House press secretary Ari Fleischer says he considers the reports "a wonderful outlet for reporters to express themselves." In other words, pool reports can allow reporters to grandstand and aim schoolyard barbs at the president's press handlers.

"Pools exist because the press corps is too big to go into every event with the president," explains Copley News Service Washington, D.C., bureau chief George Condon, a former president of the White House Correspondents' Association, which represents the press in negotiations with the administration on coverage-related issues. Condon, who has been covering the White House since 1982 and is the unofficial dean of pool reporting, says, "The most important ethic in the pool is you don't keep anything to yourself."

Condon was on duty during President Bush's visit to his Crawford, Texas, ranch on February 17—a day when tensions peaked over pool entrée. Condon claims that a White House pool handler prevented him from entering a 400-person party in honor of the president: "They said there wasn't room for [the pool]. If you really don't have space for everybody it is standard for only a print pooler to go in....The excuses that were given did not hold water." In his pool report, which he titled "Clueless in Crawford," Condon complained: "In a break [from] the White House precedent extending back at least four presidents and almost three decades, the White House barred even your print pooler from accompanying the president inside an event open to the public."

Fleischer now acknowledges the misstep. "What happened was we were not aware of some of the arcana of pooldom," he says. Current White House Correspondents' Association president Arlene Dillon, who is a CBS News producer, brought complaints regarding pool access to the attention of Fleischer during a meeting with him on February 21. Dillon recalls: "Ari and I had a conversation and he assured us that that stuff wouldn't be regularly recurring. It was very productive, and positive results have come out of it." In fact, the day after Dillon met with Fleischer, White House correspondents got just what their colleagues in the pool had been demanding—the administration made the president available to the press corps for 30 minutes of questions.

The Washington Times's Joseph Curl compares press complaints about pool access to a sporting event: You argue the referee's call "even if you don't think the call was all that bad in the hope that the next time the referee gives you the call."

President George W. Bush enjoys occasionally hazing the White House press pool.

RON EDMONDS/AP PHOTO

Despite the grumbling, some White House reporters have adopted a wait-and-see attitude. The *Los Angeles Times*'s Gerstenzang says, "They're learning what the job is, and we're learning who they are and how they operate. They can design the system any way they want and we can complain about it." Fleischer affirms: "They're not shy. If there's a problem, they find multiple ways to bring it to our attention."

In a February 26 pool report about a meeting of the National Governors' Association, Julie Mason of the *Houston Chronicle* moaned: "The pool was restricted to a spot behind some potted shrubs." Even the president indulges in the collegial hazing. In the same report, Mason wrote: "As the pool was leaving, Bush said he would take questions but told reporters, 'Not yours.'"

that "this career politician, who has lived the cloistered life of a top Washington bureaucrat for decades, is having trouble presenting himself to the electorate as a man in touch with middle-class life." Rosenthal's article contained reporting beyond the pool report itself but appeared to have its origins in McDonald's observations as the pooler. In editorials and cartoons and on late-night talk shows, the impression of Bush as a man out of touch dogged him until he lost the election to Clinton nine months later.

"I think [Rosenthal] took basically elements from my pool report, and then did his own reporting...and then wrote his own story. Would I have written it that way? Probably not," says McDonald, now a senior writer with Stateline.org, a nonprofit website devoted to reporting on state government. Some journalists said at the time that McDonald underreported the incident, thus giving rise to false impressions about its significance. "One thing I regret," says McDonald, "is maybe not being a little bit more specific and a little bit more detailed [in my pool report] about the technology and explaining that it really was remarkable stuff that he was looking at."

For his part, Rosenthal says he relied on television feed from the pool cameras for his story and that his "rendition of what happened was completely 100 percent accurate." The story simply hit on something "that Bush was relatively vulnerable on"—his inability to connect with real people—says Rosenthal.

White House pool duty has been referred to as a deathwatch, especially when a president is rushed to a hospital emergency room, as Clinton was on March 14, 1997, in Florida.

WHITE HOUSE POOL REPORTS are a relatively recent phenomenon of the American presidency and became more institutionalized in the sixties and seventies. Most dramatically, the Kennedy assassination drove home the need for a press pool to always be on duty, in case such a tragedy should again befall the nation. Muriel Dobbin, one of the pool's grandes dames (she joined the White House press corps in 1964 as a reporter for the Baltimore *Sun*), bluntly explains: "The basic point of a pool is in case the president is killed." Beyond the morbid idea of an assassination watch or even a deathwatch, the need for the pools has been bolstered by the practical consideration that in an era of 24-hour news cycles and multiple outlets, there simply isn't room for representatives of all the news organizations to be present for many presidential activities.

Despite 40 years of grudging cooperation from first families, the press pool–White House press office partnership has endured its share of breakdowns, and the Clinton presidency was no exception. In December 2000, for instance, when the president and first lady left the White House, sans pool, in search of a new home in Washington, D.C., complaints poured in to press secretary Jake Siewert. That same week President-elect George W. Bush barred the pool from his Florida vacation—an ominous sign from the press's point of view. CBS's Arlene Dillon, in her capacity as president of the White House Correspondents' Association, led an outcry. "This [pool-free travel] should not be going on," she told *The Washington Post*, "for either the president or president-elect."

Of course, that was not the first time the press pool felt neglected. In the early Clinton years, with a president prone to impromptu jogs through Washington, the pool had often been stranded, with no president in sight. In October 1993, one pool report, written in a break from protocol (where the newspaper reporter wrote the pool report) by wire reporters Ron Fournier of AP and Donna Smith of Reuters, began with the lament: "Another pool fiasco." It went on to report that "after being told at 3 P.M. that the president could jog at any time, pool was formed about 5:55 P.M. and rushed to the driveway to find the president decked out in jogging gear. There were no pool vans in sight. [Clinton] took off without us. Vans arrived at least 10 minutes later. Pool gave pursuit, yelling to various passersby and police, 'Have you seen the president?' One young man pointed to his chest and said 'I'm the president.' Pool didn't fall for it. Gave up pursuit at 6:30 P.M., and waited for president in driveway. He arrived at about 6:45 P.M. in a limousine with Chelsea. 'You get lost?' he asked the pool. 'I'm sorry.'"

Perhaps pool reports will become fodder for future historians, or perhaps they'll just provide a few chuckles. On the way home from his presidential trips to Asia, Clinton would often stop in Hawaii for a few days of rest. This meant golf for the president and lazy days under the sun for the pool. On November 17, 1994, George Condon, a veteran White House reporter for Copley News Service, began his pool dispatch with 121 words of scene-setting: "Ah, an evening in paradise. Domino's pizza, reruns of 'Get Smart,' and eleven hours of non-news to boot. You can almost hear Don Ho wafting on the sea breeze. Such was the first night in Hawaii for your dutiful pool.

"Dare we say—only a hint of news and pitifully little color. We should have known what we were in store for at the outset, when we spotted the Eiwa birds soaring so close to the shore near the golf course. Legend, as you all know, has it that the Eiwa birds come near land only when a bad storm is gathering. That, of course, is but a myth. But for this pool, a myth is as good as a mile."

Condon's report, which included references to Clinton as the "First Tourist," "First Duffer," and "First Eater," ended in distinctive prose, calling his rotation "more fun than a human being can stand. Thus endeth the fun; thus endeth the pool report. Aloha."

Beyond the fun, many pool reports provide a unique perspective on a moment in an American presidency: a rafting trip

with the Clintons down the Snake River in Wyoming, a private presidential tour of catacombs in Budapest, a visit to Nelson Mandela's former prison cell on Robben Island, a question to the president about the Monica Lewinsky affair.

The Washington Post's John Harris says pool duty "gives you a fuller appreciation of what [the president's] life is like and how it works"—an appreciation that can inform and affect the way a president is portrayed in the press at large. Harris had been on the White House beat for three years when, he says, he found himself awkwardly straddling the line between fly-on-the-wall pool reporting and using his proximity to engage the president on the still-developing Lewinsky story.

On pool duty in early 1998, Harris recalls being in "a jewelry shop where Clinton was buying bric-a-brac. It's just me in there, and the whole time he's three or four feet away." Harris faced the classic pool conundrum: "Are you supposed to interrupt or not?" As the president finished shopping, "he comes over and talks to me. It's totally inconsequential chit-chat," Harris says. "Are you supposed to say, 'Excuse me, sir, I'd like to ask you the latest about Lewinsky?' You're not doing your job if you don't....I can't imagine facing colleagues and saying, 'Well, I had a five-minute chat with Clinton, but I didn't ask him the question of the day.' You had to, so I did. I said, 'Ah, sir, I hate to change the subject, but, you know, I'm going to be in the doghouse with colleagues if I don't ask.' You usually don't want to ask a rude question in those kinds of public settings. But if he's not making himself available in more normal settings, or if it's the major story of the day, it's irresponsible not to ask."

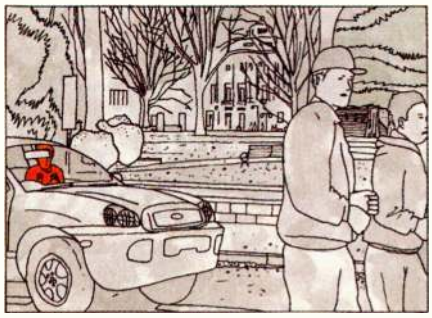
According to Harris, Clinton replied, "You tell them I had no comment." Such "no comments" and, of course, many actual comments go straight from the pool report into scores of stories every day.

THE POOL'S WORK often goes unnoticed, but during times of emergency it becomes vital.

Paul Bedard, then with *The Washington Times*, was the pooler on President Clinton's March 1997 trip to the South, during which the president planned to spend a night at the coastal island home in southern Florida of golfer Greg Norman. Clinton never finished the night there. At 1:20 A.M., with the pool asleep a half-hour drive from Norman's house, the president ripped his quadriceps tendon on a walkway and was rushed to St. Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach, at 2:15 A.M. for treatment. More than an hour later, a White House press aide placed cryptic wake-up calls to poolers.

As pool members sped to the emergency room, Bedard says, he could only assume that "the absolute worst, a heart attack or an aneurysm," had befallen the president. "You think whatever you're going to think when you get a call like that," he says. He learned from a press aide only that the situation was "something serious, but [Clinton was] alive."

The prime directive of the pooler—to pass on information to colleagues—became Bedard's sole mission. Eschewing his normal pool prose, Bedard wrote a quote-laden, four-and-a-half-page report filled with facts, including comments from the president's doctor and a local orthopedic surgeon who treated Clinton upon his arrival at St. Mary's. (Bedard usually laced his pool reports with dry humor. In a report from Helsinki only a week later, relaying color from a Clinton-Yeltsin summit dinner, Bedard noted that the menu included "saddle of reindeer fawn. Note: this is Rudolph. Bambi was a deer.") The days that followed the Clinton leg injury brought hard questions about White House tardiness in notifying the pool in an emergency. The AP's Terence Hunt, then president of the White House Correspondents' Association, told *The Washington Post* that "when a medical question is involved and the president is in the hospital, the pool should be alerted immediately." But Mike McCurry, Clinton's press secretary at the time, was quoted as saying that "the president blew his knee out...big deal."



Pool duty often involved keeping up with Clinton on his morning jog through Washington, D.C.

The press and White House officials will always disagree about such things, but for Bedard, who says that to be a member of the White House pool is to be "a part of history," it was always a big deal.

ON BILL CLINTON'S FINAL day in office, *The Boston Globe*'s Susan Milligan, eyes wide open to the dramatic closing act unfolding before her, scribbled in her notebook. As the transfer of power took place, memories of eight years of pool reports were clouded by ten weeks that featured a Florida recount, a first lady joining the U.S. Senate, a last-minute deal with the Whitewater prosecutor, and a still-brewing scandal over presidential pardons.

Milligan wouldn't disappoint. "The POTUS [president of the United States] himself said that [White House Chief of Staff John] Podesta was 'tearing up' as the two men walked out of the Oval," she wrote. That the eyes of the chief of staff had gone watery is known as "good color." That Milligan could attribute the observation to a quote by the president is known as "great color." The anecdote found its way into almost 30 news accounts in the days that followed.

As a press-office aide wrangled the pool to the steps of the White House North Portico, Milligan's report segued to the first interactions between the Clintons, Gores, Bushes, and Cheneys. "The arrivals were very formal, very polite," Milligan wrote. "Neither side betrayed either excitement or sadness at the significance of what was about to occur." Milligan pressed spokesman Jake Siewert and his Bush counterpart, Ari Fleischer, for inside color from the meeting. "Siewert reports that at one point, there was a piano player playing 'Our Love Is Here to Stay,' and that Clinton walked over, sat down next to the player, and began swinging with the music." Contrasting that with the buttoned-up new team, Milligan wrote, "Fleischer shook his head and said 'private conversation.'"

The pool boarded the motorcade for a trip to the Capitol down Pennsylvania Avenue. Something then happened to Milligan that no Clinton pooler had experienced in covering the president. Upon arrival at President-elect George W. Bush's inauguration, the Clinton press office and the Clinton pool lost their power.

"POTUS and party arrived at the back of the Capitol, then moved to the front of the Capitol for the ceremony," wrote Milligan. "Your pool was not allowed to accompany them, as we were not considered White House pool anymore." ◘

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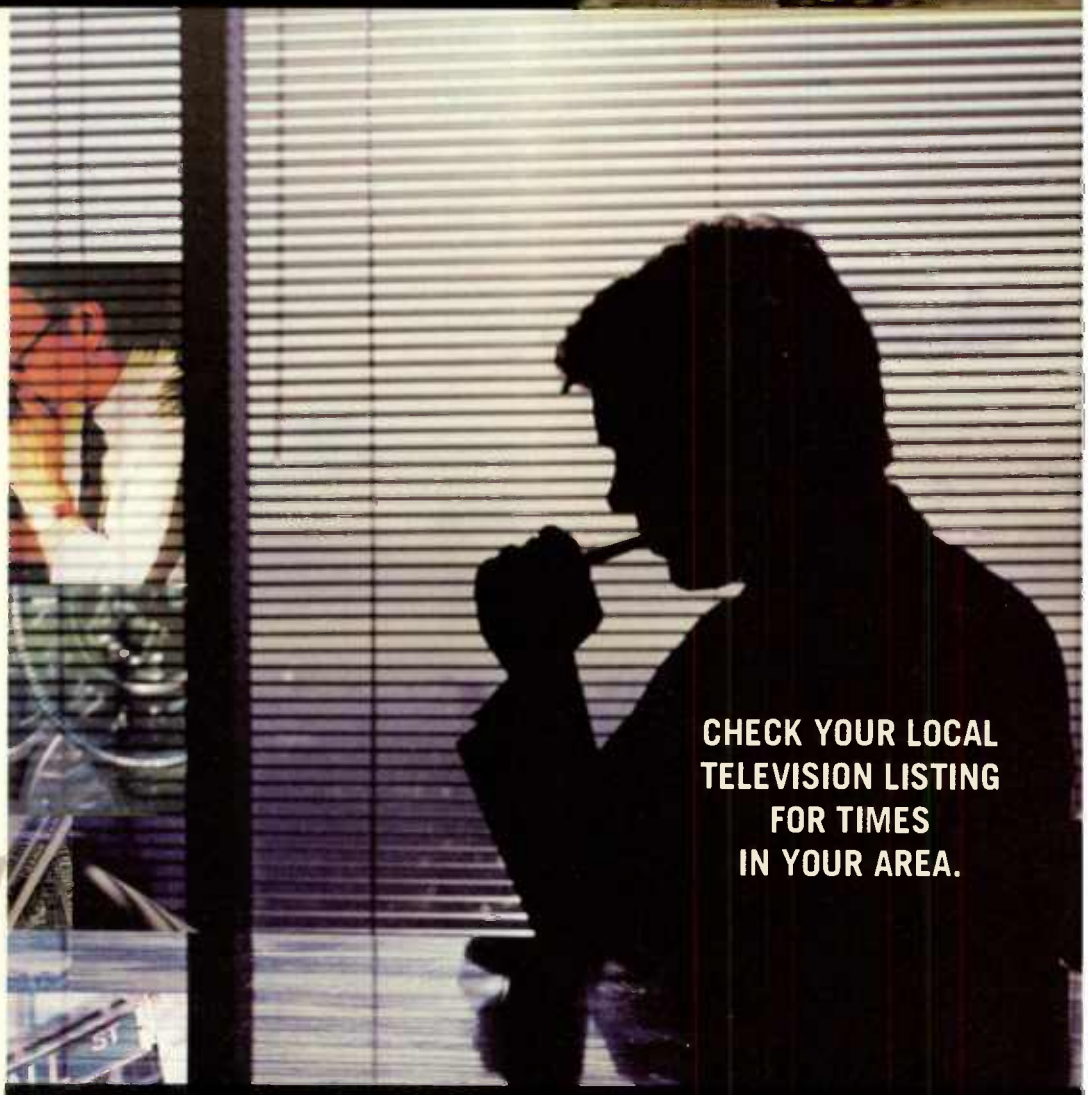

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THE WRITE STUFF

Need the perfect prose for your life story or novel? Here are some of the best places to look for instruction—and maybe even a little inspiration. By Emily Chenoweth

Conventional wisdom says that there are really only three pieces of advice to offer the would-be writer: Read, write, and revise. But the wealth of books and magazines about writing—which seek to instruct or inspire—suggests that maybe those three directives aren't enough, and that writing, although a solitary pursuit, is best endeavored with the aid of others who have done it before you. Some of the titles included here are time-tested classics, and some may well become so. Whether your goal is a memoir, a feature magazine article, or even the Great American Novel, you'll find these guides—ranging from reference texts and instructional manuals to philosophical explorations of the writing life—helpful on your literary journey.

REFERENCE BOOKS

THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE

BY WILLIAM STRUNK JR. AND E.B. WHITE
(ALLYN AND BACON; FIRST PUBLISHED, 1959; FOURTH EDITION, 2000, $6.95)

The original *Elements of Style* was a slim, self-published textbook by William Strunk, who was an English professor at Cornell University from 1899 until his retirement, in 1937. *New Yorker* magazine legend E.B. White encountered the book as a Cornell undergraduate in 1919 and first revised it nearly four decades later, adding a chapter on style—and later an introduction—thereby ensuring "Strunk and White," as it's affectionately known, a preeminent place on the bookshelves of students, journalists, novelists, and anyone with an abiding regard for the English language. In this pithy volume, rules and principles of usage, composition, style, and form are clearly, firmly, and often wittily expressed. Pick up *The Elements of Style* to solve the that/which conundrum, but don't be surprised if you're compelled to keep reading.

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

(THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS; FIRST PUBLISHED, 1906; 14TH EDITION, 1993, $45)

The Chicago Manual of Style began modestly as a single sheet of basic style rules recorded by a proofreader at The University of Chicago Press. Now, about a century later, the manual is in its 14th edition and weighs in at 900-plus pages. It covers more than 2,000 topics, among them deciphering proofreaders' marks; using foreign languages, proper punctuation, and documentation; and how to prepare a manuscript and what to expect from an editor's reply. Every rule is illustrated with examples (sometimes figures and tables, too), and in the unlikely event that you should require even more information, most chapters have a section of additional references.

THE NEW FOWLER'S MODERN ENGLISH USAGE

REVISED EDITION BY R.W. BURCHFIELD
(OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; FIRST PUBLISHED, 1926; REVISED THIRD EDITION, 1998, $29.95)

Although thumbing through *Fowler's* is a little like reading the dictionary, it manages to entertain. A dictionary is nonjudgmental, however, while H.W. Fowler, a British schoolmaster and lexicographer whose voice hasn't been entirely removed from the new edition, had strong opinions about the kinds of words people should use and the ways in which they should use them. Organized alphabetically, *Fowler's* offers advice on grammar and syntax, comparisons between American and British English, etymological information, the occasional history lesson, and, of course, plenty of guidelines for proper English usage.

MAGAZINES

POETS & WRITERS

(POETS & WRITERS, INC., $4.95/ISSUE)

According to its editor, Therese Eiben, *Poets & Writers* seeks "to foster the professional development of individual creative writers, to extend the reach of regional literary communities, [and] to enrich the national conversation about literature." Published by the nonprofit organization Poets & Writers, Inc., this bimonthly magazine for the committed, experienced writer tracks publishing-industry news, explores matters of craft, and provides information on grants and awards. Interviews, profiles, and the periodic special section (the most recent explored the relationship between literature and cyberspace) round out this thoughtful and literate publication. To subscribe, visit pw.org.

THE WRITER'S CHRONICLE

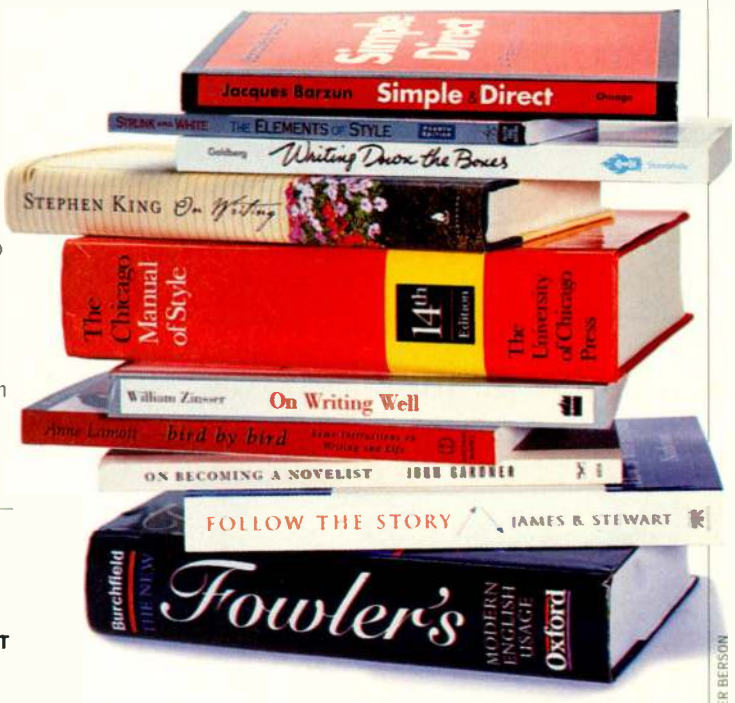
(ASSOCIATED WRITING PROGRAMS, $3.95/ISSUE)

Forgive the *Chronicle* its appearance—its oversize, stapled, newsprint pages, its almost aggressive disinterest in graphic design—and dive in: Learn that essayist and novelist William Gass writes without thinking about plot or "some preestablished arrangement of actions" or that literary star Rick Moody works with a slogan in mind (for the book he's currently working on, it's "Naked Vulnerability"). In addition to such enjoyable and potentially motivational trivia, the magazine provides information on, say, what persuades an editor to pluck a submission from the slush pile and on contest and conference registration deadlines. Subscription information is available at awpwriter.org.

WRITER'S DIGEST

(F&W PUBLICATIONS, INC., $3.99/ISSUE)

Writer's Digest offers a monthly



PETER BERSON

These guides to writing could get the creative juices flowing.

batch of helpful hints, short profiles, and general encouragement for those trying to convince themselves that a career in writing might be possible. From brief interviews with freelance writers to two-page "writing clinics," *Writer's Digest* never wavers from a democratic enthusiasm for all things writerly and a blithe optimism regarding anyone's chances of authorial success, whether in romance novels, plays for children, or literary masterpieces. To subscribe—or browse the extensive collection of Writer's Digest Books—see writersdigest.com.

BOOKS ON TECHNIQUES AND PHILOSOPHIES

ON WRITING: A MEMOIR OF THE CRAFT

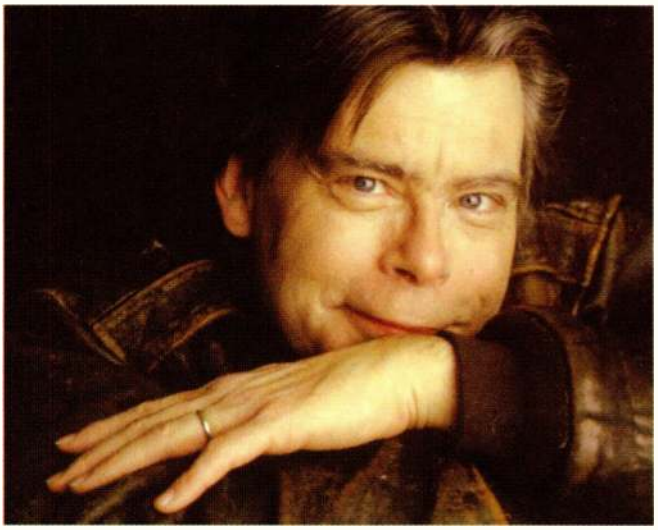
BY STEPHEN KING
(SCRIBNER, 2000, $25)

"This is a short book," best-selling novelist Stephen King begins, "because most books about writing are filled with bulls--t." *On Writing* is indeed about writing, but it's also about the man himself: Part memoir, part chatty instruction manual, *On Writing* offers insight on King's creative processes (which in earlier years, he says in the book, involved copious amounts of drugs and alcohol), his publishing history, his relationship with his readers, the 1999 accident that nearly killed him, and his beliefs about inspiration, commitment, and craft. It's not an elegantly written book, but it's eminently readable, with the encouraging central thesis that it is possible "to make a good writer out of a merely competent one." All that the generous-spirited King asks for is dedication: If you can't take this occupation seriously, he writes, "it's time for you to close the book and do something else."

ON BECOMING A NOVELIST

BY JOHN GARDNER
(W.W. NORTON & COMPANY, 1983, $12)

The ideal audience for the late novelist John Gardner's book is the multitude of inexperienced but serious writers whose ambition is not simply to get published but to pursue the craft with workmanlike dedication and uncompromising artistry. It's a path fraught with perils—alcoholism, misanthropy, despair—but also redemption, as the late Raymond Carver, one of Gardner's students and the author of this volume's introduction, might have attested. Gardner nurtures these persistent, earnest souls with genteel authority and an unerring eye for the bigger picture. Why write? For the noble, diligent spirituality of it. Why quit? Because you are not doing it for diligent spiritual reasons. "This book tries to give honest reassurance," Gardner writes, "by making plain what the life of a novelist is like," and it does so with unfailing honesty.



In *On Writing*, Stephen King gives blunt but generous advice.

WRITING DOWN THE BONES

BY NATALIE GOLDBERG
(SHAMBHALA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1986, $11.95)

Though vaguely New Agey and sometimes a little goofy (chapter titles include "Writing Is Not a McDonald's Hamburger" and "Talk Is the Exercise Ground"), *Writing Down the Bones* has been a beloved source of writing exercises and creative inspiration for 15 years. The book can be read cover to cover, but it's probably best experienced in isolated bursts of openhearted attention. Goldberg's suggestions—attempt to compose in laundromats, write about food when you can't think of a better topic—aren't earth-shattering, but they are sensible and even nurturing. *Writing Down the Bones* is a book likely to quell your doubts and muzzle your inner critic: "Don't even worry about writing 'well,'" Goldberg counsels, "just writing is heaven."

FOLLOW THE STORY: HOW TO WRITE SUCCESSFUL NONFICTION

BY JAMES B. STEWART
(TOUCHSTONE, 1998, $14)

Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist and best-selling author (*Den of Thieves* and *Blood Sport*) James B. Stewart distills the accumulated wisdom of years of writing, reporting, and teaching into concrete advice for beginning nonfiction authors and journalists. In clear, straightforward prose, augmented by examples from his own work, Stewart describes how a story evolves "from its inception to publication." His liberal use of the first-person singular lends the book an earnestly pedagogical—but not pedantic—air, and readers will finish it with a sense not only of the particulars of how, say, to pitch ideas to editors but also with a larger idea about the role of curiosity and constant inquiry, crucial qualities of a good writer.

ON WRITING WELL: THE CLASSIC GUIDE TO WRITING NONFICTION

BY WILLIAM ZINSSER
(HARPERPERENNIAL, 1976, $14)

William Zinsser's book—an informative, easy, and often humorous read—is designed "not to teach good nonfiction or good journalism, but to teach good English that can be put to those uses, or to any uses." Zinsser loves the English language and scorns things that mar its clarity (euphemisms, jargon) or lessen its originality ("journalese"). Although he says that "few people realize how badly they write," he's also convinced that there's hope for just about everyone. Two of Zinsser's basic principles are to read writers you admire and to write for yourself. His more specific advice includes hints for writing about travel, science, and sports.

SIMPLE & DIRECT: A RHETORIC FOR WRITERS

BY JACQUES BARZUN
(THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 1975, $15)

Simple & Direct is a rigorous composition course in paperback form, though Jacques Barzun has modestly referred to it as a "little guide." In a firm, professorial tone, the eminent scholar, author, and teacher explains the techniques ("make fewer words do more work") of and attitudes (self-criticism, for example) behind good writing. With 20 principles of clear prose, exercises in which to practice them, excerpts from literary works serving as model passages, and thorough discussions of tone, syntax, and diction, Barzun is certain to lead you out of the tangled jungle of ambiguity, misdirection, and pretension.

BIRD BY BIRD: SOME INSTRUCTIONS ON WRITING AND LIFE

BY ANNE LAMOTT
(ANCHOR BOOKS, 1994, $12.95)

Anne Lamott seems like one of your best friends after you've finished her book: She offers insight gleaned from her experiences without condescension; gives sensible advice you might actually follow; and keeps you laughing. Her frankness—about the dueling voices of self-aggrandizement and self-loathing, about the prevalence of "s---ty first drafts"—is a refreshing break from the relative solemnity of other books about the writing life. Should the struggle for creative achievement begin to take its emotional toll, read *Bird by Bird* and experience, at the very least, a momentary uplifting of the spirit. ■

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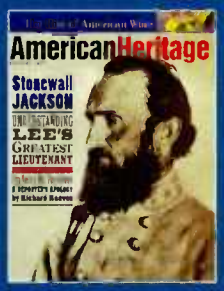

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ME AND MY MOBILE MP3

The era of Napster may be ending, but digital music will play on. We tried out one portable MP3 player that lets you walk around with the equivalent of 150 CDs in your back pocket. By Mark Boal

If you've ever logged on to Napster and downloaded a free song...if you've ever poked into a stranger's hard drive and taken his music without remorse...if you've ever eaten, talked on the phone, worked, played a video game, or slept while adding to your music collection...count yourself among the lucky ones.

Napster, as we know it, is dying: And all that unethical downloading of bootleg music that made it so fun and infamous is dying, too. In its place will be a brave new world of pay-per-play, in which you'll download music, in MP3 or some other format, only if you cough up some cash.

When we arrive at that phase, historians will no doubt look back and ponder the reign of Napster and free MP3s. Maybe they'll see a pirate's paradise, or maybe they'll see virtual communities and focus on that unprecedented time when millions of Americans began sharing art.

But if you're like me, you're not thinking about the future—you're too busy grabbing songs and enjoying the ones you already have. You can listen to them on your desktop, of course. But if you want to hear these tunes outside your your home or office, you'll have to get a portable MP3 player. I recently tried one of the latest.

It's called the Jukebox 6000 ($350), and it's as advanced as a portable MP3 player can get.

In a battery-powered cube no bigger than a slice of meat loaf, the jukebox stores the equivalent of 150 CDs' worth of songs. That's a bit less than 6 gigabytes (it's falsely advertised as having exactly 6), more memory than desktops had a few years ago, and about 100 times the storage space of most MP3 players. That's because, unlike its competitors, a hard drive lurks inside the Jukebox, which also means it can store files of any type, not just MP3s.

All you need to know about the Jukebox's design is that it's French. Made by a company called Archos, it doesn't resemble any existing *objet*, except perhaps those timers you see on explosives in action movies. The cube is made of metal and gray plastic. On its corners are squishy blue bumpers made out of some rubber-and-who-knows-what-else hybrid. The face of the player features an LCD display, below which are buttons to stop, play, and so on. It's heavy—not weight-lifting heavy, but oddly so for such a small gizmo.

Setup was easy. The Jukebox plugs into the USB port in the back of most computers (it works on both PCs and Macs) and appears as a new disk drive on your desktop, to which you drag and drop MP3s or other files.

It comes with superb software, called MusicMatch, which manages a variety of MP3 tasks, from burning (a.k.a. recording) CDs to listening to Internet radio.

That's the good news. The other news: On rare occasions, due to a software bug, it skips. (The company has a downloadable remedy on its website.) It also has shoddy headphones, no remote—even though the manual mentions one—and a faulty LCD display that reported the rechargeable battery was out of juice after two hours when in fact it really lasts for eight.

Still, we're talking about 150 CDs in your back pocket.

It took me about 20 minutes to transfer my 452 songs. Thus loaded, I unplugged and went out, looking for a Xando moment.

Xando is the name of a trendy chain of coffee shops. There's one near my house. In the afternoons hordes of college students go there to study and smoke on the couches in the back.

Some invisible thread connects these students to the technology marketplace. Like a law of science, the cell phones, laptops, and other gadgets that appear in the students' hands at Xando are soon the

PETER BERSON

Archos's portable MP3 player, the Jukebox 6000, with attached headphones

talk of the town and tech magazines. The scene is a cool-hunter's dream. And since I've lost my own instinct for cool (due to an accidental assimilation into the real world), I borrow what I can from the kids in this coffee shop.

I found a table, sank into a chair, and cranked up the Jukebox. As soon as I tried to change songs, I realized that navigating hundreds of tracks on a display less than an inch high requires the patience of a Jedi. Compounding the task: The Jukebox lacks a resume feature, so every time I turned it on, I had to start from "Aaj Ki Raat," an Indian composition and the first song in my collection. That quickly became annoying. I got tired of scrolling at the *R*'s and stopped there.

After 20 minutes of tingling to Steve Reich's minimalist masterpieces, I was zinged by my own aesthetic, or lack thereof, for next up was Sacred Reich's thrashing heavy metal. The absence of a segue between violin and pounding drums left my ears aching. It made me want to smoke.

Looking at my neighbors, I tried to find somebody to bum a cigarette from. There was a forlorn hippie, all beads, woven things—and a StarTac cell phone—but she wasn't smoking. For a moment I thought she was drawn to my Jukebox, but she left without comment. Had she commented, I would have had my Xando moment: when a technophile notices YOUR gadget.

As it happened I had to settle for a Mail Boxes Etc. moment. There I was, examining envelopes, when the counter guy noticed my Jukebox. He came bobbing over, looking shaggy, wearing a T-shirt, sweatpants, and a mustache, and asked, his eyes growing wide, "What's that?"

"It's an MP3 player," I replied.

"That's a radio station?" he asked, peering at the display.

"No. MP3. Digital-music files," I said, adding a bit too proudly, "It can hold 150 CDs' worth of music."

"It's going to replace CDs, huh?"

"Totally."

"How much is it?"

"A bit under $400."

"That's not bad," he said. "But I'll just wait for three years until they're $39.95." And then he started to laugh. ■

REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18] story—are different. One comes from "one former Democratic spokesperson." Another from "another former Democratic spokesperson." Let's see now—how many former Democratic spokespersons are there? There's Pierre Salinger, from the Kennedy days, but he served 40 years ago, in a different era, so it's unlikely he's the speaker. Besides, *Brill's Content* writer Seth Mnookin refers to Salinger as "an amiable jester in Bermuda shorts," a wonderfully descriptive term but not one likely to be used for a good source. Then there are Bill Moyers and George Reedy from the Johnson era, Jody Powell from the Carter years, and five people who spoke for President Clinton—George Stephanopoulos, Dee Dee Myers, Mike McCurry, Joe Lockhart, and Jake Siewert. Mr. Moyers, Mr. Reedy, Mr. Powell, and Mr. Stephanopoulos were not quoted by name in the Fleischer story, which reduces the possibility that any of them is an anonymous source. Therefore, a reader could infer that those two anonymous critics came from the group that comprised only Ms. Myers, Mr. McCurry, Mr. Lockhart, and Mr. Siewert.

So why not just name him? Or her?

The editors respond: On the question about the meaning of "declined to comment," we want to point out that this magazine's policy is always to seek comment from the relevant parties and never, as Michael Gartner implies, to wait until the last minute in the hope of not "ruining a good story by getting the other side." In fact, our editorial guidelines state: "What if Jones is unavailable for comment? Make sure you leave an explicit message about what you want to ask and that you make a note of who took the message and the time of the call. This is not so much for legal protection as to ensure that you work in a way that produces careful, accurate reporting and will enable you to write a snappy reply when Jones writes a letter complaining about how stupid and unfair you are."

As for Mr. Gartner's attempt to smoke out Seth Mnookin's sources in his article on Ari Fleischer: He argues that anyone not quoted by name in the story was likely not an anonymous source, and he therefore narrows down the field of possible sources. But there's no basis for that assumption.

TOADYISM

The ombudsman at *Brill's Content* is supposed to investigate complaints about articles in the magazine, and there's no such investigation this month. That's because there were no complaints of substance. The mail was all about problems with subscriptions, mail generated by a column on the subject two months ago.

Perhaps the magazine has become so good and fair and scrupulous that there are no complaints. Perhaps the magazine is riddled with mistakes and cheap shots but people don't think it's worth the trouble to complain. Perhaps readers think the ombudsman is just a toady for management. You choose, but remember: Skepticism is a virtue. (And the only reason I used "toady" was to tell you that the word comes from "toadeater," the term for the shills used by charlatans in 17th-century Europe. The shill would elbow through the crowd, run up to the wagon of the traveling medicine man, and announce that he had swallowed a poisonous toad. The medicine man would give him an elixir, and suddenly the toadeater would be fine. Everyone would then want to buy some of the magic potion. Sales would soar, and the medicine man and his toady would then be off to the next town. That's why today a servile flatterer is known as a toady.)

BROADCAST JOURNALISTS

Someone in this magazine should say a good word or two about television. *Brill's Content* has been pretty tough on television as of late—Steven Brill was particularly harsh (rightly so, perhaps) in the February issue as he analyzed what the magazine's headline writers called "the election-night fiasco," and editor Eric Effron was almost as tough in the March issue, calling the XFL football partnership between the World Wrestling Federation and NBC "the next step in the evolution of shock TV, and it's an important one because it applies the trashy practices of the genre to mainstream entertainment."

Fine, but for the sake of balance might I add:

Television journalists are the bravest journalists in the world.

When covering wars and riots, they have to risk their lives for weeks on end to get the 90 seconds of footage that we routinely expect and matter-of-factly watch from our living rooms in the evenings. The TV journalist cannot report from the edge of the crowd. What's more, he is carrying equipment that marks him as a target for bottle throwers in riots and bomb throwers in wars. The next time you're in Washington, D.C., go to the Newseum, in Arlington, Virginia, and look at the memorial in the little park next door. It lists the names of journalists around the world who have died doing their jobs. Sadly, it added 579 names between 1990 and 1999. Though print journalists far outnumber broadcast journalists throughout the world, almost half of those killed on duty—226 of those 579—were broadcasters.

That's what reality television really is. ◘

Human Portals

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 75] *Austin American-Statesman*. The ideas and commentary from these regional papers rarely break into the national media. Normally, you'd never hear about them, but Weiss lives to identify them.

For Weiss "the fun part" is linking good ideas to attentive audiences, because, he told me via e-mail (Weiss prefers to communicate via e-mail), "what some Texas-based TV columnist has to say about *Dawson's Creek* is of interest to somebody in, say, New Hampshire." He's exactly right: The news media have segmented themselves so much that they badly need bridges like Weiss's blog. But more instructive, too, is how TvTattle proves that good writing can be found all over the media map. Blogs are evidence that insight can come from any corner.

At its most fevered pitch, SurvivorSucks.com attracted an audience in the hundreds of thousands.

Bloggers are, on the whole, living in those corners themselves. Romenesko started MediaNews in St. Paul and is now located in Evanston, Illinois, where Romenesko lives in a studio apartment. Haughey's MetaFilter operates from San Francisco, and Weiss runs TvTattle from a college somewhere in northern California (the media-shy Weiss told me, "I don't want to reveal too much about myself because I'd prefer that the page speaks for itself"). Few web logs seem to be situated in the cynical media capitals of Los Angeles or New York, which allows them a certain generosity of spirit and an unjaded enthusiasm.

Given the right conditions, that eagerness can escalate into an investigative fervor. Last summer I got hooked on SurvivorSucks.com, an outpost started by 30-year-old Dallas Web designer Paul Sims for fans who love to hate the CBS show *Survivor*. Three years ago Sims started a small community site, RealWorldBlows.com, about the MTV series *Real World*. He followed the advent of reality TV in Europe, and when *Survivor* hit the states, he launched SurvivorSucks as part of his PlanetSucks.com Network. (What might sound like a business is distinctly not. He operates the sites with the help of the PlanetSucks community.)

Like TvTattle's Weiss, Sims has a curious opposition to overexposure in the media. At the height of the site's popularity, Sims turned down interviews from the likes of CNN. "I didn't want the site associated with a personality," he says in a phone interview.

Nevertheless, SurvivorSucks.com broke stories: a fan hacked his way into the CBS website; a Zapruder-like frame-by-frame analysis by fans of the opening-credits sequence revealed missing cast members from a tribal council (thus prefiguring their exits). In December, a source tipped off Sims to nude personal snapshots that winner Richard Hatch had posted to dating service MatchMaker.com, and the names and identities of *Survivor II* competitors leaked out and appeared on Survivorsucks.com long before *TV Guide* printed them. At its most fevered pitch, Survivorsucks.com attracted an audience in the hundreds of thousands because a swarm of small-time sources created a hive of good information. On the night of the *Survivor* finale last August, CBS's website attracted 254,000 unique visitors. CBS has a multimillion-dollar advertising budget and brand-name power; Sims, with his handful of contributors, nevertheless managed to rack up 100,000 visitors.

But as with many generosities, blogs aren't indefinitely sustainable. After all, these are people running them, not businesses, and hype doesn't pay bills. As Sims of SurvivorSucks says, "It's a colossal amount of work running this, and it'll make you crazy." As of the end of January, even Pyra Labs, despite a campaign to raise money for a new server, went from having six employees to one. TvTattle sometimes goes to sleep for a week when Weiss takes exams. And nobody seems to want to do the thankless work of creating decent archives. Long-standing personal blogs have dropped out of operation when exhaustion or romantic heartbreak interrupts their creators' posting cycles. Plastic.com may prove more durable than its unfunded competitors (disclosure: I used to work for Feedmag.com, one of the sites now partnered with Plastic.com), assuming it's possible to commercialize the blogging instinct at all. The decidedly noncommercial MetaFilter.com runs a tag line on its front page: "the Plastic.com it's OK to like."

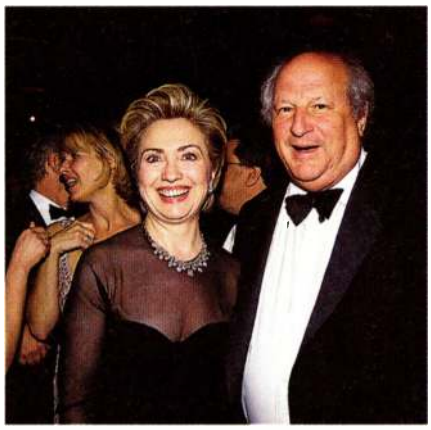
Major media companies will undoubtedly take consolation in the vicissitudes of these operations. As long as it's just Jim Romenesko behind MediaNews, it's just Romenesko you're dealing with. But the fact that blogs may come and go doesn't mean that media heavyweights should ignore them. Part of the allure of blogs is how their creators share themselves and what they know spontaneously, outside of a profit motive. Blogs are a loose reflection of their readers, which is how we get hooked in the first place: They're small, intimate, and enormously wide-minded. In other words, people-size. And as long as they exist, they'll represent the ultimate irony: They're nonbusinesses threatening their big-business competitors. ◘

Aren't They a Pair?

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 87] columnists so when the time came, they'd repay the favor by mentioning Rich. "The smartest P.R. people, of which Bobby is definitely one, really know that what columnists want are great stories. And if you tip us to a couple of great stories, how can we say no when you come to us with something on Denise? Because Denise, at that time, certainly wasn't a great story." Rich didn't get in the columns because she was a star, says Travis, but once she was in the columns, she became one. "Once she was created," he adds, "she became kosher."

Aren't They a Pair?

Starting in 1995, Denise Rich parties had become a coveted ticket, with everyone from Goldie Hawn to Mikhail Gorbachev attending. The music celebrities came from Rich's Rolodex (she has written lyrics for Patti LaBelle, Celine Dion, and Natalie Cole and has been nominated for three Grammys), and the Hollywood/Broadway/Washington celebrities came from Zarem's. "She threw fantastic parties," remembers Fink, who says her fetes stood out because her apartment had breathtaking views of the city, an unusually eclectic guest list, and, not inconsequentially, good food, which counts to columnists on the run from one event to the next. "I can't tell you the dreck parties that I've gone to," Fink complains, "where it's worth your life to get something to eat." Richard Johnson loved Rich's sense of theatricality: "How many parties have you been to where there's an Oriental gentleman who is spinning sugar into sculptures which you can then take home?"



Zarem with Hillary Clinton last year at a charity event in New York City

"The party scene was very smart," says journalist Lisa DePaulo. "It really helped her career. Every Denise Rich party I went to, no matter how outlandish, always included one of the singers she produced for her company." But counterbalancing the tabloid images of Rich's extravaganzas, with their pink velvet tablecloths and custom ice-skating rinks on the terrace, was her philanthropy. "The thing about her parties," says DePaulo, "is they were usually benefits." And it was under Zarem's guidance that Rich became the darling of the Democratic Party.

I'm a lifelong Democrat," says Zarem proudly. "I campaigned for Roosevelt when I was five years old," he continues. "I've been obsessed with the programs or the policies or the feelings of the Democratic Party all my life." He was able to convince Rich to contribute money to some of his favorite charities and causes—Albanian refugee camps, children of people who had died from AIDS, and, above all, the Democratic Party. "I'm the one who got her into the DNC [Democratic National Committee] eight years ago," says Zarem. "*I'm* the one who had to talk her into it. She was a *Republican*!"

But skeptics find it hard to believe that Rich's political activity was not part of Zarem's press strategy or a larger campaign to secure her ex-husband's pardon. "It wasn't," says Zarem firmly. "I want to be clear about this, because I think every a--hole who's called me in the past few days assumed it was part of the strategy. It *wasn't*. I got her involved because I'm a lifelong Democrat and wanted help for the Democratic Party. *I'm* the one who convinced Denise to do it."

He was obviously persuasive enough to encourage Rich to donate more than a million dollars to the Democratic Party and to the Clintons. Over the years, she befriended the president, whom she supported even in the darkest days of the Monica Lewinsky scandal and who attended her fund-raising events for the organization about which she cares most: The G&P Charitable Foundation for Cancer Research, which Rich created in 1996 in memory of her middle daughter, Gabrielle, who died of leukemia that year at the age of 27. At the G&P gala last November, Rich presented Clinton with a golden saxophone—a moment that has been endlessly replayed.

"[The politics] totally had nothing to do with publicity," Zarem says emphatically, "and everything to do with being a human being and a person, and feeling their platform and ideas were the most important at that time. Denise has always been sensitive to other people, very vulnerable herself, very well-meaning, wanting to do things for people. And that was what our whole relation was about. I didn't just make her a social personality."

"I think his decision to get her involved in politics was so smart," says DePaulo. "Because it did give her credibility and she really loved it....There was always a sense of guilt with Denise that she had been the fugitive's wife and wanted to show she could do good things." Zarem says politics and burnishing Denise Rich's image were never linked. "I swear we never discussed that part of it," he insists. Likewise, Zarem says it's absurd to think Denise decided to pursue Marc's pardon by donating to Clinton—because it was Zarem's idea to begin with. "I really do not think that Denise engineered, masterminded, Marc's pardon," Zarem says. "Certainly not."

But in recent weeks, Zarem's authority about Denise Rich's motives and actions has been undermined by the notion that he didn't know his client as well as he thought he did. These days Zarem appears not so much guileful as gullible. "Unfortunately he was misled early on," says Richard Johnson, "when he was protesting how innocent she was and how uninvolved she was in the whole pardon process."

No matter how much Zarem avows that he was the one who mistakenly ratcheted up Rich's "surprise" over her ex's pardon to a denial, the impression—heightened by her later invocation of the Fifth Amendment—is that Rich has something to hide and that she bamboozled even her own loyal spokesman.

"For three days," wrote *New York Post* columnist Jack Newfield on January 25, "Denise Rich sent P.R. man Bobby Zarem out to lie to reporters to claim she had nothing to do with the pardon....Only after some reporters—including this one—found out about her mercy letter to Clinton did she admit her role." A month later, Zarem is still irate. "She didn't send me out to do s--t," he barks. "To suggest that I'd go out to lie is just brain-dead."

"I really do not think that Denise engineered, masterminded, Marc's pardon," Zarem says. "Certainly not."

Appearances only worsened, however, when, three days after the pardon story broke, publicity heavyweight Howard J. Rubenstein, the emergency-room surgeon of P.R. debacles who has handled Kathie Lee Gifford, Marv Albert, and Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York, was suddenly speaking on behalf of Denise Rich. "It wasn't like she dumped Bobby for Howard," says one reporter, who adds that most people weren't aware that Rubenstein already handled Rich's G&P foundation. "On the other hand, Bobby comes off looking like a schmuck and

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Howard looks like the knight in shining armor." Says public-relations czar John Scanlon, "Bobby was put in that terrible position of having to publicly lie for her....And that's the worst position to be in." Indeed, the newspaper articles made it sound as if Rubenstein had been brought in to clean up Zarem's mess. "[Rich] even hired a new spokesman yesterday," wrote the *Post* on January 24, "to help her 'fess up and release the letter she wrote."

Zarem says Rubenstein didn't help the confusion. "Howard represents the *Post* and called them and told them he'd replaced me," says Zarem. ("I called the *Post* and told them I was the spokesman for Denise, not that I'd *replaced* him. That's a shade of difference, but there is a difference," Rubenstein counters.) Still, Zarem nevertheless says he understood Rich's suggestion that Rubenstein handle the pardon fiasco. "I felt totally capable of handling it honestly," he says carefully, "and was a teeny bit hurt at [Rich's] suggestion. But [I] realized that it completely made sense....That's what [Rubenstein] does, is damage control."

Rubenstein shrugs off any tension. "I have a great deal of admiration and regard for [Zarem]," he says. "I'm not competitive with him; we do different things." The difference, according to Rubenstein, is that Zarem makes stars, while Rubenstein rescues them. "I usually take on very serious issues that a celebrity or businessperson might face," says Rubenstein. "That's how my firm has built its reputation."

So would he have taken on Denise Rich years ago, when Zarem did? "Probably I would not," he says. "That's really not my field." In other words, he gets his clients when they're already famous—or, in many instances, infamous: "I have some very, very prominent female clients—very well known—and sometimes they call us just to project their image...but they've usually arrived somewhere." Sarah Ferguson is an example. "I wasn't looking to create a celebrity; she *was* a celebrity." I ask Rubenstein whether he thinks Zarem was sloppy when he spoke on Rich's behalf after the pardon scandal first broke. "I'm not going to characterize it in any way," he replies. "It just happened. It might have been just miscommunication between Bobby and Denise."

So far, Rubenstein has been providing the kind of protection his clients seek: keeping them out of the spotlight they once sought. Rich has given no interviews about the pardon and declined, through Rubenstein, to talk about Zarem for this article. She did, however, have Rubenstein relay a written statement, which he read to me over the phone: "Bobby is brilliant at what he does. He's been a great help to me in advancing my career and I'm very appreciative."

It's a Friday night in February, close to 1 A.M. Zarem and I are at Elaine's, the enduring celebrity watering hole on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Actress Michele Lee, still in makeup after a performance from her Broadway show, stops by Zarem's table twice to trade affectionate banter, and they make plans to escort each other to an upcoming theater benefit. At the next table, *Us Weekly* editor in chief Terry McDonell chain-smokes through his steak dinner, occasionally leaning over to extol Zarem to me. "You can throw anything at him," says McDonell. "Ask him how he'd handle Clinton right now. Ask him how he'd handle the Yankees."

Zarem just smiles. He's a fixture here, as well as the archetype for a new film currently in production in which Al Pacino plays a press agent in his twilight years. "It's from knowing Bobby that I knew I wanted to make a movie about a publicist," says director Daniel Algrant. The movie tickles Zarem (he met with Pacino at the actor's request), but he stresses that—aside from the fact that Pacino's character attended an Ivy League college, curses a blue streak, has old movie posters on his wall, and hangs out at Elaine's—it's not him. "The guy is more like Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*...which I'm really not," says Zarem. "I've never fortunately been without resourcefulness." Algrant concurs: "Bobby is right—our character is different from him. Our guy is a hawker and still in the hunt; he still needs the business to survive."

Zarem has gotten a haircut since our last meeting, and it makes him look boyish; now, he is dangling a dripping gray oyster from his fork and speaking of regret. He is quick to share his psychological evolution from insecure, dyslexic kid to self-effacing press agent to therapy-cured warhorse; it's clearly a subject he thinks about often. He realized long ago what it means to sit in the publicist's box: Being the quiet force behind the star means that few really understand what you did and even fewer remember. "One of the things a press agent can never do is take credit for something," says Zarem. "The second you take credit for something, you've taken away the value of it for the person you did it for." He smiles. "But you've also allowed yourself to be not given credit." He hasn't, he says, made as much money as he could have. When I ask what Rich paid him for his services, Zarem was vague. "It was standard," he says (standard, for Zarem, is $5,000 to $10,000 per month for an individual client). "It wasn't exorbitant. It was probably a tenth of what Howard's getting now to handle this crisis." Zarem also says too many clients forget to say thank you. "Oh, they all make you feel like you're the greatest friend in the world, the most important person to them....And then the second you get the *Newsweek* or *Time* cover story or whatever you've been working on for nine months, all of a sudden in their mind, it was their birthright."

Zarem says that, like himself, Rich sought acceptance from worlds she admired: "Wanting to be *accepted* and wanting to be a *star* are sometimes two entirely opposite things."

But Denise Rich is not among the clients who have disappointed Zarem. Rich, he says, didn't set out to become a star. Like him, she was seeking acceptance in worlds she admired and to which she wanted to belong. "Somebody can want to be accepted for being a humanitarian and a philanthropist and a songwriter without being a star," says Zarem. "There are almost no star songwriters; there aren't any star philanthropists. Wanting to be *accepted* and wanting to be a *star* are sometimes two entirely opposite things." Ironically, it is only now, after all their work together, that Denise Rich has become a full-fledged celebrity. It's not at all the kind of fame she and Zarem sought, but he insists Rich's reputation will survive this imbroglio.

What about the *Post*'s claim that the latest uproar could make Rich "radioactive" on the social circuit, unraveling the persona he nurtured for so long? "I don't believe for one second that that's what's going to happen," says Zarem. "I really don't. Denise has too many great friends here, and there are too many people here who have done many more wrong things than she ever did. The city is populated with them."

And ultimately, says Zarem, his mistakes hurt him more than anyone else. "I regret that I didn't develop emotionally sooner

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than I did, or that I had such a low self-esteem," says Zarem. "I love talking to you like this, because I went through my life with nobody who would be interested in what I was doing.

"There's a difference," he continues, "between people who are driven to be stars and people who want to be accepted, who don't necessarily have any sense of self-worth, as I didn't most of my life." He says he used to confuse the success of a client with his own identity. "I thought that Bobby would get acceptance if he made Dustin Hoffman acceptable," he says, referring to himself in the third person.

Lately, however, Zarem says he feels buoyant. "One of the reasons I'm able to enjoy my life right now," he says, "is I realized that, for better or worse, I was accepted." He pauses, considering. The light in the restaurant is warm and familiar, and he is surrounded by cigarette smoke and the din of friends and acquaintances. He smiles. "And I'm the last person who knew it." ◘

Euromyths

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 91] destined to send readers screaming for NoDoz.

And the European Commission, with a bureaucracy of 20,000 people, is hard-pressed to counter the overwhelming perception that it is the bloated perpetrator of picayune regulations. "Nobody, not even those on the Euro-supporters side, would deny that Brussels is a sprawling bureaucracy which occasionally gets into things that are better left alone," says Peter Cole of The University of Sheffield.

Even Alan Rusbridger, editor of the unabashedly pro-Europe *Guardian*, acknowledges that the arcana of European government can be tough going. Rusbridger recently went to Zurich for a seminar on that very issue. "I sat there for two days, and all these former commissioners and current commissioners and Eurocrats of one kind and another talked and talked," he says. "When you bother to listen to what they're saying, these are decent social democrats inspired by an admirable ideal that they really believe in. But at the end of it, it comes down to nightmarishly dull discussions of clauses and subclauses and institutions. How you make it interesting, either to voters or readers, is one of the great conundrums."

Part of the problem is that the EU government, even when compared with other dull bureaucracies, can be spectacularly boring to cover and to read about.

The Guardian's two Brussels correspondents struggle to cover the issues of the day—the common agricultural policy over mad-cow and foot-and-mouth diseases, the EU's latest transportation and environmental agreements—with verve and passion. But sometimes they and their comrades in the busy British press corps in Brussels can't help getting sidetracked by the critical mass of tabloid-ish stories that appear in the other newspapers and set a different news agenda entirely. "Either you take a tremendously purist attitude and say that you will ignore the enormous babble of the Euroskeptic press and set a different agenda," says Rusbridger. "Or you say you have to acknowledge that the Euroskeptic agenda is terribly important and that you have to do your reporting through that prism."

That prism is always there, says Caroline Jackson, a Tory member of the British delegation to the European Parliament. As it happens, she is irritated by a recent flurry of stories in the papers that, she says, misrepresented a serious point about European environmental law for the sake of a few cheap laughs. (The stories, which had to do with a British court ruling that defined plastic flowerpots as recyclable packaging materials, were illustrated in many of the papers with photographs of Bill and Ben the Flowerpot Men, two children's-television characters whose days consist of sitting around in plastic pots repeating the word "Flubberdub." The headline over the story in *The Sun* about the court decision read: "Potty!")

"The papers have got to have headline-grabbing stories to attract readers," Jackson says of the British press. "If you plow your way through a paper like *Le Soir* [the Brussels evening paper], they do a much better job because they don't have to grab readers literally off the streets."

If the papers' coverage irritates even card-carrying Conservatives, like Jackson, it makes members of the ruling pro-Europe Labor government livid. Their rage has rarely been publicly expressed, because it is not particularly wise to take on Britain's influential newspapers, especially with an election coming soon, probably late this spring. But several months ago, after a string of negative articles it considered particularly misleading, the government exploded.

In a debate late last year with Charles Moore, editor of the highly Euroskeptic *Daily Telegraph*, Neil Kinnock, a former Labor Party leader and currently vice-president of the European Commission, inveighed against the papers' lazy tendency to use the word *Brussels* to mean everything to do with Europe. Of course, he said, the word "provides handy—sometimes jokey—alliteration for 'bosses,' 'barmy,' 'bungling,' and 'bureaucrats.'"

"Everyday myth is presented as fact, and jaundiced opinion as truth in the news body of papers," Kinnock said. "That is calculated bias against understanding. It is not good journalism. It is not even good polemic. It is propaganda."

Fighting his own rearguard action, the much-put-upon Geoffrey Martin, the commission's representative in the U.K., has made it his mission to educate the public about what he considers the press's distortions and misrepresentations. To that end, his office runs a feature on its website (cec.org.uk) called "Press Watch," devoted to puncturing various Euromyths and other Euroskeptic beliefs.

"Seldom has press coverage of Europe been so distorted," the website says. "Much of the British press, fuelled by the claims and counter-claims of embryonic domestic political campaigns, continues to obscure the substantive issues by sensationalizing the trivial and presenting ill-informed opinion as fact. At the extremes, stories likening those implementing European child safety standards to Nazi collaborators (*The Mirror*) or suggesting that EU grants have funded IRA [Irish Republican Army] arms bunkers (*Daily Mail*) demonstrate nothing more than paranoia."

But back at the *Daily Mail*, Esser stands by the stories of the Euroskeptic press and says that the paper's skepticism about Europe's encroachments "reflects the fears of our readers."

"Obviously, we take our readership into consideration in any editorial decision," Esser says. "We're not here to be unpopular with readers. We're here to sell newspapers." ◘

Porn Czarina

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 95] keep legislators' phones ringing. In the past year she's become one of Utah's most fervent antipornography activists. She counsels sexual addicts; she organizes local conferences; she writes pamphlets and articles. And it's not as if her home life isn't hectic enough: Hamilton and her husband have 21 children between them (both are widowed), and they've taken in at least 14 more.

Like Ruzicka, Hamilton hopes that Houston will help Utah curb the spread of what she considers glossy smut. "Sexual awareness opens once, and it's a tragedy if it happens in a grocery store. *Redbook*, *Mademoiselle*, *Allure*, those magazines have pushed it to the max....Our children are walking through grocery checkout lines and seeing sexually explicit pictures...and that puts them on the path to sexual addiction."

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Houston with Attorney General Shurtleff (background) at the announcement of her new job

Hamilton believes that she can help put the kibosh on this pernicious "propaganda." "It's so totally cool," she says. "My daughter stopped in a grocery store recently, and saw a *People* magazine with this almost nude lady, and she took it over to the service desk and said, 'If we want to live in Las Vegas we would go live there.' So then I went in, and then a bunch of people went in and complained, and we all got more people to complain, and now they stopped selling it out in the open.

"The silent majority needs to speak up; the silent majority doesn't want the pornography," Hamilton continues. "And every time you see something offensive, it doesn't take very long to swing by the service desk and say, 'I'd appreciate that being covered or frankly not being sold.'"

Despite the rhetoric, Hamilton is not part of a silent majority; she is part of a group of activists committed to keeping pressure on Houston and her elected boss, Attorney General Mark Shurtleff. But the Utah chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union says it will monitor Houston's work and will consider any possibly chilling effects on speech a constitutional issue.

But in Utah, people like Ruzicka and Hamilton seem to celebrate the prospect of a "chilling effect."

"Of course everyone's concerned about the constitutionality, but there's not a constitutional right for slut," Ruzicka says—she appears to mean smut—her sentences coming quicker. "There's not a constitutional right to produce and distribute slut, and so where is that constitutional right that protects all of us?" Ruzicka's comments echo what Attorney General Shurtleff said at the January press conference announcing Houston's hiring. Fudging the U.S. Supreme Court's distinction between pornography, which is protected speech, and obscenity, he said, "There's absolutely no redeeming value to pornography...and I, for one, will not allow pornographers to hide behind the First Amendment." Shurtleff also said he wasn't afraid of prosecuting people who "send" websites to minors. (Websites can't be sent to anyone; instead, a website's address can be sent, but the recipient then needs to type in, or click on, that address to access the site.)

For the most part, Shurtleff has been praised for his implementation of Houston's post. But some are already questioning whether Houston's new job is nothing more than expensive posturing by an elected official who was seen as being insufficiently hard-line on pornography in last year's election. (One antipornography group Hamilton is involved with supported Shurtleff's more conservative opponent, Frank Mylar, in the Republican primary for attorney general, arguing that Mylar would do more to combat the spread of pornography.) In an article in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, columnist Shinika Sykes wrote, "Considering the state's many funding problems, elected officials should have been asked to explain why a $75,000- to $150,000-a-year search for pornography is something other than expensive moral posturing, and why one of the 150 lawyers on staff at the AG's office couldn't have done the job."

When Houston worked as a senior attorney in Utah's West Valley City's attorney's office, the job she held prior to her current post, she helped create an advocacy program for victims of domestic violence. Like many other Mormons, Houston believes that pornography is a contributing factor in almost every case of domestic abuse. She hesitates before talking about specific situations she encountered, but she does tell of one domestic-abuse victim who said her husband was never violent before he became interested in pornography. "I don't think pornography always causes domestic abuse," says Houston. "But I know that almost whenever I see domestic abuse, there's pornography." Pornography revolts her: "If I thought my job just consisted of watching hour after hour of pornographic movies, I would never have taken it in the first place."

But hard-core porn isn't what scares Houston most about her new position. The scariest part of her job, Houston says, is dealing with the press; even before starting her new post, she received dozens of interview requests from national news organizations such as ABC News and *The New York Times*.

She's been game thus far. Before Houston even started work in February she did an interview with *Penthouse.com*, and the interviewer told her that he admired her guts in taking his call. "It is scary to be under so much scrutiny....I thought it might die down," she says. She has also learned that a good amount of personal scrutiny is likely to come with her new territory. The day before she began work, a front-page *Salt Lake Tribune* headline read: "Porn Czar Says Inexperience is Irrelevant." The article began: "Utah's new porn czar is an acknowledged virgin." Although it's true that Houston has never been married (she lives alone with her two dogs, Oreo and Cookie) and that Mormon teachings prohibit premarital sex, she says she never told the *Tribune* reporters she was a virgin. "I did not admit it or deny it," she says. "I told him it was no one's business." Houston points out a number of other factual inaccuracies in the *Tribune* profile, including her age and her work history. "I'm going to need to start taping these things," she says. (James Shelledy, the *Tribune*'s editor, confirms that there were some minor mistakes concerning Houston's age and work history, but he says the notes of two different reporters support the paper's writing that Houston said she was a virgin.)

Such attention is only likely to increase when Houston prosecutes a case, drafts her first ordinance, or tests her limits. And scrutiny of anything related to Utah will increase as the state prepares for an influx of thousands of journalists for next year's Olympics. Indeed, Utah's new approach to dealing with

Porn Czarina

pornography comes at a high-profile time for the state: Many Utahans see the Olympics as a chance to show the world that Utah is not filled with outcasts. The Mormon Church, meanwhile, seems to be trying to mainstream its image and recently announced that it preferred to be called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, emphasizing that the church is a mainstream Christian denomination.

And yet Houston's position will probably accentuate the uniqueness of Utah and its overwhelming Mormon influences. Houston says the snickering about her state and her religion doesn't bother her. She'll be focusing on her job. "People tend to think that it's predominantly LDS here," she says. "But there are a lot of other people out there, although a lot of them have the same standards and feelings." As for concerns that Houston runs the risk of trampling on First Amendment rights, she says an organized citizenry—not the government—holds the key to curbing pornography: "There's a big difference between tolerance and not being offended and...the community has the ultimate control over what comes into their community. They...don't watch a movie or they don't go to a movie and they're not going to show that movie very long. It'll be gone. But [the community needs] to work together to do that." ◘

The Subject Is Rosie

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 101] apparently featured prominently in the crafts section in the debut issue of *Rosie*. I can't help but think the craft is a perfect metaphor for O'Donnell and her magazine: It has an eclectic mix of materials, a little sparkle, and generous amounts of glue, but making it work means you have to start cutting things out first.

"This is a brand-new magazine—there is no *McCall's*," says Susan Ungaro, the editor in chief of *Family Circle* magazine (another G+J USA title) and a consulting editor for *Rosie*. She says it without a hint of remorse or nostalgia. "It was not making money and was not successful," Ungaro says, throwing a quick look to the G+J USA press representative in the room with us. "That was no secret."

But just how unsuccessful? Magazines appear and disappear regularly (*George*, *Swing*), and many endure even though they're hopelessly in the red (*Esquire*). *McCall's* had survived 125 years of American culture and a few life cycles of feminism, two world wars, and countless recipes for the perfect tuna casserole. It was the golden girl of magazines, resilient if unremarkable. To cease publishing it now is like moving a family heirloom from the living room to the basement to make space for the television.

McCall's and many other early magazines were "edited" by businesses, which were able to use magazines as vehicles for their products. As the late academic Nancy Walker observes in her book *Shaping Our Mother's World: American Women's Magazines*, *McCall's* was originally titled *The Queen: Illustrated Magazine of Fashion* and was intended to promote James and Belle McCall's paper-dress-pattern business. Other seminal women's magazines had similar origins: *Woman's Home Companion*, established in 1873, and *Good Housekeeping*, begun in 1885, both began as mail-order catalogs. The commerce came first and the content second, argues Walker, who was an English professor at Vanderbilt University. But it's a pas de deux that every magazine still has to master. (Incidentally, *McCall's Pattern* magazine has no connection to G+J USA's publication and is under different ownership.)

The Queen changed titles twice in its first 20-odd years, evolving into *The Queen of Fashion* in 1891 and then *McCall's Magazine: The Queen of Fashion* in 1897. It wasn't until the 1920s, after a few near-death experiences, that *McCall's* began to establish itself literarily, publishing fiction by George Bernard Shaw and F. Scott Fitzgerald and, later, an excerpt of Eleanor Roosevelt's memoirs and her advice column, "If You Ask Me."

By the 1930s, *McCall's* had achieved literary status and a graphic friskiness. When you look back at these issues, the magazine seems impressively modern, with its huge, hyperintimate portraits on oversize paper and clean, uncluttered layouts. The June 1949 issue with Eleanor Roosevelt on the cover is typical: no headline, no teaser—just her broad, smiling mug. The contents feature an excerpt of her memoirs about living in the White House; an exposé on the new science of knowing the sex of a baby before it is born ("Yet soon almost every mother may be able to learn the sex of the child she is bearing, many, many months before she delivers"); and sewing patterns.

In the 1950s, as the mythology of American domesticity emerged, *McCall's* evolved from strictly a women's magazine to "The Magazine of Togetherness" for the whole family. Editors commissioned a freelance writer named Betty Friedan. They wanted her to expand on a questionnaire she had designed for her fellow Smith College graduates of 1942. As Friedan later wrote, "Getting strangely bored with writing articles about breast feeding and the like for *Redbook* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, I put an unconscionable amount of time into a questionnaire...thinking I was going to disprove the current notion that education had fitted us ill for our role as women....The suspicion arose as to whether it was the education or the role that was wrong." When the *McCall's* editors received Friedan's manuscript, which bristled against the constraints of homemaking, they rejected it. "The male *McCall's* editors said it couldn't be true," she wrote. The manuscript, after failing to find placement in other magazines, would become the seed for Friedan's 1963 landmark study of the status of the American woman, *The Feminine Mystique*.

In many ways, Rosie O'Donnell is the inverse of everything the 125-year-old *McCall's* once stood for.

McCall's became Friedan's first target. In the book's second chapter, she lists the complete table of contents for the July 1960 issue, including:

"A lead article on 'increasing baldness in women,' caused by too much brushing and dyeing.

"A long poem in primer-size type about a child, called 'A Boy Is A Boy.'

"A short story about the minute sensations of a baby throwing his bottle out of his crib."

Of *McCall's*, Friedan argued: "The image of woman that emerges from this big, pretty magazine is young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies, and home." And 1960 was the same year, she noted, of Castro's revolution in Cuba, the independence of African colonies, and the stirrings of civil-rights protest, almost none of which made it into the magazine. "This

magazine, published for over 5,000,000 American women," she wrote, "almost all of whom have been through high school and nearly half to college, contained almost no mention of the world beyond the home."

As incendiary as the thesis was, *The Feminine Mystique* didn't dent the growth of *McCall's*. In fact, the magazine's audience swelled. By the late 1960s, its circulation had hit its all-time peak of 8.5 million, making it the most popular women's magazine in America. By 1972, the magazine had broadened and evolved, and a softer, more thoughtful Friedan met it halfway. Friedan joined her erstwhile enemy, sharing the pages of *McCall's* with Simone de Beauvoir and Gloria Steinem.

In one of her columns from 1973, titled "We Don't Have To Be That Independent," Friedan wrote from an airport, exhausted from her traveling. "It is a relief now to realize that we [women] can admit our need for love and home," Friedan reported, "that we can admit our dependence on [our children and husbands] without giving up our identity." (Friedan's initial critique of *McCall's*, however, still rings true. In the final issue, in March 2001, any potential political gravitas has been neglected in favor of family drama. The stories set outside the kitchen, bedroom, or medicine cabinet imply risk—"I Was Pregnant When the Car Crashed"—or dysfunction—"Hello, My Name Is Jean, and I'm a Shopaholic." The only childless women are the models.)

Eleanor Roosevelt on the cover of the June 1949 issue of *McCall's*

By the 1990s, *McCall's* was barely distinguishable from other women's magazines on the rack. Magazines have metabolisms, and *McCall's* had been slowing for the past ten years. After its late-1960s peak, circulation hovered around 5 million by 1990 and then saw a steady attrition of readers from its offerings of "celebrity close-ups" with Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York, and dieting advice. Five years later, the circulation of *McCall's* had crept down to just over 4.5 million. By last year it stood at 4 million.

The magazine isn't entirely to blame for its withering. Though *McCall's* had once gamely outlasted its competition, like *Collier's* and *Woman's Home Companion*, the competition diminished, getting smaller and smarter, splintering audiences into dozens of market segments. "Twenty-five years ago, there was a phrase that described the women's magazines: the 'Seven Sisters,' like *McCall's*, *Family Circle*, *Redbook*, and others," says magazine consultant David Z. Orlow, head of Periodical Studies Service. "But in the past two decades, the Seven Sisters sprouted more sisters, nieces, and aunts, and there are now a multitude."

Savvy health magazines like *Shape* and *Self* made the "quick binge buster" advice (i.e., "walk and talk") in *McCall's* feel fussy and out of step with younger readers, and its portraits of domestic bliss seemed better served by the more sophisticated *Bon Appétit* and the 1991 landmark launch of *Martha Stewart Living*. *McCall's*, once "The Magazine of Togetherness," was discovering that its family of readers increasingly wanted out.

Still, we are talking about a circulation of 4 million, which makes *McCall's*—despite the gradual diminishment of its audience—one of the pillars of the American magazine industry, along with *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Redbook*. All of these have circulation figures in the 2 million to 5 million range and also experienced declines in the 1990s. (For comparison, *Time*'s current circulation is over 4 million, *People*'s is 3.5 million, and *Newsweek*'s is 3.1 million.)

But big circulation figures can be deceptive. High circulations generate advertising, but another key measure of most consumer magazines' health is the number of newsstand and supermarket sales. This is acutely true for women's magazines, which first introduced the concept of the checkout periodical. Upstart *Family Circle*, launched by a grocery store in 1932 and available strictly in stores, became a magazine phenomenon. By December 1973, according to a 1974 *New York* magazine article, *Family Circle* had sold 9.7 million copies off-the-rack—a record for any women's magazine.

McCall's, meanwhile, stayed put on the shelves. Between 1989 and 1990, single-issue sales dropped an average of 28 percent. A decade later, they dipped 21 percent. Admittedly, these numbers are less revealing than they look. The downturn of single-copy sales was industrywide and accounted for only about 8 percent of the total sales of *McCall's*. But the figures reaffirmed the sense that *McCall's* wasn't speaking to its audience like it used to.

From an advertising angle, the magazine was shrinking as well. The December issue of a magazine usually represents the high-water mark for magazine advertisements, fat with holiday offerings. According to the Magazine Publishers of America, the December 2000 issue of *McCall's* brought in more than $9 million in advertising revenue, but that was down 13 percent from the year before, and the magazine had been losing more than a million dollars a month. But according to the Magazine Publishers of America's monthly magazine totals, *Ladies' Home Journal* pulled in $14 million in advertising revenues, *Family Circle* $17 million, and *Good Housekeeping* a gigantic $25 million. *Martha Stewart Living* raked in $23 million. The January 2001 *McCall's* issue had less than 50 pages of advertising, down 13 percent from the previous January's issue.

Worse, the advertisements in the February issue of *McCall's* looked like Home Shopping Channel castoffs. The big advertisements are two-page spreads of the Ashton-Drake porcelain dolls of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and Johnny, "the First John Deere Collector Doll." In an industry that succeeds when big retailers like car and clothing companies buy ads, *McCall's* magazine was about as classy as that six-inch-tall hand-painted Grumpy.

Which brings us to *Rosie*. Before there was *Rosie*, there was Annalyn Swan. Swan worked as a classical-music critic and editor at *Newsweek* through the 1980s, was editor in chief of the defunct *Savvy* magazine for four years, and then worked on several new magazine projects within Time Inc. In the fall of 1999, O'Donnell's business manager, Dan Crimmins, contacted Swan to see if she would help invent a magazine around the talk-show host.

It wasn't the first time the idea had been bandied about. O'Donnell had been approached years before but had turned all comers down. "At the time I didn't want to do a magazine," she says. "My mom got two subscriptions—*Life* and *McCall's*—but magazines don't hold any reverential place in my life....I had no interest." But she changed her mind, asking Crimmins to explore the idea and find some people to develop it. Crimmins brought Swan in, along with one of O'Donnell's lawyers, Philip K. Howard, author of *The Death of Common Sense: How Law Is Suffocating America*. Swan stitched together lineups, sample stories, the mission statement, and a business plan.

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(G+J USA reps, careful about the magazine's image right before launch, informed me that Swan was unavailable for comment.)

But after months of work, the news broke about Oprah's upcoming magazine. Howard called Crimmins. *Oh crap*, Crimmins thought, *we're too late*. But, Crimmins recalls, "Philip said it wasn't a problem. Oprah had just created a new category." Crimmins's story proves just how young the idea of celebrity-edited magazines really are—just two years ago, Crimmins thought that Oprah had nabbed the entire market. Some see the trend—the famous magazine editor—as excessive. "The cult of personality has certainly spawned more profitable magazines than anything else—*InStyle*, *People*, et cetera," says magazine consultant Orlow. "We've now just taken the cult to new and obscene levels."

Once the sample issues had been finished, Crimmins met with "three or four" publishers in New York, including Time Inc., which, after having helped launch Martha Stewart's magazine only to have her later buy them out, didn't seem anxious to become involved with another celebrity-edited magazine. But G+J USA CEO Daniel B. Brewster Jr., newly hired away from American Express Publishing Corp.—which was responsible for sophisticated African-American lifestyle guru B. Smith's magazine of the same name—was highly receptive. "By the second meeting, they flew in the German officials [from Bertelsmann]," Crimmins says.

Rosie O'Donnell (standing) at a taping of her show, *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, in New York City, during which the studio audience dressed like her.

It was Brewster who initially brought up the idea of fusing *McCall's* with *Rosie*. "Publishers asked me, 'Would you want to start one on your own?' but I really understood that to build a subscription base, to start from scratch, was really difficult," O'Donnell says. "But then [Brewster] said, 'Would you want to merge with *McCall's*?' That interested me because it had a big circulation right away. And as far as a business venture, it was more appealing."

By that time, the summer of 2000, Oprah's *O* was hot property: It boasted a 2 million circulation after only six issues. Some critics see O'Donnell's magazine as a copycat of Oprah's more-holistic-than-thou success, but O'Donnell is comfortable starting in Oprah's shadow. "If you're going to copy someone, Oprah's the person to copy," she says. "She sets the standards of excellence in everything she does....Of course they will say that it wasn't until she did *O* that I thought, 'Maybe I could do that too.' In many ways that's true. But the same thing happened with television—she totally paved the way for me and every other woman on daytime TV."

Once the deal was signed last fall (a 50-50 partnership between G+J USA and KidRo Productions), then came the matter of the name. O'Donnell wanted to retain *McCall's*, but keeping the old name would diminish the magazine's chances of reinvention in the eyes of advertisers. O'Donnell cops to that: "A lot of the upper-scale advertisers that we were trying to bring in didn't have much interest in the old title." When they came up with the hybrid *Rosie's McCall's*, which was announced at the first press conference in November, readers and advertisers were confused. One guest on O'Donnell's show told her that "it sounded like a parrot magazine, *Rosie's Macaws*," she says. "Then Sandra Bernhard came on the show and said, 'Oh yeah, I'm doing *Sandie's Hustler* next month.'"

So they considered the options, like *Enjoy*—a word that O'Donnell says often on the show—but "[G+J USA] thought it sounded like a food magazine." Ultimately, she gave in to becoming the brand. "I didn't know what else to call it."

O'Donnell first met with Susan Ungaro in the offices of *Family Circle* to hash out the editorial concept on a yellow legal pad. Ungaro subsequently hired Cathy Cavender, a former *McCall's* editor who had left to work for the defunct *TV Guide* spinoff *Celebrity Dish* and is the editor in chief of *Rosie*, and Doug Turshen, the former editor in chief of *American HomeStyle & Gardening*, who is now the creative and lifestyle director. "I really wanted two people who had already been editors in chief because this magazine had to happen fast," says Ungaro. "I wanted them to know all the pressures of running a magazine and all aspects of the business."

With Cavender and Turshen running the place, O'Donnell's schedule is light and somewhat symbolic. She's been coming in twice a week for a few hours and has an office that she shares with editor at large Heidi Safer, whom O'Donnell calls "my Gayle King" (after the editor at *O* who acts as the on-site representative for Oprah).

So far, the biggest rub has been choosing covers. If O'Donnell can be said to be good at anything, it's knowing her audience as well as she knows herself. But her cover picks have met with some resistance; she's not used to the industry's rules of subject selection. "I wanted to put 'N Sync on the cover and they said, 'You can't do that. It's a teen thing,'" she recalls. "I said, 'But parents are interested in reading and thinking about them, kids care about them, and they're really nice guys.'" Then she corrects her posture, switches into "business tone," and continues, "They said, 'I don't think we can do that. Let's get three under our belt before we do that.'"

Putting 'N Sync on the cover (or Madonna for that matter) might be one of the riskier, more interesting moves that the magazine will take. The glad-handing and gabfests that have made O'Donnell's show so refreshing on daytime TV—a throwback to Merv Griffin and Mike Douglas—in the midst of trashy real-life soap operas (*Jerry Springer*, *Sally Jessy Raphael*, or *Geraldo*) can be a bit rote in the pages of a magazine. What works onscreen may not be so easily translated into print. Most periodicals—particularly the fame-focused ones like *Entertainment Weekly*, *Us Weekly*, or *InStyle*—sell the same populism and disclosure: what Julia Roberts thinks about the actors' strike, how often Brad Pitt washes his hair.

The real allure of O'Donnell's show—and her personality—is the way in which she deconstructs her own stature. It's evident in the first show she ever taped. During that debut broadcast on June 10, 1996, O'Donnell tipped the audience off to her safety net—the jokes taped to the inside of the newspaper on her desk—and dumped it. She confessed that her hair had been dyed "the

daytime-talk-show-host shade" of brown and told her audience not to clap when they didn't want to, advising them, "This is not *Sally Jessy Raphael*." (Of course, by the time of the Disney World taping, the applause sign was in full swing.) She coerced George Clooney and Susan Lucci into posing for a Polaroid because "no one will believe that you were on my first show if we get canceled." No other daytime TV show dared demystifying celebrity as much as O'Donnell's. But it can't work forever. At some point, as O'Donnell's empire expands, the sweetly revealing, obsessed-fan approach will seem disingenuous.

There's a moment in that first show that feels like a bit of foreshadowing. With Clooney in the chair, O'Donnell showed a publicity still from his big-hair days on the sitcom *The Facts of Life*. She asked bluntly, "Are you never ever going to get married again? Don't want any kids?" Clooney looked awkward. She had cornered him. When she describes to me the editorial policy of the magazine as "we don't go where you don't want us to," I think of Clooney in the chair on that first day. O'Donnell has grown consciously more careful. But the softball Q&As make things so comfy for the interview subjects that it's easy for both guest and viewer to slip into a lull of complacency. The interviews can feel a lot like the old *McCall's*—textureless and safe.

What she is, undoubtedly, is a figurehead. Recently, I went to an engagement party for my sister, who is a serious O'Donnell fan. By the end of the night, her friends were stuffing their numbers in my jacket, hoping I could get them a ticket to a taping. People like Dani Wayt and her mother, with their letter for O'Donnell, make pilgrimages to her show. "Mothers send me photographs of their kids dying [and] wearing the *Rosie* shirt or in the coffin with the *Rosie* doll," she says. "We have Make-A-Wish [a philanthropy to help kids with terminal conditions that O'Donnell supports] kids every day in the audience, and a lot of those kids die. When they do, the parents feel the need to contact me. It's overwhelming."

She's hoping that need to connect will make her audience migrate with her to print. And the truth is that she likes detours in her own career. "In the middle of my film career, when I went off to do Broadway, everybody thought I was insane," she says. "I always do what I feel inside and it's served me well so far." In addition to editing the magazine, she's planning a documentary for HBO, maybe a kids' show, and some work for the adoption center with which she's now associated.

O'Donnell turned 39 this March. It's a big number for her, the age her mother was when she died. O'Donnell has felt—and articulated many times—that absence, and the magazine launch marks the point of transition. "Age 39 resonates a lot with my life, and definitely had a lot to do with my decision not to renew my contract for the show," she says. "For a long time I was trying to live past this number and do everything I could before the number happened." Now it's here, and with *Rosie*, she's poised to become a mother figure for the culture at large. The role will be a release, she says. "Anything after 39 is free time." ◘

Nixon and the Chandler Dynasty

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 107]

During the five years that followed, Nixon carefully planned his resurrection. In early 1967, he paid another obsequious visit to Norman and Buff Chandler; he told his former patrons that he again planned to seek the Republican presidential nomination. When Pat Nixon flatly told her husband in front of the Chandlers that she did not want the anguish of another campaign, he glossed over her protests as if she weren't in the room. Instead, he implored the Chandlers for their blessing. That Nixon ignored his wife's opinion appalled Buff. Although Norman always had the last word, he was never as dismissive of Buff's wishes as she saw Nixon being toward his wife's.

Pat Nixon flatly told her husband in front of the Chandlers that she did not want the anguish of another campaign; he glossed over her protests as if she weren't in the room.

Norman gave Nixon the same noncommittal reply that night that he'd given him in 1962, when Nixon had sought Norman's approval to run for governor. If Nixon won the nomination, he'd get the *Times*'s endorsement—it was still a Republican newspaper, after all. But the *Times* was now firmly in Otis's hands, and Norman would make no predictions about how his son would instruct his staff to cover the campaign.

Although never a personal favorite of Buff's, Nixon had served a symbiotic purpose for both the Chandlers and the *Times* during the congressional and vice-presidential phases of his political career. He could be counted on to help Buff raise money in her single-handed campaign to build the Los Angeles Music Center, for example. But both Buff and Otis had always thought Nixon to be crude and rude.

Buff, who had learned early on how to hold her liquor, was horrified by Nixon's behavior after he had downed a few drinks. Otis was never a big drinker, and he was even more shaken when he saw firsthand Nixon's penchant for crudity and off-color humor. At a *Times* executives' session during the early days of the 1968 campaign, Otis invited Nixon to speak.

"I guess I shouldn't tell this one," said the future president of the United States, "but I'll do it anyway: Why did the farmer keep a bucket of s--t in the living room?" As a pall fell over the room, Nixon could barely contain himself.

"To keep the flies out of the kitchen!" he cried.

After an uncomfortably long silence, Buff said: "You're absolutely right. You should not have told that story."

But Nixon's media handlers managed to keep his taste, judgment, and unprincipled ambition under wraps throughout most of the 1968 campaign. Dominated as presidential politics was that year by the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. and the antiwar protests at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the Democrats' internecine disarray over Vietnam played straight into Richard Nixon's hands. Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, Otis Chandler's personal choice to succeed Lyndon B. Johnson, had been tarred indelibly by the increasingly unpopular war. And the third-party candidacy of Alabama governor George Wallace sealed Humphrey's doom. Although tepid in its support, Otis Chandler's *Times* did endorse Nixon for president in 1968, over the objections of many of its own reporters. Confronted by a gaggle of young supporters chanting "We want Nixon!" on a campaign train during the final weeks of the race, *Times* political writer Dick Dougherty, who had covered Nixon for

years, muttered within earshot of *Philadelphia Bulletin* reporter Tony Day, who remembers hearing it, "And you're going to get him, you f---ing rubes."

In November 1968, with just 43 percent of the popular vote, Nixon became the 37th president of the United States. Ironically, at almost the same time, Otis Chandler's *Times* had completed its editorial shift from the right to the center, and the newspaper that had created Richard Nixon was now frequently at odds with him.

Nixon won the presidency on the strength of his "secret plan" to end the war in Vietnam and the platform of "law and order" at home. Although his promises never materialized and the war droned on—a point driven home relentlessly by the *Times* and virtually every other major American newspaper—President Nixon seemed preordained to fulfill every fear Otis Chandler had ever entertained about the polyester prince of darkness his own parents had nurtured and then foisted upon the nation. Still, Otis felt he had to make the best of it: At least Nixon was reading the *Los Angeles Times* again.

The L.A. *Times*'s Norman Chandler with his wife, Dorothy "Buff" Chandler, at the beach in 1957

"Our paper isn't read as soon as *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* by important people in Washington," Otis said. "Still, Nixon subscribes." On behalf of his *Times* and its Washington bureau, Otis felt he had to deal with Nixon's presidency by remaining on cordial terms even though he had supported Hubert Humphrey.

In 1972, although the *Times* endorsed Nixon's reelection campaign, it printed a letter from several dozen *Times* reporters and editors announcing that "a newspaper is not a monolith" and that they would be voting for Senator George McGovern. During the Norman Chandler–Kyle Palmer era, such a letter would never have been printed and those who had the temerity to sign it would have been risking their jobs.

But 1972 was not just a presidential election year: It was also the year of GeoTek—a financial scandal that threatened to doom Otis Chandler's tenure as *Times* publisher just as Watergate would soon threaten Nixon.

To his everlasting regret, Otis signed on early to the gas-and-oil exploration venture created by his old Stanford classmate and big-game-hunting companion Jack Burke. As Burke's GeoTek empire grew, he offered finder's fees to Otis to bring new investors into the company and rewarded him with a seat on the GeoTek board and blocks of GeoTek stock. By the time an internal audit turned up irregularities that, in turn, brought about a Securities and Exchange Commission investigation, Otis had accepted nearly half a million dollars in finder's fees and promotional stock, which the SEC charged was a fraudulent scheme. "I helped a friend of mine raise some money for a venture, and I should have been more careful," he says on reflection nearly 30 years later.

As the GeoTek investigation expanded, Otis began to believe that his own persecution by the government might be politically motivated. During the first several weeks following the Watergate break-in of June 17, 1972, the *Los Angeles Times*'s Washington bureau played a game of one-upmanship with *The Washington Post*'s Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. *All the President's Men*, Woodward and Bernstein's best-selling account of Watergate, and the 1976 movie version stamped the two *Post* reporters in American legend as the only two Davids slinging stones at the paranoid White House Goliath. But in reality, *Times* reporters Jack Nelson, Bob Jackson, and Ron Ostrow were right behind them, even pulling ahead of the intrepid *Post* a few times. At one point, five days before Christmas 1972, Watergate judge John Sirica even jailed John F. Lawrence, the *Times*'s Washington bureau chief, for several hours on contempt charges because he refused to release tapes of Jack Nelson's interview with Watergate figure Alfred Baldwin, a former FBI agent who participated in the break-in at the office of Democratic National Committee chairman Lawrence O'Brien.

Throughout the Watergate era, both papers engaged in the cutthroat competition sparked by Otis Chandler in the early sixties when he gleefully hired Joe Alex Morris and Robert Elegant away from rival Katharine Graham's *Post*-owned *Newsweek*. In October 1972, the two papers were neck and neck, and President Nixon was well aware of their competition. In a diary entry on October 15, 1972, H.R. Haldeman, Nixon's chief of staff, recorded the president's fury over a front-page *Post* story linking Nixon aide Dwight Chapin to reelection-campaign espionage. Wrote Haldeman: "He thinks we ought to raise hell with the *L.A. Times* if they pick up the story. He thinks I should call Otis and point out to him that when he was under attack on his oil deal, the President told all of us 'hands off.'" But Nixon's duplicity, glimpsed privately by Buff and Norman years earlier, was now in full view. His "hands off" promise not to crack down on Otis could be as easily forgotten as any of the other promises he broke to suit his immediate needs.

Twice, as Norman Chandler lay dying, the president called to tell his old friend and patron that he was coming by to pay him a get-well visit; both times Nixon stood Norman up, never offering an explanation or excuse for his broken promise. Buff later sent the president a handwritten note condemning him for his insensitivity.

While making empty vows to Norman, Nixon privately raged over the audacious independence of Norman's son. The no-holds-barred news policies Otis had instituted as *Times* publisher vexed Nixon almost daily, and he said as much to his staff. The *Times* that Richard Nixon had had in his back pocket during Kyle Palmer's reign could no longer be so easily controlled. So just as the East Coast media had been denied access to the president, the *Times*'s reporters would be similarly punished. Furthermore—and even worse for Otis—Nixon knew exactly how to squeeze at the top ranks of the paper as well.

Eight months before Watergate, Nixon had vowed to sic no less a prosecutor than Attorney General John Mitchell on Otis and his family. On Oval Office tapes released 25 years after the break-in, President Nixon can be heard ordering Mitchell to direct the Immigration and Naturalization Service to raid the *Times* for illegal aliens and, more specifically, to check the citizenship of Otis Chandler's gardener.

"Now, let me explain, 'cause as a Californian, I know," Nixon told Mitchell. "Everybody in California hires them. There's no law against it, because they are there, because—for menial things and so forth. Otis Chandler—I want him checked with regard to his gardener. I understand he's a wetback. Is that clear?"

At one point on the tapes, the president raved at Haldeman that he wanted treasury secretary John Connally to turn the Internal Revenue Service loose on every member of Chandler's family.

"There's one thing I want done....Look over all the activities of the *Los Angeles Times*—all," Nixon snarled. "I want this whole goddamn bunch gone after."

There were any number of ways to harass Otis and his *Times*. One was to extort reelection-campaign contributions. In the summer of 1972, just weeks after the Watergate break-in, one of Otis's big-game-hunting buddies who worked on Wall Street had breakfast with Al Casey, president of Times Mirror, at New York's Waldorf-Astoria hotel and got right to the point, as Casey recalled in his memoir. Otis Chandler's friend was there on behalf of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President (CREEP).

"Mr. Casey, what we're looking for from the Times Mirror is a $500,000 contribution," said the man Casey would later identify only as "Mr. X."

Casey balked, pointing out that such a contribution from a corporation was illegal.

"How can you use the word 'illegal,' Mr. Casey, when we're discussing the president of the United States?" asked Otis's pal.

Casey knew the law and flatly refused to break it.

"Mr. Casey, I think you should know that your friend and colleague Otis Chandler could be in serious trouble with the SEC," the friend continued. "I could, you realize, have the SEC investigate him...which might prove very embarrassing."

"That sounds to me very much like a threat," said Casey.

"You may take it for what it's worth, Mr. Casey," said Otis's friend. "I should also tell you that I could, if you persist in your position, have President Nixon fire [Times Mirror CEO] Franklin Murphy from his position on the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board."

"That's a crock of baloney and you know it," said Casey.

But neither Otis nor Murphy took it that way after Casey returned to Los Angeles.

"Jesus, Al! They really want to humiliate me, don't they?" said Murphy.

Otis was even more upset. He knew better than Casey that the threat of an SEC probe was both ominous and real. "We really don't need an SEC investigation, Al, do we?" Otis asked.

"No," Casey answered. "Who the hell does?"

"It could be embarrassing, to say the least," Otis continued, real dread tingeing his voice. "I mean, Jesus, the newspapers would go to town on the story. And think of my kids, all the finger-pointing at school. That kind of thing."

But neither Franklin Murphy nor Otis Chandler told Al Casey that he had erred in telling off Mr. X: The *Times* would not pay hush money to CREEP; meanwhile, Otis's GeoTek nightmare worsened.

By the end of 1972, Otis's *Times* was delivering a million copies per day, year-round, and had printed 4.3 million classifieds in a single year—setting a world record. Goal after goal that he and editor in chief Nick Williams had set ten years earlier was met and surpassed. But the success didn't seem to matter much to Otis; the gloom of GeoTek continued to hover over each business day. It was hard to imagine how things could get much worse.

While Otis had been struggling with GeoTek, Richard Nixon resigned. The *Los Angeles Times* was one of the few major dailies that did not call for him to step down, and such faintheartedness seemed to mark an oddly disturbing editorial return to Kyle Palmer's era. From the safety of his retirement, a puzzled Nick Williams wrote critically of the episode in a letter to his old friend, retired editorial-page editor Jim Bassett.

"I thought the *Times* should have demanded Nixon's resignation," wrote Williams. "Instead, it called for the 'legal and normal process of an impeachment trial,' and this after the *Chicago Tribune* among many others urged resignation as best for the nation."

Bassett, who had retired from the *Times* to write the official history of the Chandler dynasty, could offer no immediate explanation for the paper's delicate handling of the disgraced former president—a momentary spineless relapse, he surmised.

Gerald Ford assumed the presidency and pardoned Richard Nixon. As the nation celebrated its bicentennial in 1976 by electing Jimmy Carter president and wiping the Watergate slate clean, Times Mirror celebrated yet another milestone of its own—its revenues exceeded $1 billion for the first time. As Richard Nixon faded into a long political exile, GeoTek's Jack Burke was sentenced to prison. His old friend Otis Chandler escaped conviction but paid more than $1 million in legal-defense fees, and his otherwise pristine reputation never fully recovered.

"There's one thing I want done....Look over all the activities of the *Los Angeles Times*—all," Nixon snarled. "I want this whole goddamn bunch gone after."

In 1984, Nixon faced the media one more time, during a convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington. More than 900 members of the press attended, including Otis Chandler, who had officially retired as publisher of the *Los Angeles Times* in 1980 but was still chairman of the board of the booming Times Mirror Company.

During his 30-minute speech, Nixon spoke of former vice-president Walter Mondale's campaign against President Ronald Reagan; Reagan's failed Central America policies, particularly the "Mickey Mouse" mining of Nicaraguan harbors; and American insensitivity to Third World problems—but he refused to talk about Watergate.

"I'm going to talk about the future, not the past," he told the journalists.

After it was all over, Otis met his old adversary and shook his hand.

"Brilliantly done," he said. ■

BILL BRIDGES/TIMEPIX

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KICKER BY MODERN HUMORIST

Scooping the *Enquirer*

"What's going on here? What are the implications of picking up *The New York Times* and seeing a front-page story with details attributed to *The National Enquirer*?"
—Juan Williams on NPR's *Talk of the Nation*, referring to the *Enquirer*'s recent scoops about Jesse Jackson's out-of-wedlock child and Hugh Rodham's role in the Clinton pardons

The New York Times might want to consider going on the offensive, beating the *Enquirer* at its own game. To wit:

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition

Celebrity birthdays: **Today,** Cher, age 55. **Tomorrow,** Richard Hatch, age 56. **Yesterday,** Kevin Garnett, age 25. Celebrity birthday table and the full horoscope report are on Page D10.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MAY 20, 2001

...L. CL . . . No. 51,675

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani prizes domestic comfort and is sensitive and intuitive, his preference for doughnuts indicates.

Studies Show That Dessert Preference Is Key to Assessing Personality Type

By GINA COLADA

A new test devised by university researchers uses subjects' choices for the final course at dinner to rate and analyze their character traits.

"Your favorite dessert reveals your personality," said Dr. Earl Griffin, an expert in food preference-linked psychology. "It sounds too simple to be true, but it's infallible."

Researchers discovered that people who chose cake or pie as their favorite dessert were likely to be family-oriented and conservative. "Pie and cake eaters tend to be very loyal, religious, and uncomfortable with change," said Dr. Griffin. "They love pets and are very traditional."

Those who prefer ice cream are "the flamboyant type—the life of the party," said Dr. Houston. "They live for today and fall in and out of love very easily."

Pudding and gelatin-based dessert lovers, on the other hand, enjoy the outdoors and sports and are competitive. They are often workaholics and are passionate about reading.

Those who prefer unusual and complicated desserts such as Baked Alaska or crème brûlée "love to stand out in a crowd. They dislike being perceived as ordinary, and they love fine wines and gourmet cooking," Dr. Griffin said.

The research team is sanguine about the wider applications for their findings. "What we like to eat reveals a lot about us," Dr. Griffin said. "It's always useful to know yourself better."

See Science Times, Page D1.

STRAIN ON KATHIE LEE GIFFORD'S MARRIAGE PREDICTED TO INCREASE

MIDLIFE CRISIS AND CAREER CHANGE WILL BE FACTORS, ANALYSTS SAY

Damage to Union Likely

By F. CHUCK NORRIS

NEW YORK, May 5 — Analysts of Kathie Lee Gifford's marriage are pessimistic about its success in the long term and doubt that it can be a source of happiness for the actress-singer.

The marriage, which was endangered by an episode of infidelity in 1997, was said to be "stronger than ever" after weathering a downward slide. However, experts say that new stressors such as Ms. Gifford's relinquishing her position at "Live With Regis and Kathie Lee" and her disappointment with the poor sales of her newest album are endangering the marriage.

A combination of boredom, disappointment over her singing career and the strains of all-day togetherness may damage Ms. Gifford's marriage irrevocably, warned Rick Gennaro, a marriage analyst for

See Business Day, Page C2.

CROWE'S ACTIONS THOSE OF UNATTACHED MALE LEADING EXPERTS SA

Intimacy Sought With at Least Two Actresses

By FRANKLY BRUNI

LOS ANGELES, May 5 — Actor Russell Crowe approached actress and singer Courtney Love and actress Leelee Sobieski separately at a party sponsored by DreamWorks SKG and made flirtatious overtures to both, The New York Times has learned.

Crowe, who has been the focus of publicity over his connection with actress Meg Ryan, is said by observers to have been behaving "like a single guy."

Ricardo Miller, a parking valet, noted that Crowe "disappeared" with Love later in the evening and was seen leaving Love's hotel room the next morning. This report casts doubt on the viability continued Crowe-Ryan tionship, which has, up now, seemed stable to ex

"Russell Crowe's to ting has broken Meg heart," a source close Ryan said. "He's been p like a single guy, with of exotic beauties. Po feels as though she's gi stable home for what out to be just a fling."

A representative Love denied that the had ever taken place. Mr. Crowe nor M were available at

Continued on Pa

Russell Crowe met with several attractive a tre Hollywood yesterday.

Flockhart's Weight Drops to Record Low

By CHRISTOPHER S. ROBIN

Calista Flockhart's weight dropped to 98 pounds during the last two weeks despite predictions that it would remain stable at 106 pounds, and the drop is causing concern among Ms. Flockhart's co-workers, a source on the "Ally McBeal" set said today.

Ms. Flockhart, according to the source, had been eating well until recently, usually having a bagel with cream cheese for breakfast, a salad or sandwich for lunch, and a dinner of pasta and salad. She had even felt strong enough to go jogging with her personal trainer.

But for the past two weeks Ms. Flockhart has consumed "almost nothing," according to the source, except for a steady intake of double espressos.

Ms. Flockhart could not be reached for comment, but her

Continued on Page C4.

Cruise Sought Reconciliation With Kidman in Last-Minute Effort

By LOWELL PACINO-BERGMAN AND JEFF GIRTH

LOS ANGELES — Sources close to the Tom Cruise-Nicole Kidman household have confirmed to the Times that Mr. Cruise actively campaigned for reconciliation with Ms. Kidman during tense negotiations that lasted well into the morning hours.

The failed negotiations, which occurred in February but on key points of contention. Mr. Cruise would not back down on his claim that Ms. Kidman was jealous because he was "a bigger star" than she is, and Ms. Kidman insisted that Mr. Cruise stop "screaming" at her.

Other issues on which Mr. Cruise and Ms. Kidman were unable to reach agreement reportedly included Mr. Cruise's vanity, Ms. Kidman's friendships with several of her stars, and Ms.

Whitney Houston's Use of Chemical Additives Called Harmful, Costly

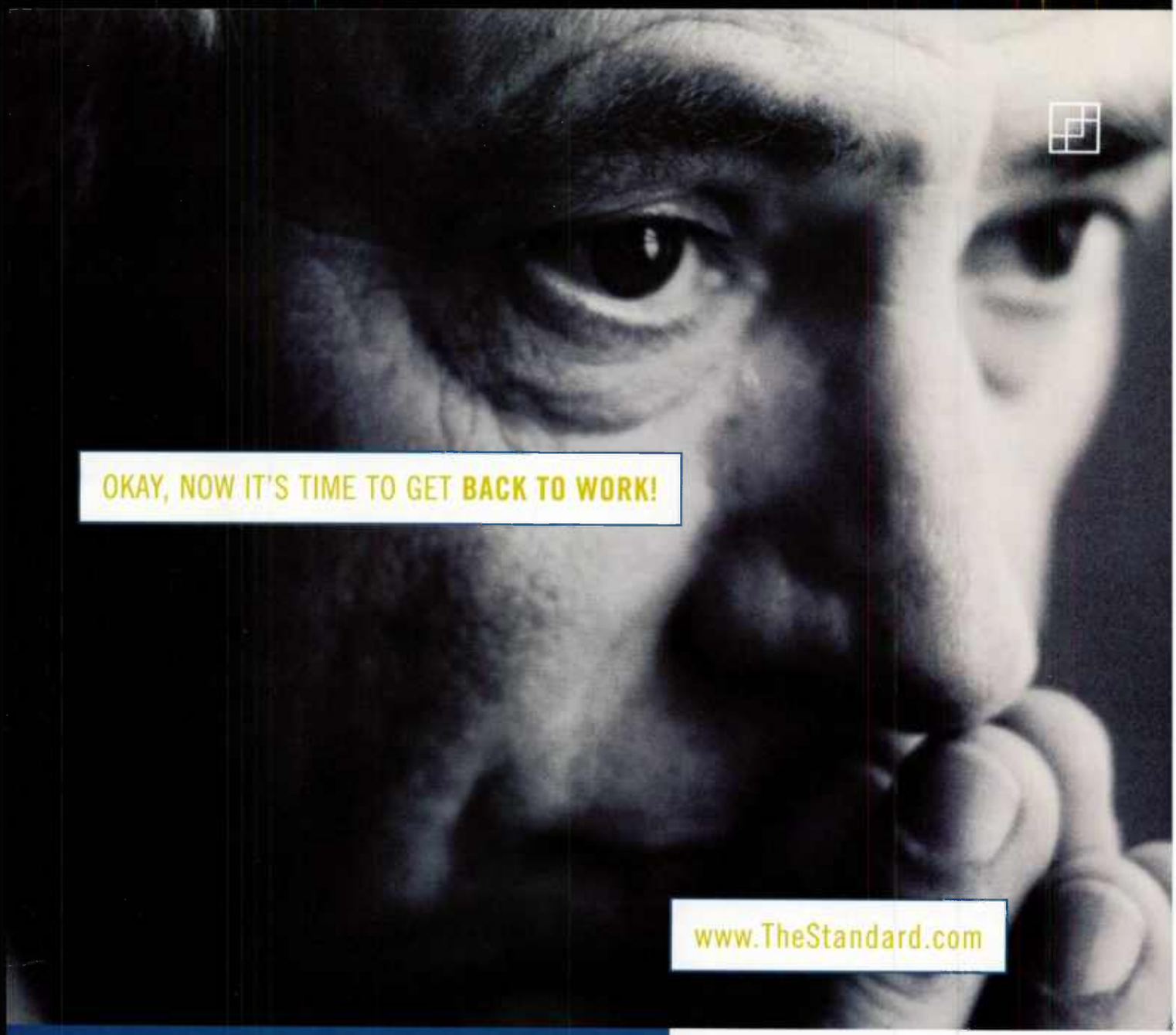
By FRANCIS "X" CLINES

Singer-actress Whitney Houston may be spending more than $100,000 per year on chemical health and dietary supplements, according to a former employee, and the use of these substances is thought to threaten the singer's career and personal life.

Several alleged episodes of erratic behavior, including an incident in which Ms. Houston

Study: Weight-Loss Method Celebrities More Efficient

LEFT: RICHARD DREW/AP. RIGHT: NEWSMAKERS



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