

Teen Sex, Fairness,  
And CBS's *48 Hours*

**Anchors, Interns, Minions, Moguls:  
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**Three Kids Shake Up  
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# BRILL'S CONTENTENT™

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE INFORMATION AGE

MAY 1999

# GOSSIP!

## HOW THE WORLD'S HOTTEST GOSSIP COLUMN REALLY WORKS

**By Katherine Rosman**

Sacred cows...planted items...the editor's  
social circuit...our accuracy box score...why a  
24-year-old Oxford grad loves writing this stuff...  
Plus, **Liz Smith** on why gossip is good for us,  
**Todd Gitlin** on why it's a virus, and our (failed)  
attempt to scam the gossips.

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World Radio History



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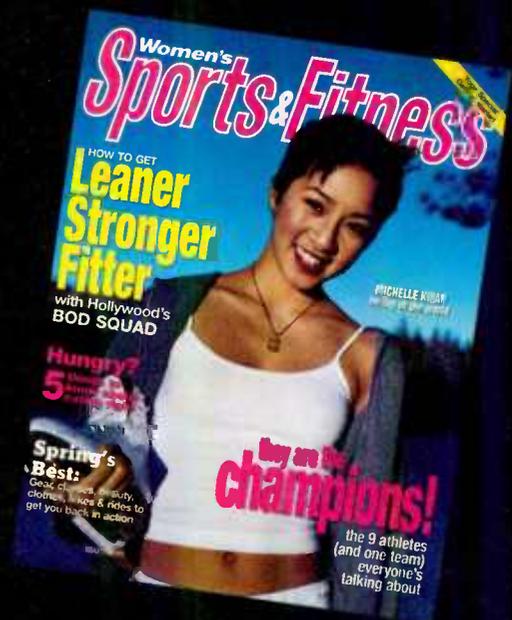




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**Culture mash** China and Taiwan youths bypass political strife to create a 'greater China' pop culture. **6**

**Ideas** Giant booksellers create a new way to go buy the book - megadistribution centers. **15**

## HYBRID HYPE



CARLOS OSORIO/AP

**MOTOR SHOW:** A Chrysler Cruiser unveiled in Detroit.

**Smaller, gentler SUVs appeal to practical era**

By Eric C. Everts and Abraham McLaughlin  
Staff writers of The Christian Science Monitor

# Terrorism's Trend Lines

■ Friday's blasts in two African capitals show terrorists are forced to evolve in their tactics.

By Scott Peterson  
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

**AMMAN, JORDAN** - Just after the US Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, a call was placed to a newspaper in Cairo to claim responsibility.

Playing out a script well rehearsed in the Mideast for decades, the caller said he was from the Liberation Army of the Islamic Sanctuaries, a previously unheard of group.

Even the journalist who took the call doubts it was genuine, and - except for a threat received from Egypt's Islamic Jihad and published by the pan-Arab newspaper Al-Naba' - investigators have few clues yet,

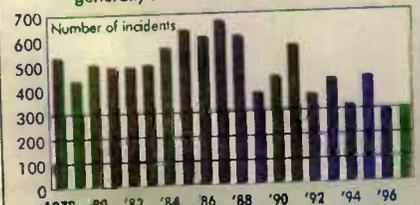
packed with high explosives in the basement sheared the building in two, the message was sent around the world that a new nation was about to be born.

Menachem Begin, who masterminded the King David attack, and later prime minister of Israel, described in his book "The Revolt" the thinking behind such acts of terrorists. "There are times when everything in you cries out: your very self-respect as a human being lies in your resistance to evil," Mr. Begin wrote. Then, playing on Descartes' words, he added: "We fight, therefore we are."

But the creation of Israel left a losing side too. To the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians dispossessed of their land in 1948, that event is still called "al Nakbah," the Catastrophe. It sowed the

## Global Terrorism, 1978-97

Despite high-profile attacks such as last week's at US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the number of terrorist incidents around the world has not generally increased in recent years.



Source: April 1998 US State Department Report on Global Terrorism

holds true of terrorists today, for whom it is "more of a calling than a state of mind."

As one youth described terrorism in Mr. Hirs's book: "It cannot be pinpointed.



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World Radio History

## [ LETTER FROM THE EDITOR ]

**T**HERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH GOSSIP, SOCIAL critic Todd Gitlin argues in an essay in this issue, as long as gossip is kept in its place. But gossip no longer knows its place—or perhaps more accurately, we no longer know gossip's place. It's everywhere. And for that reason, the people who bring us gossip have grown more influential, more central to our media culture.

Gossip is fun—there's no denying that. But as it has increasingly come to define our celebrity-obsessed era, it also demands to be taken more seriously. So in a special package of stories beginning on page 96, we try to come to terms with gossip.

Staff writer Katherine Rosman takes us behind the scenes with the people who produce the *New York Post's* Page Six, the gossip column that, for better and for worse, has become a social and political force to be reckoned with. Where does this stuff come from? Do they check it before they dish it? Can't we just ignore it all? Rosman goes deep into the gossip trenches and learns how stories are planted, spiked, traded, and embellished. What she discovers is fun *and* serious.

In his essay, Gitlin argues that a gossip-soaked press is degrading its public, because gossip displaces news that really matters. But a leading gossip practitioner doesn't see it that way. If it's possible to be eminent in this particular field, Liz Smith is, and the famous columnist argues here that gossip not only is good for the soul, it's good for democracy. It is, Smith contends, a way of "exchanging power."

Power—who exerts it and to what end—is an endlessly fascinating question and one the press should always be grappling with. But where is the power within the press itself? One way to measure that—as they teach in journalism seminars—is to follow the money. This issue includes our first annual salary survey, in which we reveal the salaries of a broad cross section of the media.

Word of our salary report has, not all that surprisingly, received a chilly response in media circles. "It's none of your business" is the PG version of what many press people (who are quite comfortable seeking this information from others) told our reporters. Still, we managed to get much of the information we wanted, and the

revealing 12-page report that begins on page 84 is the result.

By now we're growing accustomed to a certain reticence from journalists whom you would hope would be at least a little understanding of our interest in telling important inside stories. It happened to staff writer Leslie Heilbrunn as she looked into a controversy over a recent *48 Hours* segment that probed a troubling case—involving teen sex and alleged rapes—that has torn apart a Michigan community. Two of the families involved in the story had some complaints about a CBS producer, so Heilbrunn sought to learn about the producer's reputation and past work by contacting people involved in prior stories she had covered to see if they had similar complaints. For that, she encountered only resistance from the network, which challenged Heilbrunn's right even to ask such questions.

As it happened, the information Heilbrunn tracked down about the producer (with no help from the network) was only positive, and it helped paint a fuller, fairer picture of the *48 Hours* controversy. The story on page 74 is a nuanced account of what can happen when families who feel victimized turn to a network newsmagazine for justice, sacrificing their privacy in the perhaps naive hope of telling the story *their way*.

We're always looking for ways to expand this magazine's scope and reach. Our new columnist, Jon Katz, leaves no doubt that is his intention, too. In his debut column on page 56, Katz ventures into the vague and murky world of *The X-Files*. Why there? Because, Katz argues, the way mainstream media have misunderstood *The X-Files* phenomenon speaks to a general failure to understand where our culture is heading. Katz, well known for his provocative and original writing on media and culture, has a lot more to say, and we're delighted to add his voice.



ERIC EFFRON  
EDITOR

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

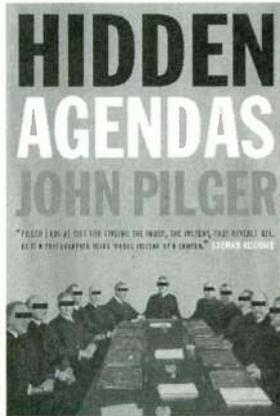
**1. ACCURACY:** *Brill's Content* is about all that purports to be non-fiction. So it should be no surprise that our first principle is that anything that purports to be nonfiction should be true. Which means it should be accurate in fact and in context.

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

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

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

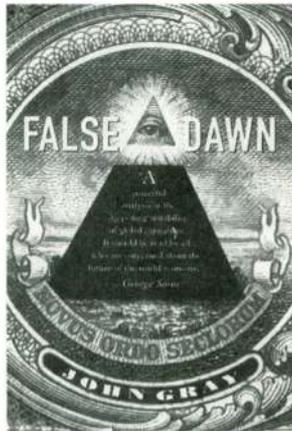
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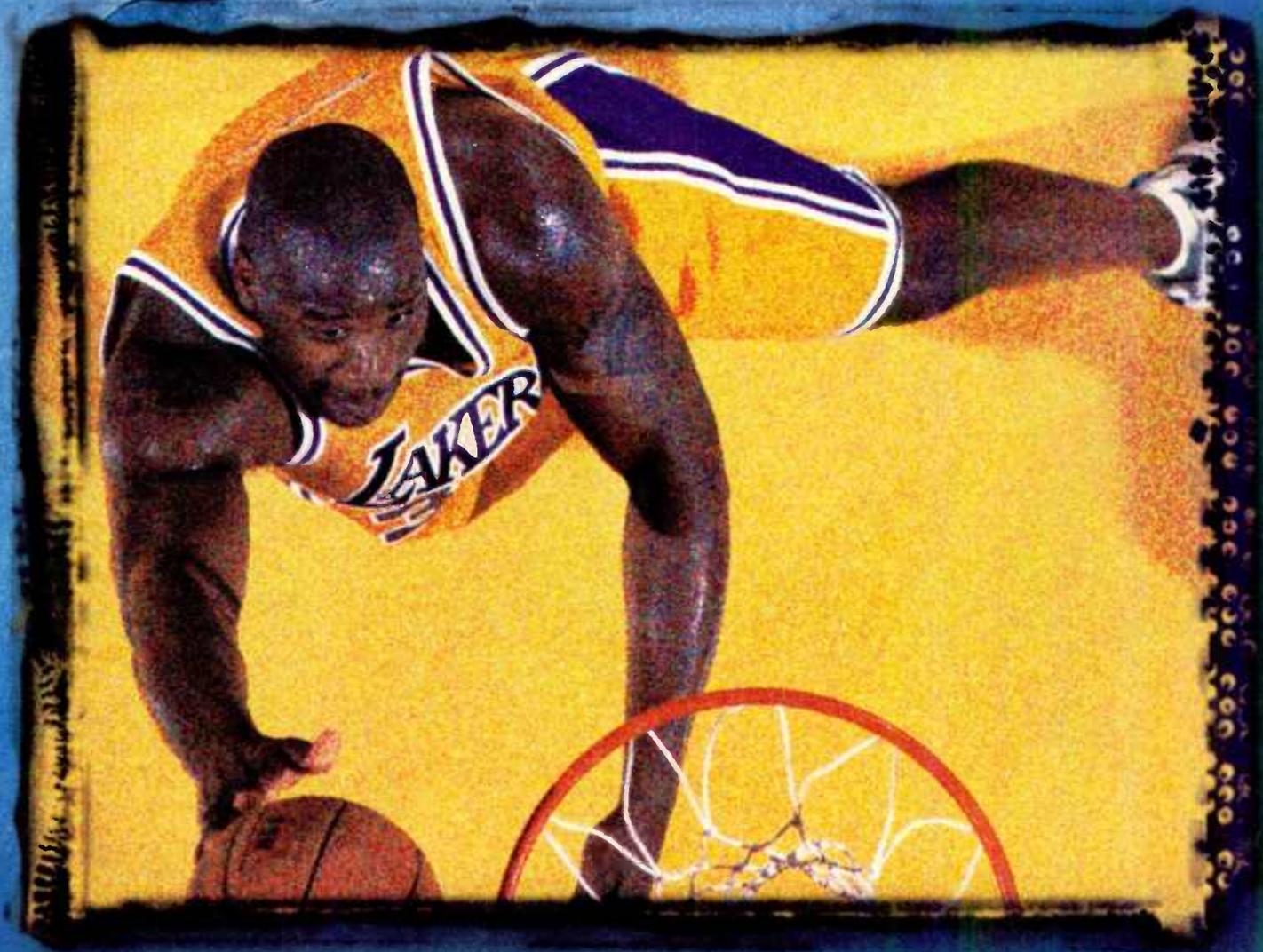
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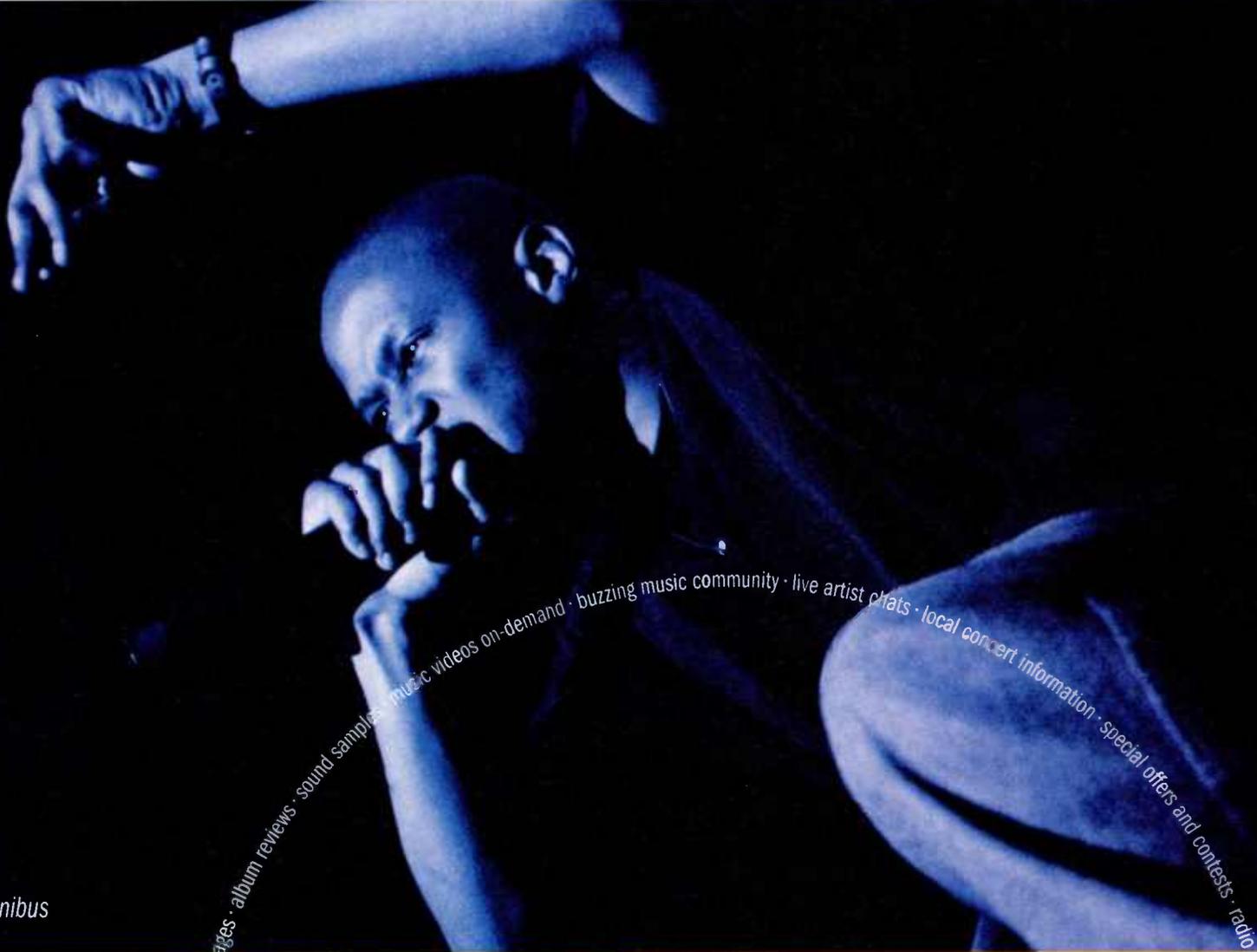


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Zach watched 1,826 hours of music television last year hoping to discover new music



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# BRILL'S CONTENT

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE INFORMATION AGE

MAY 1999 • VOLUME TWO • NUMBER FOUR

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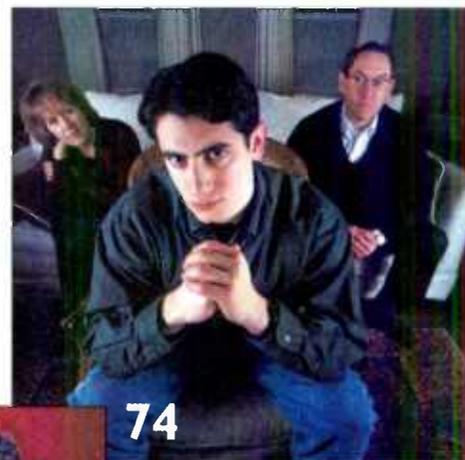
96

Richard Johnson, editor of the hottest gossip column around, oversees his tell-all empire in the newsroom of the *New York Post*.



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*New York Times* restaurant reviewer Ruth Reichl is finally able to shed her assortment of disguises as she gets ready to become the new editor of *Gourmet*.



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# WHO GETS PAID WHAT

One way to measure power is to follow the money. *Brill's Content's* first annual salary report does just that, as we reveal the salaries of a broad cross section of the media.....84

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Jerry Falwell's comments about Tinky Winky, the allegedly gay Teletubby, set off a media frenzy.





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# Civic Journalism is ...

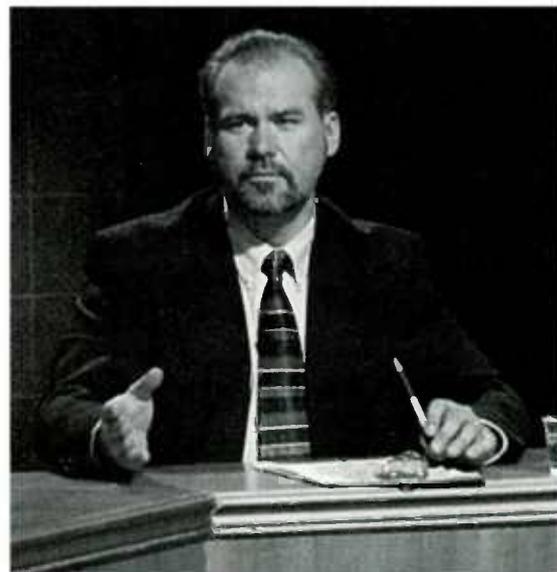
## About re-invigorating coverage.

It was the 1993 mayoral election in Rochester that changed the way I approach journalism and has, frankly, kept me in this business. That election showed me that the news media can be essential to our civic lives and, if I may sound so bold, essential to our democracy.

That year, the five-term mayor of Rochester decided to retire. There were five candidates to replace him. I approached the local newspaper about collaborating on a series of live, two-hour, prime-time debates. I suggested a format in which citizens would get to ask the candidates some of the questions.

The citizens' questions were direct and intelligent and far different from reporters' questions. They didn't talk about how much development money would go downtown. They asked about graffiti and noise ordinances and what could be done about stray dogs. And the candidate who was trailing the pack, with no money for TV ads, went from last place to first and eventually won the race. Rochester elected its first African-American mayor. He credited the debates with his election.

It was the first time in my career that I saw my work have impact. I discovered what was, for me, a new formula for journalism: meaningful coverage on issues meaningful to people and involving the citizens in your community. It is a way to better journalism. It is the kind of journalism I want to practice.



**Gary Walker**  
Vice President, News & Public Affairs  
WXXI-TV, Rochester, NY

---

***The Pew Center for Civic Journalism is pleased to present this message, another in a series on how journalists are working to improve news coverage by involving citizens - and to improve the community through their journalism. For more information, call 202-331-3200.***



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## ON GORGEOUS GEORGE, TWO OF OUR "WORST," AND "HERO" FLYNT

IT ISN'T JUST HIS READERS WHO APPARENTLY THINK THERE'S A PLACE IN THE MAGAZINE landscape for what John F. Kennedy Jr. calls his political "lifestyle" publication; some of our readers share that opinion. Meanwhile, staffers at *The New Yorker*, *U.S. News & World Report*, the *Forward*, and *USA Today* are among the correspondents checking in this month, though not with words of praise. (Praise comes to us primarily from those who reside outside the media bubble.) Letters published with an asterisk have been edited for space. The full text appears at our website ([www.brillcontent.com](http://www.brillcontent.com)).



### DEPT. OF COMPLAINTS

In accordance with the corrections policy of *Brill's Content*, I'd like to direct your attention to [a] totally inaccurate coverline on the April 1999 issue.

The cover touts a story exposing "Fake Letters From *The New Yorker*." This headline suggests that the letters that appear in *The New Yorker* are fake. Readers of *Brill's Content* may recall an article in your magazine last year that revealed that in certain magazines the printed letters from readers



are actually composed by the magazine's editors. This is not at all the case at *The New Yorker*.

Moreover, even a literal reading of the headline is an inaccurate description of the piece to which it refers. The article about *The New Yorker's* letters policy in the issue describes in unfair terms, to which we reserve our objections, our policy of signing letters responding to readers' comments with a pseudonym. Again, there is nothing fake about the letters.

We expect that in accordance with its stated policy, *Brill's Content* will promptly issue a correction "at least as prominently as the original mistake [that] was published."

PERRI DORSET  
Director, public relations  
*The New Yorker*  
New York, NY

**Editor in chief Steven Brill responds:**  
Sorry, but no correction is merited. We said "Fake Letters From *The New Yorker*—not

"Fake Letters To *The New Yorker*." And signing letters with a phony name is fakery. (By the way, we checked: Ms. Dorset is a real person.)

### CHEAP "GIMMICK"

As a fan of your magazine, I was disappointed that you used one of journalism's cheapest gimmicks—the "dumbest" members of Congress, the "sexiest" stars—to write about reporters who cover the White House ["The Best And Worst White House Reporters", by Robert Schmidt, April]. I was doubly disappointed that your methodology was so superficial: a review of the way reporters covered three major stories and interviews with "19 current White House reporters, 5 former White House reporters, 9 White House aides who talk to the press on a regular basis, [11 former White House officials], and 14 people who pay close attention to White House coverage"—all of them anonymous. And I was heartsick that you saw fit to name our Ken Walsh as one of the four "worst" reporters on the



Letters to the editor should be addressed to: Letters to the Editor, *Brill's Content*, 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10175  
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E-mail: [letters@brillcontent.com](mailto:letters@brillcontent.com). Only letters or messages signed by those who can be contacted during daytime hours, by e-mail or telephone, will be considered for publication. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.

## CORRECTIONS

IN THE MARCH "STUFF WE LIKE," THE PARTIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE website [www.impeach-andrewjohnson.com](http://www.impeach-andrewjohnson.com) were not identified. The site was created by HarpWeek LLC and is edited by John Adler.

Also in March, in the article "New Media's Trial Run," *The Industry Standard* was incorrectly identified as "a trade publication that evaluates media coverage of the Internet." *The Industry Standard* is a newsmagazine that covers the Internet economy. Its daily online "Media Grok" feature evaluates media coverage of the Internet.

And a photograph of P.J. O'Rourke on page 45 of the March issue carried an incomplete credit. It should have read: Maxwell Mackenzie/CBS/AP-Wide World.

We regret these errors.

Finally, a clarification: In March's "Rewind," Steven Brill wrote that Justice William Brennan coined the phrase "marketplace of ideas," which is true. But, as many of our readers noted in letters to us, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes introduced the concept of the "free trade in ideas" in his dissent to *Abrams v. U.S.* in 1919.

## [ LETTERS ]

beat, an amazingly broad claim considering that approximately 1,600 journalists are accredited to cover the White House—and proof positive that these exercises (to use your language) can be “arbitrary and useless.”

To set the record straight: Mr. Walsh is anything but “tired.” As anyone around *U.S. News* will attest, he is probably our hardest-working correspondent. To measure the extent of his reporting by the number of “quotes” in his stories is plain silly. There are hundreds of quotes every week in the White House briefings and press releases; how many are worth publishing? We take it as a compliment, not a criticism, that he doesn’t hang around the White House briefing room, and goes on fewer domestic trips with the president than some of his colleagues. Mr. Walsh spends his time winning the trust of sources who know what they’re talking about—and who aren’t afraid to stray from the White House spin.

For a long stretch during my eight months as editor, Mr. Walsh kept us compet-

itive in the Lewinsky story. In September, he was the first to report that Hillary Rodham Clinton would play a large role in determining whether the president survived the scandal. The result was a cover story titled “Can She Save Him?” When Newt Gingrich resigned, he appeared on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*, but Mr. Walsh persuaded us to put George W. Bush on the cover because he was the future of the Republican party. When everyone else in the media was writing about the prospects for a censure deal, Mr. Walsh reported that an unrepentant president and gleeful aides were hoping for a “naked acquittal.” He wrote: “Increasingly convinced that he will not only avoid conviction but will be able to claim ultimate vindication...he might even avoid a censure.” These are only a few examples of the times Mr. Walsh’s reporting has been not only right but also way ahead of those reporters who dutifully pass along quotes from unnamed spokesmen.

Contrary to your reporting, Mr. Walsh is

held in high esteem by his competitors at the White House. He has won two of the most prestigious awards for White House coverage, the Aldo Beckman Award and the Gerald R. Ford Award for Distinguished Reporting on the Presidency. Mr. Walsh is the only reporter who has won the Ford award twice.

I have been editing White House reporters for almost two decades. Ken Walsh ranks among the very best White House reporters I’ve worked with and competed against. Your assessment was hurtful and sadly unknowing. If your magazine practices the ideals that it preaches, then someone in your shop should send Mr. Walsh a heartfelt apology.

STEPHEN G. SMITH

Editor

*U.S. News & World Report*  
Washington, DC

**Robert Schmidt responds:** While Mr. Smith’s view is understandable, we take exception to two important misstatements of fact: We did not com-

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pare Mr. Walsh to the "1,600 journalists [who] are accredited to cover the White House." Rather, as the article stated, we focused on the small group of reporters who work for major national news organizations. And some of our sources were named.

### DAVID BLOOM DEFENDED

\*Senior writer Robert Schmidt rates the best and worst White House reporters in your April 1999 issue. Given the nature of the article, I was surprised to read misleading and inaccurate reporting in Mr. Schmidt's profile of NBC White House correspondent David Bloom.

After writing that Mr. Bloom's reports "lack depth and context," Mr. Schmidt cites as "a good example" Mr. Bloom's February 3 piece on the president's Medicare plan, in which Mr. Bloom quotes from a Concord Coalition Facing Facts alert. That alert criticized the president's proposals for using the surplus to extend the solvency of the Social Security and Medicare trust funds.

Mr. Schmidt writes that Mr. Bloom

found the statement on U.S. Newswire, a news distribution service Concord uses frequently. Perhaps Mr. Bloom did. Mr. Schmidt was wrong to assume that "Bloom apparently pieced together the quote he used in the broadcast from two separate sentences in the press release."

In fact, Mr. Bloom called the Concord Coalition several times that day. His initial call was to ask if Concord had any comment. After that conversation, I faxed our Facing Facts alert to Mr. Bloom for his review. Later that morning, Mr. Bloom spoke to Concord's policy director, Robert Bixby, and then arranged to have Mr. Bixby interviewed by NBC staff to explain our position. After that interview, Mr. Bloom asked me to fax our alert to NBC's graphics department so they could use it that night in the story.

It is clear from those facts that Mr. Bloom did far more than "apparently" use a simplistic "trick of the trade" of reading a news advisory on a wire without following up on it.

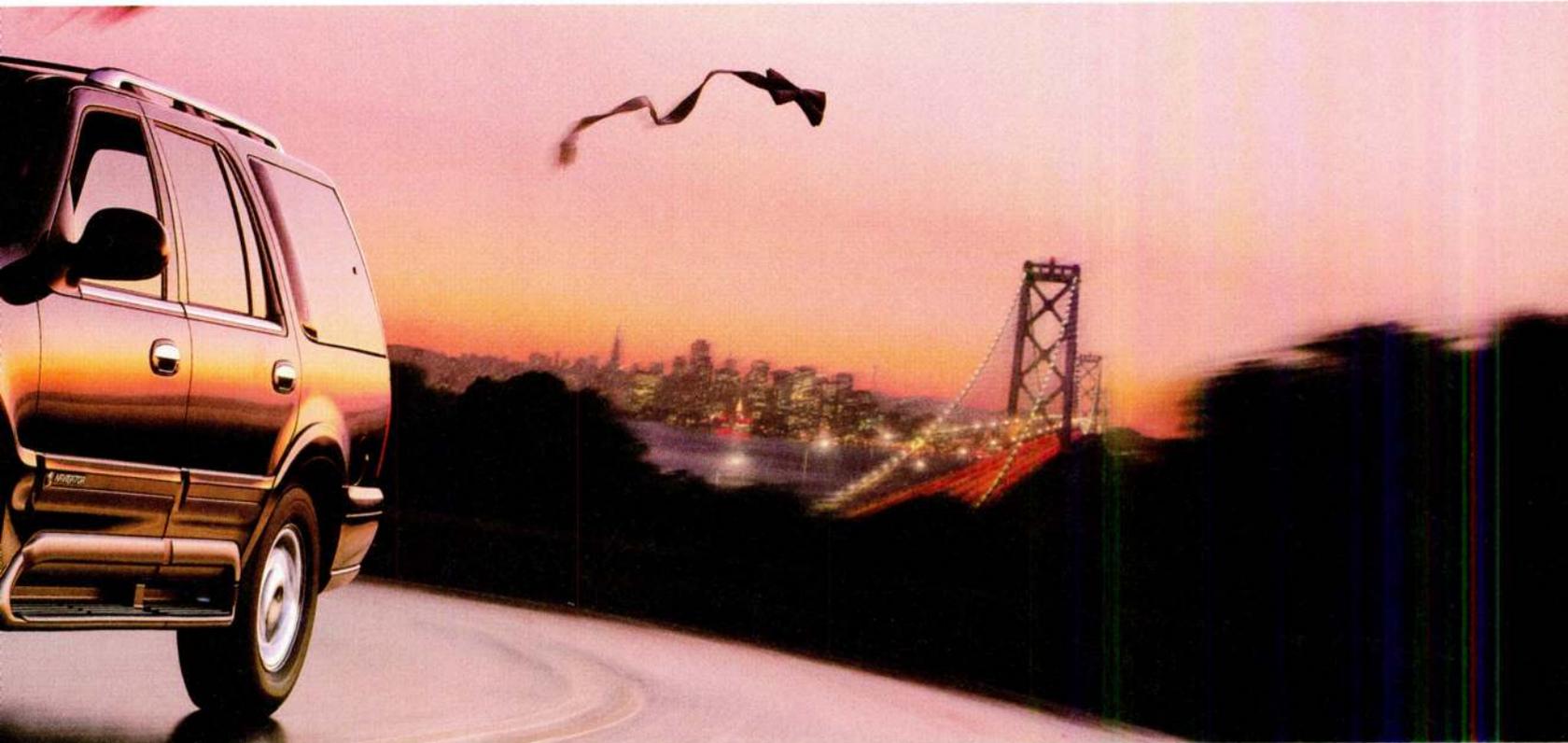
Mr. Schmidt also writes that by using the release, Mr. Bloom did not have to attend a Concord Coalition Capitol Hill forum held earlier that day. That is true, if only because the Concord Coalition did not host a forum that day. This is a fact that could have been easily checked by Mr. Schmidt or *Brill's Content*.

I would have been more than willing to talk with Mr. Schmidt or anyone else from *Brill's Content* about Mr. Bloom's reporting and about whether Concord hosted a forum that day. Unfortunately, no one bothered to call in order to ensure the story had the proper "depth and context."

CRAIG CHESLOG  
Communications manager  
The Concord Coalition  
Washington, DC

**RS responds:** Mr. Cheslog is right. The Concord Coalition did not host a forum on November 3.

(continued on page 124)



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# REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

■ BY BILL KOVACH

**O**F SINS AND SINNERS—Getting through the background for this piece may be complicated, but I hope you'll stick with me, because there's an important issue under examination here. It's all about opinion and fact. It's about the difference between the journalism of assertion and the journalism of verification. And it's about how this or any other publication needs to be clear about which is which, and the damage that can be done when that difference is not clear.

It all began with an article called "Sins of Omission" by Jeff Pooley that appeared in "The Notebook" section of this magazine's December/January issue. Pooley wrote that "selective disclosure" in the identification of the authors of op-ed articles on newspaper opinion pages doesn't "always tell the whole story." Often, Pooley noted, the information left out might shed light on the author's vested interest in the subject being written about.

In response to Pooley's article, a letter was printed in the March issue. The writer, Candace Crandall, agreed with "The Notebook" item and added, "But it gets worse when you consider the number of op-eds ghostwritten by third parties."

As an example, she cited an article that had been submitted to *The Boston Globe*, which did not run it, and the *International Herald Tribune*, which published the article under the joint byline of George Woodwell of the Woods Hole Research Center and John Holdren, a Harvard professor. Ms. Crandall noted that an organization called Ozone Action submitted the article to the *Tribune* and offered her opinion that *it*, not Woodwell and Holdren, was the probable author of the article. Ozone Action is a Washington-based environmental group concerned with the depletion of the earth's ozone layer and global warming.

"The published *Tribune* version," Ms. Crandall wrote, "made no mention of Ozone Action. That the op-ed was being submitted (and likely drafted) by a third party was known to the op-ed editor. Readers should have been told or the op-ed should have been rejected."

The letter was signed: Candace Crandall, Policy Research Associate, The Science & Environmental Policy Project.

As if to reinforce the point made originally by Jeff Pooley

---

*Bill Kovach, curator of Harvard's Nieman Foundation for Journalism, was formerly editor of the Atlanta Journal and Constitution and a New York Times editor.*

in "Sins of Omission," *Brill's Content* chose to publish neither her title nor the name of her organization, which is skeptical about ozone-depletion and global-warming claims, when it printed her letter.

Because that letter contained statements purporting to be facts (that the *Globe* did not publish the article, that the *Tribune* did, that Ozone Action had forwarded the article to the newspapers, for example) a fact checker was assigned by *Brill's Content* to look into the matter. The following editor's note reported on that process:

"We checked out the above claim. It's true. The *Globe* rejected the piece and the *Tribune* ran it, without mentioning Ozone Action."

All this has now prompted two lengthy letters of complaint. The first came from Michael Getler, the *International Herald Tribune's* executive editor, who registered his concern about both Ms. Crandall's letter and the editor's note that implicitly endorsed her claim. Mr. Getler included in his letter a memo from Robert Marino, the *Tribune* editor who handled the op-ed piece in question, in

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which Mr. Marino says of the claim that a third party or Ozone Action had a hand in writing the article in question: "Neither implication has any basis in truth." (Further complicating this is Ozone Action's acknowledgement in its own letter that the group helped Woodwell with research for the op-ed.)

"Mr. Woodwell, director of the Woods Hole Research Center, originally wrote the piece himself and submitted it to *The Boston Globe*, which, he says, suggested he broaden the representation," wrote Mr. Getler. "He called on Mr. Holdren, a Harvard professor, to join him. Mr. Holdren had suggestions for changes, which Mr. Woodwell accepted. The version they worked on together was submitted to the *IHT* by Ozone Action."

The second letter of complaint came from John Passacantando, Ozone Action's executive director. It makes the same point.

"Given the magazine's commitment to raising journalism to a higher plane, I am disappointed that the magazine chose to publish the letter with an additional claim that the facts in the letter are true in an editor's note," he writes. "Had the magazine bothered to call Ozone Action, the *International Herald Tribune*, or either of the two renowned scientists impugned in Ms. Crandall's letter, her claims would have been proven false."

I told you this was going to be complicated, didn't I? But I also said it's important—because each issue of *Brill's Content* reminds readers that the magazine's "first principle is that anything that purports to be nonfiction should be true. Which means it should be accurate in fact and in context."

This becomes a special problem for the opinion pages of newspapers and magazines. These pages are designed as forums for debate. Readers are invited to express their opinions on current issues. Deciding which part of the material on the opinion pages is fact and which part is opinion becomes more complex. Assertions of opinion are often mixed with verified facts in the hope they will be more believable.

It was this confusion of a letter writer's opinion with verifiable fact that led *Brill's Content* to question the integrity of two organizations and two people.

Ed Shanahan, who handles letters to the editor for *Brill's Content*, says that letters published in the magazine "are fact checked the same way other articles are. We seek corroboration of every statement of fact made in a letter." But letters are not edited the same way articles are (in the spirit of preserving the letter writer's voice).

In this case, the magazine did check the facts in Ms. Crandall's letter. But it did not check Ms. Crandall's assertions of opinion—that Ozone Action or someone other than the listed authors actually wrote the piece. When I talked to her, Ms. Crandall furnished me, by e-mail, a list of reasons she suspected the pieces had been written by someone other than the stated authors, but the list was one of coincidences and not evidence to substantiate her claim that the article was "likely" written "by a third party."

So, when the editor's note said, "It's true," it was talking only about the facts contained in the letter. The magazine had no way of knowing if the op-ed piece was "likely drafted" by a third party and that the op-ed editor knew it. Those opinions fell outside the fact-checking net. Dr. Woodwell, Dr. Holdren, and Ozone Action were not called by the fact checker.

I had conversations with both Dr. Woodwell and Dr. Holdren, who assured me they had jointly written the letter that appeared in the *Tribune*. Dr. Holdren added, "We have such strong and often stated positions on these issues that people who know us could tell which paragraph I wrote and which he wrote."

They also said that they had used Ozone Action, with whom they have worked frequently on global warming issues, to place articles in newspapers which had carried an earlier article they wanted to dispute.

"We used Ozone Action to distribute the article," Dr. Woodwell said, "because that's what they do, among other things."

It seems clear to me from talking to all the parties that the editor's note was mistaken when it made no distinction between the letter's assertions of opinion and its statements of fact and lent the authority of *Brill's Content* to both. In so doing, it declared something to be true which it did not know to be true.

The note, in effect, introduced a confusion of fact and unverified opinion into a public debate. Debate that mixes unverified opinion with fact can lead to false conclusions. No community is made better by such a process. The discipline of journalism was created to try to avoid this outcome and it is important that a clear distinction be maintained between journalism of assertion and journalism of verification.

As Walter Lippmann declared 80 years ago, the public's dependence on accurate information in public debate is profound. "Public as well as private reason depends on it," Lippman wrote. "Not what somebody says, not what somebody wishes were true, but what is so, beyond all our opinion, constitutes the touchstone of our sanity."

In what may be an ironic indication of how much trust at least some members of the public still invest in what they read, both the editors at the *Tribune* and the director of Ozone Action assumed it was Ms. Crandall (who was entirely open about her affiliation in her letter), and not *Brill's Content*, who chose not to disclose that. That "sin of omission" was committed to conserve space in the letters section.

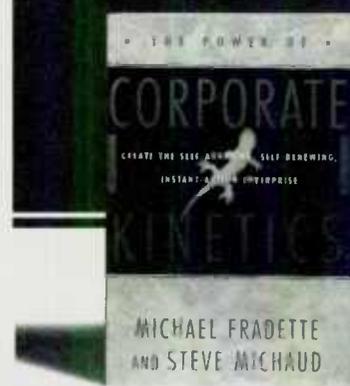
**Editor in chief Steven Brill responds:** Bill Kovach is exactly right. First, if we were going to publish the claim that the article was ghostwritten, we should have called those involved for comments and reported their comments in what we published. Second, the statement "It's true" was far too broad. In short, all involved—especially me, because I edit the letters page and was the one who decided that we should fact check what we did fact check but neglected to have us get comment from all involved—violated our own guidelines. ■

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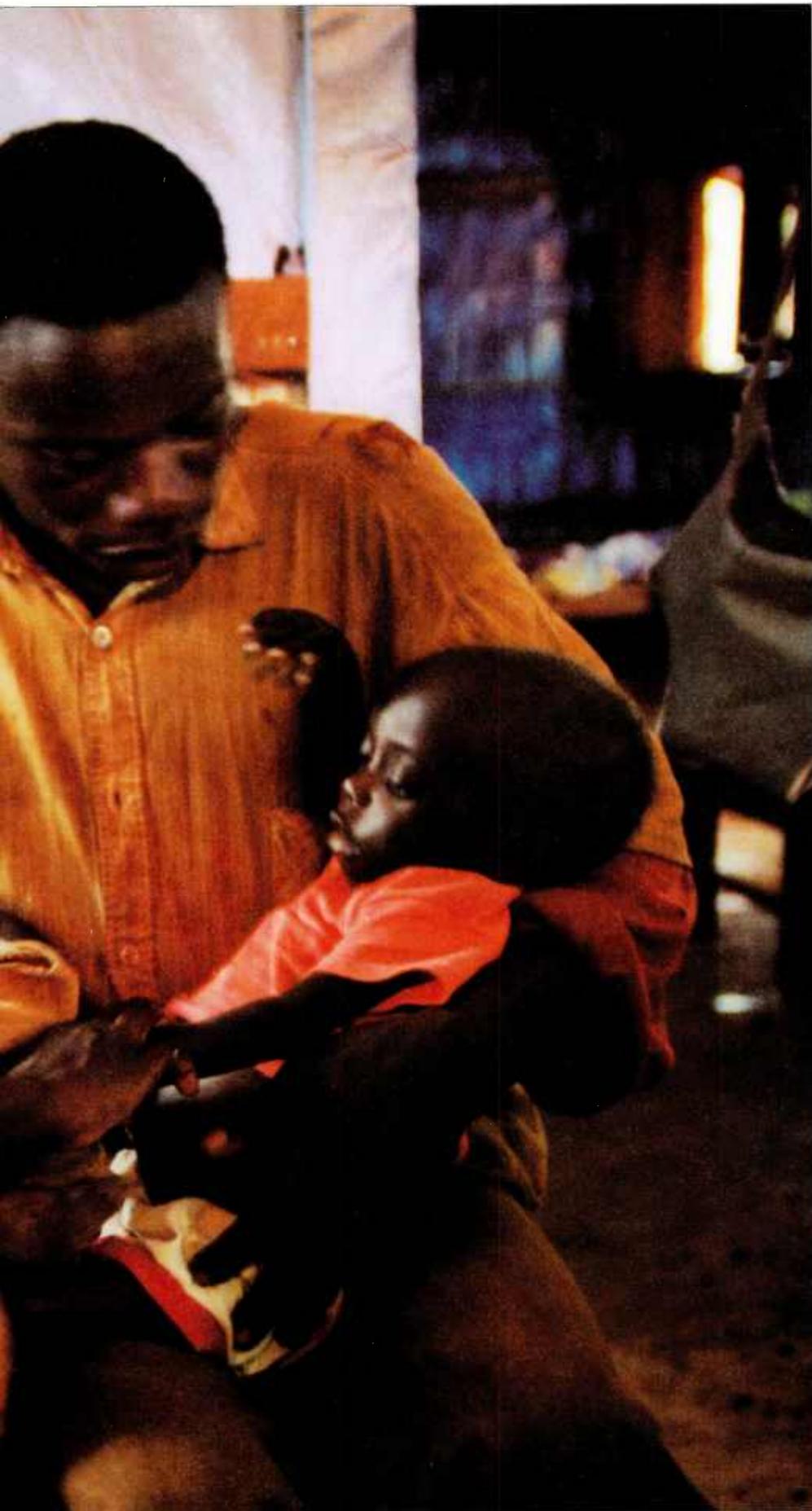
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PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTHA RIAL/PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE



## how they got that SHOT

WE SEE A TENDER MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF AN AFRICAN family, our eyes drawn by the glow of their skin and their richly colored clothing. What is not obvious in this photograph is that the little boy has just been adopted by a Hutu couple after his mother had either died or abandoned him, and that all are victims in the long-raging conflict between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi.

It is also not obvious that this one-year-old child is sick and that only a week before this photo was taken he could not hold up his head due to malnourishment. This Burundian Hutu couple fed him and nursed him. Here they are seen bathing him at the Mtendeli Refugee Camp near Kibondo, Tanzania. "I went to visit them every day in the tent," says photographer Martha Rial. "The little boy couldn't sit up and couldn't open his eyes at first, but by the end of the week, he was sitting up, his eyes were alert.... We couldn't talk with each other because they spoke a dialect, Kirundi, but we had gotten to know each other through my daily visits."

We are accustomed to images of atrocities from the Hutu-Tutsi war, but Rial, 37, wanted to depict the tragedy of ethnic conflict by concentrating on life-affirming moments. As a staff photographer for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, she had never photographed an international story before she proposed a photo journal about the refugees in Tanzania and Burundi—an idea she got after phone conversations with her sister, Amy, who was then a public-health nurse with the International Rescue Committee stationed near Mtendeli. It is unusual for a daily newspaper to invest many resources outside its local area unless there's a local angle to the story, but the *Post-Gazette* decided to send Rial because of her passion, her clear plan, and the editors' hunch that she had a great story. "I saw someone with zeal and a spirit of entrepreneurship," says Thomas O'Boyle, an editor at the paper.

Rial traveled to the Tanzania-Burundi border, joined her sister, and photographed refugee camps for three weeks, taking 1,800 shots, of which 43 were chosen for a special 12-page section called "Trek of Tears," published in January 1997. Her series won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for spot-news photography.

—Miriam Hsia

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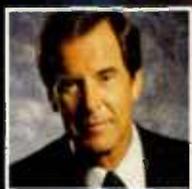
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# Car-accident journalism....What's wrong with this *Wall Street Journal* story?....NBC's Juanita Broaddrick interview taught us a lot—about the press....

## WATCHING A CAR ACCIDENT:

We all know that we shouldn't rubberneck at car accidents, but we do. We want to look away, but we can't. We feel bad, sometimes even physically sick, if the scene is too grotesque. But we find ourselves stealing a glimpse anyway.

So it was with the Barbara Walters-Monica Lewinsky interview. Fascinating? At times, yes. Something we should feel good about watching? Probably not. Two hours that a news organization should feel good about orchestrating? No way.

At a press conference held to hype the interview the week before, ABC News president David Westin declared that after viewing a tape, he found it "frankly, to me, so educational" that he decided "the only way to do it justice" was to turn it into a two-hour special. He didn't mention that making it into a special allowed ABC to turn away the advertisers that had reserved spots for that night's regular *20/20* at standard rates and sign up new advertisers at premium rates that gave the network \$15 million to \$20 million in extra revenue.

What was "educational" about Lewinsky's answers to questions such as what the president might have said to the intern about the state of his marriage? Or Lewinsky's explanation of phone sex, or her take on what kind of kisser our president is? Westin didn't answer a fax asking him to outline the "educational" value of his bonanza.

Westin is an affable, smart man who came up through ABC as the lawyer who vetted the network's gutsier news reports. Just two years ago he was rightly upset when the gossip press probed his affair with an employee and the breakup of his and his girlfriend's marriages. To watch him now stoop to calling this "educational" is like watching one of those car wrecks. Fascinating, but sad and even embarrassing.

It's time we called stuff like the Lewinsky interview what it is: car-accident journalism. Car-accident journalism is the three-card monte of journalism—material whose only justification is the purely economic one that people will look if it's flashed in front of them.

## MINOR DETAILS:

A March 3 *Wall Street Journal* story on the front page of its "Marketplace" section read like a parody of the Internet craze that has mesmerized much of the financial community, including the press. The long profile of an Internet service



Barbara Walters' interview with Monica Lewinsky was fascinating at times, but was it "educational"?

provider called MindSpring Enterprises, Inc., chronicled the company's "growing pains," the rise of its entrepreneur founder to the point where his stock is now worth about \$200 million, and how its once-intimate staff meetings had become satellite-beamed teleconferences from three locations.

All great stuff. But as this was *The Wall Street Journal* and this was an article about how the company was doing as a business, I also looked for something else—a hint about whether the company has ever made a nickel, or even whether its profits (or losses) were growing.

Asked why her piece hadn't included anything about profits or the lack thereof, *Journal* staff reporter Andrea Petersen said she'd have to call me back "in a few minutes." She never did, and *Journal* managing editor Paul Steiger said he had no comment when asked the same question.

I'll bet you were assuming, as I was, that this was another of those fabulous Internet companies with no profit and little prospect of any. In fact, MindSpring recently recorded its first profitable year ever, earning about \$9 million. Breaking into the black used to be worth noting in a business profile in a business newspaper.

## THE BROADDRICK SCOOP:

When NBC's Lisa Myers completed her Bill Clinton-raped-me interview with Juanita Broaddrick, there was strong disagreement at NBC over how quickly or if at all the story

should be televised. Myers, ultimately backed by Washington bureau chief Tim Russert, wanted to allow the White House only a few days to comment. *Nightly News* anchor Tom Brokaw and *Dateline NBC* executive producer Neal Shapiro were on the other side; Brokaw questioned whether it should run at all, and Shapiro, among others, wanted to make sure it didn't run without an attempt to corroborate every possible alleged detail independently, even if it took several weeks.

If you think any of this is evidence of something rotten at NBC, think again. This is the way the editorial process is supposed to work. Smart people engaged in a creative enterprise, governed by real but subjective ethical and professional standards, are supposed to disagree. Indeed, one would hope that they feel passionately about what they're debating. And it's utterly normal for the reporter who has done the story to be the one who's most anxious to get it out quickly and the one with the least perspective about the need to check it some more. That's what editors are for.

In fact, once one acknowledges the ultimate futility of trying to decide the "Is it true?" dilemma of the Juanita Broaddrick story, what becomes most interesting about it is the way much of the press handled NBC's handling of it.

Spurred initially, I guess, by feverish dispatches from Matt Drudge, several news outlets speculated that NBC had iced Myers's story. (Fox News anchor Brit Hume actually sported a "Free Lisa Myers" button on his lapel on the air.)

In fact, according to three senior NBC news executives, what the network was doing from January 20, when Myers nailed the interview (after having tried for months to get it), until February 24, when it aired the story on *Dateline*, was what any news organization should have done: the grunt work of trying to check it all out.

"We had people burrowing through hotel basements in Little Rock for two and a half weeks looking through old records to find when the seminar [that Broaddrick supposedly attended on the day of her alleged encounter with then-Arkansas attorney general Clinton] might have taken place," says an NBC producer. "That's how we got the date...When we realized that

she had received credit for going to the seminar but also that she now told us that she'd left the seminar that morning after the rape, we had to spend time figuring out why she still got the credit. [The answer: Credit was given when an attendee signed in the night before.] We spent days going through the basement of the [Little Rock NBC] affiliate, to find [news] tapes [from the time in question] to see if maybe Clinton was giving a speech somewhere when she said he had been in that room. We went through the morgues of local newspapers....Every single day we were doing something impor-

tant...And, we were also waiting on the White House for something about his schedule [on the day of the alleged rape] and about Broaddrick. For a while we had reason to believe they were going to give us something, so we waited. We were worried that we'd go on the air and *then* they'd release his schedule and he'd have been playing golf on Borneo that day....You don't just put someone on the air accusing the president of rape and then worry about that stuff."

This seems logical enough, especially coming from the network and the program that were hurt so badly by the story about a burning General Motors truck that hadn't really ignited on its own. Yet, we can't know for sure what was in NBC News president Andrew Lack's mind when he decided to run the story when he did. So it's easy not to believe him and all those who work for him who say they did it on the merits, and instead to spin out more cynical theories, such as



Fox News anchor Brit Hume egged on NBC by sporting a "Free Lisa Myers" button.



Juanita Broaddrick's charges against President Clinton were aired after a heated—and appropriate—debate within NBC.

that NBC did not want to queer the impeachment vote, or that NBC, mindful of the need to curry favor with the White House for parent company General Electric, never intended to run the story until publication of much the same charges in *The Washington Post* and on the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal* embarrassed them into doing so. (My theory wouldn't be that Lack

delayed it to help the president, but that he was comfortable delaying it because he thought that the story would provide a great way to bring the ratings of sister channel MSNBC back to Lewinsky-impeachment levels a few weeks after the impeachment vote. He could run it on NBC's *Dateline* and then exploit it all day and night on the now-scandal-starved cable channel. Put differently, why waste this story by burying it amid the impeachment-vote headlines?)

As with Broaddrick's charges themselves, none of these theories is provable—or provably false. But the wide circu-

lation that most of them (though not mine) received says two things about the state of the press.

First, there's the fact that a story that seems from all objective evidence to have been delayed for the right reasons—there *were* real NBC reporters in Little Rock doing *real* work during those four weeks, and the resulting details in the *Dateline* broadcast *did* reflect that work—is nonetheless suspected of being held for the wrong reasons. This suggests that it's getting harder to believe that a major news organization would ever do the right thing.

Second, this poisoned credibility leaves news organizations in an impossible position, especially at a time when stories about stories that other news entities are working on are becoming so common. The news organization with the scoop is rightly criticized if it rushes into print or on air without checking; but because its ethics and motives have become so suspect, it's also knocked if it waits and does the soul-searching and the checking that it should do.

Beyond that, there are other curiosities associated with the Broaddrick story worth noting.

**•We seem to have become dependent on legal proceedings and investigations to legitimize a scandal-news story.** Much of the debate about NBC's airing of the Broaddrick story focused on the fact that with the statute of limitations on rape having passed and the impeachment trial over, there was nothing "official" that could now happen; therefore, this wasn't a story. This mind-set of using the prospect of official proceedings as a crutch probably flows from the way too many journalists have come to view investigative reporting as reporting leaks from investigations. Or it could be that journalists are merely expressing their frustration that now that the Lewinsky story is petering out, there is little that they can do to keep it (and its ratings potential) alive because there isn't any prospect of an "official" follow-up.

But the goal of journalism should be to tell people interesting things that they ought to know without worrying about how the government in whatever capacity (senators, state prosecutors, etc.) might react. In a democracy, information is good for its own reasons, not because it will always spur a legal proceeding. And if someone makes a credible charge that our president is or was a rapist, that meets the test. Knowing about this might cause people to think differently (maybe rightly, maybe wrongly) about how they judge candidates running for office, about rape laws and statutes of limitations, about their president, or about the impeachment process. I don't think I'd have run the piece, because I don't think Broaddrick is credible enough, but I think it's a close call, and the fact that no legal proceeding would clearly flow from the story shouldn't affect that decision.

**•The increasingly common phenomenon of publishing a story about someone else's story presents its own problems.** I'd be the last to argue that a news organization's decisions about whether to publish hot, tough stories aren't news. But the way *The New York Times* went about it—in a well-done piece by Felicity Barringer and David Firestone published on the morning that the NBC telecast was to air and just after the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* articles ran—raises new questions. The *Times* presumably didn't think the Broaddrick story was fully

credible or newsworthy in a major way; it *never* ran a straight story detailing her allegations. But it *did* have to describe the allegations in detail to make its story about the press coverage of Broaddrick make any sense. Standing by its apparent news judgment by not spelling out Broaddrick's charges would have made its story maddeningly elliptical and *even* farcical, given that its readers would get the details from other sources. Not running the story at all would have ignored a major news event and policy issue in its own right—the NBC, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* decisions to publish.

"We all pretty much came to the decision that there was enough there on the record to justify something in the newspaper," says *Times* Washington bureau chief Michael Oreskes. "There was debate over just how much, but once we decided to do it, we decided that we had to do our own reporting [including a Broaddrick interview]....Just reporting the allegations because it's a media story isn't enough to justify it," he adds. "If you think there is no legitimate story, then you should stick to your guns....I personally believe that the phrase 'it's out there' to justify reporting something that you wouldn't report but that others are reporting is the worst phrase that has ever entered the journalistic lexicon. It should be banned."

**•Most of the press missed the most obvious reason the president would have remained silent about the Broaddrick charges even if he is innocent, and in the process, missed making an important, larger point.**

Remember the Supreme Court's decision in the Paula Jones case, that a sitting president could be sued in a civil action? Well, the only thing that could make Broaddrick's old charges part of a new legal fight would be for the president to respond by saying she's not telling the truth, whereupon she could sue him for libel, whereupon he'd have to undergo a deposition. Then he could be asked anything about his sex life and how he has responded in the past to allegations about sexual misconduct. Ken Starr would presumably be waiting outside for a transcript so he could convene a grand jury. And all of the legal work involved would be at the president's expense.

That has to be why the president—who has shown little compunction about denying sex charges against him, even if they are true—has only had his lawyer say, in his lawyer's name, that any allegation that Mr. Clinton assaulted Broaddrick is false.

Pointing this out would not only have been fairer to the president, but it also would have made clear the absurdity of the high court's decision, in that it opens the way for any and all litigation against a sitting president and leaves him at great risk in denying even charges that are decades old. ■

NBC displayed this old photo of Bill Clinton and Juanita Broaddrick in a nursing home in Van Buren, Arkansas.



# the notebook

## KEEPING DINNER DOWN

The White House Correspondents' Association tries to shake its bad image.

**T**HE WHITE HOUSE Correspondents' Association is famous for exactly one thing: the annual black-tie dinner where Hollywood celebrities, politicians, and reporters gather for a boozy, C-SPAN-retevised gala, ostensibly to honor the president. The event takes place this year on Saturday, May 1. "If you ask me what they do, I'd tell you they throw a big, flashy dinner every year, and beyond that I'm hard-pressed to name any other function they have," says one long-time Washington journalist.

That image is hard to shake, admits WHCA president Stewart Powell, the White House correspondent for Hearst Newspapers. But Powell says that the association, which he oversees along with an elected board of directors, has been trying to become more than a dinner committee. These days it puts much of its energy into trying to keep the White

House press corps' travel costs in line. Powell has also weighed in on press-access issues at the White House. The association's goal, he says, is to involve reporters and their bureau chiefs in decisions that the White House used to make without much input from the press corps.

But as the group works to broaden its mission, some prominent journalists—and even some White House correspondents—are saying the dinner itself has become a problem, a crass celebrity pageant where the main mission (honoring the president) has been lost in the revelry.

The association has about 245 members, but the dinner draws 2,700 attendees. Thus, more than 90 percent of those at the dinner are guests of news organizations. Traditionally, these guests have been mainly pundits, government officials, and favored sources of the

reporters, but in recent years news organizations have tried to outdo one another by inviting celebrity guests, no matter how tenuous their link to Washington journalism. (In 1997, for example, *Vanity Fair* famously hosted Ellen DeGeneres and Anne Heche.) Media companies have also started inviting big advertisers, who are dazzled by rubbing shoulders with high-voltage celebs.

Last year, the conservative magazine *Insight* invited Paula Jones, the woman who had accused President Clinton of sexual harassment. Her presence at a party honoring the president created a sensation and did not go over well with much of the White House press corps. "I think the dinner has become a bacchanalia and an embarrassment to the profession," says *New York Times* Washington bureau chief Michael Oreskes. "I was appalled by last year's dinner."

Oreskes wants to tone down the event. In a letter to Powell last year, Oreskes urged the association to make the event a midweek lunch and to invite fewer people. "I think it's very impor-

tant that we pay a lot of attention to the image we project of the profession, and right now our credibility is very much on the line," he says. "I don't think we want to send out over C-SPAN...the message that we spend our time in Washington yakking it up and partying with sources and quasi-sources with all kind of political agendas."

Powell says that the association is taking steps to reduce the "frenzy," but warns that it cannot vet news organizations' guests. "I'm trying to do the best that I can...without stealing the fun," he says. In past years, comedians have entertained the guests. This year, Aretha Franklin will sing at the dinner and MSNBC anchor

### SOME JOURNALISTS SAY THE DINNER HAS BECOME A CRASS CELEBRITY PAGEANT.

Brian Williams, a former White House correspondent known for his easy wit, will make the traditional presentation of awards to reporters and scholarships to low-income students.

Much of the association's annual budget comes from the dinner. In fiscal 1997, the most recent year for which figures are available, the group grossed \$325,250 from dinner tickets. After party costs of \$247,420, the group earned \$77,830. Membership dues, which are \$25 per person, brought in only \$8,375 in 1997.

The association uses the money to pay its office rent and the salary of one part-time staffer, Powell says. (In 1997, the group's total non-dinner expenses were about \$32,000.) The money also pays for the scholarships and journalism awards. In 1997, the association gave one college-bound high schooler a \$2,000 scholarship and awarded \$2,000 in prize money to three White House reporters. Last year, Powell says, the group gave out \$6,000 in scholarship money. In other words, about 2 percent of the proceeds from the \$125-a-plate dinner ended up in the scholarship fund. —Robert Schmidt



President Clinton with comedian Al Franken at last year's dinner.

JOE MARQUETTE/AP-WIDEWORLD

## Charlie Rose *Interrupt-O-Meter*

FORTHE LAST THREE MONTHS, we've presented the "Charlie Rose Talk Meter," which measured how much the late-night host talks compared to his guests. (We found that he held forth for between 21 and 23 percent of each show.) But that measure doesn't give the full flavor of a Charlie Rose interview. This month we took a different approach and tracked how often he interrupted his guests' responses during five installments of his show. (The gap in dates is due to a pledge drive on New York's WNET, which bumped the show.) The interruption quotient peaked on March 2, when Rose's guests were the hosts from ABC's *The View* and former basketball coach John Thompson. He was most restrained on February 26, when his discussions focused on accused terrorist Osama bin Laden and architecture. —Matthew Reed Baker

Feb. 26

23 interruptions

March 2

74

March 3

60

March 4

62

March 11

57

# Amazon Obsession: How'm I Doing?

IT'S VERY MUCH LIKE PEOPLE WHO have a stock ticker on their desk," says one author. "It's like a dieter who needs to check the scale hourly," says another. Yet another calls it "that fix."

They're all referring to a little feature found on Amazon.com: hourly updates of the online bookseller's sales rankings.

Amazon.com spokesman Bill Curry says that the online bookstore added the updates last July to help its users make buying decisions. One side effect is that many authors and editors check their books' standings several times a day. "It has given them a point of focus that has become semi-intense," says a publicist for Scribner Books. Curry believes the publishing world pays attention to the hourly updates because "we give a real perspective on how things are selling in real time—not two weeks later." (The figures are based on sales over the previous 24 hours.) With bookstores, publishers only know how much inventory they've sent; they don't know how much of that inventory will be returned weeks later.

Brian Greene, author of *The Elegant Universe*, which hit number one on the Amazon.com best-seller list in the United States in February and in the United Kingdom in March, says that his checking "goes in spurts. I try not to, but it's sometimes difficult not to take a quick peek." He adds, "Certainly I try never to check more

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Amazon.com Sales Rank: 2,146  
Avg. Customer Review: ★★★★★  
Number of Reviews: 3

Amazon.com Sales Rank: 2,146

James Shapiro ★★★★★

than once in an hour, but every few hours it sort of strikes you as, 'Hmmm, I wonder what's happening on Amazon.'" While he says he's checked the rankings as often as seven times in one day, Greene also realizes that the ranking has to be taken with a grain of salt: "There are times when you just have to say to yourself, 'There's really no point in checking. What's happened in the last hour is not really what this is about,' and just waiting until the next day or the day after just to get a more overall sense of how things are going" is important.

Bruce Judson, author of *HyperWars*, says he finds the Amazon updates helpful in gauging how his press and public appearances affect his book's sales. For example, he explains, when he appeared on CNBC's *Power*

*Lunch* on February 1, his book was ranked slightly above 1,000. A half hour after his 1:30 P.M. appearance, he says, the rank had jumped to 400. By 11:00 P.M., "it hit one hundred, which is the magic number," Judson says. The next morning it peaked at 85. After *The New York Times* quoted him extensively in its lead business-page article on February 21, twice noting that he was the author of *HyperWars*, Judson saw his sales ranking shoot from the 1,000s to the 200s in two days. A two-day stint on Amazon's "What We're Reading" in business pushed the book from the 700s to 122.

In some cases, the situation has gone too far. Jennifer Blustein, a publicist at *Harper's Magazine*, describes one author she knows who is obsessed with the hourly updates and even believes he knows precisely when they happen (at about 20 minutes past the hour). While she declined to identify him, she says that whenever she receives e-mail from him, there is a note at the end: "PS, I'm number X." One day, after already hearing about his ranking three times, Blustein received a frenzied call from him saying, "Can you check? Can you go to Amazon and check?" Blustein replied, "Didn't I just talk to you two hours ago?" His reply: "But I can't get to my computer. I'm in the car." Clearly, she says, "this ranking at least for this person has outgrown its usefulness." —Leslie Heilbrunn

## Pundit Scorecard: **BELTWAY BOYS AND A BIG BONANZA**

THE RESOLUTION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL impeachment drama meant that the accuracy of a raft of pundit predictions—some unresolved for months as the process dragged along—could finally be gauged. For most of the TV soothsayers in our continuing survey, it turned out to be a bonanza. All but one improved their percentages, achieving a level of wisdom that makes them slightly more accurate than a coin toss. Of course, many of them benefit from some easy calls: Out of an excess of generosity, perhaps, we gave them credit for such obvious predictions as President Clinton's acquittal. Even Sam Donaldson (eventually) got that one right.

A few, such as George Will, never hazarded a guess on the subject. Coincidentally, Will continues to occupy the cellar, just below John McLaughlin, even though Will was able to lift his average above his previous .111.

We have added entries for two former McLaughlin confrères, Morton Kondracke and Fred Barnes, who now make their home at Fox News Channel as *The Beltway Boys*. (In a number of cases, the two jointly made predictions; we've given each credit for those.)

As we've done in previous rounds, we've tabulated each pundit's predictions between August 1 and (as of this version) February 1 and then verified the outcomes. We intentionally did not include their most recent calls in order to leave time for them to come true. At right, we offer updated pundit standings.

With the prediction season for the 2000 presidential election just getting under way, will the pundits remember their disastrous showing in the 1998 Congressional elections and be more circumspect? A *Brill's Content* prediction: Don't bet on it.—*Bridget Samburg*



**Morton Kondracke**

Switch-hitter  
Average: .492 (32 of 65)

Executive editor, *Roll Call*

### HOME RUN

Predicts (November 7) Rep. Richard Gephardt will seek House Speakership rather than presidency.

### STRIKEOUT

Says a drop in retirement-account earnings will hurt President Clinton's approval ratings (October 10). Not only did it not dent the ratings, the stock market quickly rebounded, making both the premise and conclusion wrong. Extra citation for most mealy-mouthed call: In the midst of Clinton's trial (January 16), Kondracke says the president "could" be removed from office. No kidding.



**Fred Barnes**

Bats right  
Average: .438 (32 of 73)

Executive editor, *The Weekly Standard*

### HOME RUN

Foresees (October 10) that Reps. Lindsey Graham, Asa Hutchinson, and Henry Hyde will be the GOP's "new face" in the impeachment saga.

### STRIKEOUT

Grows ever more convinced that the president would leave office, calling it 25-30 percent certain (August 22), then raising that to a 60 percent certainty a month later. By December 19 Barnes drops all doubt: "[Y]ou're going to see exactly what the president vowed he would never do—and that is resign." Turns out that's one promise Clinton kept.

## Pundit standings after six months:

- Margaret Carlson, CG (21 for 33) .636
- Tony Blankley, MG (31 of 50) .620
- Patrick Buchanan, MG (36 of 60) .600
- Al Hunt, CG (31 for 52) .596
- Eleanor Clift, MG (36 of 62) .581
- William Kristol, TW (32 for 56) .571
- Sam Donaldson, TW (13 for 23) .565
- Michael Barone, MG (22 of 39) .564
- Robert Novak, CG (31 for 56) .554
- Cokie Roberts, TW (12 for 22) .545
- Mark Shields, CG (12 for 22) .545
- George Stephanopoulos, TW (29 for 58) .500
- Morton Kondracke, BB (32 of 65) .492
- Kate O'Beirne, CG (13 for 27) .481
- Fred Barnes, BB (32 for 73) .438
- John McLaughlin, MG (22 of 53) .415
- George Will, TW (7 for 18) .388

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

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## MAKING SENSE OF THE POLLS

The Wall Street Journal should be more careful before calling for a polling critic. ● BY WARREN J. MITOFSKY

**A** WALL STREET JOURNAL editorial on March 3, 1999, called for a polling critic to make sense of contradictory polls on the credibility of Juanita Broaddrick's sexual-assault charge against President Clinton. The editorial writer, who was apparently still smarting over the public's strong approval of the president's job performance during Monicagate, branded opinion polls "the 800-pound gorilla." In fact what may be needed more than a polling critic is a critique of the *Journal's* editorial page.

Broaddrick claimed Clinton "sexually assaulted" her 21 years ago. In a CNN/Gallup/USA Today poll 54 percent of the respondents said the allegations were not true; only 34 percent said they were true. Meanwhile, in a Fox News/Opinion Dynamics poll, the numbers were the other way around—54 percent of those polled said the allegations were true and 23 percent said they were not. The *Journal* blamed the difference in the results on differences in the way the polls' questions were worded. CNN used the word *rape* in its question, while Fox referred to the alleged incident as *sexual assault*. The editorial pinpointed these words as the cause of the different results. It also claimed that "Mrs. Broaddrick has never used the word *rape* and prefers to call it a *sexual assault*...."

The problem is that the *Journal* didn't tell its readers two crucial facts. First, pollsters for Fox started interviewing prior to the broadcast of *Dateline NBC's* interview with Broaddrick. Up to that time she had not used the word *rape* to describe the

Warren J. Mitofsky, an independent pollster, was a director of the CBS News/New York Times Poll and is an election consultant to CNN and CBS.

### REVIEW & OUTLOOK

#### The Broaddrick Polls

A friend called recently to say she had an idea for a bumper sticker: "Nobody Polled Me!" It is likely that opinion polls have never confused more people, or had more power. Some commentators, for instance, have taken Mr. Clinton's immovably high job-approval ratings as proof the nation has gone round some moral bend. Now come the results of the early Juanita Broaddrick polls.

The CNN/Gallup poll released on Monday said that by 54% to 34% the public was inclined to believe Presi-

drick by a margin of 54% to 23%. When only those with knowledge of the allegations were surveyed (again 56% of the sample), the margin was 62% to 20% for Juanita. Why the difference?

As many by now suspect, the way the questions are worded matters. The CNN poll asked people if they believed Mrs. Broaddrick, who "recently stated that Clinton raped her in 1978." But Mrs. Broaddrick has never used the word "rape," and prefers to call it "a sexual assault," which is the wording the Fox News poll used.

A distinction without a difference in normal conversation, perhaps, but not in polling. "Words such as 'rape,' 'investigation' and even 'media' are highly charged words in polls, and it's no surprise some people recoil when they're associated with the President of the United States," says pollster Kellyanne Fitzpatrick, who was one of CNN's on-air commentators for this poll. A transcript of the show indicates CNN referred only to a "sexual assault" on air, but its survey asked people about "rape."

A third poll by Rasmussen Research surveyed only those people who had seen the NBC "Dateline" interview; it used no descriptive term. Mrs. Broaddrick's allegation. Rasmussen found that 57% of those who saw the "Dateline" interview believed her, while 25% did not.

As for President Clinton himself, that high job-approval number was

#### Who Do You Believe?

Do you think that Broaddrick's allegation (of rape) is true?

DEFINITELY/PROBABLY	34%
DEFINITELY NOT/PROBABLY NOT	54%
MARGIN OF ERROR	±3%

Those who've heard the allegations: (56% of sample)

DEFINITELY/PROBABLY	44%
DEFINITELY NOT/PROBABLY NOT	48%
MARGIN OF ERROR	±5%

Source: CNN/Gallup/USA Today, Feb. 26-28

Based on your knowledge of Bill Clinton, are the allegations (of sexual assault) more likely to be true or not true?

TRUE	54%
NOT TRUE	23%
MARGIN OF ERROR	±3%

Those who've heard the allegations: (56% of sample)

TRUE	62%
NOT TRUE	20%
MARGIN OF ERROR	±5%

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, Feb. 24-25

The *Journal's* poll editorial (top); Juanita Broaddrick during her *Dateline NBC* interview

incident, even though commentators had used it on air. The CNN poll followed the *Dateline* interview, during which the incident was repeatedly referred to as *rape*.

The terms *sexual assault* and *rape* were both used appropriately by Fox and CNN in their questions. Both were in public use. CNN's use of the word *rape* is not likely to have caused its poll results to differ from Fox's.

So, why the different results? It's simple and has to do with the second crucial omission. The *Journal* ignored a Fox set-up question in its poll that likely did cause the difference. Before asking for the respondents' judgments on the incident Fox asked the following:

"Last week *The Wall Street Journal* published 20-year-old sexual assault allegations by Juanita Broaddrick against Bill Clinton. Broaddrick says while forcing her to have sex, Clinton tore her pantyhose, held her down, and bit her lips. She also says that Clinton tried to apologize 13 years later, just before announcing his campaign for president. Have you heard about Broaddrick's allegations against Clinton?"

This was what likely influenced Fox's result. CNN's poll had a set-up question, but it wasn't as loaded, stating simply, "A woman from Arkansas named Juanita Broaddrick has recently stated that Bill Clinton raped her in 1978. Clinton has denied the allegation. Have you heard the news about this allegation before now, or not?"

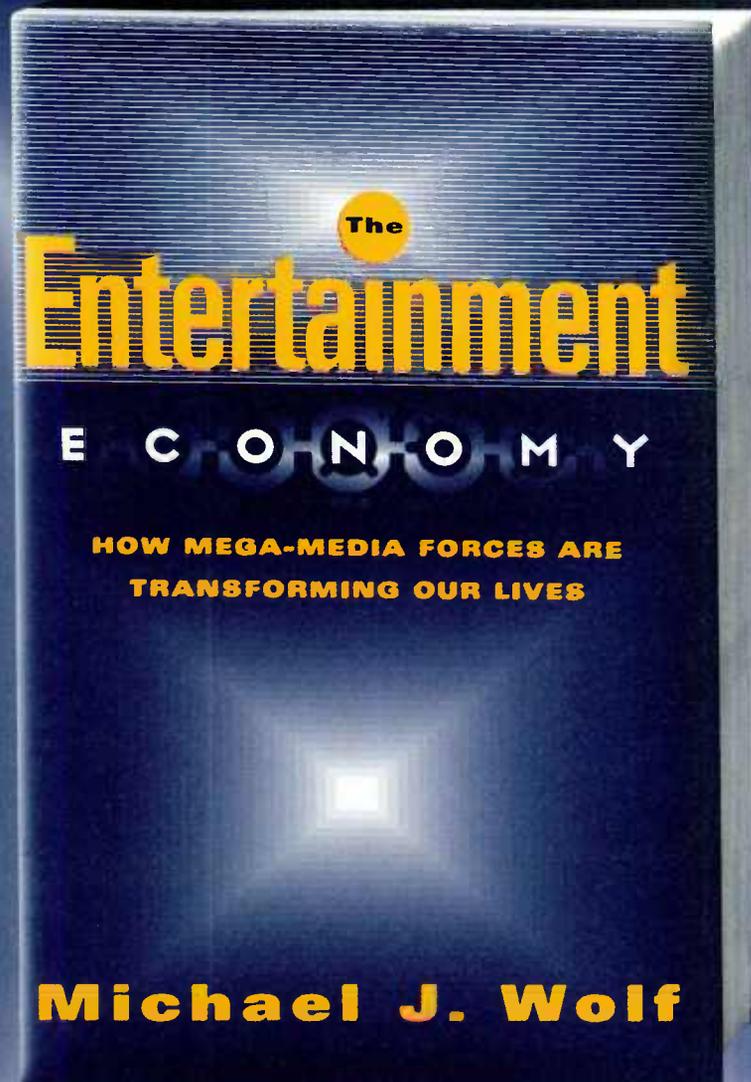
After the *Journal* editorial appeared, the paper conducted its own poll on the



subject. Its pollsters, Peter Hart and Robert Teeter, apparently did not read the editorial. They used the word *rape* in their question and found, like CNN, that 50 percent did not believe the allegation of rape. Unfortunately, the *Journal* did not print these results.

*Journal* editorial page editor Robert L. Bartley responded to a reporter's calls for comment with an invitation to write a letter to the editor.

Every business is show business.



In the tradition of *Future Shock* and *Being Digital*, *The Entertainment Economy* shatters conventional views of our culture and economy, revealing that words like "image" and "celebrity" aren't just for actors and rock stars anymore.

Michael J. Wolf shows how everything in our world—from the airlines we fly to the malls we visit—is being transformed by ideas that come from the entertainment world. Exposing how the principles of MTV are used by companies like McDonald's and Citibank, Wolf shows how in our media-saturated society, corporations don't just sell products—they vie for our attention.

 TIMES BUSINESS

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## IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM...

How the competition faced Barbara Walters' Monica Lewinsky interview

IT'S HARD TO COMPETE WITH oral sex. When Barbara Walters' golden "get"—the first TV interview with Monica Lewinsky—loomed on the prime-time schedule March 3, rival networks knew any attempt to beat the two-hour *20/20* special on ABC would be like crawling up a mudslide. They were dead, doomed, trounced, before even trying. The only question was how to counterprogram to lure those channel surfers maxed out on Monica.

CBS News took the high road, rerunning three classic *60 Minutes* segments on its progeny, *60 Minutes II*. "For those who tuned in, I think they got a strong broadcast," says Jeff Fager, *60 II*'s executive producer. But he admits it was basically a futile exercise. "One person asked me, 'So what kind of test pattern are you going to run tonight?'" laughs Fager, referring to the color bars that appear during an emergency test. "Someone else said it's like going up against the Super Bowl with a tennis match." (It's an apt analogy: ABC's numbers were second only to those of the Super Bowl, with an estimated 74 million tuning in.)

For the second hour, CBS reran an episode of *Touched by an Angel*. Nothing like a little religion to save America from thong underwear.

On CNN, Larry King's guest was radio relationship guru Dr. Laura Schlessinger. Other than using the word *penis*, she offered little comparable fizz. For instance, while Walters was asking Lewinsky, "What exactly is phone sex?" King was inquiring, "What is a psychotherapist?" Schlessinger says she didn't mind going up against Lewinsky, but, she says, "I went on with the agreement that I would not be asked about Monica. I have more to offer than that."

When in doubt, there are always sirens and mayhem. NBC grabbed a distant second place with *The World's Most*

*Amazing Videos: Footage of mishaps, natural phenomena and police encounters, followed by a Law & Order episode.*

MSNBC won the prize for clever surrender. After Brian Williams's regular news broadcast aired at 9 P.M. during Walters' first hour, talk-show anchor John Hockenberry came on at 10 P.M. with a surprise strategy: Instead of targeting the stalwart few who weren't watching Walters, MSNBC decided to woo the masses who were. Hockenberry didn't just acknowledge that most people were watching Monica, he encouraged it, urging viewers to offer their reaction during the show via calls and e-mail and then to watch him discuss their impressions with his panel during ABC's commercials. (During the ABC interview, he tried to be in commercial break, though at times he was on air discussing people's reactions to the interview.) "The purpose

### HOCKENBERRY DIDN'T JUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MOST PEOPLE WERE WATCHING MONICA, HE ENCOURAGED IT.

of this program tonight," Hockenberry announced, "is for you to react live to the Monica media circus.... We're claiming our own spot under the big top, right next to the center ring."

*Hockenberry's* executive producer, Phil Griffin, says the idea was hatched a week earlier. "We were sitting around knowing that nobody's going to watch us at ten o'clock that night," he says of himself and Hockenberry. "And then John said, 'Picture in picture!'"—referring to those TV sets that permit the viewing of two programs simultaneously. Their gambit—*watch us both*—defied the TV axiom never to mention the competition.

The show provided a helpful "Monica clock" in the lower right corner



John Hockenberry and his "Monica clock"

of the screen so viewers would know when the Lewinsky interview would resume. Alongside that was a nervy running estimate on how many millions ABC was raking in in advertising revenue, calculated at *Advertising Age's* projected rate of \$750,000 per 30-second commercial ("All right, the tally at this point, \$33.2 million..."). "We treated it like election night," says Griffin, who says it had the same energy and unpredictability of a live news event with a good-humored dose of "shrick."

What MSNBC lacked in ratings (*Hockenberry's* first hour earned a feeble .2, or 95,000 homes) it made up in buzz. "It did not exactly rock the cable world," admits Griffin, "but it got more attention than anything else we've done." Indeed, *Hockenberry* was singled out for its cheeky ingenuity by both *The New York Times* and ABC News itself on *Good Morning America* the next day.

As for other cable stations, Nickelodeon offered family values with *The Brady Bunch*, *The Wonder Years*, and *The Jeffersons*. Lifetime, on the other hand, embraced the night's theme, scheduling a movie called *My Neighbor's Daughter*, synopsised in newspaper listings as "A married banker has an affair with a teenage girl." Alas, Lewinsky has proven that racy dramas these days can't hold a candle to the truth.—Abigail Pogrebin

COURTESY OF MSNBC

## QUIZ

# Think Of **The Synergy!**

Can you match the parent company to its properties? Five of the conglomerates listed in the first column own some or all of one property listed in the second column and one listed in the third. Three conglomerates own two properties in each column. Answers below. —Kimberly Conniff

**Viacom Inc.**

**Time Warner Inc.**

**News Corporation**

**Bertelsmann AG**

**PRIMEDIA Inc.**

**General Electric Co.**

**The Walt Disney Co.**

**Lagardère (Hachette)**

1. Folger Shakespeare Library books
2. *YM: Young & Modern* magazine
3. Los Angeles Dodgers
4. *Mad* magazine
5. A&E Television Networks
6. relationships.com (an Internet singles service)
7. Storm Shadow cruise missiles
8. fit tv
9. *Seventeen* magazine
10. *20/20*
11. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. publishers



- A. *Soil Science Society of America Journal*
- B. Castaway Cay (a private island in the Bahamas)
- C. Ansett Australia airlines
- D. *Waste Age* magazine
- E. World Championship Wrestling
- F. *George* magazine
- G. International Construction Week reports
- H. ChinaByte (a Chinese information-technology website)
- I. Kings Dominion theme park
- J. Kashiwazaki-Kariwa advanced boiling water reactor
- K. *Shotgun News* magazine



ANSWERS: Viacom Inc. (1-1), Bertelsmann AG (2-A, 11-G), News Corporation (3-H, 8-C), Time Warner Inc. (4-E), General Electric Company (5-I), PRIMEDIA Inc. (6-K, 9-D), Lagardère (7-F), The Walt Disney Co. (10-B)

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## How do you live up to a name like that, anyway?

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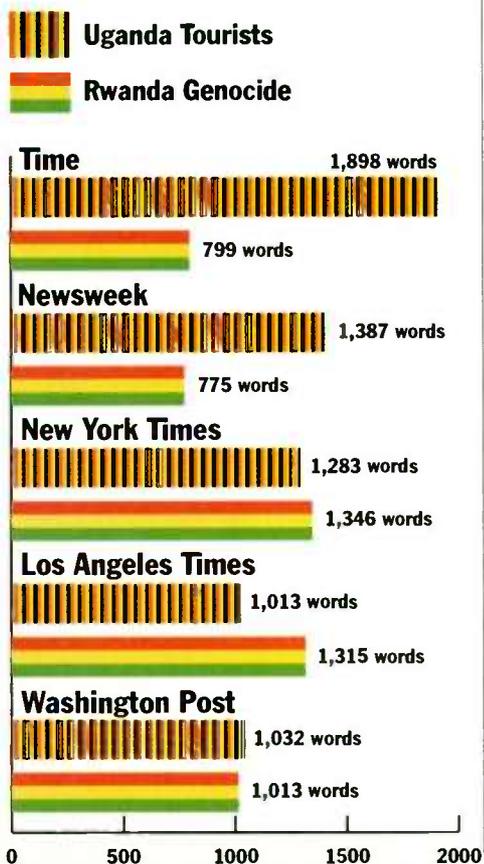
Covering the Birthplace of Buzz

## MEASURING THE COVERAGE:

### Rwandan Genocide vs. Ugandan Tourist Massacre

DO NEWS ORGANIZATIONS devote more space to stories with local ties than to those that might be more newsworthy but have less immediate impact? When eight tourists, including two Americans, were killed in Uganda in March by Hutu captors, *Brill's Content* compared coverage of the event to coverage of the breakout of the genocide in Rwanda in April 1994. We checked coverage in *Time* and *Newsweek* from their April 18, 1994, and March 15, 1999, editions and feature articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post* from April 11, 1994, and March 3, 1999. The initial Rwandan genocide prompted about half the coverage (measured by word count) by the newsweeklies that was given to the tourist murders in Uganda. The dailies gave comparable coverage to each. Our tally is below.

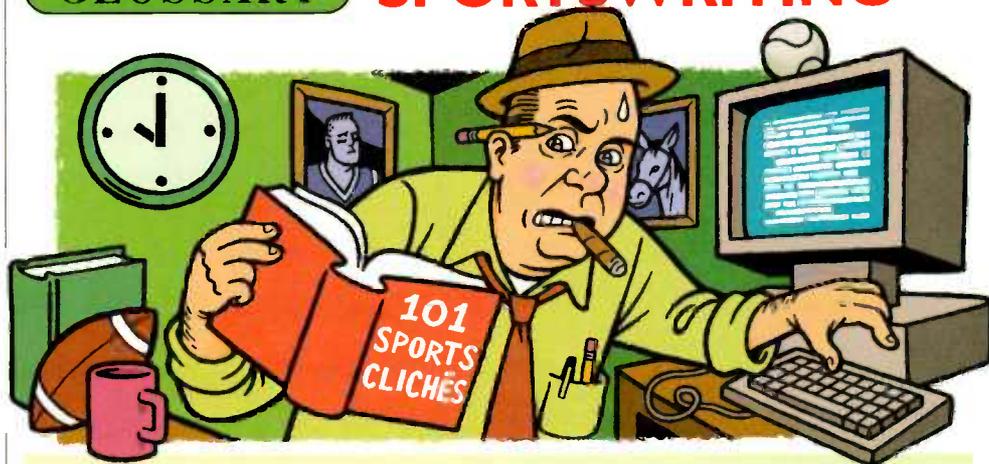
—Leslie Heilbrunn



BRILL'S CONTENT MAY 1999

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## GLOSSARY SPORTSWRITING



MANY OF THE CATCHPHRASES THAT PLAGUE SPORTSWRITING START OUT AS COACH- OR player-speak and have their lives extended by lazy or deadline-crazed sportswriters. Here are a few of the best known, compiled with the help of Dan Shaughnessy of *The Boston Globe*, Tony Kornheiser of *The Washington Post*, Mark Kriegel of the *New York Daily News*, Laura Vecsey of *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Frank Deford of *Sports Illustrated*, and Donnell Alexander of *ESPN: The Magazine*.

—Ed Shanahan

- **"BRIGHT," "ARTICULATE," "INTELLIGENT":** Generally describes athletes who answer a barrage of inane questions with something more than monosyllabic grunts.
- **"PERSONABLE":** Describes athletes who will at least answer questions, in monosyllables or more.
- **"SHOWED HEART":** A team or player that exhibits effort despite never having a chance to win.
- **"THE FINAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE":** A player brought in by management with the hope that he or she can kick-start a band of underachievers.
- **"LACKS CHEMISTRY":** A team in which the players hate each other.
- **"DEFENSIVE SPECIALIST":** A player who can't score.
- **"STREAK SHOOTER":** Inconsistent offensively.
- **"LIMITED SKILLS":** This guy is not as good as advertised when he was drafted, so don't expect much.
- **"A PROJECT":** Same as above, although probably didn't come at the same high price.
- **"STEP IT UP TO THE NEXT LEVEL":** Time to play better and win. Fast.
- **"THE QUINTESSENTIAL MODERN ATHLETE":** A tip-off that the writer doesn't feel particularly comfortable around the player he's describing this way.
- **"THE FUTURE IS NOW":** The team is old.
- **"REBUILDING PHASE":** The team is going to stink for the foreseeable future.
- **"A SOURCE CLOSE TO THE PLAYER":** The player's agent.
- **"A SOURCE CLOSE TO THE TEAM":** The general manager.
- **"THE TEAM CAME OUT FLAT":** Too much time in the bar, not enough in the bed.
- **"HIS SHOTS WOULDN'T FALL":** The basketball player refused to pass to open teammates even though he couldn't hit the rim.
- **"A TAPE-MEASURE JOB":** A home run that lands beyond the fifth row.
- **"WILL THE PLAYERS BUY INTO HIS SYSTEM?":** Do they think the coach has any idea what he's talking about?

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## Tinky Winky Trouble

Falwell was unfairly slammed for "outing" the character.

IN FEBRUARY, TELEVANGELIST JERRY FALWELL'S *NATIONAL Liberty Journal* printed a "parents alert" that Tinky Winky, one of TV's Teletubbies, "has become a favorite character among gay groups worldwide." The evidence of his orientation: the male character is purple (a gay-pride color), carries a purse (effeminate), and sports an antenna shaped like a triangle (a gay-pride symbol). Tinky Winky's features, said the article, "are no doubt intentional and parents are warned to be alert to these elements." The story, written by senior editor J.M. Smith, noted that Tinky Winky's sexual preference "has been the subject of debate" and advised parents to keep their toddlers away from the show, a British import that airs on PBS.

After *The Associated Press* picked up *NLJ*'s article on February 9, few media outlets could resist the opportunity to slam Falwell for "outing" such a babylike creature. "Always on the lookout for a new straw man, the televangelist with the big mouth has set his sights on Tinky Winky, a big-eyed, sweet-faced character," began an editorial in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "It's ludicrous that anyone would have to defend Tinky Winky, who is about as sexual as a Furby.... But the Moral Majority founder is so media-hip that his words, no matter how ridiculous, grab headlines." *USA Today* heaped scorn on the preacher: "If the Teletubby known as Tinky Winky is gay because it's purple, then the red Teletubby Po must be a Marxist, orange Laa-Laa

a Protestant militant, and green Dipsy an eco-terrorist."

Falwell objects to the media fuss. "It makes Jerry Falwell look like he has too much time on his hands and was monitoring children's cartoons," he says. "This is the worst example of yellow journalism that I've encountered." He insists that his publication never "outed" Tinky Winky. The *NLJ* article, he says, was simply "passing on what the national media had already established."

In fact, Falwell's magazine did not initiate speculation about Tinky Winky's sexual orientation. At least a dozen media outlets had dubbed the character "gay" months before the *NLJ* even mentioned the critter. On July 20, *Time* magazine reported on transsexual behavior moving into the mainstream: "Even Teletubbies...features Tinky Winky, a boy who carries a red patent-leather purse." On December 28, *People* magazine noted that "gay men have made the purse-toting Tinky Winky a camp icon." And in January, a month before the *NLJ*'s article was printed, *The Washington Post* pronounced Ellen DeGeneres and her girlfriend Ann Heche "Out" and Tinky Winky "In" as the new gay icon. —Bridget Samburg

## A STORM BREWING ON ABC

IT'S CUSTOMARY FOR A NETWORK to hype its sweeps-month programming to the max. That's what ABC did in February for *Storm of the Century*, a miniseries written by horror master Stephen King. Controversy arose when ABC tried a new promotional approach: running a nation-wide crawl message that looked like an actual weather advisory along the bottom of the screen during popular prime-time sitcoms. The crawl read: "ABC STORM ALERT...Stephen King's *Storm of the Century* is coming this Sunday. Please notify all friends, family, and neighbors to glue themselves to a TV, Sunday at 9/8 central." (Crawls are generally used to inform viewers about breaking news and urgent weather reports and not for entertainment or promotional purposes.) It was aired on Wednesday, February 10, during episodes of *Dharma & Greg*; *Two Guys, a Girl, and a Pizza Place*; *The Drew Carey Show*; and *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*

An ABC statement defended the crawl by

stating that "it was totally clear within the first few words of the crawl that this was a promo and not an actual weather advisory."

But five out of seven ABC affiliate news directors contacted by *Brill's Content* were not happy about that particular promotion. "What made the crawl particularly troubling is that it's the format of urgent news," says Scott Libin, news director at KSTP-TV in St. Paul. While using the crawl space as a promotional tool "was clever from a marketing point of view...the peril to it is that people don't know whether it's real or not," says Billy Otwell, news director at WTNH-TV in New Haven.

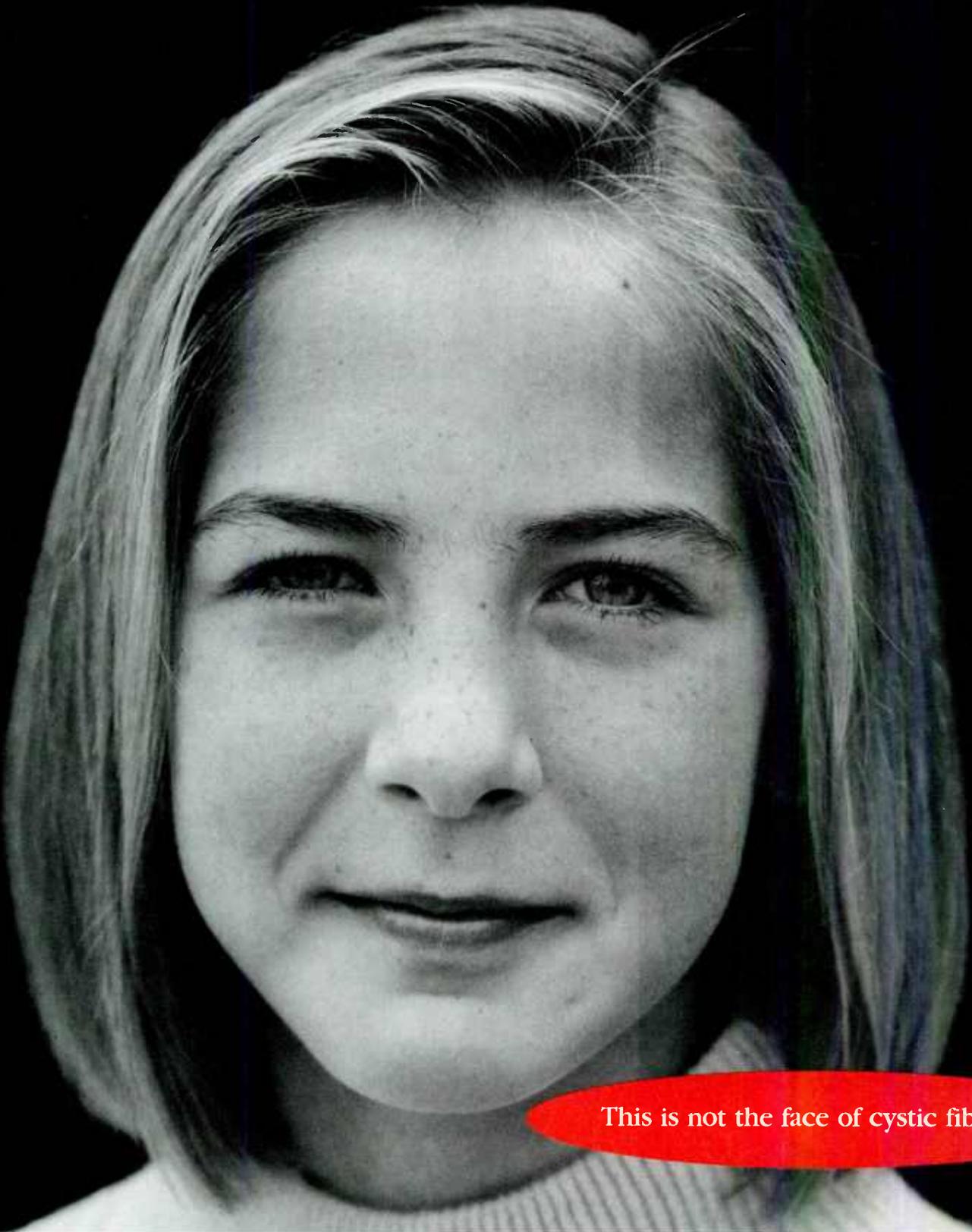
Blurring the line between fiction and reality may have ultimately served to confuse viewers at home. Some local newsrooms were inundated with calls about the phony "storm alert." At KGO-TV in San Francisco, for example, "the phones were lit up like a Christmas tree," says David Metz, the station's program director. The ABC-owned station decided to block out the



The *Storm of the Century* crawl on *Dharma & Greg*

crawl locally two of the four times it aired because of the confusion it had created among viewers. "To run a crawl that looked very much like a breaking-news crawl—it confused a lot of people," says Metz. A network spokeswoman noted that a minuscule number of viewers called the network to complain about the promotion.

—Kendra Ammann



This is not the face of cystic fibrosis.

It's the face of Rachel Course, cartwheeler, violinist and an extraordinary kid. She has cystic fibrosis (CF), but it doesn't stop her from doing the things she wants to do. New medicines discovered by pharmaceutical company researchers have helped Rachel, and thousands of other CF patients, go from a life of little hope to one filled with dreams for the future. There isn't a cure for CF yet, but America's pharmaceutical companies get closer every day. So a little girl like Rachel can keep on doing what she does best. Being a kid.

**America's Pharmaceutical Companies**

Leading the way in the search for cures

## Workers Of The *Journal* Unite

**W**HO'D HAVE THOUGHT OF *THE Wall Street Journal* as a hotbed of union activity? Well, just try taking away one of the reporters' most cherished perks and see what happens. In late January, Dow Jones & Co., Inc., chairman and CEO and *Journal* publisher Peter Kann made official what

had been rumored for months: The company was going to end its 50-year-old profit-sharing plan, under which Dow Jones contributed the equivalent of about 15 percent of each employee's salary to that employee's retirement fund.

The announcement came just over a year after Dow Jones took a \$1 billion write-off on its failed Telerate unit and reported its first loss ever as a public company, although its print publishing unit—of which the *Journal* is a part—showed record profits.

*Journal* reporters, not previously known for taking aggressive stands against management, reacted swiftly and vehemently to the cuts. "We, the undersigned newsroom employees and members of [the Independent Association of Publishers' Employees], are deeply disturbed by your extraordinary declaration today.... The move represents a substantial pay cut for all of us who are already making less than our peers at comparable national publications," read a widely circulated petition that originated in the paper's New York headquarters.

Out of a total of about 2,100 union members in the U.S. and Canada, 1,145 eventually signed on to three versions of the petition, which were hand-delivered to Kann.

"People see it as a 15 percent pay cut," explains Karen Damato, a union board member and a 15-year *Journal* veteran. "This really struck a nerve."

The paper's Washington bureau, which includes some of the *Journal's* most prized reporters, weighed in with a pointed letter of its own. "We think the issue of profit-sharing goes to the soul and

culture of this company," said the February 9 missive to Kann.

Signatories threatened to start putting in for overtime—which they say they never do but which they are entitled to as union members—if the company breaks what they see as its "social contract" with them.

"Seventy-hour weeks are not uncommon in this bureau," said the letter. "Putting our relationship with Dow Jones on a strictly contractual basis while keeping the paper competitive almost certainly would cost the company more money than could be saved by reducing retirement costs.... About one third of the reporters in the bureau have turned down better paying jobs at other news organizations in recent years; profit sharing is a major reason."

In response to the mounting criticism, Kann sent a note to managers to clarify his position. The letter emphasized that Dow Jones will maintain some kind of retirement plan, but one that will be more in line with those at other papers, such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

No doubt unintentionally, the company's move has helped strengthen Dow Jones's historically tepid union, the IAPE, an affiliate of the Communications Workers of America. Any change to the retirement plan is subject to negotiations with the union, although the plan affects every employee of the company, including top managers. The current union contract was set to expire April 30, and formal bargaining sessions began in mid-March.

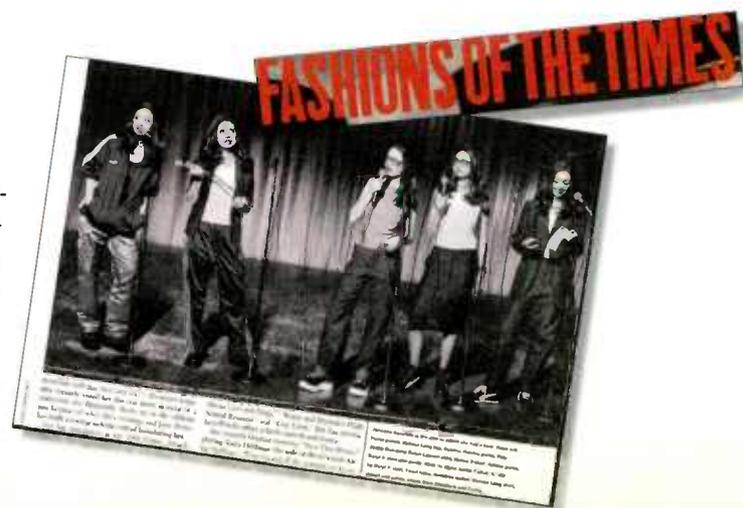
Star reporter Steven Lipin sits on the bargaining committee, lending it added heft at the negotiating table. Meanwhile, reporters are walking around New York headquarters sporting buttons that read "I [heart-shape] My Retirement BENEFITS" and "IAPE/CWA 1096."

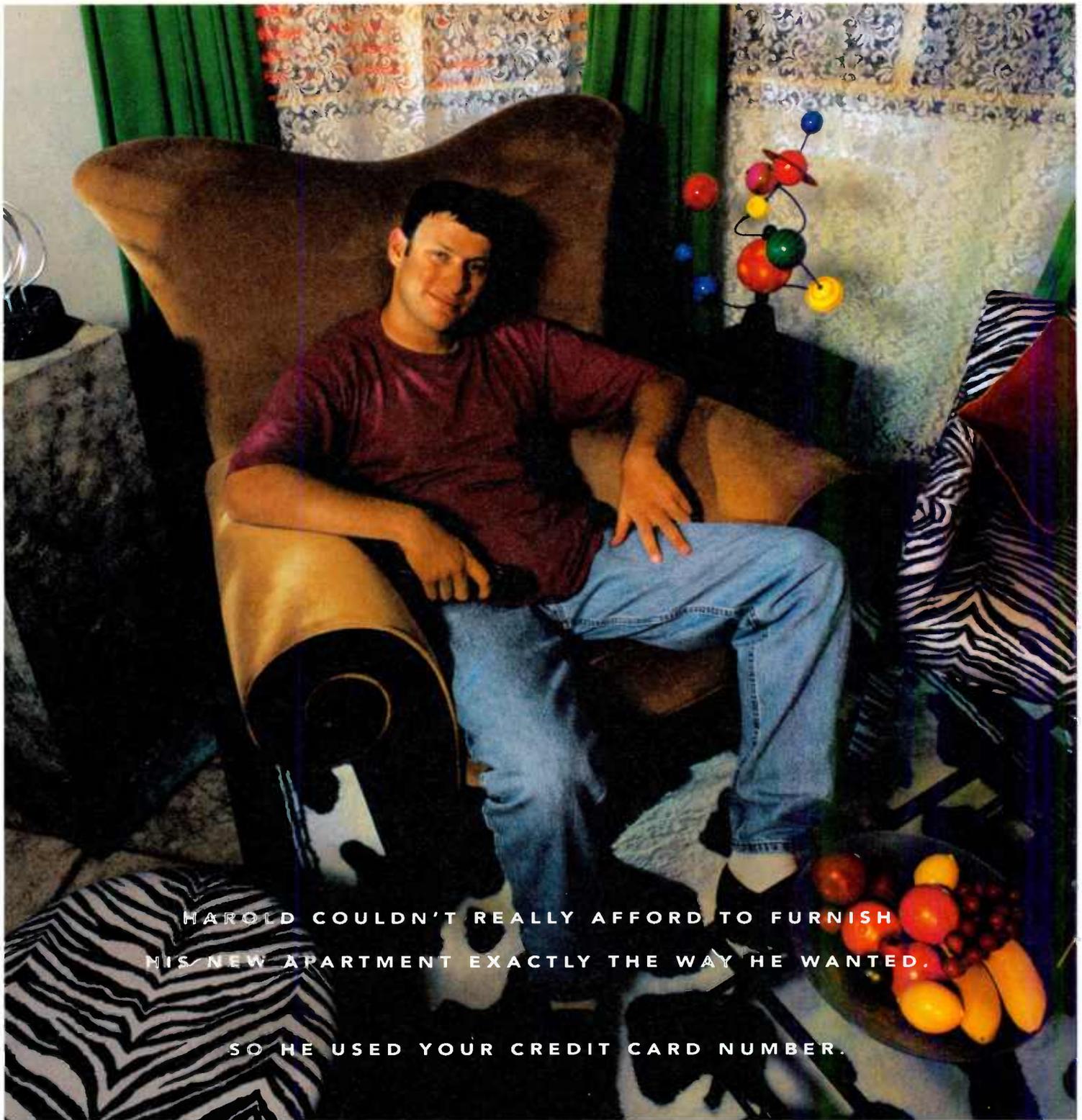
Ron Chen, president of the union, says one of the company's lawyers said to him recently, "You've got to thank the company, Ron. We're helping you organize a real union." —Rifka Rosenwein



## YOU'RE SO THIN, I BARELY RECOGNIZE YOU!

**THIS SPRING'S FASHIONS OF THE TIMES**, a semiannual *New York Times* supplement, hailed actress Janeane Garofalo's insistence on maintaining her unidealized, unwaifish style. Alongside the story was a photo montage (right), with the caption "Janeane Garofalo is the first to admit she has a look..." The pictures aren't of Garofalo, though, but of a look-alike model. Garofalo's manager says the actress is "disappointed" that the story celebrated her "normal" body but used images of a thinner model. Garofalo "completely knew what we were doing," counters *Times* style editor Amy Spindler. Garofalo declined to sit for a fashion shoot, Spindler says, so "we got a model that looked as much like her as possible." —Katherine Rosman





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SO HE USED YOUR CREDIT CARD NUMBER.

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# The Hurricane That Wasn't

In the wake of the president's impeachment, the author explores the calm left by a killer storm that never quite made it past the coastline.

ANYONE WHO'S BEEN WORRIED THAT TELEVISION commentary from Washington is biased in one direction or the other can relax: It turns out that nobody pays any attention to these guys anyway. Confirmation of that fact is one of the silver linings of *The Scandal*. My wife is particularly pleased. On Sunday mornings, she likes to get comfortable in the window seat, a cup of

tea at her side, and browse contentedly through *The New York Times*, she claims that during the Lewinsky era the peacefulness of our household on many Sunday mornings was shattered by my shouting at the television set. It is now clear that getting angry at the talking heads of television—the people I call the Sabbath Gasbags—is the equivalent of losing your temper at the referee in an off-season exhibition game. None of it counts anyway. So, my wife says, just relax. Be cool.

She's right. I shouldn't have berated the Sabbath Gasbags in this space a few months ago for not apologizing for their bizarrely inaccurate predictions and their consistently wrongheaded analyses. It's now obvious that nobody cared about either. For more than a year, the Gasbags did everything possible to whip up enthusiasm for driving President Bill Clinton from office, and in all of that time they managed to add to the pack virtually nobody who hadn't doubted the legitimacy of his presidency in the first place. Even though the 'bags said every week that a great shift of public opinion was about to occur, the needle never budged. After a while, the Gasbags started spending some of their time in front of the camera speculating about which hideous flaw in the character of the American people—materialism or lack of moral standards or a denseness that prevented full understanding of how absolutely, historically monumental the situation was—might account for what they kept calling "this disconnect." Nobody paid any attention to that, either.

For many Americans, the realization that the Gasbags have no influence whatsoever comes as a great relief—comparable, I'd venture to say, to the relief provided by the California State University at Fullerton rock-lyrics study of 1986. There was a time when many parents expressed concern about the possibility that the lyrics of rock songs were a bad influence on teenagers. In statements to the press and even testimony before Congress, a number of people warned of the possibility that rock lyrics might be tempting teenagers to become dope fiends or Satan-worshippers or believers in single-payer health-care schemes. These concerned citizens were unimpressed by my suggestion that the way to counter that danger was simply to pay off prominent rockers to sing songs that featured endless repetition of lyrics like "I wanna clean my room" or "I appre-

*Contributing editor Calvin Trillin is the author of Family Man, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. He is also a columnist for Time, a staff writer for The New Yorker, and the contributor of a weekly verse to The Nation.*

ROBERT DE MICHELL



ciate the great burden of responsibility my father carries and the sacrifices he's made on behalf of me and my siblings, and I have only the greatest respect for him."

Then, two social scientists from California State University at Fullerton published a thorough study of how teenagers respond to rock lyrics. The study showed that teenagers don't listen closely to the words of rock songs, don't catch a lot of what they do hear, and don't much care one way or the other. This brought—or, at least, should have brought—great relief to concerned parents. For some people, it is an even greater relief to have learned over the course of 1998 that the Republic can take anything that *The Capital Gang* or *Meet The Press* can dish out.

**F**INAL PROOF THAT THE GASBAGS have no effect on public opinion should come as good news to people on both sides of the political divide. The right, of course, has been talking about the bias of the liberal media for years. On my bulletin board, I have three bumper stickers that I picked up at the 1996 Republican National Convention; they say "Freedom of the Press Does Not Mean the Right to Lie" and "I'm Fed Up With the Liberal Media" and, presumably for folks who don't even need to be told who's being talked about, "They're Lying." I keep the bumper stickers as cautionary notices, in the same spirit that I keep an industrial-incentive poster from the twenties that says, beneath a drawing of a vicious-looking clown kicking someone's hat, "Funny? Jokes that injure others, waste time...are never jokes. Let's think twice!" (Without making any great claims about how well the bumper stickers have restrained my instincts for prevarication—I made up my wife's dialogue for this column, for instance—I should note here that since I got the poster, maybe 15 years ago, I haven't kicked one hat.)

The analysis of bias offered by the right is based on a simple and undeniable fact: An overwhelming number of journalists are Democrats who voted for Bill Clinton. I've always thought that the people who run network-news divisions internalized the right wing's accusations long before Bill Clinton came to the White House, and, in an effort to prove that they are not part of "the liberal media," began leaning over so far backwards that they would be putting themselves

in danger of serious physical injury if they actually had spines. This is why the customary liberal-conservative pairing on television is a newsmagazine reporter versus an editor of *The Weekly Standard* and why NBC would never carry a left-wing equivalent to *The McLaughlin Group* and why ABC is perfectly comfortable having Cokie and Sam (both reporters and therefore under suspicion of having voted for President Clinton) joined in quizzing guest politicians by the conservative ideologue George Will, that rare seeker of information who specializes in rhetorical questions.

Among the Gasbags, of course, enthusiasm for *The Scandal* was nearly universal, and I assumed from the start that it had less to do with politics than with protecting an early investment in the story and with Beltway myopia and with the tendency of people on television to treat almost everything as absolutely, historically monumental.

I think of the latter phenomenon as Hurricane Coverage Mode. Unless I have been badly misinformed, there are no more hurricanes now than there were in the days when most Americans managed to get through September and October without being scared out of their wits by the prospect of being destroyed by a storm with a cute name. These days, though, any sign of a tropical disturbance brings to the screen a reporter shouting against the rains that are pelting his designer slicker, breathless interviews with the expert at the National Hurricane Center, and graphics tracing the killer storm's progress up the coast. While the hurricane is still in the Caribbean, cautious folks as far inland as Ohio are taking to the storm cellars. A couple of days later, maybe 20 minutes into the news, the anchorman mentions, just before informing us that the Dow went up or down a few points, that Kimberly or Nigel has "veered out to sea."

When *The Scandal* finally veered out to sea, The Gasbags' own role in scaring a lot of citizens into the cellar was not part of their post-mortem discussions. "Yeah, yeah, you were just neutral analysts, like the guy in the hurricane center," I found myself muttering to the television set one Sunday after the acquittal. "You were not the people who spent four or five hundred hours wondering why in the world the president wouldn't just admit that he committed perjury."

"Take it easy," my wife said, putting down the "Metro" section and reaching for "Arts & Leisure." "Relax. None of it counts anyway." ■

**ONCE AROUND THE STORE AND YOU'LL WANT TO TAKE IT AROUND THE WORLD.**

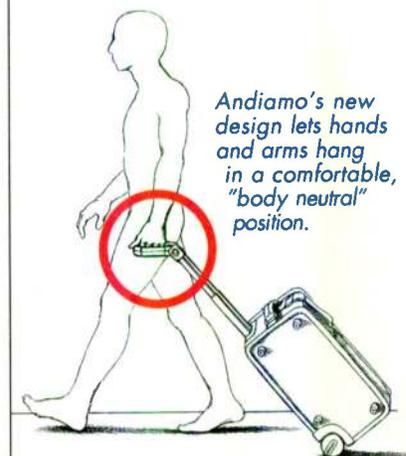
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# Free Speech, If You Can Afford It

The *New York Times* sells space for issue advertisements on its influential op-ed page. How much does it cost to disagree?

**F**OR YEARS, *THE NEW YORK TIMES* HAS reserved space for paid advocacy messages that appear at the lower right of its op-ed page. With their distinctive content and design, there's no question that they are paid advertisements, as opposed to editorial commentaries.

But a question has arisen over the *Times*'s policy regarding the voicing of objections or counterpoints to those advocacy ads. The experience of somebody who tried to rebut these op-ads sheds light on a murky corner

of the *Times*'s powerful franchise and raises questions about fairness, double standards, and a little-examined aspect of ad-edit separation.

Joanne Doroshow, executive director of a Ralph Nader-spawned consumer group called Citizens for Corporate Accountability & Individual Rights, says she was appalled late last year by a series of ads that have been running on the *Times*'s op-ed page. The ads, sponsored by the Washington Legal Foundation, sound the familiar alarm over greedy plaintiffs' lawyers who are responsible for what one of the ads called "tyranny by litigation."

Although the ads do not advocate specific reforms, it is clear that the Washington Legal Foundation is pushing for the sorts of changes—essentially making it harder to file suits and win them—that groups like Doroshow's contend would be harmful to consumer interests. It's not just that Doroshow disagreed with the policy being advanced. She also took issue with many of the factual claims about abusive litigation that were cited in the ads to back up the assertion that, as the December 14 installment put it, "[w]e've now become a society of victims in search of a scapegoat to sue whenever anything goes wrong."

For example, this is from the ad: "An off-duty McDonald's worker dozed off late at night while driving

home and crashed into an oncoming car. Sue McDonald's! Why? Because the motorist, [who died in the accident], became tired after working a late shift at the restaurant."

Sounds silly, of course, but a lot less so if you were told, as Doroshow pointed out in a letter to *Times* management, that the employee was a high school student whom McDonald's allowed to work a double shift in violation of its own rules, despite the fact there had been other incidents in which employees who worked similar schedules had fallen asleep while driving home. McDonald's had allowed the teen to work one shift after school (on a school night) and another from midnight to 8 A.M., so he had gotten only six hours of sleep during the last 48 hours of his life.

Paul Kamenar, the Washington Legal Foundation's executive legal director, says the facts as stated in its ad are correct. Doroshow is merely adding "spin and additional facts," Kamenar says, "but she is not disputing our facts."

Another claim in the ad series: "A lawsuit was recently brought by an experienced tire worker who ignored a prominent red and yellow warning that it was dangerous to mount a 16-inch size tire onto a 16.5-inch tire ring. The warning even featured a pictograph showing a worker being thrown into the air by an exploding tire. You guessed right—the worker mounted the undersized tire and it exploded while he was carelessly leaning over it. Of course, the worker's attorney sued the tire company for his injuries. Amazingly, he won \$10.3 million!"

This is what Doroshow says about the litigation: The victim in the tire accident was not "experienced," but rather an 18-year-old working after school. The case was settled with the rim manufacturer and Ford, according to Doroshow, because the rim was misstamped: The ".5" figure did not print through. She also says the jury award cited in the WLF ad is a "complete fabrication."

When asked to respond to Doroshow's charges, the foundation provided a copy of the decision in the case, which largely backed up its account. (The decision also revealed that the WLF's ad left out the not-so-minor detail that an appeals court had cut the damages in half.) Doroshow later explained that there have been a few dozen cases involving exploding tires, and that she was describing the facts in a different case because she thought that was the one to which WLF was referring. "That's another problem with the ads," she asserts.



"It's almost impossible to track these cases down because there are no citations, and [WLF] wouldn't return my calls."

Anyone who has been following the tort-reform controversy over the years is familiar with the back and forth of these sorts of litigation horror stories. It's the stuff of a great debate. And it's a debate Doroshow wanted to have. She didn't think the WLF claims should go unanswered, particularly considering their prestigious perch on the *Times's* op-ed page. So she decided to set out her objections to the foundation's ads in a letter to the editor.

That's when she got her next unpleasant bit of news from *The New York Times*. "I was told that if we wanted to reply," Doroshow says, "we had to buy an ad. We can't afford that." (Those quarter-page ads on *The New York Times's* op-ed page cost about \$30,000.)

In January, Doroshow wrote to Arthur Sulzberger Jr., the *Times's* publisher, calling the paper's refusal to run letters in response to advocacy ads "unreasonable." She called on the *Times* to stop publishing the WLF messages "and to repair the extensive damage already done by these false advertisements by permitting non-paid responses to these ads on the paper's editorial pages."

The *Times's* answer came a few days later from Robert Smith, whose title is manager of advertising acceptability. The letter, which Doroshow provided to me along with her own correspondence, noted that the *Times* accepts paid advertisements from a wide variety of groups and individuals. "We expect opinion advertisers to avoid inaccurate or misleading statements of purported fact. We do not, however, vouch for the accuracy of factual claims in opinion advertisements nor do we take a position, one way or the other, with regard to an advertiser's arguments or conclusions.

"It is possible, then," Smith continues, "that advertisements for The Washington Legal Foundation included assertions that are subject to debate. We would not, however, attempt to suppress or modify opinion advertisements because others have challenged their accuracy or expressed opposing views. And, as we're sure you can understand, we do not give away advertising space to opinion advertisers or to those who wish to challenge opinion advertisers. Were we to do so we would soon find ourselves having to make judgments as to which points of view were worthy of free space and which were not. That, obviously, would cause more problems than it would solve. I hope this clarifies our position."

**W**ELL, IT DOES CLARIFY IT, BUT it also leaves unanswered significant questions about fairness and accuracy, and about the *Times* trying to have it both ways when it comes to those op-ads. Of course the *Times* can't give space on its letters page to everyone who wants to dispute the claims made by any advertiser. But the *Times* sells its valuable space on the op-ed page in a manner unlike any other ad space, in effect giving those ads the accoutrements of editorial content.

Here's how its own advertising guidelines put it: "The op-ed page, because of its proximity to the editorial page, is

**P**rograms in New York City... (The text is partially obscured and difficult to read.)

### A master's degree is no guarantee of teacher quality.

... (The text continues with a discussion on teacher quality and education.)

### The Parks Brochure, Unabridged

**By Amy Krouse Rosenthal**  
**Ballet Hoops! Check writing!**  
... (The text is a parody of a brochure, mentioning items like 'Ballet Hoops' and 'Check writing'.)

### IN ALL FAIRNESS

#### Taxation By Litigation

The All-American Business Owners Committee, and the U.S. Government... (The text discusses tax issues and litigation.)



Ronald J. Papp  
President  
All-American Business Owners Committee

a particularly sensitive position in the newspaper." Op-ed advertising, according to the guidelines, "must deal with a grander dimension than that of the promotion of a specific company, its product or service; the op-ed position should be viewed as the single most valuable position to reach top government, social and business opinion makers. It should be viewed by advertisers as an extension of the impact and credibility of our editorial board.... These rules are adopted as a guide to ensure that advertisements that appear on the op-ed page recognize the sensitivity of the position [and] do not compromise the page's integrity." (Emphasis added.)

If the *Times* is going to sell advertising based on the "impact and credibility" of its editorials and commentary, then doesn't it have an equal responsibility to open its letters pages to responsible, credible challenges to those ads? These are not just any ads; they contain substantial content relating to matters of public policy, and they get to bask in the glow of the paper's editorial-page credibility—"a particularly sensitive position in the newspaper," as the *Times* puts it.

For Joanne Doroshow (and for others, no doubt) the *Times's* policy creates a catch-22: The editors won't run her response because the article in question wasn't in their bailiwick. But the advertising department won't give her free space because, well, that's not what advertising departments do.

The paper's no-letter policy regarding the advocacy ads is confirmed by Nancy Nielsen, the *Times's* vice-president for corporate communications. Nielsen notes that Doroshow is, of course, free to write a letter to the editor expressing her view on the issues raised in the ads—as long as the letter doesn't directly address the ads. "The editors don't have anything to do with ads," Nielsen says, "so therefore they don't run letters to the editor about ads."

But if the *Times* is going to let some interests buy their way onto its editorial pages, shouldn't they at least let people like Joanne Doroshow argue their way onto those pages? ■

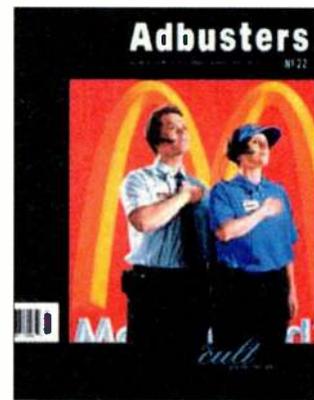
Spotted any good blurs lately? E-mail me at [eeffron@brillsccontent.com](mailto:eeffron@brillsccontent.com).

# STUFF we LIKE

## Ad Assault

There's nothing subtle about *Adbusters*, a Vancouver-based quarterly whose sophisticated assaults on Madison Avenue and consumer culture have won it a loyal international following. The ad-free magazine, published by the nonprofit Media Foundation, sponsors "Buy Nothing Day" and lampoons well-known advertising campaigns. Instead of Joe Camel, *Adbusters* offered a gaunt "Joe Chemo" hooked up to an IV. Another ad—this one parodying the Absolut vodka campaign—showed the familiar bottle drooping to one side, with the slogan "Absolut Impotence." In between mock ads, the magazine's articles are often freshly written and handsomely designed. The autumn 1998 issue's "The Revolution will be Carbonated," for instance, was a barbed commentary on a new kind of radical chic: Revolution Soda slaps Che Guevara's visage across its soda cans, turning yesterday's counterculture icon into today's marketing image.

—Jeff Pooley



## MEASURING NET SUCCESS

The *Industry Standard's* "Internet Economy Index" Metrics section, the two-page spread in the weekly that bills itself as "the newsmagazine of the Internet economy," perfectly fulfills the publication's mission. From its bar graph of weekly Internet users to its Internet stock chart to its "Internet Deal Flow Monitor" to its tally of weekly unique Internet visitors to its daily averages of business-site homepage download times, which compares this week to last week (my favorite), the pages' great graphics and uniquely assembled information give the entire publication an identity and easy-to-consume usefulness that's the envy of any magazine editor and well worth the price of a subscription.

—Steven Brill

## A WEEKEND BREAK

In a world with dozens of news shows to choose from, *CBS News Sunday Morning*, with its upbeat tone and leisurely pace, stands out. Created 20 years ago by the late Charles Kuralt, the show is more than just another news program; it's a celebration of culture. Each week, anchor Charles Osgood and a team of correspondents produce thoughtful reports about literature, fine art, music, science, nature, sports—and, of course, the news of the day. Among the more interesting offerings on recent Sundays: reports on former President George Bush's parachute jump, Nebraska's unicameral legislature, and the music and poetry of pop singer Jewel. The show's signature is its endpiece, a full minute devoted to the sights and sounds of nature—a restful way to conclude one week and begin another.

—Kendra Ammann



## WISEGUYS ON THE WEB

They may be fading, but America's gangsters remain an enduring source of fascination. When that fascination extends beyond the familiar (Sammy Bull) and into the obscure (Tony Ducks), [ganglandnews.com](http://ganglandnews.com) is a great place to turn. The site, created by New York *Daily News* reporter Jerry Capeci, is the online successor to a column written by Capeci until it was, uh, whacked by his editors in August 1995. That journalistic hit hasn't stopped Capeci from filing weekly dispatches on all matters mob. On March 1, for instance, site visitors were treated to items on such subjects as the decision by legendary mob turncoat Joseph Valachi to testify before Congress in 1963 and John Gotti Jr.'s recent courthouse visit to watch as one of his lawyers defended an accused killer. The site goes beyond print crime journalism by providing links to related stories about indictments, court rulings, and other relevant subjects. Another bonus: a collection of "connected" links, including one for [www.gotti.com](http://www.gotti.com), a tribute page that greets visitors with an audio clip of a crowd chanting, "Free John Gotti." Credit Capeci for offering both sides of the story. —Ed Shanahan

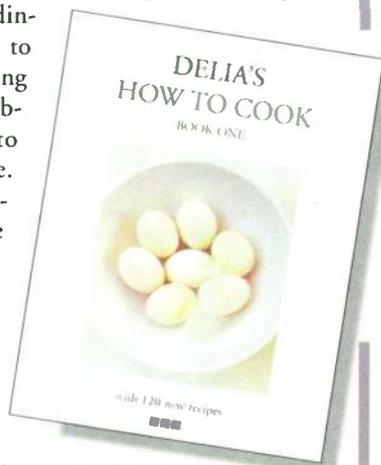
Jerry Capeci's

GANG LAND

Real Stuff About Organized Crime

## Easy Cooking

British food, like British dentistry, used to be regarded as a joke. But London has emerged in recent years as something of a dining mecca, a home to restaurants serving outstanding continental, Asian, and Caribbean cuisine in addition to traditional British fare. Reflecting these developments is **Delia Smith**, whose popular TV shows and cookbooks have made her the Julia Child of Great Britain. A former food writer for London's *Evening Standard*, Smith celebrates the full range of the English kitchen, with recipes from the exotic (tiger prawn jambalaya) to the homey (softly scrambled eggs). And she brings to her work a gift for simplicity and clarity.



—Caroline Bowyer

## ROCKING REVELATIONS

You may think you don't care about bands like Modley Crüe and Milli Vanilli, but VHI's **Behind The Music** might persuade you otherwise. The profiles that make up this documentary-style series about musicians—ranging from Billy Joel to Blondie to Lynyrd Skynyrd—feature remarkably revealing interviews. Billy Joel, for example, confesses his hurt at being betrayed by his business manager, who in addition to embezzling millions from the singer-songwriter, was his former brother-in-law and the godfather of Joel's daughter. Waylon Jennings discusses his sorrow dating back to 1959, when he gave up his airplane seat on a flight with Buddy Holly with the joke, "I hope your plane crashes." Shortly after that, the plane went down, killing Holly, Ritchie Valens, and the Big Bopper.

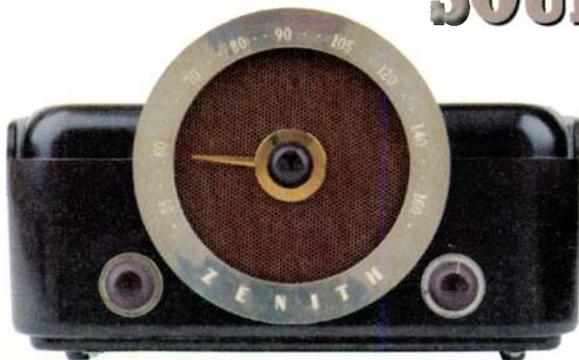
—Julie Scelfo

1

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## SOUNDS OF THE CENTURY



Friday through next January, NPR's *All Things Considered* is airing "Lost & Found Sound," recalling key moments of the twentieth century. The series includes 100 years of sound bites, many taken from radio- and broadcast-news reports. Among the highlights is a pastiche of sounds requested by soldiers during World War II, including the sizzle of a steak on the grill, the foghorns of San Francisco harbor, and Johnny Weissmuller's Tarzan yell. Coproducer Jay Allison has also collected 600-plus sonic snapshots from listeners, among them a Pittsburgh family's tape of their grandfather's recollection of Abraham Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address, and personal reflections from soldiers in World Wars I and II, as well as the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars.

—D.M. Osborne

# The Best Of Times

Newspaper journalism has radically changed in the last 20 years. At the *Concord Monitor*, telling stories is still the heart of the job.

In the late 1960s, the *Concord Monitor* was still printed on an old letterpress machine.

I HAVE ONE OF THE BEST JOBS IN AMERICAN journalism. The *Concord Monitor* has local ownership, a large staff for a paper its size, management that respects newsroom autonomy, and an interesting variety of news in a prosperous community where people care about each other. No one expects me to be anything but the editor.

Before I came to Concord 21 years ago, I worked briefly for a chain-owned newspaper. It was one of the better chains, but I quickly came to believe that the reward for good work at that newspaper was a job at another newspaper. I liked and respected the people I worked for, but I couldn't shake the feeling of being in a corporate fishbowl. Besides, I had already worked at four newspapers, my wife and I had recently had our second child, and we wanted to settle down in a good community. When the opportunity came along in Concord, the publisher of the *Monitor* at the time, George Wilson (he's now the newspaper's president), gave me a general charge. The size of the paper (18,000-plus) should be no obstacle to excellence, he said. Spend at least a third more on news than the paper did last year, and make it as good as you can. I am a far different editor from the hard-charging 31-year-old who accepted that challenge in 1978, and the current publisher, Tom Brown, has yet to bump up the newsroom budget by a third in any single year, but little has changed in terms of what is expected of me.

I know most editors don't have it as good as I do. I run into a lot of them at conventions, and I read about them in trade magazines. They complain about interference from the advertising department, cutbacks in the newsroom even in good times, and misunderstandings with publishers.

They worry about a loss of the idealism they brought with them into their careers.

I feel for them. I'm still idealistic as hell. I bless my good fortune in working for a newspaper that gives me the freedom to shape my job. When I come home complaining about being tired, my wife tells me she doesn't remember a time in 29 years of marriage when I wasn't tired. But almost everything I do in my work is something I have chosen to do. I identify with Sisyphus, the mythical character who kept pushing the rock up the hill only to have it roll to the bottom again. But the way Camus concluded the tale, Sisyphus was happy. I am, too.

This contentment does not blind me to the ever-changing world in which newspapers operate. We no longer have the captive audience we did even 20 years ago, a trend that began with the demise of many evening newspapers. These thrived in an industrial society that saw men work the day shift and women stay home to keep house and raise the children. In a changed nation of busy two-income families, most metropolitan evening dailies died off and many small-city papers, mine included, switched to morning publication. This gave those of us who made the move a longer shelf life and allowed readers to fit the daily paper into their routines, however varied or harried those routines might be.

The other factor that broke our lock on the market was competition. In most communities, my own included, people can't avoid the news. They get it through osmosis—from TV talk shows, 24-hour cable news channels, and more conventional TV- and radio-news competitors. We held focus groups at the *Monitor* a few years ago and were shocked to hear people who were not subscribers speak quite knowl-

edgeably about local and state issues. On the surface, at least, some people were getting along fine without us.

I do not view these trends as signs of the decline of the daily newspaper or, heaven forbid, the daily newspaper editor. Nor do I see them as a reason to diverge from the path I started down as a journalist more than 30 years ago. On the contrary, rather than the age of the dinosaur, I believe newspapers have entered a golden age.

Think of it: When I got my first job as a sportswriter in the mid-1960s, the process of putting the paper out was only slightly less cumbersome than it had been in the nineteenth century. We had practically no color. Type was set from pots of molten lead mounted on fantastic machines called Linotypes. Newspaper production departments were far larger than the news staffs. I can still smell the composing room and hear the clatter of typewriter keys in the newsroom—and I cherish the memory of those sensations—but the newspaper we publish today is far superior to the papers of that time.

There are two main reasons for this. Technology is one, of course. At the *Monitor*, pagination and a state-of-the-art press enable us to produce sharp graphics and fine color every day. But the most important factor is people. When I came to the *Monitor* in 1978, we had a news staff of 18 plus a few correspondents. Today, we have 45 editors, reporters, and photographers. We still hire many young people into their first or second jobs, but the depth and breadth of the talent in our newsroom is something I could not have imagined when I arrived here.

Working with so many beginning journalists, I am reminded perhaps more often than most editors of just how difficult our task is. To get enough facts, to get the right facts, to get the facts right, and then to decide what the story is and tell it with authority and clarity and an eye for the pleasing detail—this is hard work, but it is the heart of newspapering. The medium isn't the message, the message is the message.

And as if reporting and storytelling weren't challenging enough, the world itself is vexing. Probably any veteran local editor can tell you a dozen cases in which one day's big story became the next day's big but substantially different story. One day a couple of years ago, our page-one banner headline read: "Officer kills suspect." The next day's banner headline read: "Officer's 9 shots not fatal." The suspect had actually survived a burst of gunfire from a Concord police officer but had shot himself in the head. It took an autopsy to figure this out. The twists and turns of a story are seldom so dramatic, thank goodness, but the ground beneath the news is perpetually unstable.

For the most part, newspapers have lost the ability to tell breaking news first, even locally. This is a blessing, not a blow. We all still love a scoop, of course—that story dug out by the persistent reporter from the reluctant source. However, on the visceral front—murder and mayhem—the TV people are going to get there first almost every time. But television's headline news is exactly that: the headlines on the stories in tomorrow morning's paper. Anyone who wants to know what really happened needs us. I am not the only one who has noticed the premium on storytelling. Years ago, in critiquing the writing in my newspaper, I often used *The New York Times*

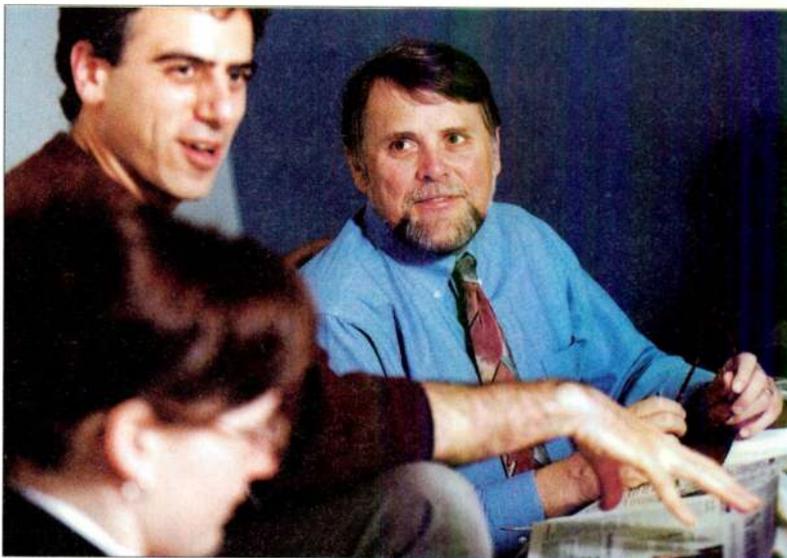
for comparison. I could open the *Times* to almost any section and find a fatuous 52-word lead to hold up as an example of bad writing. But often these days, the *Times's* front page is not a telephone book of minute developments in the glacial processes that make the world go round. Instead, the editors find room on the front for one or more well-reported, well-crafted stories about things that matter.

ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF MY JOB HAS become editing the community—not the community newspaper, the community itself. In the two days in which I have been drafting this column, here are some of the reader-written pieces I have had to work with: a commentary by a local woodsman arguing that even responsible logging in New Hampshire's forests is a poor alternative to allowing the forests to live through their cycles unmolested; an essay by a 15-year-old local girl, who happens to be the daughter of the U.S. ambassador to Denmark, on her new life in Denmark and her adjustment to a culture in which competition is shunned; a local naturalist's account of her encounters with blue-footed boobies on a trip to the Galapagos; and a local lawyer's satirical look at how New Hampshire's big commercial television station hypes winter storms.

This storytelling by readers has spread to other sections. Stripped across the top of a recent Sunday business page was a first-person piece by a local businessman who, now that he is past 50, finds himself nodding off to sleep at meetings and Rotary lunches. The big spread on our "Home & Family" page not long ago was a young woman's story of how her love of singing had helped her recover from a brain injury.

To tell the stories of a community's life is a high calling, and never have the stars been better aligned to shine on this practice. We have magnificent technology and more talented people than ever. Our mission has never been clearer. All an editor needs is a paper where the owner and the publisher understand that good journalism is good business. ■

Mike Pride (right) meets with staff members each afternoon at 4 P.M. to review stories for the following day's paper.



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# HERD ON THE NET

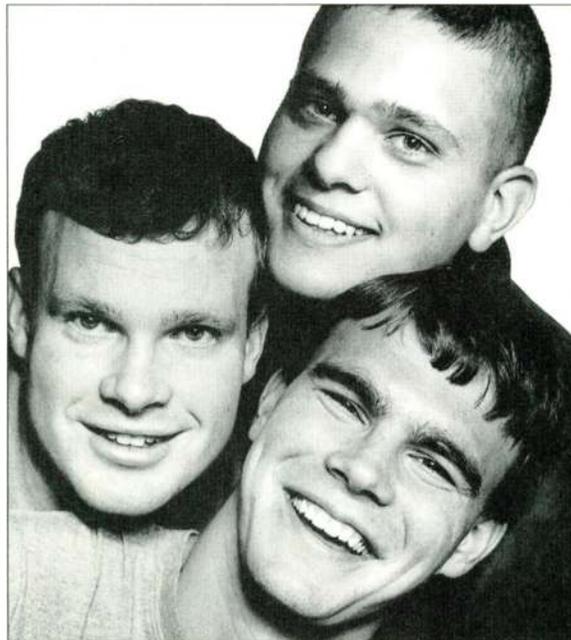
Raging Bull has stampeded to popularity in the raucous world of financial message boards by offering users the ability to shut each other up. ● BY MATTHEW HEIMER

**B**ILL MARTIN PROJECTS a calm enthusiasm as he talks about Raging Bull, the financial message-board website that he cofounded in 1997. Listening to his authoritative baritone, one can almost forget that until last fall Martin would have been too young to go out for a beer. But he has the right to sound confident. Just 21, Martin is copiloting one of the Internet's hottest investment-related destinations.

As of mid-March the website ([www.ragingbull.com](http://www.ragingbull.com)) had 95,000 members, up from 23,000 on New Year's Day and 5,000 in July 1998. The membership stampede has allowed Raging Bull to horn in on the Big Three stock-discussion sites: The Motley Fool (420,000 registered users), Silicon Investor (100,000), and Yahoo! Finance, which declines to give a figure. (See related chart, page 54.)

So what are all these Raging Bullies coming to check out? Each other, mostly. The website offers traditional editorial content—its homepage has been dominated by standard news articles. But the brains behind the Bull insist that their greatest selling points are their technology and their members, who endlessly joust, cheerlead, and share hunches on the site's thousands of stock-related message boards.

The Bull's rise illustrates how the Internet's word-of-mouth nature can turn old-media business models on their heads. It also shows how message-board users rely on each other's information, even though it comes from



anonymous, unaccountable sources. Far from dismissing the value of such information, Martin says Raging Bull, like other message boards, is "becoming a news-creation organization."

RAGING BULL WAS BORN ON A NEW Jersey golf course in the summer of 1997, when Martin and a high school buddy, Greg Wright, decided to try to profit from their interests in finance and the Internet. From their respective dorms at the University of Virginia and Rutgers University in New Jersey, Martin and Wright used rudimentary shareware ("It looked god-awful," confesses Martin) to create a site on which friends could kibitz about stocks. Martin recruited members of his college investment club to write company profiles and market wrap-ups. But

Basement tycoons: Raging Bull partners (clockwise, from left) Bill Martin, Greg Wright, and Rusty Szurek

until the summer of 1998, when the partners began to work full time from Martin's father's basement, the herd of Bull users numbered fewer than 100.

By then, the top sites had long been provoking controversy for the freewheeling, foaming-at-the-mouth rhetoric that sometimes popped up. "Jerks would come in," Martin complains, "and disrupt" informative exchanges with unfounded rumors, off-topic babble, or personal attacks.

Raging Bull ultimately struck gold by offering its users a way to shut each other up. In June 1998, the site rolled out a unique new feature: the "ignore" button. An icon at the bottom of each message now offers members a chance to "ignore poster" if they find that person's messages inane. Click on the icon, and the offending person's messages will be hidden from you on any future message board you skim. (The Motley Fool adopted a similar feature in December.)

The "ignore" button was an immediate hit. The tiny fraternity of loyal Bull users raved about it on other websites. Word spread, and Martin claims that Raging Bull enlisted 5,000 new members that month, a migration that has continued.

The online buzz attracted the attention of Jason Anders, a reporter who watches stock message boards for *The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition*. After Anders profiled the site in a July 2 article that mentioned the "ignore" feature prominently, the Raging Bull gang got national attention as well as offers from companies seeking to buy the suddenly hot site.

The Bull founders eventually reached a deal with the venture capital

arm of CMGI, Inc., a company that has invested in such Internet powerhouses as Lycos Inc., and GeoCities. CMGI paid \$2 million for just under 50 percent of Raging Bull and agreed to let the founders continue to run it.

CMGI is betting that “community” sites like Raging Bull—which hasn’t turned a profit so far—will be able to attract enough users to make money through advertising revenue. The Bull currently sells ads for \$10 to \$50 per 1,000 pageviews, says cofounder Wright; at any given time, there are about 50 different ads scattered across the site.

**R**AGING BULL HAS ASSEMBLED A cadre of freelance writers, and the site now posts two or three new articles a day on its homepage. But the boards, Martin insists, are where “news is being made.” He plans to make them the site’s “showpiece” by featuring them more prominently on the homepage.

To help its members gather news, in January Raging Bull introduced a

more sophisticated version of the “links” that message-board users post to lead friends to important resources. Combing through messages to get to these links can be tiresome. So Raging Bull created a separate area attached to each board, where members can list frequently used resources and vote on their relevance. With most Raging Bull boards organized around individual stocks, the links help each board become “an on-the-fly broadsheet,” as one financial writer puts it, packed with stories on one company.

But how good is the information that Raging Bull users are trading? The quality varies wildly, and even the message board’s strongest boosters agree with its biggest critics: Don’t bet the farm on a message-board tip.

Virtually all message-board users write under aliases, and some have been accused of trying to inspire hype or panic in order to profit from the resulting price swings. Raging Bull (and the other top sites) allow you to

scroll along a user’s past messages to see if that person tends to give sound advice; but such a search takes time and patience.

Like most sites, Raging Bull does little to oversee its message boards. The site’s partners take pride in their quick responses to e-mail complaints, but with 9,000 postings per day, they can’t act as censors—or even as editors—nor do they want to. Of the top stock-discussion sites, only The Motley Fool assigns full-time staff to patrol for inappropriate posts. The other sites urge people to police themselves.

Raging Bull users say they’re up to the task. Several describe a process in which more experienced investors provide editorial leadership. When a poster makes unfounded claims or acts rudely, writes Bull member Barbara Clairmont, “there’s a few [veterans] who pretty much let the individual have it double-barrel.” Call it democratic journalism: The Bull’s members both provide the content—and edit it. ■

## Bulls, Fools, And Silicon Yahoos: A Thumbnail Guide To Stock Chat Sites

WEBSITE	FEATURES	MONITORING
 <p><b>RAGING BULL</b> (www.ragingbull.com) Members: 95,000. Posts per day: 9,000.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows users to customize links to news stories and resources related to their favorite stocks.</li> <li>• Permits members to block posts from annoying users.</li> <li>• Links real-time stock quotes to message boards.</li> <li>• Emphasizes technology and penny stocks.</li> </ul>	<p>The site has “zero tolerance” for foul language or stock hyping—but few resources to stop them. One partner and one “advocate” respond to complaints, remove inappropriate posts, and revoke membership in extreme cases.</p>
 <p><b>SILICON INVESTOR</b> (www.siliconinvestor.com) Members: 100,000 Posts per day: 15,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lists boards that have seen a sudden jump in activity, usually a sign of company or market news.</li> <li>• Allows quick comparison of multiple stocks.</li> <li>• Caters to active traders and stresses Internet stocks.</li> <li>• Charges membership fee (\$60/six months, \$200/life).</li> </ul>	<p>Two staff members maintain the boards and respond to complaints. Members receive a warning and face expulsion for vulgarity, spamming, or blatant solicitation. Posts removed on typical day: 10-20.</p>
 <p><b>THE MOTLEY FOOL</b> (www.fool.com) Members: 420,000. Posts per day: 7,000.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connects messages and their replies through “threading,” making conversations easier to follow.</li> <li>• Allows members to hide postings by disfavored users.</li> <li>• Provides access to tips for beginning investors.</li> <li>• Devotes many boards to general market sectors or general investment goals and strategies.</li> <li>• Posts some 15 original news articles each weekday.</li> </ul>	<p>A staff of 20 full-time “strollers” patrols the boards, partly to watch for inappropriate posts. Spamming, profanity, and stock hyping are grounds for removal of a message and its poster. Users can alert staff to trouble by pressing a button marked “good/bad post.” Posts removed on typical day: 10-15.</p>
 <p><b>YAHOO! FINANCE</b> (http://finance.yahoo.com) Yahoo declined to provide membership and posting figures for its financial boards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links stock boards to Reuters market news, Zacks research, and First Call reports on insider selling.</li> <li>• Permits users to customize stock news.</li> <li>• Offers more chat on nontechnology stocks.</li> <li>• Can be difficult to navigate.</li> </ul>	<p>Yahoo declines to specify staff resources devoted to policing harassing messages, spamming, and unsolicited advertising. The site usually boots out only repeat offenders who reach “a higher level of abuse,” says Yahoo! Finance producer Mike Riley.</p>

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World Radio History

# The Truth Really Is Out There

Fox's sci-fi hit *The X-Files* provides a case study in how the media have blundered in their coverage of pop culture.

WE MAY NEVER KNOW JUST WHAT all those bees were doing out in the desert, where Agent Mulder's sister is, or why all those people's pupils changed color just before they died. It's beside the point, anyway. *The X-Files* was never about solving mysteries so much as it was about evoking them.

This month, *The X-Files* concludes its next-to-last season and next year it will morph from one of TV's unlikeliest hit dramas into "*The X-Files: The Movie Franchise*." The time is right; the end is near. Next season will be the *X-Files*'s last—at least on TV. The first *X-Files* movie was released last summer and the show is now becoming a movie-only franchise. It's six years old, its stars are pooped, its creator restless, its fans distracted by vampire slayers, *Ally McBeal*, and the tide of teenage angst on The WB. So the weekly series will depart the airwaves, to dwell à la *Star Trek* in the land of Intergalactic Media Hype.

Ponder it while there's still time, educators, journalists, and bewildered parents wondering what young people are up to and how to reach them. Forget about the market research, polls, and focus groups. Run a few episodes of *The X-Files* through your VCR.

The news media struggle with the concept that pop culture has become one of our society's most telling and reliable mirrors. Perhaps because it threatens their monopoly on agenda setting and provides fearsome competition, they've blundered even more over how to cover it, presenting everything from hip-hop to MTV to the Internet as a series of plagues endangering our youth and wrecking civilization.

But *The X-Files* is one of TV's most interesting, even significant shows, as well as one of the most intensely political. Almost from the beginning, producer Chris Carter's odd, haunting series has been among the most popular broadcasts among the much-prized 18- to 40-year-old audience, the very group that has abandoned newspapers and commercial broadcasting in droves. It reveals much about the values and culture of the young audience that has watched it so devotedly.

*The X-Files* is one of the first cultural offerings whose fans

*Jon Katz's column will appear here regularly. A former newspaper editor and TV news producer, he is also a contributing editor at Rolling Stone and a columnist at slashdot.com.*



Scully and Mulder (Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny) are perhaps the first young, attractive couple on TV to care about each other without becoming sexually involved.

coalesced on the Web. It's no accident that the series and the spectacular rise of Net use occurred at about the same time.

Although many journalists still portray it primarily as a source of sex, addiction, and perversion (and lately as a digital goldmine), the Net is really a collection of teeming communities, cultures unto themselves. On the thousands of websites devoted to *The X-Files*, fans all over the world scrutinize plotlines, trade gossip about scripts and characters, and even write their own fantasy scripts for the drama (especially when reruns are being aired), 24 hours a day. The search engine Infoseek alone offers roughly 167,000 different listings for *X-Files* homepages, articles, websites, and mailing lists.

Moreover, *The X-Files* is strikingly post-political; that is,

it transcends conventional ideologies and stereotypes about liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats. In mainstream journalism, there are two sides to every idea or issue, a left and right, and both sit on *Crossfire*, arguing eternally and without resolution.

On *The X-Files*, our real life political-media codependency is seen as the ludicrous and insane menace it has become, the real conspiracy. There, all dogma and parties are assumed to be corrupt and untrustworthy. On *The X-Files*, politics are murky. The program questions truth, science, rationalism itself.

Like many successful stories—*Star Wars* and the various incarnations of *Batman* come to mind—*The X-Files* is essentially a myth. Its central heroes are FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson). Mulder is obsessed with investigating the super-secret X-Files, weird cases that the bureau wants to bury, that point to supernatural or extraterrestrial evildoers. Scully, originally assigned to debunk Mulder's crackpot theories, becomes his friend and eternally skeptical companion.

Mulder is a dreamer and a visionary, as far from the prototypical male action hero as you can get. Prone to dark humor and profound brooding, he sleeps alone on his living room sofa, calling sex hot lines and watching horror movies and porn videos in his rare spare time. Scully is a doctor and a scientist. Rational, courageous, relentless, she never has to invoke feminism because her equality and competence are taken completely for granted.

The two are young, attractive, and continually thrown together in dangerous situations; there is no real emotional presence in either's life but the other. Yet their relationship remains almost proudly platonic, making *The X-Files* perhaps the first TV hit in which love between two such characters never becomes sexual.

Writing for magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *Wired* in the past several years, I had access to a number of surveys (from the likes of Yankelovich Partners Inc. and Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.) about the attitudes and values of the *X-Files*'s prime audience—people in their late teens through thirties who compose the heart of the ascending digital young, the wired world. It was striking to see their hybrid notions about the world, a mix of liberalism and conservatism largely ignored and unexplored by journalism, which remains fixated on the warring and increasingly hateful elements trapped inside the Beltway, all drinking the same obviously tampered-with water. (Mulder, are you there?)

A survey conducted by Luntz Research Companies for *Wired*, published in the magazine's December 1997 issue, found that younger, increasingly "wired" Americans were forging a new kind of political ethic. They were also democratic, optimistic about their futures, and profoundly tolerant on racial and sexual issues. They were economic conservatives, suspicious of government regulation, and devoted to the free-market system. Even before the Lewinsky nightmare, they were wary of conventional media and had little patience for the moralizing and posturing of Washington journalists and politicians.

*The X-Files* meshes perfectly with that worldview. Until this spring, Mulder and Scully had struggled to unravel some murky but evil conspiracy by a group of White Men In Suits (in *The X-Files*, any white man in a suit smoking cigarettes signals danger) that did or didn't involve aliens and some shadowy conspiracy to take over the earth.

When partly revealed in February, the alien plot—involving conspirators called the Syndicate—seemed loopy and tiresome. Imagined, however, the great conspiracy was enchanting—and apt. Isn't that a central notion of the young, that the world is run by a bunch of suits inhabited mostly by middle-aged white men in remote places making corrupt, greedy, even evil decisions?

In fact, trawling on an *X-Files* AOL chat room the week the series' "secrets" were revealed, I encountered this exchange:

Damian 7: Hey, I am watching TV and I look at the House Managers in the Senate...so what occurs to me?

Four fellow chatters messaged back at almost the same instant: The Syndicate.

The only difference? None of the managers smoked.

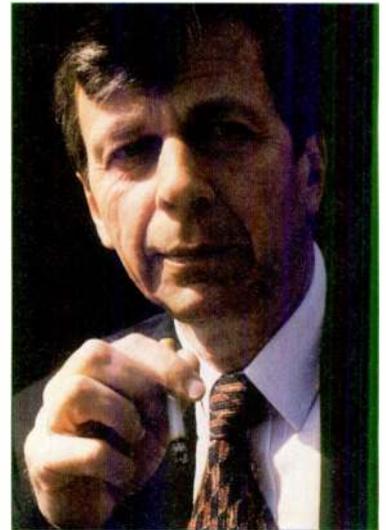
A

S VIVIDLY AS *THE X-FILES* CAPTURES THE young's dark, even hopeless view of politics, it also offers other interpretations. Critics and scholars are already writing about the mythology and spirituality inherent in certain classic episodes. In fact, everyone who watches seems to come away with something different, a sign of the program's complexity and vitality, especially in the early years before it became a huge hit.

To me, *The X-Files* is one of the more poignant legacies of the Cold War. Before World War II and the conflict with communism that followed, America never had much of a secret government. Ever since, we have. (In pop culture, the National Security Agency is usually singled out as the source of evil, mostly because the geek culture on the Net is drawn to the NSA's supposed high-tech wizardry.) Accordingly, movies from *Enemy of the State* to *Men In Black* present government mostly in terms of conspiracies spun by nameless men with lots of cool equipment. Since we can't know what these people are really doing, anything is possible. Writers and producers merely need to fill in the blanks.

This fusion—cynicism combined with technology and the secret machinery of the Cold War—has always been at the heart of *The X-Files*. If few bought the notion of an alien conspiracy to take over the world, the basic worldview was credible to the young: "The Truth Is Out There," all right. But nobody in a suit—at a press conference, in a corporate office, on the evening news, or on the front page of *The New York Times*—will tell it to you. ■

You can e-mail me at [jonkatz@Slashdot.org](mailto:jonkatz@Slashdot.org)



On *The X-Files*, any white man smoking a cigarette signals danger.

# Cop-Out At *The New Yorker*

A longtime *New Yorker* writer speaks out here about the magazine's attempt to extend the presumption of innocence to a toxic chemical. ● BY PAUL BRODEUR

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO *THE New Yorker* that published Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*? The January 11, 1999, issue of *The New Yorker* contained a "Comment" piece (the magazine's equivalent of an editorial) in which a staff writer

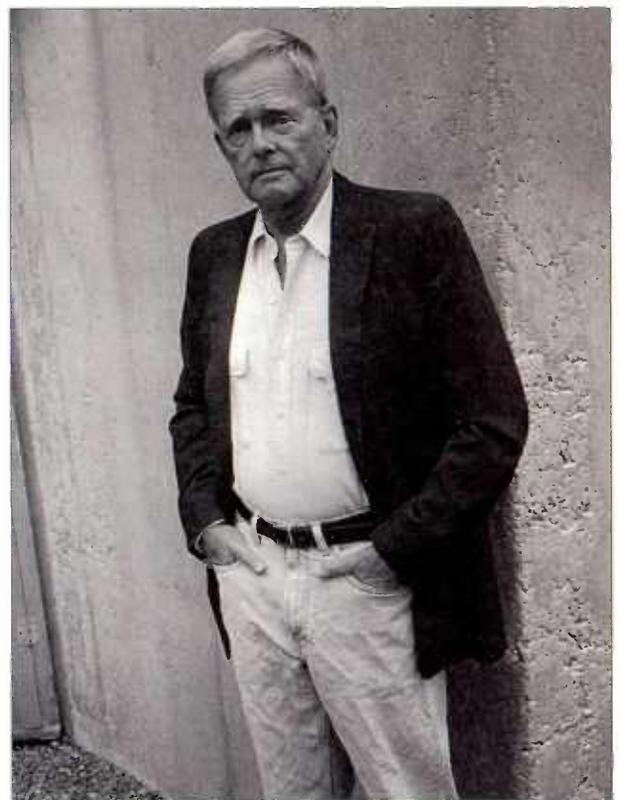
named Malcolm Gladwell delivered some opinions about the carcinogenicity of trichloroethylene (TCE), the chemical that a jury, in 1986, found W.R. Grace & Company responsible for dumping into open ground and contaminating drinking water supplies in Woburn, Massachusetts. W.R. Grace subsequently settled the case by paying \$8 million to the families of eight leukemia victims (most of them children), who had lived in the neighborhood where the dumping had occurred and had allegedly drunk water from TCE-contaminated wells.

In his *New Yorker* piece, Gladwell used the movie *A Civil Action*—an account of the Woburn tragedy and ensuing court trial that is based upon Jonathan Harr's book of the same title and that stars John Travolta—as the starting point for the following statement regarding the carcinogenicity of TCE:

"It is taken as a given that the chemical allegedly dumped, trichloroethylene (TCE), is a human carcinogen—even though, in point of fact, TCE is only a probable human carcinogen: tests have been made on animals, but no human-based data have tied it to cancer." [Emphasis added.]

On January 15, after checking with officials of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences's National Toxicology Program, I wrote to David Remnick, editor of *The New Yorker*, asking him to consider an accompanying letter to "The Mail," the section of the magazine that publishes letters from readers to the editor. In my letter to "The Mail," I pointed out that several studies published in the peer-reviewed medical literature had tied TCE to the development of cancer in humans, and cited (by volume, number, and page) one study that had appeared in 1998 in the highly respected *Journal of Cancer Research and Clinical Oncology*. I went on to point out that more than

*Paul Brodeur was a staff writer at The New Yorker from 1958 to 1996.*



Paul Brodeur's letters to *The New Yorker* raised questions about the magazine's reporting.

half a dozen studies published in the peer-reviewed medical literature showed that TCE causes liver tumors in mice and kidney tumors in rats. The fact that TCE is a carcinogen in multiple species, I explained, is why the International Agency for Research on Cancer has listed it as a probable (more likely than not) cancer-producing agent in humans. I ended the letter by saying that TCE was widely used in the electronics industry as a solvent for cleaning circuit boards.

On January 22, an associate editor at *The New Yorker*, to whom Remnick had referred my letter, wrote to inform me that a magazine fact checker had done some further research, and that "[t]he study you cite was the only one we could find that turned up a link between TCE and cancer." The associate editor then cited a 1991 study that had been conducted by

BILL RAVANESI

researchers from the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and had appeared in the prestigious *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, which showed that “[d]etailed analysis of the 6,929 employees [of an aircraft maintenance facility] occupationally exposed to trichloroethylene...did not show any significant or persuasive association’ between TCE and cancer of any type.” She went on to inform me that “[g]iven that there is the one study showing a link, what Gladwell wrote may seem like a semantic wriggle, but I really think that it isn’t, and that there isn’t enough data to show a ‘tie.’” She told me that as a result the magazine would not be able to run my letter.

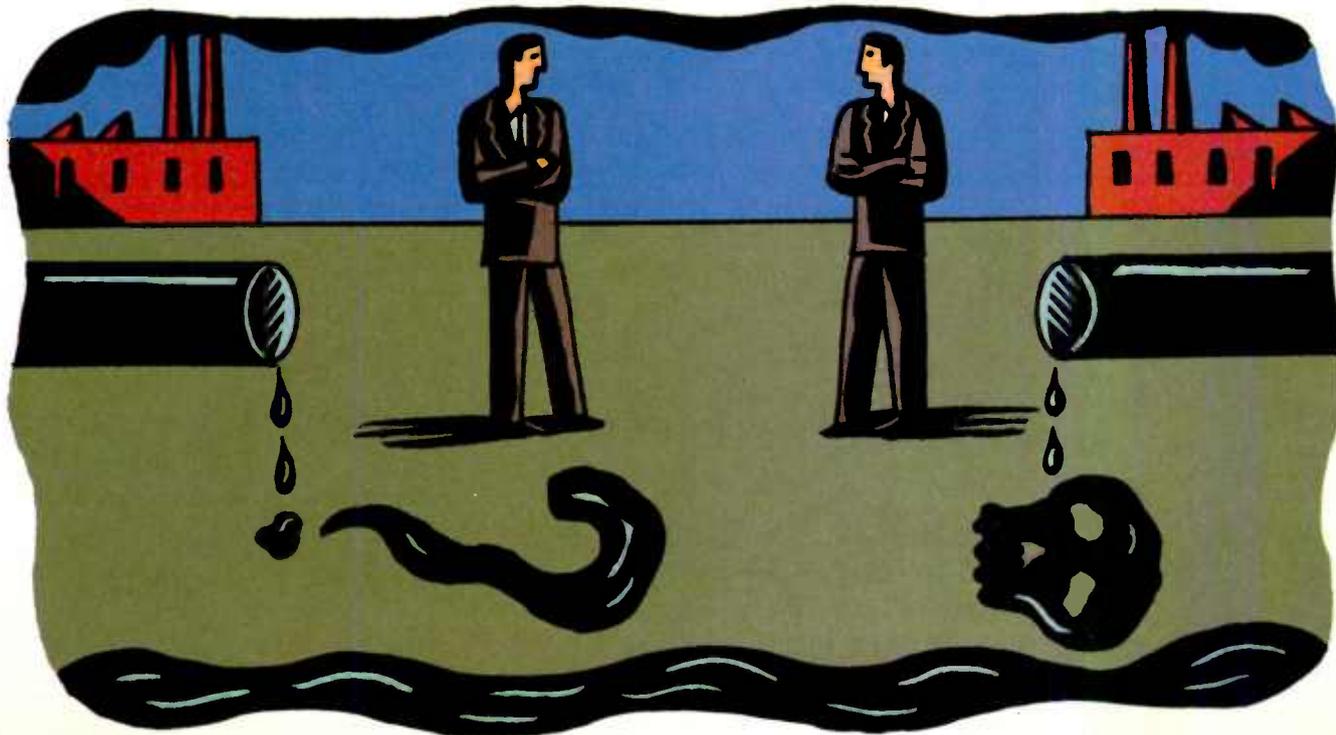
During the next ten days, I was traveling. Before leaving home, however, I asked a medical-scientist friend to access MEDLINE, a database of medical-journal articles and abstracts, and provide me with copies of any studies that had been published in the peer-reviewed medical and scientific literature regarding the capacity of TCE to produce cancer or other diseases in humans. When I returned, a thick envelope awaited me. It contained copies or abstracts of 42 studies—10 of which suggested that TCE was carcinogenic in humans. One of the studies was titled “An Analysis of Contaminated Well Water and Health Effects in Woburn, Massachusetts.” It had been published in September 1986, in volume 81, number 395, of the *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, and it had been conducted by researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health and Boston’s Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, who had found that drinking water from the very same TCE-contaminated wells described in *A Civil Action* was at least partly responsible for elevated incidence rates of childhood leukemia in Woburn.

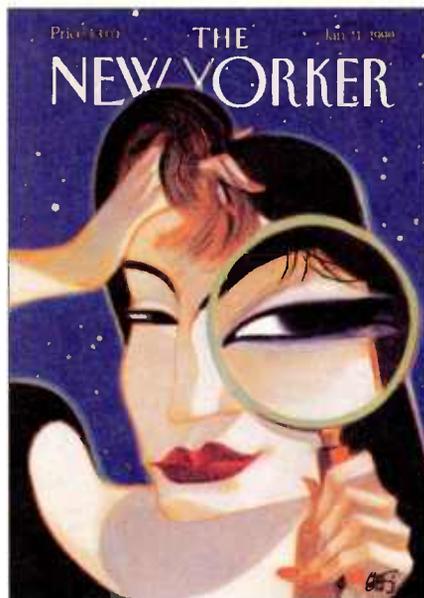
Among the other studies downloaded from MEDLINE was a copy of the 1991 investigation cited by *The New Yorker* associate editor as having shown no persuasive association

between TCE and cancer of any type, as well as a copy of a follow-up study of the same workers that had been conducted by researchers for the National Cancer Institute, and published in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, in 1998. Reading both studies in their entirety proved interesting. For example, the 1991 study found more than three and a half times as many deaths as expected from cancer of the biliary passages and liver among white male workers exposed to TCE who had died after 1980. In the follow-up study, non-significant excesses for non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and for cancers of the esophagus, colon, primary liver, breast, cervix, kidney, and bone were found in workers exposed to TCE. In the conclusion section of the follow-up study, the NCI researchers stated that their findings did not “strongly support a causal link with trichloroethylene because the associations were not significant, not clearly dose-related, and inconsistent between men and women.” However, the researchers went on to declare that “[b]ecause findings from experimental investigations and other epidemiological studies on solvents other than trichloroethylene provide some biological plausibility, the suggested links between these chemicals and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, multiple myeloma, and breast cancer found here deserve further attention.”

Meanwhile, the issue of *The New Yorker* dated February 8 had come out with an article titled “The Cancer-Cluster Myth” by Atul Gawande, a research fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health, who declared in a parenthetical statement on page 36 that a sevenfold increase in the occurrence of a cancer is “a rate of increase not considered particularly high by epidemiologists.”

On February 8, I wrote a second letter to David Remnick in which I enclosed the abstracts or copies of five studies showing a link between exposure to trichloroethylene and the development of cancer in humans. I drew his attention to the





fact that one of these studies dealt with the wells in Woburn that W.R. Grace had been found responsible for contaminating with TCE. I pointed out that since TCE and similar halogenated hydrocarbons are widely used as pesticides, solvents, cleaning agents, de-greasing agents, cutting fluids, propellants, and refrigerants, millions of Americans are being exposed to them on a daily basis.

**F**OR REASONS OF brevity, and because I assumed that *The New Yorker* retains some institutional memory, I did not tell Remnick that the November 24, 1975, issue of the magazine contained an “Annals of Chemistry” piece by me in which I had pointed out that “trichloroethylene—a chemical widely used in industry for de-greasing metals, for drycleaning clothes, and for decaffeinating coffee, and routinely employed since 1934 as an inhalation anesthetic in surgical and obstetrical cases—was highly similar in its basic molecular structure to vinyl chloride, the chlorinated-hydrocarbon gas used extensively in the manufacture of plastics and as a propellant in many household aerosol sprays, and recently discovered to be a powerful carcinogen in workers who had inhaled its fumes.” Nor did I tell him that in this same article I had reported that on March 21, 1975, the National Cancer Institute had sent a “Memorandum of Alert” to appropriate government agencies about the capacity of trichloroethylene to cause cancer in animals, and that on June 16, 1975, the General Foods Corporation—makers of Sanka and Brim—had announced that it would no longer use trichloroethylene in its decaffeinating process.

In my letter of February 8, I went on to tell Remnick that Gawande’s assertion in “The Cancer-Cluster Myth” that a sevenfold increase in the occurrence of a cancer is “a rate of increase not considered particularly high by epidemiologists” was absurd on the face of it. In this regard, I drew his attention to a second letter to “The Mail” that I was enclosing.

The final paragraph of my letter to Remnick read:

*“Finally, let me say that I trust my pointing out errors of fact in two recent issues of The New Yorker will be taken by you in the spirit in which it has been given. I have high regard for the magazine on whose staff I served for thirty-eight years, and I wish you great success in your stewardship of it.”*

In my accompanying letter to “The Mail,” I once again pointed out that Gladwell was in error when he claimed that no human-based data have tied trichloroethylene to cancer, and cited five medical or scientific journals in which such data had been published in recent years. As for Gawande’s dismissal of the importance of a sevenfold increase in the

occurrence of a cancer, I pointed out that “[n]on-smoking workers exposed to asbestos—one of the most deadly industrial carcinogens ever discovered—suffer a fivefold increase in lung cancer,” and that “one-pack-a-day smokers of cigarettes—far and away the most deadly carcinogen ever discovered—suffer a tenfold increased incidence of lung cancer.” After reminding the reader that occupational exposure to asbestos has killed at least half a million workers in America in recent years, and that cigarettes have and will continue to kill

millions upon millions of people in the general population, I pointed out that “[o]bviously...a sevenfold increase in the occurrence of a cancer caused by a single carcinogen has to be considered dangerously high, particularly if significant numbers of people are exposed to the carcinogen.”

My letter to “The Mail” concluded:

*“Not to consider it [a sevenfold increase] as such would be a way of overlooking the fact that one in every three American men and one out of every four American women is today developing cancer in his or her lifetime. There’s a word for that kind of incidence—no matter what the disease. The word is epidemic.”*

On February 10, David Remnick wrote me a letter of reply that read:

*“Thank you for your letters and the attached excerpts and information. It seems to me what we have here is not a matter of right and wrong and fact versus, well, something else, but rather a legitimate debate in which you disagree with both Gladwell and Gawande. You ask if I mind your sending them: Of course, I don’t. But I also trust you know I am sincere when I say that we went to great lengths to ensure the accuracy, as best it can be established, of both pieces. The traditions at The New Yorker have not changed where that is concerned.”*

Alas, Mr. Remnick, they have. Slowly but surely, ever since Tina Brown took over the magazine in the autumn of 1992. Under the 35-year editorship of William Shawn, from 1952 to 1987, and under the five-year editorship of Robert Gottlieb, from 1987 to 1992, errors of such magnitude as I have pointed out to you would have been highly unlikely. But, had they occurred, for the editor of *The New Yorker* not to have acknowledged them—either in a “Department of Amplification” or in a statement of correction issued to avoid the appearance of downgrading a major potential public-health hazard—would have been unthinkable.

The magazine that published Rachel Carson’s seminal *Silent Spring* has lost its way. It is not too late, however, for you to bring it back. ■

*Editor’s note: David Remnick and Malcolm Gladwell were given this article to read and chose not to respond to it.*

**Learned of a company that customizes  
CDs for consumers.**

**— April 27th issue, pg. 39.**

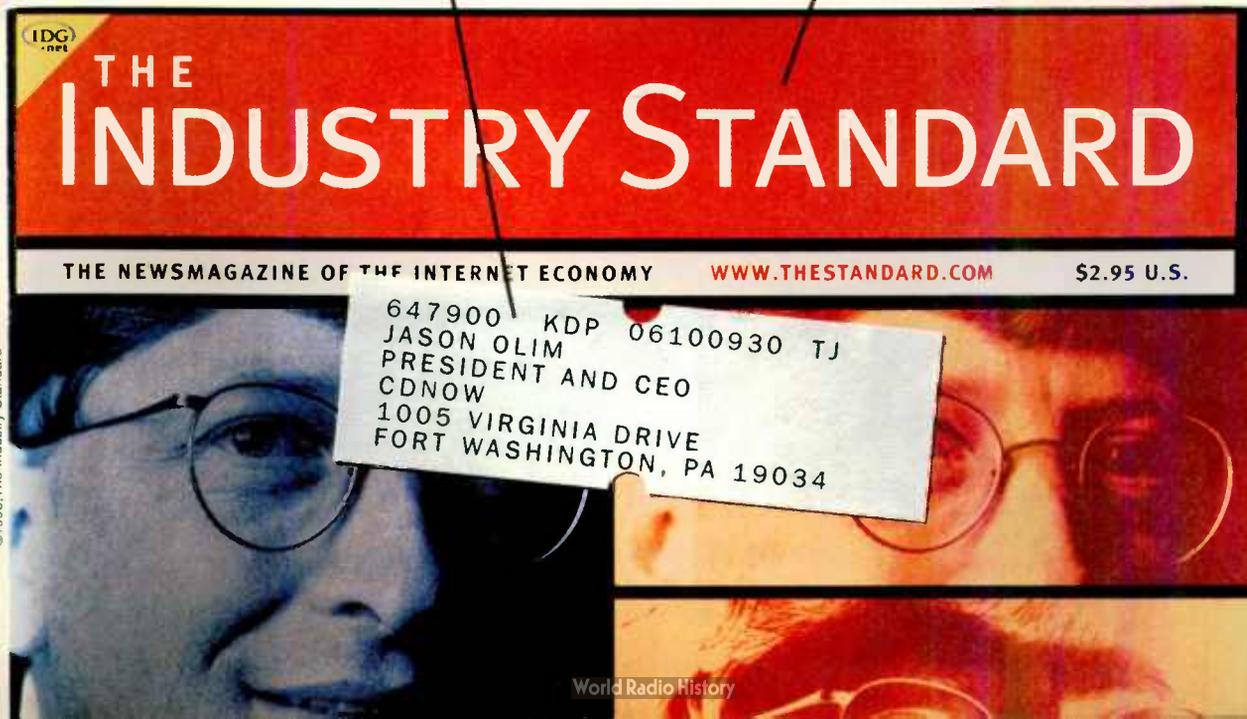
**Bought a customized CD.**

**— May 11th**

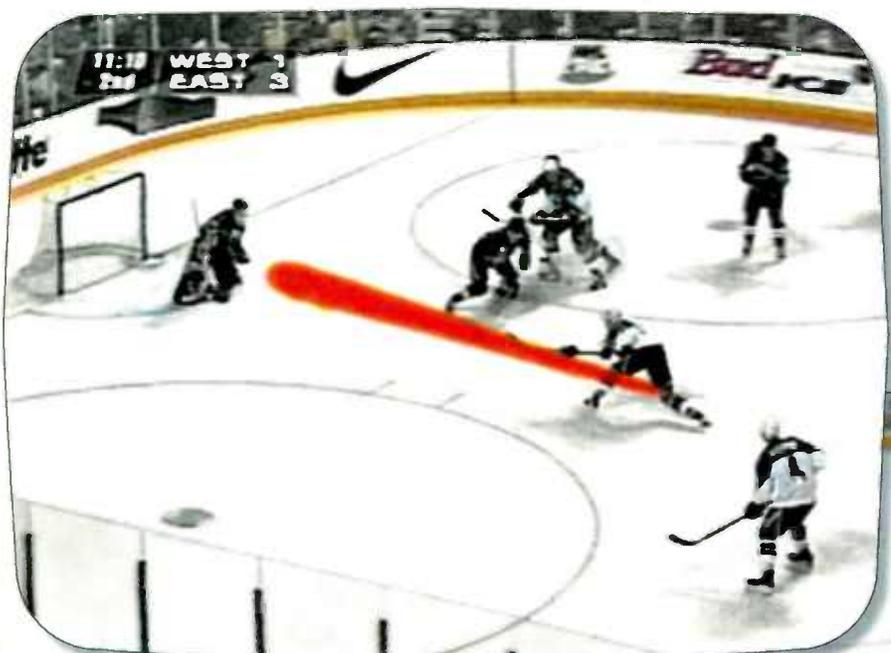
**Bought the company.**

**— June 6th**

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# THE FUTURE OF *TV SPORTS* IS



The FoxTrax puck lent an electronic, comet-like tail to blistering slapshots, like those fired (above and at right) in an NHL All-Star Game. The tricked-up rubber disk has been sent to the penalty box, but its creator has taken the concept into some new arenas.





along with information from broadcast cameras themselves, produced the desired result: the TV-viewing fan could find the puck on the ice because a blue glow would illuminate it. When a player fired a puck at a high speed (usually more than 50 miles per hour), a red tail would follow in the wake.

Each of the pucks, which cost \$100 apiece to produce, also faced a battery of tests to insure that it looked, felt, and acted like the standard \$5 version. One test required the puck to be fired from a cannon at 105 miles per hour against a steel pole. The puck did not break apart.

With Jerry Gepner overseeing the puck's integration into Fox's broadcast, Honey's invention debuted as scheduled at the 1996 All-Star Game. Critics were not impressed. *Chicago Tribune* columnist Bob Verdi labeled the puck an "abominable contraption," a "monstrosity," and "a neon beach ball." *Hartford Courant* columnist Jerry Trecker concluded, "FoxTrax looks to be a technological toy of limited value."

But Honey was convinced otherwise. And Gepner, approaching two decades producing television sports, knew there could be numerous contexts in which viewers might want to see an event enhanced visually or statistically with information collected by Honey's sensors. [See box, page 66] But no network—not even Fox, which had shelled out \$1.58 billion over four years to televise football—had the appetite to fund all the possible projects. "We can't afford to do that anymore," says Aagaard, the CBS Sports vice-president.

So, taking a collective deep breath, the troika quit their News Corp. jobs. The group received between \$5 and \$10 million from investors that included Shamrock Holdings Inc., an investment firm run by Walt Disney vice-chairman Roy Disney, and Sterling Ventures, a fund supervised by New York Mets co-owner Fred Wilpon. With News Corp. swapping the puck equipment and various technologies for a nearly 10 percent stake, the company men were out on their own.

IT'S THE FRIDAY BEFORE THE 1999 NHL All-Star game, and Stan Honey is standing in the broadcast truck once known as Fox Sports's "puck truck." For the previous three years at about this time, the truck has been en route to the All-Star game to help make the puck glow. Today, however, it is sitting in SporTVision's lot in California. Fox has decided to pass on the glowing puck this year.

Fox's hockey ratings slipped over the three years FoxTrax was used. While Fox averaged a 2.1 rating during the 1996 season (reaching 2 million homes), it averaged a 1.4 rating (1.37 million homes) in 1998. The NHL says its surveys show the puck, though popular with casual fans, was a turn-off for hardcore followers. Fox's Hill says the puck gave hockey broadcasts an initial boost the sport couldn't sustain. "For a brief time in the sun, hockey had a chance when an awful lot of people watched it. Because why?" asks Hill. "They thought [the puck] was cool."

Whatever the reason for hockey's plummeting ratings, the puck is on thin ice. SporTVision partners consider the system mothballed, and Hill talks about the glowing puck in the past



tense even though he's not ruling out using it in this spring's Stanley Cup finals. Next year, however, ABC Sports and ESPN will own the exclusive national broadcast rights in the U.S., and have no plans to use the system.

Honey says he's not upset by his puck's demise. "I just build 'em," he says. And Honey knows the truck has a new high-profile gig: making elec-



Bill Squadron (top) and Jerry Gepner provide the TV sports savvy and connections SporTVision needs to sell its wares.

tronic first-down lines.

Aside from the goal line, the crossing of which signals a touchdown, the first-down line is football's most important demarcation point. Unlike the goal line, however, the first-down line is invisible, except for the hand-held markers attached to those quaint ten-yard chains on the sidelines. The notion of an electronic first-down line had been kicking around network sports divisions for years, but no one had developed the technology to make it a reality. When the SporTVision guys left News Corp., the line's creation became a priority.

Honey and his team developed a system that places a translucent yellow line at the first-down line without obscuring the players' feet and jerseys. As a result, the line looks like it's on the field. Ironically, the first customer for this football innovation was not Fox, but ESPN. Fox passed on the system because Hill thought the cost—between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per game—was too high. But Jed Drake, ESPN's vice-president of remote production, was so impressed by a demonstration tape he saw that he signed an exclusive agreement with SporTVision to use the innovation for the 1998 season.

Creating the technology and selling it to broadcasters aren't the only barriers SporTVision must surmount. The company also has to convince the leagues to approve its enhancements. And no league has a more conservative reputation than the National Football League. Here's one of the ways Jerry Gepner earns his keep. Gepner has perfected his role as an informal ambassador for broadcasting in the offices of the sports leagues. (The NFL likes Gepner so much that league officials send him to the construction sites of new stadiums to offer advice on how to make the buildings camera-friendly.) With Gepner backing an idea like the first-down line, and an eager broadcaster such as ESPN involved, the chances for success are improved.

The first-down line debuted on ESPN's September 27, 1998, telecast of the Cincinnati Bengals-Baltimore Ravens game, and was an immediate hit within the broadcasting community. CBS Sports quickly hired SporTVision rival Princeton Video Image to put its own (orange) first-down line on the air. (PVI concentrates most of its efforts on virtual advertising.) At no point, according to SporTVision, ESPN, and the NFL, were fans asked for their input. ESPN's Drake acts as if it's sacrilege to wonder if decisions on enhancements like the first down line are ratings-driven. "We don't look at these things in that vein," says Drake. "We look at these things to improve the quality of our coverage for the viewers we do have." But without focus groups or surveys ESPN really has no idea whether its viewers consider the innovation an improvement.

The second product rolled out by SporTVision is called AirF/X. It may be the only basketball-related product using the word "Air" that has nothing to do with either Michael Jordan or the Nike Corporation. AirF/X does not make a video enhancement like the blue blotch on the hockey puck or the yellow first-down line. Instead, the system offers a new statistic: the height of a basketball player's jump. The basketball system relies on a single digital camera directed at each end of the floor. When a player shoots, an operator types in that player's number and the AirF/X system calculates how high the player jumps based on data from the camera and the player's height.

So far, SporTVision has had little success selling its basketball system. Gepner says the current strike-shortened NBA season has curtailed budgets. But the company is placing a lot of emphasis on developing products like the Air F/X that measure the performance of athletes in new ways. When Gepner speaks about the future of the company, he talks about generating numbers, not

video enhancements. "If you can accurately measure the height of every NBA player's jump," explains Gepner, "you create a very impressive database [with] real value, ongoing value."

The SporTVision partners imagine a future in which most stadiums are equipped with SporTVision sensors and small cameras to fuel data and video-enhancement production interchangeably. If a broadcaster wants a video enhancement, SporTVision will be able to deliver it. If a team wants a statistic for its Jumbotron, SporTVision will deliver that, too. The company could also package all sorts of the statistics and sell them to sports websites and video-game makers. "I think it's a very powerful place to be," says Honey.

The SporTVision principals are convinced their creations will be lapped up by sports fans. But technical innovations have always enjoyed a tenuous relationship with the games they seek

Costas likes the first-down line, but stresses that such innovations must be used judiciously.

With outfits such as SporTVision on the hunt for new enhancements full time, however, the inventions will keep on coming, and spectator sports are bound to look and feel more like video games. But the prospect of interactive entertainment—in which a viewer can tailor the broadcast to his or her liking—may eventually wash away the concerns of Costas and others. The real issue is not that sports broadcasts look like video games, but that the games are being played by some producers in New York. In the near future, it's quite possible that enhancements such as the first-down line or the glowing puck will be options at the disposal of the sports fans at home. Statistics would be available at the press of a button—one located not in a control room but on your remote control. And if a viewer chooses to turn off all the options, perhaps TV sports will be even less cluttered than before the dawn of the puck. In the future, it may not be television broadcasters and SporTVision executives deciding what we see. It may well be us. ■

An extreme statistic: The SporTVision "MaxAir" system measures a skateboarder's half-pipe ride.



## COMING ATTRACTIONS

The electronic first-down line and glowing hockey puck are already reality for TV viewers. Here are some other technological innovations you may be seeing in the near future, thanks to SporTVision:

### SKI-RACE LEADERS—

No more racing against a clock. Each run would include a video marker representing where the leader would be on the course at the equivalent time.

### HOME-RUN DISTANCES—

The numbers you've heard all these years have been educated guesses. Expect to see a reliable statistic for the distance a homer would have traveled if it hadn't ended up in the seats.

### SHOTPUT THROWS—

A glowing circle would show where the leader's toss landed.

### SOCCER OFFSIDE LINES—

Because the line is always changing depending on the position of the defender closest to the goal, an electronic first-down-type line would appear across the soccer field.

### CAR-RACING LEADERS—

Any car in a pack can be made to glow like a hockey puck.

### FOOTBALL TELESTRATOR—

Banish the handwriting! Now you'll see players' routes appear on the ground just like the first-down line.

—TR



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# Who Needs Publishers?

With the rise of the Internet, writers may soon discover they can go into business for themselves and distribute their stories without magazines or newspapers.

**T**HERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CONFLICTS among writers, editors, and publishers. But the advent of online publishing, and some new technologies for embedding advertisements in e-mail messages, promise to give this conflict a new structural dimension. We may see a world in which ads are attached to particular stories, not publications. Put simply, the new world allows authors to go into business for themselves, and the impact on our experience as readers could be profound.

Writers want their stories—and their bylines, which serve as a personal brand—to replicate widely. Editors, by contrast, want the maximum number of eyeballs focused on a specific publication. The editor's goal, then, is not maximum *replication* of any particular story (or the generation of fame for any particular writer) but, instead, *reproduction* of the valued experience of reading the publication (or going to a particular place online). The publisher, meanwhile, is focused on the business side and seeks reproduction of a profit stream, which roughly corresponds to increasing subscription and advertising revenue and reducing costs (such as reporters' salaries).

All three—writer, editor, and publisher—share an interest in the viability of the publication effort. But there are distinct tensions between these goals. Replication of an article (the writer's goal) is cheap and fast. Reproduction of a publication brand is expensive and slow. It requires contracts, training, sustained relationships, and organizational structures.

As a reader, you have a stake in which of these two models—replication of an article or reproduction of an entire publication—dominates. If reproduction is dominant, you will experience a world of stable brand names and subscription-based publications consisting of changing aggregations of authors. If replication were to triumph, you would deal more directly with your favorite authors, spend less time skimming articles by authors you don't like, receive copies of stories sent to you by friends without any concern about copyright violations, find more extensive free archives of stories online—and perhaps have a better shot at becoming a widely replicated author yourself.

In the paper-based world, the tensions between a writer's desire for replication of a story and a publisher and

editor's desire for reproduction of the user experience are kept in balance because all three types of players need each other and need expensive, centralized production facilities. It's expensive to reprint a particular story and prohibitive to distribute print stories one at a time. If the audience is loyal to a publication, power flows to the party that can find revenue to keep the reproduction of the newspaper, magazine, or website going month after month. Reproduction rules.

The new architectures of the Net may change this balance. Online, it is now cheaper to distribute a particular story than it is to attract readers to a multi-voiced, ad-supported "publication." Insofar as a writer wants to spread her particular version of the truth to a maximum potential readership, it may no longer make sense to rely on the nineteenth-century economics of the printing press. Instead of having one publisher print a million copies, why not rely on the ability of 10,000 web surfers to send 10 copies each to their friends?

**T**HE WRITER STILL NEEDS TO EAT, OF course. And, for all but the most famous and popular, this may require surviving on ad revenue rather than on subscriptions. But the publisher's control over ad revenue, unquestioned when the paper-based publication was the only route to distribution, could be undermined in an electronic world. Who says the ad must go on the website rather than directly in the text of the story, albeit in a specially marked and separate place? If a third party sold ads for writers to attach to individual stories, and if writers conditioned use of their content on the attachment of these ads, the economics of the business could be turned upside down.

Most publishers might recoil in horror at this idea, except that it could produce more revenue for them, too, if the terms of the deal were right. The likely rate and extent of story replication would be influenced by a whole new set of factors. A story—even one containing ads—could be propagated to millions of readers by e-mail, whereas an online "publication" has to keep us coming back. A story is most likely to be copied widely if it is stored indefinitely and available over the longest possible time. In contrast, a website has to protect its archives and limit external copying. All things considered, there may be more eyeballs and revenue available to writers who unhook their stories (and the ad revenue that supports them) from particular portals. If we could visualize

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the movement of texts across the Web, we would see that “publications” flourish when they are smaller, more mobile, and more likely to cause us to pass them along to friends. A story, like a virus, can travel light and derive “nourishment” from its hosts. It’s hard for the large, complex mammals of the publishing world to compete against this tactic.

If this inversion were to occur, publishers and editors would not need to fear being out of a job, only that that job would change. Writers don’t like to sell ads. Some even welcome an editor’s input. Those who are good at selling ad placements, or overseeing production, or traditional editing, will have a role to play in service of an author-driven publishing model. The more legitimate cause for concern among traditional players may be that nothing requires that they be the first or most successful at playing the role of empowering story-based publishing.

A new generation of Net entrepreneurs may be the first to figure out how to create a flow of stories that, leading a self-replicating life of its own, throws off more revenue and attention than could have been produced with equivalent editorial and marketing effort even through a leading “publication.” Those entrepreneurs will not prohibit copying of their materials—they will encourage it. (To be fair, some online publications, like *Forbes*, even now offer a feature allowing a reader to “send this story to a friend,” thereby propagating an ad at least for their own online site.) The new-model players won’t remove older stories to a closed archive—they’ll facilitate the searching of their backlists. They won’t strive to maintain separation of ads and story text, they’ll integrate them (while maintaining visual separation to preserve trust). They may pay writers by offering a cut of ad revenue, rather than a salary.

Smart authors (with the help of their publisher and editor allies) may even figure out how to track their own personal readerships—offering sequels by direct e-mail to those who indicate an interest. This may, in turn, produce a new kind of demographic link for targeted advertising—if you read this commentator, you’re more likely to buy this car. It will become easier to tell which particular writers have the greatest readership—not just which multivoiced print publications get distributed (or visited—at the table-of-contents level—online).

Many will object that a story-based, ad-linked method of delivering news and commentary will diminish editorial “quality control” and undermine the ethical principles that call for separation between the editorial and business sides of the publishing industry. But what could better ensure quality than the collective judgments of millions of readers no longer forced—by the old-world convenience and economics of print publishing—to consult only a few viable publications? If a story gains its own separate life only if we, the readers, find it valuable and choose to share it, then boring, unclear, unhelpful authors will be punished directly in the marketplace. There will still be ethical questions if a writer sells his pen to an advertiser. But in a world where relatively few publications seem determined to preserve the integrity of their brand at all costs, wouldn’t we be equally willing to trust the author, who has a story to tell or a personal viewpoint to express, than an ad-selling publisher or online-venue-touting editor, to resist selling out?

And, because a writer of a story is not interested in the content of the ad that makes its replication possible, we can imagine blind placement agencies that procure ads for insertion into stories without the author’s advance knowledge as to which ad will run. The advertiser may not need to select a “publication” with great care—because the price for the ad could turn on data, collected after the fact, showing how widely (and where) the story replicated. We will have to use greater care in selecting our sources under this model because print-publication economics will no longer ensure that every writer must go through an editor to get to mass distribution. This trade-off may be worth it, however, insofar as it allows new voices that might not have made it through the print-world hurdles to reach a mass market. Your voice could be one of them.

Associating an ad with a particular story and allowing that story to propagate freely online has the potential to increase reader convenience, editorial quality, and overall publishing revenue. But this potential can only be realized if all concerned rethink their roles. Those roles, now based on the economies of scale of the printing press, reflect a slow, expensive process that involves high institutionalized costs of nurturing new writers and establishing closed distribution channels. Mammals reproduce. Stories, like viruses, replicate. They can outsource to others the task of making and distributing copies. Which model do you think has the best chance of capturing the bulk of the ad-revenue nourishment and journalistic energy available in cyberspace? Who will be the first to break out of the old paradigm? ■



World Radio History

# Best-selling author and *New York Times* restaurant critic Ruth Reichl spent years trying to be invisible. Now she sheds her disguise in one of her last meals as a reviewer.

C

AN I SMELL YOUR SOUP?" RUTH REICHL HAS HER NOSE AN INCH AWAY FROM MY CONSOMMÉ. *THE NEW YORK TIMES'S* RESTAURANT CRITIC NORMALLY DISPLAYS FLAWLESS MANNERS AND A FINELY CALIBRATED UNDERSTANDING OF DINING ETIQUETTE. BUT DUTY CALLS, SO REICHL HAS DIPPED HER HEAD INTO MY BOWL. SHE INHALES AND SIGHS: "MAITAKE MUSHROOMS."

We are tucked into a lacquer table for two at Sugiyama, a small, serene Japanese restaurant in mid-Manhattan. It's one of Reichl's last dinners in her role as arguably the most influential restaurant critic in the land before she leaves to edit *Gourmet* magazine.

For a change, Reichl is out of disguise, eschewing the wigs and glasses that have made her a famously elusive figure in New York restaurant circles. (She reasons that this restaurant's staff and patrons, most of whom are Japanese, will be unlikely to recognize her.) After asking me to switch seats so she can watch the chef work behind the sushi bar, Reichl settles in to sip cold, crisp sake out of willowy crystal. She has ordered for us in advance—I'm having the vegetarian meal and she's having the fish. Each will consist of an unhurried parade of miniature courses over a span of almost three hours.

Reichl needs to taste each course of my dinner along the way, but the portions are so minuscule that she worries I'll leave hungry. I reassure her ("I'll have a bowl of cereal when I get home"), so she reaches her chopsticks over my plate and lifts a mysterious, flowery, vegetable sushi, holding it up to the light. "Look how beautiful that is," marvels Reichl. She struggles to identify it. "Oh God, what do you call it? I can taste it without tasting it. I think it's a lotus bulb." As

I'm wondering how this relative stranger is going to bite my sushi and return it to me, her teeth slice it precisely in half. She chews carefully, as if waiting for the vegetable to announce itself. "I think it is lotus bulb but I'm not sure. It's not like anything I've ever tasted. The thing I was thinking of has a chestnutty quality. This has an oniony quality." She hands the sushi back.

Except for raising her eyebrows when each course is presented and gently asking "What is this?" Reichl appears no more intense or persnickety than any other diner—a youthful 51-year-old with a wild bush of hair, casually chewing and chatting. She doesn't take notes or whisper into a hidden tape recorder. Instead, she assembles her impressions after dinner when she gets home. Herself an ardent cook, Reichl has an uncanny memory for food and a keen detector for ingredients.

She needs them. Reichl is making the second of what will be four visits to Sugiyama, an average number for her. Reichl will have to recapture eight courses per person, along with their prominent ingredients, the service, the ambience, the music, even the color of the carpeting. (Reichl never calls the chef to check if she correctly divined, say, the spices. "The last thing you want," says Reichl, "is some

restaurateur saying, 'She didn't know what she was eating, she had to call!'")

To a great extent, Reichl holds the economic future of Sugiyama on her palate, and she knows the power of the star rating that she'll eventually bestow or withhold—one for "good," four for "extraordinary," and none if she considers the restaurant merely "satisfactory" or "poor." Even after five and a half years in this job, she says she's uncomfortable reducing a restaurant experience to a grade, but she knows it's the first thing readers look for when her review appears on Wednesday morning.

Reichl researches each chef she reviews. She knows, for instance, that Nao Sugiyama ran a restaurant that closed when immigration problems forced him to return to Japan. Tonight he moves gracefully in the warmly lit open kitchen, which doubles as a sushi bar. "He's got such a great face," Reichl says of the chef, whom she doesn't know. She admires the way he deftly converses with patrons at the sushi bar. "A good sushi chef has to have the quality of a good bartender, to know when to talk and when not to. And he's very good, he's very sweet. He's very open."

A glowing hot stone is presented to Reichl. It's a personal grill, she explains, to sear her fresh toro tuna and shemaji mushrooms. As the rosy flesh hisses before her, Reichl savors the rituals of a meal like this, appreciating its scrupulous ceremony. The chef is re-creating an elegant Japanese tradition, she notes, called *kaiseki*. "In Japan, this would be served in some beautiful little place by the side of a stream," purrs the well-traveled Reichl, "and you'd be in a tatami room with women in kimono coming in and out, and you'd be eating on antique plates and it would cost seven or eight hundred dollars a person. He's figured out a way to do this kind of food on another scale. And he's done an amazing job.... I always think of it as almost edible poetry. It's not about eating a lot, it's about a lot of little bites. And each thing refers to something. You'll notice, everything is very delicate."

# A Last Supper



**BY ABIGAIL POGREBIN**  
**PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL DONNELLY**

"Delicate" is an understatement. The dots of food arrive like a painted still life that you're afraid to disturb. And the rhythm of the evening is indeed lulling. There is nothing frantic about anyone's movements, the conversation is muted, the elegantly painted plates arrive with a gentle click on the table, and the waiter departs with few words. It's a very unusual dining experience, and for this reason, Reichl doubts people will flock here, no matter how positive a review she ultimately writes. "I just don't think there are a lot of Americans who want to eat these small little tastes," says Reichl. "I think this is pretty rarefied."

Suddenly Reichl's stone won't sizzle. "My hot rock has gotten cold!" she exclaims. "It won't cook my mushroom." She pauses and I wonder if she is irritated. "Do you fault the restaurant for the cooled rock?" I ask. "No," she laughs, "I fault myself for talking too much. A Japanese person would know that you're supposed to eat fast enough so that you finish it all before your rock gets cold."

Describing this food in print won't be a simple task. The Japanese vocabulary will mean little to most readers and the tastes don't resemble familiar flavors. Reichl is unfazed by tofu skins and sea urchin gonads, but how will she make her readers taste them? It's hard to imagine how any critic, after reviewing close to 52 restaurants a year for five years (not to mention some 200 additional reviews per year for the *Times*-owned radio station), doesn't simply run out of adjectives. "When I first started," she recalls, "I knew in my thesaurus all the adjectives for *delicious* were under number 298 and my thesaurus just flipped right open to it."

Other than using *irresistible* 61 times in print, Reichl has been amazingly inventive, describing a panna cotta as "trembling," oysters as "coppery," and sausage as "wimpy." An appetizer at Gloucester called "spaghetti vegetables," Reichl once wrote, "arrives looking like an Aztec god of a salad, filaments of carrots, cucumbers, and beets crowned with long slices of fried plantain. It's a beautiful thing, all vibrant color that wakes you up and makes you laugh. And then makes you wish it tasted better."

As acid as Reichl's opinions can be, she emphasizes the subjective nature of reviewing. "There is no right or wrong about this," Reichl asserts. "I'm not right. This is my opinion. And we're talking about things that happened to me....All I can do is say to my

readers, *This is who I am and this is what happened.* I think it's really important for the critic to put him or herself into it, for the reader to know who you are."

Reichl takes this personal voice so seriously that she instructs her dinner companions not to voice their opinions. "They think they're being helpful. They'll tell you everything that's wrong. That's not helpful....I usually say, 'Don't bother.' ...Nobody's paying for their opinions." Nevertheless, she'll often capitalize on a friend's comments, as she did in a recent three-star review of *Tabla*, a popular new Indian-influenced eatery. "Each time I dine at the restaurant I encounter at least one person who despises the food," she wrote. "It always takes me by surprise....I suddenly look up and find my guest staring with disbelief at a bowl of wild mushroom soup. 'It's horrible,' he says. I take a bite; it is electric with the taste of tamarind. The power of the ginger in the liquid takes my breath away. 'It's fabulous,' I cry, 'you're insane.'"

While her guest tonight savors the intense flavors of a piece of broccoli, Reichl grumbles. "I'm disappointed," she mutters. She thinks the chef has been lazy with my vegetarian meal; too many of the courses were too similar. "It shows a certain lack of imagination," she says. "I mean, I was really unhappy that you got the mountain yam twice."

But Reichl is patient with the service, despite our Japanese waiter's basic inability to explain anything we're being served. "I really appreciate the fact that this waiter, who clearly speaks very little English, not once has he said 'I don't know,'" says Reichl. "It would be more helpful if he knew ahead of time what things were....But it's a very new restaurant. They'll learn."

Most important, the waiter hasn't breached any of Reichl's rules of comportment. "Dirty fingernails," she winces, "I find really unpleasant. And you see it a surprising lot. Also, perfume and cologne that's strong enough so that when your server comes towards you, you can smell them coming." She doesn't mind the occasional spilled wine or late seating, but she recoils at waiters who insist on introducing themselves: "I really hate it when waiters tell you their name. You don't want to be friends with your waiter. Great service is unobtrusive—when you look around for a glass of water and it's there."

Above all else, Reichl abhors rudeness and snobbery. She riled the restaurant



Changing hats: Ruth Reichl is leaving her perch as a restaurant critic to become the editor of *Gourmet*.

industry in 1993 when she compared two experiences at the legendary *Le Cirque*—one in which she dined in disguise, and one in which she made no attempt to conceal her identity. As the "unknown diner," she was rushed, ignored, and forced to make do with a lot of "brown food." As the "most favored patron," she was showered with truffles and petit fours.

The owner, Sirio Maccioni, was enraged. "I think that was written by someone who didn't know what was going on in New York or going on in my family," Maccioni says. But he has softened on Reichl—since she crowned his new *Le Cirque 2000* with four stars two years ago. "I believe that she became a very fair person," Maccioni says now with no apparent irony.

Reichl distinguished her column by venturing beyond French and Italian restaurants to feature more global fare—a soba noodle parlor in Soho (the three stars she gave it dismayed the New York food establishment) and Ping's Chinese Restaurant in Queens.

Her reviews read like playlets in which patrons and waiters become distinct characters. A review of *Monkey Bar* began this way: "The woman stands at the top of the stairs. She looks left and right, smiling dazzlingly, as if waiting for the flashbulbs to explode. Then with the deliberate sensuality of Marilyn Monroe, she makes the most of her moment and slowly descends the staircase." And at *Aquavit*, the waiter "has the slightly frowning, preoccupied air of a young intern. He has a haughty doctor's demeanor, too: he acts as if we are extremely lucky to have his attention. The fact is, we don't have it all that often."

Reichl has rarely written about inferior, unpopular restaurants. "What's the point of telling people not to go to a restaurant nobody's going to?" she asks. But occasionally Reichl has clobbered a place she thinks no longer deserves its reputation. She recently demoted *Les Célébrités* from three stars to one: "When a restaurant charges \$25 for a bowl of turnip soup," she wrote in February, "pleasant is not enough."

Reichl's fans have gotten to know her not just through her column but also through her acclaimed memoir, *Tender at the Bone*, which chronicles her childhood in New York's Greenwich Village with a mother known to scrape mold off leftovers and serve the spoiled food at parties. "[B]efore I was ten I had appointed myself guardian of the guests," wrote Reichl. "My mission was to keep Mom from killing anybody who came to dinner."

Reichl's love of food survived her mother's affinity for recycled coleslaw, thanks partly to gastronomic influences such as a housekeeper who made wiener schnitzel. Somehow, Reichl—who is seen in a gym about as often as she is glimpsed at *Burger King*—has managed to stay slim despite consuming about 12 meals—and sampling 24 desserts—a week. "She eats," affirms four-star French chef Daniel Boulud admiringly. "I don't know how she can sustain the pace of eating and drinking so much."

Reichl says she's still not sick of reviewing, and wouldn't have thrown in her napkin had *Gourmet* not come courting. "When they called me, I said, 'Why would I want to leave? You must be crazy.' And then I thought, *In two years I'll be kicking myself.*"

She looks forward to getting to know the chefs she's had to keep her distance from, to eating lunch without a wig, and to catching a movie once in a while. What will she miss the most? "The letters," she says. "I get these letters from readers that really make you feel like you're making people happy, that you're really doing something"—she pauses. "I mean I still have my mother's voice echoing, 'Aren't you ever going to do anything useful with your life?'"

Three hours and \$177 later, Reichl returns a traditional bow of farewell and departs. A few weeks after, Reichl's review gives *Sugiyama* three stars and compares eating there to "a dream voyage across space that takes you, if only for a few hours, to the far side of the earth." She could have said the same thing about her own reviews. ■



COMMENTARY THAT HITS

# BELOW THE BELTWAY

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Trusting in a CBS producer (clockwise from top left): Jodi Tallarigo and Lauren Keller, parents Steven and Diane Keller, Dan Granger, and parents Teina and Richard Tallarigo.

When four families agreed to let *48 Hours* cover a statutory rape case they learned that the first thing people lose when they talk to the press

# WHOSE STORY IS

**T**HE SEDUCTION—OR THE REQUEST FOR cooperation, depending on your point of view—began last July 6. That's when Abra Potkin, a highly regarded, energetic—and, yes, arrestingly empathetic—producer for CBS's *48 Hours* approached two 18-year-old women in a parking lot outside the courthouse in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. Potkin told the 18-year-olds that she was interested in following the story in which their younger sisters had taken center stage. The women's 15-year-old sisters were two of the three complainants in a highly publicized case in which their high school's senior-class president and three of his friends were charged with statutory rape.

The case was notorious in Grosse Pointe, the tony Detroit suburb where the participants lived. And the legal charges told only a small part of the story: The two 15-year-olds had accused the men of forcible rape, while the third girl, a friend who'd had sexual experiences with the same men, had denied that force was involved. Much of the town had turned against the three girls, who had been hounded and harassed by students and residents, and the prosecutor was not pursuing charges of forcible rape.

The 15-year-olds' sisters passed the CBS producer's card to their parents. "I don't think this is a good idea," Steven Keller remembers saying when he was given the card. Concerned about his daughter Lauren, one of the two 15-year-olds, he didn't think more publicity would help.

But Potkin persisted, arranging a meeting with the families of both 15-year-olds. Potkin told them, according to Steven Keller, that she wanted to tell the girls' story to raise national awareness about date rape. She gave them copies of a sensitive documentary she had made about a young girl revealing to her community that she had AIDS.

The meeting left the two families believing that Potkin was setting out to create an in-depth, sympathetic portrayal of their daughters' ordeal. Steven Keller's wife and two daughters wanted to participate. Keller recalls that when Lauren told him, "Dad, if I can do something to stop" this from happening to someone else, "I think that I'm going to do something positive," he dropped his opposition.

Before officially agreeing to cooperate with CBS, the girls' parents met with Douglas Baker, who was prosecuting the statutory rape case. Baker says he cautioned them that "You don't know what the final product will look like....It may not depict you or your daughter in a way that you like. You won't have control over the final product."

Baker's warning would prove prophetic. But it didn't sway the families. On July 8, after some final negotiations with CBS, they agreed to work with *48 Hours*. The next day, Potkin sent the Kellers a letter confirming their commitment. CBS promised not to broadcast anything until the cases against the four men were resolved. "[W]e believe," the letter added, that "your daughters deserve this opportunity to tell the story of what happened in this case."

Four days later, on July 13, CBS began videotaping. Potkin and CBS video crews were in and out of the lives of the participants' families for the next four months. During that time, Potkin won the trust not only of the girls and their families, but also of Daniel Granger, then 18, the main accused man. And while Potkin ultimately crafted a report that was anything but superficial, she left the families of the two 15-year-old girls feeling victimized a second time. It's a complex story, a reminder that fairness can be in the eye of the beholder and that the first thing a person loses when he or she agrees to be interviewed by a journalist—even a good one—is the ability to control one's own story.

Finally, it raises a question: Do reporters have an obligation to protect the people whose lives they are chronicling? Most reporters would say that's an easy "no." But it's not such a simple question when the people involved are 15 and have been traumatized by a sexual experience and its very public aftermath.

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR POTKIN AND HER CBS TEAM to insert themselves into the fabric of Grosse Pointe. They interviewed teens in the area and videotaped the swarm of local media. Most of all, though, the *48 Hours* team spent countless hours with the girls—as well as a similar amount of time with Dan Granger and his family.

Potkin—who did not respond to interview requests for this article—did much more than tape interviews. She and her associate producer took out Lauren Keller and Jodi Tallarigo (the second 15-year-old) about ten times. They went shopping at a local mall, to dinner or the movies, and for manicures and pedicures. According to Steven Keller, the producers paid for the outings, some of which were videotaped.

The girls quickly grew attached to Potkin, 28, who they seemed to regard as a big sister. The producer provided a rare sympathetic ear for the girls, who had been ostracized. Potkin, they say, assured the girls that she believed in them and cared for them. The parents trusted the producers and seemed to consider them friends to their daughters. They allowed Potkin

involving their teenage children,  
is control of their own story.

By Leslie Heilbrunn

**IT, ANYWAY**





The *48 Hours* segment portrayed Dan Granger (with parents Laurie and Richard) as both a smug lothario and a bright student whose future had been ruined.

to take the girls out unchaperoned.

Potkin and the CBS crew were now inside the lives of the girls' families. For example, when the University of Michigan revoked its acceptance of Granger because of the statutory rape charges, CBS cameras taped Lauren and Jodi in Jodi's house jumping up and down with glee.

A CBS crew, of course, was in the courtroom on October 14 when Granger was sentenced to four and a half months in jail plus probation on the reduced charge of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. (His three friends pleaded guilty to similar charges; each was sentenced to 70 days in jail plus probation. As part of their plea agreements, two of the men admitted that the girls had not given expressions of consent.)

**O**NCE THE CASE WAS RESOLVED, CBS COULD AIR its report. As the broadcast date neared, the Kellers began to grow concerned. They say they were expecting an advance screening, something that never happened. The Kellers' anxiety mounted when they looked at a *TV Guide* days before the show aired, and noticed the title: "Cry Rape." To them, it signaled that the show would be skeptical of the girls' accounts.

Nearly frantic, Lauren Keller's mother called Potkin to tell her to obscure the family's faces on the video and hide their identities. But Potkin advised against doing that, Diane Keller asserts, telling her that it would make Lauren look like she had something to hide.

On November 19, the Kellers and Tallarigos gathered in their respective homes, with their attorneys present, to watch *48 Hours*. They were flabbergasted by what they saw.

The show opened by introducing Dan Granger, a cocky, popular, and ambitious high school senior who liked to carouse with his friends. CBS interspersed video of

Granger at parties, smugly acknowledging his participation in "booty calls," along with sober footage that showed the toll the case had taken on this promising student.

The Kellers and Tallarigos, meanwhile, were galled by what they thought was a one-dimensional portrayal of their daughters as flighty adolescents interested in clothes, video games, TV, and boys.

The show raised serious questions about teenage sexuality and cultural messages that promote sex. But it also presented provocative images of women and girls (including repeated shots that focused solely on the bodies of pubescent girls). The question of consent was raised. On air, the Keller and Tallarigo girls accused the men of plying them with alcohol (when the girls were only 14) and then raping them. But Nicole Ciccarelli, the third girl, contradicted her former friends. "It wasn't like we considered it rape or anything," she said, "It was, like, sex." Ciccarelli went so far as to say that Lauren Keller had explicitly asked her to set up a sexual assignation with Dan Granger. Her account essentially matched that of Granger, who acknowledged having sex with the girls, but denied forcing them to do so.

As the broadcast continued, Steven Keller recalls, his family watched in horror. Tears ran down Lauren Keller's face as Grosse Pointers were seen calling her and her friend liars. She grew hysterical; her older sister sobbed alongside her. Lauren felt betrayed all over again. By the end of the night, her father says, she had an emotional breakdown.

When the two girls' families spoke to CBS's Potkin the next day, they say they told her never to contact their daughters again under any circumstances.

THE KELLERS AND THE TALLARIGOS WERE LIVID. THE KELLERS had already filed a wide-ranging suit charging two local newspapers, the Grangers, and the Grangers' attorney with defamation; they had also sued Granger for assault and his parents for allegedly permitting alcohol to be served to their underage daughters.

Now the families considered a suit against CBS. (Repeated calls to three *48 Hours* producers were not returned. A CBS spokeswoman said the three would not comment, and would say only the following: "We believe our broadcast and our reporting was accurate and fair to all parties involved in a very sensitive and complex issue. We stand by our broadcast, as well as the entire staff involved in it.")

On November 27, Richard Tallarigo, Jodi's father, fired off a letter to Dan Rather, *48 Hours*'s anchor. The letter made a variety of charges, the majority of which are impossible to verify because they concern dealings between the families and CBS to which there were no outside witnesses. Responses from Susan Zirinsky, *48 Hours*'s executive producer, who answered Tallarigo's letter, are in italics. (The full text of both letters is available at [www.brillcontent.com](http://www.brillcontent.com).)

• **Charge:** CBS misled the Kellers and Tallarigos about how their daughters would be portrayed and did not make it clear that *48 Hours* would give such prominence—or sympathy—to Granger's story. *CBS response: Producer Potkin "repeatedly told you we would attempt to interview everybody*

involved in this story, the other side as well as your own, and that everyone would have the opportunity to present their positions..." Five separate sources—including Richard Tallarigo himself—confirm that it was commonly known that *48 Hours* was covering Granger.

• **Charge:** CBS broke its promise to let the families see the broadcast in advance, which was the condition on which the families had agreed that their daughters could be identified. (Their names had not previously been used in the media.) *CBS response:* Potkin "told you she would let you know before broadcast whose voices would be heard in the program, and she did. But she never promised that you would be permitted to see a tape of the program before it aired. CBS News policy prohibits such pre-broadcast disclosure of a program." (CBS's July 8 letter to the Kellers, which spelled out the conditions of their participation, included no mention of an advance screening.)

• **Charge:** CBS manipulated the girls into cheering and "high-fiving" at the news that Granger had been denied admission to the University of Michigan. *CBS response:* The scene was "not staged. In fact, the girls paged Ms. Potkin, and asked her to come to the house, where they were videotaped reacting to a local television story they were then watching."

• **Charge:** Tallarigo says *48 Hours* falsely insinuated that his daughter continued to socialize with the same group of

as a producer was always clear. Potkin was both "very professional" and very friendly, says Rita Diya, whose daughter's AIDS case was the subject of one Potkin story. "It was amazing that she could do both roles in and out so easily."

Both Richard Granger, whose son Dan was accused in the Grosse Pointe case, and Noreen Ciccarelli, whose daughter was the third complainant, say that Potkin lived up to her word. "I have no complaints with the *48 Hours* production," says Ciccarelli. "They told us that they were going to do a story about the community's reaction, the treatment of the girls, and the true story—and that's exactly what they did."

Potkin is "a warm person who listens very well, who's very empathetic," says Jonathan Klein, a mentor of Potkin's during his days as a producer at CBS. "All the best journalists have that ability to make people feel comfortable about telling the truth, because that's what journalism's all about."

Klein's statement reflects the deep divide between journalists and their subjects. To reporters, empathy is a tool to be used in service of gathering information. Even if reporters honestly sympathize with the person they're covering, their loyalty is to the story, not to the person. To the story subject, meanwhile, empathy can mean something else entirely. And when those subjects are 15—and seemingly acting without their parents' close supervision—that

## The Kellers' anxiety mounted when they learned the episode's title: "Cry Rape." To them, it signaled skepticism of their daughter's account. Nearly frantic, Diane Keller asked CBS to obscure the family's faces and names.

men after she was allegedly raped by one of them. *CBS response:* "[Y]our daughter did continue to socialize with the same group of young men.... It was after that rape that the incident occurred between your daughter and Dan Granger... that resulted in his prosecution and guilty plea." Jodi Tallarigo disputes her own father's account. She testified that she had two separate sexual encounters with the same group of men within a two-week period of time.

• **Charge:** CBS ignored the Tallarigos' request that it not videotape their daughter in front of a door graffitied with the words *Sex is good* and that the crew intentionally posed her in front of the words. *CBS response:* "Jodi [Tallarigo] was not posed in front of the graffiti on her door. Jodi was moving around the room as she was interviewed, and happened to be standing in front of the graffiti..." (Richard Tallarigo counters that it was the producer's responsibility to say, "OK, hold that thought, let's stand you right over here by the window because this background I was told not to shoot.")

ONLY THE FAMILIES AND POTKIN KNOW WHAT WAS REALLY said. And, as noted, general expressions of sympathy leave a lot of room for interpretation. But six people who have been subjects in Potkin's projects say that while Potkin certainly engaged them and formed relationships with them, her role

empathy can feel a lot like a friendship. "The families felt like [*48 Hours*] was like their patron saint," says Ron French, a *Detroit News* reporter who covered the case, "who was going to see them through this terrible time."

In that, the families were clearly wrong. And even if the girls' families have reason to feel betrayed, it also has to be said that the *48 Hours* broadcast gave both sides of the story. Consider the views of Douglas Baker, who prosecuted the case. He knows the facts, and, as the person who put Dan Granger in jail, is certainly no friend to the convicted men. Baker does not challenge the show's accuracy: "I thought it was balanced in that they covered both sides."

In the end, perhaps, one can argue that while the adults sought their legitimate aims—for the girls' families, vindication; for the producers, a compelling story—the girls were caught in the middle, unprotected by both their parents and by the producers. The girls' vulnerability comes through most poignantly in a passing moment in the broadcast. In it, Nicole Ciccarelli, the most thoughtful teenager interviewed, explains that she and her mother were leaving Grosse Pointe to make a fresh start in a new community. As Nicole put it in the interview, which would be seen by 12.6 million viewers around the country, "People don't know that I'm one of those girls. I hope they don't find out." ■

# Pop Goes The Revolution



**Tad Low and Woody Thompson say their *Pop-Up Video* is spurring a cultural insurrection. Fans just consider it a riot.**



**T**HERE ARE CERTAIN MOMENTS THAT capture a creator's vision. For Herman Melville, it's Ahab's show-down with the great white whale. For Shakespeare, it's Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy. And for Tad Low and Woody Thompson, the minds behind *Pop-Up Video*, the VH1 television show that layers music videos with behind-the-scenes production stories, it's the blurb-blurb of a text bubble poking fun at celebrity insincerity.

Witness the duo's deconstruction of the video for "Promise of a New Day," the 1991 song from Los Angeles Lakers cheerleader-turned-pop-music chanteuse Paula Abdul. The original music video showed Abdul, with her Laker Girl moves and bubble-gum lyrics, bopping about a lush, tropical landscape. As they have done with 519 other videos, Low and Thompson overlaid Abdul's production with a series of text bubbles that throw irreverent jabs. In the *Pop-Up* version of "Promise of a New Day," one bubble informs viewers that Abdul chose the tropical backdrop because she "wanted the video to draw attention to the ero-

sion of the ozone and the rainforests." But, as the next bubble reveals, "Paula never left the L.A. studio—all her scenes were shot in front of a blue screen." Another blurb claims that "[t]he grass was painted emerald green to give it 'extra richness.'" Then comes the punchline: "Painting grass can cause harm to the environment."

Low, 32, and Thompson, 31, consider themselves a sort of modern-day Woodward and Bernstein, investigative journalists whose beat is the celebrity image-making apparatus. "Music videos are infomercials to get you to buy an album," says Thompson, whose program, in the unironic words of Low, is "the *Consumer Reports* of music videos." The partners fancy themselves subversives. "The whole idea is to eliminate this pantheon of false gods and to replace it with people who are more meaningful," says Low.

But to Viacom Inc.-owned VH1, *Pop-Up Video* isn't about effecting social change; it's about revenue. The program—which the network, not Low and Thompson, owns—is a moneymaker that's edging toward cash-cow status with the help of licensing agreements with



**BY KATHERINE ROSMAN**

**POP  
UP  
VIDEO**



Tad Low (in mascot garb) and Woody Thompson are the brains behind *Pop-Up Video*.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW BRUSSO



Billie Jean King was not Michael's lover.

Michael Jackson's hit song "Billie Jean" unleashed the free-association talents of the *Pop-Up Video* crew.

toymakers, clothing manufacturers, the National Hockey League, and the New York Yankees, to name a few. *Pop-Up* has become such a cornerstone program for VH1—and a primary reason for the network's ratings turnaround—that, in his 1997 letter to shareholders, Viacom chief executive Sumner Redstone mentioned it in the same sentence as *Angela's Ashes*, Frank McCourt's Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir, and the mega-smash film *Titanic*.

So the network brass will likely humor Low and Thompson's urge to bedevil and belittle until it jeopardizes Viacom's relationships with the musical artists whose videos are VH1's financial lifeblood. In 1997, pop singer Jakob Dylan of the Wallflowers—who, Thompson had read, has stormed out of interviews when too many comparisons to his father, Bob Dylan, have been made—objected to a popped-up version of his band's 1996 hit single "One Headlight." Thompson had written a script that intentionally played up the family connection by repeatedly referring to Bob Dylan songs. ("It was 15 degrees [when the video was being shot]," one pop-up read, "but it felt even colder 'Blowin' In The Wind.'") The younger Dylan insisted that VH1 president John Sykes yank the popped-up video. Sykes says he didn't hesitate to oblige.

For heeding celebrity whims and whines, Low calls Sykes a "sycophant."

Viacom-owned VH1 and MTV Networks are "nothing more than intimate bedfellows with the industry," Low adds. Thompson agrees, calling VH1 "ratings and money whores."

Responding to the *Pop-Up Video* duo's characterizations, VH1 executives sound much like parents tolerating—and patronizing—their rambunctious, troublemaking kids. "I think they believe every word of what they're saying," says Lauren Zalaznick, VH1's senior vice-president of original programming and development. Still, she says, "I would point out that they make their living making television shows, which in and of itself puts them on the side of commerce and collusion. And there's no two ways about it. They are not documentary filmmakers struggling to 'expose' the new payola.... They are not Ralph Nader."

As MTV News's Christopher Connelly succinctly puts it: "If they go after Pat Benatar, Pat Benatar is not going to be able to make sure they

never work again."

Low and Thompson may view themselves as crusaders, rallying the masses to resist corporate cultural hegemony. But the approximately 10 million weekly viewers of *Pop-Up Video* just want to have fun by spending a half-hour in front of the TV, laughing at the videos that go pop, pop, pop.

**I**N 1996, VH1 WAS A STRUGGLING cable network saddled with an image as cutting edge as Celine Dion's. John Sykes was handed the task of infusing the channel with attitude and reversing its fortunes.

He soon hooked up with Low and Thompson, who were shopping some ideas of their own. The two have known each other since 1979, when they were campers at Camp Dudley in upstate New York. (Low says Thompson was the coolest kid at camp because his face adorned the front of the Honeycomb cereal box, and any kid on the front of a box of sugared cereal, Low says, is "a big celebrity.") They became reacquainted after college (Low graduated from Yale; Thompson from Colgate) when both moved to New York City to break into the TV business.

Thompson, the calmer of the two, has a boyishness about him—curly light-brown hair, full cheeks that easily break into dimples, and a tendency to slouch down in his chair. He worked as a writer, producer, and editor for three and a half years for the production company that makes *Nick News*, a children's news program for Nickelodeon, another Viacom property. He's the mellow antidote to the redheaded Low, who can be bombastic and short-tempered. Low has held seven full-time media jobs—many of them on-air—with organizations such as MTV News and CBS's New York television affiliate.

Before *Pop-Up Video* powered an image and ratings makeover, the struggling VH1 was as cutting edge as Celine Dion.





He's been fired from five of them, including *Good Morning America* and MTV. Low brags about getting canned the way most people brag about being promoted.

But in creative sensibility and sense of humor, the two are strikingly similar. In 1994, Low recruited Thompson to produce segments for *Last Call*, an ill-fated syndicated late-night talk show Low cohosted. After about 13 weeks, both were fired and then started a production venture called Spin The Bottle, Inc. Through the partnership, Low and Thompson came up with *Pop-Up Video* and other program concepts such as *Rock Your World*, in which a weekly newsreel would be accompanied by modern hits. ("From the war in Bosnia intercut with Frankie Goes To Hollywood's [1984 song] 'War' to Mike Tyson's bowing out of his heavyweight bout to Sheryl Crow's [1993 hit] 'Leaving Las Vegas,'" reads the pitch, "it's a chance to play great tunes intercut with today's images.")

Of the eight ideas the pair proposed to him, Sykes chose *Pop-Up Video*, which rapidly became the network's initial success in its new "Music First" incarnation. "I think *Pop-Up* was a huge part of our turnaround," Sykes says. In fact, since *Pop-Up* took off, VH1's ratings have skyrocketed 78 percent among the coveted 18-49 demographic. In the last year, *Pop-Up*'s own ratings jumped 38 percent among the same demographic.

**N**OW THAT *POP-UP VIDEO* IS established, Low and Thompson delegate daily authority for the program to 34-year-old producer Paul Leo. "The video is an artifact of our culture," Leo says, "and we're doing a little mini-thesis on it as it happens." He selects which videos to pop by deciding which could use some jazzing up (Seal's 1995 hit "Kiss from a Rose," for instance, and the Goo Goo Dolls' 1998 single "Iris") and which have nostalgic import (Randy Newman's 1983 "I Love L.A." and Wall of Voodoo's 1982 song

"Mexican Radio").

Once the videos are assigned to one of five staff writers, the entire Spin The Bottle staff—Thompson, Low, the writers, the researchers, the office manager—meets in a cozy room painted nail-polish red. Everyone smushes onto the oversized black couch, watches the video, and screams out whatever pops into their heads.

This "brain screen" rarely lacks for witty ideas. During a recent viewing of 1992's "Human Touch" by Bruce Springsteen (a.k.a. "The Boss"), comments begin flying before the

stuff that's not really about the video." For the video of "Hot Legs," the 1981 duet by Rod Stewart and Tina Turner, Shidnia gets this query from a writer: "Try to find out something from [Kentucky Fried Chicken] or other chicken resource on: relative popularity/sales of 'legs' (i.e. drumsticks) vs. other body parts...are breasts the most popular chicken part?...How many deaths are there yearly from undercooked chicken?" Shidnia searched the Web and struck gold: "I found out that Texas A & M [University] has a department of poultry science." Calls to the chicken



Low and Thompson (leaning forward on couch) hold court in the "red room" for the regular screening of pre-popped music videos.

video starts rolling. Look at bosses, one staffer recommends, naming New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner and ad agency honcho Mr. Tate from the sixties sitcom *Bewitched*. The song's title also gets the group's trivial tendencies flowing. "What about bass?" asks one fish-loving staffer. "If you touch them they get a disease and their scales fall off." A *Pop-Up* writer then declaims, "Clearly, there's a lot in the masturbation file."

After the free-association shindig ends, two staff researchers get to work. Shellina Shidnia, 26, has the responsibility of tracking down "all the extra

experts yield the desired information.

Staff writers such as Liz Lewis, 27, conduct the actual interviews to get the behind-the-scenes-set stories that inform what Lewis calls her "gonzo journalism." People who have worked on the videos are the most important sources. Occasionally, Lewis has even gotten her hands on a crew list that provides names and numbers for every person who worked on a particular video. "To *Pop-Up Video*," she says, "a crew list is gold." Usually, though, Lewis makes cold calls to makeup artists, directors, and choreographers, hoping for warm receptions.

Lewis's goals are less ambitious

Low and Thompson fancy themselves subversives, fighting the entertainment conglomerates' cultural hegemony. "The whole idea is to eliminate this pantheon of false gods," says Low. But the 10 million weekly viewers of *Pop-Up Video* just want to have fun.



than those of Low and Thompson. "I don't take it upon myself to debunk a myth," she says. "I think of myself...as a journalist. I am going to go out and get the facts and I will present the facts." She acknowledges, however, that, "very often in recent music-video history, the facts paint a picture of unabashed, shameless marketing."

Before the words are matched with the pictures, producer Leo oversees a strict editing process. "We need double sourcing for everything," Leo explains, because a mistake "makes us look bad." If an error makes its way into a broadcast video, Leo works to get a correction made before the video airs again, because mistakes—whether factual or grammatical—subvert *Pop-Up's* own subversive agenda. "It's where people start to doubt what we're telling them," Leo says. He writes his comments and questions on the script, which is returned to the writer for revision. The next draft goes to VH1's Zalaznick.

During this process—from brain screening to broadcast—the content of the music-video journalism can change dramatically. For one 1998 *Pop-Up* episode, Leo selected Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean." The assigned *Pop-Up* writer had no shortage of fodder. The self-proclaimed King of Pop has his peculiarities—reportedly undergoing extensive plastic surgery, for instance, and attending public events with Bubbles, his pet chimpanzee. And by a fluke of pop culture, the "Billie Jean" video debuted in 1983, the same year as *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* cleaned up at the box office. So the writer played up Jackson's "alien" behavior. But the toughest jabs involved sex. "Michael worried people might think this song was about a well-known tennis player," one pop read. Then, the writer proposed to air a picture of Billie Jean King next to the cap-

tion, "Billie Jean King was not Michael's lover." And then, in rapid succession: "Also not Michael's lover: Billy Joel...Billy Joe [from the band Green Day]...Billy Ray [Cyrus]...Billy Martin...Billy Bob [Thornton]...Billy Club...Billy Goat."

At the end of the first draft, Leo noted, "Works OK...but sort of light on the production info—this is a seminal video—script needs that historical perspective." Zalaznick had bigger problems than lack of historical context. "Sorry—but the overall tone is too mean, in an easy way—I'm almost ok w/ the alien stuff, but not the sex." She marked a red "X" through the "Billy Club" blurb and wrote "NO" next to it in big capital letters.

Her edits, she explains, didn't stem from any fear of offending advertisers. The billy goat joke, she thought, was clever. The billy club joke was not. "It was a clear gay bash," she says. So the sex was toned down in the final script—"billy club" was cut and became "Billy C." next to a picture of President Clinton.

As generally happens, the "Billie Jean" video went to VH1's legal and standards department. Legal and standards, according to Leo, had a problem with the historical context that the writer had added. "Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean' was the first video by a black artist on MTV," Leo explains, "and we had said something [like] 'MTV refused to play black artists until this video.'" That didn't sit well with the standards departments, he says. They claimed that "it wasn't that they were refusing, they just hadn't yet." The information eventually aired as follows: "This video was originally rejected by MTV in 1983....The channel claimed it didn't meet their quality standards." Zalaznick defends the network's edit, saying there was no way to

prove that MTV had "refused" to air videos by black artists.

**P**OP-UP VIDEO'S SUCCESS HAS MADE its creators a much-in-demand commodity in Hollywood. For a reported \$500,000 over two years, the Walt Disney Company gets a first peek at Low and Thompson's ideas for network series and specials. On the cable front, they are developing programs for the American Movie Classics channel (creating Cliff's Notes versions of your favorite films) and the Travel Channel. Other TV shows, including *NBC Today*, have tried to glom on to *Pop-Up's* ratings-generating gimmick by inviting the pair to their studios to work their brand of backstage magic. And USA Networks, Inc., chairman Barry Diller (an investor in *Brill's Content*) has hired them to produce *Phly*, a show built around secret recordings of conversations between anonymous people in bars, parks, and restaurants (the conversations are to be aired only after the people give their consent) against the backdrop of pop-culture images. The show is to run on WAMI Miami and eventually on Diller's USA Broadcasting television stations.

**I**RONICALLY, POP-UP VIDEO HAS ALSO proven lucrative for the musicians spoofed by the show and for the giant record companies that market their wares. As a result of the *Pop-Up* treatment, Sykes explains, viewers become reacquainted with singers they've often forgotten, and then go out and buy those artists' albums.

Helping entertainment conglomerates move product is certainly not the intention of Low and Thompson. But such is the curse of rebel culture, says Leslie Savan, advertising critic for the *Village Voice* and author of *The Sponsored Life: Ads, TV, and American Culture* (Temple University Press). Any rebellion against society's status quo that



seems “cool” can be co-opted to benefit the status quo, Savan says. If the hipness “attaches itself to an item or an object or a product,” she explains, it can have “good rub-off. The ‘coolness’ of the *Pop-Up* message can go like osmosis” into the bands they mock or the manufacturers to whom the gimmick is licensed. “That’s the real hideous problem of coolness in America and throughout the world,” Savan says. Commerce will always try to capitalize on rebel chic—and will usually succeed.

To protest the watering down of their cultural protest, Low and Thompson rely on the same sensibility that drives *Pop-Up Video*: They try to make public information that some might prefer remain private.

A late 1997 visit to *The Oprah Winfrey Show* offered such an opportunity. Low and Thompson had flown to Chicago to “pop” *Oprah*, a TV spot that Low disparagingly calls “the Holy Grail” of publicity. Low wanted to capture what it’s really like to be a guest on one of America’s favorite talk shows, so he took video



footage of the green room. (“I wanted to show people what kind of spread you get,” he says with feigned innocence.) Bringing a camera onto the studio property, though, is strictly forbidden. When *Oprah* staffers (whom Thompson refers to as “freaks, her cult”) noticed their filming, a security detail arrived to confiscate the camera. Low refused to give up easily. “I had had enough with *Oprah* and her sycophantic staff,” he says. So he secretly removed the video cassette before turning the camera over.

It didn’t take long for Winfrey’s staff to notice that the camera was empty. Five minutes before showtime, the executive producer delivered an ultimatum: No tape, no *Oprah*. Low became increasingly indignant and refused to hand over the tape. For once, Thompson lost his cool. “My wife, my mother-in-law, and [a few] staffers are in the audience,” Thompson remembers, and “Tad wants to be treated like Tom Cruise.” Thompson’s rage—and the

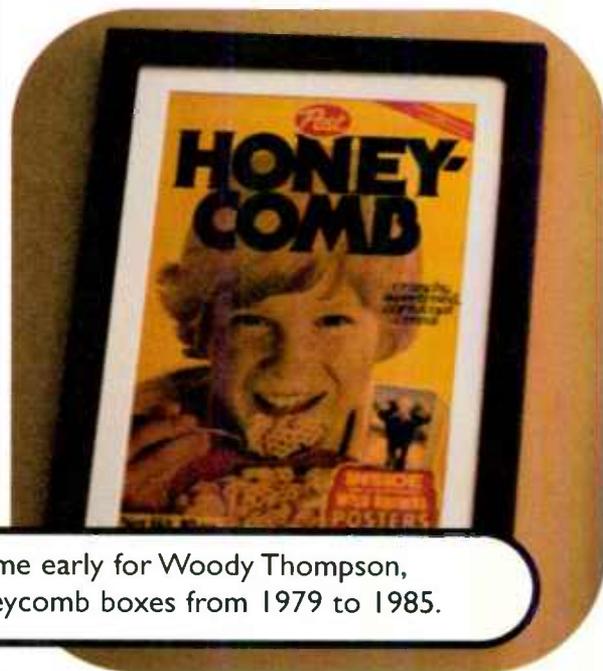
producer’s threat—convinced Low to give in, and the two made their appearance before *Oprah*’s average of 33 million weekly viewers. But Low and Thompson printed an account on their website ([www.spinthebottle.com](http://www.spinthebottle.com)) of what they deem her censorial actions. “That’s pretty much entertainment career suicide to dis *Oprah*,” Low says with palpable pride. (Winfrey’s press office declined to comment for this article.)

Then, in January, Low and Thompson decided to tempt their employment fate by lambasting their boss in front of a visiting reporter. They had wanted to produce a special, live *Pop-Up Video* edition of President Bill Clinton’s State of the Union address. Amid tawdry presidential revelations and a surreal impeachment process few could have imagined, Low and Thompson were positively giddy anticipating the pops they could come up with, as the assem-



bite the hand that feeds them....Anyone who’s made a major impact in content,” McDonnell reasons, has done so by “going against the grain of what the expected wisdom is.”

“They’re extremely creative,” Sykes says. “Are they difficult? Sure. Does it



Pop-culture celebrity came early for Woody Thompson, whose face graced Honeycomb boxes from 1979 to 1985.

bled continually applaud Clinton’s words. How many people in Washington have the clap? How many people in Washington are named Lewinsky? And how close to the Capitol is the nearest McDonald’s?

Sykes rejected the idea. Low and Thompson insist the kibosh came because Sykes was trying to kiss up to President Clinton. Low and Thompson dared the reporter to confront Sykes about the State of the Union incident, smiling the mischievous grins of two young campers who have just short-sheeted their counselor’s bed.

Sykes laughs off the incident, but still, telling a reporter that your boss is a kiss-ass isn’t usually a smart career move. That brashness is, however, a component of their talent, argues *Men’s Journal* editor Terry McDonnell, who worked with Low and Thompson on the doomed late-night show several years back. “I think they have the one thing that will ultimately ensure their success,” he says. “The instinct to

bother me? No....At the end of the day, they create the kind of television that no one else has so far.” That’s what counts in the entertainment industry. “If you can deliver the goods,” says VH1’s Zalaznick, “you know what? Everyone needs a product.”

That’s just the kind of bottom-line attitude the two creators loathe. Still, they carry on with what they see as their mission, mocking the steady stream of one-hit wonders and other cultural effluvia. “We’re here to offer an entertainment alternative that’s not going to be shepherded through the normal means of publicity,” Low says. He and Thompson know where they want to go and Low insists they don’t need *Entertainment Tonight*, *Access Hollywood*, or *Oprah* to get there. “If you sell out, if you play by their rules,” Thompson says gravely, “they’ll use you and abuse you. You’ll be their flavor of the month.” ■



BRILL'S CONTENT

# 1999 SALARY REPORT

TELEVISION



MAGAZINES



NEWSPAPERS



RADIO



ONLINE



# WHO GETS



# WHAT

**J**EFF GREENFIELD GOT RIGHT TO THE POINT. “I REALIZE THAT IT FASCINATES PEOPLE, but I’m old,” the 55-year-old CNN senior analyst declared, “and I come from a time when it’s nobody’s business.” Greenfield’s reaction was perhaps more colorful, but not much different, than that of many (though not all) of the media figures we encountered in the creation of this special salary report. And Greenfield’s challenge should be addressed. Is this stuff any of our (or your) business? We answer yes, of course, and here’s why.

There are lots of different ways to look at media, and for this magazine, the most important is to examine the—surprise—content. But our mission is to give our readers the smartest, fullest picture we can of how nonfiction content is created, and that means understanding the people, ideas, and market forces that are shaping that world. There’s more to any market than what people get paid, of course, but there probably is no better indicator of what the market values than its pay scales.

People are entitled to try to keep their salaries secret. But it’s worth noting that, in the end, the secrecy most serves the interest of the bosses. This explains why, while many people didn’t want to talk about their own salaries, they sure were interested in learning about everyone else’s. After all, what better way to find out how you stack up and perhaps bolster your own bargaining clout?

But we’re not doing this as a service to the industry. We’re doing it because consumers get smarter about what they’re reading, watching, and hearing when they understand the market a little better.

It could be argued, for example, that the marketplace seems to reward the number of eyeballs that an on-air person is thought to be able to keep glued to a screen more than it rewards the quality of the content of the reporting. How else to explain why a White House television correspondent makes so much more than what top newspaper correspondents—such as *The Washington Post*’s Peter Baker—are paid, let alone why someone like Baker makes less than a weather announcer in Davenport, Iowa. The same phenomenon would explain why on-air talent generally make more than their executive-producer bosses, who often rule their lives and scripts with an iron hand. (One exception here

is Don Hewitt, the original and still-incumbent executive producer of *60 Minutes*, whose high pay suggests that the *60 Minutes* brand, as much as the on-air talent, is the show’s biggest asset.)

In short, in most markets, whether the product is soda or information, the perception of relative fungibility (does the name really count in the marketplace?) governs much of the value, perhaps at the sacrifice of rewarding excellence.

All this said, we need to be clear about the limits, caveats, and flaws with this report.

This is not meant to be comprehensive, although we did try to hit most of the major national news organizations. It’s a broad cross section, but we left out some important people if we just couldn’t nail down their packages. For example, we included *The New York Times*’s executive editor Joseph Lelyveld because we think we have a good idea of his salary and bonus (but not a good enough idea to allow us to provide more than a range of \$450,000–\$600,000, rather than an exact number). But we didn’t get enough comfort on *Washington Post* executive editor Leonard Downie Jr.’s annual income, so we didn’t include it.

While we only included salaries that we were confident about, there is a wide variety in the kinds and levels of confirmation we received. This is why in many instances, as with Lelyveld, we’re sacrificing some precision in order to increase accuracy. Also, with job categories—as opposed to named individuals—we use ranges to cover what more than one person holding the same title may earn. Another reason for using ranges is that some of our sources had information that was precise but a year or two old; thus, we had to estimate any subsequent change.

We’re including in our compensation figure salary and bonus, but not

other income, such as outside speaking fees, stock options, and other payments that could be significant. And compensation figures are rounded to the nearest \$1,000 increment.

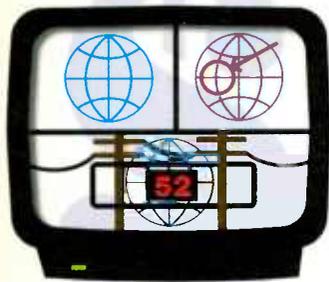
We tapped a variety of sources. Salaries for many top executives are included in corporate filings, for instance, which confer a strong degree of credibility. TV stars’ salaries are often the subject of speculation in the trade and general-interest press. And every workplace is rife with speculation about what colleagues and supervisors make.

We tracked down all these sources, and talked to supervisors, people who had held the jobs in question previously, people who had been offered those positions, union representatives, agents, colleagues, and others, in order to confirm or correct press stories and rumors and to get fresh information on those whose salaries had never been talked about. Everyone got a chance to confirm the numbers. Some did, many wouldn’t.

Finally, we chose to “name names” only for people deemed to have a high profile or the kind of job high enough on the totem pole that their name, not just their title, is relevant. In cases where we didn’t use names but identified the position, we do not mean that everyone with that title makes that salary, but rather, that a specific person earns that salary or it’s typical for the slot.

The reporting for this project was a staffwide effort, with contributions from Kendra Ammann, Matthew Reed Baker, Steven Brill, Kimberly Conniff, Amy DiTullio, Matthew Heimer, Jennifer Greenstein, Leslie Heilbrunn, Gay Jervey, Dimitra Kessenides, D.M. Osborne, Abigail Pogrebin, Jeff Pooley, Ted Rose, Rifka Rosenwein, Bridget Samburg, Julie Scelfo, Robert Schmidt, Ed Shanahan, and Rachel Taylor.

—ERIC EFFRON, EDITOR



E'VE ALL HEARD ABOUT THE HUGE SALARIES COMMANDED BY the biggest TV-news stars. But most people who work in television news toil in local markets, and for those folks, the riches of the big time are a distant beacon. Outside of the biggest city markets, TV journalists often earn modest salaries for which they're expected to perform multiple jobs. In our television report, you'll see what the big people (and the people behind the big people) make, but you'll also learn about folks like Ed Agre. Agre pulls in \$22,000 a year. He is the news director, the anchor, *and* the reporter at tiny KXGN in Glendive, Montana.



**BARBARA WALTERS**  
ABC



**TED KOPPEL**  
NIGHTLINE, ABC



**HUGH DOWNS**  
20/20, ABC



**DAN RATHER**  
CBS

**ABC:**  
**BARBARA WALTERS**  
**COANCHOR**  
20/20  
**COHOST AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**  
THE VIEW  
**HOST**  
THE BARBARA WALTERS SPECIALS  
**\$10 MILLION!**

**PETER JENNINGS**  
**ANCHOR AND SENIOR EDITOR**  
WORLD NEWS TONIGHT  
**\$8.5-\$9 MILLION**

**TED KOPPEL**  
**ANCHOR AND MANAGING EDITOR**  
NIGHTLINE  
**\$8 MILLION**

**DIANE SAWYER**  
**COANCHOR**  
20/20 and GOOD MORNING AMERICA  
**\$7 MILLION**

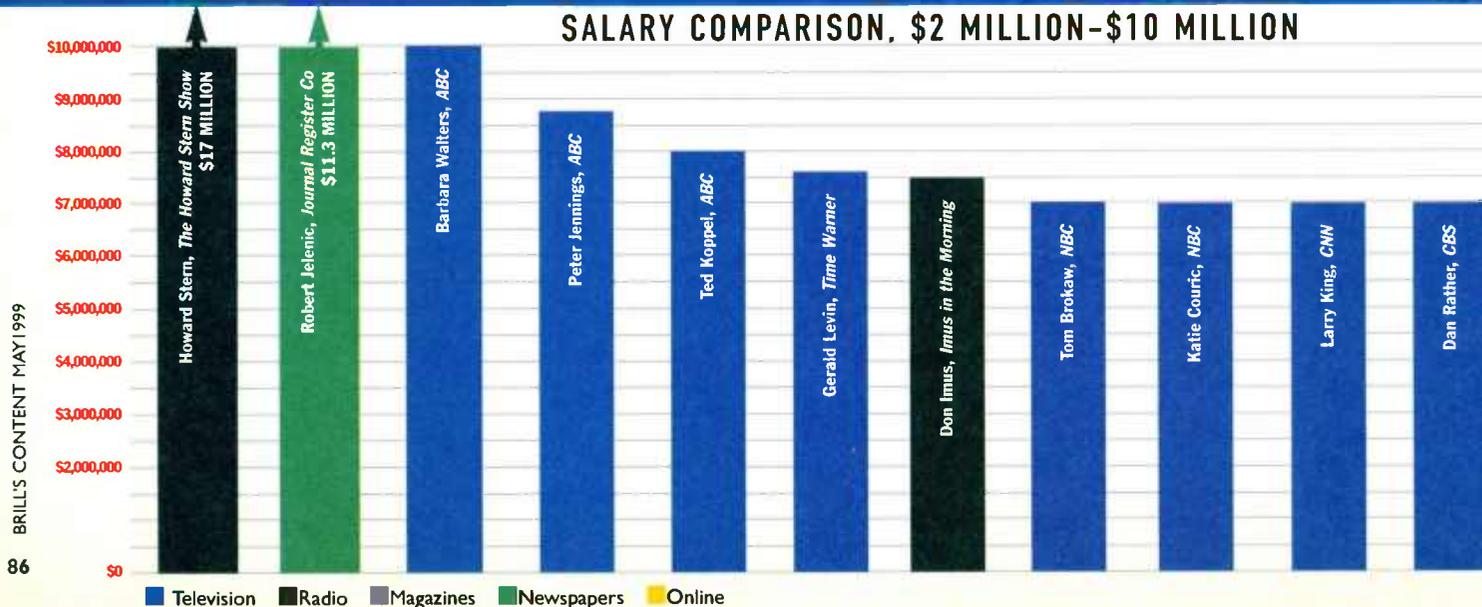
**HUGH DOWNS**  
**COANCHOR**  
20/20  
**\$3.25 MILLION**

**SAM DONALDSON**  
**CHIEF WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT** ABC NEWS; **COANCHOR THIS WEEK; COANCHOR 20/20**  
**\$3-\$3.5 MILLION**

**FORREST SAWYER**  
**CORRESPONDENT, SUBSTITUTE ANCHOR** ABC NEWS  
**\$2.5 MILLION**

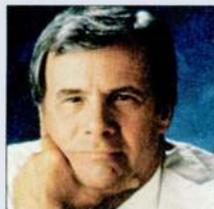
SVENNENVIK/ABC (WALTERS); DAMICO/ABC (KOPPEL); SVENNENVIK/ABC (DOWNS); BUSACCA/CBS (RATHER)

SALARY COMPARISON, \$2 MILLION-\$10 MILLION





**LESLEY STAHL**  
60 MINUTES, CBS



**TOM BROKAW**  
NBC



**JEFF ZUCKER**  
NBC TODAY

**KATIE COURIC**  
COANCHOR  
NBC TODAY  
**\$7 MILLION**

**MATT LAUER**  
COANCHOR  
NBC TODAY  
**\$2.5 MILLION**

**NEAL SHAPIRO**  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
DATELINE NBC  
**\$1.2-\$1.5 MILLION**

**CONNIE CHUNG**  
COANCHOR  
20/20  
**\$1 MILLION**

**SENIOR PRODUCER**  
20/20  
**\$200,000-\$250,000**

**SEGMENT PRODUCER**  
WORLD NEWS TONIGHT  
**\$80,000-\$150,000**

**CBS:**  
**DAN RATHER**  
ANCHOR AND  
MANAGING EDITOR  
CBS EVENING NEWS  
WITH DAN RATHER  
**\$7 MILLION**

**DON HEWITT**  
CREATOR AND  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
60 MINUTES  
**\$4-\$5 MILLION**

**MIKE WALLACE**  
COEDITOR AND  
CORRESPONDENT  
60 MINUTES  
**\$3 MILLION**

**STEVE KROFT**  
COEDITOR AND  
CORRESPONDENT  
60 MINUTES  
**\$1.75 MILLION**

**LESLEY STAHL**  
COEDITOR AND  
CORRESPONDENT  
60 MINUTES  
**\$1.75 MILLION**

**BOB SCHIEFFER**  
CHIEF WASHINGTON  
CORRESPONDENT;  
MODERATOR  
FACE THE NATION  
WITH BOB SCHIEFFER  
**\$1.5 MILLION**

**PRODUCER**  
60 MINUTES  
**\$100,000** (starting salary)

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
CBS NEWS  
**\$22,000**

**NBC:**  
**TOM BROKAW**  
ANCHOR AND  
MANAGING EDITOR  
NBC NIGHTLY NEWS  
WITH TOM BROKAW  
**\$7 MILLION**

**JEFF ZUCKER**  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
NBC TODAY  
**\$1.05-\$1.25 MILLION**

**LISA MYERS**  
WASHINGTON  
CORRESPONDENT  
NBC NEWS  
**\$375,000**

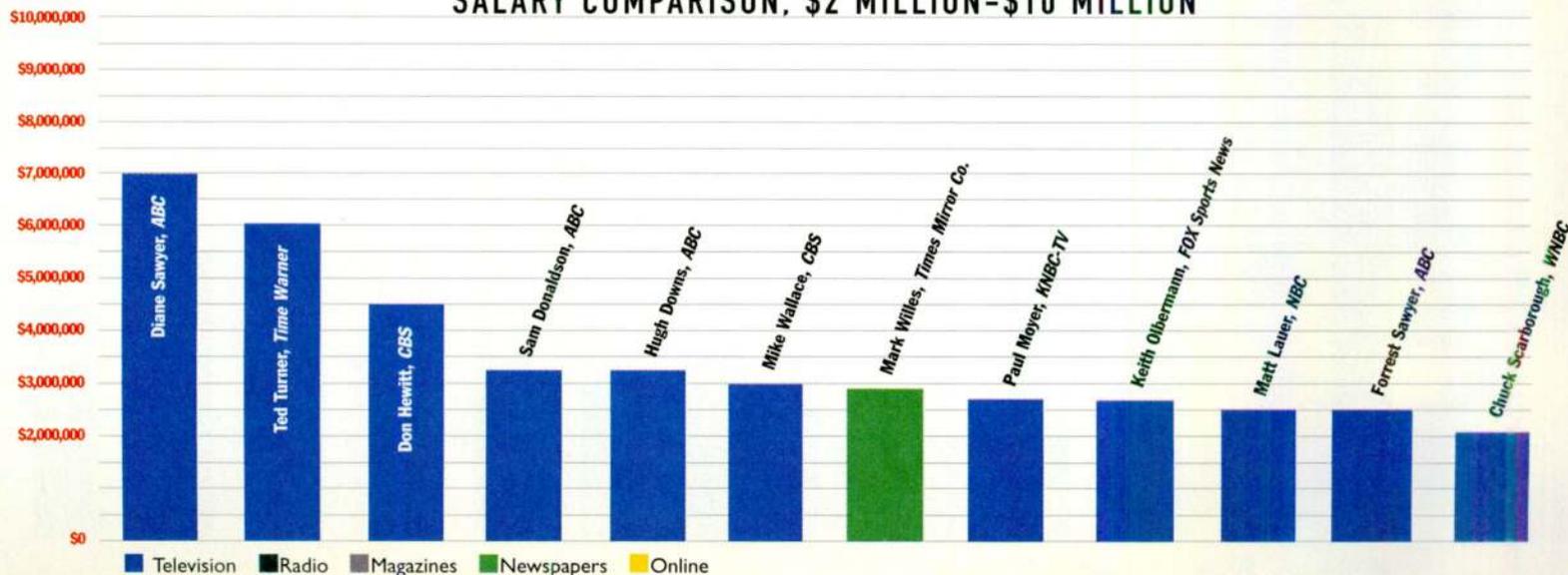
**DAVID BLOOM**  
WHITE HOUSE  
CORRESPONDENT  
NBC NEWS  
**\$300,000**

**SENIOR PRODUCER**  
NBC NIGHTLY NEWS  
WITH TOM BROKAW  
**\$160,000**

**ASSISTANT PRODUCER**  
DATELINE NBC  
**\$30,000-\$50,000**

BLANKENHORN/CBS (STAHL); COURTESY OF NBC (BROKAW & ZUCKER)

## SALARY COMPARISON, \$2 MILLION-\$10 MILLION

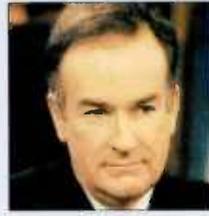




**GERALD LEVIN**  
TIME WARNER, INC.



**BERNARD SHAW**  
CNN



**BILL O'REILLY**  
FOX

**JUNIOR ON-AIR  
CORRESPONDENT**  
\$100,000-\$125,000

**ASSOCIATE PRODUCER**  
PRIME-TIME NEWS  
PROGRAMMING  
\$40,000-\$55,000

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
\$20,000-\$25,000  
(starting salary)

**PBS:**  
**FIELD PRODUCER**  
THE NEWSHOUR  
WITH JIM LEHRER  
\$53,000-\$95,000

**OFF-AIR REPORTER**  
THE NEWSHOUR  
WITH JIM LEHRER  
\$33,000-55,000

**ESPN:**  
**ROBIN ROBERTS**  
**ANCHOR**  
SPORTSCENTER  
**CORRESPONDENT**  
ABC SPORTS  
\$650,000

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
\$25,000

**SEVEN-MONTH "TRIAL"**  
**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
\$9/HOUR; NO BENEFITS

**CNN:**

**GERALD LEVIN**  
**CHAIRMAN AND CEO**  
TIME WARNER, INC.  
\$7.55 MILLION

**LARRY KING**  
**HOST**  
LARRY KING LIVE  
\$7 MILLION

**TED TURNER**  
**VICE-CHAIRMAN**  
TIME WARNER, INC.  
\$6.05 MILLION

**BERNARD SHAW**  
**ANCHOR;**  
**COANCHOR**  
NEWSSTAND: CNN & TIME  
\$1.1 MILLION

**JEFF GREENFIELD**  
**SENIOR ANALYST;**  
**COANCHOR**  
NEWSSTAND: CNN & TIME  
\$1.1 MILLION

**JOHN KING**  
**WHITE HOUSE**  
**CORRESPONDENT**  
\$225,000-\$275,000

**PRODUCER**  
INVESTIGATIVE UNIT  
\$65,000

**SENIOR PRODUCER**  
WEEKLY NEWS TALK SHOW  
\$60,000

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
NEW YORK BUREAU  
\$28,000 (starting salary)

**FOX SPORTS NET:**  
**KEITH OLBERMANN**  
**HOST**  
FOX Sports News  
\$2.67 MILLION

**FOX NEWS:**

**ROGER AILES**  
**CHAIRMAN AND CEO**  
\$1.4 MILLION

**BRIT HUME**  
**HOST, SPECIAL REPORT**  
WITH BRIT HUME  
**MANAGING EDITOR**  
WASHINGTON BUREAU  
\$1 MILLION

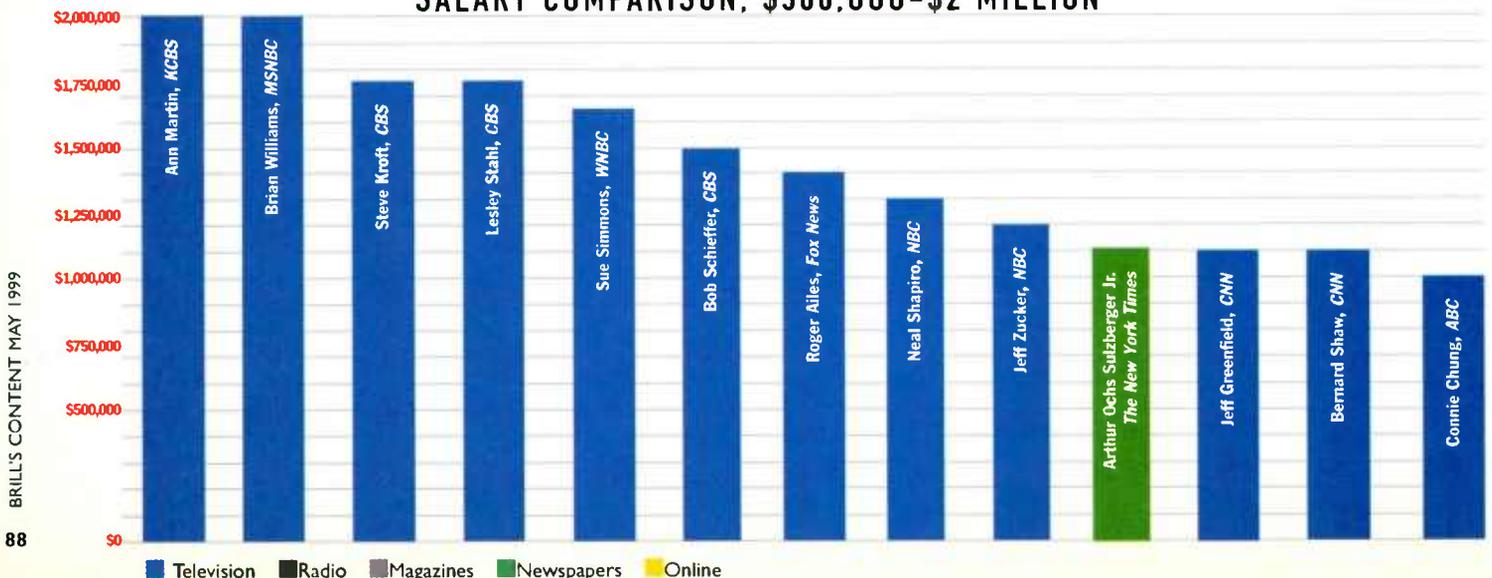
**BILL O'REILLY**  
**HOST**  
THE O'REILLY FACTOR  
\$950,000

**NEIL CAVUTO**  
**HOST**  
CAVUTO BUSINESS REPORT  
**VICE-PRESIDENT,**  
**BUSINESS NEWS**  
\$650,000

**MATT DRUDGE**  
**HOST**  
DRUDGE  
\$175,000

SAGHS/GNP/ARCHIVE (LEVIN); ECCLES/CNN (SHAW); COURTESY OF FOX NEWS (O'REILLY)

## SALARY COMPARISON, \$500,000-\$2 MILLION





**NEIL CAVUTO**  
FOX



**BRIAN WILLIAMS**  
MSNBC



**LARRY KING**  
CNN

**STEVE DRAGANCHUK**  
WEEKEND ANCHOR/  
WEATHER REPORTER  
WREX, ROCKFORD, IL  
**\$20,000**

**SMALL MARKETS:**

**ALAN MITCHELL**  
CHIEF METEOROLOGIST  
KTEN, SHERMAN, TX  
**\$65,000<sup>2</sup>**

**MATT BROWN**  
MAIN ANCHOR/ASSISTANT  
NEWS DIRECTOR  
KXII, SHERMAN, TX  
**\$38,000**

**ASHLEY ANDERSON**  
ANCHOR  
KTEN, SHERMAN, TX  
**\$33,000**

**ED AGRE**  
NEWS DIRECTOR;  
ANCHOR; REPORTER  
KXGN, GLENDEVE, MT  
**\$22,000**

**JENNIFER STRAND**  
WEEKDAY REPORTER/  
WEEKEND ANCHOR  
KXII, SHERMAN, TX  
**\$20,000**

**ROBERT HORNACEK**  
REPORTER  
KTEN, SHERMAN, TX  
**\$15,000**

**MSNBC:**

**BRIAN WILLIAMS**  
ANCHOR AND  
MANAGING EDITOR  
*THE NEWS WITH BRIAN WILLIAMS*  
SATURDAY ANCHOR  
NBC NIGHTLY NEWS  
WITH BRIAN WILLIAMS  
**\$2 MILLION**

**PRODUCER**  
*THE NEWS WITH*  
*BRIAN WILLIAMS*  
**\$75,000**

**LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS:**  
**LARGE MARKETS:**

**PAUL MOYER**  
COANCHOR  
KNBC, LOS ANGELES  
**\$2.5-\$3 MILLION**

**CHUCK SCARBOROUGH**  
COANCHOR  
WNBC, NEW YORK  
**\$2-\$2.2 MILLION**

**ANN MARTIN**  
COANCHOR  
KCBS, LOS ANGELES  
**\$2 MILLION**

**SUE SIMMONS**  
COANCHOR  
WNBC, NEW YORK  
**\$1.6-\$1.7 MILLION**

**SAM CHAMPION**  
METEOROLOGIST  
WABC, NEW YORK  
**\$600,000**

**WARNER WOLF**  
SPORTS ANCHOR  
WCBS, NEW YORK  
**\$600,000**

**MEDIUM MARKETS:**

**PAULA SANDS**  
ANCHOR  
HOST  
*PAULA SANDS LIVE*  
KWQC, DAVENPORT, IA  
**\$120,000**

**TERRY SWAILS**  
CHIEF METEOROLOGIST  
KWQC, DAVENPORT, IA  
**\$115,000**

**ERIC WILSON**  
ANCHOR  
WREX, ROCKFORD, IL  
**\$30,000**

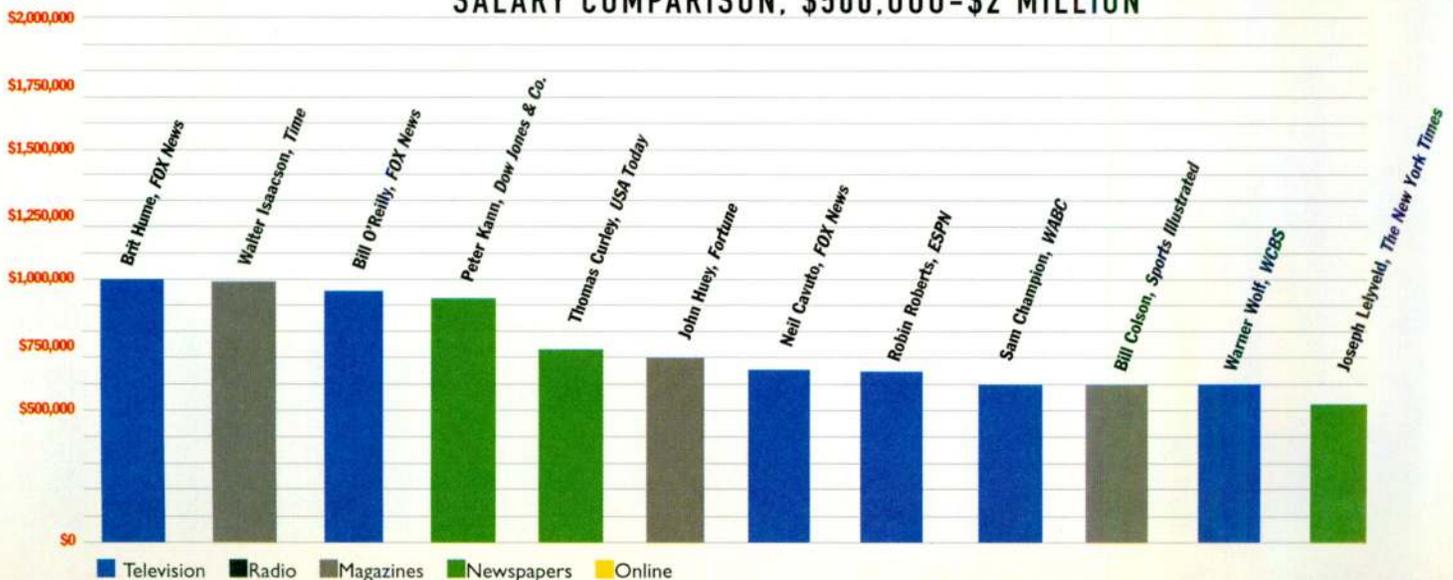
**TROY HIRSCH**  
SPORTS DIRECTOR/  
SPORTS ANCHOR  
WREX, ROCKFORD, IL  
**\$28,000**

**JASON DERUSHA**  
REPORTER; WEEKEND  
ANCHOR; PRODUCER;  
ASSIGNMENT EDITOR  
KWQC, DAVENPORT, IA  
**\$26,000**

**ANNE JOHNSOS**  
REPORTER/WEEKEND  
ANCHOR  
WREX, ROCKFORD, IL  
**\$23,000**

COURTESY OF FOX NEWS (CAVUTO); COURTESY OF MSNBC (WILLIAMS); FOTOS INT'L ARCHIVE PHOTOS (KING)

**SALARY COMPARISON, \$500,000-\$2 MILLION**





# G

LANCE AT ANY DECENT NEWSSTAND AND YOU'LL IMMEDIATELY GET A sense of what's going on in the magazine market these days. There are more magazines than ever, with more of them focused on ever narrower niches. Industry insiders say all the competition has been good news for top talent—whether their field is politics or sports or business—and our magazine report shows that those who run the top titles or who attain senior-writing status can do very well. But as in other fields, there are plenty of dues payers at the bottom. Our reporting also suggests that the conservative-opinion journals pay better than the liberal ones.



**WALTER ISAACSON**  
TIME

**WALTER ISAACSON**  
MANAGING EDITOR  
TIME  
\$975,000–\$1.05 MILLION

**JOHN HUEY**  
MANAGING EDITOR  
FORTUNE  
\$650,000–\$750,000

**BILL COLSON**  
MANAGING EDITOR  
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED  
\$600,000

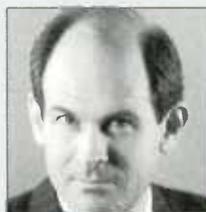


**RICK REILLY**  
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

**RICK REILLY**  
SENIOR WRITER  
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED  
\$450,000

**GEOFFREY COLVIN**  
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR  
FORTUNE  
\$300,000

**SENIOR WRITER**  
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED  
\$150,000

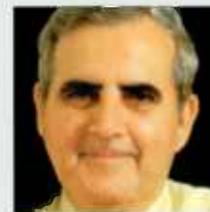


**GEOFFREY COLVIN**  
FORTUNE

**SENIOR EDITOR**  
FORBES  
\$130,000

**SENIOR EDITOR**  
TIME  
\$100,000–\$150,000

**SENIOR EDITOR (DEPARTMENT HEAD)**  
NEWSWEEK  
\$100,000–\$140,000



**CHARLES PETERS**  
THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

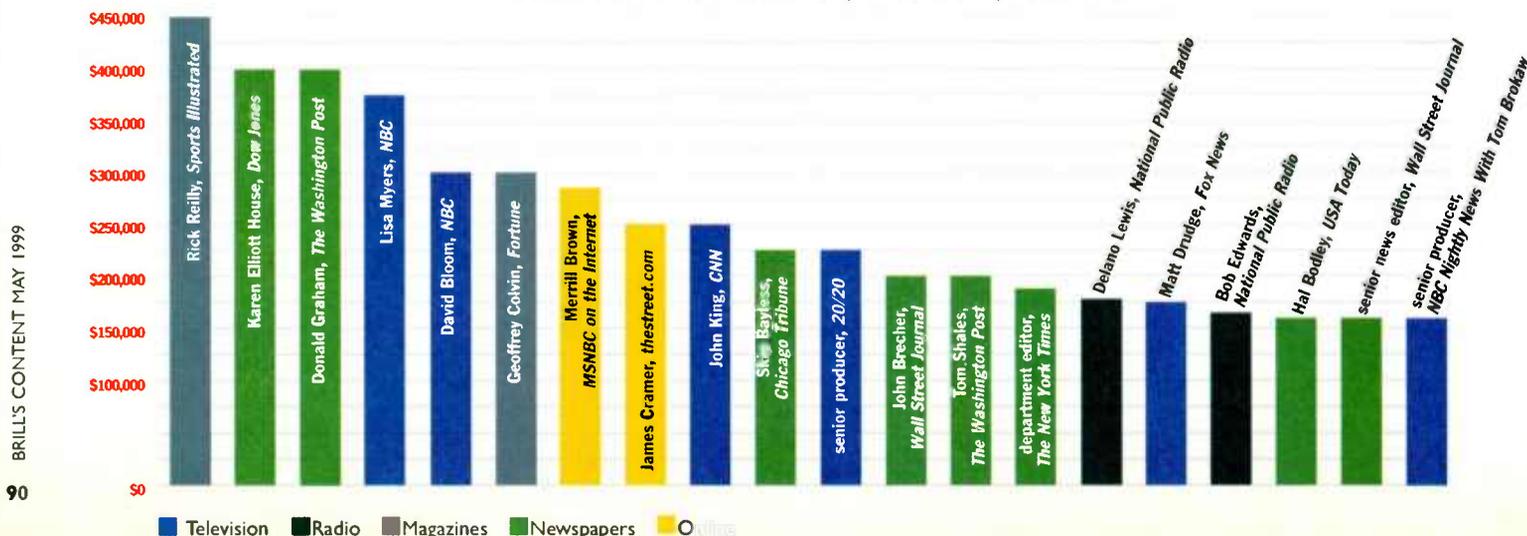
**SENIOR WRITER**  
ESPN THE MAGAZINE  
\$90,000–\$120,000

**SENIOR WRITER**  
FORTUNE  
\$80,000–\$125,000

**DAVID BROOKS**  
SENIOR EDITOR  
THE WEEKLY STANDARD  
\$100,000

THA/ITIME (ISAACSON); FINEMAN/SYGMA (REILLY); COURTESY FORTUNE (COLVIN); WALKERLIAISON (PETERS)

### SALARY COMPARISON, \$100,000–\$450,000



**WASHINGTON  
CORRESPONDENT**

NEWSWEEK  
**\$50,000-\$110,000**

**WRITER**  
NEWSWEEK  
**\$40,000-\$80,000**  
(starting salary)

**STAFF WRITER**  
FORBES  
**\$55,000** (starting salary)

**WRITER**  
TV GUIDE  
**\$50,000** (starting salary)

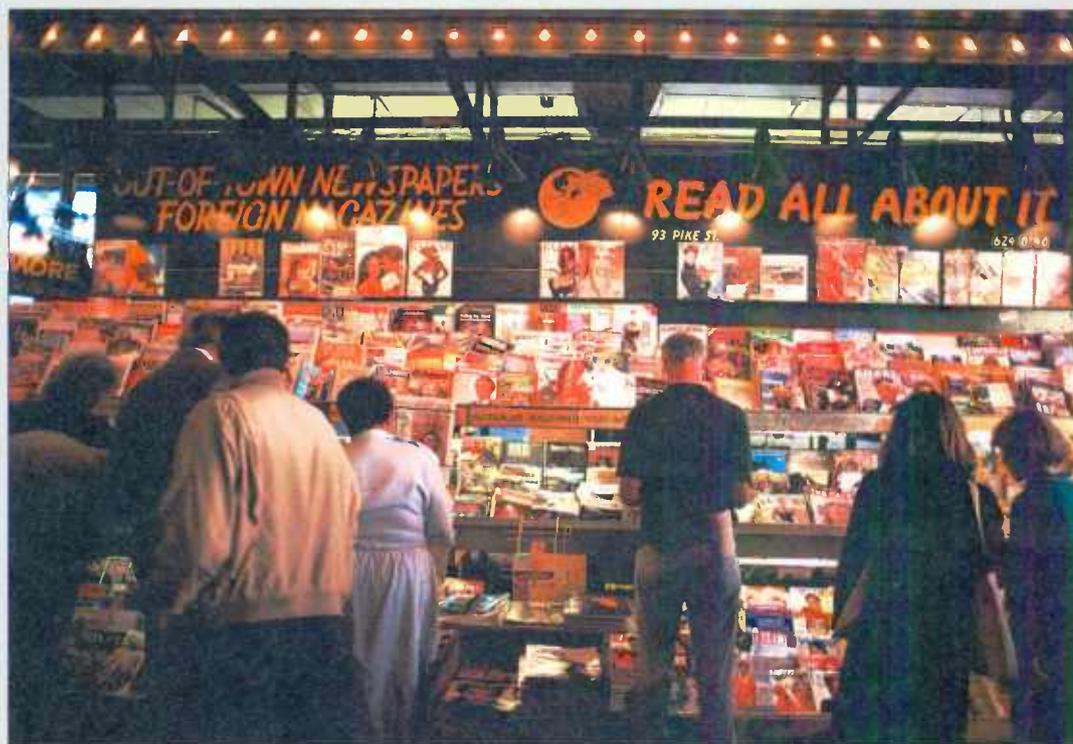
**ENTRY-LEVEL REPORTER**  
TIME  
**\$37,000**

**REPORTER**  
MONEY  
**\$36,000** (starting salary)

**WRITER-REPORTER**  
ESPN THE MAGAZINE  
**\$35,000**

**ENTRY-LEVEL REPORTER**  
FORTUNE  
**\$34,000**

**ENTRY-LEVEL REPORTER**  
FORBES  
**\$33,000**



**ENTRY-LEVEL  
FACT CHECKER**  
THE NEW YORKER  
**\$30,000-35,000**

**ENTRY-LEVEL  
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT**  
NEWSWEEK  
**\$28,000**

**ENTRY-LEVEL  
ASSISTANT EDITOR**  
TV GUIDE  
**\$25,000-\$30,000**

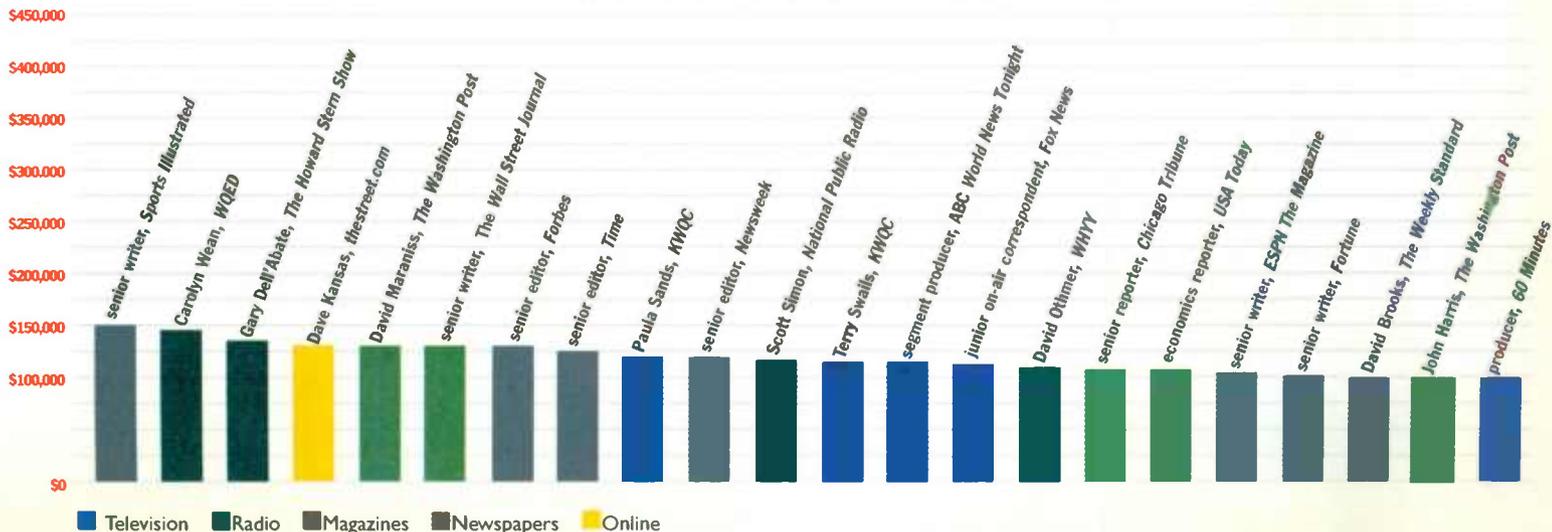
**EDITORIAL ASSISTANT**  
THE NEW YORKER  
**\$22,000-\$26,000**

**ENTRY-LEVEL  
STAFF WRITER**  
THE NEW REPUBLIC  
**\$20,000-\$25,000**

**EDITOR**  
THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY  
**\$12,000**

**CHARLES PETERS**  
**EDITOR IN CHIEF**  
THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY  
**\$10,000<sup>3</sup>**

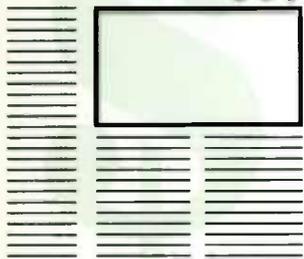
**SALARY COMPARISON, \$100,000-\$450,000**



**1999**  
SALARY SURVEY

★ EXTRA ★

50¢



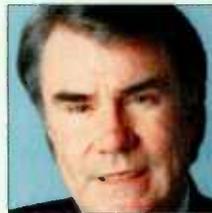
IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE WHY MANY NEWSPAPER PEOPLE JUMP AT THE CHANCE TO APPEAR ON television (and why a number of notable scribes in recent years have made the career jump to the small screen.) In many markets, it's the print people who do much of the initial reporting and digging that provides the fodder for the other media. But even the best reporters at the best newspapers typically earn far less than their counterparts on television. Television power has helped at least one top writer, though. Among the top-paid writers at *The Washington Post*: television critic Tom Shales.



**PETER KANN**  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



**THOMAS CURLEY**  
USA TODAY



**HAL BODLEY**  
USA TODAY



**DAVID MARANISS**  
THE WASHINGTON POST

COURTESY WSJ (KANN); COURTESY USA TODAY (CURLEY & BODLEY); ELLIS/NEWSMAKERS (MARANISS)

**ROBERT JELENIC**  
CHAIRMAN  
JOURNAL REGISTER CO.  
\$11.32 MILLION<sup>4\*</sup>

**MARK WILLES**  
CHAIRMAN AND CEO  
TIMES MIRROR CO.  
PUBLISHER  
LOS ANGELES TIMES  
\$2.9 MILLION

**ARTHUR OCHS  
SULZBERGER JR.**  
CHAIRMAN AND  
PUBLISHER  
THE NEW YORK TIMES  
\$1.1 MILLION

**PETER KANN**  
CHAIRMAN AND CEO  
DOW JONES & CO.  
PUBLISHER  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
\$925,000\*

**THOMAS CURLEY**  
PRESIDENT AND  
PUBLISHER  
USA TODAY  
\$730,000\*

**JOSEPH LELYVELD**  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR  
THE NEW YORK TIMES  
\$450,000-\$600,000

**KAREN ELLIOTT HOUSE**  
PRESIDENT  
DOW JONES INTERNATIONAL  
\$400,000\*

**DONALD GRAHAM**  
CHAIRMAN AND CEO  
THE WASHINGTON POST CO.  
PUBLISHER  
THE WASHINGTON POST  
\$400,000\*

**SKIP BAYLESS**  
SPORTS COLUMNIST  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE  
\$225,000

## SALARY COMPARISON, \$50,000-\$100,000





**JOHN HARRIS**  
THE WASHINGTON POST



**KAREN ELLIOTT HOUSE**  
DOW JONES INTERNATIONAL



**JOHN BRECHER**  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

**TOM SHALES**  
TV CRITIC  
THE WASHINGTON POST  
\$200,000<sup>5</sup>

**JOHN BRECHER**  
PAGE-ONE EDITOR  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
\$200,000

**DEPARTMENT EDITOR**  
THE NEW YORK TIMES  
\$175,000-\$200,000

**HAL BODLEY**  
BASEBALL EDITOR/  
COLUMNIST  
USA TODAY  
\$160,000

**SENIOR NEWS EDITOR**  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
\$160,000

**SENIOR WRITER**  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
\$130,000

**DAVID MARANISS**  
NATIONAL POLITICAL  
CORRESPONDENT  
THE WASHINGTON POST  
\$130,000

**SENIOR REPORTER**  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE  
\$108,000 (maximum salary)

**ECONOMICS REPORTER**  
USA TODAY  
\$108,000

**JOHN HARRIS**  
WHITE HOUSE  
CORRESPONDENT  
THE WASHINGTON POST  
\$100,000

**PETER BAKER**  
WHITE HOUSE  
CORRESPONDENT  
THE WASHINGTON POST  
\$97,000

**SENIOR REPORTER**  
THE NEW YORK TIMES  
\$80,000-\$100,000

**MID-LEVEL REPORTER**  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE  
\$89,000

**SCIENCE REPORTER**  
USA TODAY  
\$85,000

**WASHINGTON REPORTER**  
USA TODAY  
\$85,000

**SECTION EDITOR**  
NEW HAVEN REGISTER  
\$60,000

**SPORTS REPORTER**  
USA TODAY  
\$56,000-\$75,000

**REPORTER**  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE  
\$57,000 (with 5 years experience)

**REPORTER**  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
\$50,000 (starting salary, with 5 years experience)

**REPORTER**  
NEW HAVEN REGISTER  
\$48,000 (with 14 years experience)

**REPORTER**  
THE NEW YORK TIMES  
\$48,000 (starting salary, no prior experience)

**REPORTER**  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
\$42,000 (starting salary, no prior experience)

**REPORTER**  
THE WASHINGTON POST  
\$41,000 (starting salary, no prior experience)

**ENTRY-LEVEL  
REPORTER, EDITOR  
AND PHOTOGRAPHER**  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE  
\$38,000

**REPORTER**  
NEW HAVEN REGISTER  
\$26,000-\$28,600 (starting salary, 1-2 years prior experience)

**STAFF WRITER,**  
WASHINGTON CITY PAPER  
\$25,000 (starting salary)

\*1997 figure

DENNIS BRACK BLACK STAR (HARRIS); COURTESY DOW JONES (HOUSE); COURTESY WSJ (BRECHER)

## SALARY COMPARISON, UP TO \$50,000





# RADIO

**I**T PAYS TO HAVE A BIG MOUTH. RADIO PERSONALITIES, IT TURNS OUT, ENJOY SOME OF the biggest paydays in the media business. But radio people also make some of the most meager salaries. Our reporting found that while radio-news salaries have been static in general, talk radio is where the action *and* the money is, and even local talk-show hosts can pull in six figures in some markets. Take it as a sign of our times: Howard Stern recently made *Forbes's* list of the top 50 highest-paid entertainers. News directors at public-radio stations, meanwhile, earn about \$35,000 a year.



**HOWARD STERN**

**HOWARD STERN**  
HOST  
THE HOWARD STERN SHOW  
**\$17 MILLION**

**DON IMUS**  
HOST  
IMUS IN THE MORNING  
**\$7-\$8 MILLION**

**DELANO LEWIS**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO  
**\$178,000<sup>6</sup>**



**DON IMUS**

**BOB EDWARDS**  
SENIOR HOST  
MORNING EDITION  
NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO  
**\$165,000**

**CAROLYN WEAN**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
MEDIA PRODUCTION  
AND DISTRIBUTION  
WQED, PITTSBURGH  
**\$145,000<sup>7</sup>**



**NINA TOTENBERG**  
NPR

**GARY DELL'ABATE**  
PRODUCER  
THE HOWARD STERN SHOW  
**\$125,000-\$150,000**

**SCOTT SIMON**  
SENIOR HOST  
WEEKEND EDITION  
NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO  
**\$117,000**

**DAVID OTHMER**  
VP, STATION MANAGER  
WHYY, WILMINGTON-  
PHILADELPHIA **\$110,000<sup>8</sup>**

**NINA TOTENBERG**  
LEGAL AFFAIRS  
CORRESPONDENT  
NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO  
**\$80,000-\$85,000<sup>9</sup>**

**DIRECTOR**  
ALASKA PUBLIC  
RADIO NETWORK  
**\$65,000-\$75,000**

**NEWS REPORTER**  
KFWB-AM LOS ANGELES  
**\$45,000**

**EDITORIAL OR  
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO  
**\$36,000** (starting salary)

**HOST/PRODUCER**  
ALL THINGS  
CONSIDERED (local)  
NORTHWEST PUBLIC RADIO  
PULLMAN, WASHINGTON  
**\$25,000-\$29,000**

AP-WIDE WORLD (STERN); COURTESY WEAN (IMUS); ETU/LIN/R (TOTENBERG)

## SALARY COMPARISON, UP TO \$50,000



# T

HE ONLINE REVOLUTION MAY HAVE CHANGED THE WAY WE LIVE, LEARN, work, and play. But when it comes to salaries for the people who bring us online content, the other media still seem to be in the lead. While our reporting turned up a fair number of well-paid online honchos, for the most part the online salaries lagged behind those paid in other media at all levels. We're told this phenomenon reflects the high-risk entrepreneurial atmosphere of the newest medium, the youthfulness of many of the employees and employers alike, and the fact that many online jobs are being invented on the fly.



JOHN ABBOTT (CRAMER); COURTESY MSNBC (BROWN); MARK HANAUER (SHUGER)

**JAMES CRAMER**  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR  
AND DIRECTOR  
THESTREET.COM  
\$250,000<sup>10</sup>



**JAMES CRAMER**  
THESTREET.COM

**MERRILL BROWN**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF  
MSNBC ON THE INTERNET  
\$285,000



**MERRILL BROWN**  
MSNBC ON THE INTERNET



**SCOTT SHUGER**  
SLATE

**DAVE KANSAS**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF  
THESTREET.COM  
\$130,000

**SENIOR EDITOR**  
SALON  
\$60,000-\$90,000

**ENTRY-LEVEL REPORTER**  
THESTREET.COM  
\$33,000

**EDITORIAL ASSISTANT**  
SLATE  
\$25,000

**SCOTT SHUGER**  
SENIOR WRITER,  
SLATE  
\$80,000

**MID-LEVEL EDITOR**  
THE MOTLEY FOOL  
\$37,000

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**  
CNET'S NEWS.COM  
\$30,000-\$34,000

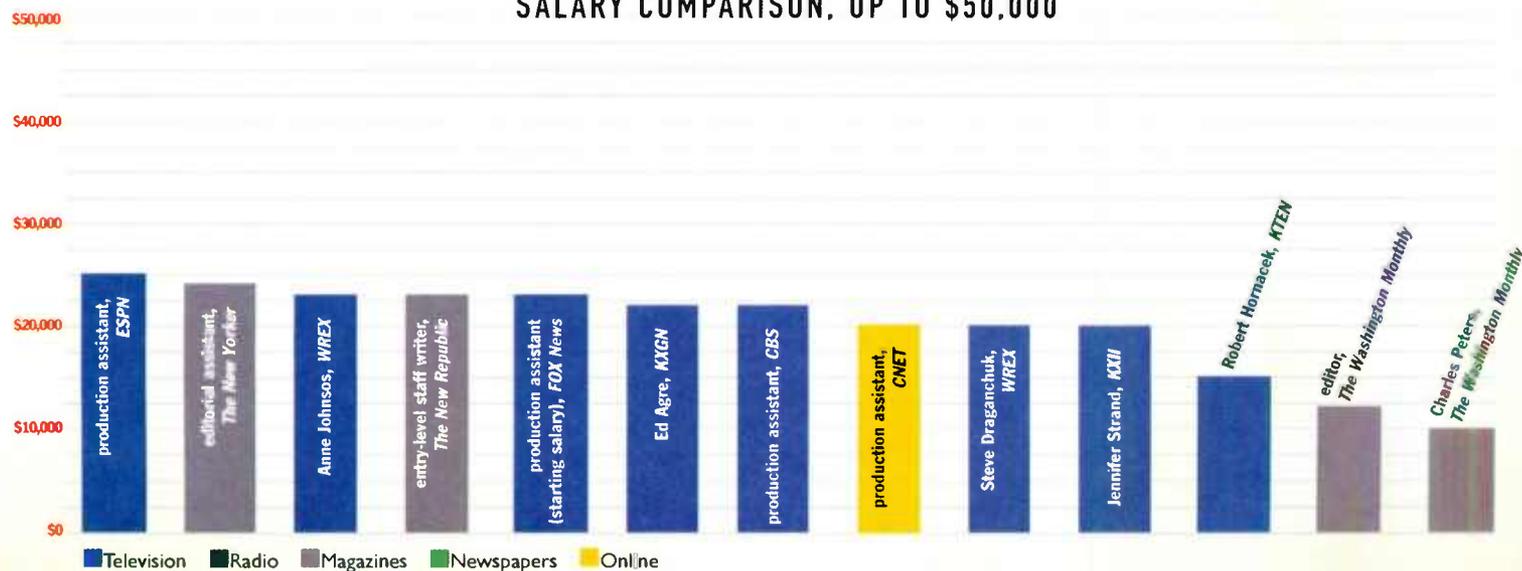
**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
CNET, INC.  
\$18,000-\$22,000

**NEWS EDITOR**  
THE MOJO WIRE  
\$30,000

**notes**

- Figure does not include profit participation in *The View*; does include the portion of her salary charged to ABC's entertainment division for non-news division specials.
- Lots of tornadoes here; weather counts.
- Peters swears this is true.
- Trenton, N.J.-based chain owns *The New Haven Register* and other papers.
- Does not include significant income from syndication of his column.
- 1998 figure, recently retired.
- Handles radio, television, and *Pittsburgh* magazine.
- Handles radio and television.
- Does not include what we believe to be significant speaking fees or other income.
- This is a relatively minor part of Cramer's income, most of which comes from his work as a money manager and his equity in TheStreet.com.

## SALARY COMPARISON, UP TO \$50,000



# “Inside The Dish Factory”



Richard Johnson and crew have made the *New York Post's* Page Six irresistible. Here's how they do it.

BY KATHERINE ROSMAN

PHOTO-COLLAGES BY JEREMY WOLFF

World Radio History



Richard Johnson at gossip's ground zero—his desk in the Post newsroom

**R**

ICHARD JOHNSON'S STORIES almost always start with a ringing phone. That's the way it happens one afternoon in late February. "HEH-lo," says the editor of the *New York Post's* Page Six. "That's ME." A prominent journalist is calling to drop a juicy tidbit: A well-known restaurateur apparently got so drunk at a dinner party that she forgot to take her sleeping baby with her when she left. In one fluid motion Johnson props his phone on his left shoulder as he snags his notebook from the other end of his desk.

"Where was the party?"

"So she had to come back because she forgot something?"

"And the baby was asleep?" He scribbles furiously.

"Hey, it happens," he says with a burst of laughter. "I owe you, man."

Johnson returns the phone to its cradle just below the message light that eternally burns red. For a moment he seems elat-

ed. This man knows good gossip when he hears it.

All day, Johnson, 45, sits at his desk way down at the end of the bustling *Post* newsroom on the tenth floor of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation building, and talks on the phone with his friends. He's not slacking off. Gabbing with his friends—people who are, as Johnson puts it, "gainfully employed in glamorous professions"—is all part of the job.

Every day since 1985, when he took over the hottest column in gossipdom, Johnson and a staff of three reporters have compiled 8 to 12 items that tantalize readers with sometimes mean-spirited dish about the famous, the infamous, and the simply fabulous. The items come from a variety of sources and are there for a variety of reasons (see diagram, page 100).

Finding out what others want to keep secret—let alone verifying the hot stuff that PR people and others with axes to grind are anxious to plant—is treacherous work, especially under a daily deadline. At Page Six, the results are mixed. We tried to re-report and verify all 52 items printed over a five-day week beginning on Monday, March 1. Of those, 30 turned out to be true. Three more were essentially true but had minor errors. Four were either exaggerated or untrue in some significant way. Fourteen were unconfirmable (often because they didn't name

the people they were talking about, let alone the sources). A story about Tipper Gore's having had a face-lift—arguably the week's juiciest item—was completely untrue as best we can tell (see "Box Score", page 102).

Under Johnson's editorship, Page Six is a must-read, not just for inquiring minds but for journalists, actors, publicists, models, advertisers, and publishers who believe they are in the business of knowing everyone else's.

In the case of the forgetful mother, readers won't know exactly whose private life they've supposedly glimpsed—or even if the story is true. The standards of conventional or "serious" journalism would dictate that the call Johnson got from his source would have only been the start of a process during which the reporter would make calls to pin down the anecdote with firsthand confirmation. But four days after Johnson got the call, the story appeared on Page Six as follows: "*Just Asking: Which madcap mom who owns restaurants was so joyful seeing friends at a party in Brooklyn, she forgot her sleeping baby on a couch when she made her exit? She realized she was missing something a few minutes later and retrieved the tot.*"

Johnson says he ran the item "blind" because he didn't want to waste his time trying to nail it down. "The only person I could call to see if it could be confirmed is the woman herself," he explains, "and I doubt she's going to admit, 'Yes, I had too many drinks and I forgot my sleeping baby on a couch at a party and I had to go back and fetch it.'" And because his source was not an eyewitness, he doesn't know who else was at the party. Not naming the woman allowed Johnson to salvage the item without wasting time trying to verify it. Johnson knows readers try to guess the identity of people mentioned anonymously in these items; for that reason, he says he tries to make them as accurate as possible. Johnson says that occasionally his editors require him to explain who the blind items are about and how exactly he comes by the information. (*Post* editor in chief Ken

Chandler did not return five calls for comment.)

But the vast majority of items use names:

"*Sightings: Christy Turlington and beau Jason Patric arguing in a Village A&P over what brand of cookies to buy. They settled on Entenmann's....*" (Representatives for Turlington and Patric declined to comment.)

"*Tipper Gore—in training for her husband's presidential campaign—looks so good, Washington socialites think she may have had a face lift.*" ("The story that was in Page Six," says Mrs. Gore's spokeswoman, "was entirely inaccurate"—a denial backed by Washington reporters and photographers who, in investigating the same story, have tried to observe Mrs. Gore at

close range and have even blown up recent photos of her and compared them to enlarged older shots.)

True or not, it's great reading.

**T**

HIS TOWN IS A *HUGE* GOSSIP TOWN," SAYS Candace Bushnell, author of *Sex in the City*, the book upon which the HBO series was based. "Everybody is always talking about everybody else," says Bushnell, herself a frequent bold-faced name in gossip columns, including Page Six, which recently reported her "canoodling" with former U.S. Senator

Alfonse D'Amato. "I was talking to someone the other day and we were saying, 'Why do we *know* all this stuff about all these people? How is it that we *know* this stuff?' It's just New York. It's just the way New York is. It's just a small town."

If New York is a small town, it's made so by the seven gossip columns that run in the *Post*, the New York *Daily News* and *The New York Times*. Page Six is the most talked about of them all. "I really do think they are the premier gossip column," says Jeannette Walls, a MSNBC gossip columnist who's writing a book on the genre.

No matter what Johnson says about you, simply appearing in his column means you're worth writing about. Michael Musto, a gossip columnist for *The Village Voice* and a correspondent for E! Entertainment Television, agrees. "If my name were to turn up in print," he says, "that's where I'd want it to be." Coos one powerful celebrity publicist, "All my clients love Page Six. People loooooove being on the page."

You don't have to tell Johnson that. "People like to see their name in print no matter how much they protest otherwise," he says, head ailt, one eyebrow raised. He's been in this business long enough, he says, to understand that when people say they want privacy, they *mean* they want good press.

Johnson grew up in Greenwich Village, the third child of a trade magazine editor and a writer. He attended the University of Colorado at Boulder for two years before returning to Manhattan. While working toward his degree at Empire State College, he interned at a Manhattan community newspaper. Before long he became the paper's editor.

From there, Johnson jumped to the *New York Post*, where he covered suburban New York and then moved up to the city desk. He grew weary of covering fires and parades; when a slot on Page Six opened in 1984, he stepped up to the plate.

Being a successful gossip reporter requires social grace and a passion for parties, two characteristics Johnson has in spades. He had just been divorced when he started on the page, Johnson remembers, so he poured himself into his job. Today, he appears to know everyone's name and occupation, not to mention their recent sexual partners and proclivities. His self-assured sophistication in both dress and manner help him blend in easily among New York's uptown glitterati and downtown hipsters. He schmoozes with a sense of purpose, giving his full attention when he's in conversation while sneaking over-the-shoulder glances to scope out his next target. At a party, he's all business.

For Johnson, gossip *is* business and it's the intrigue of learning secrets rather than celebrity hobnobbing that drives him. "He really identifies with the James Bond figures," says



Johnson dishes on stars, supermodels, and billionaires. From top: Brad Pitt, Christy Turlington, and Patricia Duff and Ronald Perelman in happier days.

## What's A Nice Girl Like Her Doing In A Place Like This?

**T**hink carefully before asking Kate Coyne such a question. "How can someone go from Oxford to Page Six?" she spits back. "What's built in that sentence is a note of *Isn't that a step down or isn't that a tarnish on the pedigree you're coming from?*" The answer, emphasizes Coyne, 24, is an unqualified "no." "I've seen a number of people who have been failures at this job who have neither the tenacity nor the sort of emotional endurance nor the perseverance to find out about an item, report an item, and write an item in the space of an hour and a half."

The native New Yorker graduated from Oxford in 1996 with a degree in English literature, moved back home, and took an internship at *New York* magazine. Before long, she became a staff reporter.

But then, in the spring of 1998, Coyne stopped by the *New York Post* newsroom with a friend, and the rest, as they say, is history. Nothing prepared her for the energy of a newsroom. "If it had been a moment scripted in the movies," she says wistfully, "it would have been, *Cut to Kate Coyne with a look of revelation on her face.*" About three months later, Richard Johnson offered her a job.

Coyne's biggest scoop so far (it made the front page) exposed Chelsea Clinton's supposed breakup with her boyfriend and ignited a controversy about whether such reporting invades Chelsea's privacy. Coyne calls *Brill's Content* "stunningly wrong" for saying

that her story broke "an admirable silence that the press had until now observed on anything having to do with Chelsea's personal life" [Rewind, February]. While researching the story, Coyne says, she read previous news stories that examined Chelsea's prom date and whether or not her boyfriend had stayed overnight at the White House. "I mean, my God!" Coyne exclaims. "There are maître d's talking about what she ordered for dinner and then somehow, *us*, we have violated a heretofore admirable silence on anything to do with Chelsea's private life? I was, like, does nobody remember the picture of [Chelsea's boyfriend] Matthew Pierce in his Speedo?"

Coyne is clearly ambitious, but for now she's staying put. "Right now, I'm happy being twenty-four and having the sort of job where people return my calls and where I get to see my name in the paper everyday," she says. "It's not a bad gig."—KR



Kate Coyne, above, says her Oxford education prepared her for the rigors of Page Six.

Jill Brooke, a correspondent for CNN, who is Johnson's friend and former fiancée. In fact, Johnson says that about ten years ago (after he'd been at Page Six for about six years) he sent a letter to the CIA seeking a job as an undercover agent and that the CIA turned him down. Brooke says she comforted Johnson after the rejection by reminding him, "You'll still be able to have a lot of intrigue doing Page Six."

FOR MANY IN THE ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA WORLDS, THE New York gossip columns are hardly trivial. "Placing an item is phenomenal," says one publicist with a major entertainment agency. "And it's because items drive print." She means that an item in a New York column has a way of climbing the media food chain into the national press. "Basically everyone at *Entertainment Weekly*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *Access Hollywood*," she explains, "comes in every day and...literally pick their stories out" of the columns.

Did you see *People* magazine's cover on the breakup of Marla Maples and Donald Trump? A Page Six staffer was the first to report the couple's split. How about the stories on ABC's *20/20* and in *Fortune* about the Sultan of Brunei's sexual escapades? A Page Sixer broke that scandal, too.

It's not just media types who pay attention. "Richard Johnson and Page Six play an increasingly important role in the nonsocial, political circuit now that politicians have become celebrities," says Kellyanne Fitzpatrick, a Republican pollster. "Page Six," agrees Ken Frydman, a communications

and media consultant, is "read by everybody and people who say they don't read it are liars."

In 1997, Johnson ran a series of critical items about cronyism in the city's appellate courts. The articles rankled the Association of the Bar of the City of New York; its president, Michael Cardozo, asked to meet with the *Post's* editor in chief, publisher, and editorial page editor. Johnson was invited to join the meeting.

"They expected Richard to just come to this meeting and fold," says a pro-Johnson source who said he spoke with "several" people who attended the meeting. "But Richard comes to the meeting with tons of new stories and documentation," this source adds. "So he just wipes them out at this meeting. And he still writes about the judiciary to this day."

Johnson confirms the particulars of the meeting, though he characterizes it as "cordial." As he recalls it, the bar association and court representatives complained about Page Six's repeated use of the phrase "ethically challenged." "They started arguing about how everything in the criminal justice system is hunky-dory," Johnson asserts, "and that there's no politics involved. And I brought up some stuff that they couldn't deny." Cardozo declined to comment on the specifics of the meeting other than to say such gatherings between editors and the city bar association are not uncommon.

Johnson's influence, says one political consultant, doesn't manifest itself with voters as much as it does with donors. This consultant offers Geraldine Ferraro's failed 1998 Senate bid as an example. Early in the primary campaign, Johnson's aggres-

# PAGE SIX HEARD IT HERE FIRST

Where Johnson and his reporters got the information for the March 11, 1999, column

## Flirty Foxy earns Italian insult

**Page Six**

By RICHARD JOHNSON  
with Jesse MacIntosh  
and Kate Glynn

### Secret files

PRESIDENT Clinton survived his impeachment trial, but might not be out of the woods yet. His next scandal is expected to be the allegation that he had the hot for three female Secret Service agents. Confidential FBI files, according to Star magazine's ace reporter Richard Gooding, reveal how three female agents' colleagues of presidential hanky panky — including one who is said to have filed a complaint that he frequently "hit on her," sources say. That agent later withdrew the complaint when her request for a transfer was granted. The FBI files — kept under lock and key by Congress — were said to be the deciding factor for several wavering House members who ultimately voted to impeach.

### Happy hitter

"I've waited 15 years for this," said Orlando Cepeda with a tear in his eye after being selected for the Baseball Hall of Fame. The great first baseman, whose wife Miriam is a Bronx native, celebrated with 76 amigos (70 men, 6 women) at Joe's Place, a new restaurant on Westchester Avenue in the borough, the other night. Legendary saleroo Johnny Pacheco, who had been performing with Celia Cruz in the Dominican Republic, limoed straight from JFK. Cepeda, today a Giants scout, was wearing a brown fedora, a black leather trench coat, blue jeans and sneakers. Is that GQ, or what?



**PAM:** dripping wet  
**MAYBE** Tommy Lee deserves some sympathy. While he can't go out and party because he's on probation for hitting his wife, Pamela Anderson, she was knocking back a few at Skybar at the Mondrian in West Hollywood the other night with some unidentified stud who wasn't her new boyfriend, surfer Kelly Slater. As the bar was beginning to close at 1:30 a.m., Pam and her hunk dived headfirst into the pool. Several men offered her a towel as she emerged, her tight, skimpy dress clinging invisibly over her ample curves. "She didn't care," said one guy. "She hung out wet."

ISABELLA Rossellini shouldn't assume that her fellow New Yorkers don't understand Italian.

The ageless daughter of Ingrid Bergman didn't appreciate the way teen sensation Foxy Brown arrived late Tuesday at the Whitney Museum's Brité Nite benefit — pleading hair and makeup crises — and then seemed more interested in chatting up John Kennedy than performing.

(Kennedy was also tardy, turning up with one hand holding wife Carolyn's and the other clutching a comb and brush.) Foxy was thrilled when John claimed he "couldn't wait" to hear her sing.

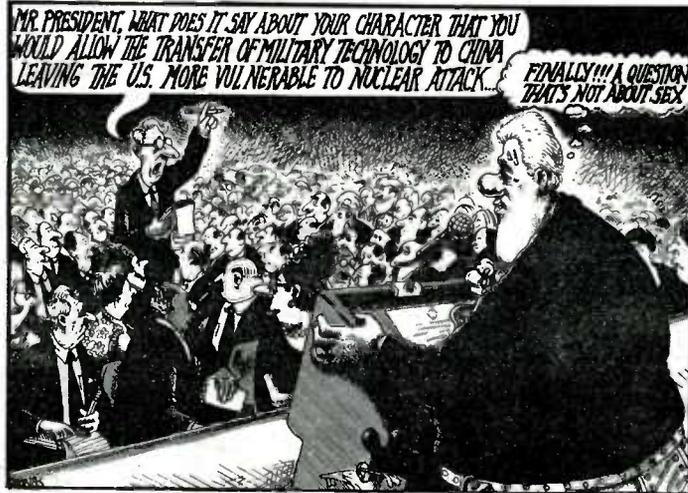
Rossellini, unimpressed by such diva behavior, turned to a pal and said in Italian: "It's a shame she's so difficult at 19, because when she's 30 [and washed up] she'll wish she'd been nicer at 19."

"Foxy wasn't feeling well, but even just one song was well worth it," said one planner. Singer Jennifer Holliday never even turned up for her scheduled performance. But disco queen Gloria Gaynor, also on the bill, graciously covered for Holliday and sang a couple extra numbers. (What the party was like for the B-list. Pages 50-51.)

"Those older divas are a lot easier to deal with than the younger ones," said one event planner. Oh, really? Decorating doyenne Martha Stewart didn't even come into the Roseland main ballroom for the simultaneous bash for the Forbes Celebrity 100 issue.

The usually happy homemaker waited in the lobby for fellow guest of honor Sean "Puffy" Combs. They'd planned to rendezvous at 7 p.m. But as the clock moved toward 7:30 and other revelers arrived, Martha paced the carpet.

"Where is he?" she kept asking. Finally, the exasperated Stewart stormed out — missing Puffy's arrival by seconds. (The rapper then high-tailed it down to see model girlfriend Kim Porter strut her stuff at the Pile show, and later held a memorial of sorts at NY for Notorious B.I.G., marking the two-year anniversary of his death.) The Forbes group parried on, with a nearly two-hours long concert by Chris Isaak. The classy crooner seemed oblivious to some of the more obnoxious guests — host Kip Forbes politely labeled them "noisy" as they talked through his welcoming remarks.



### Early spring

IT looked like prom night — only a couple of decades removed — the way loving couples were paired up at Babbo the other night. Charlie Rose and Peter Jennings and his pretty young wife Kaye shared nearby banquette with ABC

Amanda Burden were at one table in full canoodle — "like a couple of teenagers," said one witness Elsewhere in the Italian eatery on Waverly Place, Peter Jennings and his pretty young wife Kaye shared nearby banquette with ABC

News chief David Westin and his wife Sherrie Rollins. Marlo Thomas and Jay McInerney, sans spouses, looked on — from separate tables.



**Sightings**  
**AMBER** Valletta celebrating a pal's birthday at Belgo on Lafayette Street with fellow cat-walker Shauna Harlow, and asking one of the monk-costumed waiters if he was wearing anything under his coat. "That's for you to find out," he replied.  
**MIRA** Sorvino smooching at a back corner table at Cafe Luxembourg with a "dark actor type," a description that fits current beau Olivier Martinez...  
**LINDA** Tripp, in sunglasses with her hair pulled back in a ponytail, smoking at a table in the middle of the barroom of Puffy's new Billy Seven at the Four Seasons Hotel...  
**BONNIE** Tyler seeking lyrical inspiration at Tompkins on West 47th

### Tunes diss for Joan's Oscar-ogling

DON'T invite Amy Spindler and Joan Rivers to the same fashion show. In the latest V magazine, the fashion editor for the New York Times Sunday magazine trashes the comedienne for her previous Oscar fashion coverage on the E! Channel. Spindler doesn't like Rivers' "cheap, tabloid approach" to critiquing the style of the stars. "What she does is personal attacks based on no education about fashion or any attempt to learn," snarls Spindler. Her opinions are formed in a total vacuum. And I'm not even going into what she looks like. "Snaps Rivers, "Final Go tell that to Randolph Duke or Vera Wang, who make all my awards clothes now." And Rivers deflates her own views, "It's like it's like this approach. These are people spending \$20 million a year and getting all their clothes for free. I think it's my place to say, 'Hey! You screwed up here!' But Spindler's unimpressed. "I hate what Joan Rivers has done to Hollywood. Actors have to have the guts to start ignoring her. They have to start being who they are, or they'll all turn into what she wants them to be. average designer bags." Uli, Amy — have you looked at the last Fashion of the Times issue?

The item was picked up from Star magazine, the supermarket tabloid. No additional reporting was done.

Johnson got this tip from a source he has in the Bronx. "How many gossip columnists have sources in the Bronx? Ask yourself that question," he laughs. "Aileen Mehle ["Suzy" from Women's Wear Daily and W] doesn't know anyone in the Bronx."

A source, characterized by Johnson as "a secondary eyewitness" (otherwise known as not an eyewitness), called in the information for this item.

This item was plucked from W magazine. Page Six did no additional reporting.

Johnson had dinner at Babbo, with Jay McInerney, and saw all of the people noted.

Johnson says Langan's "is Page Six's favorite watering hole." Either a Page Six staffer or the bartender saw Bonnie Tyler there.

Page Six reporter Jeane MacIntosh got the first part of the item about Isabella Rossellini's comments from "Italian-speaking spies," she says. "We even have multilingual spies at Page Six!" The second part of the story, about a hissy fit thrown by Martha Stewart, was witnessed by MacIntosh and her friends, she says.

The sighting of the Amber/Shalom celebration at Belgo was reported to Johnson by the publicist for the bar.

A Post staffer was an eyewitness to Mira Sorvino's makeout session and passed the information along to Johnson.

The Linda Tripp spotting was relayed to Johnson by a reader who is not a regular source.

A publicist faxed in the Bebe Neuwirth item.

sive coverage of Ferraro's faltering bid became a self-fulfilling prophecy, the consultant says. "The big donors read it in his column. They give less money and then it [the rumor of Ferraro's cash-strapped coffers] turns out to be true." Johnson has no problem with that charge. "I'd like to think I had some role in destroying her career," he says.

Johnson's own politics, in fact, have drawn criticism. He is anti-tax, anti-big government, and anti-President Clinton, and

those views are often reflected on Page Six. For example, a day after *The New York Times* published a front-page story in February reporting that declining use of food stamps may be a sign that the needy are not applying for benefits, Johnson ran the following item: "The drop in the number of people using food stamps is good news to most folks—but not to the New York Times. 'A Plunge in Use of Food Stamps Causes Concern,' the front page blared yesterday. The story reports a 'flurry of activity at the

Department of Agriculture.' It seems the Times is unhappy welfare reform is working. The fact that the unemployed are finding jobs undercuts decades of liberal orthodoxy."

Johnson is "a very conservative Republican. He's a very, very white guy," says one political consultant. "He and [New York's GOP Mayor Rudolph] Giuliani and the administration have always had a love affair. And you don't have to look hard to find puff pieces and damage-control spinning on the page."

In September 1997, *Vanity Fair* ran a story alleging an adulterous affair between Giuliani and his press secretary that relied on many unnamed sources. One would think such a scandal would be irresistible fodder for Page Six, but Johnson didn't bite. The question isn't whether *Vanity Fair's* story deserved coverage but whether Johnson shifted his own standards in deciding not to write about it.

Johnson didn't cover the *Vanity Fair* story, he says, because the *Post's* city desk was already giving it plenty of ink. He didn't touch the Giuliani rumor because, "we usually demand a certain amount of evidence before we accuse people of adultery. I have no pictures. I don't know where the love nest is. Give me some lead to follow up and I will." He says not only is the burden of proof higher when making accusations about the mayor, but that in the case of adultery, *Post* lawyers require confirmation from one of the spouses.

He doesn't seem to mind running such stories as blind items, though. Consider two examples that appeared together on February 21: *WHICH fashion oracle—who appears to have an ideal home with a loving husband and kids—has been having a year-long affair with a telecommunications titan who also appears to have a wonderful marriage? This dynamite could really explode... WHICH big-mouthed media tycoon, married to a well-preserved West Coast beauty, has been keeping a gorgeous French mistress in a lovenest on East 65th Street?* Does he relax his rules for blind items? Yes, he says, "that's the reason we make them blind."



ON FEBRUARY 25, LESS THAN A WEEK BEFORE the Barbara Walters interview, a *Post* reporter has scored information on the current celeb-dit-tutti-celebs. "We have another account of Monica's eating habits," Johnson

crows. The previous night, a city-desk reporter "was able to get a table right next to Monica's table and she eavesdropped the entire meal," Johnson explains with pride. Not only did Lewinsky order a salad, two servings of ravioli, a lamb entree, crème brûlée, and several glasses of wine, but she and her pals discussed Johnson's past handiwork. "How do they know this stuff?" she is reported to have asked about Page Six. Even better, Lewinsky's banter was filled with references to "Ms. Peppercorn," a variation on Johnson's nick-



World Radio History

name for her: the portly peppercorn.

These are the scoops that make life worth living for Johnson and his staff. The team includes Jeane MacIntosh, 38, his second-in-command—a fireball of a reporter whose former jobs include separating hot dogs on a conveyor belt at a Ball Park Frank factory and pushing the button to coordinate the barley-and-hops mixture process at the Stroh Brewery Company, both in her hometown of Detroit. MacIntosh jumped from cold cuts to couture when she moved to New York City in 1986 and landed a job as a financial writer for *Women's Wear Daily* and for *Daily News Record*, *WWD's* counterpart for men. She then moved exclusively to *DNR*, where she wrote about media, marketing, and the party circuit.

Kate Coyne, another Page Six staffer, is 24, grew up in New York City, graduated from University of Oxford in England, and can chatter on at the speed of light (see sidebar, page 99). Rounding out the team is Jared Paul Stern, a 28-year-old Philadelphia native and Bennington College graduate whose signature is his omnipresent fedora. Every day the staff toils in the newsroom from about 10:30 A.M. until 6:30 P.M., when the requisite event hopping to find fodder for *The Page* commences.

When Rupert Murdoch bought the *New York Post* in 1977, Page Six was his first innovation, and James Brady, now a columnist for *Advertising Age* and *Parade*, was the page's first steward. Page Six would be a receptacle for all the juicy nuggets that didn't have a home elsewhere in the newspaper. (Murdoch declined to be interviewed for this story.) Brady chose the name Page Six because that's where the column was set to appear in the paper. (Nowadays Page Six is rarely on page six.)

Brady recalls one evening when he received a call at home from an editor. It was, Brady recalls, "a nit-picking call about some minor item on Page Six," and he wasn't pleased to be bothered at home for what he considered no good reason. "I went to see Roger Wood [the *Post's* editor at the time] the next morning and I said, 'Roger, you run the most god-awful headlines on page one, you know, "WORLD ENDS TOMORROW!" and yet your people

at night nitpick to death a minor item on Page Six and I'm fed up with it!" Brady remembers saying. "Roger Wood looked at me and said, 'Dear boy, no one believes page one.

They do believe Page Six'....He not only put me in my place but he sort of underlined the importance of Page Six." Wood's recollection is slightly different: "I can't imagine I said that about page one, but I certainly would have been able to say it about Page Six."

(continued on page 104)



Jeane MacIntosh, left, worked at a hot dog factory and a brewery before chasing down gossip for *The Page*.

# THE PAGE SIX BOX SCORE

**U**ncovering the secrets of the famed and the fabulous isn't easy. And determining whether items planted by somebody's press agent or enemies has any truth to it is even harder. Add the pressure of reporting and writing 8 to 12 items a day every day and you've got the challenge facing the Page Six staff.

We looked at how Page Six fares by checking the accuracy of the 52 items that ran from March 1 through March 5. As our tally below shows, the results are mixed. Of the total, 30 turned out to be true; three more were true but had minor errors. Four were either exaggerated or untrue in some significant way. Fourteen were unconfirmable (often because they were items that didn't name the people they were talking about, let alone the sources). One item, Tuesday's lead story about Tipper Gore's supposed face-lift, was untrue as best we could tell.

## TALLY

UNTRUE AS BEST WE CAN TELL ....	1
EXAGGERATED OR UNTRUE IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY .....	4
MINOR ERRORS BUT SUBSTANTIALLY TRUE .....	3
TRUE .....	30
NOT ABLE TO CONFIRM .....	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>

Monday, March 1, 1999

Tuesday, March 2, 1999

Page Six	● UNTRUE AS BEST WE CAN TELL	● EXAGGERATED OR UNTRUE IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY	● MINOR ERRORS BUT SUBSTANTIALLY TRUE	● TRUE	● NOT ABLE TO CONFIRM
Lead story Paula Jones poses for a British tabloid in a "low-cut leopard skin blouse" at the Excelsior Hotel in Little Rock				X	
Time, Inc., editor in chief throws party for gay and lesbian journalists			X		
NY Gov. Pataki staffer Charles Gargano reports for jury duty				X	
Novelist Jay McInerney speaks at St. Luke's school				X	
During Atlanta concert, Elton John urges audience to read <i>Esquire</i> magazine				X	
Website IEG to post 12 nude photos of supposed Jerry Hall-Mick Jagger homewrecker				X	
Overly "joyful" restaurateur leaves baby at party					X
Maid finds sex toys in drawer of billionaire philanthropist and "impeccably decorated wife"					X
Artist Chuck Close argues for more resources devoted to improving care of paralyzed				X	
Joan Rivers emcees a panel discussion on gossip at the Algonquin Hotel				X	

Page Six	● UNTRUE AS BEST WE CAN TELL	● EXAGGERATED OR UNTRUE IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY	● MINOR ERRORS BUT SUBSTANTIALLY TRUE	● TRUE	● NOT ABLE TO CONFIRM
Lead story Tipper Gore has had a face-lift	X				
Rod Stewart, Ronald Perelman chat at NY restaurant				X	
Dan Aykroyd and <i>Saturday Night Live</i> pals at Manhattan bar				X	
Antonio Sabato Jr. celebrates birthday at Chaos in Miami				X	
Christian Slater dines at New York's Chez Josephine				X	
"Former power couple" denies that she scammed him through sale of websites					X
"Married talk-show host" has a crush on "very available movie star"					X
"Alternative rock queen" involved with a married "exec at her record label."					X
Company sells underwear with White House logo to a 70-year-old who "fantasizes" about Clinton		X			
Woman says Leo DiCaprio is "no Titanic in the sack"					X
Larry King predicts Kurt Rambis will coach Lakers				X	
Mike Wallace, Kurt Vonnegut, and others to attend opera				X	
Tommy Hilfiger will announce his support for Bill Bradley "any minute"					X
Harry Connick Jr. visits third-grade class					X
Steve Martin set to write sitcom				X	

Wednesday, March 3, 1999

Thursday, March 4, 1999

Friday, March 5, 1999

<b>Page Six</b>	● UNTRUE AS BEST WE CAN TELL	● EXAGGERATED OR UNTRUE IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY	● MINOR ERRORS BUT SUBSTANTIALLY TRUE	● TRUE	● NOT ABLE TO CONFIRM
Lead story Jerry Falwell's gay cousin speaks out on Tinky Winky frenzy			X		
Judy Bachrach signs book deal for bio on Tina Brown and Harry Evans				X	
Michael Milken protégé James Dahl shorts Dell Computer stock					X
Esquire-sponsored reading, <i>Cruel Intentions</i> premiere coincide with Lewinsky interview			X		
Fire damages Julia Phillips's L.A. apartment			X		
Broadway's Elizabeth Franz looks for NY apartment			X		
Royal watcher Penny Junor scoffs at writing Tripp bio					X
Writer Christopher Hitchens to address <i>The Nation</i> staff			X		

<b>Page Six</b>	● UNTRUE AS BEST WE CAN TELL	● EXAGGERATED OR UNTRUE IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY	● MINOR ERRORS BUT SUBSTANTIALLY TRUE	● TRUE	● NOT ABLE TO CONFIRM
Lead story Ted Danson defends decision to speak at conference marking anniversary of Exxon Valdez spill				X	
Pregnant Scary Spice commissions "nude statue" and photos of herself					X
Gov. Pataki creates waves in naming presiding judge of Appellate Division		X			
Former Sen. Al D'Amato lunches with headhunter				X	
Italian Don Giuseppe Avarna, known for ringing bells in converted-chapel home each time he made love to wife, dies		X			
Versace family successfully pressured <i>Newsweek</i> into not publishing juicy info					X
Geraldo Rivera dreams of sailing around world			X		
<i>Wing Commander</i> will feature trailer for <i>Star Wars' The Phantom Menace</i>				X	

<b>Page Six</b>	● UNTRUE AS BEST WE CAN TELL	● EXAGGERATED OR UNTRUE IN A SIGNIFICANT WAY	● MINOR ERRORS BUT SUBSTANTIALLY TRUE	● TRUE	● NOT ABLE TO CONFIRM
Lead story Lewinsky to attend the <i>Vanity Fair</i> post-Oscar bash				X	
Donatella Versace to stay at mansion where brother died				X	
Tom Wolfe, Ed Hayes, and their wives celebrate Wolfe's birthday				X	
Brooke Shields flirts with Four Season's co-owner in the Grill Room				X	
Tom Cruise and Steven Spielberg overheard discussing a project at a restaurant				X	
Robert De Niro and Martin Scorsese chosen to present Elia Kazan with award at the Oscars to appease "Marxists" angry with Kazan		X			
At NY bar, John Waters talks about plot of movie for which he's approached Meryl Streep and Sharon Stone					X
Artist Neke Carson opens show at Holly Solomon Gallery				X	
Item on new <i>NY Times</i> food critic publishes photo and supposed address				X	
<i>Premiere</i> magazine says movie critics pick <i>Shakespeare in Love</i> as year's best picture				X	
At Alaskan dog-sled race Joan Rivers and Susan Lucci receive book from a NY socialite.					X

(continued from page 101)

**M**

OST PAGE SIX ITEMS COME TO THE reporters because publicists are constantly pitching stories about their clients. "It's, basically, you write your own specific item. You send it in. You call [Johnson] and say, 'Are you going to use it?' and he says yes or no," says one publicist. But like proper fork usage at state dinners, gossip has rules of etiquette that aren't to be ignored. "You *never* lie in an item," cautions the publicist. "*Never. Never.* Because Richard will *never* talk to you again, so you *never* do that. And you *never* give an item to Richard and then give it to Rush & Molloy [in the *Daily News*]. *Ever.* It's the worst thing you could possibly do," she emphasizes.

Literal accuracy is the only test. An item that says "We hear" that some celebrity "plans" to attend a party is no doubt literally true. But because Johnson concedes that no one from Page Six ever calls to see if the celeb really intends to go, let alone follows up to see if he or she went, the whole item is a hit-or-miss proposition.

Then there's the you-scratch-my-back method of item

**"Subjects of stories are much more likely to get off the hook if they can pawn some other unfortunate soul's story off on the columnist," says a former gossip.**

placement. Bobby Zarem, a publicist who has counted John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman, and Arnold Schwarzenegger among his clients, says savvy publicists must give columnists juicy tidbits on major celebs so that they have a better chance of getting an item placed for an unknown client when the need arises. "Sometimes there are things that people wouldn't want in print, but they're not hateful," Zarem says, explaining what sort of tidbits he means: "People getting married, people getting divorced, people, you know, sticking their tongues down one another's throat in a nightclub in Hollywood."

Some people don't bother with a publicist. According to Bebe Buell's agent, a February item announcing that Buell, mother of actress Liv Tyler, had a singing gig at a small Manhattan venue came from Buell herself. (Buell declined to comment. Johnson said he couldn't discuss his sources.)

Some items—7 of the 52 in our March 1-5 Box Score—are picked up from, and usually credited to, other publications. But sometimes not. Consider a blurb that ran on February 16 about "cable TV personality Elvira." It described her outrage at becoming a Sexgate footnote when presidential aide Sidney Blumenthal said he was asked while being deposed by Kenneth Starr's prosecutors whether White House staffers compared Lewinsky to her. The *Post* item was almost identical to a story that ran February 12 on NewsMax.com, a politically conservative news website. The Page Six item, Johnson says, should have been credited to NewsMax.com, but he adds, "I have a

pretty good reputation of crediting other journalists."

Other tips come in from people who, Johnson says, love to call him. "I remember the first night John Kennedy Jr. went out with Daryl Hannah," he says. "By the end of the [next] day, we had a complete itinerary of their evening. We'd get a call from someone who'd say they saw them at 9 P.M. and then we'd get a call an hour later from someone who said by eleven o'clock, they were so and so. We had a fairly good idea of where they had dinner and then all the clubs they went to afterwards."

"There are people out there who are always on the lookout who seem to get some continuous pleasure from calling us up and telling us stuff," says Coyne. "And we love them." One such person was the source for Jared Paul Stern's best "get." An insider from *Esquire* called him in February 1997 to tell him that the magazine was killing a short story about a gay love affair for fear of losing advertising from Chrysler and others. The *Post*'s scoop got the attention of *The Washington Post*, which ran the story the following week.

Coyne landed her first *Post* front-page story thanks to a trusted source. Coyne says she had tabbed an item about Chelsea Clinton's boyfriend in a British tabloid, which she thought had

gotten the young man's name wrong. So, she says, she called a source who keeps tabs on Chelsea's life at Stanford. But the incorrect name was incidental to a bigger story, Coyne discovered. Her source, she says, told her that Chelsea and her boyfriend had broken up.

MacIntosh agrees that great scoops come from good relationships with sources. That was the case when she broke the news that Donald

Trump and his second wife, Marla Maples, were calling it quits. The rumor of trouble between Mr. and Mrs. The Donald had been floating around, MacIntosh says, and "every columnist in town had been working on it." But at around 2 P.M. on May 1, 1997, MacIntosh says she had sources "close to both Donald and Marla" who told her their marriage was over. "The bigger editors had called me in and said, 'How sure of this are you' and 'Are you sure?' And they grilled me and grilled me and grilled me and said, 'This better be true or else.' You're not just going to go around screwing with Donald Trump and Marla Maples," she says.

Those with pockets as deep as Trump's are treated more carefully than most. "I think, obviously, with someone like Donald Trump, who can afford the best lawyers in town, you don't want to unfairly piss him off," Johnson says. "If he's unhappy, he's going to make a big noise."

Some people are completely off-limits. Johnson says he would never write about Murdoch, whose messy divorce would make great material for Page Six. "There's no point in writing anything that's going to piss your boss off," he reasons.

So what's a gossip to do with good dirt that he can't print? He swaps with other gossips, according to a former Page Six competitor. If Johnson has an item on someone he doesn't want to cross, this source explains, a Page Sixer might pass it off to one of his competitors in exchange for some item down the road that the competitor either can't or doesn't want to run. An



unspoken rule prohibits competing columnists from writing negative items about each other. "There's a weird collegiality," the former gossip says, "a careful collegiality." Johnson declined to comment on this practice.

There are also ways for people to kill items about themselves. "Subjects of stories are much more likely to get off the hook if they can pawn some other unfortunate soul's story off on the columnist," says the former gossip, who calls such practices "sort of extortionary."

Some people find the ethics of gossip columns like Page Six unacceptable. Patricia Duff, the high-profile Democratic activist, is currently going through a protracted child-custody battle with her ex-husband, billionaire Revlon owner Ronald Perelman. On December 24, 1998, Johnson ran an item saying that at a recent school event, Duff chatted away on her cell phone "long enough to annoy parents with less pressing lives."

That day, Duff's attorney drafted a letter to Johnson: "If you had taken a moment to call Ms. Duff or any one of the three teachers present at this mother's visiting event, each would have confirmed that this supposed incident *never* occurred." Johnson dismisses the complaint. He says he did not call Duff or any of

her representatives because he considered the item "innocuous." Journalists, though, don't usually decide which subjects should have a right to respond to stories about them based on how innocuous the journalists think the story is. And Johnson refuses to cop to the potential damage of a published account of a mother choosing to talk on the phone rather than pay attention to her child at a school function while that woman is involved in a custody battle. "Is it really defamatory to say that she uses a cell phone?" he asks, sounding more like a lawyer than a reporter.

The tip came from a source who has provided Johnson with reliable information for years, Johnson says. But he admits the source had only heard it second hand. Still, Johnson stands by his story and says, "She's lucky we write about her."

Duff doesn't feel so lucky. "Well, as [Johnson] knows, I'm in the middle of a custody battle and that's rather prejudicial," she says. "You know, it's not the kind of thing you want out there, particularly if it's untrue. But he never called."

Deepak Chopra, the celebrity guru and best-selling author, says he too was wronged by Page Six. In July 1996, Johnson ran an excerpt from a story published in the Murdoch-owned *Weekly Standard* claiming that Chopra had a soft spot for pros-

## Gossip Is Not For Amateurs

**G**OSSIP COLUMNS MAY WALLOW IN TRIVIA OR EVEN sleaze. But do they sacrifice the facts for a scoop? To find out, we tried to plant a totally fictitious item with 30 online, print, and TV gossip mavens—from Liz Smith, to E! Online, to Page Six of the *New York Post*. We abided by the following rules: 1. The story had to be utterly innocuous; we didn't want to plant a story that would have any impact one way or the other if it was published. 2. The person involved had to give his permission—i.e., he would not be victimized if the story were printed. We asked actor George Clooney to help us, and he agreed. 3. As is the custom with other stories in this magazine, no matter what the outcome of the experiment—positive or negative—we would publish the results.

Here's the story we cooked up with Clooney, using a piece of his old *ER* stationery, again with his permission. From Los Angeles, we mailed or faxed the following anonymous letter to 30 gossips:

*I know George Clooney well because I have been working real close with him on ER. The guy is now so full of himself that guess what movie project he's secretly working on: He's the president and he's trapped in a sex scandal. But he's clean, and it's all the press and paparazzi's fault. Here's the real funny part: In the script he's working on, one of his kids gets trampled by the paparazzi while at school, and George—the president!—sues them. Guess who he's saying he wants to play the kid? Prince Harry!! Check it out. It's his big secret plan to go after the press and become a big star at the same time.*

The results: Clooney's PR representative, Lisa Reeder, who did not know about the experiment and therefore could simply deny the story in all honesty, says she got three calls: "Two to let me know about it and one to check it out." No one, she says, took it seriously. And no one published the story. In fact, Page Six had the savvy to

smell a rat; on March 6, its lead headline was "Not even Clooney's this far gone." The item said, "Two weeks after leaving *ER*, George Clooney is the target of an apparent hoax aimed at making his gargantuan ego look even bigger than it already is." The *Post* story continued: "Yesterday, we received an unsigned fax on *ER*/Warner Bros. Television letterhead stationery claiming Clooney had found the perfect movie vehicle for his megalomania." The story reprinted the letter and then quoted Reeder calling it "a scam."

Richard Johnson, who got the faxed tip, says, "It looked great. It was on that *ER* stationery and it read like it could be true." So he passed it to Jared Paul Stern, who, Johnson said, reported back that the whole thing was a hoax. Stern says, "It sounded a little far-fetched to begin with, to tell you the truth. It came in anonymously on *ER* letterhead, but that can be mocked up." Why did Stern believe Reeder when he gets so many denials he doesn't believe? "She was pretty vehement. And there was very little to stand [the story tip] up."

On March 10, Page Six ran a follow-up. "It just goes to show that gossip is a dangerous business that shouldn't be left to amateurs," it began. The item then described our hoax and noted that Page Six had exposed it. Others, including MSNBC's Jeannette Walls, to whom we sent the letter, and Fox News Channel, which did not get a copy of the letter itself but which is Page Six's corporate cousin, gave the story similar treatment.



George Clooney helped us try to hoodwink the gossips. We failed.

Jared Paul Stern poses with his reporting must-haves: a telephone and the omnipresent fedora.

titutes. Chopra disputes the allegation and sued *The Weekly Standard* and the *Post*. (The suit was settled. Both publications ran apologies and retractions. Chopra says he is bound by the agreement not to talk about the payment he received, but does say his legal fees of over \$1.6 million were covered.)

Johnson says that when he picks up stories from other publications, as he did in the Chopra case, he assumes that they are accurate. He adds, "I'd think with his level of spirituality, he wouldn't be checking us out so carefully."

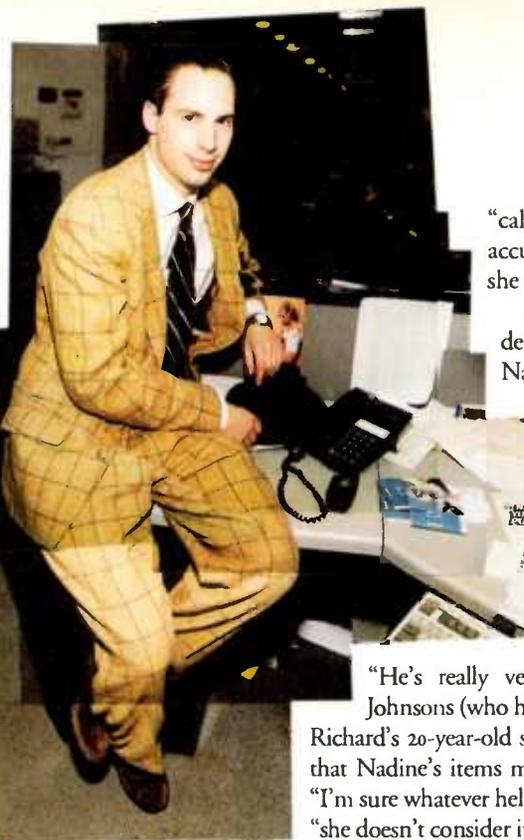
"Sightings," those items that state which fabulous celebrity has been seen at which fabulous locale, aren't checked either, according to Johnson, because—again sounding more like a lawyer than a journalist—they're harmless. Brad Pitt might disagree. "MEMO to Brad Pitt," one January item read. "Lose the attitude. Pitt, whose last two films have flopped at the box office, still thinks he's a megastar. At the Sundance Film Festival, while every other celebrity waded through the snow in boots and down jackets, Pitt stomped around in a leather jacket, black jeans and sunglasses, which he wouldn't remove indoors or when the sun went down. Even worse, he kept a big, burly companion by his side at all times, apparently to keep those throngs of invisible fans at bay. 'He was laughable,' sneers one Sundancer. 'Everyone kept saying that he looked like he needed some Retin-A and a shower.'"

But this "innocuous" item was wrong, as Page Six acknowledged the next day. "The blonde hunk wandering around the Sundance Film Fest with bad skin and an even worse attitude wasn't Brad Pitt," the correction stated.

Such mistakes occur in Page Six, charges Martin Singer, an entertainment and corporate lawyer in Los Angeles who represents Demi Moore, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Sylvester Stallone, because Johnson and his staff contact story subjects or their representatives only randomly. He says that in his experience the supermarket tabloids—the *National Enquirer*, *Star* magazine, and the *Globe*—are more diligent.

Hogwash, says Johnson. "If I don't call, why is he able to send preemptive letters before we can even publish anything?" Johnson asks, offering as proof of his calls to Singer's clients a faxed letter from Singer that reads in part, "I have been informed by my client Demi Moore's publicist Allen Eichorn that you contacted him concerning the Article 'Demi spends Night with Young Hunk' that appeared in the March 11, 1997, issue of the *National Enquirer*..." Johnson does, however, admit that even when he does call subjects or their representatives, he won't hold an item for a comment. "We're a daily newspaper," he explains. "We don't have the luxury of waiting around for people to get back to us."

Cindi Berger, the publicist for Sharon Stone, Mariah Carey, and Barbara Walters, disagrees. Johnson almost always



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"calls for comment or to verify the accuracy of what he has learned," she explains.

Another source of criticism derives from Johnson's marriage to Nadine Johnson, a publicist who promotes events for restaurants, magazines, and others. "In a city that runs on questionable relationships," one competing publicist says, "this probably is the most conspicuous." But Lizzie Grubman, another high-profile publicist, says that Richard treats all publicists equally.

"He's really very fair," she emphasizes. Both Johnsons (who have a 7-year-old son in addition to Richard's 20-year-old son from a previous marriage) say that Nadine's items must pass muster before they run. "I'm sure whatever help I can be to her," Richard laughs, "she doesn't consider it enough." He adds in a more serious tone, "I think she gets a lot more stuff in *The New York Times* than in Page Six." We were unable to find any examples of Johnson abusing his power to help his wife.

The loudest complaints come from celebrities who say that columns like Page Six violate their rights to privacy. To that, MacIntosh says, "Celebrities wouldn't be celebrities unless there were entertainment writers writing about them. And the people who want to read about them are the people who pay money to go see their movies. And so, yes," she continues, "I do think that sometimes it probably really stinks to have people prying into your private life, but that's the way it goes. ... Behave yourselves! And don't do anything stupid! Fly under the radar! Otherwise," she admonishes, "we're waiting for you."

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ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, A SMALL CROWD of journalists, publicists, designers, and lawyers gathers at Johnson's swank downtown Manhattan townhouse to watch Barbara Walters' interview with Monica Lewinsky. "I used to be very annoyed when her stupid lawyer Ginsberg was always saying, 'This woman's life has been ravaged,'" Johnson says, seated in his comfortable, stylish living room of hardwood floors, red curtains, and red gingham-, plaid-, and stripe-covered chairs and daybeds. "I said, 'What? She's having the time of her life.'"

As Monica tells the world that she blabbed to her friends about the notorious cigar incident because she and her buddies are so "tight," Johnson's grin widens. "Trash," he says, "doesn't get any better than this." He sits literally on the edge of his seat for two hours.

The evening's high point occurs when Walters asks Lewinsky what's it like to be referred to as "the portly pepperpot." Johnson throws his left arm up, thumb extended skyward in triumph. The room erupts in applause.

The scene would make a great item for Page Six. ■

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# Why Gossip Is Good For Us

BY LIZ SMITH

**Y**ES. IT'S BEEN VERY GOOD FOR ME. I've made an enormous amount of money from gossip. It beats being a news reporter by a country mile. But that's not the question you're asking, is it? Well, surprise, surprise! Many academics have asked this question. There have been papers written, theses explored, studies made. The findings are that gossip is cathartic. It is useful. It serves a number of purposes. Gossip relaxes you, establishes you, makes you feel better—indeed, I have seen one such paper that posits that gossip makes you live longer. Gossip is an enormous way of exchanging information and thereby of exchanging power. There is power in telling something you know or think you know.

Gail Collins of *The New York Times*, author of *Scorpion Tongues*, says that “gossip empowers both the tale carrier and the recipient....[G]ossip answers a wide range of human needs....It bonds both teller and listener together with a sense of sharing something slightly forbidden.”

In an article for *Family Circle*, journalist Margaret Jaworski writes, “Gossip is a bit like Greek tragedy, an emotional release valve that allows us to express a whole range of human feelings—envy, anger, compassion—and find solace in other people's woes.”

People crave news. Houses in early New England were built close to the road so that passersby might give the latest. *Hey, didja hear? They shot Lincoln two months ago in Washington!* And a little gossip makes it even more so.

People are now used to news that also entertains.

Oscar Wilde said, “History is merely gossip.” Later, he added my personal favorite, to wit: “But scandal is gossip made tedious by morality.” Still, if gossip becomes history (and it certainly does; just consider the 1,000 days of John F. Kennedy), then gossip has its own importance as a historical reservoir.

Gossip is based on a common impulse—*Let me tell you a story*. This makes it a basic for studies of history, biography, autobiography, memoirs, romans à clef, novels, diaries, letters. Everything is grist for history's mill, even, or perhaps especially, gossip.

Classics scholars have told me that some of the earliest evidence we're said to have of Greek writing is two incisions

in Mount Hymettos that date back to the eighth century before Christ. They are seldom cited by classicists because they are dirty gossip. The first says, “So-and-so is a c-----r.” The second reads, “So-and-so is a pederast.”

Among the first gossips in history was Homer. At first, Homer, or whoever he was, repeated his tales aloud, memorizing them, getting others to memorize them, and thus, by repetition, turning them into

literary legend. Finally someone began writing them down.

Today, Erica Jong says, “gossip is the opiate of the oppressed.” And it does seem that everybody wants to know—in the words of lyricist Alan Jay Lerner—“what the king is doing tonight.” They then take delight in the king's conquests, his travails, his hangover, his embittered marriage, his extramarital dalliance—whatever. They sometimes find out that the rich, famous, and gifted are just as miserable as they are. Thus, gossip gives comfort. Joan Rivers

**1** *gos·sip* \ 'gä-səp\ *n* [ME *gossib*, fr. OE *godsibb*, fr. *god* god + *sibb* kinsman, fr. *sibb* related — more at *SIB*] (bef. 12c) **1** *a dial Brit*: GODPARENT **b**: COMPANION, CRONY **c**: a person who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts about others **2** **a**: rumor or report of an intimate nature **b**: a chatty talk **c**: the subject matter of gossip — *gos·sip·ry* \ -sə-prē\ *n*  
**2** *gossip* *vi* (1627): to relate gossip — *gos·sip·er* *n*

—Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary

notes, "It's nice to know, when everything is going wrong in your household, that Elizabeth Taylor has problems too."

In *Moralities of Everyday Life*, psychologists John Sabini and Maury Silver state, "Gossip brings ethics home by introducing abstract morality to the mundane....Gossip then, is a mechanism of social control in that it allows individuals to express, articulate, and commit themselves to a moral position in the act of talking about someone....It is a way that we come to know what our own evaluations really are....[It] is a training ground for both self-clarification and public moral action."

These guys, Sabini and Silver, really love gossip. They say it is "common....a cross-cultural universal....a curious pleasure....[it] highlights the idleness of talk....[People gossip] to advance their interests....[Gossip gives] the actors using [it] a way to make their stories interesting....Part of the charm of gossiping is sharing a secret....[Y]ou have an obligation to talk, and gossip is a pleasant, easy, and universally accepted way to fulfill the obligation....[Gossip] dramatize[s] ourselves: our attitudes, values, tastes, temptations, inclination, will....[Gossip] creates a feeling of intimacy....Gossip lets people air their chest, get their outrage supported....[allows them to] be the hero of a moral drama with a minimum of inconvenience....Gossip, then, is one method commonsense actors have to externalize, dramatize, and embody their moral perceptions."

If you always say merely, "Hello. You're looking well. Isn't this lovely weather?" then you are a social bore. If you say, "Let me tell you a story you're just not going to believe," you'll be unforgettable. Gossip makes you inter-

esting and boosts your self-esteem at having it to relate.

Because of the happenings of the last decade or so, we have all become more cynical and less innocent. Is this bad? Isn't knowledge power? And we became that way chiefly from gossip. But do we really still want the kind of press that operated on "a gentleman's agreement" with Congress and the White House and told us little white lies about the people we were electing? Isn't it better to know the truth? Shouldn't we examine the feet of clay of our peerless leaders? Wasn't it better when Betty Ford ended speculation about her substance abuse and publicly declared it, thereby becoming a role model?

Here's a yellowed scrap of paper from a defunct magazine called *L.A. Style*. The unknown author commented perspicaciously, "Gossip is good. It is that rarest of guilty pleasures—completely democratic and fully participatory.... It helps us sort things out."

I have a little theory. I think gossip is one of the great luxuries of a democracy. It is the tawdry jewel in the crown of free speech and free expression. You don't read gossip columns in dictatorships. Gossip is for leisure, for fun, for entertainment, for relaxation. Should the day come when we are enduring big black headlines about War, Famine, Terrorism, Natural Disaster—that kind of news will drive gossip underground and out of sight.

Then, we won't have gossip to kick around any longer.

*Liz Smith's daily column is syndicated in more than 70 newspapers. She appears on The Gossip Show on E! Entertainment Television and on Fox's Good Day New York.*



# Why Gossip Can Be Hazardous

BY TODD GITLIN

**G**OSSIP IS A SERVICE INDUSTRY. IT ought to be obvious that the work of headline writers, rumormongers, prosecutors, and paparazzi alike satisfies the popular desire to feel in the know (look what *I* know); to feel normal (look how weird *they* are); and to feel morally superior (look

how perverse *they* are)—all in all, to feel connected to the presumably throbbing heart of real life. At the same time, gossip satisfies society's desire to keep its members entangled with one another.

A society that hasn't quite outgrown its puritanism is especially disposed to prurience. Gossip is the prude's revenge. Juicy gossip serves as social cement. This is as true for smallish groups as it is for society as a whole. After all,

why is it so interesting to know—or think we know—whom X is dating, who is carrying Y's baby, and why Z's eyes look red? In the case of people we know at least vaguely—bosses, rivals, employees—intimate knowledge is part of what binds the group. For individuals in the group, gossipy knowledge widens the social circle. Vicarious life gives us more lives to live. But of course, as O. J. and Nicole Brown Simpson, Princess Diana, and Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky need hardly have reminded us, we don't just gossip about people we know. We gossip about people we've never met. These we call celebrities. One thing that popular news media have done since time immemorial is dish about the demigods whose special traits make them admirable, desirable, enviable, or, in any event, worthy of attention.

Our modern celebrities are, as the English critic John Berger pointed out in *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin, 1972), our modern royalty in a society that doesn't believe in royalty. A society that is formally democratic promises that people shall not be condemned to low station by their birth. But visibly some people are wealthier—or photograph better or leap higher—than others. How shall we reconcile ourselves to the limits of our lesser lives? By spying on *them*, the glamorous ones, the rest of us temporarily borrow their prowess and their glory. Their plots become our subplots. Through them, transubstantiated in a sense, outsiders feel like insiders. Their triumphs are ours at second remove, and when they crash and burn, we commiserate or secretly revel or otherwise content ourselves with our own lot. In other words, gossip thrives on resentment and envy, which are the dirty little secrets of a society that promises social equality and delivers unequal rewards. Gossip is one way to cope with the limits of ordinary lives; it elevates the gossips and brings the mighty down to earth for a moment or two.

So it's silly to curse the back fence for being the place where the neighbors schmooze. The problem is not gossip. Let a hundred *Stars*, *Globes*, *National Enquirers* and—God help us—*Drudges* boom. The problems have to do with gluttonous media unwilling to draw boundaries, unwilling to say that gossip ends *here*. For one thing, mass-circulation gossip can be merrily used by the unscrupulous. In the 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy and his cohorts, along with red-hunting agencies who were gripped by hallucinations, assisted in turn by gossip columnists like Walter Winchell, blithely ruined the careers of hundreds of people who were no menace, red or otherwise, to national security. Throughout the 1960s, the FBI tried to ruin the reputation of Martin Luther King Jr. with leaks about his sexual exploits. In 1969, the FBI smeared the actress Jean Seberg, who had been giving money to the Black Panthers, with a leak to the gossip columnist Joyce Haber, who ran

a blind item to the effect that she was pregnant by one of the Panthers. Pregnant she was—by her husband. She had a breakdown, lost the baby, never recovered, and eventually killed herself.

Today, a gossipy news media, with channels galore and highly dispensable scruples, drinks deeply of leaks. A prosecutor may leak to turn—or entrap—a witness, and to taint a prospective jury. A well-heeled litigant may use the discovery process to flush out an antagonist's secrets. Where tabloid considerations prevail, so does intimidation. And please note, for those who go on about “the liberal media,” that most of today's public gossips skew well to the right—Rupert Murdoch, Matt Drudge, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page.

With so much of the so-called news up close and personal, as the saying goes, gossip metastasizes. With news annexed to the entertainment business, tabloid logic rules, and gossip isn't left in its place. Its place becomes everywhere. Don't blame this all on the around-the-clock cable channels, talk radio, or the Internet; the high-road competition sees little reason to resist low-road charms either. Gossip displaces news. Gossip unbounded has grown into a national—make that global—game of Trivial Pursuit. No wonder the *Stars*, *Globes*, and *National Enquirers* are watching their circulation sink. When Kenneth Starr's famous referral dishes up

the details of what the president touched and when he touched it, and ABC News carries Barbara Walters engaging the president's ex-mistress on the question of whether she “serviced” him, pity the poor *Star* and *Enquirer*, loath to use the very phrase “oral sex.” How can they compete?

There's a half-truth to the tabloids' protestation that people choose to be entertained. Still, it's not mere hypocrisy when the public deplores an underwear-sniffing press. Journalists have fallen in popular esteem—in ethical repute they rank down there with lawyers and corporate executives—because, to some degree, people know the difference between what they enjoy as voyeurs and what they need as citizens of a democracy. But the fact that the public showed good sense during this year of The Blue Dress doesn't get the drooling media off the hook. When gossip metastasizes, myriad important matters go unattended. As the media surrender their sense of proportion, a bedazzled people grow disconnected from democratic self-governance. A press that infantilizes its public forfeits that public's respect, or deserves to. ■

*Todd Gitlin, a professor of culture, journalism, and sociology at New York University, is the author of eight books, including The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America Is Wracked by Culture Wars, and a new novel, Sacrifice (both Metropolitan Books).*

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# Gossip: The Next Generation

LIKE PEANUT BUTTER AND CHOCOLATE, THE Internet and gossip appear to be an oh-so-perfect match. Both the adolescent medium and the matronly pastime have little tolerance for pretension—and an unquestioned respect for timeliness. “Gossip is sort of like fast food,” muses MSNBC columnist Jeannette Walls. “Once it’s cold, it’s completely tasteless. You’ve got to get it out there while it’s hot.” Nothing can reach a plugged-in, gossip-hungry reader quicker than a web page. Like much of the other content on the Web, a lot of cybergossip is simply warmed-over newspaper material. Sites such as Gossip Central ([www.gossipcentral.com](http://www.gossipcentral.com)) and The Obscure Store and Reading Room ([www.obscurestore.com](http://www.obscurestore.com)) will take you to the online versions of daily gossip columns found in print outlets such as the *New York Post* and the *New York Daily News*. But inquiring minds are left wanting to know more. The Internet provides.

Walls dished dirt in print for years before making the leap to cyberspace last November to pen her daily “The Scoop” column on MSNBC.com ([www.msnbc.com/news/GOSSIP\\_Front.asp](http://www.msnbc.com/news/GOSSIP_Front.asp)). While she reports celebrity gossip, her column is often dominated by politics. On February 9, she was the first to report the as-yet-unsubstantiated gossip that first lady Hillary Clinton was eyeing a New York apartment.

An established journalist working within an established organization, Walls occupies tony real estate in the Internet-gossip

world, but most of the action is arguably down on the other end. That’s where you’ll find Jill “the Diva” Stempel and her column, “The Sleaze” ([www.thesleaze.com](http://www.thesleaze.com)). While Walls caters to politics, the Diva is an unadulterated celeb-watcher. Here’s the Diva’s take on singer Celine Dion at this year’s Grammy Awards: “Let’s discuss CELINE ‘I’m not anorexic, I just weigh 40 pounds and that is normal’ DION. Could she try to look anymore like GWYNETH PALTROW?? I mean, I just gotta say that this whole white girl hair weave craze is getting a little bit out of control.”

The 26-year-old Diva writes her daily column from her Brooklyn apartment; sometimes it feels as if you’re just getting her take on last night’s TV event. But sometimes Stempel snags a scoop and her readers aren’t the only ones who benefit. Gossip legend Liz Smith may have indirectly filched an item from Stempel last summer about actress Kate Winslet’s efforts to slim down at the request of costar Arnold Schwarzenegger. Stempel’s item was posted July 20; the same story appeared in Smith’s syndicated newspaper column nine days later. Not only did the item appear to rely on Stempel’s reporting (a minor infraction in the gossip world), but Smith reprinted Stempel’s closing joke almost word for word. Smith says she never looks at the Internet for gossip items. Denis Ferrara, who helps compile Smith’s column, claims an independent source provided him with the item. Ferrara admits, however, that his source could have swiped it from Stempel’s column. “We try not to use anything that we think has been on the Internet,” says Smith. (Two days later, Smith followed up with an item saying that Schwarzenegger’s people had denied the story.)

On a less inflammatory note, a site called The Smoking Gun ([www.thesmokinggun.com](http://www.thesmokinggun.com)) distinguishes itself simply by ferreting out juicy items in public documents and posting those documents on the Internet. Read an excerpt from a suit filed against basketball bad-boy Dennis Rodman by a Los Angeles cocktail waitress, or see what the FBI had on Frank Sinatra. This site proves that even in the chummy gossip world, good reporting can sometimes trump a bulging Rolodex.

At first glance, the most impressive site when it comes to Internet gossip is produced by E!Online ([www.eonline.com/GOSSIP/index.html?fd.left.hed](http://www.eonline.com/GOSSIP/index.html?fd.left.hed)). It boasts some clever features, including an ongoing diary supposedly written by Madonna’s child. E!Online’s pride and joy appears to be Ted Casablanca’s “The Awful Truth” column, which offers readers a rare level of reporting for the online-gossip world. But the real awful truth is that E!Online is a weekly magazine masquerading as a fresh gossip source. Most of the site’s content, including Casablanca’s column, is refreshed only once a week. That’s roughly six months in web years. Get with the medium!

—Ted Rose

Some of the Web’s leading gossip sites: (clockwise from upper left) The Obscure Store, The Sleaze, E!Online, and Jeannette Wall’s column on MSNBC.





## **Memo:**

**TO: THE MEDIA AND THOSE THEY COVER**

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**SUBJECT: MEDIA COMPLAINT BOARD AT:  
[WWW.BRILLSCONTENT.COM](http://WWW.BRILLSCONTENT.COM)**

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**PURPOSE: TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD**

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**I**T WASN'T A FRONT-PAGE STORY. IN FACT, WHEN 11-year-old Ryan Harris was found dead last July in an impoverished Chicago neighborhood, her underwear stuffed in her mouth and her shorts pulled down to her ankles, it only merited a 92-word brief in the *Chicago Sun-Times* and a 368-word article tucked on page 3 of the *Chicago Tribune's* metro section.

But less than two weeks later, the Chicago Police Department announced that two boys, 7 and 8 years old, had confessed to the murder. The scant media coverage turned into a frenzy of outrage.

Alex Kotlowitz, a Chicago-based journalist and author, first heard about the tragedy when he was asked to appear on *CBS This Morning* and "contribute to the laments," as he puts it. He had been looking into a story for *The New Yorker* about the juvenile-justice system; after the morning show, he went directly to one of the court hearings on the Harris case. The more details he heard, Kotlowitz says, the more skeptical he became about the children's supposed confession. "On some visceral level, I wondered how it was that children this young could've spun out such a complete yarn," he says. "At some point, it began to unravel." On September 4, county prosecutors announced that semen had been found on the girl's underpants. The charges against the boys were dropped.

In a story for *The New Yorker*,  
**Alex Kotlowitz** examined how two  
young boys could be called killers.

# JUVENILE INJUSTICE

After the frenzy died down, Kotlowitz, 44, spent three months canvassing Englewood (where Harris was found and where the boys lived) and trying to piece together how the police had come to the conclusion that these young boys could kill. His quest resulted in a February 8 *New Yorker* article, "The Unprotected," which told the tale of children trapped in a justice system insistent on treating them like adults, in a nation quick to believe they could be murderers.

Kotlowitz patiently reconstructed the events following Harris's death, from the boys' interrogation as witnesses and their "confessions" to police officers (without their parents present) to the effect the case has had on the juvenile-justice

debate. Along the way, his relentless reporting brought texture to what he called a "dispirited community" readers knew only as "low-income" and character to two frightened boys who are, after all, only children. The 7-year-old has a serious speech impediment, Kotlowitz revealed, and the 8-year-old is "stick-skinny, with gangly limbs that [move] out of synch with the rest of his body, like those of a marionette.... When he smiles, it's as if someone had plugged him in." In the courtroom, the children scribbled in coloring books, their heads not visible above the back of the bench.

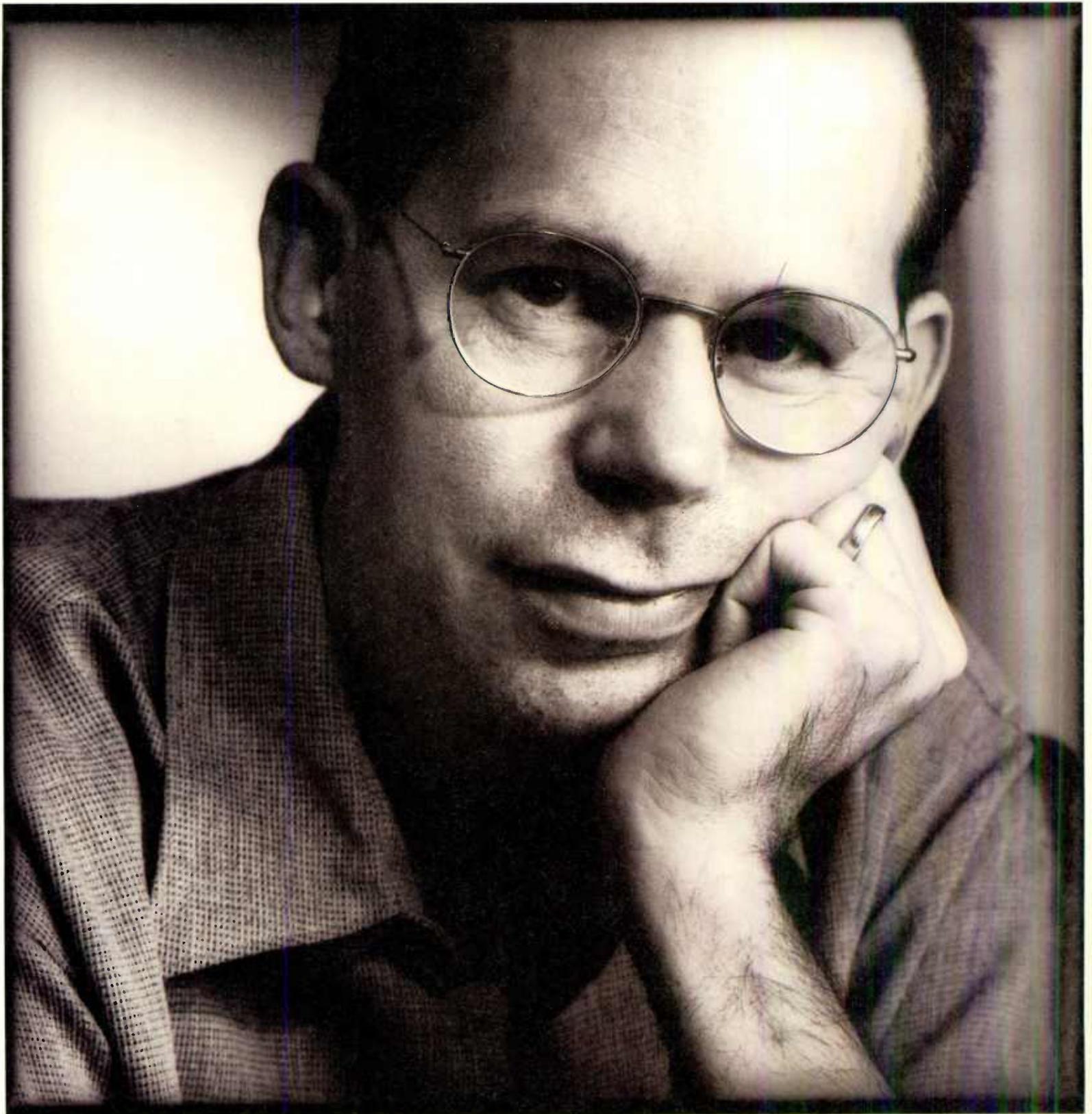
Kotlowitz says he interviewed more than 40 people for the story, from "obvious players," such as attorneys and reporters, to more "peripheral" characters, including the court's sketch artist, the deputy who escorted the children into the courtroom, and experts on how children behave while being interrogated. The police officers involved in the case refused to speak to Kotlowitz, so he gleaned crucial details from police and medical reports, interviewed other cops who knew the lead detectives, and spent an evening riding with plainclothes officers in the district in which the murder took place.

Most effective were Kotlowitz's revelations about the boys' home lives. "Everyone's assumption right off the bat, including mine, was that something was off in their families," he says. In fact, as he outlines in his piece, both boys come from stable two-parent homes, and their families have been deeply affected by the ordeal.

After Kotlowitz had spent two afternoons with the 7-year-old's family, the boy's father took him aside and told him why he'd been so reluctant to talk to the media. "I think everybody looked at me, and all they saw was a gang-banger," the father said, according to Kotlowitz. (*Time* magazine actually reported that the 7-year-old had ties to Chicago's notorious Black Disciples, an allegation Kotlowitz believes is untrue, "disturbing, and dismaying.") In "The Unprotected," Kotlowitz explained why the father hadn't shown up for his son's first hearing. "Unable to face the thought that his son had been arrested for murder, he got into his 1988 Ford Taurus and drove ninety miles north to Milwaukee and then back, listening to his and his son's favorite song, Al Green's 'Love and Happiness.'"

Kotlowitz is no stranger to communities like Englewood. His 1991 book, *There Are No Children Here* (which grew out of a series of articles for *The Wall Street Journal*), chronicled a year in the life of two boys struggling to survive childhood in a project on Chicago's West Side. And just last year he published *The Other Side of the River*, the story of two towns in southwestern Michigan—one white and middle class, the other black and poor—and their disparate explanations for the drowning death of a 16-year-old black boy in the river that separates them.

A white, middle-class man originally from New York City, Kotlowitz has a background that is far removed from many of the people he covers. But he spends months and even years in their neighborhoods. "Often what happens is that we go into communities like Englewood and report on [them] as if we



Alex Kotlowitz tries to probe issues like race and poverty in ways that will engage those who normally don't give these problems much thought. "He ventures into terrain that many people don't want to look at," says Isabel Wilkerson, a journalist and friend of Kotlowitz's.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KURT GERBER  
World Radio History

were foreign correspondents," he says. "Sadly, I don't think we spend enough time [there]." According to John Koten, Kotlowitz's former editor at the *Journal*, Kotlowitz transformed the paper's coverage of social issues and "humanized" the *Journal* by reporting on urban communities from the inside out.

Kotlowitz tries to get at issues like race and poverty in ways that will engage those who normally don't give these problems much thought. "He ventures into terrain that many people don't want to look at," says Isabel Wilkerson, a journalist and friend of Kotlowitz's on leave from her job as *The New York Times's* Chicago bureau chief. Nan Talese, Kotlowitz's editor at Nan A. Talese/Doubleday Publishing, agrees. "[His stories] illuminate a hidden corner of our society."

However sensitive Kotlowitz is to the boys' plight, "The Unprotected" is hardly a rant about cops coercing confessions in order to frame innocent kids. "He helps show the complexity of situations and relationships.... He doesn't polarize it," says Catherine Ryan, chief of the juvenile-justice bureau at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. He reports outright that there is scant evidence that the detectives are "rogue" cops. The real story is "much more complicated," he says, and he has no qualms about presenting it that way. He wrote: "The possibility that [detectives] Cassidy and Nathaniel were just workaday cops...makes the treatment of [the boys]—as if they were just like any other suspects, despite their obvious immaturity—even more disquieting."

Since stories about the case began appearing in August, a directive was issued that requires a parent or guardian be present when police interview a child in Chicago, and a commission is looking into whether or not children under 10 can understand their Miranda warnings and are fit to stand trial. Lawyers for the boys are working on civil suits against the police. But Lee Aitken, Kotlowitz's editor at *The New Yorker*, thinks the true impact of Kotlowitz's piece is in its cautionary tale. Says Aitken: "Look how far we've come in what we're willing to believe about kids this young." ■

# GOING FOR THE GOLD IN OLYMPICS REPORTING

BY ED SHANAHAN

## CHRIS VANOCUR BREAKS THE STORY

**C**HRIS VANOCUR, THE LEAD political reporter for KTVX, knew he was looking at something significant on November 23 when he obtained from a source a copy of a draft of a letter written by senior Salt Lake City Olympics official David Johnson to a woman named Sonia Essomba.

"The enclosed check for \$10,114.99 will have to be our last payment for tuition," Johnson informed Essomba in the letter. Vanocur had heard rumors about such payments made by the local Olympic organizing committee in connection with the city's 1995 selection as the site for the 2002 Winter Games, but this was the first time any written proof had surfaced.

Vanocur's next move was to search the Internet, where he turned up citations for the late Rene Essomba, Sonia Essomba's father, a prominent surgeon from Cameroon who, it turned out, had been a member of the International Olympic Committee. "That's when things really started to heat up," says Vanocur.

Vanocur contacted other sources, who told him of similar payments made on behalf of the relatives of other IOC members. He then questioned local Olympics organizers about the contents of the Essomba letter. Far from stonewalling him, Vanocur says those officials "tied up a lot of loose ends" by confirming the younger Essomba's connection to the IOC and acknowledging that the payments to her were part of a larger "humanitarian-aid" program.

On November 24, Vanocur went on the air to report that the Salt Lake City

committee had spent thousands of dollars on scholarships for IOC relatives. A little more than a week later, the committee admitted spending nearly \$400,000 on 13 such scholarships.

Lee Benson, a columnist for the *Deseret News*, says that because of the heavy-handedness of those organizing the 2002 Games, it wasn't surprising that the story would come out about improprieties connected to Salt Lake City's selection as an Olympic site.

"There were a lot of somebodies with an axe to grind," Benson says, adding that it also wasn't a big surprise that Vanocur—with KTVX since 1990, in the city on and off for 17 years, and known as a bulldog reporter—would be the one to break that story first. "They were all thinking, *Who is the most likely to snap at this and tear it apart and make a big deal out of it?* Chris Vanocur has that reputation."

Vanocur, 39, agrees that his reputation for being hard-nosed—not just on the Olympics beat but on most everything he covers—paid off in this instance. Though

Chris Vanocur turned the rumor of tuition payoffs into substantiated fact.



TIM KELLY

acknowledging that he was somewhat "lucky" to break the initial story that set off an international Olympic scandal, the son of veteran television newsman Sander Vanocur says it was hard work that put him in the position to be lucky. "I'm a great believer in the Branch Rickey line that luck is the residue of design," he says.

Vanocur hasn't tired yet of the Olympics scandal story. "Are you kidding?" he laughs. "I'm going to ride this story as long as I can. I made a decision early on to do whatever I had to report this story, to approach this as a once-in-a-lifetime story, and that's the way I'm doing it."

## HOWARD BERKES RAISES THE STAKES

**H**OWARD BERKES, WHO covers eight western states out of National Public Radio's Salt Lake City bureau, is another reporter who devoted his winter to following the Olympics saga.

"This story," says Berkes, a Salt Lake City-based NPR correspondent since 1982, "has given the media permission to finally pick apart this international organization that for decades and decades operated in an arrogant and completely closed fashion with millions of dollars flowing through their hands and no accountability."

Berkes says he knew Chris Vanocur's initial story about the Essomba letter was newsworthy locally, but wasn't sure what it would mean to NPR's national audience.

"If somebody in the Olympic movement thinks it's wrong, then it's a story," Berkes recalls thinking. "Where was the ethical bone in the IOC body? Who in the organization would care about this maybe and have something to say about it?"

One name kept coming up: Marc Hodler of Switzerland, the chairman of the IOC commission overseeing Salt Lake City's preparations for the 2002 Games and

the author of the IOC's rules governing gifts to its members and what kind of contact those members can have with potential host cities.

Having identified Hodler as a critical source, Berkes began trying to contact him in Switzerland, compensating for the eight-hour time difference by getting up early in the morning so he could reach Hodler in the early afternoon. For more than a week, those attempts proved unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, spurred by Vanocur's initial report, the local press was dogging Salt Lake Olympics officials for a more detailed explanation of the "scholarship program." On December 8, those inquiries yielded a one-page press release that said 13 people—6 of them identified as "direct relatives" of IOC members—had received a total of \$393,871. The money was described as assistance for students and athletes from developing countries.

"That night," Berkes says, "I decided I was going to reach Hodler if it was the last thing I did." Moving his dialing time up to 2 A.M., Berkes got Hodler's secretary on the phone and explained why he was calling.

"He got on the phone and he was very excited right away," Berkes says. Hodler was aware of Vanocur's original story, but Berkes was the first to tell the IOC offi-

**"This story has given the media permission to finally pick apart this international organization that for decades...operated in an arrogant and completely closed fashion," Berkes says.**

cial the details of the Salt Lake City committee's fuller admission about the tuition money. "He said, 'This is the information we've been looking for. This is the information we need....He went on and on about how wrong it was, how improper it was.'"

The Hodler interview, Berkes says, was essential to advance the story. "He was somebody in the organization of such senior status that no one could ignore him." The firestorm that started once



Howard Berkes's story for NPR took a local story to an international level.

The Associated Press picked up Berkes's initial report on Hodler's reaction confirmed that hunch.

Before long, 24 IOC members had been linked to the Salt Lake scandal, similar allegations had emerged concerning other Olympic host cities, including Nagano and Sydney, and six separate investigations had been launched into Olympic site-selection practices. In announcing the results of one of those inquiries, former Senate majority leader George Mitchell described succinctly the impact of the scandal touched off by Vanocur and Berkes's reporting: "The credibility of the Olympic movement," Mitchell said, "has been gravely damaged."

Andrew Jennings, the British journalist and author of *The New Lords Of The Rings: Olympic Corruption and How to Buy Gold Medals*, says that without Berkes's interview of Hodler, Vanocur's original story, though important, might have died within a few days. Jennings says Berkes deserves praise for his doggedness in pursuing the most critical interview of the unfolding scandal. "Once Marc Hodler signaled 'I'm speaking out, boys, it's okay for you to speak out,'" says Jennings, "that let it roll." ■



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# HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

We've searched through the field of gardening information to find the best in magazines, books, websites, and TV shows. ● BY BRIDGET SAMBURG

**W**HETHER YOU'RE JUST coming out of a cold Northeast winter or a balmy one in Florida, spring is upon us all, which means it's time to plant a new garden. Gardeners everywhere are dusting off their trowels, grabbing their seeds, and heading outdoors. If

you're having trouble remembering when to plant those tulip bulbs or how to trim that shrub, we've got the dirt on where to find the answers.

Because gardening conditions vary from region to region, most experts suggest looking for information locally. Make a friend in your nearby garden center, tune into horticulture specialists on local radio programs,

and, above all, learn by doing.

If you're eager to learn on your own—or just want to pick up a few tips from the experts—there is a wealth of information available from books, magazines, websites, television programs, and even a telephone service. Both the avid gardener and the intimidated beginner will find plenty to nurture their curiosity.

## in the bookstores:

**TAYLOR'S 50 BEST SERIES** (Houghton Mifflin Co., \$10 each) The Taylor series of books includes volumes about houseplants, shrubs, herbs, perennials, and more. Complete with colorful pictures, these books use the proper and common names of plants to explain the basics of planting and care.

**NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HORTICULTURE** (Garland Publishing, Inc., \$75 per volume) Written by Thomas Everett, former New York Botanical Garden maven. "He has all the knowledge in the world and all old-world techniques," says Thomas Cooper, *Horticulture* magazine's editor. "It proves there isn't a lot new in gardening. When you think you've

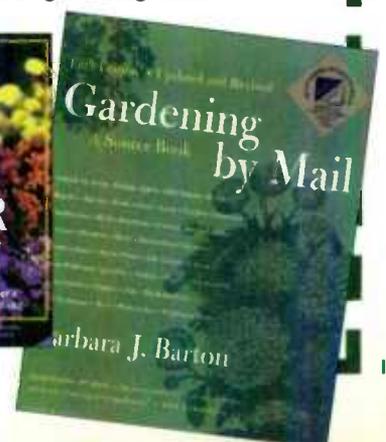
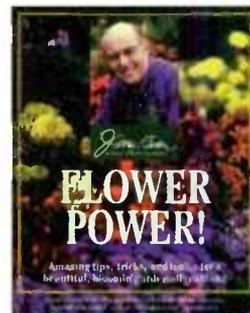
found a new plant, [Everett] has already written about it." Contains diagrams and care instructions.

**THE SOUTHERN LIVING GARDEN BOOK** (Oxmoor House, \$29.95) This guide contains information on more than 5,000 plants and flowers indigenous to the South, a glossary of gardening terms, and colorful pictures. "I think it is particularly useful for novice gardeners," says Carol Bishop Miller, a contributing editor at *Horticulture*.

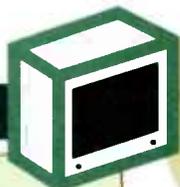
**ELEMENTS OF GARDEN DESIGN** (Owl Books, \$14.95) This easy-to-understand primer on design principles is useful for guiding gardeners of all skills as they create attractive combinations and patterns using various kinds of plants and flowers.

**FLOWER POWER** (Ballantine Trade Paperback, \$12.95) Teaches the how-to's of growing bright and beautiful blooms. Author and gardening expert Jerry Baker reveals his secrets about how to cure ailing plants with beer, mouthwash, and dish soap.

**GARDENING BY MAIL** (Houghton Mifflin Co., \$24) A handy compilation of mail-order catalogs, ranging from seeds and flowers to gardening tools.



on the tube:



**VICTORY GARDEN**

(Home & Garden Television; Mondays - Fridays, 8 A.M. and 5 P.M.) This long-running show is polished, detailed, and practical. Season-appropriate shows focus on getting your garden ready for winter, turning soil in spring, and sowing seeds come summer. Tune in for creative twists to add to your yard, flower bed, or veggie patch.

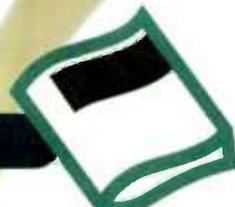
**MRS. GREENTHUMBS** The name says it all. This popular gardening icon periodically joins ABC's Regis Philbin and Kathie Lee Gifford to share her earthy wisdom. Lively and creative, Cassandra Danz dazzles audiences with beautiful floral creations and hints for innovative gardening methods. She has her own show on Canada's LifeNetwork and is trying to launch it in the United States. Danz has also written several books, including *Mrs. Greenthumbs Plows Ahead: Five Steps to the Drop-Dead Gorgeous Garden of Your Dreams*.

**REBECCA'S GARDEN** (Nationally syndicated. Check local television listings or [www.rebeccasgarden.com](http://www.rebeccasgarden.com) for channels and times.) Rebecca Kolls gets right down to the dirt on how to create both simple and elaborate gardens. From planting vegetables and pruning bushes to caring for more delicate flowers, Koll's entertaining and informative tips make her show a must-see. You may also enjoy the affiliated *Rebecca's Garden* magazine.

Rebecca Kolls reveals her flower-planting secrets on *Rebecca's Garden*.



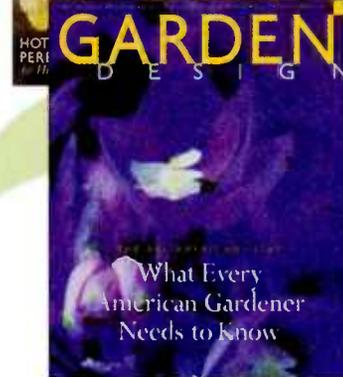
in the magazines:



**HORTICULTURE** (Primedia, \$26/year) Budding with information on plants and gardening for all regions of the country. Lengthy articles discuss color combinations and planting techniques for particular flowers. Each issue includes book reviews and practical Q&As.



**GARDEN DESIGN** (Meigher Communications, \$19.95/year) With its focus on aesthetics, this glossy highlights the spectacular and unusual while also delivering suggestions on how to design a classical garden. "This is an armchair magazine, rather than a how-to magazine," says Bill Marken, editor of *Rebecca's Garden* magazine.



**SUNSET** (Sunset Publishing Corporation, \$24/year) This regional magazine focuses on all aspects of growing in the South and Northwest. Its monthly tips on what to plant, how to design, and when to propagate make this a "bible" for those out West, says Karen Dardick, freelance gardening writer for such publications as the *Los Angeles Times* and *Rebecca's Garden* magazine.

in the newsletters:

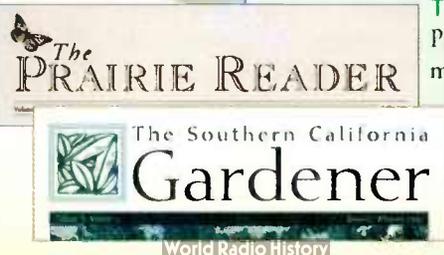


National newsletters are tough to dig up, but their regional counterparts are easier to find. Contact your local horticulture society to find out the best ones in your area. Here are a few to get you started.

**THE AVANT GARDENER** (Horticultural Data Processors, \$20/year) Unpretentious in style, this monthly newsletter is packed with ideas about innovative design techniques and hot new topics.

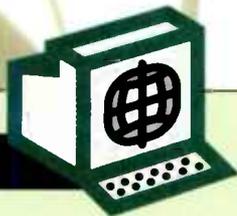
**THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GARDENER** (Garden Media, Inc., \$24/year) One of "the best" regional newsletters, says *Rebecca's Garden's* Marken. This 24-page offering focuses on what makes for winning garden combinations in hot, dry Southern California.

**THE PRAIRIE READER** (Word Rustlers/Liatris Productions, \$18 for four issues) A solid and informative read for Midwestern gardeners of all skill levels. Focus is on regional plants and flowers and the appropriate time to begin planting.



MICHELE LAURITA/REBECCA'S GARDEN MAGAZINE; PHOTONICA (2) (SANDERSONIA)

## on the web:



### GARDEN SOLUTIONS

[www.gardensolutions.com](http://www.gardensolutions.com)

A plethora of information on bulbs, roses, fruit trees, shrubs, and exotic plants. For questions still left unanswered, expert gardening hosts "Barb and Bob" will answer inquiries via e-mail.

### AMERICAN ROSE SOCIETY

[www.ars.org](http://www.ars.org)

Although not particularly fancy, this site provides information on exhibiting, pruning, spraying, and growing roses.

### GARDEN ESCAPE

[www.garden.com](http://www.garden.com)

"This is the six-hundred-pound gorilla in the field," says *Horticulture's* Cooper of this commercial site, which features tips on garden design and a weekly almanac. "It's very polished, very easy to use, and has a lot of information," he adds.

### NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION

[www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org)

This official NGA website provides gardening tips and a broad selection of guide books and catalogs for sale. Online NGA courses are offered, and the site's "horticultural dictionary" provides definitions for every term and plant name. "They've always been a staple in providing gardening info without a lot of fluff," says Don Zeidler, direct marketing manager at W. Atlee Burpee and Co. seed company.

### VIRTUAL GARDEN

[www.vg.com](http://www.vg.com)

This site, sponsored by Time-Life, offers links to other web gardening sites, such as the American Orchid Society. Complete with a plant encyclopedia and a locator for horticultural societies all over the world.

### THE GARDEN VILLAGE

[garden.vbutler.com](http://garden.vbutler.com)

This easy-to-navigate page offers links to more than 150 sites devoted to such subjects as agriculture, organic gardens, pest control, and small-space gardening.

### GARDEN TOWN

[www.gardentown.com](http://www.gardentown.com)

Plant yourself in this virtual town to enjoy the "Library," chock full of helpful info on seeds, roses, herbs, and more, or browse through the "Mall," which offers a listing of books, magazines, and gardening apparel available for purchase. "Sage Hall" provides a forum for gardeners who want to share ideas or ask questions. Don't leave town without stopping by the "Gallery," an extensive display of photographs illustrating various gardening styles.

### THE BUTTERFLY WEBSITE

[www.mgfx.com/butterfly](http://www.mgfx.com/butterfly)

Luring butterflies to your garden may be easier than you think. This site offers tips on which shrubs and flowers to plant to attract these colorful, winged insects. Conservation information and a colorful photo gallery make this a worthwhile browse.

## on the telephone:

**D**O YOU NEED IMMEDIATE instructions on how to stake a tomato plant? Does your orchid require emergency care? If you need answers fast, you're in luck. Horticulture experts are available all over the country to answer your gardening questions by phone—for no charge. Rebecca Kolls, the star of *Rebecca's Garden*, says the national Master Gardener program is one of the best resources available. "It's a great service, and it's free," says Kolls.

The program, offered through local cooperative extension programs, trains amateurs in horticulture; in return for their education, these new gardening masters are required to teach others, often by phone. "They have on-staff master gardeners who are sitting there waiting to answer phone calls and questions from any of the residents in their county," says Kolls. "Some of the arborists can even come out to your house and look at your trees and tell you which ones are diseased." Kolls says that many of the local programs are supported by nearby universities so "the information you receive is as up-to-date as it gets."

To find the service closest to you, call your local cooperative extension service or go to [www.reeusda.gov/new/csrees.htm](http://www.reeusda.gov/new/csrees.htm).



# DÉTENTE WITH A HUMAN FACE

*The Kissinger Transcripts* strips away the former secretary of state's public facade to reveal his true nature. Plus: An antihero's obsession with stealing rare blossoms.

## AFTER READING *THE KISSINGER*

*Transcripts*, it is not hard to understand why Henry Kissinger has fought to block access to his personal papers until five years after his death. The *Transcripts*—a collection of once-classified accounts of Kissinger's meetings with communist icons such as Leonid Brezhnev and Mao Zedong—show that the former national security adviser and secretary of state under Presidents Nixon and Ford has a gift for obsequious flattery. "I used to assign the Chairman's collective writings to my classes at Harvard," Kissinger tells Mao in one meeting. Nixon, hardened cold warrior, adds, "The Chairman's writings moved a nation and have changed the world."

It's détente with a human face, and it's surprisingly readable. *Transcripts* strips away the mystique of diplomacy to reveal an eerie camaraderie—complete with sexist jokes and small talk about weight loss and UFOs—among supposed enemies. In one standoff with Brezhnev over arms reduction, Kissinger quips, "What are 3,000 MIRVs among friends?"

Sometimes the exchanges border on the surreal. Brezhnev accidentally refers to the secretary of state as "Comrade Kissinger," and Mao half-jokingly offers to send the United States 10 million Chinese women to "flood your country with disaster."

The book ends fittingly: In a meeting with

the incoming secretary of state, Cyrus Vance, the foreign-born Kissinger is asked about his career plans: "I would like to be chairman of something....But our constitution prevents me from being President."

—Jeff Pooley



## FLORIDA NURSERY

owner John Laroche is a misfit—a motor-mouthed, chain-smoking schemer whose Seminole Indian financial backers nickname him "Crazy White Man." But the passion that animates Laroche—his quixotic desire to capture and breed rare orchids—makes him an appealing antihero. Susan Orlean, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, spent two years researching and visiting Laroche's world, sometimes wading up to her waist in swamp-water in search of the perfect blossom. She brings Laroche's fervor to life in *The Orchid Thief*, weaving an account of her travels together with history and botany lessons in an engrossing tale of eccentric ambitions.

While awaiting trial for stealing blossoms from a wildlife preserve, Laroche introduces Orlean to South Florida's orchid-breeding elite, a seemingly genteel crowd whose cutthroat competitiveness shows through in plant-kidnappings and family feuds. Orlean's gift for descriptive detail helps her convey the quality that inspires such mania:

## THE ORCHID THIEF

Susan Orlean  
Random House  
January 1999  
PRINT RUN:  
62,500



the orchids' beauty. "One looks like a human nose," she writes in an overview of the thousands of orchid species. "One looks like the kind of fancy shoes that a king might wear. One looks like Mickey Mouse." In addition, as Laroche repeatedly reminds Orlean, a particularly gorgeous new breed can earn its grower some serious money.

Orlean's time among the orchid-hunters ultimately leads her to admire and envy their consuming passion, to sympathize with their disappointed aspirations—and to hope that she'll never acquire their obsession herself. Thanks to her vivid, sympathetic account, the reader is likely to feel the same way.

—Matthew Heimer



## BETWEEN THE IMAX MOVIE

*Everest* and the best-selling book *Into Thin Air*, Mount Everest and mountaineering both got a bad rap last year. From these sources, any level-headed person on level ground could argue that climbing the world's highest peaks just ain't worth the risk. But with his new book, *Distant Mountains*, photographer John Cleare reminds us how good it feels to sit literally on top of the world.

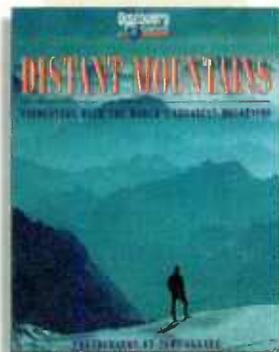
## THE KISSINGER TRANSCRIPTS

Edited by  
William Burr  
The New Press  
February 1999  
PRINT RUN:  
20,000



**DISTANT MOUNTAINS**

John Cleare  
Discovery Channel  
Books/Random House  
November 1998  
PRINT RUN:  
14,000



*Distant Mountains* features Cleare's photographs from nearly every major mountain range over five continents. From the moonscapes of Patagonia to a sea of clouds below Himalayan summits, Cleare's photographs are never less than stunning and include pristine panoramas and action shots of his fellow climbers that provide a sense of scale and human frailty.

Not merely for coffee-table display, this book also features 11 essays by Cleare and other renowned mountaineers—complete with maps, tables, and travel tips. While some prosaic detail will appeal only to the initiated, the cumulative effect is that of one grandiose travelogue. Jim Perrin's journey from Delhi to the 12,770-foot-high source of the Ganges is particularly evocative, while W.H. Murray's essay about his amateurish first trek in the Scottish Highlands effectively describes the burgeoning hunger to climb every mountain: "The shortness of life was brought home to me with a sudden pang. However, what I lacked in time might in part be offset by unflagging activity. From that day I became a mountaineer."

—Matthew Reed Baker



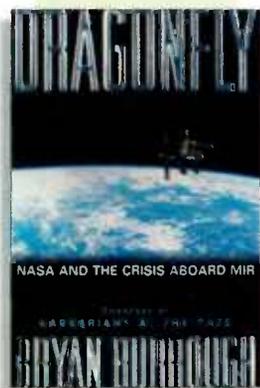
**EVER SINCE AMERICANS**

stopped visiting the moon, compelling stories about manned spaceflight have been rare. John Glenn's shuttle trip last year managed to strike a chord with many Americans, yet the mission was brief and uneventful. Focusing his attention on the Mir space station in his book *Dragonfly*, Bryan Burrough deserves kudos for finding a fresh, human space story chock full of drama.

The heart of Burrough's

**DRAGONFLY:  
NASA AND THE  
CRISIS**

**ABOARD MIR**  
Bryan Burrough  
HarperCollins  
October 1998  
PRINT RUN:  
70,000



story is Mir's *annus horribilis* of 1997, in which the station appeared to be falling apart. Burrough, a special correspondent for *Vanity Fair* and the coauthor of *Barbarians at the Gate*, reports that the problems were a direct result of a seriously flawed Russian space program, which was heavily reliant on antiquated technology and Russian bravado. In a satellite-docking-turned-collision, for example, we learn that the cosmonauts were expected to manually dock the incoming cargo ship via remote control without computer data or a direct view of the ship. Even Tom Hanks couldn't do that.

Burrough focuses his narrative on the rotating crew of U.S. astronauts trapped aboard Mir for the ride—and their bosses down on earth. One might expect Russia's space masters to avert their eyes from such disparate peccadillos as unexplained fires and possession of vodka, but NASA's hands-off stance is a stunner. Burrough suggests the American laissez-faire attitude was shaped by the political realities of trying to support a shaky Russian government and preserve the future of the International Space Station. These may have been reasonable goals, but they easily could have had disastrous consequences. Burrough transforms the events on Mir into a cautionary tale about the perils of multinational space exploration.

—Ted Rose



**DRESSED IN FORMAL**

kimono, her face covered in white makeup "like thick paint," and wearing a traditional wig of human hair, Liza Dalby, an American anthropology student, fit the role of geisha almost perfectly. Adopted by an "older sister" in the traditional manner

and trained in geisha arts, Dalby spent a year living the geisha life—accompanying men to Japanese tea houses, providing lighthearted conversation, pouring sake, playing music, flirting. In *Geisha*, she recalls her experiences as Japan's only foreign member of this exclusive community.

Dalby writes as a true insider, touching on everything from how a kimono is worn to how a geisha-to-be would lose her virginity. With sharp insight into Japanese social customs, she describes a lifestyle that no other Westerner has experienced.

As a rule, Dalby explains, geisha should be witty and charming, adept at classical Japanese dance or traditional music—able to act "as 'oil' so that banquets and dinner parties may proceed smoothly." And, though

the unmarried geisha sometimes sleep with the men they entertain and "generally know more about sex than housewives do," Dalby finds that Japanese wives understand—and even appreciate—the geisha's role. "They see the distinction...

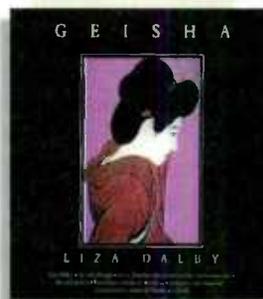
as a feminine division of labor," she writes, "where neither side need be jealous because one identity does not overlap with the other."

A perfect book for those who enjoyed the best-selling novel *Memoirs of a Geisha*, the nonfiction *Geisha* reads more like a journal than a scholarly work. Researched in the mid-1970s and first published in 1983, *Geisha* has been re-released with a new introduction, "Twenty-Four Years Later." In it, Dalby notes some of the developments that have taken place in geisha life and warns that geisha "numbers will shrink further" in the coming years. If she's right, that's all the more reason why her account of this unique aspect of Japanese culture is truly exciting.

—Rachel Taylor

**GEISHA**

Liza Dalby  
University of  
California Press  
October 1998  
PRINT RUN:  
15,000



# HOW DO THEY KNOW?

Where women's magazine editors learned the ins and outs of their business



**ROBERTA MYERS**

**EDITOR IN CHIEF, MIRABELLA, 1998—**

Colorado State University, B.A., 1982  
Associate articles editor, *Seventeen*, 1987–1989;  
articles editor, *Seventeen*, 1989–1991;  
managing editor, *Seventeen*, 1991–1993;  
editor in chief, *Tell*, 1993–1994;  
senior editor, *In Style*, 1994–1995;  
senior articles editor, *Elle*, 1995–1997;  
editor, *Mirabella*, 1997–1998



**ELAINA RICHARDSON**

**EDITOR, ELLE, 1996—**

University of Edinburgh, M.A., 1982;  
St. Hilda's College, University of Oxford,  
M.Litt., 1984  
Reporter/writer, *New York Post*, 1989–1990;  
features editor, *Mirabella*, 1990–1993;  
managing editor, *Elle*, 1993–1996



**ANNA WINTOUR**

**EDITOR IN CHIEF, VOGUE, 1988—**

Did not attend college.  
Fashion editor, *New York* magazine, 1981–1983; creative  
director, *Vogue*, 1983–1986; editor in chief, *British Vogue*,  
1986–1987; editor in chief, *House & Garden*, 1987–1988



**KATE WHITE**

**EDITOR IN CHIEF, COSMOPOLITAN, 1998—**

Union College, B.A., 1972  
Executive editor, *Mademoiselle*, 1984–1986; associate editor,  
*Mademoiselle*, 1987–1988; editor in chief, *Child*, 1988–1989;  
editor in chief, *Working Woman*, 1989–1991; editor in chief,  
*McCall's*, 1991–1994; editor in chief, *Redbook*, 1994–1998



**SUSAN TAYLOR**

**EDITOR IN CHIEF, ESSENCE, 1981—  
SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT, ESSENCE  
COMMUNICATIONS, INC. 1993—**

Fordham University, B.A., 1991;  
studying for Master of Divinity degree  
at Union Theological Seminary  
Beauty editor, *Essence*, 1971–1972;  
fashion and beauty editor, *Essence*,  
1972–1981; vice-president, *Essence*  
Communications, Inc., 1986–1993

THOMAS LAU/OUTLINE (WINTOUR); TEREESA KOPIN (RICHARDSON); MYERS: WHITE; COURTESY OF ESSENCE (TAYLOR)



**LINDA WELLS**

**EDITOR IN CHIEF, ALLURE, 1990—**

Trinity College, B.A., 1980  
Associate beauty editor, *Vogue*, 1983–1986;  
beauty editor and food editor, *The New York Times Magazine*, 1986–1990



**GLEENDA BAILEY**

**EDITOR, MARIE CLAIRE, 1996—**

Kingston University (UK), B.A., 1983  
Editor in chief, *Honey* (UK), 1986–1987; editor in chief, *Folio* (UK), 1987–1988; editor in chief, *British Marie Claire*, 1988–1996; consultant, *Marie Claire Album S.A. (Marie Claire parent)*, 1995—



**ELIZABETH TILBERIS**

**EDITOR IN CHIEF, HARPER'S BAZAAR, 1992—**

Leicester Polytechnic (UK), B.A., 1970  
Fashion editor, *British Vogue*, 1974–1984; executive fashion editor, *British Vogue*, 1984–1987; editor in chief, *British Vogue*, 1987–1992; director, Condé Nast Publications, Ltd. (British subsidiary of Condé Nast Publications, Inc.), 1991–1992



**BONNIE FULLER**

**EDITOR IN CHIEF, GLAMOUR, 1998—**

University of Toronto, B.A., 1977  
Editor in chief, *YM*, 1989–1994; editor in chief, *Marie Claire*, 1995–1996; editor in chief, *Cosmopolitan*, 1997–1998



**MARTHA NELSON**

**MANAGING EDITOR, IN STYLE, 1993—**

Barnard College, B.A., 1976  
Staff editor, *Ms* magazine, 1981–1985; editor in chief, *Women's Sports and Fitness*, 1985–1988; executive editor, *Savvy Woman*, 1988–1990; editor in chief, *Savvy Woman*, 1990–1991; consulting editor, *Who Weekly* (Australia), May 1992–November 1992; assistant managing editor, *People*, February 1993–May 1993



**ELIZABETH CROW**

**EDITOR IN CHIEF, MADEMOISELLE, 1993—**

Mills College, B.A., 1968;  
attended graduate school at Brown, 1969–70  
Editorial director, *New York* magazine, 1976; executive editor, *New York* magazine, 1976–1978; editor in chief, *Parents*, 1978–1988; president, editorial director, and CEO, Gruner + Jahr USA Publishing, 1988–1993

(continued from page 21)

**HAVE IT BOTH WAYS**

\*I found the JFK-George article ["The Politics Of Personality," March] interesting. There is definitely a role for a political magazine that doesn't sit on the coffee table exuding an oppressive weight of guilt when you can't bring yourself to read the text-heavy tome. On the other hand, unless JFK can bring me at least one or two really thought-provoking articles per issue, he'll never see my money.

JENNIFER S. OATFIELD  
Chicago, IL  
(via e-mail)

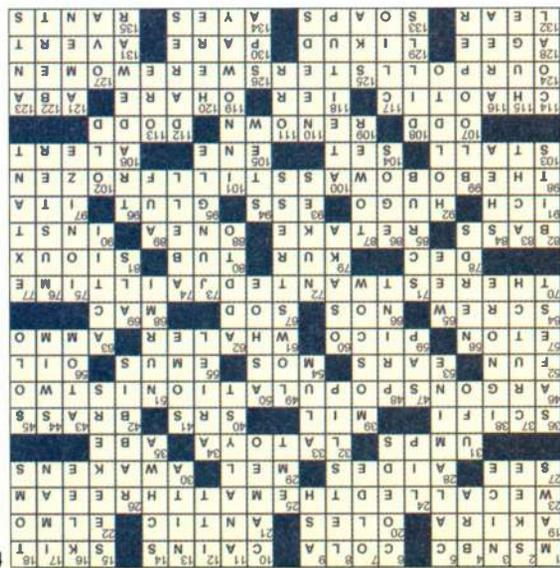
**MAKE IT INTERESTING**

\*Reading your feature on George, I couldn't help but think back to your USA Today story in the September issue ["Surprise! We Like McPaper"] and to your running theme in Brill's Content of media content conforming to consumer demand. If editors feel caught between losing readers and cutting out subjects they feel are important, shouldn't it be their responsibility to present news in an interesting manner that makes clear its relevance?

STEPHAN FARIS  
Tucson, AZ

**Crossword Puzzle solution**

See puzzle, page 127

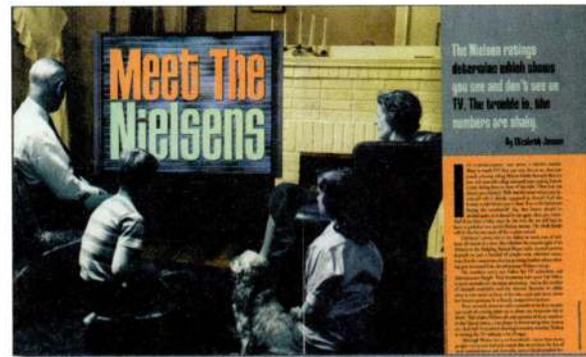


BRILL'S CONTENT MAY 1999

**BURIED IRONY**

\*I enjoyed the article in your March issue about David Eggers of the late, great *Might* magazine ["Reveling In The Anti-Buzz"]. How ironic, though, that a story about a writer who thoroughly skewered the culture of celebrity would be buried on page 121, behind a 12-page cover profile of John F. Kennedy Jr.—a celebrity whose "political" magazine worships celebrity and reduces everything else to a fashion statement.

JEFFERSON DECKER  
Cambridge, MA  
(via e-mail)



**TELL HIM MORE**

\*In the March issue I immediately flipped to "Meet The Niensens." Your article was informative, but conspicuous by its absence was any elaboration on what you called in the first paragraph the "token reward" paid to the Nielsen families. This is important information. How could this be overlooked?

FRANK MEANS  
Corsicana, TX

**Editor's note:** Good question. The "token reward" offered to a Nielsen family can range from \$1 to \$6, for those that fill out one of the company's weekly diaries, to a onetime \$50 payment for those that have a Nielsen "people meters" installed on their television.

**LET'S EAT**

\*In "The Powers That Aren't" [Rewind, March], I think [Steven Brill has] identified a significant blind spot in the business perspective of media companies that "chase the competition."

In the restaurant business, large corporations chase the competition in

offering us burgers, fries, and sugar-water beverages. I thank my lucky stars that we can still find five-star restaurants—and neighborhood diners—that offer better quality and bigger selection while making a decent profit.

BRUCE MADSEN  
Sierra City, CA  
(via e-mail)

**TRUST BETRAYED**

\*It would seem with your defense of the mainstream media that your magazine isn't as independent as you wish the public to believe. I'm referring to the article about Larry Flynt [The Big Blur, March]. It is clear that *Brill's Content* has betrayed the trust of your readership with your weak attack on a real American hero.

DENNIS D. COMSTOCK  
No. Muskegon, MI

**NO ONE'S IMMUNE**

\*Thanks for "Tracking The 'Clinton Love Child' Story" [The Notebook, March]. I heard this story on no less a source than the BBC World Service News. Usually the BBC does a decent job, but [the Lewinsky] scandal caused the best to do the dumbest things.

JACK WIDNER  
Edinboro, PA

**CHEESE GONE BAD**

\*I have been a subscriber since your first issue and have to say that I think your magazine has done a fine job, with the exception of the issue that basically heralded Matt Drudge as the greatest thing since sliced cheese ["Town Crier For The New Age," November]. Imagine my happiness when I read the article "Is Drudge Dead?" [Rewind] in your March issue. Not many other media outlets would produce a piece and then question itself several months later.

CRAIG STARK  
Conroe, TX  
(via e-mail)



### GOOD STORY, BAD AD

\*I enjoyed the article by Ben Stein, "Ignoring The Deed, They Call It Greed" [The Debunker, March] on the press's lambasting of lawyers for making millions on the tobacco settlement when [those lawyers] should be thanked for saving our lives. But I was jolted by the "No Bull" Winston cigarette ad blanketing the back cover. I can't support a publication that touts so deadly a product.

MARX COOPER  
Oak Park, MI

### NOT A TRUE TEST

\*In "Our Read On Bookstores" [The Notebook, March], at least Michael Kadish admitted his survey was "unscientific" before adding another layer to the trendy stereotype of bookstore clerks who are ignorant about their merchandise.

Mr. Kadish's biggest omission was ignoring individual specializations. My own were ancient history, classical philosophy, and comparative religion. I couldn't answer his question on the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for fiction (at least off the top of my head), but I could steer him to the best translation of Herodotus and a bargain study of the Nag Hammadi texts.

The truly typical customer, whom independents and chain stores alike serve to survive, wants "that book by that guy on TV the other day." Answer that question, Mr. Kadish. That's why best-sellers are prominently marked near the front of the store, and why the savviest clerks receive a pittance for their knowledge.

JIM GAINES  
Bowling Green, KY  
(via e-mail)

### MAINSTREAM U.S.A.

\*As the editor of one of Gannett's smaller newspapers, I wanted to point out what I considered to be the missing point in Jennifer Greenstein's story about efforts to include minority voices and perspectives in our pages ["Just Add Color," March].

The point she missed is that successfully doing so isn't a matter of keeping lists and going to extreme lengths to meet some quota, real or imagined. It's about getting to know the diverse people who live within your beat and in your community. It's about getting out of the office and talking to people, people who are different from you. And, as with any source a reporter uses, it's about developing a relationship of trust with those sources, quoting them accurately, and using those quotes in a meaningful context.

The question that needs to be addressed, I'd suggest, is not why



Gannett newspapers care so much about diversity but why so many newspapers and other media outlets still don't share that level of commitment.

DENNIS M. LYONS  
Executive editor  
*The Reporter*  
Lansdale, PA  
(via e-mail)

### ON THE LIST

In reference to the March "Making The Best-Seller Lists" story, [Dow Jones & Co.'s] Richard Tofel was quoted saying *The Wall Street Journal's* best-seller list was "the first list to say all the stores that were in it" in 1994, when it started.

For the record, *USA Today* launched its best-seller list on October 28, 1993, and from the start has

printed the names of contributing booksellers each week in the paper. The list includes the names of the chain, independent, online, and discount booksellers, as well as Ingram Book Co., which represents retail sales from a collection of independent booksellers.

JACQUELINE BLAIS  
Best-selling books editor  
*USA Today*  
Arlington, VA  
(via e-mail)

**Editor's note:** If there's a contradiction between Mr. Tofel's statement and Ms. Blais's, we don't see it. *The Wall Street Journal* names all the stores that contribute to its list, while *USA Today* states that "reporting stores include," not "reporting stores are."

### BONE TO PICK

Since your magazine is in the position of being a journalistic watchdog, I was surprised that you didn't call the *Forward* for comment before publishing a story alleging that we had changed a writer's article without checking with her ["Funny Bones To Pick," Talk Back, March]. We in fact did check with Susan Shapiro about the editing changes we made before publishing her article. After your article appeared, we called Ms. Shapiro and asked her about it, and while she initially denied having received a fax with the edited version of the story, she eventually acknowledged that she may simply have failed to notice the changes in the republication version we sent her. For the record, our policy is to clear changes with writers before publication.

IRA STOLL  
Managing editor  
*The Forward*  
New York, NY  
(via e-mail)

**Editor's note:** Ms. Shapiro stated that changes in her stories sometimes were made without her consent. She did not specify

whether or not she was contacted by *Forward* editors, but may have mistakenly left that impression.

**ALL THAT JAZZ**

\*University of Chicago president Hugo Sonnenschein ["Media Diet," *The Notebook*, March] is profoundly controversial here, because many "classic" University of Chicago scholars think he is trying to make the place into Disney World—or at least more like Princeton, from which he came—to attract more undergraduates.

[These critics] will be confirmed in that belief by his comment [in] your March issue about his favorite radio station: "I listen to public radio [Chicago's WBEZ-FM] almost exclusively—talk and classical." There are two excellent FM classical stations here in Chicago, WFMT and WNIB. WBEZ is our only source of jazz [within the Chicago city limits], and God bless them for it.

JOEL HENNING  
Leisure & Arts columnist  
*The Wall Street Journal*  
Chicago, IL  
(via e-mail)



**SHOOTS AND SCORES**

\*Many of us who had the pleasure of covering high school basketball—or any other prep sport—stood up and cheered while reading Katherine Rosman's profile of Ron Lemasters ["A Town's Memory," March]. Thanks for bringing back some great memories.

BRACEY CAMPBELL  
Atlanta, GA  
(via e-mail)

**COMPANY MAN**

When you asked my opinion about the best news websites ["Best Of The Web," April], I told your reporter that I go to MSNBC for breaking news but also visit CNN's site for talk-show transcripts. You published the latter but not the former. Now I'm in the doghouse with my colleagues at a sister site (*Slate* is owned and MSNBC is half-owned by Microsoft). Will you please get me out?

MICHAEL KINSLEY  
Editor  
*Slate* (www.slate.com)  
(via e-mail)

**Editor's note:** Mr. Kinsley did toe the company line. Our reporter's notes show that—in addition to mentioning his occasional visits to the CNN site—he told her that "Slate is all you need" and that "MSNBC is my home page" and "the place I go to for breaking news."

**DEFEATS THE PURPOSE**

\*Edwin Schlossberg's article "A Question Of Trust" [Next, March] was disturbing and ridiculous. He suggested that an unidentified authority establish an information-veracity service to certify Internet data as trustworthy or not.

Mr. Schlossberg's analogy with the scientific community is erroneous—research studies and reporting cannot be judged in the same light. There will always be serious questions regarding objectivity with nontechnical information, but these concerns are by no means limited to Internet newcomers.

The established media has had their share of problems in determining what is and is not the "truth." What this article suggested almost amounts to some type of censorship bureau, a way for the established media to discredit any potential competition. This defeats the whole purpose of the Internet—to provide a real-time global forum, an alternative to the traditional dissemination of information.

STEPHEN LAHANAS  
Dayton, OH  
(via e-mail)

**A PUNDIT'S RESPONSE**

\*In its February issue, *Brill's Content* published an article on my work as a commentator in the White House crisis ["A Pundit's Rise And Fall," *The Notebook*, by Ted Rose]. *Brill's Content* appeared more intent on fashioning than reporting facts, including withholding facts that contradicted the thrust of its story. For example, *Brill's Content* reported to its readers that a review of my résumé failed to give any hint as to why I would be asked to give commentary in this crisis. *Brill's Content* assured its readers that the only relevant background to the crisis was "some teaching in the area." It did not consider "material"—or worth noting—that I (1) represented four former U.S. attorney generals in constitutional litigation in the White House crisis, (2) testified as a constitutional expert in both the Senate and House impeachment hearings, (3) published three large academic pieces on impeachment (including work expressly relied upon by the House managers in the Senate trial), and (4) litigated in the areas of presidential powers, congressional authority and constitutional criminal procedure for over a decade. These items were all on the résumé that *Brill's Content* reviewed for its readers.

Anyone who has dealt with Mr. Brill has few expectations. I have criticized Mr. Brill in the past for such acts as manufacturing false quotations for publication. To its credit, the magazine expressly links its content with his reputation and credibility. The only missing element in the title, however, is the simple legend "Caveat emptor": Buyer beware.

JONATHAN TURLEY  
George Washington University  
Law School  
Washington, DC

**Ted Rose responds:** The media's appetite for Mr. Turley's commentary—not his résumé—was the focus of my article. Besides, Mr. Turley became a regular Lewinsky pundit before he amassed most of the credentials he cites above.

# “Take A Number”

Statistics don't lie...but they sure can mislead.

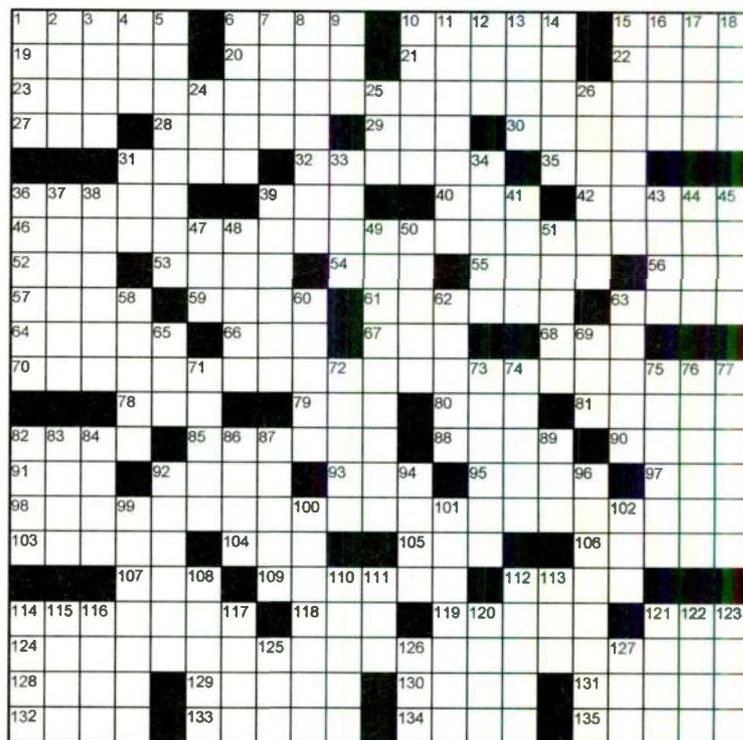
## ACROSS

- 1 Lack work
- 6 The \_\_\_ wars of the 1980s
- 10 Fratricides
- 15 *Saturday Night Live* piece
- 19 Ran name
- 20 Appreciation for the Toreador
- 21 Bit of mischief
- 22 Tickled doll of recent fad
- 23 “82% of Americans have phone manners our researchers categorized as ‘rude’ or ‘very rude.’” True, but...
- 27 Catch on the tube
- 28 Oval Office staff
- 29 NC Congressman Watt
- 30 Stirs
- 31 They call certain workers out on strikes
- 32 One of Michael's sisters
- 35 Former *New York Post* publisher Hirschfeld
- 36 Zelazny's genre
- 39 50,000 score, slangily
- 40 Most *Modern Maturity* readers: (abbr.)
- 42 Generals, for example
- 46 “Half the population of Argon, Montana, believes that Elvis Presley controls world silver markets from his Miami Beach offices.” True, but...
- 52 A blast
- 53 “I'm all \_\_\_” (notable Perot quote)
- 54 Udall and Vaughn
- 55 They're grounded down under
- 56 Gulf War issue
- 57 Where Ian Fleming went to prep school
- 59 Essayist Iyer
- 61 He's got a harpoon
- 63 Bullets
- 64 You're nuts if it's loose
- 66 Denials
- 67 Lay earth
- 68 Jobs creation
- 70 “Only 18% of state residents wanted Senator Slipshod to resign due to his involvement in the scandal.” True, but...
- 78 Mo. of Cokie Roberts's birth
- 79 Bob who reports for *Brokaw*
- 80 Place for three men
- 81 Daschle constituent, perhaps
- 82 The lowest a man can be
- 85 Get back, as the Senate

- 88 Very draftable
- 90 Pt. of MIT
- 91 Part of a Kennedy quote
- 92 Boss of the fashion world
- 93 One of four in Mississippi
- 95 It drives prices down
- 97 “Make \_\_\_ double!”
- 98 “87% of taste-testers preferred our Beef-Bomb Mega-Deluxe® burger over the competition's BoBo® burger.” True, but...
- 103 Play for time
- 104 Newscaster's workplace
- 105 Hurricane dir.
- 106 On one's toes
- 107 Out there
- 109 Fame
- 112 Senator since '81
- 114 Like *The McLaughlin Group*
- 118 Ending for cloth
- 119 Oprah comes down there a lot
- 121 Lawyers' org.
- 124 “94% of men we asked claimed to have phenomenal sex at least five times a week.” True, but...
- 128 1958 Pulitzer winner for fiction
- 129 Begin party
- 130 Cut
- 131 Ward off
- 132 TV producer Norman
- 133 Daytime fare
- 134 They might have it
- 135 Dennis Miller output

## DOWN

- 1 Black holes of consumption
- 2 \_\_\_-ball
- 3 Like Katie Couric
- 4 Burned item of recent decades
- 5 Lotion variety
- 6 Sorority members
- 7 Shoppe's adjective
- 8 Allow a leak
- 9 Cigar remnant
- 10 Marshall McLuhan makes one in *Annie Hall*
- 11 Gergen or Stephanopoulos
- 12 Cousin on *The Addams Family*
- 13 NY Congresswoman Lowey
- 14 One of two in Alabama
- 15 They're looking
- 16 “Twittering Machine” artist
- 17 Model who married David Bowie
- 18 DeLay and Harkin
- 24 Backtalk
- 25 Ambulance worker, for short
- 26 Many Talmudists
- 31 Jimmy Carter claimed to have seen one



- 33 Dan Rather, vis-a-vis Sam Houston state
- 34 Sharon of politics
- 36 Tops in security
- 37 Cliché, to a writer
- 38 Slight
- 39 Where *The Washington Post* has David Hoffman
- 41 Not all
- 43 Speck
- 44 Do lengths
- 45 Without a copilot
- 47 Drain, as energy
- 48 Genre of media
- 49 Unlike most media jobs
- 50 “...who lived in \_\_\_”
- 51 “The Flying Finn”
- 58 Future CEOs, maybe
- 60 10,609,000 people live there
- 62 Build on, as another's point
- 63 One fifth of *Hamlet*
- 65 Small
- 69 Roker and Sharpton
- 71 Get clean
- 72 Protest banner word
- 73 Upton Sinclair novel, with *The*
- 74 Ring \_\_\_ (seem familiar)
- 75 Charge, in a way
- 76 Collect
- 77 Still around
- 82 Short write-ups
- 83 Eight, in *Der Spiegel*
- 84 Strawberry field, once
- 86 They may block legislation
- 87 Trump \_\_\_
- 89 Part of Goethe's goodbye
- 92 Keep accountable for
- 94 Seethe
- 96 Possible consequence of dumping
- 99 On-air gaffe
- 100 Loved the praise
- 101 Not at all
- 102 Word with money or hat
- 108 Some pickles
- 110 Must have
- 111 Former Nebraska Governor Kay
- 112 Has the nerve
- 113 Mined-over matter?
- 114 More mined-over matter?
- 115 A big deal
- 116 Field of expertise
- 117 Madison Avenue prize
- 120 Roll-call response
- 121 Kind of corner
- 122 Ernie's buddy
- 123 Picnic trouble
- 125 Reggae cousin
- 126 Karlsbad, notably
- 127 Eggs

BRILL'S CONTENT MAY 1999

## [ TICKER ]

**13** Number of the 13 highest-rated basic cable programs during the week of February 8-14 that were either professional wrestling, coverage of the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, or *Rugrats*<sup>1</sup>

**20** Average number of hours of television watched each week in 1997 by children aged 6-11

**36** Average number of hours of television watched each week in 1997 by men 55 years or older

**42** Average number of hours of television watched each week in 1997 by women 55 years or older<sup>2</sup>

**1,509** Number of daily newspapers in the U.S.

**52** Number of U.S. cities with more than one daily newspaper<sup>3</sup>

**77.6** Percentage of U.S. adults who read daily newspapers in 1970

**58.7** Percentage of U.S. adults who read daily newspapers in 1997<sup>4</sup>

**57.8** Percentage of first-year college students who in 1966 said they believed that "keeping up to date with political affairs" was an essential or very important goal

**25.9** Percentage of first-year college students who said they held that view in 1998<sup>5</sup>

**82.9** Percentage of first-year college students who use the Internet to do research and/or homework

**43.2** Percentage of first-year college students who believe that material available on the Internet should be regulated by government<sup>6</sup>

**46** Percentage of Internet users who first went online in 1998<sup>7</sup>

**1,578,000** Approximate number of America Online subscribers, as of December 1994

**15,000,000** Approximate number of America Online subscribers, as of December 1998<sup>8</sup>

**33,000** Approximate number of Internet hosts, as of July 1988

**36,739,000** Approximate number of Internet hosts, as of July 1998<sup>9</sup>

**49** Percentage of Americans who earn more than \$50,000 a year and use the Internet

**31** Percentage of Americans who earn between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year and use the Internet

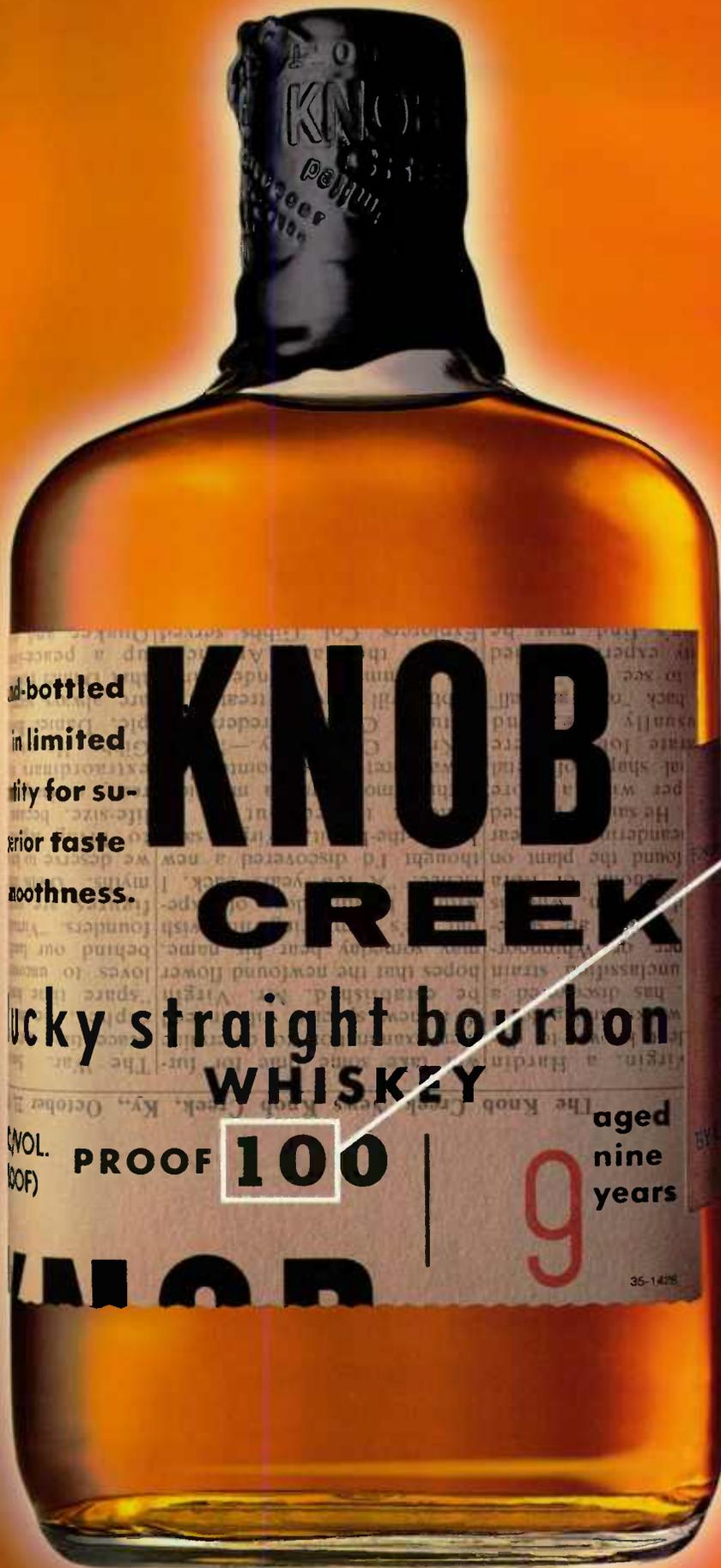
**14** Percentage of Americans who earn less than \$25,000 a year and use the Internet<sup>10</sup>

**\$44.4 billion** Market capitalization of DaimlerChrysler as of March 2, 1999

**\$7.5 billion** Net income of DaimlerChrysler in 1997

**\$33.3 billion** Combined market capitalization of Yahoo! Inc. and GeoCities as of March 2, 1999

**\$112.8 million** Combined net loss of Yahoo! and GeoCities in 1997<sup>11</sup>



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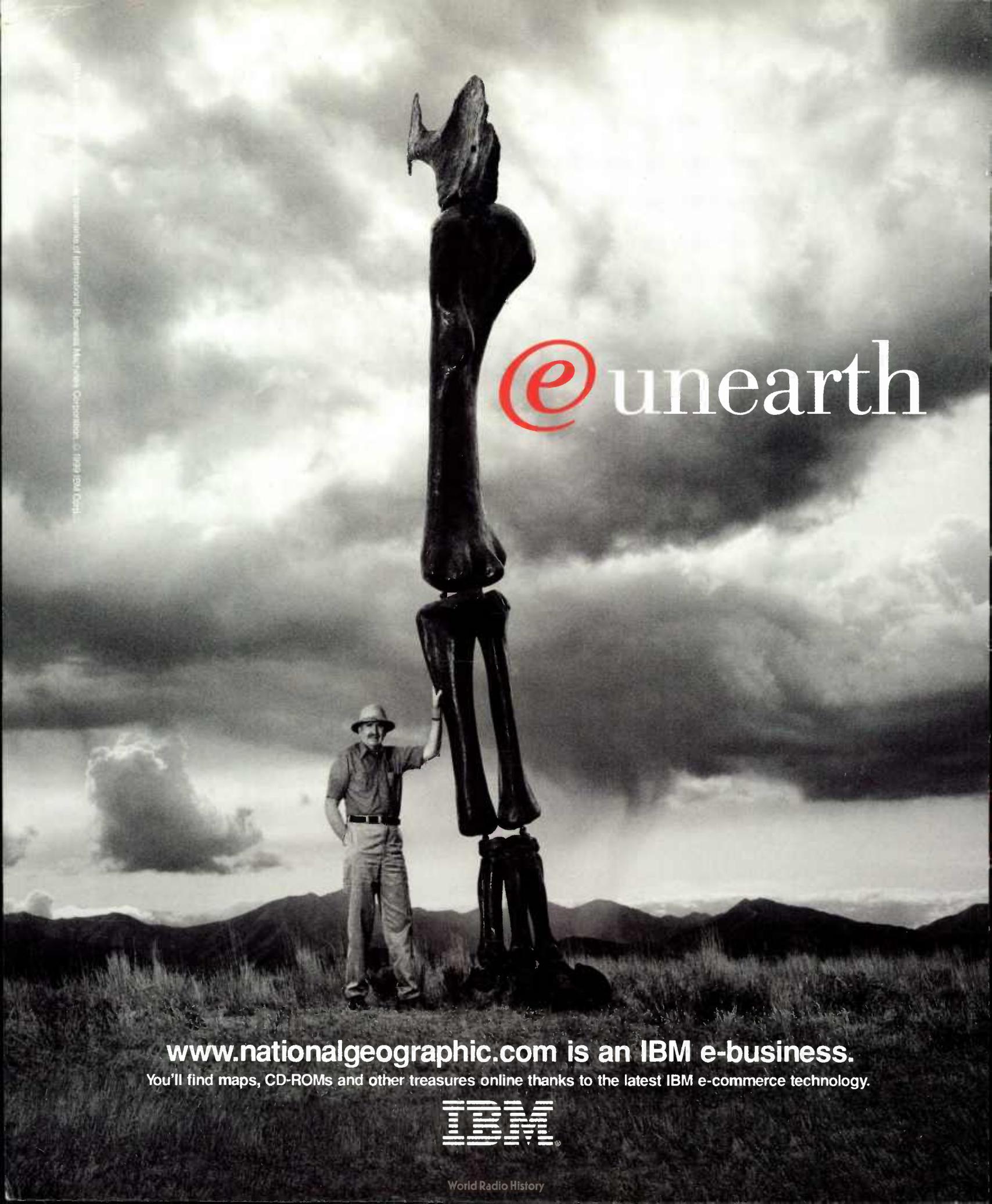
(Only the Romanian judge gave it a 9.5)

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