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INSIDE  
MADONNA'S  
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OSCAR STORYTELLING

CONGRESS'S  
MEDIA WATCHDOG...  
OR LAPDOG?

THE XFL THREAT

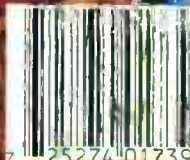
RICHARD SCAIFE'S  
PERSONAL PAPER



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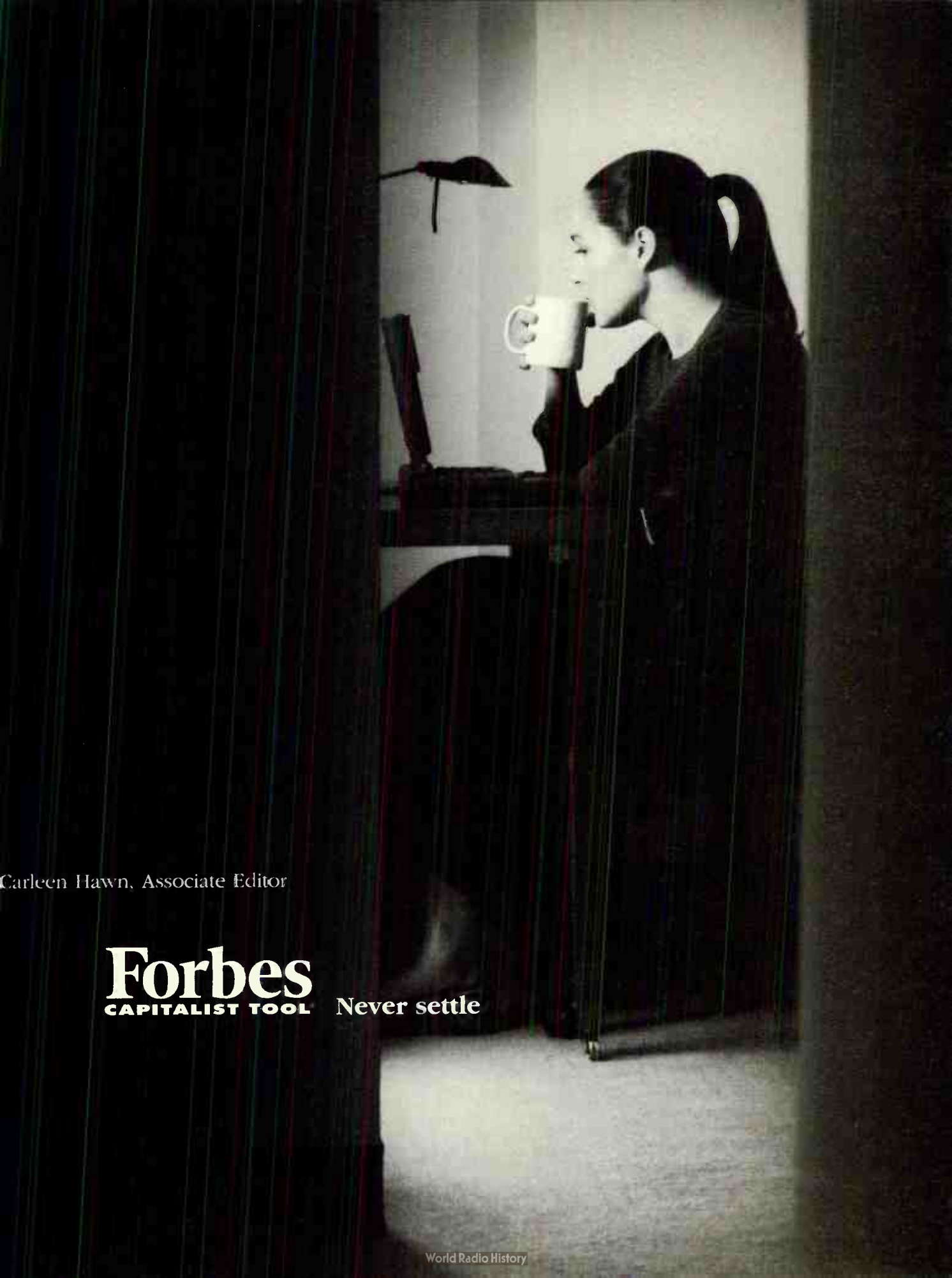
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5th draft 1:15am. Still not good enough.



Carleen Hawn, Associate Editor

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CONTRIBUTORS

**FLOYD ABRAMS** ("Bill Gates Under Oath," page 113) is a partner in the New York law firm of Cahill Gordon & Reindel and is the William J. Brennan Jr. Visiting Professor of First Amendment Issues at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

**ANDY BOROWITZ** ("The Hillary Index," page 160) contributes humor pieces to *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, and is a commentator on NPR's *Weekend Edition* and the author of *The Trillionaire Next Door*.

**DOUGLAS CENTURY** ("Black Publishing's New Colors," page 84) is the author of *Street Kingdom: Five Years Inside the Franklin Avenue Posse* and has contributed to *The New York Times*, *Talk*, and *Rolling Stone*.

**KIMBERLY CONNIFF** ("All the Views Fit to Print," page 104), a staff writer for *Brill's Content*, was awarded a Pulitzer Traveling Fellowship in 1998.

**JIM EDWARDS** ("Nice TV," page 88), a senior writer for *Brill's Content*, was the managing editor at *Adweek*.

**PETER MAASS** ("Radio Wars," page 108) is the author of *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War*, a memoir of covering the war in Bosnia.

**SETH MNOOKIN** ("Advice to Ari," page 94), a senior writer for *Brill's Content*, wrote last month's cover story on TV news and election night.

**JESSE OXFELD** ("Telling Stories on Oscar Night," page 122), a staff writer for *Brill's Content*, previously worked at *Newsweek*.

**KAJA PERINA** ("Binn There, Done That" page 128), a *Brill's Content* staff writer, wrote about *GQ's* Men of the Year Awards in our February issue.

**JOHN R. QUAIN** ("Viva Las Vegas," page 54), a contributing editor to *Brill's Content* and *Popular Science*, is also a technology correspondent for *CBS News's Up to the Minute*.

**ROBERT SCHMIDT** ("Power of the House," page 80), a senior writer for *Brill's Content*, is based in Washington, D.C.

**CARL SWANSON** ("Desperately Seeking Madonna," page 98) is a staff writer at *New York* magazine and was the media columnist at *The New York Observer*.

# CAPITALIZING

**W**hen we sent the previous issue to press, we still didn't know who the next president would be. But one thing was certain:

Although the nation's balloting procedures would be debated and perhaps reformed over the coming months and years, the media would face intense public and governmental scrutiny for their role in the events of November 7, 2000. One Washington player—whose influence had previously been known mostly to insiders—immediately stepped onto the national stage and personified the debate: Congressman Billy Tauzin of Louisiana, perhaps the capital's most powerful regulator of media companies.

Within 24 hours of the sun rising in the East on November 8, Tauzin, then the chairman of the House Committee on Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade, and Consumer Protection, was calling for network heads to testify in congressional hearings that would probe whether the media had been irresponsible or biased or both. As senior writer Robert Schmidt reports in his definitive profile on page 80, the Republican Tauzin—who presents himself as a good ole boy from the bayou but who legendary Washington lobbyist Jack Valenti says has a "brain that's as sharp as three lasers"—wasted no time in using his Billy pulpit to chastise the networks. As I write this, the hearings are scheduled for February, and Tauzin shows no signs of backing down. In early January, talking with Schmidt about Steven Brill's piece in our February issue that questioned whether the networks' collective reliance on Voter News Service for exit-polling data might violate antitrust laws, Tauzin said he had similar concerns and suggested that he might pursue that line of questioning.

Some in Washington, however, point to Tauzin's close friendships with and financial ties to media-company executives and their top lobbyists as evidence that his post-election crusade was mostly grandstanding.

And now that Tauzin has been confirmed as chairman of the even more influential House Committee on Energy and Commerce (where he'll oversee media and telecommunications regulations from a loftier perch), his interaction with the networks will be watched even more closely.

This issue profiles other new powers in Washington who will define the Bush administration's relationship with the media. Senior writer Seth Mnookin's historical yet up-to-the-minute look at the role of presidential press secretaries (page 94) considers how 40-year-old Ari Fleischer will fare in his new job as President Bush's

spokesman. Mnookin talked to 11 former press secretaries—many of whom Fleischer had himself just called for advice—to find out what pitfalls and challenges Fleischer may face. Fleischer says he has unfettered access to the president (which all the press secretaries Mnookin interviewed said is key to success in the job), but the press has already

questioned this claim, in a stinging exchange during a pre-inaugural briefing on January 9.

Another new mediator between the press and the Bush administration is Michael Powell, Secretary of State Colin Powell's son and the new chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. As senior writer Mark Boal points out in his Notebook piece (page 38), the younger Powell's desire to limit the FCC's activism could alter the media-and-minorities landscape and upset not only those who support affirmative action but also his father. Elsewhere in Notebook (page 46), Seth Mnookin rounds up the reporters who, based on their prior reporting on George W. Bush and the relationships they formed with his inner circle during the campaign, are best situated to turn Bush leaks into Bush scoops.

And speaking of scoops, don't miss our clairvoyant look at Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's much-speculated-about forthcoming memoir (*Kicker*, page 160). If you thought Election 2000 was surreal....

DAVID KUHN



# BRILLS CONTENT

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**Contributing Editors** Austin Bunn, Jonah Goldberg, Jeffrey Klein, Mike Pride, John R. Quain, Calvin Trillin, Ellen Umansky

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**Assistant to the Editor in Chief** Justina Kessler

**Assistant to the Editor** Lara Jochim

**Editorial Manager** Jennifer Morton

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**Photography Director** Stella Kramer

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Steven Brill

**Senior Vice-President/Publisher** Kevin Martinez

**Associate Publisher** Carl Trautmann

**New York Manager** Kevin M. Cox

**Technology Advertising Director** Beatrice Olivas  
415-439-8825

**New Media Director** Virginia Lujano

**Sales Representatives** Lisa Mandel, Richard Pace, Mitch Prager, Duffy Walter

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**LOS ANGELES** Dianna Hightower (Director of Southwest Sales) 818-909-4613

**SAN FRANCISCO** Kimberley Klevstad (District Manager)

415-439-8313, Lisa McAlpin (Associate)

**SOUTHEAST** Duffy Walter 212-332-6322

**TEXAS** Carol Orr Corporation 214-521-6116

**Direct Response Representative** Kelly Gafney

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# BRILLS CONTENT



**"I KNOW SOME PEOPLE SAY IT WAS PART OF A MASTER PLAN TO GET EVEN MORE PUBLICITY, BUT IT WASN'T."  
LIZ ROSENBERG, MADONNA'S PRESS AGENT, ON THE MEDIA RESTRICTIONS SURROUNDING MADONNA'S WEDDING. PAGE 98.**

LENHOFF LAF ARGUE/GAMMA PRESSE

One of the scores of international journalists who camped outside the gates of Scotland's Skibo Castle, waiting for Madonna's wedding guests to arrive.



The anatomy of a media blitz, page 98.

**80 POWER OF THE HOUSE**

Good-ole-boy congressman Billy Tauzin is perhaps Washington's most powerful media overseer. As the new chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, he wants to grill the networks about their election-night gaffes. But the networks aren't too worried. Here's why. **BY ROBERT SCHMIDT**

**84 BLACK PUBLISHING'S NEW COLORS**

How a new monthly magazine, *Savoy*, hopes to capture the rising class of affluent black readers that the towering *Ebony* may no longer serve. **BY DOUGLAS CENTURY**

**88 NICE TV**

**COVER STORY**

With racy shows like *Friends* dominating prime time, big advertisers in search of "family friendly" fare are rewriting the rules of network television—and some of the scripts.

**BY JIM EDWARDS**

**94 ADVICE TO ARI**

As George W. Bush's press secretary, Ari Fleischer, began settling into the job, our writer called 11 former presidential spokespeople. The consensus: Access to the president is key. What does that mean for Fleischer?

**BY SETH MNOOKIN**

**98 DESPERATELY SEEKING MADONNA**

Madonna loves England—and the English media, which have remade her into a British everywoman, love her back. Not that they got invited to her highly public private wedding. A report from the barricades. **BY CARL SWANSON**

**104 ALL THE VIEWS FIT TO PRINT**

Richard Scaife, the billionaire provocateur who has famously funded conservative causes, has found another way to spread his message: by publishing an increasingly influential daily newspaper in his hometown of Pittsburgh. **BY KIMBERLY CONNIFF**

**108 RADIO WARS**

Slobodan Milosevic's failure to silence Serbia's U.S.-supported radio station, B-92, was emblematic of the war he lost to control the country. **BY PETER MAASS**

COVER (LEFT TO RIGHT): COURTNEY COX ARQUETTE, MATTHEW PERRY, JENNIFER ANISTON, DAVID SCHWIMMER, LISA KUDROW, AND MATT LEBLANC. © NBC/JON RAGEL/NPC.

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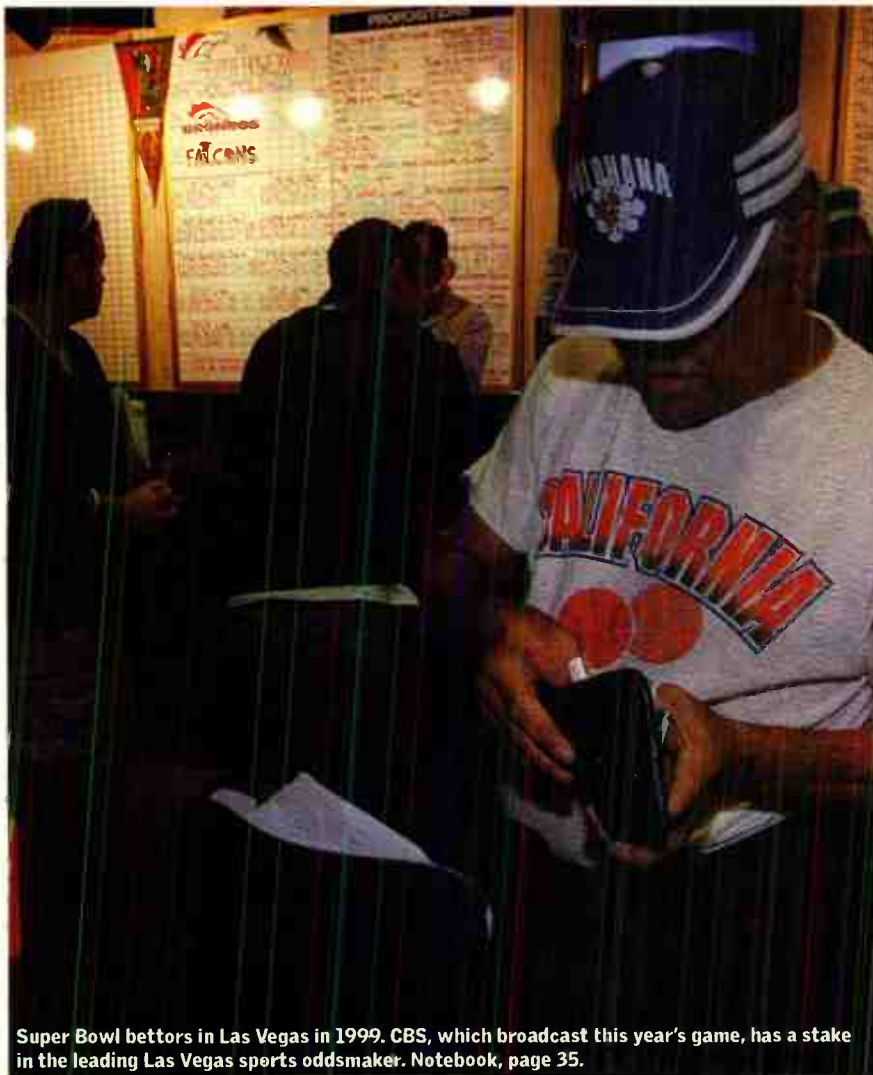
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## "WE WISH CBS SPORTSLINE WOULDN'T DO THAT, AND IT IS SOMETHING WE WILL BRING UP WITH THEM."

NCAA SPOKESPERSON JANE JANKOWSKI, WHEN TOLD THAT AN ONLINE PARTNER OF CBS, WHICH EXCLUSIVELY BROADCASTS THE SUPER BOWL AND THE NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT, OWNS THE LEADING SPORTS-BETTING ODDSMAKER IN LAS VEGAS. NOTEBOOK, PAGE 35.



Super Bowl bettors in Las Vegas in 1999. CBS, which broadcast this year's game, has a stake in the leading Las Vegas sports oddsmaker. Notebook, page 35.

## COLUMNS

### 27 REWIND

Giant media companies naturally try to maximize profits from their news divisions, but what happens when not much is happening?

BY STEVEN BRILL

### 31 THE BIG BLUR

As Vince McMahon partners with NBC and puts his stamp on football, the line between tawdry spectacle and legitimate sports gets even harder to find. Welcome to the XFL.

BY ERIC EFFRON

### 51 THE WRY SIDE

Dream or nightmare: Your book group is discussing the latest Eastern European fiction, but you've prepared a brilliant analysis of a new private-eye novel.

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

### 54 AT WORK

Live from Las Vegas, a fear-and-loathing tour of Comdex, the granddaddy of computer trade shows—where, to woo journalists, technology flacks will do just about anything.

BY JOHN R. QUAIN

### 61 TALK BACK

*The Boston Globe* reported that an official in the DA's office had made racially incendiary promises to win votes. Here, his retort.

BY JAMES BORGHESE

### 78 OUT HERE

Our columnist edits a New Hampshire newspaper that, he'd always thought, covered women's sports fairly and proportionally. Now he's not so sure.

BY MIKE PRIDE

### 22 REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

The ombudsman ponders this magazine's circulation strategy and other business practices—and sides with management.

BY MICHAEL GARTNER

## UP FRONT

### 7 FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

Capitalizing.

### 18 LETTERS

Election (late) night 2000; videogame blame; CNN's working mom; and more.

### 24 HOW THEY GOT THAT SHOT

A Memphis photographer—standing on a slippery sidewalk—captures a defining image of an ice storm to remember.

BY STEPHEN TOTILO

### 35 NOTEBOOK

CBS, which airs the Super Bowl, hasn't disclosed its partial ownership of the top sports oddsmaker in Las Vegas.

BY STEPHEN TOTILO

PLUS: Michael Powell, Colin's son and the new FCC chairman; Dubya's press posse; a less-exclusive Sebastian Junger; and more.

### 73 STUFF WE LIKE

A slew of things that bring us pleasure.

# 964 NOMINATIONS. 353 ACADEMY AWARDS.



SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

## MARCH 2001

PRIMETIME HIGHLIGHTS ALL TIMES EASTERN

	4	5	6
8:00pm	2001: A Space Odyssey	8:00pm	Days of Wine and Roses
10:30pm	The Guns of Navarone	10:00pm	Arthur
1:30am	Destination Moon	12:00am	Papa's Delicate Condition
			8:00pm
			Seven Brides for Seven Brothers
			10:00pm
			On the Town
			12:00am
			A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum
	11	12	13
8:00pm	Northwest Mounted Police	8:00pm	Some Like It Hot
10:15pm	Sergeant York	10:30pm	Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?
12:30am	Jaws	1:00am	The Night of the Iguana
			8:00pm
			Pride and Prejudice
			10:00pm
			Little Women ('49)
			12:15am
			Lost Horizon
	18	19	20
8:00pm	Citizen Kane	8:00pm	Ben-Hur ('59)
10:20pm	The Producers	12:00am	Annie Hall
12:00am	The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer	2:30am	The Broadway Melody
			8:00pm
			Chariots of Fire
			10:30pm
			Oliver!
			1:30am
			Mrs. Miniver
	25	26	27
8:00am	Meet Me in St. Louis	8:00pm	The Alamo
10:00pm	Poessed	11:30pm	The Bells of St. Mary's
12:00am	Singin' in the Rain	2:00am	San Francisco
	73rd Academy Awards (on ABC)		8:00pm
			It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World
			11:30pm
			The Dirty Dozen
			2:30am
			Grand Prix



Watch *Giant* (1956), *The Sting* (1973), *Annie Hall* (1977), *Philadelphia* (1993), *West Side Story* (1961), *Casablanca* (1942), *The Graduate* (1967), *Now, Voyager* (1942), *Moonstruck* (1987), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) on TCM. "Academy Awards" and "Oscar(s)" are registered trademarks and service marks of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. ©2001 Turner Classic Movies. A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved. Neither affiliated nor endorsed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. All Programming Subject to Change.



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31

DAYS of  
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WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

	1	2	3
	8:00pm Paper Moon 10:00pm For Whom the Bell Tolls 1:03am Murder on the Orient Express	8:00pm She Wore a Yellow Ribbon 10:00pm Battleground 12:30am A River Runs Through It	8:00pm The Quiet Man 10:30pm Fiddler on the Roof 2:00am Bound for Glory
7	8	9	10
8:00pm Breakfast at Tiffany's 10:00pm A Little Romance 12:00am Now, Voyager	8:00pm The Big Country 11:00pm The Barefoot Contessa 1:30am Being There	8:00pm Hud 10:00pm The Miracle Worker 12:00am Moonstruck	8:00pm Born Yesterday 10:00pm Gaslight 12:00am Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
14	15	16	17
8:00pm To Kill A Mockingbird 10:30pm Elmer Gantry 1:00am Little Women (33)	8:00pm The Treasure of the Sierra Madre 10:30pm The Graduate 12:30am Giant	8:00pm Separate Tables 10:00pm True Grit 12:30am The Goodbye Girl	8:00pm The Philadelphia Story 10:00pm Philadelphia 12:00am Cat Ballou
21	22	23	24
8:00pm From Here to Eternity 10:00pm Rocky 12:30am In the Heat of the Night	8:00pm The Apartment 10:30pm Out of Africa 1:30am An American in Paris	8:00pm Gone With the Wind 12:00am The Sting 2:15am Ordinary People	8:00pm West Side Story 11:00pm Casablanca 1:00am Mutiny on the Bouncy (35)
28	29	30	31
8:00pm Mon Oncle 10:00pm 6 1/2 12:30am Desert Victory	8:00pm The Champ (31) 9:30pm Manhattan Melodrama 11:30pm The Story of Louis Pasteur	8:00pm The Fortune Cookie 10:15pm Close Encounters of the Third Kind 12:45am The Defiant Ones	8:00pm The Jazz Singer (27) 9:30pm The Search 1:30pm Seven Faces of Dr. Lao

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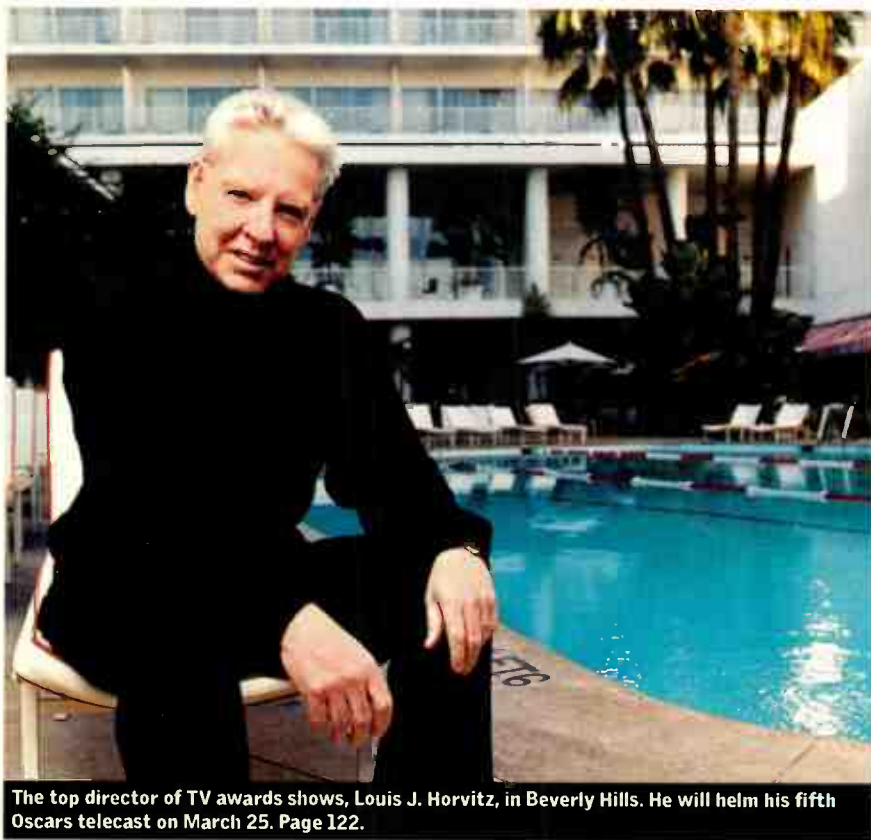


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## "IT'S A NIGHTMARE TO EVEN CONCEIVE."

ACADEMY AWARDS TELECAST DIRECTOR LOUIS J. HORVITZ, WHO CONTROLS 35 CAMERAS, 150 TECHNICIANS, AND ANOTHER 150 STAGEHANDS. CREATORS, PAGE 122.



The top director of TV awards shows, Louis J. Horvitz, in Beverly Hills. He will helm his fifth Oscars telecast on March 25. Page 122.

## DEPTS.

### 113 BOOKS

A preeminent First Amendment lawyer assesses two competing accounts of the Microsoft trial—and argues that Bill Gates walked the line between evasiveness and lying.

BY FLOYD ABRAMS

PLUS: Paperback flower power; Gay Talese explores the Yangtze; chasing Anonymous; and more.

### 120 SOURCES

Fix that dripping faucet with these home-improvement guides.

BY EMILY CHENOWETH

### 122 CREATORS

Meet the TV director behind nearly every big awards show, who'll decide what you will—and won't—see on Oscar night. BY JESSE OXFELD

### 127 CREDENTIALS

Decoding the science of scientific journalism. BY EMILY CHENOWETH

### 128 NICHES

The celebrity-friendly pasha of upscale giveaway magazines—in which the advertising often is the content—invades Manhattan with his newest publication, *Gotham*.

BY KAJA PERINA

### 135 TOOLS

Sony's new digital audio recorder promises to transform your mumblings into text. But its software isn't a very good listener.

BY MARK BOAL

### 160 KICKER

The Hillary Index.

SATIRE BY ANDY BOROWITZ

## BRILL'S CONTENT

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#### Accuracy

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

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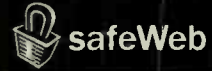
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6. Separately or in addition, readers are invited to contact our outside ombudsman, Michael Gartner, who will investigate and report on specific complaints about the work of the magazine. He may be reached by voice mail at 212-332-6381; by fax at 212-332-6350;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

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# ELECTION (LATE) NIGHT 2000; VIDEOGAME BLAME; AND CNN'S WORKING MOM

## UP ALL NIGHT

"Seth Mnookin's story "It Happened One Night" [February] was magnificent. I stayed up till 5:15 A.M. on election night, and Mnookin accurately captures the drama, intensity, and importance of the evening. Reading Mnookin's piece, I was reminded of the thought that watching election night 2000 was equivalent to witnessing the explosion of the *Hindenburg*, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, or the shots fired at Fort Sumter.

DAVID WAGNER, BOSTON, MA

## DECEPTIVE LABELING

"I am a lawyer who represents the parents of the three girls shot and killed in Paducah, Kentucky, by a videogamer trained to kill efficiently by the hyperviolent games he played.

Mark Boal's article "Winning the Blame Game" [Spinners, January], portraying [Interactive Digital Software Association president] Doug Lowenstein's alleged success in cleansing the videogame industry (an industry for which he is a paid lobbyist) of the blame for such violence, is terribly misleading.

The story gives the impression that the gaming industry is a leader "in developing a self-regulatory system" of labeling products as to age-appropriateness and that "their system is a model." The quoted words are those of a spokesman for the FTC [Federal Trade Commission], but they are



taken out of context, a context in which the videogame industry's labeling is nothing but a clever deception.

The FTC's chairman, Robert Pitofsky, said in his sworn testimony to Congress on September 13, 2000, that "of the 118 electronic games with a Mature rating for violence [inappropriate for anyone under 17] the Commission selected for its study, 83, or 70 percent, targeted children under 17. The marketing plans for 60 of these, or 51 percent, expressly included children under 17 in their target audience."

Mr. Lowenstein repeatedly promised America, prior to the FTC report, that this targeting of kids with violent videogames was not going on. That would make Mr. Lowenstein a liar.

If Mr. Boal had bothered to contact anyone other than the industry's lobbyist, he would have learned that the videogame industry is in the crosshairs, now more than ever, of those intending to

punish it, in no small part because it has said it was protecting our kids, when in fact the FTC has concluded just the opposite is the case.

JACK THOMPSON, MIAMI, FL

## ACTIVE ADVOCATE

"I am Dave Grossman, the subject of the videogame industry attack that was reported in your Spinners article by Mark Boal. I respectfully submit that journalistic integrity should require some fact-checking before publishing the self-serving statements of an industry lobbyist [Doug Lowenstein] and (most important) that your reporter should have gotten the whole story before passing on the videogame industry's personal attacks on me and my research.

The videogame industry's lobbyists would like you to believe that I do not have any scholarly standing in this field and that, after their attacks, I have drifted off into obscurity.

Letters to the editor should be addressed to: Letters to the Editor, *Brill's Content*, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 Fax: 212-332-6350 E-mail: [letters@brillcontent.com](mailto:letters@brillcontent.com). Only signed letters and messages that include a daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. Letters may be edited for clarity or length. Letters published with an asterisk have been edited for space. The full text appears at our website ([www.brillcontent.com](http://www.brillcontent.com)).

# Banality Bites.

It's all around us.

The drivel, the blather, the lowest-common-denominator prattle of popular culture. It's siren song lulling us into a mind-numbing stupor.

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**T H E**  
**W@LL**

The AMA [American Medical Association], the APA [American Psychiatric Association], the United States Marine Corps, and many others would disagree.

This year I was invited to present scholarly papers to the AMA, the APA, and the American Psychological Association. My book, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, is in its tenth and largest U.S. printing, [and my] new book, *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill* (coauthored with Gloria DeGaetano), continues to sell well and is being picked up as a standard text in many universities.

Meanwhile, the videogame industry's lobbyists would have you believe that they have stemmed the tide in the attempt to regulate their industry. Exactly the opposite is true.

I have testified before the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House, and several state legislatures, all in support of legislation to regulate this industry. In response, Sears has decided not to sell the violent, "Mature"-rated videogames. Disney has pulled all the violent games out of all of its theme parks. And Wal-Mart, Kmart, Target, and many other retailers have agreed to card the customers who purchase their products.

The fact that the mainstream media have lost interest in this topic does not mean that the topic has gone away. The fact that I have not been on *60 Minutes* lately does not mean that the story is over. The wheels of justice continue to grind along, regardless of whether the media report it.

In closing, I would like to call your attention to the single most glaring factual error in your article. The videogame lobbyist's "five-page white paper" reported by your writer was actually an attack on our new book. If your reporter had contacted me, I could have

sent my rebuttal to this document, outlining the many, many factual errors in this piece of blatant industry propaganda—propaganda that *Brill's Content* has accepted, and reported, at face value.

LT. COL. DAVE GROSSMAN (RET.),  
JONESBORO, AR

**Mark Boal responds:** I've no doubt that as an attorney seeking damages, Mr. Thompson plans to "punish" the videogame industry. But his agenda is quite separate from that of legislators in Washington, and my piece concerned the latter.

Mr. Thompson's charge that I quoted the FTC out of context is wrong. It rests on the faulty equation of two distinct business practices. My source at the FTC praised the way game makers label their products, whereas the quote Thompson cites concerns advertisements. The distinction between the label on a product and an ad about the product is significant, because it is by prominently labeling videogames that the industry has avoided regulation.

As for Lt. Col. Grossman, I regret not having spoken with him directly. I'm sure that he will continue promoting his own self-created science, what he calls "killology," and I hope that his active speaking schedule leaves time for solid research. He is mistaken about the white paper I mentioned in my article [*The Effect of Video Games on Children: A Fact-Based Response*]. It concerns his testimony before



IDSA president Doug Lowenstein

Congress (and contains only one mention of his book). A separate white paper also prepared by the Interactive Digital Software Association [*The Factual Errors and Distortions In "Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill"*] deals with Lt. Col. Grossman's book.

## COVERING CELEBRITY

"I thought that Katie Roiphe's "Profiles Encouraged" [Critical Condition, January] was on the money, incisive, and absolutely brilliant. Her dissection of the tricks and fawning standards of the modern celebrity profile proves not only how utterly bland and generic they are but how foolish we are as readers.

I'm on both sides of the issue as an avid consumer and a freelance entertainment writer, but even I can't stand the modern sycophantic tripe that passes for entertainment "journalism." I've let my subscriptions to *Premiere*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Us Weekly* lapse, and I get a sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach every time I even see *Today's* Jill Rappaport or [*E! News Daily's*] Steve Kmetko.

BOB RUGGIERO, HOUSTON, TX

## JOURNALISM 101

"We cowrote one of the letters you published in your [January] issue [regarding Abigail Pogrebin's October 2000 article, "Favorite Son," about Baltimore *Sun* reporter Jim Haner]. In responding to our letter, as well as one by Scott Higham [a former colleague of Haner's], Pogrebin wrote that we don't argue with the substance of her reporting on the errors "but say only that they don't matter."

Pogrebin's self-serving response is grossly inaccurate. Neither letter said errors don't matter. Mr. Higham wrote that all journalists make mistakes and "[w]e all get sick when we make them."

## CORRECTIONS

In February's "Minding the X's and O's" [Notebook], Greg Gumbel's name was misspelled throughout.

In February's "Gracious Loser? Hardly" [Election Special], we referred to *Inside Edition*, a show syndicated by King World Productions that appears on various network affiliates, as an ABC program. We also misidentified the Fox News Channel as the Fox News Network.

In January's "Winning the Blame Game" [Spinners], we reported that the videogame *Max Payne* had been released commercially. Although the press has seen versions of the game, the public will not be able to buy it until later this year.

We wrote that while we have faith that Jim's mistakes were honest errors made on deadline, it "might have been fair game to examine newsroom reaction to those errors in a responsible story about tensions between the old and new guard at the *Sun*."

Ms. Pogrebin may not like our criticism of her work. But it's Journalism 101 that she's not allowed to attribute remarks to us that we never made. Mistakes do matter. That's why Haner and the *Sun* promptly corrected his.

If a senior correspondent from your magazine can't fairly and accurately characterize two short letters she had time to reread before responding, how can anyone believe a word you publish?

APRIL WITT, CYRIL ZANESKI,  
BETHESDA, MD

## Abigail Pogrebin responds:

In our January issue, when I wrote a response explaining that Jim Haner's defenders did not "argue with the substance of [Haner's] errors but say only that they don't matter," this judgment was based on Ms. Witt and [CONTINUED ON PAGE 158]

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# REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

**One reader was upset that by subscribing to *Brill's Content* she quickly began to receive reams of junk mail. The ombudsman tackles this and other magazine business practices—and, in a rare turn of events, sides with the management. BY MICHAEL GARTNER**

**R**eaders have three complaints about the subscription and delivery practices of this magazine.

You might want to stop reading right here, because I'm siding with management all the way. If you do keep reading, though, you'll learn why you sometimes get junk mail after you subscribe to *Brill's Content* (and you'll learn how to avoid that), why the magazine sometimes gets to newsstands before it gets to your house, why the burden is often on you to end your subscription rather than on the magazine to re-up you, who you have to be to get a free copy sent to you, where you have to be to pick up a free copy, why you can't find bargain subscription rates for *Brill's Content*, and, finally, why Steven Brill doesn't promise you a video of *Bad Moments in Journalism* or a Skeptic's Yo-Yo if you'll just give the magazine a try.

And since it may strike you, if you keep reading, that I'm shilling for the magazine this month, I might as well go all out and say this: *Brill's Content* seems to be a success with readers. When it was launched, in June 1998, the magazine promised advertisers that at least 150,000 people would buy it each month. That so-called guarantee was raised to 225,000 at the beginning of 1999 and to 325,000 last September. In January of this year, it went up again, to 400,000. In a marketplace filled with 17,970 consumer magazines, that's impressive.

Now to those complaints.

Complaint No. 1: Lisa Pergolizzi subscribed to *Brill's Content*, and before long she was getting mail and solicitations from companies she didn't particularly want to do business with. She knew those companies had gotten her name from *Brill's Content*, because their letters to her misspelled her name—the same way it was misspelled on her subscription form.

"Yes," she writes, "I am aware that I can opt out of 'list sharing,' but why are the instructions on how to opt out buried in small type in the masthead, and is it correct to sell the list before a subscriber has had time to 'opt' out of the selling?"

Stuart Jordan, this magazine's circulation director, writes in an e-mail message that "it's unlikely, but not impossible" that a new subscriber will get some *Brill's Content*-generated junk mail before she gets her first issue and before she finds the option that lets her remove her name from the mailing list that is rented to others.

Here's how the system works. *Brill's Content* keeps what it calls a rental file, a list of subscribers who are willing to let *Brill's Content* pass their names on to other mailers. It rents the

list, and if your name's on it, you'll likely get eight or nine mailings a year. Mr. Jordan writes that he rejects "anything that we think is not appropriate for our readers," and he says the rental policy is stricter than that of most magazines. The list is updated once a month, and your name goes on it in the first update after you pay for your subscription. That timing means it is indeed possible that your name can get on the list before you get your first copy of *Brill's Content*—if you pay quickly and the circulation people respond slowly—but, as Mr. Jordan writes, that's unlikely.

Once you get your first copy, you'll see—if you're a careful reader of the masthead—that it's possible to have your name removed from the list. At the bottom of that page is a paragraph (not in small type) that says: "Occasionally, we offer our subscriber list to companies whose products and services may interest you. Many of our subscribers find this a valuable service. We strictly monitor use of our list. If you would prefer not to receive these mailings, just send us your label with instructions not to release your name."

At the moment, 305 subscribers—out of the 400,000 or so people who buy the magazine—have their names on the don't-rent list. That means (a) most subscribers do indeed view the list as a "valuable service," (b) most subscribers don't know about the option because they don't read the masthead, or (c) most subscribers don't care. Since this magazine always reminds us that "skepticism is a virtue," I'm eliminating (a). It's probably a toss-up between (b) and (c).

There doesn't seem to be anything untoward about all this, but here's a suggestion for Steven Brill: How about putting that "opt out" notice on the subscription form itself? And how about eliminating that hard-to-swallow sentence about junk mail being a "valuable service"?

Complaint No. 2: A caller who left only his first name—he said he was Michael from Berkeley—wonders why he doesn't get his copy of *Brill's Content* until after he sees it on the newsstand.

Here's the answer: Maybe because he lives in northern California. Maybe because he has a slow post office. Maybe because his neighborhood bookstore is good at stocking its shelves. Maybe because some guy in Tennessee is very efficient. Maybe because the roads were bad somewhere between Virginia and Los Angeles.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 136]

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

#### HOW TO REACH MICHAEL GARTNER

Phone: 212-332-6381

Fax: 212-332-6350

E-mail: [mgartner@brillscontent.com](mailto:mgartner@brillscontent.com)

Mail: 5315 Waterbury Road,

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## *The Chronicle:*

Explained why top psychology Ph.D.'s, who in years past would have devoted their careers to research breakthroughs, are moving to industry instead.

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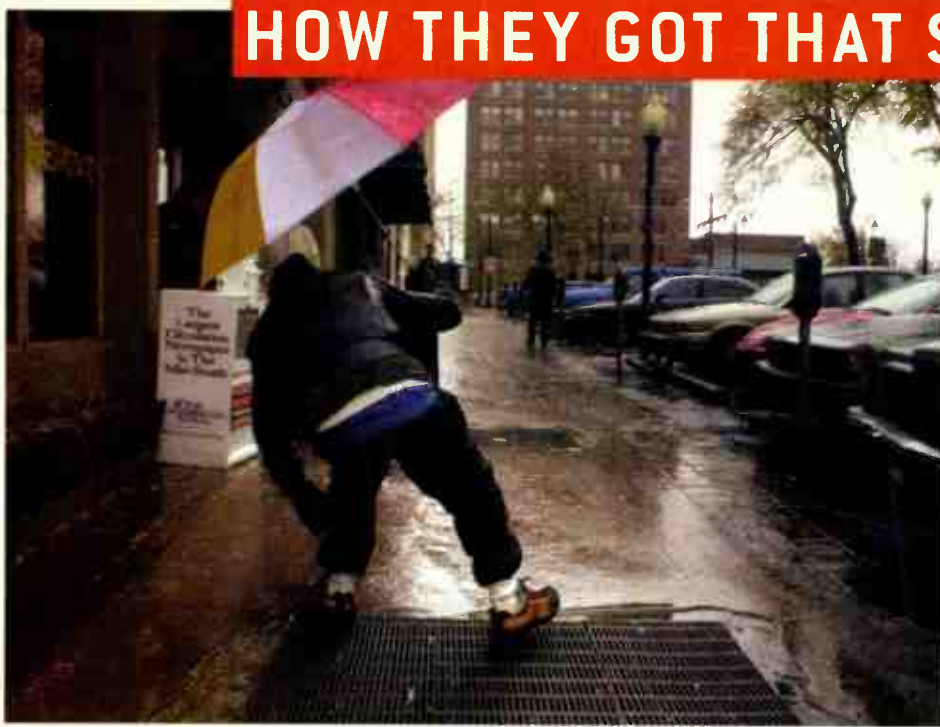
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## HOW THEY GOT THAT SHOT



## COLD SNAP

A Memphis photographer—standing on a very slippery sidewalk—captures a defining image of an ice storm to remember

When a powerful ice storm hit Memphis, Tennessee, last December, the local newspaper quickly dispatched a team of photographers to record its effects. Most were told to shoot car accidents, but Nikki Boertman, 28, a staff photographer at *The Commercial Appeal*, was given the human-interest beat. Her assignment: Shoot the traditional man-against-weather photo, a newspaper standby in all seasons. Boertman nailed the assignment with a shot of a man at the very moment he was slipping on ice (top row, center). How did she end up in exactly the

right place at exactly the right time? How—short of pushing him—did she manage to get her shot?

It took a few tries. Boertman says she and the reporter accompanying her first noticed someone slipping on a sidewalk as they were driving through town earlier that morning. "Of course, by the time I pull up and get my camera, he was long gone," recalls Boertman. "I said to the reporter, 'I want to get someone falling!'"

Thinking logistically about ice and pedestrians, Boertman realized that a downtown



Memphis park near a number of bus stops would be the ideal location: People would be making their way toward arriving buses. Some of them, surely, would be having trouble with their footing.

At the park, Boertman got out of her car. "Everyone was walking very slowly, and there were two inches of ice everywhere," she says. As she aimed her camera, she began to have trouble with her own footing, struggling to keep her balance as three men walked by, laughing. "We should be taking *your* picture," she remembers their saying.

As one of the men urged his friends to hurry—they were late for work—another slipped and fell. "Everyone asks me, 'How did you get that picture?'" says Boertman, referring to the photo, which ran on the front page of the *Appeal* the next day. But she didn't need quick reflexes. "They assume he fell once," she says with a laugh. Boertman says the man fell several times, and she caught his later spills with her digital camera.

She hoped the paper would run a photo from the sequence in which a passerby

helped the man up. "I liked the stranger-helping-another-stranger aspect," says Boertman, who, busy taking pictures, did not offer a helping hand of her own. "I'm the kind of person who would put my camera down and help someone if they needed it," she says, but the bystander was so quick to react that it wasn't necessary. On his feet again, the man joined his amused friends and hurried away.

STEPHEN TOTILO

Photographs by Nikki Boertman/  
*The Commercial Appeal*

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# the need for news

Giant media companies naturally try to maximize profits from their news divisions, but what happens when not much is happening? **BY STEVEN BRILL**

**T**he 1997 James Bond movie *Tomorrow Never Dies* is about a greedy media mogul who tries to boost the ratings and fortunes of his worldwide cable and satellite TV news channels by creating a war in Asia. I was reminded of the movie two days after the U.S. Supreme Court issued its

pivotal decision in the Bush-Gore election case. That morning, I turned to MSNBC.com and saw a screaming headline about some minor snowfall hitting parts of the Midwest. In a matter of hours, the news had gone from who was going to be the leader of the free world to the prospect (overstated, as it turned out) that some commuters might be delayed a few minutes by icy roads.

This absence of news was awful news for Erik Sorenson, Roger Ailes, and Tom Johnson, who run MSNBC, Fox News Channel, and CNN, respectively. Their average number of viewers per week dropped by 62 percent from the week before the Supreme Court election decision to the week after. That severely depresses the advertising rates they can charge in the future, because those rates are based largely on the prior quarter's ratings; and it ended a gravy train of premium ratings they were getting during the election count standoff from advertisers who were signing on for whichever spots hadn't been booked in advance.

It was also bad news for David Talbot, Michael Kinsley, and Merrill Brown, the

editors who run the websites Salon.com, Slate.com, and MSNBC.com. The average number of visits to their sites dropped by almost 30 percent, and just about all of their advertising revenue is based precisely on the number of people who view each screen each day.

News has always been a business, and it's always been a business that does better when *big* news, especially *big bad* news, is breaking and breaks over a long period. Ted Koppel's *Nightline*, for example, owes its launch to the Iranian hostage crisis, just as many American newspapers had their heyday during World War II. And many in the news business have been known to hype or even to try to create stories to improve their fortunes.

But there are now four big differences.

First, with the coming of all-news cable channels and websites, we now have big businesses that, unlike newspapers or the old TV networks, are playing for big stakes that are almost entirely dependent on there being big news. Sure, CBS's ratings for its half-hour evening news show were down, too, in late December. But that decline is relatively



GEOFFREY GRAIN

meaningless compared with how well CBS fares with *Survivor: Australian Outback*. And, sure, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* might have had a slight bump in circulation during the Florida standoff, but most of their readers are regulars who subscribe or who pick the paper up every morning as they get on the subway or bus. What we now know about cable news and website audiences from ratings roller coasters such as the one we saw in December is that their pattern is exactly the opposite: These are the most fickle audiences imaginable; when there is news, they'll watch, and when there isn't, they won't. Besides, no one knows the "ratings," or readership, of the news pages of a newspaper compared with the sports or entertainment pages.

Second, most of these cable or Web entities are now part of large public corporations—businesses that demand steady, upward growth in profits and put relentless pressure on, and offer great rewards to, the people who run each of their divisions to produce just that. (In the case of Salon.com, it's a tiny public company whose very survival depends on page views growing rapidly.) When CNN was just a part of Turner Broadcasting, the culture of the place more willingly accepted the reality that an all-news channel had its ups and downs; indeed, most CNN people were happy simply to have defied the experts who had said CNN would fail altogether. That's not the culture of a large public company like AOL Time Warner, where CNN is now a small subsidiary (which, in fact, competes with two other all-news channels that are also subsidiaries of large public companies).

Third, the kind of news that attracts cable television and website viewers is different from what traditional news outlets produce. It's more often than not talking heads, or typing fingers, pontificating or arguing about something rather than providing in-depth reporting. Indeed, the last two years have provided vivid proof that this is the staple of these businesses. During that time we've watched as CNN tried to offer expensive, heavily produced shows through its *Newsstand* imprimatur that were intended to overcome the fickleness of its audience by creating what's called "appointment television," which people will loyally watch every day. These *Newsstand* shows failed and have now been abandoned in favor of more talk-oriented (and cheaper-to-produce) fare based on the news of the day.

Fourth, although things could change anytime, for now there just isn't that much big news on the horizon. The cable news channels may have heralded the election standoff as a "nation divided," but it was really a matter of a nation not terribly divided at all but only undecided about two middle-of-the-road candidates. Compare what supposedly "divides" us today to what divided us in prior decades: whose HMO, school aid, or budget surplus plan is better versus whether we should intervene against the Germans in a European war, whether we should execute the Rosenbergs, whether nonwhites should be allowed to go to school with or sit at

lunch counters or on buses with whites, whether the Russians would retaliate during the Cuban missile crisis, whether we should be fighting a war in Asia, whether women should have equal employment rights and the right to choose an abortion, whether we'd be able to buy gasoline without waiting on long lines, whether we'd get inflation and unemployment down, whether we'd win the Cold War, whether we'd win the Gulf War, or whether we'd be able to balance the budget and repel the Japanese economic threat. Imagine what *Crossfire* or Chris Matthews or Bill O'Reilly could have done with that material.

But that's not the material they have today. So what can they do to produce steady, high ratings? Well, as CNN found, they can't shift to trying to create steadier appointment television with in-depth news; on cable television, it just doesn't seem to produce the numbers that justify its cost, and that's probably even truer for a website, where people won't read much more than a screen or two. Instead, producers can try to make the personalities behind each show (and, I guess, each Web offering) the ingredient that's a constant. But those personalities and the executives for whom they work will be under tremendous pressure to produce a result—steady, upward growth—that is contradicted by the unsteady nature of the business they're in. Which in many instances will mean that they'll be so eager to build

LIKE THOSE WHO  
PRODUCE WRESTLING  
ON COMPETING  
CHANNELS, NEWS  
PRODUCERS PUNCH UP  
THE ACTION TO CREATE  
A RIVETING FIGHT.

their careers (nothing wrong with that) that they'll do anything to create argument and division where there may not really be much, or fan the flames of a real division when those kinds of issues reappear. In short, they'll have to take even such relatively benign issues as the Ashcroft attorney-general nomination or the size of the tax cut and create a consistent fever pitch of controversy and division in a world in which that kind of division is anything but consistent. Or they'll exacerbate tension when there is something genuinely scary, such as a modern version of the Cuban missile crisis. It's hard to figure which is worse.

From the day the first headline was written by the first pamphleteer, newspeople have had a stake in making things seem more urgent than they probably were. But now the stakes are far higher. Some of the largest corporations in America—such as General Electric (MSNBC), AOL Time Warner (CNN), and News Corporation (Fox)—have people and subsidiaries whose entire fortunes depend on making sure there's a good, live fight brewing 24 hours a day. Theirs is no longer the Cronkite-like task of taking the news as it comes and reporting it calmly and seriously, with only the urgency it deserves, letting the ratings fall where they may. Instead, like those who produce wrestling on competing channels, their job is to punch up the action and the story line to create a riveting fight, using as their cast the politicians and other partisans who crave the airtime.

And, as with wrestling, our job in the audience is to enjoy the show but remember that it's not all real. ■



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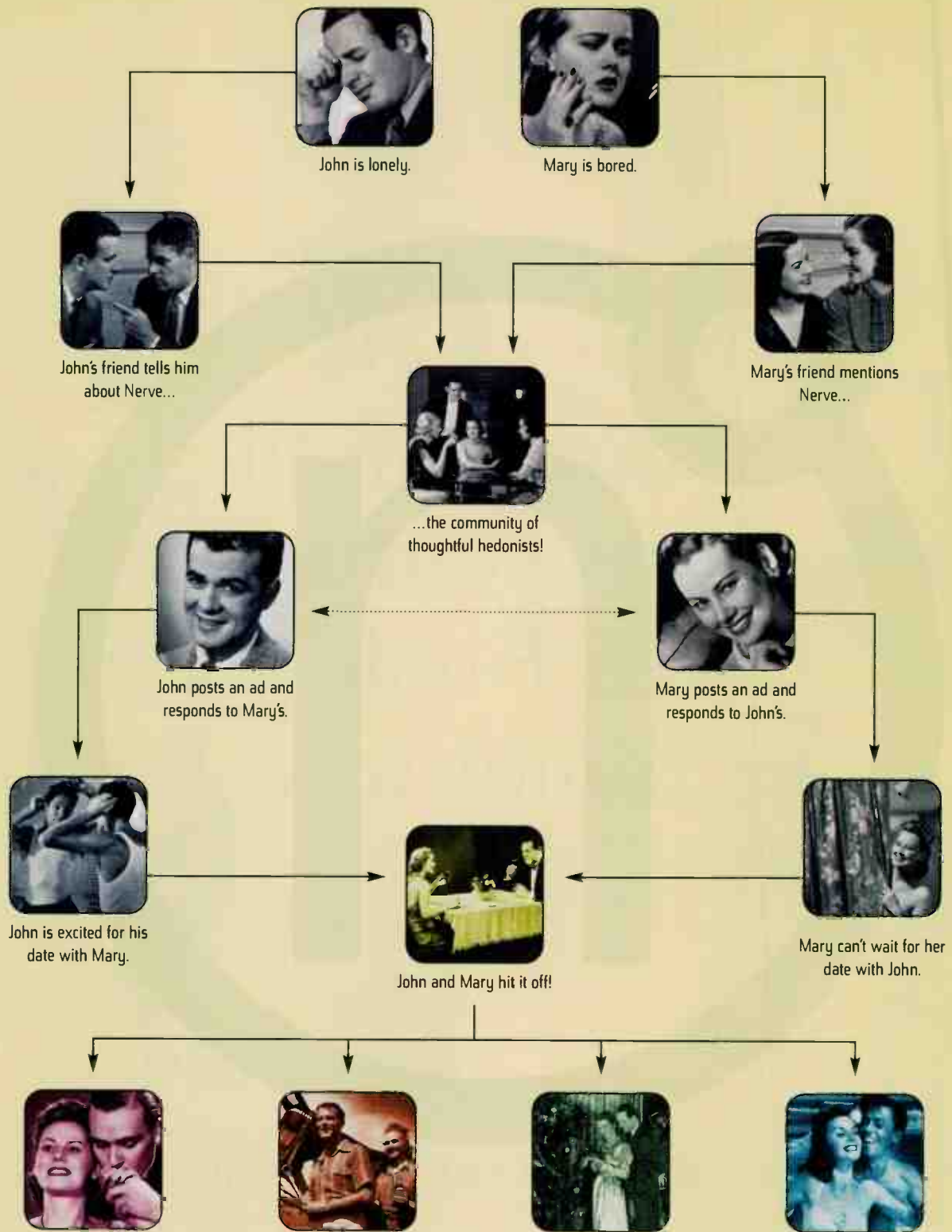
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# out of bounds

As Vince McMahon partners with NBC and puts his stamp on football, the line between tawdry spectacle and legitimate sports gets harder to find. **BY ERIC EFFRON**

**G**reat satire or parody, or absurdist works by the likes of Eugène Ionesco and Samuel Beckett, sheds new, often harsh light on reality by making us confront the fact that the seemingly ridiculous fiction has much in common with actual human experience. Which brings us to Vince McMahon, the showman and entrepreneur behind the World Wrestling Federation, who is about to conquer the cultural and media mainstream in a new way through his fledgling professional football league, the XFL.

Eugène Ionesco and Vince McMahon may have never been mentioned in the same paragraph before, but then again, we live in absurd times. The advent of the XFL makes it harder than ever to ignore that the lines between shock culture and mainstream entertainment just keep getting blurrier, and as in absurdist literature, you go from thinking *What's wrong with these people?* to the harder question *What's wrong with us?*

You probably know enough about professional wrestling—the ritualized, scripted violence, the scantily clad women—to have some sense of what's in store when McMahon's in-your-face marketing and entertainment style meets the game of football. The matches, scheduled to kick off on February 3, will be faster and more dangerous, for starters. No fair catches or quarterback slides (NFL practices that provide a measure of protection to players but also reduce the number of awesome tackles). McMahon has never been accused of subtlety, and with team names like the Orlando Rage, the New York/New Jersey Hitmen, and the Chicago Enforcers, it's hard to miss the point. Another man never accused of subtlety, former wrestler and current Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura, will be analyzing the games. ("We are here to have fun," Ventura said recently during a press briefing. "It's honesty, something the media doesn't know anything about.") In the XFL, in contrast to the National Football League, cheerleaders will not be barred from dating the players, thus giving rise to the sort

of back stories and, er, character development that juice up professional wrestling. "When the quarterback fumbles...and we know who he's dating, I want our reporters right back in her face on the sidelines, demanding to know whether the two of them did the wild thing last night," McMahon told *ESPN The Magazine*. Later he said he was joking, but with McMahon, you really never know. I guess we'll have to tune in to find out.

There are two reasons to take this latest McMahon venture seriously. First, it involves football, the most popular of professional sports. Concerns are already being raised (in what McMahon can dismiss as fuddy-duddy quarters) that the XFL will serve only to further desensitize kids to the difference between "fake" and "real" violence. "XFL will probably pick up a whole range of people—black and white, poor and middle class—with the same formula they use in wrestling," Lin Dawson, a former football pro now involved in academia and in the field of conflict resolution, told *The New*

**XFL CHEERLEADERS CAN DATE PLAYERS, GIVING RISE TO THE SORT OF BACK STORIES THAT JUICE UP WRESTLING.**



McMahon (right) horseshoes around with ex-NFLer and XFL adviser Drew Pearson.

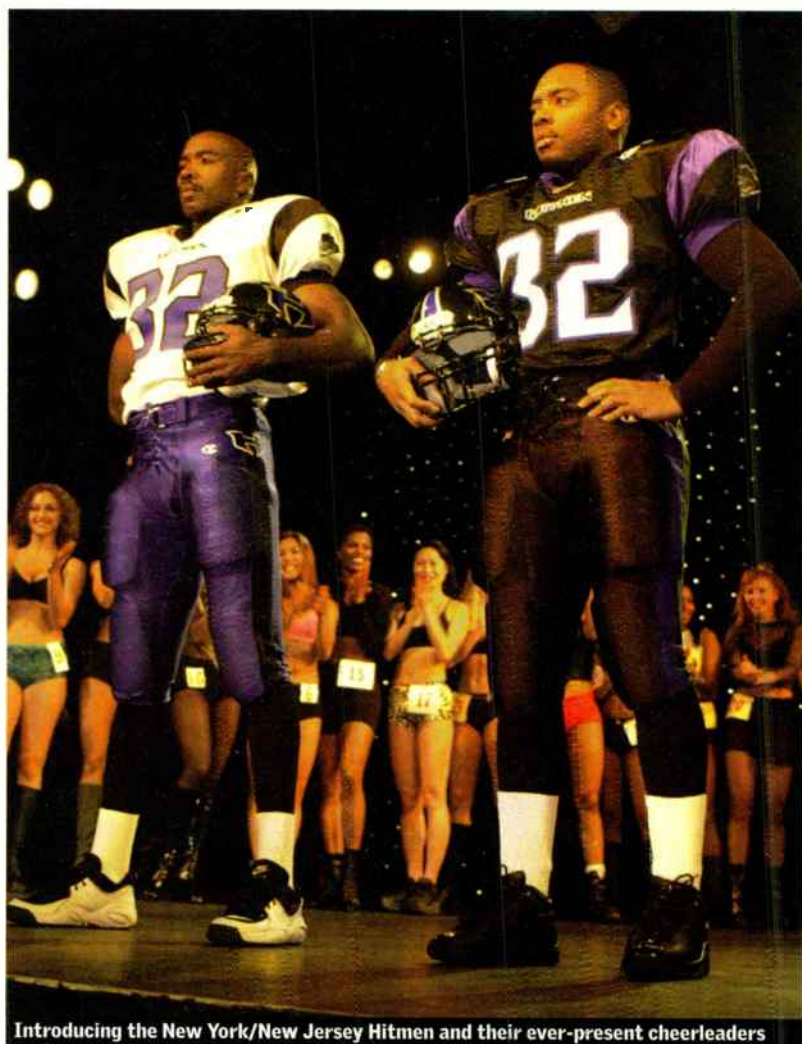
PETER INCROGAN/REUTERS

York Times's Harvey Araton. "But you bring this mentality to mainstream sports and you suddenly have a generation of kids carrying it over to adulthood, growing up thinking that's what it's supposed to be."

But the biggest news, really, behind what Araton recently called "the shrinking divide between tawdry culture and true competition" is that McMahon—no financial slouch himself, obviously—is partnering with no less of an establishment media giant than NBC, a division of General Electric. And we're not just talking about a contract for NBC to air the games, the typical arrangement between a sports league and a television network. NBC is, literally, McMahon's partner and the league's co-owner; the network pumped around \$50 million into the league and is providing lots of marketing muscle. And less tangibly, but perhaps more significantly, NBC has given its classy imprimatur (think *The West Wing* and *ER*) to the sort of programming we'd expect to find (or not bother to find) on the lowly UPN. In short, NBC makes it harder to dismiss or ignore the XFL, plus it makes it more likely the league will catch on, since the network has incentives to be patient while the games find their audience and their advertisers. The games will air on Saturday nights, long a ratings bust for NBC, so the network must figure it has little to lose and a big potential upside. In the best-case scenario from NBC's perspective, the XFL will attract enough wrestling fans and enough football fans (hungry to fill that post-Super Bowl void) to create the critical mass that has eluded other startup professional sports leagues. And since the XFL owns the teams—which is not the case with the NFL and other major sports leagues, in which individual teams have separate owners—it will be easier to impose rules (like no poaching of players) that will foster team parity within the league and team commitment to the hometown. (Speaking of rules, all involved say game rules will be enforced fairly and that the competition will be on the up-and-up; silly of us even to wonder about that.)

"The idea is to show the game up close in a way that you never had the ability to see it before, whether it's on the line of scrimmage, whether it's in the backfield, whether it's in the locker room," Dick Ebersol, who runs NBC Sports, told reporters. "You're going to have a real insight into the game you've never had before."

Well, yes, it's all about insight. But the insight we might take from the XFL has less to do with football and more to do with the current state of our media culture. Sure, football is just a game, a staged spectacle, so why not just loosen up and have some fun with it? And yes, when McMahon and Ventura paint their critics as elitists, they do land some punches. And yes, none of this is exactly new; ESPN's *X Games* and even such



Introducing the New York/New Jersey Hitmen and their ever-present cheerleaders

earlier inventions like Roller Derby and *American Gladiators* combined athletics and theatrics (and sex appeal) in the name of entertainment.

But the XFL-NBC partnership is the next step in the evolution of shock TV, and it's an important one because it applies the trashy practices of the genre to mainstream entertainment—with the backing of one of the world's largest corporations. It does harm to our notion, growing ever more quaint, that despite the commercialism and the greed, there's something noble, something *real*, about professional sports. And who could doubt that if the XFL succeeds, other sports leagues—which, after all, are businesses trying to maximize profits—will do what they must to stay competitive, and that the networks (think *Temptation Island*) will feel pressure to spread such fare and have few qualms about doing it.

What may be most disturbing about the prospect of Vince McMahon in charge of what could be the next big thing our kids are all talking about, however, is that it forces us to face just how far down this road we've already gone—so far down, in fact, that McMahon can make a straight-faced argument that he's basically doing what the NFL does, only without the phony nods toward convention. And that's when we leave the theater of the absurd and come face-to-face with the reality of a media culture that already is operating on the extremes. ■

M. DAVID LEVUS/ALLSPORT

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that the globalization of English may not happen. For starters, three times as many people speak Chinese around the world as English. Not only that, there may be a backlash against speaking English in Middle Eastern or Asian countries. In addition, becoming bilingual is difficult for most people. Conclusion? Don't throw away those Berlitz tapes.

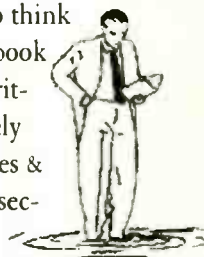
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# NOTEBOOK

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Gamblers inspect Super Bowl betting odds at a Las Vegas casino in 1999.

## A GAMBLING GAMBIT

Winter is high season for sports betting. Americans wager upwards of \$80 billion a year—legally and illegally—on sporting events, according to a government study, and two of the year's biggest betting draws occur within weeks of each other: the Super Bowl, in late January, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association men's basketball tournament, in March. Both the NFL and the NCAA are acutely aware of the potential threat gambling poses—point-shaving scandals can damage a league's credibility for years—and they avoid any association with sports betting. The leagues ask their broadcast and other media partners to avoid sports-gambling ties, and have in the past successfully pressured them to drop betting-related advertising. But it's difficult for the leagues to police sports betting in an age of corporate conglomeration and the Internet: *Brill's Content* has learned that CBS, exclusive broadcaster this year of both the Super Bowl and the NCAA basketball tournament, has recently established partial ownership of the leading sports oddsmaker in Las Vegas.

CBS's stake in a major Las Vegas sports-betting institution is obscured by a complicated business structure: CBS owns a 19.8 percent stake in SportsLine.com, the second most popular sports-news site on the Internet, according to Media Metrix ratings. The partnership began in 1997. According to the terms, SportsLine brands the site as CBS SportsLine, which is advertised on CBS and makes use of CBS Sports content. CBS, in turn, receives an annual payment of SportsLine stock and a share of the site's advertising revenues. Starting next year, that annual stock payment will be worth \$20 million.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 36)

## WHEN GOOD TV FILMS GO BAD

USA Network executives insisted that the cable channel wasn't caving in to advertiser Johnson & Johnson when it

**VERBATIM** stopped production in November on *Who Killed Sue Snow?*, a movie about two murders inspired by the infamous Tylenol poisonings. It was simply that they didn't want to prompt copycat crimes, a spokesman told reporters. Curiously, this concern did not trip up other recent USA films

(described below in network press materials), which could just as easily, it seems, inspire copycats.

LARA KATE COHEN

### EVERY MOTHER'S WORST FEAR

"Martha...is a teenager who spends her time exploring on-line chat rooms.... Flirtation turns deadly, however, when her on-line suitor lures her to his apartment and imprisons her."

**A FACE TO KILL FOR** "Virgil says he's marrying for love. What he's really interested in is Terry's money, and he's willing to destroy her life to get it."

**SECRET CUTTING** "With few, if any, real friends at school...Dawn finds solace in being able to control at least one thing in her life—her secret cutting."

**THE STALKING OF LAURIE SHOW** "A teenage girl who starts out with a desire to make friends in her new surroundings... ends up being caught in a twisted and evil web of jealousy and deception that has her fearing for her life."



The USA film *The Stalking of Laurie Show*

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## TERMS OF THE ART: REALITY TV

In reality TV, the only thing studiously kept "off camera" is the camera. But somebody has to hold the equipment in the rain, on the raft, or up close and personal for the tearful confession. Below, the emerging lexicon of these makeshift documentarians—provided by one of their own (who sought anonymity). **AUSTIN BUNN**

**BURN THAT ONE:** "If your set-up [see below] doesn't work, and something happens in front of the rolling camera that reveals your manipulation of the action, you 'burn that one,' or erase that portion of the tape and record over it, so that the loggers, editors, and the exec producer won't see what you did. Thus, you erase reality—an interesting metaphysical concept—and you try it again until reality gets it right."

**DUTCH ANGLES:** "Turning the camera sideways for no particular reason other than the fact that everyone is doing it on MTV."

**INTRO AND OUTRO:** "When you don't have the narrative signposts you need, you aid the story by having a character tell you what happened so far, what just happened, what they think will happen, and 'how their day was.'"

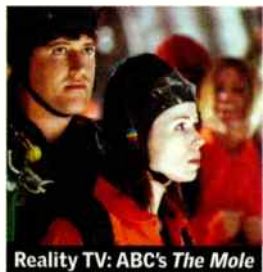
**LIPSTICK CAMERAS:** "Reality filmmakers, often bored when nothing much is happening, will rig up tiny 'lipstick' cameras on the ends of poles (called a 'bamboo-cam'), on the axles of moving cars, even an extreme-close-up of a hyena chomping guts and bones ('gut-cam')."

**RANDOMS:** "People on the street or bystanders, as in 'Let's get some randoms interacting with the contestants.'"

**SET-UPS:** "The dirty secret of reality filmmaking. If reality is not cooperating,

and your executive producer is screaming at you, sometimes you have to help reality along by 'manufacturing' your desired scenario. No one

will ever admit to doing this, unless they are very drunk, but everyone has done it at some point or another."



Reality TV: ABC's *The Mole*

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35] Last April, in a transaction that has gone unreported in the press and mostly unnoticed by the sports leagues, SportsLine subsidiary Vegas Insider purchased a company called Las Vegas Sports Consultants for about \$7 million. LVSC, founded by renowned Vegas oddsmaker Michael "Roxy" Roxborough, sets the odds and point spreads used by three-quarters of Las Vegas casinos for betting on all professional and college sports. Neither CBS nor SportsLine ever announced the purchase.

SportsLine and CBS have reason to keep quiet about their recent connection to oddsmaking: They have a troubled history with sports betting. In 1999, an ESPN report revealed that SportsLine was leasing an Internet address to an offshore gambling website called Sportsbook.com. The NCAA complained, and SportsLine canceled the arrangement. An embarrassed CBS, which has a \$6.2 billion, multiyear contract to televise NCAA games, issued a statement that anchor Greg Gumbel read to a national audience during the college basketball championships: "CBS was unaware of SportsLine's connection to Sportsbook, and the network was very concerned and took immediate action."

By purchasing LVSC, SportsLine and partner CBS are again linked to sports gambling, since the oddsmaking company's revenues come from the casinos that pay for its proprietary gambling information. LVSC gives its customers up-to-the-minute odds, player-injury updates, weather reports, and scores via Internet, satellite, cable, or radio. (The bulk of illegal sports betting, too, depends on LVSC odds, which are published in newspapers across the country.)

Asked about the CBS-LVSC connection, the NCAA's Bill Saum—who is in charge of the league's gambling policies—said he was unaware of CBS's partial ownership of the oddsmaking company: "It's new information to me." NCAA spokesperson Jane Jankowski, also unaware of the connection, expressed concern: "We wish CBS SportsLine wouldn't do that, and it is something we will bring up with them." NFL spokesman Greg Aiello says: "It would be fair to say it's a concern and something that we're watching."

CBS spokeswoman LeslieAnne Wade says the network by contract "does not share in any revenues with Vegas Insider," the SportsLine subsidiary that bought LVSC. Strictly speaking, this is true: CBS receives a portion of SportsLine's advertising revenues but no direct revenue from the company's gambling-related subsidiaries. But according to SportsLine's 2000 annual report, CBS is due to receive SportsLine stock valued at \$20 million every year between 2002 and 2006, when their contract is set to expire. (The amount of stock CBS receives varies depending on the price of SportsLine stock at the time of each annual payment.) The value of that SportsLine stock is affected by the performance of the entire company, including its gambling information service LVSC.

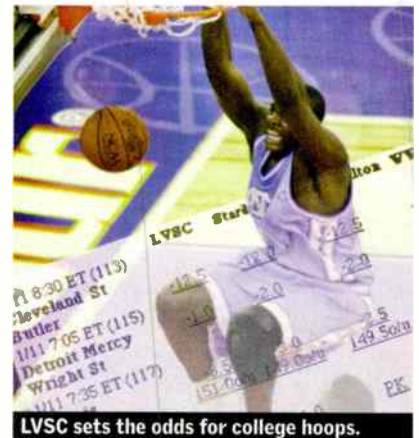
SportsLine CEO Michael Levy says his company is in the "information business," not the "gambling business," and that in any case, there are no Internet links between CBS SportsLine and his company's odds-related subsidiaries. As to the millions of dollars in SportsLine stock CBS receives every year, he adds, "That's kind of an indirect thing."

SportsLine spokesman Larry Wahl says he has not heard any objections from any of the sports leagues or from CBS. Sean McManus, head of CBS Sports, and Russell Pillar, head of Viacom Interactive, which oversees CBS's online business, did not return calls for comment. Both are members of SportsLine's board of directors. "The separation of the businesses is probably satisfactory [to CBS]," says Wahl.

No one at LVSC would comment on the oddsmaking company's affiliation with CBS, but in 1998 Russ Culver, chief oddsmaker for Vegas Insider, the SportsLine subsidiary, addressed the TV network's uncomfortable relationship with gambling: "I'm affiliated with CBS SportsLine, although they don't advertise that," he told a writer for the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. "The networks realize how important wagering is to the popularity of the NFL, but they want to act like they aren't promoting that angle."

STEPHEN TOTILO

**SPORTSLINE AND PARTNER CBS ARE AGAIN LINKED TO SPORTS GAMBLING.**



LVSC sets the odds for college hoops.

L: CAROLYN JOHNS/ABC; R: MATT DETRICH/KRT PHOTOS



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## THE FCC CHANGES CHANNELS

On January 16, a federal circuit court declared unconstitutional the Federal Communications Commission's affirmative-action regulation, which required that broadcasters maintain minority-recruitment programs.

### POLICY

For William Kennard, until January 19 the chairman of the FCC and a 1997 Clinton appointee, the decision must have been a depressing harbinger; Kennard, the first African-American ever appointed to the position, is known as a supporter of affirmative-action policies and has a record of encouraging minority employment in the broadcasting industry.

His successor, Michael Powell, a former chief of staff in the anti-trust division of the Justice Department and an FCC commissioner since 1997, has said that he favors race- and gender-neutral hiring policies. Like his father, Secretary of State General Colin Powell, Michael Powell has acknowledged publicly the role affirmative action played in his career, even noting that he himself has been "a product of affirmative action." However, he has also stated that he is wary of being known as an advocate for minority groups. "You do no one any favors by being perceived as someone who dedicates most of his time to minority concerns while neglecting other duties and responsibilities that come with the office," he told a group of African-American political leaders at a 1999 Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration in Washington, D.C. "You may feel you are making a difference,

**MICHAEL POWELL IS WARY OF BEING KNOWN AS AN ADVOCATE FOR MINORITY GROUPS.**

but you are marginalizing yourself and will slowly be compartmentalized by those who judge your actions." Powell's opposition to government-regulated affirmative-action policies ("Minorities and women want a fair

chance, not a handout," he said in a 1998 speech before the Douglass Policy Institute, a conservative think tank) may alter how broadcasters hire minority employees, as well as whether the government subsidizes minority ownership of media properties, both hard-won programs installed during Kennard's tenure. Powell declined to comment for this article.

Moreover, Powell is also known to be more supportive of megamergers, such as the recent Time Warner-AOL marriage, than Kennard, who supported it only after the companies were compelled to accept certain conditions. Such mergers have historically decreased the number of minority-owned broadcasters, which tend to be smaller operations. In 2000, Powell dissented in part from a proposal Kennard backed to give small and minority-owned businesses licenses for low-power FM radio stations. That plan was strongly opposed by large broadcasters and was subsequently scaled back by Congress. Powell argued that letting the smaller media outlets compete with traditional broadcasters



FCC chairman Michael Powell

could involve a "cost...to existing stations that provide equally valuable service to their communities."

"He's taken a very pro-broadcaster line and questioned the FCC's legitimate authority to promote the public interest," says Andrew Jay Schwartzman, head of the Media Access Project, a not-for-profit public interest group that opposed the Time Warner-AOL merger.

But despite his opposition to race-based policies, Powell supported a bill recently introduced by Senator John McCain that gives tax incentives to broadcasters who sell stations to minorities. He enjoys an unusually high level of bipartisan support in Washington, and even his opponents seem to admire him. "The fact is, I am a big fan," Schwartzman was quick to add after his criticism of Powell. "I think he's a stunningly talented guy, and quite a remarkable political talent."

Many public-interest groups and legislators who will have to work with Powell in the coming months were reluctant to speculate on the record about the changes he would make at the FCC. But David Honig, the executive director of the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, a nonprofit legal support group representing a slew of minority groups with media interests (including the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and the NAACP), supports Powell, although he did wonder about Powell's willingness to pursue and protect minority interests in the broadcasting industry: "Is he going to be as aggressive as Bill Kennard tried to be? It's going to be hard, given the political climate."

For now, though, Honig, along with everyone else, will have to wait and see. One of Powell's first decisions at the helm of the FCC will determine whether the FCC appeals the recent ruling that overturned its minority-recruitment requirements. Powell has not yet stated a position on the issue, but nobody will be surprised if it takes the FCC in a new direction. **MARK BOAL**

ON THE RECORD

**"People depend on [AOL Time Warner products] to manage their everyday lives, and for those who want to be relieved of their unrelenting boredom, we tell stories."**

—GERALD M. LEVIN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF AOL TIME WARNER, DESCRIBING THE COMPANY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS CUSTOMERS, IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, JANUARY 13, 2001

MARTIN SIMON/SABA CORBIS





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## EXCLUSIVITY CLAUSES

In the glamorous unfolding of his career, from tree cutter to foreign correspondent to author of the best-selling *The Perfect Storm*, Sebastian Junger has taken on his share of dangerous

### LABELING

assignments and won his share of acclaim. And at first glance, Junger's "Terror Recorded," which appeared in the October 2000 issue of *Vanity Fair*, seems to be further evidence that his cinematic prose style is not incompatible with serious reporting.

Junger relates a trip he took to Sierra Leone, where, after some careful maneuvering, he managed to obtain from a so-called village "Elder" photographs documenting war crimes during that country's civil conflict. The pictures are shocking. In one, a group of grinning men displays a severed head. In a gruesome triptych, soldiers in combat fatigues are seen dragging and then shooting a half-naked civilian at point-blank range.

*Vanity Fair* did its best to hype the images. The headline copy says the photos are "published here for the first time," and the piece claims that "only a handful of people know [the photos] exist," which is why they could play an "enormous" role in an upcoming war-crimes court. Junger writes that the Elder risked his life to steal the images from a band of rebels, while he, the resourceful reporter, used his contacts at the State Department to smuggle the pictures out of the country.

But as it turns out, the photos have been kicking around Sierra Leone for at least a year. Miles Roston and Peter Leahey, two New York-based documentary-film makers, bought the same set of pictures on the streets of Freetown, Sierra Leone, for \$25, and used them in a film, *Last Chance for Peace*, first shown in 1999 at a

conference in Jordan and subsequently aired on the Internet and on television around the world.

The pictures may be irrelevant to the outcome of a war-crimes trial, because the U.N. secretary general's office wants

the court to consider only those crimes committed after 1996—three years after Junger's account suggests the photos were taken. Not only that, but the BBC regularly publishes Sierra Leone war photos on the Internet, because, as its star correspondent Mark Doyle writes via e-mail, they "are readily available. You fly to Freetown and the victims are there. It's quite easy." And as many

people who follow Sierra Leone know, the war's bloodiest episode, the invasion of Freetown, was captured by a Sierra Leonean freelance cameraman, and his footage has been shown on CNN as a documentary called *Cry Freetown*.

Yet *Vanity Fair* was sufficiently underwhelmed by angry complaints from the documentarians not to print a clarification saying they didn't have an exclusive. Perhaps that's because in a narrow sense, the magazine was not incorrect to say the pictures were "published here for the first time"—they had merely been broadcast on the Internet, television, and movie screens.

Toward the end of his piece, Junger quotes State Department official Pierre Prosper, who says the pictures may be valuable, and in a reply to the aggrieved documentarians, *Vanity Fair's* editorial associate Stephen A. Levey wrote that the State Department "can confirm" the "importance of the photographs."

But when *Brill's Content* spoke to a high-level State Department official close to the matter, he said, speaking on condition of anonymity, that there was "no independent confirmation of the photos," although he was hopeful that the Elder would be instrumental in bringing Sierra Leone criminals to justice. However, because the rebels and government soldiers are continually switching sides in the decade-old civil war, the true story of the photos may never be known. (Junger hedged this by writing that the Elder's story is "impossible to confirm.") Junger was unavailable for comment for this story.

*Vanity Fair's* stretch is a variation on something that happens all the time. When a story is almost an exclusive, editors and writers seem increasingly likely to hype first and ask questions later. That's what happened, for example, when Bill Clinton gave a round of exit interviews and everyone from *Rolling Stone* to *Esquire* billed their stories as revelatory. Then there was the recent cover story in the now defunct *George* magazine, featuring an "exclusive" interview with Linda Tripp in which she reshaped her complaints about the Clinton administration. According to *George* editor in chief Frank Lalli, the biggest news in the piece was that "Linda Tripp reminded this country about how the president diminished his office in his affair with Lewinsky." But if that isn't old news, what is? It takes some creativity to imagine its plot, but maybe *George's* editors were hoping, à la Junger, for a movie deal.

MARK BOAL



Sebastian Junger

WHEN A STORY IS NOT QUITE AN EXCLUSIVE, EDITORS HYPE FIRST AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER.

### VANITY SITES

More than anything else, writers want to be read. Perhaps this explains the proliferation of pleasantly self-promotional online libraries in which Web-savvy writers collect their works. Aside from links to articles, the sites often include basic biographical information about the author and sometimes a photograph. They also exhibit a wide variety of design sensibility—from the simple list format to snazzy animation and audio. Here's a sampling.

LARA KATE COHEN

NAME URL	DESIGN STYLE	AUTHOR PHOTO	HIGHLIGHT
Malcolm Gladwell gladwell.com	minimalist	yes	Gladwell on his book, <i>The Tipping Point</i> : "It's very practical. And it's very hopeful. It's brain software."
Arianna Huffington ariannaonline.com	bland	yes	The photo gallery, with pictures of Huffington posing with Jay Leno, Eleanor Clift, Colin Powell, and others.
Joshua Micah Marshall j-marshall.com	text-heavy	yes	Encyclopedic coverage: "If you really must see every single piece he's written, click here."
Rebecca Mead rebeccamead.com	functional	no	The <i>New Yorker</i> profile of Sophie, a Manhattan 8-year-old who lives on the Upper West Side.
Gail Sheehy gailsheehy.com	childlike	yes	A self-help quiz based on Sheehy's theories called The Passages Tour. "Let's get to know each other," she says.
Andrew Sullivan andrewsullivan.com	high-tech	no	The site's "enhanced multimedia experience" along with Sullivan's running commentary on current events.
Rob Walker robwalker.net	modernist	no	Walker's diaristic writing on New Orleans, where he moved about a year ago.

JENNIFER MARTIN/LAISON

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## A CENTURY OF PUNDITRY

Watching all the turnover in Washington of late, with a new administration sweeping into town, we here at Pundit Scorecard started to think—I mean *really* think—about exactly

### PUNDIT SCORECARD

what we're doing here. "I know what you're doing!" you are no doubt saying. "You're scrupulously recording every prediction uttered on the weekend pundit shows and checking to see which ones come true." You've got a point. But since we started this thing, we've logged 2,410 predictions by 17 pundits on four shows. That hurts our heads.

So, in recognition of the fact that a new boss is in town, we're wrapping up the Clinton era and turning over the odometer. This issue of the Scorecard covers predictions made through December 12, 2000, the day the Supreme Court ended Al Gore's recount struggle and, by our lights, at least, as good a day as any to mark the end of the Pundit Scorecard season. Next issue, we'll be starting our pundits at zero. And we'll be changing the lineup—there's some promising talent coming up from the minors.

In the meantime, though, we've got winners! Even though our records go back only to 1998, we feel perfectly confident in declaring *Capital Gangster* Margaret Carlson (.639) the Pundit of the 20th Century. Though *McLaughlin Groupie* Clarence Page is the numerical runner-up, his paltry 12-for-19 record disqualifies him from earning the second-place ribbon. That goes to Eleanor Clift for a stunning 181 correct predictions.

As for the loser—who else? The century's wrongest pundit (with the lowest average and the most misses) is none other than John McLaughlin, a fitting position for the "self-appointed caesar" of punditry, as *Vanity Fair's* James Wolcott calls him. Better luck next season, John.

ALL-TIME WINNER  
Margaret Carlson



WRONG AND WRONGER  
John McLaughlin

JOHN COOK

PLAYERS		
1	Margaret Carlson, <i>CG</i>	(53/83) .639
2	Clarence Page, <i>MG</i>	(12/19) .632
3	Eleanor Clift, <i>MG</i>	(181/291) .622
4	Lawrence O'Donnell, <i>MG</i>	(44/71) .620
5	Al Hunt, <i>CG</i>	(94/153) .614
6	Robert Novak, <i>CG</i>	(78/128) .609
7	Cokie Roberts, <i>TW</i>	(52/86) .605
8	George Stephanopoulos, <i>TW</i>	(136/227) .599
9	Tony Blankley, <i>MG</i>	(126/219) .575
10	Michael Barone, <i>MG</i>	(95/166) .572
11	Sam Donaldson, <i>TW</i>	(44/77) .571
12	Kate O'Beirne, <i>CG</i>	(40/71) .563
13	Morton Kondracke, <i>BB</i>	(107/192) .557
14	Mark Shields, <i>CG</i>	(32/61) .525
15	George Will, <i>TW</i>	(61/122) .500
16	Fred Barnes, <i>BB</i>	(96/194) .495
17	John McLaughlin, <i>MG</i>	(119/250) .476

TEAMS		
1	<i>The Capital Gang</i>	(297/496) .599
2	<i>This Week With Sam Donaldson &amp; Cokie Roberts</i>	(293/512) .572
3	<i>The McLaughlin Group</i>	(577/1,016) .568
4	<i>The Beltway Boys</i>	(203/386) .526

BB: *The Beltway Boys*; CG: *The Capital Gang*; MG: *The McLaughlin Group*; TW: *This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*  
Covers predictions made between August 2, 1998, and December 12, 2000  
Team scores based on total predictions made on each show

## MATT STONE

In March, *South Park* creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker will take a stab at political comedy with the premiere of *That's My Bush!*, their new live-action sitcom on Comedy Central. That's Bush as in George W. Before last year's election, Stone and Parker laid plans to produce a sitcom set in the White House, with the sitting president and his family as central characters. The show had been scheduled to air in February but was delayed for weeks while the identity of the president-elect—and hence the show's main character—was being sorted out. Not long after it became clear that he would be writing about Bush, Stone talked with *Brill's Content*.

EMILY CHENOWETH

**DID YOU WANT A PARTICULAR PERSON TO WIN FOR THE SAKE OF THE SHOW?**  
They're all the same people to us, really. The



Sitcom creator Stone

show isn't first and foremost a political satire; it's first and foremost a sitcom about a family. We're not out to get anybody any more than we have been before. It's more about establishing George Bush as a likable, believable character. That's the real challenge. Ripping on George Bush isn't hard—it's like shooting fish in a barrel. Our challenge is to create a sitcom around his family and create a character in him that people can identify with, the way people can identify with Archie Bunker, Homer Simpson, Ray Romano, and all those kinds of characters.

**DO YOU WATCH A LOT OF SITCOMS?**  
I don't really watch much TV. I don't like TV. It's probably because that's where I

work—that's what we do all day is sit around and try to come up with funny s--t. I hate sitcoms. I grew up never watching any sitcoms—except for *All in the Family*. That's also going to be a big component of the show—that we're out to parody sitcoms. If anything, we're out to get sitcoms more than we're out to get George Bush. On the other hand, there are things about sitcoms that work, and we're going to try to do both.

**WILL YOU HAVE ROLES FOR OTHER POLITICIANS?**

If the story lines demand [that Bush] talks to the secretary of state, then it would be a Colin Powell character that we'd bring in. I think the Cheney's could be a part of it, but we haven't really figured it out yet. In kind of the way that Cheney is his little Barney Rubble, maybe. If it has to do with an uncle, then we'll just invent an uncle. We want to get it to the point where people can't remember what really is George Bush, what they know for a fact, and what we've kind of invented.

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## MAXIM-UM SPIN CONTROL

Since its launch, in 1997, *Maxim* has been one of the biggest magazine successes in recent memory. The popularity of the beer-

### THE NUMBERS

and-babe-heavy glossy was cemented last June when it posted a circulation of more than 2 million—higher than competitors *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Men's Journal* combined. Despite the numbers, Felix Dennis, the magazine's founder, has worked hard to prove that his publication isn't just for frat boys. Last November, *Maxim* issued a press release touting data that it hoped would silence critics. "*Maxim* magazine's first MRI [Mediamark Research Inc.] study reveals readers are richer and better educated than competitors," the release said.

The leader in the field of audience research, MRI studies the spending habits and demographic makeup of a magazine's readership. Its most recent survey showed that *Maxim* readers, whose median age is 26, have a median household income of \$61,907 and that 73 percent are college-educated. "There are certain rival senior executives in the magazine industry who have been in denial concerning *Maxim's* readership profile," said Dennis in the release. "Perhaps now they will have the courtesy to publicly admit they were wrong."

**MAXIM DIDN'T MENTION THAT ITS READERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO LIVE WITH THEIR PARENTS.**

That's unlikely, because many of these executives dispute *Maxim's* interpretation of the numbers. It's true that MRI measured a household income of \$61,907 for *Maxim* readers and just \$54,342 for *Esquire* and \$59,338 for *GQ* (*Men's Journal* was the only publication in the men's field with a higher median income—\$65,318). But according to the same report, *Maxim's* readers were more likely to live at home with their parents, thus the high household income, and they were the least likely among readers of the eight men's lifestyle magazines that MRI measures to have a



college degree. The numbers for individual earned income tell a different story: *Maxim* readers earn a median income of \$30,977 a year (the lowest of the men's magazines) while *Esquire's* and *GQ's* readers earn \$34,782 and \$31,800, respectively.

Such MRI studies lend themselves to spinning, and magazines use them in the hope of creating industry buzz that will translate into advertising dollars. "Huge media decisions involving immense [amounts of money] are being made based on one study," says Ed Whitaker, the marketing director for *Men's Health*.

Although magazines are fond of trumpeting their readers' affluence, MRI president and chief operating officer Kathi Love says that minor differences in their numbers—household

income, for instance—are statistically negligible. But MRI stays out of the fray. "We're a neutral measuring service," says Love.

*Maxim* group publisher Carolyn Kremins reiterated that her magazine was pleased with the MRI results. "*Maxim's* audience mirrors the new economy; that guys are more affluent at a younger age," she wrote in an e-mail message to *Brill's Content*. But Kremins may not have any luck convincing the competition. "I've analyzed the numbers, too," says Tom Florio, vice-president and publisher of *GQ*. "And *Maxim* does not have the highest median household income in the men's field....Media buyers are aware of this."

While *Maxim* may have a hard time shaking its randy image, the magazine has had some success luring highbrow advertisers—Chanel and Burbury, for example—with its paying customers, all 2,157,324 of them.

ELIZABETH ANGELL

## ECONOMICS 101

Business reporters love to complain about the public-relations reps who bother them.

### LESSONS

"We get an absolute blizzard of people coming our way," says Bill Holstein, who writes for *U.S. News & World Report*. "We're living in a war zone." But reporters aren't the only ones inundated with irritating phone calls: PR reps for major financial institutions say they have to contend with persistent calls—from reporters.

Business publicists say the growth of business news—all of those new magazines and websites devoted to

money—has increased the number of calls they receive from green journalists. "Thoroughness has taken a hit in the rush to be first," says Chris Ullman, spokesman for the Securities and Exchange Commission, who notes that in this instance, he is speaking personally, not for the agency. "There's been an increase in the number of journalists who expect to be spoon-fed complex issues without having done their homework." Ullman considers himself a gatekeeper who checks a reporter's background knowledge before arranging interviews with senior officials. "We've got to make sure there's a base level of

understanding," he says.

It isn't difficult for PR people to spot a rookie. "When a reporter starts out by asking 'Where is your trading floor?' I know we're starting at ground zero," says Scott Peterson, a spokesman for the NASDAQ. "We don't have a trading floor." Peterson says he often gets calls from journalists who want a comment on the health of the market as a whole. "Our job here at the NASDAQ is to run a market," says Peterson. "We're not in a position to analyze what's happened to a stock portfolio." Unfortunately, that job just might fall to the reporter.

ELIZABETH ANGELL



T: JESSICA ABEL; B: FRANK WEBSTER

1 PART DETROIT DRUMMER

1 PART MEMPHIS BASS

2 PARTS AUSTIN LYRICS

AND A SPLASH OF BAY AREA VOCALS

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MIX WELL.

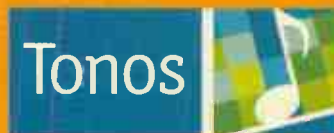


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## ROUNDUP: DUBYA'S PRESS POSSE

New administrations bring myriad changes to the Washington landscape, and not just for the thousands of political appointees who populate the capital. The fourth estate has a traditional changing of the guard as well; as rising stars get assigned to the White House, once-frenetic campaign correspondents return to filing placid metro briefs, and political reporters mine a newly ascendant set of sources.

### PRESIDENTIAL ACCESS

For Bush II, some reporters will be better positioned than others. A handful of scribes insinuated themselves so well into George W. Bush's presidential campaign that they're already angling for scoops and prime background clatter. Foremost among those is **Thomas DeFrank**, the Washington bureau chief for the *Daily News* of New York, a man referred to in Bill Minutaglio's Dubya biography as one of the president's "favorites." DeFrank's ties extend deep into the Bush-family coterie: He wrote a book with Bush adviser James Baker and has been close to Vice-President Dick Cheney since the seventies, a relationship DeFrank parlayed into the vice-presidential nominee's first newspaper interview after being selected for the Republican ticket.

**Judy Keen**, who covered the Bush campaign for *USA Today*, should also be primed for some exclusives; close to Bush on the trail, Keen acknowledges she was a reporter the Bush camp could leak information to with the expectation of decent play.

It's not only pen-and-pad reporters who have cultivated relationships with Team Bush. CNN's **Candy Crowley**, who covered Bush's campaign, developed a particularly responsive relationship with her sources (Crowley did not return calls seeking comment). And the Fox News Channel, a conservative-leaning

**AFTER THE CAMPAIGN, SOME REPORTERS ARE BETTER POSITIONED THAN OTHERS.**

network, has long enjoyed a cozy relationship with Republicans; indeed, last December it was rumored that Bush would tap Fox News anchor **Brit Hume** as one of his spokesmen (Hume also did not return calls seeking comment).

Whether reporters such as Keen and Crowley will be able to translate their cozy contacts into scoops remains to be seen; now that Bush is president, reporters will not have the daily, intimate contact with him they did during the campaign.

Regardless, there will be a lot of new faces in the White House pressroom. **Dana Milbank** (see "On the Trail," page 116) and **Mike Allen** will form one of the most potent duos in D.C., tag-teaming

the White House for *The Washington Post*. Both Milbank and Allen covered Campaign 2000, and both distinguished themselves, albeit differently: Allen covered all four of the major candidates extensively—Bush, Al Gore, Bill Bradley, and John McCain—and is commonly known as the hardest-working man in journalism. Milbank, meanwhile, was more often found penning ponderous paeans. Writing in the *Post* last summer, he rhetorically asked, "Has there ever been a more milquetoast meeting, a more treacly trade show, than this Republican National Convention of 2000?" During the shortened Bush transition, Milbank took on the mantle once assumed by *The New York Times*'s Bush-campaign correspondent, **Frank Bruni**, and turned what are

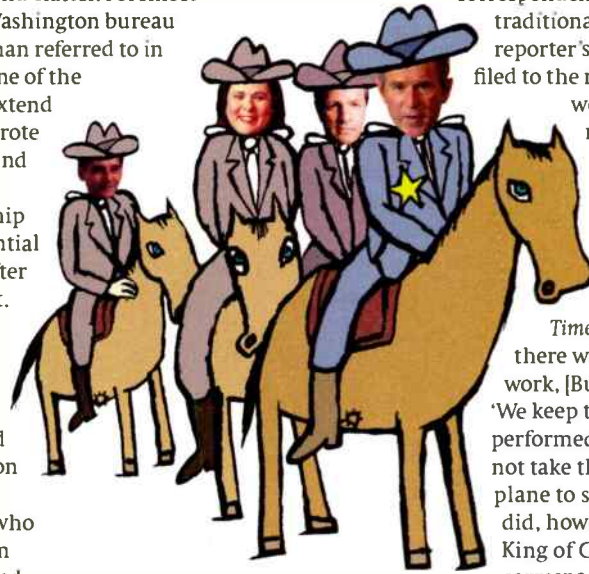
traditionally contentless pool reports—one reporter's dispatch of a limited-access event filed to the rest of the press corps—into minor works of whimsical delight. Take this report from December 28, in which Milbank describes an uneventful plane ride with the president-elect: "Bush...could be seen in the first-class cabin, spectacles on nose, reading *The New York Times*.

Immediately after reading the *Times*, he went to the lavatory. Asked if there was a cause-and-effect relationship at work, [Bush aide Gordon] Johndroe replied: 'We keep the *Post* in the bathroom.' Bush performed some stretches in the aisle but did not take the long walk to the back of the plane to speak with your forlorn pool. He did, however, have a tête-à-tête with John King of CNN, which led us to believe the correspondent is being considered as a possible defense secretary, a possibility King did not deny." Bruni—known as "Panchito" to Bush—will be building on his mordant

witticisms in a book: *The Times* reporter, who with David E. Sanger covered the early days of Bush II, has a deal with HarperCollins for a book built largely around Bruni's observations on the trail.

Surprisingly, the Texas papers that devoted the most time to covering the campaign—the *Austin American-Statesman*, the *Houston Chronicle*, and *The Dallas Morning News*—are adding only two reporters among them to the White House beat. **Ken Herman**, the wisecracking *Statesman* scribe, is moving to D.C., at least temporarily, as the paper expands its capital bureau, and *The Dallas Morning News*, meanwhile, is keeping its time-tested duo of **G. Robert Hillman** and **David Jackson** in D.C. But **Wayne Slater**, who covered the Bush campaign for the *News*, decided to remain with his family in Austin. His explanation: "The weather's better."

SETH MNOOKIN



From left: Ken Herman, Candy Crowley, and Brit Hume hope for prime access to President Bush.

HERMAN: RENAY BOWLES; CROWLEY: CNN; HUME: FOX NEWS; BUSH: ERIC GAY/AP; ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT MENCHIN

ON THE RECORD

**Q: "So, how do you write those books so fast?"**

**A: "I get up early."**

—EXCHANGE BETWEEN A CURIOUS MADELEINE ALBRIGHT AND THE PROLIFIC JIMMY CARTER ON THE SET OF ABC'S *GOOD MORNING AMERICA* IN JANUARY, AS REPORTED IN THE *NEW YORK DAILY NEWS*. ALBRIGHT PLANS TO WRITE A BOOK OF HER OWN.



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**3** Number of ads for dotcom companies that, as of press time, were expected to air during Super Bowl XXXV, held January 28

**17** Number of ads for dotcom companies during Super Bowl XXXIV

**3** Number of ads for dotcom companies during Super Bowl XXXIII<sup>1</sup>

**\$3.5** Asking price, in millions, of the Washington, D.C., home Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton bought in January

**\$1.7** Asking price, in millions, of the Washington, D.C., home of Michael Oreskes, until recently the *New York Times* bureau chief there, which Mrs. Clinton visited on her house hunt

**\$25,000** Average salary of 1999 journalism and mass-communication graduates working for daily newspapers<sup>2</sup>

**286,932** Total number of magazine advertising pages sold in 2000

**\$17.6** Total magazine advertising revenue, in billions, for 2000

**14** Percentage increase in that revenue from 1999 to 2000<sup>3</sup>

**4.9** Weight, in pounds, of the February/March 2001 issue of *Bride's* magazine, which set a Guinness world record for largest consumer magazine

**1,286** Number of pages in the February/March 2001 *Bride's*

**178** Number of those pages containing editorial content

**4** Number of consecutive years for which the February/March *Bride's* has set a record for largest consumer magazine<sup>4</sup>

**625,000** Estimated number of high-definition television sets sold last year

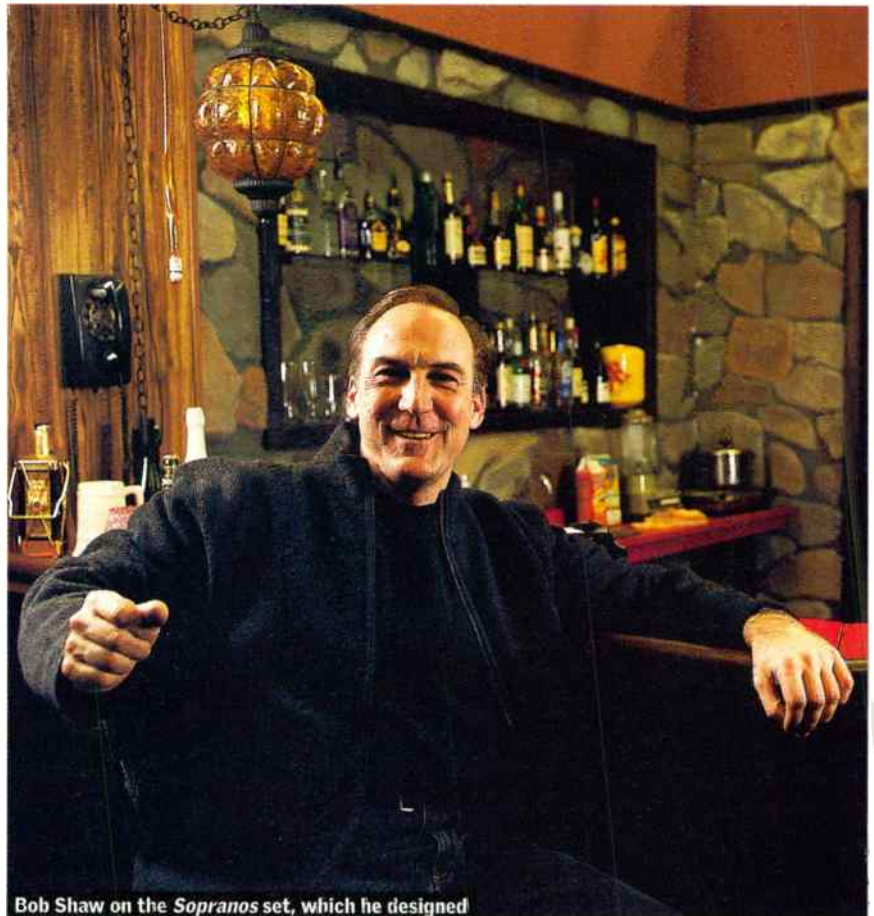
**125,000** Estimated number of high-definition television sets sold in 1999

**25** Estimated total number, in millions, of television sets sold last year

**\$2,000** Retail price of the least-expensive high-definition television available through the end of last year<sup>5</sup>

COMPILED BY JESSE OXFELD

1) *The New York Times* 2) *The New York Times*, 1999 Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates, University of Georgia 3) Publishers Information Bureau 4) *Mediaweek* 5) *The New York Times*



Bob Shaw on the *Sopranos* set, which he designed

## THE DON OF DESIGN

Since its debut, the HBO series *The Sopranos* has been noted for flouting the nostalgic mob-drama conventions established by Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* films. *The Sopranos* takes place not in the Little Italy of the distant past but in present-day suburban

New Jersey, and this unglamorous setting, strip malls and all, throws the surviving elements of *cosa nostra* culture depicted on the show into sharp relief. The balance of *Old World* and *New World* is the show's dramatic center and also the key to its realism: *The Sopranos* is reportedly a hit with actual mobsters, who can be heard earnestly discussing the show ("Is that supposed to be us?") on FBI surveillance tapes made public at the 1999 trial of the New Jersey-based DeCavalcante crime family. The program is believable, and the man responsible for that believability—in look and feel—is production designer Bob Shaw.

Shaw scouts locations, builds sets, and chooses props, translating his sense of the real world of the New Jersey Mafia onto the TV screen. "I was born and raised in New Jersey, and my mother's family is Italian," says Shaw. "I have a lot of personal knowledge to draw on." When he's out looking for locations, he and his crew scour his old stomping grounds. For a recent shoot, they inspected eight nail salons, looking for the one with the right tacky charm. Sometimes it's not "tacky" Shaw is after but "authentic Italian": Trying to figure out exactly what Uncle Junior would keep in his basement, for example, had Shaw recalling a relative's winepress and dried peppers.

Before *The Sopranos*, Shaw worked on films including *The Ice Storm* and *Quiz Show*, jobs that required a focus on historical accuracy. Now it's a modern netherworld he's charged with representing, and he's well suited to the job. "I know the area we shoot in," he says, and then adds, perhaps a bit ominously, "and I know what the people are like."

LARA KATE COHEN

ANNE KATRINE SENSTAD



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# reality czech

Dream or nightmare: Your book group is discussing the latest Eastern European fiction, but you've prepared a brilliant analysis of a new private-eye novel. **BY CALVIN TRILLIN**

I'm in the middle of one of those dreams that everyone has about going into a final exam you haven't prepared for, except in this case what I don't seem to have prepared for is the monthly meeting of our book group. Instead of finding myself in a university lecture hall, staring down in panic at the blank pages of a blue book. I am sitting at a dining-room table with eight other people, all of whom have been out of college for a long time. The remains of dinner—Chinese takeout—can be seen on the table. (The group's only absolute rule, followed strictly even in dreams, is that hosts must serve nothing but takeout for dinner; from the start, our book group has been aware of the pitfalls that could lead us to deteriorate into a gourmet book group.) I'm talking, presumably having been the first person at the table asked to offer some general impressions of the book we've all read that month. The others are looking puzzled, or maybe irritated. Apparently everyone else in the group has read a 500-page postmodern novel by someone widely considered the most promising writer of avant-garde fiction in the Czech Republic. I've come prepared to discuss *Hugger Mugger*,

a recent private-eye mystery by Robert B. Parker. How I could have misunderstood the assignment in just that way is, like so much of what happens in a dream, unclear. It is clear, though, that my remarks are not going down well.

*So what's this dream about? Am I anxious about the possibility that, when it comes to reading comprehension and taste in literature, I'm considered the George W. Bush of this reading group? It's true that when my wife and I go to a foreign movie she usually has to explain it to me. Do these people know that? (For the record, I'd like to say that I understand Hollywood movies all too well.)*

Don't get me wrong: The exegesis of *Hugger Mugger* I hear myself presenting is brilliant. In fact, it goes beyond *Hugger Mugger* to encompass Parker's complete oeuvre. I discuss the appeal



of Parker's protagonist—Spenser, a brutally tough but deeply moral wiseass—as an iconographic American hero. I offer a theory or two about Hawk, an equally tough black man who apparently makes his living as an enforcer when he's not offering Spenser absolutely dependable backup. I digress briefly to speculate on what Parker had in mind when he gave Spenser only a last name and Hawk only a first name (“As if these two men, one white and one black, are complementary, in the sense that...”). Then I do a short riff on the possibility that Spenser is a first name and Hawk is a last name. I analyze the relationship of Spenser and his longtime squeeze—Susan Silverman, the wise and breathtakingly sexy Cambridge psychotherapist. Despite the remarkable perspicacity of my analysis, the other members of

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my book group are frowning. It's perfectly obvious that they expected me to discuss the Czech postmodernist.

*Why would they be frowning at me in this dream? Actually, the members of my book group are normally pretty tolerant of people who aren't eager to tackle Ulysses every month. It's true, of course, that one September, at the first meeting after a summer break that customarily includes reading a longer book than we take on during the rest of the year, I confessed that I hadn't been able to make it through *The Magic Mountain*, which has the narrative drive of an 18-wheeler in a ditch. It is also true that some months later, after I had single-handedly muddled up the schedule for one meeting, I said that although I would accept any punishment the group offered, I'd be grateful if the punishment did not consist of reading another book by Thomas Mann.*

Desperately, I push on. Although the English department in my college was dominated by New Critics—scholars who focused their energy on a close analysis of the text and were militantly uninterested in the biographical details of the person who had produced it—I find myself talking a bit about ways in which Robert B. Parker himself is and isn't like Spenser. I discuss the significance of the tough-guy author pictures on his book jackets. I mention how, after a panel discussion one day at The New York Public Library, I heard him growl to a fellow panelist who'd asked why he wasn't a member of the Mystery Writers of America, "The last organization I joined sent me to Korea"—a purely Spenserian response. But I also mention that Parker has a PhD in English, so when Spenser gives his name it's no accident that he sometimes says, "With an s like the poet."

*I don't know what makes me think anybody in the group would be impressed by being told that Parker has academic credentials. These people are not intellectual snobs. Some of them probably read mysteries. They're not the sort of people who always talk about wanting to stretch themselves. (Those sort of people make me think of an elastic waistband that has stretched itself so many times it's becoming incapable of doing its original duty.) Also, I would have been happy to read a postmodern Czech novel if I'd known about it. Why doesn't anybody ever tell me anything?*

In the tradition of comparative literature, I am about to move into a section of my presentation that might be called "The American Mystery Novels of Robert B. Parker and Elmore Leonard: Compare and Contrast." Then I notice that my wife is trying to signal me: Her eyes are darting back and forth between me and the book she's holding open in front of her. The book is tilted, so that the jacket is showing, and she's quietly tapping her finger on the title to remind me that what is supposed to be under discussion is a book that I am not discussing. I can see that. In my mind, I can even reflect for a moment on how strange it is that I didn't notice that she was reading a postmodern Czech novel all month while I was reading *Hugger Muggger*. But I can't stop. I realize that I'm going to follow up the Parker/Leonard analysis with some remarks on the relationship between Hawk and Susan Silverman—an area of Parker studies in which I've carved out for myself a small specialty. Everyone is looking angry now. In an effort to bring my remarks to an end, the hostess picks up one of those bells that haute bourgeois ladies of the house rang at the dinner table when they were ready for the next course. This bell is shockingly loud, presumably because it has to reach the ears of deliverymen from Chinese restaurants who are riding bicycles through Manhattan traffic.

*It was the alarm clock. I woke up in a sweat, realizing, with great relief, that there is no Czech novel to read. (When I said I would have been happy to read a postmodernist Czech novel, I didn't mean exactly happy; it was just a figure of speech.) For our meeting, that very evening, our book group would be discussing a novel by Eudora Welty, a terrific writer. I'd finished it with time to spare. I was looking forward to the meeting. It occurred to me that when the time came to make suggestions about the next book to read, I might just throw into the mix the private-eye novels of Robert B. Parker. ■*

**WHEN I SAID I WOULD  
HAVE BEEN "HAPPY" TO  
READ A POSTMODERNIST  
CZECH NOVEL, IT  
WAS JUST A FIGURE  
OF SPEECH.**

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# viva las Vegas

**At Comdex, the massive computer trade show, you can bet on the fact that technology flacks are wooing the press—and collecting chits. BY JOHN R. QUAIN**

Every November, legions of journalists wend their way among the tens of thousands of conventioners and buzzing Las Vegas casinos, trying to make sense of Comdex—the giant computer expo and a five-day, million-square-foot monster of gleaming gadgets, high-tech millionaires, and dotcom dilettantes. And trailing the reporters each year are hordes of marketing and public-relations types doing their best to steer the media away from the one-armed bandits and into their clients' booths.

For the past decade, Comdex has reigned as the largest tech trade show in the United States. Bigger than any broadcast-television convention. Bigger than any film-industry event. More than 2,100 companies, ranging from such industry heavyweights as Intel to newcomers like Hand-spring, pitch their tents in the exhibition halls, trying to make deals, impress retailers, hit on customers, and, of course, get media coverage. And in our supercharged, tech-driven economy—the dot-com bust notwithstanding—Comdex gets plenty of coverage, from high-school newspapers to the computer-industry press, from *The New York Times* to the *Today* show on NBC.

Twelve years ago, when I started flying out to Las Vegas for *PC Magazine* on jets crammed with laptop-toting propeller-heads, only tech trade-press journalists from the likes of *Computerworld* and *InformationWeek* attended. Technical knowledge was prized, and if you didn't know the meaning of "pipeline burst mode" or were ignorant about the top rpm of the latest hard drives, you were made to feel unwelcome.

But since high tech became credited with lighting a fire under the economy, more and more mainstream media attention has focused on Comdex. The dotcom boom—and bust—only increased the focus on last fall's Comdex, which drew more than 3,500 accredited members of the press and some 200,000 conventioners.

Even to old-timers like myself, Comdex can be overwhelming. Exhibits fill not only the expansive Las Vegas Convention Center but also the Sands Expo and Convention Center, blocks

away. The show is so big that the Comdex Guide listing the seminars and exhibits runs 616 pages. Beyond the official show are hundreds of private meeting rooms sprinkled around the city like safe houses, waiting for journalists to arrive for one-on-one pitches delivered by the CEOs of high-flying high-tech companies.

Indeed, weeks before the show, public-relations departments start trying to corral reporters and get them to commit to breakfasts, dinners, and parties at Comdex. Seasoned tech reporters find the preshow PR onslaught so distracting that most of us never preregister for Comdex, lest legions of communications directors start slamming us with requests.

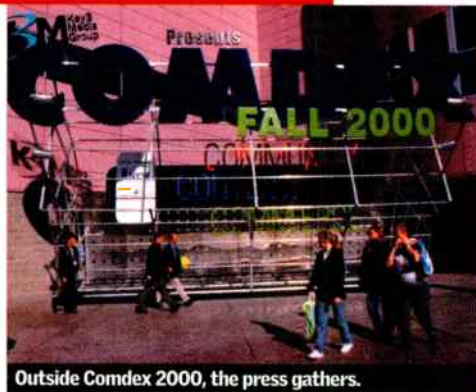
One PR representative for a major software company acknowledged that his colleagues are told not to put the word "Comdex" in the subject line of an e-mail message because most tech journalists automatically filter out these come-ons.

AS SOON AS YOU CLIMB off the plane in Vegas, you're assaulted with tech pitches. This year, dueling

big screens in McCarran International Airport's baggage-claim area blast out what looks to be the Best of Bill Gates's Onstage Handshakes, with an announcer booming, "The best is yet to come." After waiting an hour for your bags, you are greeted by the mile-long taxi line; inside the taxis, the usual ads for showgirls and adult entertainment have been supplanted by ads for computer monitors and networking equipment.

During the week that product managers order \$175 steaks at the Bellagio, "just to see what it's like," as one put it, temptation in Las Vegas runs high, and companies are not shy about exploiting journalists' desire for distraction. A couple of years ago, STB Systems, a now-defunct company that made graphics-controller cards for PCs, took a group of reporters out to the Las

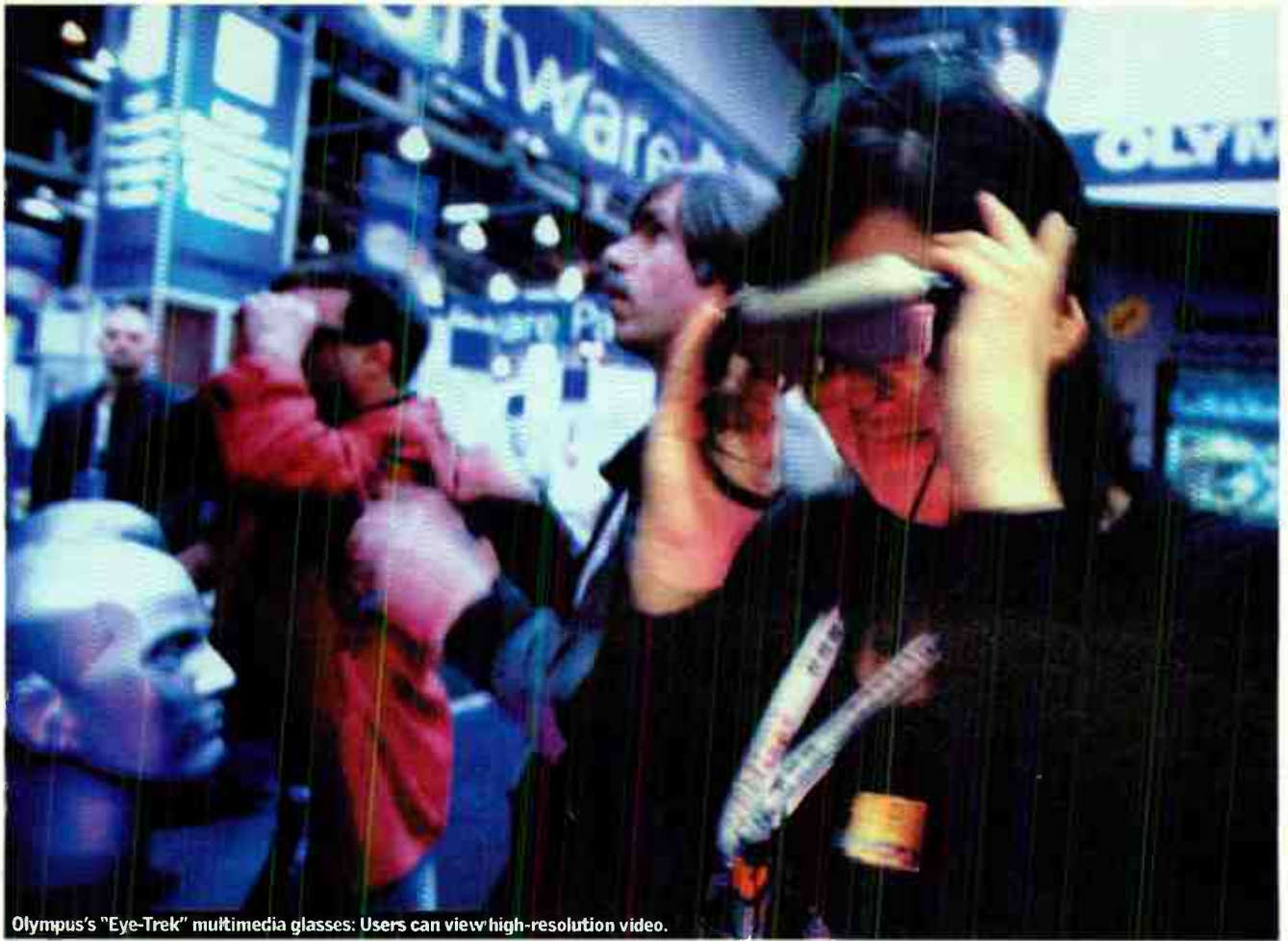
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Outside Comdex 2000, the press gathers.

CHRIS FARINA/CORBIS SYGMA





Olympus's "Eye-Trek" multimedia glasses: Users can view high-resolution video.

Vegas Motor Speedway for the Richard Petty Driving Experience. STB put editors in the driver's seats of 150-mph stock cars to emphasize that STB's cards were fast. One year, IBM helicoptered a colleague of mine into the Grand Canyon for lunch and then straight back to Vegas. All in a day's work.

Of course, a free spin around the racetrack doesn't guarantee a spot in the winner's circle—or a positive article in a major daily. But it doesn't hurt. For example, nearly every roundup of graphics-controller cards in the trade press after the Speedway event included STB's products. (That I remember the company's name even though I didn't attend the media stock-car race suggests that these ploys can be, in marketing argot, effective branding tools.) And flights of fancy like IBM's Grand Canyon tour impart an overblown importance to journalists who may envy the financial success of the companies they cover. Consequently, many reporters—"like this weird, arrogant aristocracy," the PR rep said—have come to expect such Comdex perks.

On the other side, journalists who must cover the immensity that is Comdex navigate a thicket of hyperbole, hype, and hucksterism. The press's basic logistical challenges—like figuring out how to get fed without wasting hours standing in line for overpriced hamburgers—provide PR people with marketing opportunities. Indeed, many PR events involve food. The 7 A.M. breakfast meetings. The annual press lunches at Piero's, across the street from the main convention center, where journalists zealously guard (and even fight over) their seats. The after-show press events, with fried finger food and beverages. And there's always a communications manager willing to take you out to dinner with a client. There's even some competition among the

press over who gets taken to the most expensive restaurant.

Accepting a dinner or tickets to see George Carlin does have a price. In my experience it won't guarantee coverage but it does amount to a chit that the PR representative can call in later. Out of the 40 or 50 daily voice mails I receive, for example, I could feel obligated to return the call from the person who took me to dinner or invited me to the hottest party at Comdex. Then again, declining an invitation could limit your access to technical information from the company when you really need it. Conversely, many public-relations firms score points with clients by getting reporters to attend their events, so a reporter who shows up is doing the flack a favor. Consequently, the dance between the reporters and public-relations people has evolved into an oddly symbiotic relationship. (Those willing to be interviewed for this article requested anonymity, for fear of antagonizing the other side.)

The relationship, however, can break down in the exhibition halls. That's because walking the aisles wearing a silver media badge is tantamount to waving a red flag in front of a bull. Vendors have literally reached out into the crowd and pulled me into their exhibits. I've been interrupted while conducting an interview and promised free computer equipment just to spend a few minutes with a competing company's representative. Although we may complain about such behavior, this is the most attention tech reporters get all year, so we are also flattered by it. Although most convention-goers have trouble getting a simple price quote out of exhibitors, journalists usually immediately get a cool drink and a goodie bag with stuffed toys, pens, or flashing balls embossed with corporate logos.

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THE USUAL TRADE SHOW accoutrements—all those free T-shirts and “booth babes”—are designed to lure customers and journalists alike. The former are used to entice attendees to sit through turgid presentations on the finer points of computer-software programs and the latter to appeal to the male-dominated crowd. Hitachi featured three svelte women in painted-on bell-bottoms voguing with electronic gadgets to a thumping soundtrack. They smiled and walked around onstage in front of a bank of flat-screen monitors flashing product images. The models didn’t speak, but the audience seemed entertained nonetheless.

Elsewhere, a tiny stall housing unknown SyberSay Communications created a pedestrian traffic jam by using three tall blondes and an elegant black woman, with three-foot ponytails, wearing revealing electric-blue jumpsuits. Later, the trade publisher IDG ran a mostly positive story about SyberSay’s product, a wireless earpiece for cell phones.

Typically, journalists are routed backstage, away from these shenanigans, to meet with PR representatives and company executives. Journalists who take the time to sit through these backroom meetings are rewarded with free T-shirts, sans dancing models (at least as far as I’ve seen). The scores of smaller companies that make accessories and less sexy products are banished to the far corners of the convention center, a Siberia of tiny booths where there’s little chance of media coverage.

On and off the show floor, Comdex is also dominated by “press events,” the main idea of which is media control. By far the strongest control comes from an off-site press event. Some of the older consumer-electronics firms prefer to take members of the press out to a show to establish goodwill. Philips, for example, took a group of journalists to see the Cirque du Soleil show at the Bellagio. However, public-relations firms get the

biggest bang for their buck by holding media-only mini-trade shows away from the main exhibition.

The first mini-trade show held at last year’s Comdex was DigitalFocus/MobileFocus, which was scheduled on Sunday night in a voluminous pavilion behind Caesars Palace. A Vegas showgirl guided attendees to the pavilion, where scores of companies had set up tables, several open bars beckoned, and waiters delivered hors d’oeuvres to hungry reporters.

These trade shows display products that won’t appear at the official Comdex and enable journalists to ask questions free of gawking conventioners. Several company reps crouched behind their tables to show me new gadgets away from the other reporters, attempting to create the illusion that the product introduction will be earthshaking and that I should jump at the chance to cover it. Of course, any sense of exclusivity quickly evaporates when I spot the same company reps showing the “secret” product to other reporters.

**"IF THERE'S A TV PERSON HERE AND [THE NEW YORK TIMES'S] JOHN MARKOFF AT THE SAME TIME...IT'S GOOD-BYE, MARKOFF."**

AT THE MINI-TRADE SHOWS, the company marketers and PR folks delineate the pecking order among tech journalists. Business reporters who, as a group, have

recently begun covering Comdex, for example, are considered desirable “gets.” A story in a respected business magazine has crossover appeal, getting the message out to investors and customers alike. But the tech PR crowd is still struggling with the financial reporters. Said one PR rep who considers *Forbes* and *Fortune* “first-tier” contacts, “The business reporters don’t know and don’t much care about the technology or how it works. They’ll only talk to you if there’s a spectacular success or spectacular f--up.”

For the flacks, of course, the possibility of airtime trumps all. “If there’s a TV person here and [*The New York Times’s*] John Markoff at the same time,” says one company representative, “it’s good-bye, Markoff.” As the computer consultant for CBS News’s overnight broadcast *Up to the Minute*, I’ve experienced the lure of TV firsthand. One year, a Korean company sent four corporate representatives to accompany me to the roof of CBS affiliate KLAS for my stand-up. In the middle of the night, with near-freezing temperatures and a nasty wind blowing down the Strip, the four reps gamely climbed a ladder to the roof with me, nervously clutching their \$10,000 gadget.

At Comdex 2000, most companies are just as accommodating. When I mention my affiliation with CBS, one firm instantly hands over a one-of-a-kind



A test run of Compaq’s next-generation pocket PC; Comdex conventioners jam Palm’s booth.

L: JEFF CHRISTENSEN/SPA PRESS; R: MARIJA TERPILL/AP PHOTO

prototype, while another sends a representative to escort me to a studio on the outskirts of town. On the other hand, mentioning *Popular Science* (to which I'm a contributing editor) or, I must confess, *Brill's Content* often gets me just a handshake and a business card.

ULTIMATELY, TO CREATE the impression that computers are cool, only parties will suffice. At Comdex 2000, Dell hosted a seventies-themed fete whose main attraction was that it was held at what was rumored to be the former home of Howard Hughes. Meanwhile, Cidco, the maker of an e-mail-only device called the MailStation, touted "hand-rolled cigars, dirty martinis, even dirtier jazz" at its party, held at The Venetian's Velvet Lounge.

Companies have had everyone from The Monkees to The B-52's to Barenaked Ladies perform for the press, but still one annual late-night open-bar party has traditionally been (and remains) the ultimate nerd-a-thon of the show. Outsiders would consider it the height of tedium, but for tech types, attendance is mandatory—if you can get in. Organized by the computer-industry trade weekly *eWeek* and given the nom de plume attached to the magazine's computer-industry gossip column, the Spencer Katt party enables *eWeek* reporters to gather snippets of insider information by inviting corporate computer leaders to the bash.

While hired dancers and some poor sod in a Spencer Katt costume parade around under the mirror balls at Studio 54 in the MGM Grand, the CEOs and founders of a score of companies hang around the periphery. Without an official invitation, you are kept out by muscle-bound bouncers. A ticketless Ted Waitt, the founder of Gateway, was barred from entry one year. Competing press—those not under the corporate umbrella of *eWeek*'s parent, Ziff Davis Media—used to be kept out, but now a few are invited.

Many in attendance at Spencer are multimillionaires who have already founded and sold their second or third tech company. I hook up with a venture-capitalist friend and the former CEO of another tech company to find out what's going on. Behind me, Bill Gates gyrates spastically with a curvaceous, raven-haired woman. The next time I turn around, he's dancing with a blonde.

Shouting above the go-go music, an intoxicated PR representative tries to get my opinion about a new technology. Meanwhile, a young, inebriated Corel employee says to Gates, "You have to lift your feet when you dance." Another woman asks



Comdex conventioneers can choose from a variety of entertainments.

him, "What do you think of WordPerfect?" The party is boisterous and goes on well past the official closing hour of 1 A.M. (Gates, I'm told later, continued dancing into the wee hours of the morning.)

THE LAST COMDEX PARTY I ATTEND is thrown by the magazine *Maximum PC* at the Hard Rock Cafe. It promises to be well attended by a younger crowd dedicated to the open-source movement. Open-sourcers espouse the view that operating-system software should be freely shared so that software designers can build better products. Translation: They hate Microsoft. (Indeed, when the lights come up at 1 A.M. to signal the end of the party, a spontaneous chant of "NT sucks!"—a reference to Microsoft's business operating system—breaks out among the crowd.)

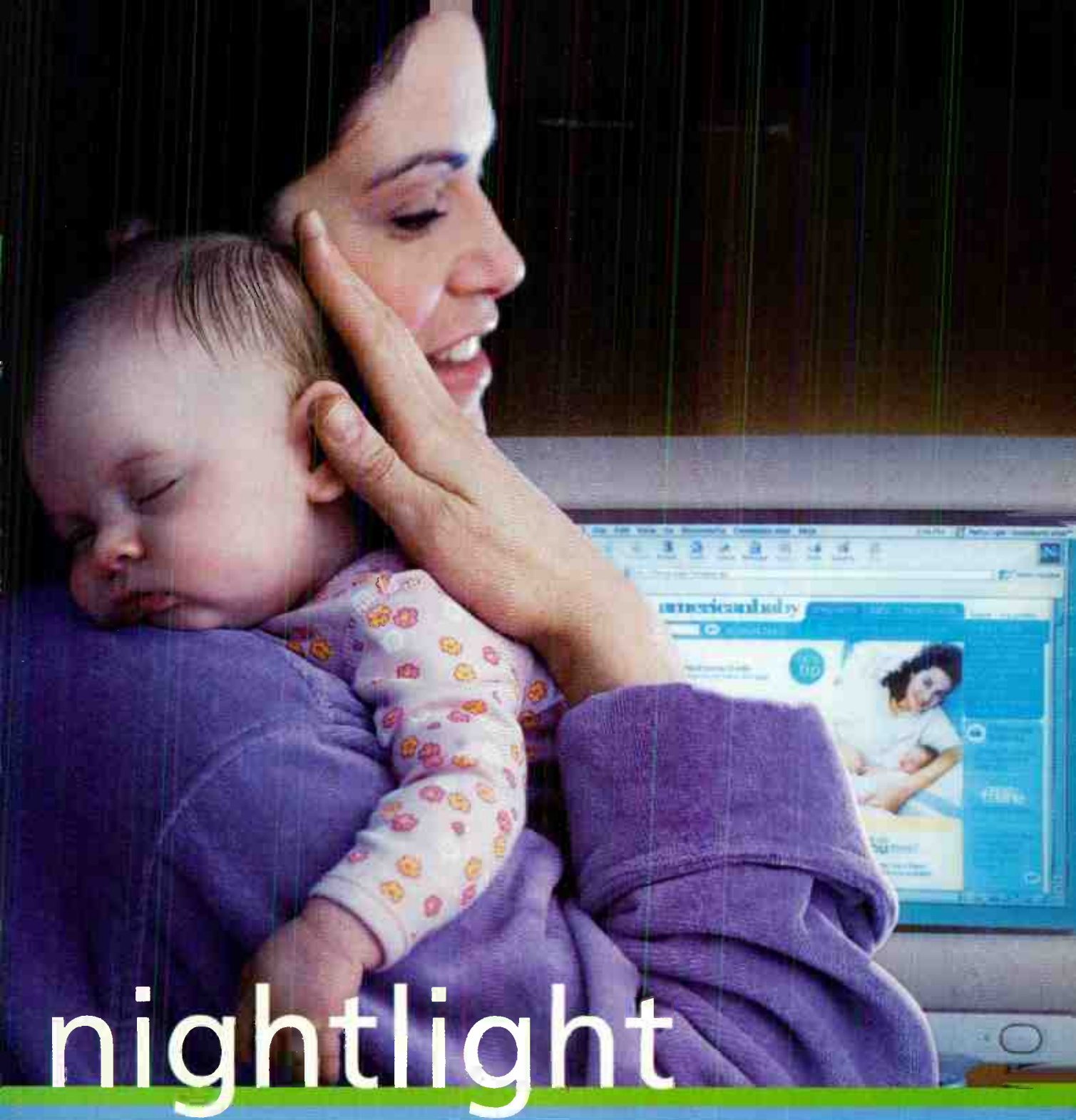
As a seventies and eighties cover band called Loveshack pounds out songs from Devo to Dexys Midnight Runners, the bar area jumps with a new generation of computer programmers and nerds.

Khakis and oxfords have been replaced by dyed red hair and guys wearing gold pants. But don't let the anti-corporate facade fool you—this is yet another PR opportunity. "We try to find out who [from the media] is going to attend," says one PR guy. "It's just like the trade show floor, and you're usually competing with other PR people." At this point one public-relations professional I've known for several years joins us and insists we all do several shots (we oblige).

It's Wednesday night, and even though Comdex officially ends on Friday, it's really the last night. *Get while the getting's good* is the general attitude, and many journalists grab the red-eye flights or leave the next morning, bleary-eyed and hungover. We are braced for follow-up calls from all those friendly PR people. ■

SHOUTING ABOVE  
THE GO-GO MUSIC,  
AN INTOXICATED  
PR REP TRIES TO GET  
MY OPINION.

MARK J. TERRILL/AP PHOTO



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# boston brawl

**The *Boston Globe* reported that the author, an official in the DA's office, made racially incendiary promises to win votes. He respectfully dissents. BY JAMES BORGHESANI**

**O**n a Monday last June, I read something remarkable in *The Boston Globe*: In 1994, in my capacity as spokesman for Suffolk County, Massachusetts, district attorney Ralph Martin—an African-American who was then running for re-election—I allegedly met with several South Boston residents at a meeting and agreed to curb prosecution of hate crimes committed by white residents in return for political support. Speaking of specific hate-crimes detectives in the predominantly Irish-Catholic area, I allegedly said, “Vote for my guy and they’ll be transferred.”

The truth is that I never said any such thing, and the meeting never occurred. It certainly was painful to see my name connected to words I had never uttered, at a meeting with people I had never met, in a place where I had never set foot. But it was truly amazing—and discouraging—to see a powerful newspaper run a story so saturated with errors that the *Globe*'s ombudsman would soon take half the op-ed page to condemn it. The ombudsman's column might have served an abstract form of justice, but it didn't much lessen the sting of having cooperated with a reporter who then proceeded to portray me as someone I am not.

In October 1999, I provided *Globe* reporter Judy Rakowsky—who was pursuing a civil-rights story—with a report listing every hate-crimes case prosecuted by our office over the previous five years. In all, I gave the *Globe* information on 123 local cases, and the statistics showed no drop in civil-rights prosecutions.

On April 18, 2000, Rakowsky met with Ralph Martin; his top civil-rights prosecutor, Andrea Cabral, also an African-American; and me. Rakowsky said she had information that at a meeting in October 1994—five and a half years earlier—I had made the promise she eventually reported. According to Rakowsky, the coordinator of Martin's campaign in South Boston and three vociferous critics of the police department's hate-crimes unit—the Community Disorders Unit (CDU)—were also present. I told Rakowsky I had no knowledge of any of this. Martin told her that he had never attended any such political meeting and that transferring detectives is a function of the Boston Police Department, and the district attorney's office has no say in the matter.

Rakowsky's front-page story quoted one CDU critic who said that she and another man had approached me after the alleged meeting and that I had promised to transfer aggressive hate-crimes detectives in return for their votes for my boss. The man, as duly noted in the *Globe*, did not remember the meeting, and the only other source mentioned was a “Boston law enforcement official who asked not to be named.” This source said that two people had separately informed him of the alleged exchange. In perhaps its most untenable allegation, the *Globe* attributed the alleged drop in civil-rights prosecutions to “concerted lobbying” of the district attorney's office by South Boston leaders. The sole example of these purported lobbying efforts offered by the *Globe*? The supposed meeting in 1994.

The day after the story ran, I received a telephone call from the woman quoted in the *Globe*. She said the quote attributed to her was “an absolute lie” and that she was going to call the *Globe*'s ombudsman. I then called the other man, and he confirmed that we had never spoken. A South Boston resident who owned the site of the alleged meeting later told me that it had been closed for renovations in 1994.

*Globe* ombudsman Jack Thomas's piece—though it ran three months after the original story—should be displayed as a blueprint for other ombudsmen throughout the nation's newsrooms. What deserves special merit is his decision to hire an analyst who actually understood the data that apparently befuddled Judy Rakowsky and her editors. Thomas understood two things: The crux of the story—that hate-crimes prosecutions in Boston had declined steeply—relied on statistics, and journalists aren't particularly good with numbers. So Thomas hired James Fox, a well-known professor from the College of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University and a statistics analyst. Fox told Thomas that he could “find little support for the reporter's conclusions.” The ombudsman labeled the *Globe*'s story “inconclusive” and chastised the paper for running a “story not yet ready for publication.” And he found the statistics confusing: “We have lots of numbers, but they conceal more than they reveal. We have an abundance of analysis, but so much of it is inconclusive that what remains, in the end, is not much of anything.”



James Borghesani: Race-baiter?

What Thomas did not address—perhaps because he lacked the space—is that Rakowsky used abominable conclusions drawn from inaccurate analyses to issue false charges of preferential treatment toward white defendants accused of hate crimes. Inexplicably, the *Globe* ignored the *prosecution* statistics provided by our office and instead used police *arrest* statistics to conclude that prosecutions had dropped by 56 percent from 1993. The police statistics included a new case-classification system that to the untrained statistician could suggest an increase in hate crimes. A good chunk of the ombudsman's column focused on the *Globe*'s dismal understanding of the new system. Further, the paper alleged that only five civil-rights cases in 1998 and 1999 were treated as felonies, despite hard data from our office that showed five times that many felony prosecutions. For the *Globe* to make such bogus charges in a city with as troubled a racial history as Boston goes beyond mere criticism. It borders on racial incitement.

As for my alleged promise at the South Boston meeting, Thomas went about as far as he could. "If I were a juror," he wrote, "I'd say there's reasonable doubt Borghesani ever made such a statement." Thomas noted the denials of the two residents who the *Globe* reported had attended the meeting and added that the quote attributed to me was "so stupid it strains credulity."

Still, the most damning ombudsman's column cannot erase the smear of a story distinguished by such poor reporting and prominent display. The original story, seen on the front page by the *Globe*'s hundreds of thousands of readers, had far more marquee muscle than the ombudsman's response. Who's to say that each reader of the original story also read Thomas's column? What's to prevent a future computer search from hooking the original story, skimming over Thomas's piece, and leading the researcher to conclude that hate-crimes prosecutions in Boston are terribly flawed? Or that I, in effect, attempted to obstruct justice by bagging civil-rights cases? I often wonder if a potential employer or client will find the fictional words ascribed to me by the *Globe* and decide that I'm a poor risk because I make dangerous statements and corrupt promises in tense situations. Somehow, waving a copy of the ombudsman's column in their faces doesn't strike me as an ameliorating action.

Reporters are powerful people. I sometimes think they forget that and don't handle their power with appropriate awe. I learned this while I was a journalism graduate student with an internship at *The (Lowell) Sun*, a suburban Boston daily. My first published story featured a local cartoon artist who had landed a national comic-strip syndication deal. The day it ran, I sat at a lunch counter and noticed that the diners to my right and left were reading it. I felt a surge of pride and power. I had reached these people, whom I did not know and who did not know me. I can't say that the tingling feeling of connectivity lasted. My reporting career continued, and I did my utmost to make every story right, tight, and bright, as my journalism professors had urged, but soon felt that my drive was more rooted in careerism than in concern for readers.

THE *GLOBE* GOT IT  
WRONG AND SCOLDED  
ME FOR COMPLAINING.

I feel that this type of arrogance was evident not only in Rakowsky's story but also in the *Globe*'s response to my office's complaints. *Globe* editor Matthew Storin gave us a perfunctory defense of Rakowsky's reporting and scolded us for complaining: "We believe it is unfair for you to criticize our reporting...given the quality of the data provided to the *Globe* by the DA's office." I read this in disbelief, knowing that we had given the paper every civil-rights case prosecuted from 1995 through 1999. Any additional case information it needed could have been obtained by spending a few hours reviewing case files in the court clerk's office. I find it astonishing that Rakowsky, who worked on this story for more than eight months, neglected to do this. In lieu of basic journalistic legwork, Rakowsky derived conclusions from police statistics that, as the analyst hired by the *Globe* concluded, she misinterpreted.

In his column, Thomas wrote, "Rakowsky's story rises and falls on the numbers. If they don't add up, then the conclusion is wrong and there's no story."

Thomas and his analyst concluded that the numbers were wrong. Unfortunately, there was still a story. But even an illegitimate story can do some good. In this case, it illuminates the *Globe*'s solid judgment to employ an ombudsman who doesn't shrink at slapping around his own paper when appropriate. The experience drove home for me the virtues of a thorough, fair ombudsman and how numbers can do damage, particularly in the hands of reporters who don't understand them.

#### BEN BRADLEE JR., *BOSTON GLOBE* DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR, RESPONDS

Mr. Borghesani's long, rambling rant uses intemperate, even reckless language that seems out of character for a supposedly measured district attorney's spokesman.

He accuses Ms. Rakowsky of being "befuddled," reaching "abominable conclusions," and making "bogus charges" that border "on racial incitement."

This is all irresponsible rubbish. His article never explains what our overall story was about and leaves undisputed key points we made about the Boston Police Department's handling of its Community Disorders Unit, as well as the record of Borghesani's boss—DA Ralph Martin—in dealing with hate crimes.

This was a carefully reported and edited piece about the decline of a nationally recognized detective unit that was on the front lines combating racism in Boston in the aftermath of forced busing. The article documented how the police department systematically defanged the CDU under pressure from South Boston leaders and how prosecution of hate crimes under Martin has tailed off, even as the number of reported incidents increased sharply.

The article was buttressed not only by the numbers—which we fully defend—but in documents; internal memos; interviews with hate-crimes experts, victims, and lawyers; and quotes from former police and prosecutors lamenting the decline of the CDU and citing political pressure from South Boston as the obvious reason.

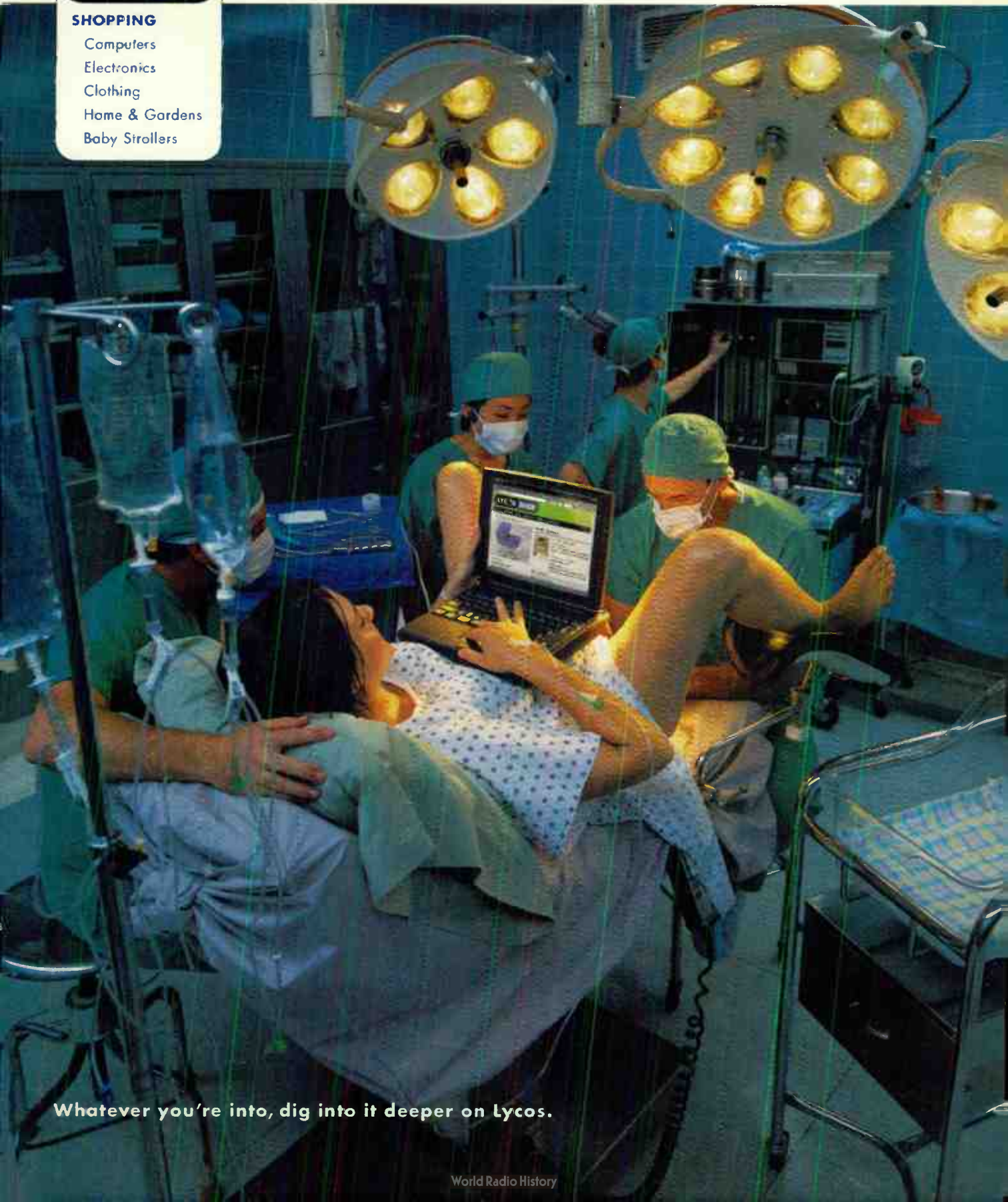




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Other key points of the piece—which Borghesani does not mention or contest—include:

—City council president James Kelly, an anti-busing stalwart from South Boston, was quoted in the article as saying Martin might have played a role in the reining in of the CDU. And after the article was published, Martin publicly acknowledged that he had taken the highly unusual step of calling Kelly and another leading South Boston politician to tell them that one of their constituents would be indicted in a hate-crimes case. Martin said he did so because the officials had been “advocates” in the case. This essentially proved one of the article’s main points: that he and police officials had been lobbied to curb the CDU.

—Martin had no designated hate-crimes prosecutor, as he does for other offenses, such as child abuse or sex crimes.

—He was cautious in bringing hate-crimes prosecutions in the interest of what he called being “objective” as opposed to “evangelical.”

—He believed that probation was more effective in fighting hate crimes than was jail time.

—At one point, one Boston police sergeant was so frustrated by Martin’s sluggishness in tackling hate crimes that he contemplated seeking direct access to the courts in civil-rights cases. An internal police memo was cited in support of this point.

As for our ombudsman’s article, we of course respect his right to call it as he sees it. But we disagree with his conclusions in this matter, especially his decision to use as his analyst James Fox, who had at least the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Fox had served as a member of the Boston Police Department’s Strategic Planning and Values committee. He coauthored an op-ed piece with Boston police commissioner Paul Evans in the *Globe*, touting the department’s success in combating youth violence. As former dean of the College of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University, Fox has enjoyed a generous supply of public grant money administered by Boston police, as well as open access to police files and personnel for research.

Fox did not take into account the research of his own colleague at Northeastern, Jack McDevitt, who has done in-depth studies of hate crimes with the Boston Police Department. McDevitt and past leaders of the CDU told Rakowsky that they dispute Fox’s analysis.

As for the 1994 meeting that Borghesani says never happened, the story quoted a direct participant. It quoted a second reported participant who said he could not specifically recall the meeting but was strong in his sentiment that if the first said it happened, it did. The piece also cited an unnamed senior law-enforcement official as saying that both had told him about the meeting with Borghesani shortly after it occurred. The article of course duly noted both Borghesani’s and Martin’s denials about the meeting.

It is true that both of the named participants recanted their



**The *Boston Globe*'s article on hate-crimes prosecution (left) and the response of the paper's ombudsman**

statements. That is unfortunate, but it can hardly be a shock for a DA's spokesman to learn that witnesses sometimes change their stories once they are aired in public and are subjected to community pressure.

As for Borghesani's complaints about statistics, in a list he gave Rakowsky that purported to be Boston felony civil-rights defendants prosecuted by Martin's office, one-third of the names were from suburban cases. That is the kind of “hard data” he says we should have used. Other defendants, against whom civil-rights

charges were dropped for “lack of prosecution,” were never listed, even though Rakowsky had already found the records in court files. Further, Borghesani wanted us to credit his office with separate prosecutions for each defendant involved in the same hate crime. These were some of the disingenuous hurdles erected by Borghesani that Rakowsky was forced to contend with. We stand by our story.

#### JAMES BORGHESANI RESPONDS

Ben Bradlee's predictable response is as factually inaccurate as the article he is striving to defend. He attempts to undercut the ombudsman's conclusions by attacking the credibility of James Fox. He writes that Fox's colleague, Jack McDevitt, disputes Fox's analysis. He omits this fact: McDevitt, like Fox, found the *Globe* conclusions wrong. “The data don't support any conclusions, either the one reached by the *Globe* or the one that says the system is working better now,” McDevitt recently told me on the telephone.

Bradlee states that the *Globe* story detailed the decline of a “nationally recognized detective unit.” The only national recognition cited in the original story is from the FBI, a fellow police agency. Thorough reporting would have revealed that in cases investigated by the former CDU, dismissal rates were high and conviction rates low. The data used to document the alleged decline were, as Fox correctly concluded, botched by Rakowsky.

Bradlee interprets a call made by Ralph Martin to city councilor James Kelly as proof of prior anti-CDU lobbying. I was with Martin when he made that call. The goal was to depressurize an extremely tense, highly publicized situation following a hate crime in South Boston. It worked: Kelly, whose prior public remarks had exacerbated the situation, issued no further statements. The defendants were convicted of all charges. It is sad that the *Globe* would distort such a responsible act to buttress their false assertions of anti-CDU lobbying.

Of the 123 prosecutions we provided to the *Globe*, only 23—less than one-fifth—were non-CDU cases, far from the one-third claimed by Bradlee. The problem was not the data. It was Rakowsky's failure to accurately report the data.

As to the South Boston meeting, Bradlee regurgitates the same absurd falsities contained in the original story. The South Boston meeting serves as a microcosm for the entire story. Nothing about it is right except the spelling of the names. ■



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# WHAT THE INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLERS ARE SAYING



Roxanne Coady

## "CURRENT TITLES IN BUSINESS," BY ROXANNE COADY OF R.J. JULIA BOOKSELLERS [AN EXCERPT]

Like all of Bob Woodward's other books, *Maestro: Greenspan's Fed and the American Boom* is juicy. It's filled with interesting details and fascinating dialogue that make you feel as though you are right in the middle of the action. And considering that the person who is in the middle of the action this time is Alan Greenspan, Juilliard student turned chairman of the Federal Reserve, this book is truly a great read. Woodward's integration of business and personalities is interesting, and unusual for a business book. He explains economics thoroughly and intelligently, yet never gives you more than you want to know. This is an entertaining, readable book about a shrewd guy who's made a lot of brilliant decisions, the person who may be most responsible for our economy's recent boom.

*R.J. Julia Booksellers* is located in Madison, Connecticut.



Elizabeth Sullivan

## "BUZZ FROM THE FLOOR," BY ELIZABETH SULLIVAN OF BOOK PEOPLE [AN EXCERPT]

Ted Koppel's book, *Off Camera: Private Thoughts Made Public*, is a collection of his journal entries from 1999. Here the reader has the opportunity to probe Koppel's mind on such topics as the John F. Kennedy Jr. plane crash and the Monica Lewinsky scandal. The nice thing about this book is how Koppel opens up to the reader. So often on *Nightline*, Koppel maintains a detached air, never actually ripping into the inane things people sometimes say; in *Off Camera* the internal censors have been switched off. At the Texas Bookfest, Koppel read from his book in the State Senate chambers, then—followed by a sizable crowd—he walked across the grounds to the author-signing tent, where he autographed copies of the book for fans.

*Book People* is located in Austin, Texas.

Our 59 Independent Bookstore affiliate experts have been looking at what's hot, what's overhyped, and what's gotten the most surprising buzz lately. Here are some of their recent observations and opinions:

Children's books and mysteries share a strong sense of narrative, say the Partners of **Partners & Crime** in New York. In that spirit, they reveal their favorite children's books of all time.

Linda Urban of **Vroman's Bookstore** in Pasadena, California, finds kinship in the way Scott Russell Sanders, author of *The Force of the Spirit*, arranges his books in his tiny cabin—the more he loves a book, the closer to his bed it is.

Can you tell "The Night Stalker" and "The Freeway Killer" apart? You can test your knowledge with a quiz of serial murderers, created by our true-crime books expert, Robert Segedy of **McIntyre's Fine Books** in Pittsboro, North Carolina.

Robin Stringer of **Davis-Kidd Booksellers** in Nashville singles out for praise Tony Bates's *Understanding and Overcoming Depression* from the plethora of depression books on the market.

*1831: Year of Eclipse*, by Louis P. Masur, highlights a pivotal and relatively unemphasized period—between Independence and Civil War—in our nation's history, notes David Schwartz of **Harry W. Schwartz Bookshops** in Milwaukee.

You might think it's about an obscure subject, but Belen Garcia's *Earthquake Architecture* is a book with fascinating implications for all architecture, says Adrian Newell of **Warwick's** in La Jolla, California.

Louise Jones of **Northshire Bookstore** in Manchester Center, Vermont, compares two memoirs of famous authors' sons: Martin Amis's *Experience* and William MacLeish's *Uphill With Archie: A Son's Journey*.

Stanley Newman of **A Different Light** in New York highlights some new books from Alyson Press—an important gay and lesbian imprint—including Felice Picano's *Onyx*.

Jan Bailey of **Barbara's Bookstore** in Chicago revels in *The New York Review of Books's* new "Classics" series, singling out J.L. Carr's *A Month in the Country*.

**Ruth Rosen's *The World Split Open* lays down a gauntlet to those who underestimate the impact of the women's movement.**

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CHICAGO, IL  
General Interest
- VROMAN'S BOOKSTORE**  
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- WORSWORTH BOOKS**  
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Computers and Science

## BEHIND THE CONTENT

## A SAMPLING OF CONTENTVILLE'S LATEST EDITORIAL FEATURES

## BOOKS

**OPEN ON MY DESK** Elliott J. Gorn discusses the research he's conducting for his forthcoming book, *Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America*.

**THE MOVEABLE FEAST** In her article "From Picasso to Boxing," our pseudonymous columnist chronicles a series of parties for books on rather eclectic topics: Episcopalian sermons, Picasso's Communist years, foreign correspondence, female boxing, nude photography, and pregnancy in New York City.

**DIARY OF A BOOK SLEUTH** Our industry spy discusses new book deals for Hillary Clinton, Britney Spears, and Elizabeth Wurtzel, as well as the film adaptation of Darin Strauss's novel, *Chang and Eng*.

**CRITICS' CHORUS** A simple breakdown of who loved and who loathed Xingjian's *Soul Mountain*, Schlesinger's *A Life in the 20th Century*, and some of the other books everyone's talking about.

**THE CONTENTVILLE AUTHOR Q&A** Nevada Barr, author of *Blood Lure*, the latest installment of her best-selling series featuring park ranger Anna Pigeon, answers the 17 questions we always ask.

**WHEN READING IS NEW** Children's-book author and NPR commentator Daniel Pinkwater has high praise for *Wolf Story*, by William McCleery, about a wolf, a family of farmers, and the art of storytelling.



**THE LAST WORD** James Carroll, author of *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews*, reduces the main argument of his 800-page tome to its essence. An excerpt: *Constantine's Sword* emphasizes that Jews were never merely passive bystanders to their own destiny. Nor were Jews ontologically fated to play the role of Western

civilization's "negative other." No, this history unfolds with a full awareness of Jewish agency, and of the crucial fact that at key points, the story could have gone another way.

**ONLY AT CONTENTVILLE** Contentville presents confidential documents related to Ken Auletta's latest book, *World War 3.0: Microsoft and its Enemies*, and to Auletta's research on the Microsoft antitrust trial.

**BOOK NEWS** In the era of e-books and multimedia conglomerates, James Atlas discusses Jason Epstein's *Book Business* and André Schiffrin's *The Business of Books*, and explores how these two controversial figures of American book publishing look back on that world's lively past and speculate on its future—if it has one.

**LITERARY WANDERER** Author Geoff Dyer describes the thrill of hunting for those rare literary treasures—out-of-print books.

## MAGAZINES

**THE CONTENTVILLE EDITOR Q&A** Jim Collins takes us behind the scenes at the New England magazine *Yankee*.

**LAUNCH OF THE MONTH** We review *One*, a new design-oriented lifestyle magazine that attempts to fuse eight categories: "fashion and beauty, home, architecture, technology, interiors, product and industry design, automotive, and travel."

## DISSERTATIONS

**DISSERTATIONS DECONSTRUCTED** David Glenn of *Lingua Franca* examines Tom Wolfe's dissertation on American writers of the 1930s.



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EXPERTS

# WHAT THE CONTRIBUTING EDITORS ARE SAYING

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

On a "vast, mad run of reading literary biographies," **Harold Bloom** studies the lives of the canon—Rimbaud, Victor Hugo, Balzac, Dante, T.S. Eliot, and Walt Whitman—and praises some of the best writers in the biographical genre.

**Rahm Emanuel** considers the motivations behind two Holocaust memoirs, Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* and Paul Steinberg's *Speak You Also*.

You can usually tell who knows Hollywood and who doesn't—and generally it's the latter who write books about the business. But **Robert Bookman** recommends some worthwhile exceptions.

**Laura Ingraham** praises *The Virtue of Prosperity*, Dinesh D'Souza's exploration of maintaining morality in the age of new media.

**The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitations of Jewish Suffering, by Norman G. Finkelstein, is one of those moments of truth telling when people might be tempted to shoot the messenger.**

**FAITH CHILDS**

It's a good time to be disillusioned, says **Stephen L. Carter**, who finds that the poetry of C.P. Cavafy offers useful insights into our current social climate.

Are the "crypto-Jews" a hoax? **Ilan Stavans**, interested in "people passing as something they're not ethnically," discusses an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* about religion and identity.

They're fascinating and uplifting, but hardly upbeat: **Christine Vachon** reads David Pelzer's memoirs, *A Child Called "It"* and *The Lost Boy*, and argues that "the only thing upbeat is that he's still alive."

A powerful article in *The New York Times* about the death penalty inspires **David Isay** to explore the issues and recommend some relevant reading.

**Rebecca Walker** discusses multilayered paintings, anthropological photography, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, as she reads about visual art.



## AN EXCERPT FROM GAY TALESE

*River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*, by Peter Hessler, is a nonfiction book, and it's exquisitely reported. Hessler has a great eye

for detail and understands character in the same way that any good novelist would. Occasionally a novelist can be equaled or even surpassed by a very fine nonfiction writer—someone who has not lost his soul to journalism, a field that tends to encourage finding and exploiting the negative aspects of certain scenarios.

*Gay Talese* is the author of the best-selling historical memoir *Unto The Sons*, a story that spans two world wars and possesses what writer Norman Mailer called, "the sweep and detail of a grand 19th-Century novel."



## AN EXCERPT FROM CRISTINA MITTERMEIER

Nobody is denying that Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey are eccentric people, but so are people who let their dogs sleep with them in the bed. In *Beauty and the Beasts:*

*Woman, Ape and Evolution*, Carole Jahme takes a group of women primatologists—the weirdest ones she could find, or at least the ones who have done the most eccentric things—and makes them out to be a bunch of wackos. Even the few things she says that might be true about the general subject of women in science are said in this sensationalistic way, like in *The National Enquirer* or on *Jerry Springer*.

*Cristina Mittermeier* is a marine biologist specializing in biodiversity conservation.

## OUR CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

SHERMAN ALEXIE  
JONATHAN ALTER  
LOUIS BEGLEY  
HAROLD BLOOM  
ROBERT BOOKMAN  
DAVID BROWN  
STEPHEN L. CARTER  
FAITH CHILDS  
JAMES CRAMER  
FRANK DEFORD  
RAHM EMANUEL  
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LARRY FINK  
IRA GLASS  
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WENDY KAMINER  
POLLY LABARRE  
NEIL LABUTE  
CRISTINA  
MITTERMEIER  
DAVID SALLE  
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MIMI SHERATON  
ILAN STAVANS  
GAY TALESE  
CHRISTINE VACHON  
REBECCA WALKER

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# WHAT THE MAGAZINE EXPERTS ARE SAYING



## ELAINA RICHARDSON ON FASHION MAGAZINES [AN EXCERPT]

*Lucky* is not a magazine that offers anything by way of a substantial read, but that, after all, is the idea: Who has time to read when there's shopping to be done? *Lucky* is for women whose chosen sport is shopping: those of us who find it relaxing to wander around a mall, who dream of late-night sessions at cosmetics wonderland Sephora... The point is that *Lucky* actually has a consistent point of view. It is not an intellectual point of view, and it may be too narrow to sustain a reader's interest for long. You only have to consider *Allure* to realize the dangers of trying to survive on pages packed with product alone. Still, *Lucky* certainly beats all those no-focus publications out there that couldn't identify their reader if they ran her over.

*Elaina Richardson* is a former editor in chief of *Elle* magazine and the current president of *Yodda*, an artists' colony in New York.



## MATTHEW GOODMAN ON COOKING MAGAZINES [AN EXCERPT]

Let's turn to the January issue of *Food & Wine*, the back cover of which has an ad for Sub-Zero refrigerators. The ad features a be-suited couple—the sort of young go-getters who used to be called yuppies—in their den standing in front of an open wine-storage refrigerator containing row after row of champagne bottles and glasses. The woman, grinning maniacally, is spraying the man with champagne, like a New York Yankee after yet another World Series championship. The tag line reads: "It's your room. Do what you want in it." It's an amazing ad because it elegantly encapsulates so many powerful messages about high-class taste, privilege ("It's your room"), personal choice ("Do what you want"), romance, celebration: all of the things that *Food & Wine* strives each month to offer its readers.

*Matthew Goodman* writes the "Food Mover" column for the *Forward* and is a commentator for the public-radio cooking show *The Splendid Table*.

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

If you haven't checked out *Playboy* since your adolescence, maybe it's time for a second look. Men's-magazine expert **Michael Segell** revisits the magazine he once had to sneak off to vacant lots to read.

**Dr. Ezekiel J. Emanuel** comments on the media's eagerness to tout any new (and unproven) anti-cancer drug as revolutionary, and wonders if *The New York Times's* enthusiastic embrace of Endostatin was premature.

If you despair of organizing your cluttered life, consider engaging in what **Winifred Gallagher** calls "spiritual as well as physical housecleaning"—a combination of feng shui and professional organizational skills—as outlined in *New Age* magazine.

*Women's Wear Daily*, the fashion industry's trade newspaper, has joined in the spin-off game by launching a quarterly magazine version of itself. **Stéphane Houy-Towner** tracks how the fledgling publication is faring.

Bored with Chanel No. 5? **Kate de Castelbajac** looks at *Vogue's* recent story on limited-edition perfumes and the fragrance scouts who travel the globe searching for these hard-to-find scents.

Soon we may be able to touch, smell, and even taste through the Internet; **Kevin Mitnick** reads

*Yaboo! Internet Life* to find out how we'll soon be sampling virtual cheesecake, guilt-free.

**Nest is a publication about one person's passions, spectacularly realized without the benefit of a single focus group or market survey. In the magazine world, Joseph Holtzman is what Al Gore desperately sought to be in politics—his own man.**

**CHEE PEARLMAN**  
DESIGN MAGAZINES

## OUR MAGAZINE EXPERTS

**DONALD BAER**  
[Political Magazines]

**SUSAN BURTON**  
[Teen Magazines]

**ELIZABETH CROW**  
[Women's, Parenting, and  
Children's Magazines]

**KATE DE CASTELBAJAC**  
[Beauty Magazines]

**DR. EZEKIEL  
J. EMANUEL**  
[Health Magazines]

**TIMOTHY FERRIS**  
[Science Magazines]

**WINIFRED GALLAGHER**  
[Religion and Spirituality  
Magazines]

**MATTHEW GOODMAN**  
[Cooking Magazines]

**STEPHANE  
HOUY-TOWNER**  
[Fashion Magazines]

**THE STAFF  
OF MARKETPLACE**  
[Money and Finance  
Magazines]

**KEVIN MITNICK**  
[Computer Magazines]

**KEITH OLBERMANN**  
[Sports Magazines]

**CHEE PEARLMAN**  
[Design Magazines]

**JOHN R. QUAIN**  
[Technology Magazines]

**DANIEL RADOSH**  
[Entertainment  
Magazines]

**ELAINA RICHARDSON**  
[Fashion Magazines]

**MICHAEL SEGELL**  
[Men's Magazines]

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# RECENT PROFESSOR'S PICKS

Our Academic Experts are among the foremost authorities on a broad range of subjects, from the elementary to the obscure. Four of our newest experts offer their choices:



**HAL K. ROTHMAN**  
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA

## Professor's Picks on LAS VEGAS

- RESORT CITY IN THE SUNBELT: LAS VEGAS 1930-2000**, by Eugene P. Moehring (2000)  
**24/7: DOUBLING DOWN IN THE NEW LAS VEGAS**, by Andres Martinez (1999)  
**RUNNING SCARED: THE LIFE AND TREACHEROUS TIMES OF LAS VEGAS CASINO KING STEVE WYNN**, by John L. Smith (1997)  
**HOUSE OF CARDS: THE LEGALIZATION AND CONTROL OF CASINO GAMBLING**, by Jerome Skolnick (1978)  
**THE GREEN FELT JUNGLE**, by Ovid DeMaris and Ed Reid (1963)



**ELIZABETH REIS**  
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

## Professor's Picks on WITCH-HUNTING IN COLONIAL AMERICA

- SALEM POSSESSED: THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF WITCHCRAFT**, by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (1974)  
**SALEM STORY: READING THE WITCH TRIALS OF 1692**, by Bernard Rosenthal (1995)  
**THE DEVIL IN THE SHAPE OF A WOMAN: WITCHCRAFT IN COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND**, by Carol F. Karlson (1987)  
**FEMALE SPEECH AND OTHER DEMONS: WITCHCRAFT AND WORDCRAFT IN EARLY NEW ENGLAND**, by Jane Kamensky (1998)  
**WITCHES OF THE ATLANTIC WORLD: A HISTORICAL READER AND PRIMARY SOURCEBOOK**, by Elaine Breslaw (ed.) (2000)



**ESTHER NEWTON**  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEW YORK, PURCHASE COLLEGE

## Professor's Picks on LESBIAN MEMOIRS

- THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B. TOKLAS**, by Gertrude Stein (1932)  
**ZAMI: A NEW SPELLING OF MY NAME**, by Audre Lorde (1982)  
**S/HE**, by Minnie Bruce Pratt (1995)  
**MAD IN PURSUIT**, by Violette Leduc (1999)  
**VALENCIA**, by Michelle Tea (2000)



**WANG PING**  
MACALESTER COLLEGE

## Professor's Picks on WOMEN'S RITUALS IN CHINA

- WOMEN WRITERS OF TRADITIONAL CHINA: AN ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY AND CRITICISM**, by Kang-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy (1999)  
**THE DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER**, by Cao Xueqin (1791)  
**TECHNOLOGY AND GENDER: FABRICS OF POWER IN LATE IMPERIAL CHINA**, by Francesca Bray (1997)  
**TEACHERS OF THE INNER CHAMBERS**, by Dorothy Ko (1994)  
**BANISHED IMMORTAL: SEARCHING FOR HUANGQING, CHINA'S PEASANT WOMAN POET**, by Paul S. Ropp (2001)

## OUR ACADEMIC EXPERTS

- C. FRED ALFORD**, Evil (University of Maryland, College Park);  
**JOYCE APPLEBY**, Early American History (University of California, Los Angeles);  
**PETER BROOKS**, 19th-Century French Novels (Yale University);  
**WILLIAM CARTER**, Prout (University of Alabama);  
**MARY ANN CAWS**, Aesthetic Manifestos (City University of New York);  
**JAMES CHAPMAN**, James Bond Studies (Open University, U.K.);  
**DALTON CONLEY**, Urban Poverty (New York University);  
**ANDREW DELBANCO**, Herman Melville (Columbia University);  
**KEITH OEVLIN**, Mathematics in Life and Society (St. Mary's College);  
**PAULA S. FASS**, History of Childhood in America (University of California, Berkeley);  
**JUAN FLORES**, Puerto Rican Identity (Hunter College);  
**JAMES K. GALBRAITH**, New Approaches to Economics (University of Texas, Austin);  
**DOUGLAS GOMERY**, History of Television in the United States (University of Maryland);  
**RONALD L. GRIMES**, Rites of Passage (Wilfrid Laurier University);  
**SUSAN GUBAR**, Feminism and Literature (Indiana University);  
**HENRIK HARTOG**, History of Marriage (Princeton University);  
**ALISON JOLLY**, Primate Behavior (Princeton University);  
**MARK JORDAN**, Homosexuality and Christianity (Emory University);  
**ALICE KAPLAN**, France Occupied by the Nazis, 1940-1944 (Duke University);  
**AMITAVA KUMAR**, Writing the Immigrant Experience (Penn State University);  
**ROBIN LAKOFF**, Powerful Language (University of California, Berkeley);  
**CLARK SPENCER LARSEN**, Bioarchaeology (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill);  
**KEN LIGHT**, Documentary Photography (University of California, Berkeley);  
**JOHN LIMON**, Stand-up Comedy (Williams College);  
**JOHN E. MACK**, Alien Encounters (Harvard University);  
**KARAL ANN MARLING**, Popular Culture (University of Minnesota);  
**DAVID MCCARTHY**, Pop Art (Rhodes College);  
**GLENN MCGEE**, Bioethics (University of Pennsylvania);  
**JOHN MCWHORTER**, Musical Theater (University of California, Berkeley);  
**ESTHER NEWTON**, Lesbian Memoirs (State University of New York, Purchase College);  
**MIMI NICTER**, Women and Dieting (University of Arizona);  
**MARVIN OLASKY**, Compassionate Conservatism (University of Texas, Austin);  
**WANG PING**, Women's Rituals in China (Macalester College);  
**ELIZABETH REIS**, Witch-Hunting in Colonial America (University of Oregon);  
**HAL K. ROTHMAN**, Las Vegas (University of Nevada);  
**ROBERT RYOELL**, World Fairs (Montana State University, Bozeman);  
**ELAINE SHOWALTER**, Feminist Criticism and Women's Writing (Princeton University);  
**PETER SINGER**, Ethics and Animals (Princeton University);  
**JASON E. SQUIRE**, The Movie Business (University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television);  
**DEBORAH TANNEN**, Language in Daily Life (Georgetown University);  
**GIL TROY**, First Ladies (McGill University);  
**MICHAEL WALZER**, Jewish Political Thought (Institute for Advanced Study);  
**STEVEN WEINBERG**, History of War (University of Texas, Austin);  
**G. EDWARD WHITE**, History of Baseball (University of Virginia);  
**CRAIG STEVEN WILDER**, Life in Brooklyn (Williams College);  
**SEAN WILENTZ**, American Politics Since 1787 (Princeton University);  
**JACK ZIPES**, Fairy Tales (University of Minnesota);  
**MICHAEL ZUCKERMAN**, American Best-Sellers 1776 to Present (University of Pennsylvania)



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At the heart of Contentville is The Cross-Content Search<sup>SM</sup>, which draws from hundreds of thousands of books, magazines, doctoral dissertations, magazine-article archives, speeches, *New York Times* archives, even transcripts of TV shows. Here's a good example of how The Cross-Content Search works:



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### BOOKS

*Gap Creek* by Morgan, Robert  
*Sullivan's Island: A Lowcountry Tale*  
 by Frank, Dorothea Benton  
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*Eternal Journey* by Hutton, Carol  
*Jane Eyre* by Brontë, Charlotte  
*Lady Chatterley's Lover* by Lawrence, D.H.  
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 Marriage Partnership  
 Parents  
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### SCREENPLAYS

*One Night Stand* by Figgis, Mike

### LEGAL DOCUMENTS

*Wendt v. Wendt*, Mar. 31, 1998  
*Baehr v. Miike-Hawaii*, same sex marriage  
 ruling, Dec. 3, 1996  
*In Re the Marriage of Joseph Eszterhas and  
 Geraldine Eszterhas*, Nov. 1, 1994  
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### SPEECHES

Speech regarding the mission of government  
 officials, Winthrop, John, 1645

### TRANSCRIPTS

*The Early Show*, Jan. 3, 2001  
*NBC Nightly News*, Jan. 1, 2001  
*Today*, Dec. 26, 2000  
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### STUDY GUIDES

*Pride and Prejudice*  
*The Return of the Native*

### NEWSLETTERS

*Sourcebook of Local Court & County Record  
 Retrievers*, BRB Publications, Jan. 1, 2000  
*American Attitudes: Who Thinks What About  
 The Issues That Shape Our Lives*, New  
 Strategist, Jan. 1, 2000  
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### ARCHIVES

*Marriage Culture Gains Ground Among  
 U.S. Youth*, Insight, Nov. 27, 2000  
*For Better...or Best*, Insight, Nov. 27, 2000  
*Courtship and Marriage Suffer From  
 "Disconnect"*, Insight, Nov. 27, 2000  
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### DISSERTATIONS

*Private Supper/Public Feast: Gender,  
 Power, And Nurture In Early Modern  
 England (Shakespeare, Jonson, Feasts)*,  
 Christensen, Ann Caroline  
*Sexual Attitudes And Behavior Of Never-  
 Married, Rural Thai Youth*, Isarabhakdi,  
 Pimonpan  
*Birthmothers Who Search: A Life Course  
 Perspective (Child Relinquishment)*,  
 Bertrand, Ruth Eleanor  
[Click for full list](#)

### HARD-TO-FIND BOOKS

*The Right To Be Happy*, by Mrs. Dora  
 Russell, 1927  
*The Pleasure Bond: A New Look At Sexuality  
 And Commitment*, Masters, William H.  
 & Virginia E. Johnson with Robert J.  
 Levin, 1975  
*The Redbook Report On Female Sexuality*, by  
 Carol Tavris & Susan Sadd, 1977  
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### CONTENTVILLE EXPERT COMMENTARY\*

*An Interview With Mona Simpson*, Nov. 2, 2000  
*Professor's Picks on Rites of Passage*, Ronald  
 Grimes, Oct. 17, 2000  
*Professor's Picks on The Family*, Lingua  
 Franca, May 23, 2000  
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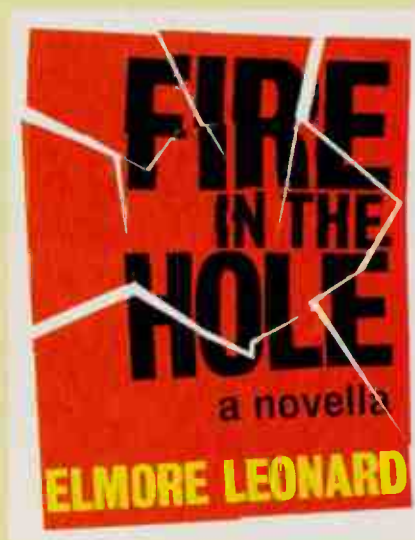
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# CONTENTVILLE PRESENTS ELMORE LEONARD'S FIRST ORIGINAL E-BOOK

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# STUFF WE LIKE

## OUT WEST

### TRAVELING NEWSPAPER

*Out West* couples founder Chuck Woodbury's affection for the American West with a strong sense of humor (think *On the Road* meets *The Onion*). The quarterly is filled with photos of roadside attractions and ads for trailer-park services. "I write a lot about the disappearing roadside, about mom-and-pop businesses that are no longer able to compete," Woodbury says. All of the articles are written from his recreational-vehicle newsroom, and he spends much of his time on the move; Woodbury describes his travels on the back roads by paying close attention, for example, to the strange names of the small towns he encounters. In a recent edition, he discusses a drive through Earth, Texas: "I could tell my grandchild that way back before the turn of the 21st century I left Earth," he writes, adding, "I could pass a lie-detector test in case anyone thought I was lying."

LARA KATE COHEN

Subscription information is available online at [outwestnewspaper.com](http://outwestnewspaper.com).

L. CHUCK WOODBURY R. HAYWARD GALLERY



## SPECTACULAR BODIES

### THE ART OF ANATOMY

Spanning 500 years of anatomical representation, the book *Spectacular Bodies* (University of California Press) examines the paintings, sculpture, diagrams, and medical illustrations found at the intersection of art and science. From Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* to 19th-century studies of musculature (left) to the grisly and grisly work of contemporary British artists, the human figure has always been central to both fields.

"The art produced in the 19th century is far more shocking than anything [British artist] Damien Hirst could produce," says Marina Wallace, a curator of the London exhibit on which the book is based. She sees a direct connection between the sometimes lurid work of earlier centuries (wax sculptures of internal organs from the 18th century, for example) and contemporary artists who focus on the body (a Marc Quinn sculpture made of frozen blood). *Spectacular Bodies* illustrates vividly the continuing evolution of our understanding—literal and aesthetic—of the flesh.

ANNA SCHNEIDER-MAYERSON

From *Spectacular Bodies*: A life-size lithograph of a dissection, by Paolo Mascagni, 1823



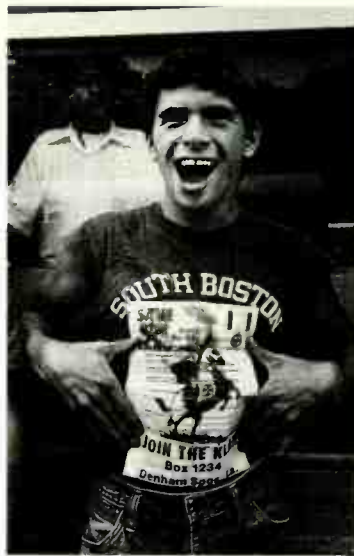
*Out West* editor Chuck Woodbury and his mobile newsroom

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## DORCHESTER DAYS

### BOOK OF PHOTOJOURNALISM

In 1978, documentary photographer Eugene Richards self-published *Dorchester Days*, a collection of black-and-white photographs chronicling life in the volatile and diverse neighborhood near South Boston in which he grew up. He printed just 2,000 copies on a press that had been used to make jam labels. Now Phaidon has released an expanded version of the book, and it is an unsparing portrait of a working-class town and its citizens: a girl in her first-communion dress, taunted by boys; a burning house; brick walls sprayed with racist graffiti. "It was a period of massive change," says Richards. After living in the South for years, he returned home in the early seventies to find a racially divided Boston in the midst of its infamous busing crisis. "I went back to Dorchester not knowing where I fit anymore," he says. "I



An image from Eugene Richards's collection *Dorchester Days*

realized I lived in a neighborhood that was very interesting because nobody fit anymore." *Dorchester Days* was a spontaneous response to his surroundings. "You start to see

things taking shape," he says. "I was halfway through when I realized that I was creating a neighborhood diary."

EMILY CHENOWETH

## "THE BODY HUNTERS"

### WASHINGTON POST SERIES

Don't miss the incredible *Washington Post* story about a Harvard-run genetic project, written by John Pomfret and Deborah Nelson. The research described in the article has been carried out since the mid-nineties in a remote province of China, where, as the lead researcher puts it, "the population was ideal for gene mapping, because there are no trains or planes. People don't move." As the *Post* points out, many of the people also can't read and now feel deceived and abused by the project, in which they donated blood samples but were never given the health care they say they were promised in return—though they may have given the Chinese government a database of their personal gene profiles. This is a massive article, full of riveting stories of abuse and compelling ethical questions, all against the backdrop of tens of millions of dollars going to researchers at Harvard and a Cambridge, Massachusetts, company, Millennium Pharmaceuticals. It's part of a six-part *Post* series called "The Body Hunters," on which, according to the *Post*, 13 reporters, editors, and researchers worked for 11 months across five continents on issues involving drug-company research now being done around the world, often using people who cannot protect themselves from potential abuse. It's a stunning example of what great newspapers still do.

STEVEN BRILL

"The Body Hunters" is posted online at [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com).

## A HOUSE DIVIDED

### DOCUMENTARY ON THE LINCOLNS

If you already miss marital intrigue in the White House, be sure to catch PBS's documentary about the Lincolns, America's most volatile first couple (after the Clintons). *Abraham and Mary Lincoln: A House Divided*, directed by David Grubin, weaves personal and political history into a

## INTELLIGENCE STUFF WE LIKE

### NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE

#### U.S. GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS DECLASSIFIED

Late one night during the Cuban missile crisis, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and a handful of unidentified men are chatting. "We need to have...a government ready for Cuba," McNamara says. "I'd take Cuba away from Castro," suggests an anonymous aide. "Suppose," offers another, "we make Bobby mayor of Havana." The conversation ends in a cacophony of laughter that can be heard online at the National Security Archive. This NSA is

not a government agency; it's a nonprofit organization that also posts declassified documents online. Although skimming the site can be numbing, finding—and listening to—a good, previously secret nugget of information makes it eminently worthwhile.

ERIC UMANSKY

*National Security Archive* is online at [nsarchive.org](http://nsarchive.org).

### STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE

#### MAGAZINE OF ESPIONAGE

Willfully obscure, often decades out of date, always long-winded, and generally badly written, *Studies in Intelligence*, a twice-yearly digest produced by the CIA, is nevertheless compelling. Who could resist, for example, "A Die-Hard Issue; CIA's Role in the Study of UFOs, 1947-90," which includes part of the CIA's collection of amateur "flying saucer" photographs and a chronology of the agency's investigation of them? The magazine also runs the occasional book review and some technical articles on spycraft. Many of the stories are culled from the classified version of the magazine (available only to people with security clearance), so at the very least it affords the vicarious thrill of reading what the spies read.

JIM EDWARDS

*Studies in Intelligence* is online at [cia.gov/csi/studies.html](http://cia.gov/csi/studies.html).



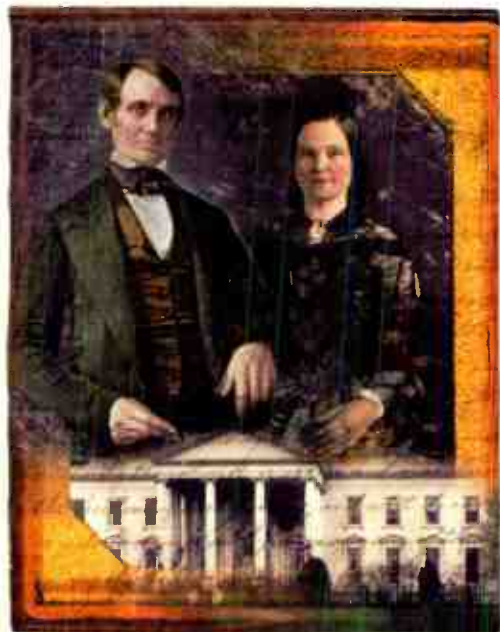
Inside the Cuban missile crisis, courtesy of the National Security Archive website

six-hour special, narrated by silver-tongued scholar David McCullough, the Edward R. Murrow of American documentaries. His voice will be recognizable to viewers of the *American Experience* series, which he hosted for 12 years. In her best *Raising Arizona* accent, Holly Hunter voices Mary Todd's hysterical missives, in which the first lady confesses her shopping addiction and raves about the death of her loved ones. The engrossingly melodramatic series is illustrated with photos, paintings, and battle re-creations.

The tale of a turbulent marriage is strangely familiar. From the moment the well-to-do Mary Todd met the bootstrapping Abraham Lincoln, she presumed herself to be his political equal. Like Bill, Abe was a born politician who overcame redneck roots. Like Hillary, Mary devoted the best years of her life to the advancement of her ambitious husband. The election of both men polarized the country, and once they reached the White House, both women became widely feared for their fiery tempers. Of course the similarities go only so far: At the end of Bill Clinton's presidency, his wife assumed a seat in the Senate; after Lincoln was assassinated, his wife ended up in a madhouse.

EVE GERBER

*A House Divided* airs in late February.



A montage of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, based on a photograph taken in the 1840s



An arrangement of *Papaver Rhoeas*, by Daniel Ost in *Leafing Through Flowers*

## LEAFING THROUGH FLOWERS

### BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHS

"For a long time the common wisdom in flower arranging was that flowers had to be presented as they appeared in nature," writes Daniel Ost in a new book that showcases his work. "But it is possible to make something...that did not previously exist." Ost is more than just a flower arranger—he's an avant-garde sculptor of plants. The lavish volume *Leafing Through Flowers* (Callaway) documents his work shaping fruit, twigs, grasses, and flowers into dramatic installations. Ost works from his hometown in Belgium, where he receives commissions from individuals, corporations, and cities. His pieces, always unorthodox, range from the diminutive (a blossom emerging from a porcelain egg) to the monumental (a giant portal built from azaleas). Stems and branches create abstract patterns, while petals and leaves take on beautiful, unexpected shapes. The book is an important record of Ost's work, because none of it lasts very long. "The moment you start making it," he says, "it's already dying."

ELIZABETH ANGELL

## NIGHTLINE OPENER

### TOP-OF-THE-SHOW NEWS REPORT

In the 21 years since Ted Koppel launched *Nightline*, ABC's legendary late-night news program, the consensus has become familiar: It's the best news program on television, home to the most insightful and sober-minded commentary, and anchored by the best interviewer in the business.



**Nightline** correspondent John Donovan

And *Nightline* is indeed exceptional. But the standard experts-and-interviews argument for *Nightline*'s exceptionalism ignores the show's unsung but greatest contribution to our all-news-all-the-time moment. When real news is happening, when there's an ongoing, developing story—something like, say, an unresolved presidential election—you can take in hours of CNN's "breaking news" reports and listen to soliloquies of Chris Matthews's bombast, but nothing will compare to the *Nightline* opening segment. That set-up bit, a report, usually taped, like the excellent dispatches John Donovan filed nearly every night during the Florida election

## STUFF WE LIKE

mayhem, consistently provides the clearest, fairest, and most comprehensive overview of the day's major news. Whatever the conventional wisdom on Koppel, those top-of-the-show summaries are the true crown jewel of *Nightline*—and therefore the crown jewel of TV news everywhere.

JESSE OXFELD

## "COOKING WITH THE TIMES"

### ONLINE CLASSES IN THE KITCHEN

Starting from the premise that "people rarely learn to cook from books" or television, *New York Times* editor and cookbook author Richard Flaste has developed "Cooking With The Times," a series of free online cooking lessons for the *Times*'s website. Produced in conjunction with New York's French Culinary Institute, the lessons feature video clips, recipes, and advice and are presented by the charmingly French-accented Frédéric Van Coppennolle, a longtime chef at the institute.

The recipes are designed for cooks with varying skill levels. Beginners create staple dishes (say, roast chicken), while advanced students absorb tricky techniques (how to drain the fat from duck, for example). The advantages of learning to cook online are

many: Recipes can be printed, the video lessons can be replayed when you need them, and in a real pinch, Van Coppennolle can be e-mailed for advice.

LARA KATE COHEN  
The series can be found online at [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com) in the "Living" section.

## ART BUCHWALD

### WRITER ON THE MEND



Art Buchwald at a recent book party

Art Buchwald, Pulitzer Prize winner and humor columnist of 52 years, was in very good spirits on the evening of December 13, 2000. He was at the Ritz-Carlton

hotel in Washington, D.C., with colleagues and friends to celebrate the publication of his latest novel, *Stella in Heaven: Almost a Novel*. But his satisfaction was due not only to the release of his 32nd book; Buchwald was happy just to be alive. Six months earlier, he had suffered a massive stroke, which paralyzed the right side of his body and severely affected his speech. He made an extraordinary recovery, and by late November, he was back at work, spinning out new columns for syndication. "This is what I did on my vacation. I had a stroke," he wrote in his first column back. "It tied me up for three months, two of which I don't remember."

Although Buchwald plans to continue writing his column, which appears twice a week in more than 300 newspapers worldwide, and to begin work on a new book, he looks to the future with a keen sense of his own mortality. "Journalism is not what it used to be," he says. "We're not the leaders anymore; we're the followers. By the time you get to the paper in the morning you've already read about it or seen it on the television the night before. I'm glad that I'm heading out now. It's getting near that time when guys like me won't be around much longer."

JOSEPH GOMES



From the current Nissan ad campaign

## "CARS LIKE IT: 0"

### NISSAN MAXIMA TV-AD MUSIC

No one says a word during the TV ads for Nissan Maxima cars—there's no melodramatic narration or hysterical talk of "year-end sales events." Instead there's music: 30 uninterrupted seconds of pop play as the soundtrack to shots of the car from all angles. The musical choices are eclectic: Seal's "Crazy," Spencer Davis Group's "I'm a Man," and The Smiths' "How Soon Is Now" are all used to great effect. Other bands Nissan has chosen to score the campaign include the Smithereens, The Who, and Dick Dale & the Deltones. The music is a brief antidote to the clutter and noise of TV advertising—to the clutter and noise of TV in general. Sure, it's all just a sales pitch, but the spots do provide oases of rhythm and melody in an otherwise frenetic environment, and the absence of chatter, even for just a few seconds, makes for an enjoyable interlude.

LUKE BARR

## STUFF YOU LIKE

### VARIETY'S HOLLYWOOD "SLANGUAGE"

Although I don't. Work in the entertainment industry, I get a vicarious thrill from scanning the articles and headlines in *Variety*'s daily e-mail newsletter. *Variety* makes me feel like a true Hollywood insider with its liberal use of "slanguage"—colorful industry jargon created by the publication for stories and headlines.

Reading the newsletter, I can find out when the newest hotshot Hollywood helmer (slanguage for director) will begin lensing (filming) his next opus; which thesp (actor) has ankle (left) the production of an upcoming film; and which skeins (TV series) will make the fall sked (schedule) at the Peacock web (NBC, of course). Although studio honchos may never invite me to do lunch at Spago, becoming fluent in slanguage may be the next best thing.

An extensive slanguage dictionary can be found at [variety.com](http://variety.com).

From David Peterkofsky, a writer based in Oakland, California.

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



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# playequity

The paper I edit has consistently given women's sports its due. But after a columnist touched a nerve, I wondered whether we'd really moved past our biases. **BY MIKE PRIDE**

Several editors and I were chatting before our news meeting the other day, and I said something stupid. Really stupid. We had two openings for reporters, and our city editor had reminded me several times that in our recruiting, we should be on the lookout for a center fielder for the newsroom softball team. "The trouble is," I said, "all our best applicants are women."

Almost before the words were out of my mouth, I knew I had stuck my foot in it. The three female editors across the table groaned and rolled their eyes. My brain groped for some quip or remark that would smooth things over, but of course I had nowhere to hide. In retrospect, it isn't hard to trace my bias. I grew up in the era of Willie, Mickey, and the Duke. I have only sons, no daughters. So when I think "center fielder," my mind's eye sees a fleet, graceful man: Bernie Williams, maybe, or Jim Edmonds.

My dumb remark reminded me that 30 years of admiring the progress of the women's movement had not been long enough to erode all my biases. It also reminded me of an incident last summer in which our veteran sports columnist got lambasted for a lesser offense.

Before I relate what happened, I should tell you that the *Concord Monitor* has consistently given local women's sports its due. Among other things, this has turned out to be good business. Whenever I sit down with a group of high-school students touring our newspaper, I ask what they read in the *Monitor*. Invariably, many of the female students say, "Sports."

Our coverage of the local high-school girls' teams also reflects community attitudes. Concord celebrated a proud moment three years ago when Tara Mounsey, a local woman, won a gold medal in ice hockey at the Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Several of her Olympic teammates told reporters that as youngsters, they had had to battle sexism in their home communities to play ice hockey. Not Mounsey. She said the community had nurtured her aspirations from the beginning.

Our newspaper, like our community, was proud of Mounsey, and it showed. Our sports editor, Sandy Smith, who happens to

be a woman as well as an ace hockey writer, covered Mounsey and women's hockey in the *Monitor* with flair. Partly because of the quality of Smith's coverage, the women's U.S. Olympic team played one of its exhibition games before a full house in Concord's small arena. Smith went to Nagano and followed Mounsey's quest for gold. And we developed a terrific women's hockey Web page for the occasion.

But even though that effort was typical of our approach to women's athletics, *Monitor* writers are no more immune to biases than their editor is. Fortunately, when we do slip up in public, readers are there to set us right.

Last year both the Concord High School boys' and girls' lacrosse teams made it to the state finals. Ray Duckler of our sports staff attended both games. Duckler is a tell-it-like-it-is columnist, unafraid to venture an opinion. That means he takes his lumps, sometimes deserved, sometimes not.

After watching the two championship games, he wrote about the difference between boys' and girls' lacrosse. "Something was missing" from the girls' game, he wrote. "No helmets. No hitting....Society apparently feels girls can't take it, which is too bad," he wrote. He quoted a high-school coach on why it took so long for girls' sports to emerge: "Maybe they think something's going to happen to our ovaries." Duckler closed by writing that the difference between girls' and boys' lacrosse "shows we still have the same old sugar-and-spice-and-everything-nice mentality." He suggested giving the girls helmets and changing their rules. "Let 'em play the game the way it was meant to be played," he wrote.

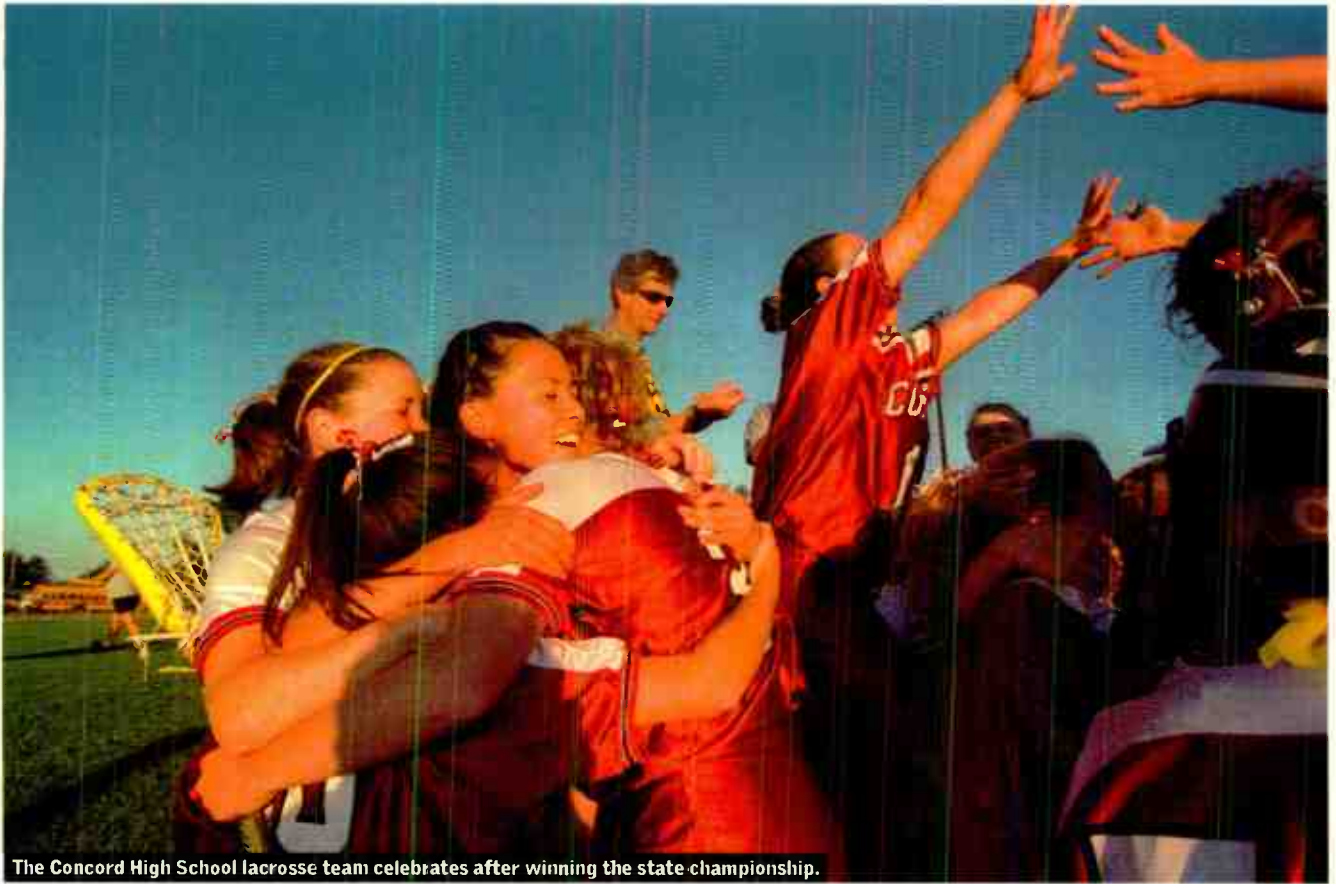
Readers responded to the column with indignation and scorn. "If the old saying that ignorance is bliss is true, Ray Duckler must be one happy man," wrote lacrosse moms Toni Crosby and Tootie Arnold. "We know that our daughters could put on pads and helmets and be great players in the men's game. We also know that a men's lacrosse player would have a difficult time playing without a helmet and pads and with a women's stick." John Mitchell, a veteran fan, praised girls' lacrosse as a sport in which teamwork, foot speed, and

"SOMETHING WAS MISSING" FROM THE GIRLS' GAME, HE WROTE.



The state championship game last June





The Concord High School lacrosse team celebrates after winning the state championship.

dexterity were the decisive factors. “Apparently there are those who feel a game is dull unless part of it involves players trying to inflict mayhem on an opponent,” he wrote. There was a one-man crusade to support Duckler: Reader Daniel C. Boyer wrote that female lacrosse players may develop more dexterity and finesse than boys, but only because “societal conceptions of femininity” force them to focus on these qualities at the expense of more physical play. But we published more than a dozen letters and reader commentaries in response to the column, and most criticized Duckler.

The debate reached its zenith when Barbara Higgins, a long-time track and cross-country coach at Concord High School, weighed in. “As a female who remembers a time when there were no organized sports opportunities for girls in Concord,” she wrote, “I can understand the anger of the high schoolers who have written in response to the article. Sports have always been an option to them, and they are not likely to think of girls’ sports as a counterpart or extension of boys’ sports. Lucky them.”

Higgins did not exactly absolve Duckler but said that she thought he had erred in assuming that the girls should change their game to achieve equality with the boys. Like him, she had wondered herself why girls’ and boys’ lacrosse games were so different. The girls “even wear skirts,” she wrote, “a definite throw-back to the days when women were ‘allowed’ to participate in sports so long as they dressed appropriately and remained lady-like.” What Duckler had done, in Higgins’s view, was “fall into the age-old trap that gender equity means sameness.” The real issue isn’t lacrosse, she wrote, but “a society that insists on requiring its girls to be like its boys in order to achieve equality.”

This kind of debate is one of the joys of newspapering—the ability to provoke the community to think aloud. Duckler’s column did that. It drew in people who do not regularly write letters to the editor. From the initial flashes of anger and indignation, readers moved on to examine larger questions.

The debate made me think, too. It made me consider anew how to keep up my guard against the latent biases that come from personal experience and how they can intrude in subtle ways on news decisions. For example, in our sports pages we run box scores of the men’s top 25 college basketball teams but not the women’s. This decision is based on a fact and a judgment: We don’t have space for both, and more readers are interested in the men’s game than the women’s. Measured in numbers, this is a fair judgment, but it also reflects a historical bias against women’s sports. Isn’t it a mistake to allow this bias to deny news content to a small but intensely interested segment of our readership? Even with limited space, we can probably find a better way to serve fans of both men’s and women’s college basketball.

As an editor, knowing that the *Monitor* expresses political opinions almost every day, I think constantly about how to be fair to all political viewpoints, especially those that conflict with my own. But it took Ray Duckler’s column and the community’s spirited reaction to it to remind me of the other, more personal biases that a journalist must resist and overcome.

We’re still looking for that center fielder for the newsroom softball team, by the way. And believe me, I don’t doubt for a second that there’s a female reporter out there who can chase down fly balls with grace and fluidity—and even back up that clod who would gladly play right field if his old bones would let him. ■

**As chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Billy Tauzin wants to bring network executives to their knees for their election-night coverage. But should the media really be scared of the Cajun congressman?**

**By Robert Schmidt**

# POWER OF THE HOU

**I**t's one of those rare working Saturdays at the U.S. Capitol, where Congress has convened in a joint session to deal with the final vestige of the 2000 election: counting the votes from the Electoral College. Although by this January 6 afternoon everybody knows the outcome of the election, the pageantry of democracy is in full swing. Vice-President Al Gore, who presides over the session in his role as president of the Senate, is announced to the chamber,

and he takes his place under an enormous flag next to the Speaker of the House. The actual electoral votes, stored inside two mahogany boxes, are carried in by congressional pages.

The visitors' gallery is packed with spectators, but the House floor below is strangely empty. More than half of the Senate and two-thirds of the House members have decided to skip the session. Not Representative Billy Tauzin, a Republican from Louisiana, who two days earlier was elected chairman of the powerful House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Over the past few months, Tauzin (pronounced TOE-zan) has been highly critical of the television networks' reporting on election night, contending that the early projections saying Gore won the state of

Florida influenced voter turnout there and across the country. Now Tauzin wants to witness the delivery of Florida's votes to George W. Bush. Tauzin sits in his seat, watching as the votes from each state, in alphabetical order, are announced. Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California.... Restless, Tauzin gets up and walks around the chamber, talking to other members and shaking hands. Finally, it is Florida's turn, and the drum procedure becomes dramatic.

For 20 minutes, more than a dozen representatives, mostly members of the Congressional Black Caucus, stand up to raise objections to the tally. But under a

**Tauzin-watchers can't decide:**

**Is the glad-handing congressman serious about taking on the media in his role as committee chairman?**

**Photographed by Chris Buck**



**A stuffed alligator head dripping with Mardi Gras beads sits on a coffee table in Congressman Billy Tauzin's office.**



law dating from 1877, objections against electoral votes can be heard only if they are in writing and signed by both a House member and a senator. None of the objectors has Senate support, and Gore is forced to silence them, banging down his gavel and ruling them out of order.

Satisfied that the election is at last final, Tauzin leaves the House floor without watching the rest of the count. He's hurrying to catch a plane for Texas, where he will spend a few days hunting and relaxing with his wife, Cecile.

Tauzin needs the rest. For the past two days he has been meeting with his fellow Republicans, plotting out legislative strategy for the coming term. As the chairman of the energy and commerce committee, Tauzin will be the point man in the House on policy relating to energy, health care, the environment, and telecommunications. A sign of how important the job is: Tauzin's first call of congratulations came from President-elect George W. Bush, who told Tauzin that he was looking forward to working with him. Tauzin says the feeling is mutual; with a like-minded Republican president behind him, Tauzin hopes to finally carry out some of his long-held policy objectives.

One of the first issues Tauzin will tackle as chairman will be the television networks' botched election

### **Congressman Tauzin's first call of congratulations on his new position as chairman of the energy and commerce committee came from President-elect George W. Bush.**



**House majority leader Dick Arme of Texas (left) jokes with Tauzin before a tax-reform debate in April 1998. (Representative John Shimkus of Illinois laughs in the background.)**

calls, which still weigh on his mind. Despite Bush's ascension to the presidency, Tauzin says he feels strongly that the "biased" reporting by the networks needs to be fixed. In November, he unleashed his committee investigators upon the networks and Voter News Service (VNS), the consortium used by the networks to make projections based on exit polls and voter returns, and at press time he planned to call the news-division brass before the energy and commerce committee in February.

The hearings will likely be the first time Americans see Tauzin in his new post as committee chairman.

But for the networks, the hearings will be a sort of reunion with Tauzin—on a much bigger stage. That's because Tauzin has long had the ear of every network-news president and the attention of every network-news president's boss.

Before taking over as chairman of the full committee, Tauzin was chairman of the House Committee on Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade, and Consumer Protection. Under Tauzin, the subcommittee has had a pro-business tilt: As chairman, Tauzin introduced bills that would support foreign ownership of television stations, create a blue-ribbon panel to study overhauling the Federal Communications Commission, and phase out the so-called E-rate, a fee that telephone companies pay (passed on to consumers in their bills) that funds access to the Internet for schools and libraries. Most recently, Tauzin helped lead the charge against the creation of low-power FM radio stations, a move large broadcasters applauded because they worried such stations would interfere with their broadcast signals.

Media companies knew then—and know even more so today—that Tauzin holds the key to the future of their industry, whether it is broadband Internet or digital television or support for the next

megamerger. So when Tauzin aired his complaints about election-night coverage in November, the networks not only listened; they offered responses that were respectful and apologetic.

"I agree with you that we at CNN need to determine exactly what went wrong in our election-night coverage and to take appropriate corrective action," wrote CNN chairman and chief executive officer Tom Johnson in a November 16 letter to Tauzin. "We will." CBS News president Andrew Heyward was also contrite. "We were as good as the information we were getting from sources we trusted," wrote Heyward. "In this case, that information was not good, and neither were we."

Tauzin can get the media's attention when he wants it, but some question whether he will make good on his rants now that voters and politicians are focused on a new administration, not "the wild, woolly, and weird situa-

tion"—as CBS anchor Dan Rather put it—on election night. Watchdog groups point out that Tauzin is a good friend to America's broadcasters: A host of media companies eagerly signed up to pay for Tauzin's A-list party at the Republican National Convention last year. He supports their legislative agenda while taking their campaign contributions and attending their all-expenses-paid "seminars" in warm climes. But Tauzin is persistent. "We'll have a fairly bipartisan investigation on this and then hold a set of hearings," he told me in November. "This is politics; this could get sticky."

BILL GREENBLATT/UPI

**E**ver since he launched his crusade in the days after the election, Tausin-watchers can't decide whether the congressman is posturing or serious about taking on the media. "These guys who go before his committee will rue the day if they don't take this seriously. He is so tenacious, and he never loses," says Frank Luntz, a Republican pollster who has worked with Tausin. "Hell hath no fury like a Tausin scorned. Don't get on his bad side or you and your industry will regret it for a long, long time."

But Jeffrey Chester, a public-interest advocate and executive director of the Center for Media Education, who has clashed with Tausin for years over regulation of the broadcast industry, scoffs at that notion. "He may do a Cajun yell, but at the end of the day, [the network executives] know they'll be sharing a big bowl of gumbo with him," says Chester. "The term 'good ole pol' was invented for Billy Tausin, and as long as he is in power, the media industries have no fear."

Such conflicting opinions about Tausin are not unusual, but they are telling. Tausin, 57, was elected to Congress in 1980 and is a bundle of contradictions. In his 12 terms in Congress, he has been both a Democrat and a Republican, a hell-bent reformer and a keeper of the status quo, a patron of big business and a champion of the little guy.

Tausin is popular in his home district, which encompasses 13 parishes on the coast of southern Louisiana. In 2000, he won the election with 78 percent of the vote, and he often runs unopposed. He is Louisiana-born-and-bred, and his blue-collar roots run deep; Tausin put himself through college and law school by working on oil rigs. Reflecting his district, Tausin has always been conservative—a Boll Weevil Democrat during the Reagan years and one of only two Democrats to support all the provisions on Newt Gingrich's Contract with America. Tausin left the Democratic Party in 1995, claiming that there was no longer any place for conservative voices in it. "When I'd walk into a room, [Democrats would] stop talking," says Tausin. "There was a general feeling that I'd hit a glass ceiling." The shift angered few of his constituents, and none of his staff resigned in protest. More important, the move gave Tausin's career a boost: He became chairman of the commerce committee's subcommittee on telecommunications in 1997.

Tausin likes to be seen as a good ole boy from the bayou—not too sharp, in over his head around professional politicians. He speaks with a drawl and peppers his stories with homespun Cajun tales. But make no mistake—the down-home act is just that. Tausin is as much a creature of Washington as he is of the Louisiana swamps, and his Capitol Hill nickname—Swamp Fox—goes far toward explaining his dual personae. As one Democratic staffer for the energy and commerce committee puts it: "Billy's a hot dog. But smart."



In a video for the National Republican Congressional Committee, Tausin dressed as Patton to re-create the opening scene of the movie about the World War II hero.

**I**t's 5:30 p.m. on December 4, and the House has come back for a lame-duck session on the budget. But there's still no winner in the presidential election, and not much is going on in the Capitol. I wait for Tausin at his cramped, messy suite of offices in the Rayburn House Office Building. His aides are milling about in jeans and gossiping about tonight's holiday office party. Tausin is supposed to hold a conference call with reporters and then meet with me, but he went out for a haircut more than an hour ago and hasn't yet returned. Instead, Ken Johnson, the congressman's communications director, takes the press call. And I wait.

More than an hour later, Tausin bursts through the door of the now mostly empty office. He gives me a hearty handshake and a pat on the arm. "Good to see you," he says, then disappears into his private office. Tausin is quickly told that I'm the reporter he's supposed to talk with, and before I know it there's a tug on my sleeve. "Come on in," he says. "Sit down—let's visit for a bit." He gives me another handshake accompanied by an arm

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 138]



## BLACK PUBLISHING'S

Can a new monthly magazine, *Savoy*, appeal to the rising class of affluent black readers that the towering *Ebony* may have left behind?

By Douglas Century

# NEW

# COLORS



In his plush-carpeted, 11th-floor office in the headquarters of Vanguard Media Inc., on Manhattan's Park Avenue South, Roy Johnson is showing me a framed black-and-white photograph so evocative that it practically smells of nickel stogies, root-beer floats, and freshly swabbed Formica. "I always call this picture the black *Happy Days*," he says. The photograph is of Kyle's Sundry, a drugstore and soda fountain that Johnson's father owned in Greenwood, the thriving black business district of segregated North Tulsa, Oklahoma. It's an image that is emblematic of Johnson's tranquil, middle-class childhood. "There were so many successful black businesspeople and entrepreneurs in Greenwood that it was known throughout the country as America's black Wall Street," recalls Johnson, the editorial director of Vanguard.

With a clean-shaved head and salt-and-pepper goatee, dressed in an open-necked pale olive shirt and darker olive slacks, Johnson, 44, is casually natty in an office surrounded by images of his heroes: Frederick Douglass; Barbara Jordan; Babe Ruth, backed by adoring, fedora- and applejack-cap-waving black fans. There's Johnson himself posing for a moody portrait a few years back with a smiling, moonfaced Muhammad Ali, and there's a snapshot of Johnson and AOL Time Warner CEO Gerald Levin being dwarfed by 6-foot-8 Earvin "Magic" Johnson, with whom Roy Johnson collaborated on the 1989 book *Magic's Touch*.

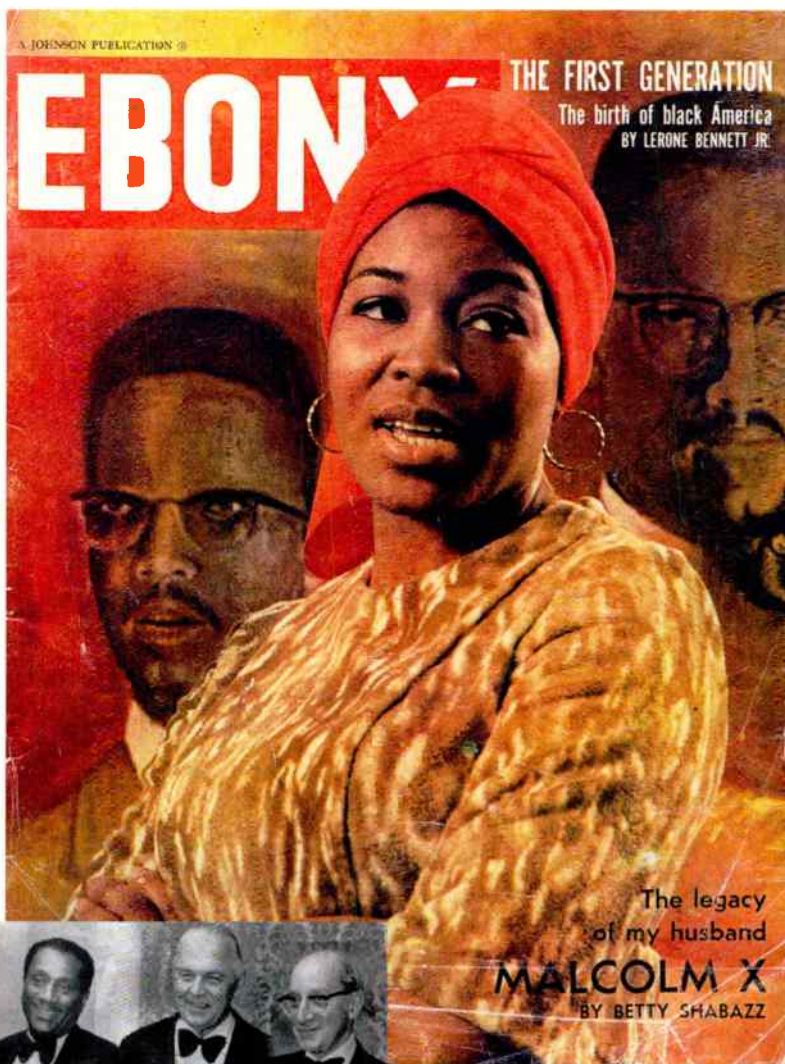
Roy Johnson honed his reportorial skills at mainstream publications like *The New York Times*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and *Sports Illustrated*, but like so many other prominent African-American journalists, he cites another periodical as his earliest inspiration: *Ebony* magazine. "I was always a rabid reader—when your mother's a schoolteacher you have no choice—and like many middle-class black homes in the fifties and sixties, *Ebony* was always on our coffee table," he says. "It was the first magazine that really reflected what this segment of the community was about. When other publications weren't recognizing black people as viable parts of society, *Ebony* did. Therefore, it gained a tremendous stronghold in a community that was dying to see itself."

*Ebony*, the groundbreaking monthly founded in 1945 by another (unrelated) Johnson—John Johnson—remains the monolith in African-American publishing. Headquartered in a towering edifice on Michigan Avenue in Chicago, *Ebony* has a monthly circulation of nearly 1.8 million (just slightly less, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, than that of Condé Nast's *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker* combined). And its sister publication, *Jet*, a weekly digest, reaches almost 1 million readers. *Ebony*'s success spawned John Johnson's subsidiary beauty empire and has made Johnson, now 83, one of the wealthiest black men in America. Known as "the magazine by and for us," *Ebony* was modeled on leading picture magazines of the 1940s, such as *Life* and *Look*, but has long since outlived the inspiration. "Look magazine is gone; *Life* magazine is gone; *The Saturday Evening Post* is gone," notes the black critic and cultural flammethrower Stanley Crouch. "*Ebony* and *Jet* are still out here."

It's perhaps ironic, then, that *Ebony*, the magazine that helped define and shape the lifestyle of postwar black affluence, has to some degree been left behind by the fast-changing realities of contemporary middle-class black life. Although most African-American journalists and media professionals will, on the record, offer nothing but plaudits for the John Johnson



Above: *Savoy* founder and Vanguard editorial director Roy Johnson (left) and Vanguard chairman and CEO Keith Clinkscales. Right: *Savoy*'s March 2001 issue. Photographed by Anna Curtis



**Above: The June 1969 issue of *Ebony*; inset, Muhammad Ali (kneeling, far right) receives the Outstanding Chicagoan award from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in 1977; *Ebony*'s John Johnson is standing second from left.**

financial situation has become even more complicated: Last November, media giant Viacom announced it was acquiring BET Holdings for nearly \$3 billion, but did not take over BET's stake in Vanguard. At press time, the trio of BET shareholders—BET founder Robert Johnson, BET president/chief operating officer Debra Lee, and cable mogul John Malone—still holds a majority stake in Vanguard, and Roy Johnson says that his company is still working through the ramifications of the Viacom-BET deal.)

publishing empire, in private conversations it's increasingly common to hear people referring to *Ebony* and *Jet* as "old-school," editorially formulaic, and unreflective of the more sophisticated tastes of the rising black middle class.

Which might explain why expectations are so high for Vanguard Media's launch of Roy Johnson's brainchild, *Savoy*, a new general-interest monthly that bills itself as "the smart, provocative voice of today's new black power." With a mix of reported pieces, fiction, and lighthearted features, *Savoy* just might be poised to carve out a distinctive niche for itself. "A class magazine focused on black people," mused Crouch a few months before *Savoy*'s premiere issue in February. "Yeah, that would be refreshing."

A newcomer to the magazine industry, Vanguard arrived on the scene last year when its chairman and CEO, Keith Clinkscales, formerly the president and CEO of the hip-hop magazine *Vibe*, struck a deal with Black Entertainment Television. Vanguard assumed control of BET's three publications: *Emerge*, a provocative political monthly for African-Americans; *Heart and Soul*, a health-and-fitness title for women of color; and *BET Weekend*, a black twice-monthly newspaper insert. In turn, Vanguard gave BET a majority stake in its company, which publishes two other magazines: the black-themed *Honey*, a young-women's lifestyle magazine, and *Impact Weekly*,



***Ebony* boasts a circulation of nearly 1.8 million, and its sister publication, *Jet*, almost 1 million.**

EBONY: © PETER BENSON; JOHNSON: CHICAGO TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO



Though lumped into a niche imprecisely described as "urban," the readership that *Savoy* is courting sounds decidedly suburban.

*Savoy* is aiming to fill a niche in a black-periodicals market dominated by *Ebony* and *Jet*, the glossy women's magazine *Essence*, the business-focused *Black Enterprise*, and a host of downmarket magazines focusing primarily on hair care and hip-hop. "One of the paradoxical aspects of our situation today is that in a time of so-called integration, there's never been a

greater need or greater explosion in terms of black magazines," says Lerone Bennett Jr., executive editor of *Ebony*. "Every time you go to the newsstand, three or four more have started." Though lumped into a niche imprecisely described as "urban," the readership that *Savoy* is courting sounds decidedly suburban: the Mercedes-driving, golf- and tennis-playing strata of black America, a crowd that's more apt to be listening to Ornette Coleman in the Land Cruiser than pumping the latest Jay-Z, more likely to be glued most evenings to MSNBC than to *Mo'Nasty*. It's a segment of black America that's rarely reflected either in traditional black periodicals or in tony magazines such as *Vanity Fair*.

"I have girlfriends and guy friends who, when they talk about their weekends, it's skiing at Vail, it's hopping a cheap flight to Paris," says Veronica Chambers, 30, a former general editor at *Newsweek* who was tapped to be *Savoy's* executive editor last spring. Born in Panama and raised in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, Chambers published a memoir in 1997 called *Mama's Girl*, which charts her coming-of-age from a difficult childhood into the black professional world that she sees as containing *Savoy's* core readership. "That's a different kind of magazine audience than somebody who's living paycheck to paycheck, or who's maybe getting knocked off welfare. The kind of articles that fit my friends' lifestyle, they were reading in *Vanity Fair*, in *Travel & Leisure*, and in magazines that don't really make a lot of effort to show that we're on the radar."

By any measure, the African-American media market is hot right now. New hip-hop-generation magazines such as *Vibe*, *The Source*, *Honey*, and *Code* crowd the shelves, while well-established titles still thrive. Mainstream media companies are fighting to gain a foothold in the African-American market, too; in addition to Viacom's purchase of BET, Time Inc. recently formed a joint-venture company with *Essence* Communications Inc., which publishes *Essence* magazine and *Latina*, and its parent company, Time Warner, purchased *Africana.com*, the portal founded in part by Henry Louis Gates Jr., the author and the chair of the Afro-American studies department at Harvard University.

This should hardly come as a surprise. According to Target Market News, a Chicago-based research company that tracks African-American spending patterns, the African-American population is expected to reach 45.1 million in 2020, outpacing the rate of growth of the white population by more than two to one. Target also reported that between 1998 and 1999, earnings for African-American households jumped 11 percent, from \$441 billion in the previous year to \$490 billion. (Earnings for white households during this same period increased slightly more than 9 percent.) Ken Smikle, president of Target Market News, observes: "The so-called black upscale reader is very desirable, certainly more than ten years ago....That audience is not only larger than ever before but more desirable to advertisers." And while Roy Johnson is hoping *Savoy* can bank on these figures, its readership is not limited to them: Just as [CONTINUED ON PAGE 141]



Vanguard's offerings: *Heart and Soul*, a health-and-fitness title for women of color; *Emerge*, a provocative political monthly that ceased publication last June; and the black-themed *Honey*, a young-women's magazine

# Nice TV

**I**n June 1998, more than 300 advertising executives gathered at the New York Hilton for what promised to be a fairly routine lunchtime event, the Advertising Women of New York's annual induction of new officers. The group holds many such lunches, at which the food is bland and you can pretty much guess what the speakers will say. This time, though, the keynote speaker, Andrea Alstrup, Johnson & Johnson's corporate vice-president of advertising, had a surprise in store that didn't just startle her audience that day but would begin to change prime-time TV as we know it—and tip the balance of power within the television industry.

**With racy shows like *Friends* dominating prime time, mega-advertisers in search of "family friendly" fare are rewriting the rules of network television—and some of the scripts. By Jim Edwards**

Most of us have never heard of Alstrup, and her unassuming looks and conservative demeanor hardly convey her power. But she's a giant in the advertising profession, having started at Johnson & Johnson

in 1964 as a secretary and then climbed into a position in which she directs the spending of some \$600 million a year of her company's money on TV commercials, from Band-Aids to baby powder, from Motrin to Mylanta. In other words, in the world of television, Alstrup matters.

In the weeks before she stepped up to the Hilton podium, Alstrup considered delivering the usual paean to the progress of women in advertising. But Alstrup was mad as hell—about sex, violence, and vulgarity on prime-time TV—and she wasn't going to take it anymore. She wasn't about to throw open her windows

**Andrea Alstrup, in her office at Johnson & Johnson's headquarters in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Portraits by Jeffrey Gardner**



"DO WE REALLY NEED TO...  
SUPPORT...A BARRAGE OF  
MEDIA THAT APPEALS  
TO THE LOWEST COMMON  
DENOMINATORS OF VALUES?"  
ANDREA ALSTRUP ASKS.

and yell onto the street, à la Peter Finch in the 1976 classic *Network*. Her recourse was more profound.

Alstrup's speech rambled a bit, from praising Johnson & Johnson's efforts to aid burn victims in South Africa to urging the audience to watch shows like *Saved by the Bell*. But soon her real point became achingly clear: The NBC sitcom *Friends*, for years one of the most popular shows on television, is embarrassing, outrageous, unacceptable. The program, which airs Thursday evenings at 8 P.M., "now shows young men and women in bed together," she noted, "and features a plot line that presents one of the young female stars as pregnant, unmarried, carrying a baby for her brother and sister-in-law because the sister-in-law cannot get pregnant." She went on to say that *Friends*, which is produced and owned by AOL Time Warner's Warner Bros. Television unit, isn't the only offender, of course, but what better evidence of the networks' abandonment of the notion that the earlier hours of prime time should be reserved for the kind of family-entertainment programs Johnson & Johnson thinks are the proper venues in which to advertise its products? "Do we really need to continue to support with our advertising a constant barrage of media that appeals to the lowest common denominators of values?" Alstrup asked. "I emphatically say we do not."

In the ratings-obsessed world of TV advertising, criticizing *Friends*—one of the few TV shows that can guarantee advertisers an audience of 20 million consumers a week—is like criticizing the weather for being too sunny. But Alstrup certainly had her audience's attention, and she was only getting started. "They stopped drinking their coffee. It was still dessert. They stopped," Alstrup recently recalled. "There was silence in the room. They just kept looking at me."

Alstrup then dropped the real bombshell: About ten companies, she announced, including such giant advertisers as Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola, Ford Motor Co., and Sears, had agreed to support Johnson & Johnson in launching an organization—a crusade, really—to pressure the TV networks to change their programming habits and put on more shows in prime time that would pass muster as family fare. The group, which eventually came to be known as the Family Friendly Programming Forum, would soon count as members 44 companies that in 1999 spent a total of \$11 billion on television commercials. If network execs take notice of Johnson & Johnson's \$600 million alone, think about how impressive that combined total must be. Among other reasons, Alstrup conceived the

Family Forum to place public and political pressure on networks to run mature-themed shows later in the evening, and to honor programs (at an annual awards ceremony) that big advertisers deem acceptable family fare.

At this point, though, almost three years after Alstrup's speech, the advertisers in the Family Forum aren't necessarily threatening to take their money elsewhere, because there isn't much of an elsewhere—not if they want a guaranteed mass audience, anyway. Rather, the Forum is doing something smarter and quite remarkable—and more likely to have a real impact on what we watch on TV.

Unhappy with the shows that now make it through the production pipeline and into coveted prime-time slots, some of the advertisers in the Forum are playing a direct role in the creation of the shows. Thirteen companies, including powerful advertisers like AT&T and McDonald's, have contributed a total of \$1 million to a script-development fund to nurture shows that even the most prudish parents could watch with their children.

There's an economic imperative behind the moral stance: These massive companies sell their everyday products—like Coke, Band-Aids, or Trident gum—to a broad swath of the public that stretches across various age groups and income levels. They need TV programs that can be watched by everyone, and that means programs that won't offend or embarrass any segment of that desired audience. (This is in contrast to the strategy that advertisers who are drawn to *Friends*—such as The Gap, Hewlett-Packard, and Toyota—are employing as they seek a young, affluent, urban audience.)

Not only does the Forum fund the growth of the scripts, it also gets to read them before they actually become pilot episodes. And those that do go into production, and ultimately on the air, come with a guarantee of advertising support that other shows can only dream of. Alstrup contends that the Forum doesn't have any control over the shows, but the implications of its involvement in prime time's creative process could be enormous. The effort, in fact, could be considered the first step toward a system in which advertisers who want to sell stuff to the entire family are using their financial leverage to help generate tamer shows.

But you don't have to be a moral crusader to think that Alstrup, whatever her particular financial motives, is onto something. Prime-time TV really is raunchier than it used to be. That episode of *Friends* in which Monica and Rachel fight over who gets to use the last condom in the package may have been funny, but should it have aired at 8 P.M., when even 8-year-olds are usually awake and watching? A spokeswoman for Warner Bros. Television, which

**Below, top: The cast of *Young Americans*, an early foray into advertiser-backed script development**



**Above: Lauren Graham (right) and Alexis Bledel star in WB's *Gilmore Girls*, a current show backed by the Family Forum.**



"JUST HOW LOW CAN TELEVISION GO?" PEOPLE MAGAZINE ASKED LAST YEAR, REFERRING TO AN EPISODE OF FRIENDS.

**Matthew Perry (as Chandler) and Courteney Cox Arquette (as Monica) on NBC's prime-time powerhouse *Friends***

produces the show, passed the buck to NBC: "We do not comment on scheduling issues, which are handled by the network." NBC's Curt King, an executive director for prime-time series, had this to say: "The show has been on for years and has a self-selected audience that is comfortable with

the content. And we don't get negative reaction from the audience." According to King, the corporate world isn't complaining, either "There has been no negative reaction from advertisers regarding *Friends*," King says.

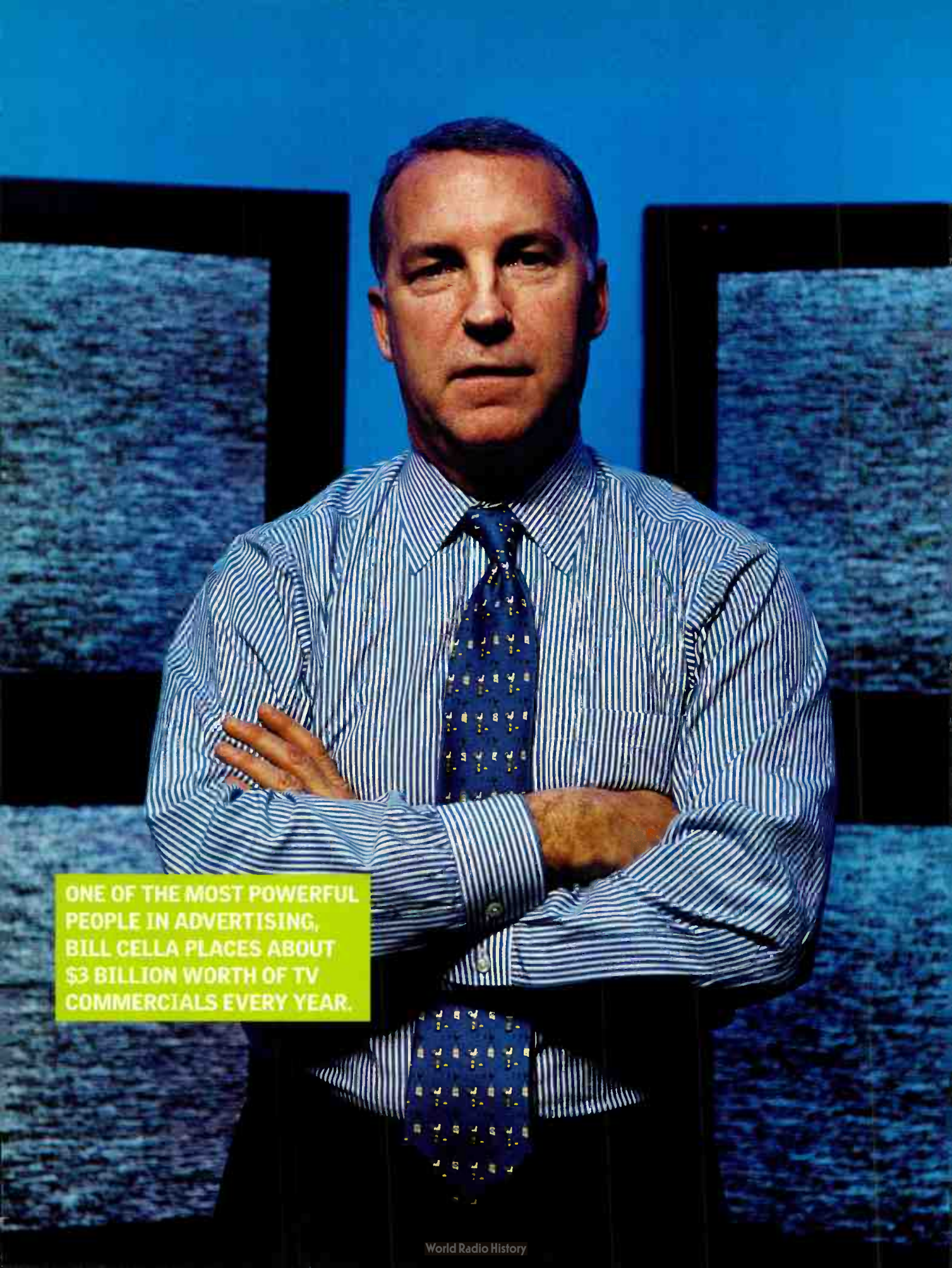
And while *Friends* is often cited, it's not the only show that has incurred such criticism. "Things have come a long way since Ricky and Lucy slept in twin beds," reporter Julie Salamon lamented recently in *The New York Times*, usually a bastion of cultural liberalism. "Those who find themselves furtively taping *Boston Public* so they can watch after the children are asleep might feel nostalgia for 'family viewing' time," Salamon wrote, referring to the Fox show about a big-city high school, which also airs at 8 P.M. In one recent episode, a girl running for student office performs oral sex on a boy whose support she is seeking: she is seen getting up from her knees. *Boston Public*, Salamon concludes, "is written as though boundaries shouldn't exist at any hour."

Disapproval of prime-time promiscuity is coming from some other unlikely quarters, too. "Just how low can television go?" *People* magazine asked last year, referring to a *Friends* episode in which Phoebe is mistaken for her twin sister—a pornographic film star. The Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonpartisan philanthropic organization, studied the 1999-2000 TV season and found that three out of four prime-time shows featured sexual content, which it defined as containing both conversation about and

depictions of sexual behavior. That figure has risen significantly from just two years ago, when the group identified sexual material in two-thirds of all prime-time programming. And 25 years ago, the Kaiser Foundation found that just 26 percent of the shows during "family hour," which it defines as the 8 to 9 P.M. slot, contained sexual content. The current study also reported that 84 percent of all sitcom episodes now feature sexual content, compared to 56 percent two years earlier. "There were no genres in which there was a statistically significant decrease in sexual content," the study concluded. And politicians of all stripes have aimed their rhetorical fire at what many see as prime-time sleaze. (In the early seventies, the Federal Communications Commission attempted to institute a network-television family hour, but the effort failed to withstand legal challenge.)

Still, though Alstrup has lambasted *Friends* and worked to persuade the other networks to air alternatives, even she is unable to resist the sheer economic logic of the sitcom's massive ratings (although *Friends* now faces the biggest challenge of its seven-season history in the form of the new *Survivor*, which began airing on CBS last month in the same time slot as the NBC sitcom). Ads for Johnson & Johnson's adult brands, such as its Neutrogena skin-care line, do run during *Friends*, a Johnson & Johnson representative confirms, although "there would probably be episodes of *Friends* that we wouldn't be in." Alstrup adds diplomatically, "I would say that the advertising that we would run in *Friends* is more directed to adults."

The Family Forum, by seeking a more direct role for advertisers in the making of television shows, is riding a cultural and political wave that networks may be ignoring at their own peril. Still, it's all about making shows that people—lots of people—want to watch. *Friends* happens to be such a show. But this prompts the questions:



ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL  
PEOPLE IN ADVERTISING,  
BILL CELLA PLACES ABOUT  
\$3 BILLION WORTH OF TV  
COMMERCIALS EVERY YEAR.

Will companies like Johnson & Johnson that want family-friendly forums for their products be up to the creative challenge of nurturing programming that's also widely popular? And will television accommodate such an incursion?

**A**ndrea Alstrup doesn't decide all by herself how to spend all that Johnson & Johnson advertising money. Like most other major companies, Johnson & Johnson engages an advertising agency to generate ad campaigns and choose the right time and place to run the commercials. That's where Bill Cella comes in. Cella, 50, is the executive vice-president and director of broadcasting and programming at Universal McCann, an advertising agency in New York. That makes him, like Alstrup, one of the most powerful people in advertising, because he places about \$3 billion worth of commercials every year on TV. At McCann, Cella oversees more than 120 ad buyers, and his agency is one of only four in the world that place in excess of \$5 billion in ads annually in various media, including television, print, and radio. "You have nine guys in the United States that...probably control half the TV [ad dollars] in the United States," says David Verklin, CEO of Carat North America, a rival media-buying service. Bill Cella is one of them.

That's why, when Alstrup wanted to get the Family Forum started, she turned to Cella, whom she consulted on her speech at the Hilton and who lined up some of his other clients behind her effort. (Clients of Cella's currently in the Forum include Coca-Cola, General Motors, and Nestlé.) Most important, though, Cella has experience with just the sort of experiment in advertiser-spawned programming that Alstrup hopes will now gain traction. Ironically, it involves a show that was deemed a failure both in the ratings and among critics, yet it may provide a road map for those looking to change the relationship between advertisers and programming and, in the process, create what might be considered a more wholesome product.

The show was *Young Americans*, which started as a concept for a *Dawson's Creek*-style drama about the lives and loves of a group of teenage boys who attend the all-male Rawley Academy, a prestigious (and fictional) New England boarding school. The WB network was keen on developing the show but was daunted by the resources required to do it. Around the end of 1999, WB's then-executive vice-president of media sales, Jed Petrick (who has since

been promoted to WB's president and chief operating officer), looked to Universal McCann for help, calling on Robert Reisenberg, whom Cella had hired a few years before. As managing director of Universal McCann's new production arm, Reisenberg, 50, specializes in creating customized shows

that integrate a client's brand image (this includes sponsorship and product placement).

"Jed Petrick at the WB came to me and said, 'Look, we have an idea that we think is a win-win situation,'" Reisenberg says. "If they had a sponsorship partner who could help support [*Young Americans*] financially, and also more importantly help support it from a promotional angle, they would have a leg up in terms of launching their show." Reisenberg and Cella took the idea to their prized client, Coca-Cola. In return for an unspecified amount of money (*The Wall Street Journal* put the figure at \$6 million, but Reisenberg says it was "not even close" to that), Coke would get an extraordinary amount of promotion. The show would be called a "Coca-Cola Summer Premiere," Coke products would be woven into the stories, there would be promotional "bumpers" (messages before and after commercial breaks) highlighting Coke's involvement, and the show's marketing and advertising would carry the Coca-Cola brand. Moreover,

Coke would retain the right to back out of the show if it did not like the story lines—not exactly a veto, Reisenberg says, but close.

Indeed, after Coke signed on, the show, already well into development by that point, was altered significantly. The network "decided to recast a couple of the people. They changed some of the story lines. They changed the pilot basically, and in doing so, they inserted Coke," Reisenberg says. "They consulted with us on all the story lines and all the directions that the stories were going to go....I reviewed it, I did share it with Coca-Cola just to make sure that there was nothing offensive about the way [WB executives] were going with it, and when the scripts were written they sent those to us, [and] we reviewed those for the same reason."

*Young Americans* ran for eight weeks last summer. It was, by almost every measure, a flop. "We interrupt our sponsors for a word from this program," sniped *Variety*, which, like many publications that reviewed the show, skewered it for its over-the-top product placements. (One episode even opened with a scene in which a boy and a girl drink a Coke at a gas station on a hot summer's day.) *Young Americans* came in last in the ratings in its time slot, watched on average by only 1.6 million households per episode. By comparison, typically about 4.5 million watch *Dawson's Creek*, one of WB's biggest hits.

So did *Young Americans* prove that too much advertiser involvement can only doom a show? On the contrary, the experience proved satisfying to many involved—most tellingly, to Coca-Cola, which is considering getting behind another "Coca-Cola Summer Premiere" in 2001. Mart Martin, a spokesperson for Coke, called *Young Americans* "another opportunity for us to make some more noise through what was a really interesting vehicle, and the WB gave it a substantial amount of publicity and promotion." According to Martin, *Young Americans* was regarded by Coke as a smart effort from Cella's people. "It was easy to execute," he says.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 146]



The cast of *Friends*, which debuted in 1994 and helped NBC rule Thursday nights

**Bill Cella, who oversees more than 120 ad buyers at Universal McCann, says *Friends* should not be aired at 8 P.M.**



The job of White House spokesman isn't easy, and access to the president is key, say numerous former press secretaries. Is Bush's man, Ari Fleischer, ready for the trenches? By Seth Mnookin

# Advice to Ari

**W**hen Ari Fleischer took over the West Wing office of the White House press secretary on January 20, he inherited a 26-year-old bulletproof vest. The garish, blue-brocade garment was initially a gift to Ron Nessen, who served as press secretary under President Gerald Ford. Nessen was given the armor by his staff, who figured he would need the protection from a hostile press that had gone through three spokesmen in two years.

"This was right after Watergate," says Nessen, who now works at The Brookings Institution, a think tank in Washington, D.C. "The Vietnam War was still going on. There was a very nasty, poisonous mood there....The briefing room is 50 feet from the Oval Office, and Woodward and Bernstein never went in the White House gate to get the story. So the [White House] press did not feel like they were treated well." Preceding Nessen in the briefing room were Jerald ter Horst, who resigned after a month on the job to protest President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon; Gerald Warren, who was well liked by the press and almost totally out of the loop in the Nixon White House; and Ronald Zeigler, the much-despised henchman who declined to comment 29 times in a row during a single press conference in the midst of the Watergate crisis.

Compared to Nessen, Fleischer inherits a placid White House press corps. The turmoil of the early Clinton years—the locked pressroom doors, the internal power struggles, and the stonewalling—is gone, and Clinton's last three spokesmen were given high marks. But Fleischer is going to need the metaphorical

protection of Nessen's flak jacket. Before he ever even stepped up to the White House podium, there was a sense in the press corps that Fleischer is at a disadvantage because of his lack of briefing experience and lack of authority within the Bush administration. Indeed, during the next several months, Fleischer would do well to remember the most common refrains found on the slips of paper the press secretaries have left for their successors in the pocket of Nessen's bulletproof vest: Don't take it personally. Cultivate your sense of humor. Make sure you have access to the president.

Fleischer says he's confident that he's up to the challenges of the office. He claims he'll approach his job "the same way you walk across a tightrope without a safety net: carefully." As for specifics, Fleischer insists he'll be "dedicated to the truth," will "help reporters find out what the truth is," and will have "the judgment to know what to say and what not to say while never lying."

**A**ri Fleischer is a trim, balding man who wears wire-rimmed glasses. He's 40 years old, Jewish, and single. As *The Washington Post* reported, during a pre-job interview with the Bush campaign, Fleischer said his goals were to settle down with a nice Jewish girl and have children. Fleischer, whose name comes from the main character in Leon Uris's *Exodus*, grew up in Pound Ridge, New York; his parents were both in business and were both Democrats.

**Ari Fleischer, the new White House spokesman, suits up for the press.**  
Illustration by Daniel Adel

CHRIS KLEPONIS/AFP PHOTOS





**Mike McCurry—quick on his feet and laugh-out-loud funny—was one of the most successful press secretaries ever, despite his lack of a personal relationship with President Clinton.**

Fleischer's dislike of Jimmy Carter and appreciation of Ronald Reagan flipped his political affiliation; he's been active in Republican politics since he graduated from Vermont's Middlebury College in the early eighties.

In 1992, Fleischer served as deputy communications director for the elder George Bush's losing re-election campaign. He has also worked as a spokesman for Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico and House Ways and Means chairman Bill Archer. One thing Fleischer's résumé lacks is substantial time working with George W. Bush. At the beginning of last year, Fleischer was a new member of Bush's campaign staff, many of whom counted their time with the candidate in decades rather than months or years. Fleischer had left Elizabeth Dole's sinking ship in September 1999, a month before she ended her bid for the Republican nomination, and before signing on with Bush, he considered a PR job at Microsoft. Fleischer says his brief history with the president will not factor into his job: "It was never an issue during the campaign, and it's not an issue now."

For much of the campaign, Fleischer was the affable, hammy sidekick to senior communications director Karen Hughes, Bush's longtime alter ego—the "High Prophet"—and a current counselor to the president. Hughes, known for neither her subtlety nor her sense of humor, always had Bush's ear and rarely left his side; she sometimes was able to articulate what Bush was thinking before he could himself. Fleischer, who alternates between dry and overeager wit, generally remained in Austin while Hughes manned the campaign trail. Reporters would occasionally grumble if they were directed to Fleischer for a comment, and Bush

seemed less at ease when being baby-sat by Dole's former mouthpiece.

"The press is already skeptical," Jerald ter Horst says. "[Fleischer's] challenge is going to be to stay wired as closely to his main sponsor as possible. He has to know what the president is thinking. If not, he'll be a second-rate press secretary."

Gerald Warren, who was Ziegler's deputy press secretary and handled White House briefings during the last year of the Nixon administration, was notoriously out of touch. One apocryphal tale has him complaining that he couldn't do his job if he never got to see Nixon; to placate Warren, a Nixon aide opened the door to the Oval Office, pointed to the brooding president, and then slammed the door shut. ("That's actually not a true story," says Warren, who, like ter Horst, has retired and lives in Virginia. "But it might as well be.") Speaking of the demarcation between Hughes and Fleischer, Warren says, "There's definitely a danger there. I don't know what [Hughes's] responsibilities will be...but she should not exclude Ari from discussions. He needs her trust, and the president's trust. The press can sense it if he doesn't have it."

The president's press secretary, Warren continues, "needs to be strong enough to be able to tell the president, 'That will backfire on you and on us,' and then be able to back that up with experience and facts and intuition. So it's that kind of closeness which is really crucial. Most of my contact was through Ron [Zeigler] and later through [Nixon chief of staff Alexander] Haig. But in my case, that wasn't all bad." Speaking of the final months of President Nixon's tenure, Warren says, "It wasn't a good year. And [not being close to Nixon] relieved me to a certain extent because it was clear that I was passing on what I was given to pass on, that's all."

Warren's example was not lost on the people who later served as spokesmen. Nessen says, "When [Ford] asked me to take the job, I knew the thing that's most important is access. It was the only thing I raised as an issue...I wanted to be able to attend all the meetings and listen to the discussions and the debates." Fleischer says that's a conversation he had with the president before he signed on. "He would not have wanted me to take the job and I would not have wanted it if there was any question about access," Fleischer says.

Bill Clinton's final spokesman, Jake Siewert, agrees that total access is crucial. "The press doesn't want to just spit out pabulum," he says. "They want to be able to give people some of the decision making and the process that went into a decision in a way that fills out reporters' understanding of it. They want something beyond the party line. When you're sitting at campaign headquarters, the press is at

**Jerald ter Horst, President Ford's first spokesman, resigned in protest of Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon.**



**Ron Nessen served as President Ford's spokesman after ter Horst.**



**Gerald Warren, a deputy press secretary under Presidents Nixon and Ford, often took the lead in briefing the press during Watergate.**



TER HORST & WARREN: AP PHOTOS; NESSEN: BETTMANN/CORBIS

an arm's length. It becomes much more difficult when you're at the White House.

"If the press office is just saying, 'We're not going to discuss that,' then you run the risk of having people running elsewhere for their stories. And you don't want people chasing things all around the building, because you lose control of the story," Siewert says. "To get that kind of stuff, you need to...go in and see the president, you need to have the right to go into any meeting."

"He's not a lifelong Bush person," says Joe Lockhart, a former Clinton spokesman now working for Oracle Corporation, a software company that specializes in the Internet. "During the campaign, Karen Hughes was thought of as the person who was closer to Bush," Lockhart adds. "That's going to be an issue...What's not clear and is probably going to be the most important thing for him is, will he have access to everything that goes on?"

Fleischer can look to two former press secretaries, both of whom came into the White House without personal relationships with the president, for two different examples of what his tenure could be like. In 1961, when Pierre Salinger began working for President John F. Kennedy, his lack of access was widely noted. Salinger, after all, was not a member of the "Massachusetts Mafia" that had helped install Kennedy in the Oval Office. This perception that he was unconnected was an obstacle Salinger was never able to overcome. Kept out of the loop during the Cuban missile crisis and generally derided by White House staff and press alike, Salinger was always thought of as an amiable jester in Bermuda shorts.

Mike McCurry also came into the White House amid questions about his closeness to the president. McCurry wasn't part of Clinton's old team in Arkansas and was further suspect because he once worked for former Nebraska senator Bob Kerrey, one of Clinton's rivals for the 1992 Democratic nomination. But McCurry—quick on his feet and laugh-out-loud funny—was one of the most successful press secretaries ever. Indeed, McCurry was able to use his lack of intimacy with the president to his advantage during the personal scandals that hounded Clinton.

"Mike McCurry did an amazing job in a difficult situation," ter Horst says. "He somehow was able to walk around the edges of the Lewinsky cesspool without getting his feet dirty."

**T**he job of presidential press secretary is, not surprisingly, a modern invention. The role filled by Fleischer used to be filled by the president's actual secretary: the person who would make appointments, set schedules, and arrange meetings.

Herbert Hoover, a man who once refused to tell a reporter whether he had enjoyed a baseball game, was the first president



Joe Lockhart (above) succeeded Mike McCurry (below) as spokesman for President Clinton; McCurry had come to the White House from the State Department.



Bill Clinton press secretary Dee Dee Myers (above) was the first woman ever to hold the job; Jake Siewert (below) was the president's final spokesman.



to assign a secretary to deal with the press, along with other duties. As W. Dale Nelson documents in his book *Who Speaks for the President?* it wasn't until four years later, in 1932, that Franklin D. Roosevelt gave Stephen Early the title of White House secretary, responsible for serving as a liaison to the press.

Early gained some notoriety—and heightened racial tension—after kneeling a black cop in the groin while attempting to escort a group of reporters onto Roosevelt's train. During Roosevelt's tenure, the president regularly held court with the press on the understanding that he could not be quoted without specific permission. Photographers were banned from taking photos that showed the crippling effects of Roosevelt's polio.

The job wasn't without its stresses. Roosevelt's successor, Harry S. Truman, feared that serving as his press secretary was a lethal assignment: After both Charles Ross and Joseph Short Jr. died on the job of heart failure, Truman said, "I feel as if I killed them." (The only press secretary to be injured in the line of duty is James Brady, President Reagan's first spokesman. He was shot during an assassination attempt on Reagan in 1981.)

Unlike Ross and Short and Early, Fleischer will need to deal with thousands of news outlets, not dozens; instead of just the printed press, Fleischer will also need to wade through a sea of television, Internet, and radio journalists. It was less than 50 years ago, on January 19, 1955, that Dwight Eisenhower held the first televised presidential press conference, telling 218 reporters, "I see we are trying a new experiment this morning. I hope it doesn't prove to be a disturbing influence."

Today the White House gets so many press calls that one spokesman is inadequate. "You need to decentralize," Siewert says. "You need to empower more

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 149]



**DESPERATELY  
SEEKING  
MAD**

Madonna and her new husband, filmmaker Guy Ritchie, leave the church after their son Rocco's christening on December 21, 2000.

**Madonna loves England—and the English press, who have remade her into a British everywoman, love her back. Not that they got invited to her highly public private wedding. By Carl Swanson**

**T**here's not much to Dornoch, a sheep-besieged medieval town about 50 miles north of Inch Ness in Scotland. Until shortly before last Christmas, it was known primarily as a dirty Valhalla for American golf adventurers. "We have the 12th or 13th-ranked golf course in the world," says the white-yellow-haired guy at the town's lone petrol station. "We've had everyone here, including Bob Hope and Bing Crosby in their day." Dornoch's population is only 2,000 or so, and its mismatching gray stone-pile buildings and soggy greenery give it a sort of unboltonally perfect picturesqueness.

When the fog—which is often so thick and low you can't see much of anything—lifts, you realize that the countryside is both lush and humdrum, a hilly landscape of placid, mysterious inlets with mountains in the distance. About a mile short of the town is the entrance to Skibo Castle, a 7,000-acre estate that Andrew Carnegie bought in the 1880s; its manor house is now a 500-rooms-a-night resort.

Tonight it will also be the most-watched house in the world, even if it can't be seen from the road. December 22 is a chilly, damp Friday, but Skibo Castle's entrance off the two-lane A9 is already marked by a dozen satellite trucks, police cars, and rental cars, all parked on the road's muddily shoulder. Scribbles, the networks, came to the collective conclusion that this is where the media should gather to watch Madonna get married to British film director Guy Ritchie.

"This is like the showbiz event of the decade," proclaims Dominic Milan, who for the past two years has been the "showbiz editor" of England's

# ONNA

Madonna has been remade in the tabloids as class, almost-English girl made good. It's a depends on both parties' recognition of its



The ubiquitous photo of Madonna, Guy Ritchie, and baby Rocco. "The christening was for us," *The Sun's* Dominic Mohan says. "Then the shutters came down."

best-selling tabloid, *The Sun*. "The closest we got was the marriage of Posh Spice and [British football star] David Beckham. But they sold their rights for a reported million pounds to *OK!* [the celebrity-filled transatlantic version of *Us Weekly*]. Madonna hasn't done that. And so she's gotten a lot of respect from the media because we can see more."

Mohan is 31, with a beer belly, his hair cut in a seventies-teen-heartthrob shag. He's taking a break from the day's stakeout, talking on his cell phone, drinking a half-pint of Miller, and smoking a menthol cigarette in the cozily creaky Victorian bar area of the nearby Royal Golf Hotel. The bar's brown corduroy couches are the control center for *The Sun's* 21 reporters and paparazzi who have been here for a week covering Madonna's wedding. Mohan claims the title of "Madonna expert" in the British press ("She announced, or confirmed, her wedding to me first," he says earnestly), although it doesn't seem to have secured him any special treatment in the long wait. Indeed, in the days before the wedding, virtually every publication in London—the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Record*, and *The Mirror*, not to mention *The Times*, the *Independent*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Observer*, and *The Sun* itself—seems to have been recycling the few leaked, possibly tweaked, tidbits about the ceremony: Gwyneth Paltrow would be there; one of Madonna's brothers would not; Stella McCartney was designing the dress; Ritchie would be wearing a kilt, most likely without any underwear.

Hundreds of cameras and reporters from around the world have descended on the town with nothing to film but the boggy scenery. This swarm of journalists is the apogee of Madonna's

media conquest of England, a yearlong rebranding project initiated by Madonna and enthusiastically assisted by the British press. Over the past year, Madonna has been remade in the tabloids as Maddie or Madge (her friends' nickname for her), a nice, working-class, almost-English girl made good (she is actually from a middle-class Detroit family). Ever since she took up with Ritchie, the English press has transformed her from a distant, kinky Hollywood icon to an approachable, cozy, simple, self-made woman in love, a woman who's been generally tamed and brought down to earth by the love of an Englishman.

"She isn't trying to f--- with the media as much as she used to," says Madonna's press agent, Liz Rosenberg, on the phone from her New York office. Rosenberg is a senior vice-president at Madonna's record label, Warner Brothers, and is the woman generally considered to be the manager of Madonna's long, complex relationship with the media. She has been Madonna's press agent since her first album came out, in 1983, back when Madonna was a punkish, post-Catholic sensation in crucifixes and fishnets, and she has seen Madonna through the singer's subsequent scandals, successes, and mistakes. Rosenberg and her British colleague, Barbara Charone, a high-powered music publicist who worked for Warner Brothers until last year, when she left to start her own PR company, are well known (and feared, and courted, depending on the situation) by reporters, particularly those present for the wedding. The two are credited with orchestrating the transatlantic publicity effort surrounding both Madonna's new image in the British press and her nuptials. (Charone did not return calls for this article, but Rosenberg says she has "helped me with Madonna's U.K. publicity for the last 15 years.")

Whether the timing of the wedding, nestled between the September 2000 release of her new hit album, *Music*, and the January 2001 stateside opening of Ritchie's third film, *Snatch*, is calculated or merely a lucky coincidence (and Madonna is both calculating and lucky), for a few weeks, Madonna reigned supreme. She spent time in England during the filming of 1996's *Evita* and subsequently, says Rosenberg, made no secret of her Anglophilia. Unlike the American entertainment press, which has a larger celebrity pool from which to draw fodder for media coverage, the British press must make do with a few stars of perennial interest. Princess Diana was the last great object of the British press's affection, and now it appears that Madonna, since she began her relationship with Ritchie, has stepped into the void left by Diana's death.

The tabloids don't have a choice: "Royalty used to sell, but not since Diana died. Showbiz now sells the best," says Mohan. *The Sun* put Madonna on the cover four times during the wedding week. "There's an insatiable demand," Mohan declares.

It's a mutually beneficial relationship that depends on both parties' recognition of its symbiosis: "My feeling is that the English press has been fantastic for the most part the last year," Rosenberg says. "I think they embraced her as one of their own."

PETER BERSON

a nice, working  
relationship that  
symbiosis.

They're very enchanted with her falling in love with an Englishman: 'She goes to a pub, and therefore, we're not going to say anything bad about her.' I think for the most part they have been a lot nicer than they used to be...In some ways, I think she's a much bigger star there—she's a really big star here, but in some ways there's more of a reverence for her as a human being there; I think they love her much more in Europe."

**T**o promote the release of *Music*, Madonna talked to a few media outlets, including *The Sun*. "The Sun's enormous," says Rosenberg. "And they've been pretty good to Madonna. You pick a couple of publications when you promote a record." And Dominic Mohan was the recipient of the interview that gave *The Sun* the global exclusive on November 22, 2000, headlined "Madonna: I'm Going to Marry My Guy." "We're the one she talked to," says Mohan. "We're the official Madonna paper. I've built up a very good relationship with Madonna." He then launches into the packaged spiel he can unload in various forms for journalists looking for Madge-filler. "We like people who came up from nothing [and] have made something of themselves," he says. "We're sort of the champion

of the working class, people like [pop star] Robbie Williams. And Madonna, through her relationship with Guy, has become an honorary British citizen."

Derek Brown, Mohan's 25-year-old sideburned-hipster protégé, agrees. "We always treated Madonna with a bit of respect," Brown says. "We maybe don't do the gossipy-type story that other papers do. We try to respect her."

"In the last year, yeah, I've seen it gradually sort of snowball," says Mohan of Madonna's profile. "It's sort of gradually gotten bigger and bigger. It's sort of deafening now."

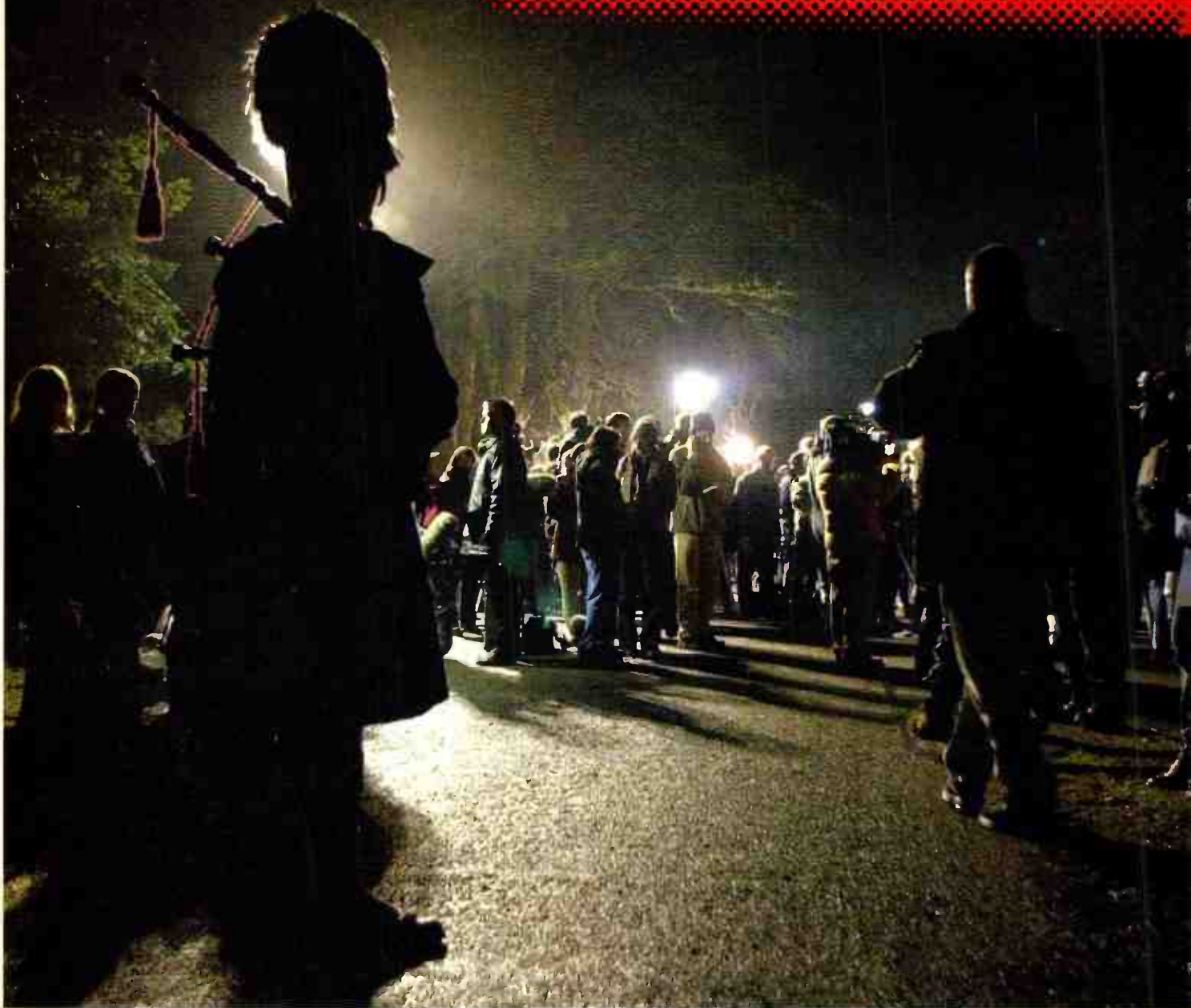
In the end, though, information about Madonna's wedding was so impounded by her camp that many papers weren't even able to report the exchange of vows with any certitude until two days after the event. When Posh Spice and David Beckham wed in 1999, Mohan says, "every half hour one of their press people would come out and say, 'They're eating minestrone soup and hot buttered rolls' or whatever, and we got everything—they played the PR thing completely." But Madonna isn't playing the game. (Her only comment on the wedding has been a terse prepared statement, released through Rosenberg: "I did not plan my wedding for the world's entertainment.")

**Shooting in the dark: photographers outside Skibo Castle. For the media, the absence of news about the wedding quickly became the news itself.**



DAN CHUNG/REUTERS

"We don't go where the news is; we go where the other  
"It doesn't matter if we all miss it. But if just *you* miss it,



Skibo Castle employees fired up two generator-powered lights as the Madonna stakeout dragged into the night. A bagpipe player (foreground) provided music.

Which means that the "showbiz event of the decade" ended up being noteworthy largely through the intensity of the spotlight on a pretty wrought-iron fence and cozy gatehouse, and not in what was actually revealed about the secret life of the very famous.

**I**t's Friday, December 22, and Dornoch's local radio station, Moray Firth Radio, is completing its "Madonna Week: A Touch of Class for Christmas." It's not clear whether this, as with much of the coverage surrounding the event, is ironic. The station is asking its listeners to call in and answer Madonna trivia questions like "Was Madonna raised a Catholic or a Buddhist?" The prize is a Madonna "goody bag," consisting of a calendar and a CD. Madonna Week, the disc jockey reminds us, is sponsored by a local supermarket—the Tesco Extra—in Inverness,

the nearest town with an airport, some 40 miles south of Dornoch. "Please stop sending in e-mails to the website claiming to be Madonna or Guy Ritchie and giving details of the wedding," says the DJ after congratulating a local girl for knowing Madonna's astrological sign (Leo). "The Web people are getting cheesed off." Then he plays a song from Madonna's attempt to embody Eva Perón: "I kept my promise/don't keep your distance."

But everyone is being forced to keep their distance. It's the wedding day, and a growing crowd of reporters, producers, cameramen, anchors, and photographers have been at the castle since 9 in the morning.

It's wet-cold, and a circle of 16 cameramen forms a clot in the turnaround at the main entrance to Skibo: CNN, BBC, Sky, and CBS are all there, not to mention teams from France, Belgium,

ADAM BUTLER/AP PHOTOS



journalists are," says David Sillito, an arts and media reporter for BBC News. you get sacked. There's no better way to describe the press than a pack."

Norway, Germany, and Japan. The small cul-desac at the foot of the castle's gates is crowded. Besides the reporters and the television and radio correspondents, there's also a pack of paparazzi, two guards, and, at this moment, exactly four fans. The network correspondents are giving updates like "They're really keeping a tight lid on this one!" One reporter yelps into his cell phone, "I can tell you exclusively, there will be a maroon tablecloth at the dinner." The rumor going around is that they'll know when the ceremony has taken place when fireworks go off—apparently a Skibo tradition.

The Skibo security and the private company Madonna hired mean business. Later press reports said that several paparazzi were flushed out of the estate's undergrowth, including one who brought snow camouflage in his bag. And in what would be the only true example of tabloid heroism at the entire event, one photographer (rumored to have been hired by *The Sun*'s sister publication, the *News of the World*, though he could have just been an enterprising freelancer) for a Sunday paper locked himself in the cathedral's organ for 60 hours—evacuating himself into plastic bags—in order to get a video of the wedding ceremony. (He was discovered and arrested.)

At 2 P.M., Nic Robertson from CNN announces to his viewers that Inverness Airport is fogged in and that the expected guests are being diverted to Aberdeen, more than three hours away from Dornoch. "The remoteness, the cold, or perhaps plain seasonal pressures may have kept Madonna's fans away; few fans are in evidence," he tells the camera. "Perhaps they knew what the rest of us failed to recognize: that even these days, a private wedding can still be private." It takes him six takes

to get that homily correct, and he becomes more emphatic with each.

Suddenly, a Mercedes arrives: It contains the pop singer Sting, who's swarmed by paparazzi shooting at the car one-handed; they catch him doing a crossword puzzle. Robertson duly reports this, adding, "We looked in the car. Sting was wearing a kilt!"

The stakeout was actually a two-day event, beginning with the christening of 4-month-old Rocco, Madonna and Ritchie's son, on Thursday, December 21, at Dornoch Cathedral, the 13th-century church in the middle of town. If the wedding itself would be all waiting and no payoff, the christening, a kind of pregame show, was the more public event: The press got to pile

up on ladders and nearby rooftops and film Madonna entering and departing the church.

David Sillito, an arts and media reporter for BBC News, reflects the next day on the christening's single photo opportunity. He is standing in the mud in his dark blue moleskin coat, trying to look bemused and respectable amid the obvious newslessness of reporting from the front gates of a secluded, high-priced golf resort. "We don't go where the news is; we go where the other journalists are," he muses, on the edge of the cul-desac but Officially Distant from the event ("The BBC is sort of uncomfortable with popular culture," he says). "It doesn't matter if we all miss it. But if just *you* miss it, you get sacked. There's no better way to describe the press than a pack." He adds that his producer sent an advance scouting team to find spots to shoot "about a fortnight ago," and they snagged the roof of a shop opposite Dornoch Cathedral. That's when the only pictures of the guests were taken, and the shot of Madonna exiting the cathedral with Ritchie (looking pensive and clutching Rocco) was the picture of record for the event. It illustrated stories in dailies from the *New York Post* to the *Montreal Gazette* (both of which featured it on their front pages). More commonly, it ran inside papers from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* to New York's *Newsday*, the *Albany Times Union* to the *Detroit Free Press*, *Hello!*, rival *OK!*, *People*, and *Us Weekly*, as well as all the major British dailies. "The glorious lighting which illuminated the whole of the cathedral yesterday was provided by the networks," Sillito explains. Most important, Madonna cooperated. "If she'd gone out through the other entrance, there would be absolutely nothing," says Sillito, "just a bunch of shadowy figures." ("I'm glad that she did do that," Rosenberg says later of Madonna's Eva Perón-esque post-christening wave.) Not that the paparazzi were happy. One of the *People* people on the scene—he says that there are eight of them, three

photographers and five reporters—is dismissive of the paparazzi's chances for a wedding photograph. "She gave them the money shot yesterday," he says. "She offered them a real unusual opportunity, let her mask down, opened the window"

"The christening was for us," Mohan agrees. "And then the shutters came down."

It's all part of this coy fan dance of push and pull with the media—the photo after the christening and the total silence afterward; Madonna's apparently chummy relationship with *The Sun*, whose staff were waiting out in the mud along with everyone else; an adamantly and

publicly private wedding in a location just remote and inconvenient enough to guarantee that once reporters and satellite trucks made the trip, they'd stick around for a few days. Indeed, the very remoteness, the disorienting, mossy unglitziness, of the location, is so emphatically at odds with the familiar deco-glamorous milieu in which Madonna is

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 150]



Skibo Castle, the 7,000-acre estate in Dornoch, Scotland, and the site of Madonna's wedding



*Pittsburgh Scaife Review*

SCAIFE LIKES



SCAIFE REACTION



SCAIFE HATES



SCAIFE ABOUT TOWN



# All the Views Fit to Print

PITTSBURGH WAS HAVING A PARTY. It was early April 1999, and thousands of people packed into the streets of the North Side to celebrate the groundbreaking of a new stadium for the Pirates, this sports-crazed city's beloved baseball team. Fireworks and a laser show illuminated the sky over the Allegheny River. The classic rock song "You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet" boomed from loudspeakers. A computerized design of the new stadium loomed on a massive screen. The mayor, the team's owner, and Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge addressed the enthusiastic crowd.

But the next day, there was no story about the bash on the front page of the city's second-largest newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. The coverage appeared in the local section and focused on the renaming of a bridge leading to the stadium for Pirates legend Roberto Clemente. The fireworks and speeches were left to the memory of those who had attended the event—or had caught the lead segment on the local newscasts or read the front page of the city's other daily newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. The day before, David House, then the *Tribune-Review's* editor, had called his publisher, gingerly broaching the subject of how to cover a ceremony celebrating a stadium that his boss had opposed. "I knew he had strong feelings about it, because it involved the Pirates, and he does not like [Pirates owner Kevin] McClatchy," says House. "He said, 'Not on page one, but it's fine if you cover it in the local section.'...We were disappointed that such a significant event couldn't be on page one. But we tried to make the best of it."

House's boss is not your average publisher. He is Richard Scaife, the billionaire philanthropist many consider to be the architect of what Hillary Rodham Clinton dubbed "a vast right-wing conspiracy." Remember the stories suggesting that Vince Foster, President Clinton's former counsel, was murdered? Scaife's money funded those reports and other conservative causes—to the tune of some \$200 million over the past 30 years.

Scaife, an heir to Pittsburgh oil, aluminum, and banking fortunes, is reported to be worth \$1.2 billion by *Forbes* and ranks 236 on its list of the 400 richest Americans. But he's not just a wealthy provocateur who tried to take down a president. He is a successful newspaperman—the owner and publisher of a thriving paper that competes with the once-dominant *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*—and an

**Richard Scaife, the billionaire provocateur who has famously funded conservative causes, has found another way to spread his message: by publishing an increasingly influential daily newspaper in Pittsburgh.**

**By Kimberly Conniff**



Scaife (center) at a 1970 Republican fund-raiser, with H.J. Heinz Company vice-chairman Frank Armour (left) and Vice-President Spiro T. Agnew

**Richard Scaife, publisher of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*.**  
Illustration by Steve Brodner

PHOTO ARCHIVES/PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

irritant to many in the community and at the paper itself.

In this age of corporate conglomerates, many big-city newspapers are part of large chains, and publishers are merely salaried employees focused on the bottom line. At the few remaining papers where the publisher is also the owner, the publisher traditionally controls the editorial pages but rarely dictates news coverage. Scaife, however, has spread his editorial influence over the entire product, from the news pages to the editorials to the lifestyle section. If some of Scaife's views weren't so enigmatic—and others so extreme—perhaps the results wouldn't be so remarkable. But what other publisher of a major newspaper has pur-sued a rumor that Russian soldiers had landed in the Allegheny National Forest, and then marched a reporter into the woods to investigate, as Scaife did in 1999? ("I found absolutely nothing," says the reporter, Joe Mandak.)

The *Tribune-Review* gives Scaife a respectable forum in which to air his views and at the same time magnifies his influence. After all, it's a large metropolitan paper with some strong local coverage, and when Scaife pushes a story there, it evolves, at least for some unsuspecting readers, from the ideological vagaries of a rich guy into a supposedly objective story. "You get the sense that [the *Tribune-Review*] is a plaything for Richard Scaife," says Doug Root, a spokesman for Pittsburgh mayor Tom Murphy, a longstanding Scaife foe. "It's a megaphone for him."

**At the few remaining papers where the publisher is also the owner, the publisher traditionally controls the editorial pages but rarely dictates news coverage.**

DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH sits at the confluence of three rivers in western Pennsylvania's Allegheny County, 70 miles from the West Virginia border. Those who haven't visited recently might imagine it as a faded rust-belt town. In fact, it is attractive and vibrant. The city's 35 miles of riverbanks are laced with trees and surrounded by hills and valleys, and although the city has lost thousands of steel jobs since the seventies, the economy has rebounded. The revitalized downtown boasts a new convention center and block after block of sleek office towers.

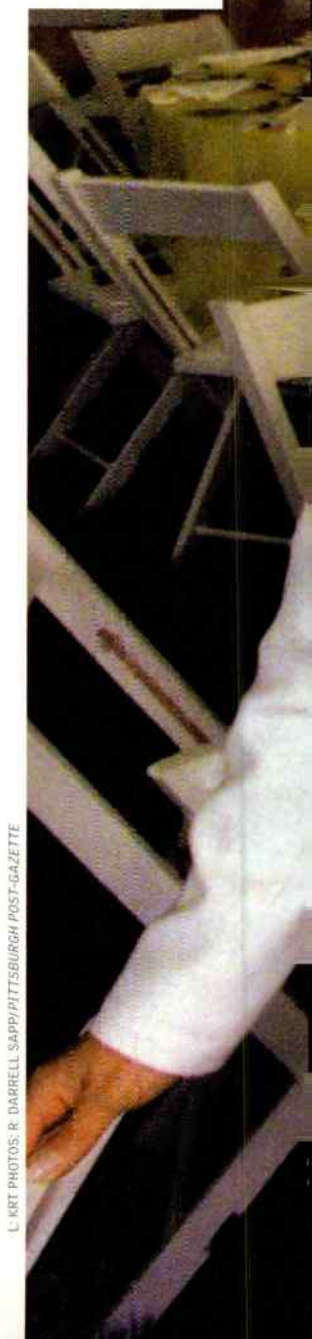
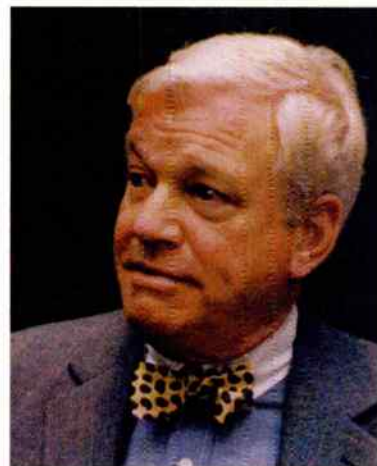
The Scaife family's long history in the region is evident all over Pittsburgh. At 54 stories, the headquarters of Mellon Bank, founded by Richard Scaife's great-grandfather, rises above nearly every other skyscraper. (Scaife's given name is Mellon Scaife, but he stopped using "Mellon" when his uncle lessened his father's role in the family's enterprises.)

A prominent building at the University of Pittsburgh, where Scaife studied, is called Scaife Hall. Another university in town also has a Scaife Hall—in fact, the university itself, Carnegie Mellon, carries his family's name.

Scaife grew up in a lavish but emotionally impoverished home, according to numerous press accounts. As reported in a 1999 *Washington Post* series, his mother was an alcoholic, and Scaife and his sister were raised by nannies. He was admitted to Yale but was expelled in his freshman year after he rolled a beer keg over another student's legs; Scaife eventually graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1957. He remained in the family business, joining the boards of its various companies and foundations, confirms Scaife's lawyer, Yale Gutnick. Scaife also dabbled in politics:

In the early sixties, he served on the campaign staff of a local district-attorney candidate and contributed \$1 million to the 1972 Nixon campaign. Contrary to many media reports, however, Scaife developed an ideological vision that is really more libertarian than right-wing; he supports abortion rights, for instance, and in 1998 he told *USA Today*, "I think government should leave us alone."

For decades, Scaife was a heavy drinker (Gutnick acknowledges that Scaife spent time in the Betty Ford Center), a socially awkward man given to outbursts. When Karen Rothmyer, writing for the *Columbia Journalism Review*, tried to corner Scaife for an interview in 1981, he called her "a f---ing Communist c---" and accused her of "hatchet journalism." (Gutnick says that



L: NRT PHOTOS; R: DARRELL SAPP/PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE



Scaife stopped drinking in the early nineties and has since undergone “a remarkable change in attitude.”)

**Scaife (left) in 1998; his wife, Ritchie, who also has influence on the *Tribune-Review's* editorial content, at the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy's Spring Hat Luncheon in May 1999**

By the early nineties, Scaife was quietly influencing public opinion. By spreading his wealth from conservative foundations to think tanks to magazines, he began a crusade to convince the public that Bill and Hillary Clinton were criminals. From 1993 to 1997, he donated about \$2 million to *The American Spectator* for the “Arkansas Project,” an investigation of the Clintons’ financial dealings, which led to Whitewater and, eventually, to Paula Jones.

Now 68, Scaife—a tall, imposing man with striking blue eyes and a shock of white hair—is still intensely private. He makes few public appearances, and hasn’t spoken to the press since 1999, when John F. Kennedy Jr. interviewed him in *George*. (Scaife denied *Brill's Content's* interview requests and didn’t respond to faxed questions.) “He’s mysteriously invisible,” says Sala Udin, a member of Pittsburgh’s city council. But Scaife’s influence reverberates throughout his paper and the city.

Scaife has always been fascinated by newspapers. “Whenever [my father] would go to a particular city, he’d bring me a copy of the local newspaper,” Scaife told Kennedy. “I had a bunch of racks at home, and I filed the papers alphabetically by state....By the time I was ten, I had subscribed to three newspapers.” By his late 30s, they had become his profession. In 1969, he bought the *Tribune-Review*, then a small suburban paper based in Greensburg, about 30 miles from Pittsburgh. (According to former *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham’s memoir, Scaife was approached by Richard Nixon in an unsuccessful effort to buy the *Post*—and presumably alter its political leanings.) At the *Tribune-Review*, Scaife quickly started to exert his influence. Pat Minarcin, then in charge of The Associated Press’s bureau in Pittsburgh, recalls that when The AP ran a story in 1972 revealing that Scaife had donated 334 checks of \$3,000 each to the Nixon campaign to avoid gift taxes. Scaife had every AP machine thrown out of the newsroom.

The *Tribune-Review* covered the suburbs for more than 20 years. During that period, Scaife ran the [CONTINUED ON PAGE 152]

**Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic understood the power of propaganda and did his best to control the media. But his failure to silence the U.S.-supported radio station B-92 was emblematic of the war he lost to control the country.**

By Peter Maass

# Radio WARS

IN BELGRADE, you don't need to be paranoid, but it helps. It's late October, and I'm sipping an espresso at the Window Café, along Knez Mihailova, the city's main shopping street, with Sasha Mirkovic, the general manager of B-92, an independent radio station that had the annoying habit of exposing the lies of Slobodan Milosevic's government. Outside the café, the city is laced with remnants of the euphoria that greeted the downfall of Milosevic's regime just a few weeks earlier. The government was washed away by a wave of protesters, many of whom found their way to the city center on October 5 by following a bulldozer as it cleared a

path through police roadblocks. A few yards from where Mirkovic and I sit, street vendors are selling postcards of the famous bulldozer—now a political icon with treads—and they are selling copies of a CD of popular protest songs with a torn campaign poster of Milosevic on the cover, under the title "He's Finished."

Mirkovic is telling me about B-92, checking his watch, running his hand through his dark hair (which is not far from a crew cut), and asking the waiter to turn down the music. He suddenly stops and points to his cell phone, which he has placed on the table between us. Whenever Mirkovic had face-to-face conversations

with sources or friends during the Milosevic era, he tells me, he not only turned off his cell phone but removed its battery. "It's not paranoia," says the stocky 33-year-old in the weary, know-it-all tone of a mechanic describing what's wrong with a car. "If you don't take out the battery, even though the phone is turned off, your conversation can be listened to." Detaching the battery to illustrate, he adds: "People are still doing this, even though Milosevic is gone."

I thought this was strange—another example of the suspicion that fills the Balkans with enough conspiracy theories to keep



**Left: A defaced campaign poster for Slobodan Milosevic from last fall's presidential elections in Serbia. Above: Sasha Mirkovic, the general manager of Serbian independent radio station B-92, operates in the let's-not-waste-a-second style of a young dotcom executive. Photographed by Thorne Anderson/Corbis Sygma**

LEFT: KAEEL ALFORD/LAISON



Oliver Stone busy for years—but other Serb journalists were telling me the same thing, assuring me, usually at the outset of our conversations, that they are not being paranoid. But none of them could explain how a switched-off cell phone could transmit their conversations to government snoops.

When I return to New York, I call Jeff Schlanger, chief operating officer of the security-services group at Kroll Associates, the global investigative company. Schlanger begins the conversation by reminding me of a simple fact: "A cell phone is a listening device." He explains that technicians can reconfigure a phone to transmit a conversation even though its owner has turned it off. The trick, he explains, is to make the phone appear as though it's been turned off when it is actually on. When I ask Schlanger what could be done to thwart this mis-

chief, he suggests detaching the cell phone's battery.

For quite some time, being an independent journalist in Serbia required a range of skills that edged into the realms of spycraft and diplomacy. That's because the struggle for power in Serbia centered on information, not politics, and Mirkovic's station was at the center of this war. B-92—which stands for Belgrade 92, its original frequency—began operating in 1989 as a low-wattage radio station for young people, but it quickly evolved, under Mirkovic's boss, editor in chief Veran Matic, into the Serbian capital's most influential source of honest and live news about the wars that were tearing apart the former Yugoslavia and about the government lies that were fueling the nationalist madness.

Milosevic made sure that the state-owned media, especially Radio Television Serbia (RTS), broadcast his nationalist

## Angry that the government had taken over their radio station, staffers destroyed whatever they could—even the jingles that identified B-92 to its listeners.

propaganda at all times; the station was staffed by loyalists who heaped praise upon the politicians, including Milosevic, who was later indicted for war crimes by the United Nations tribunal in The Hague. While leaders of the police and army were making deals with the opposition in the weeks before Milosevic was ousted, the ever loyal men and women of RTS pumped out increasingly strident propaganda, and they didn't stop until a mob stormed their headquarters on October 5 and set it on fire.

Milosevic understood that if you can brainwash your people, you don't need to arrest them. He understood a corollary lesson, too—a regime that draws its power from propaganda rather than terror faces its greatest threat from independent journalists who have the desire and the means to expose its lies. Milosevic never banned any opposition party and rarely arrested politicians who opposed him; he did, however, force the closure of radio and television stations he didn't like, and he didn't hesitate to throw journalists into jail. They were the enemy, and 18 months before he was removed from power, Milosevic showed how much he feared B-92, the pillar of Serbia's independent media, by trying to shut it down.

His failure to fully silence B-92 was emblematic of the war he fought—and, ultimately, lost—to control the hearts and minds of ordinary Serbs. B-92 outmaneuvered and outlasted Milosevic because it had truth on its side and a clever, dedicated staff, but it also had another asset—financial assistance from the United States government, which realized that in today's world, an undesirable dictator can be undermined with accurate information as well as smart bombs.

IT WAS APRIL 2, 1999, and Sasha Mirkovic knew it was going to be a bad day at the office when he saw the police cars parked

outside the Dom Omladine building. Dom Omladine is Belgrade's center for young people, who like to drink coffee in the ground-floor café, surf the Internet on the first floor, or shoot pool in the basement. The building is also the headquarters for B-92, and when Mirkovic, one of its founders, walked past the news kiosk outside the building on that day, he prepared himself for the worst. The NATO alliance had recently launched the first wave of air strikes in its 78-day bombing of Yugoslavia, and Milosevic was cracking down on dissent. Mirkovic had already taken the precaution of deleting sensitive e-mail messages from his computer and slipping out of B-92's office with documents that detailed the financial assistance the station received from foreign donors. Although B-92 acknowledged having accepted assistance from nonprofit groups outside the country, it never disclosed the dollar amounts—which appear to have been in the millions—or the donors themselves. And in the hands of Milosevic's propaganda machine, those details could easily be used to tie B-92 to the NATO governments that were preparing to turn the country into rubble.

Mirkovic took the elevator to his sixth-floor office; it was 8:30 in the morning, and he had arrived early to conduct a phone interview with a foreign television network. Before the interview could begin, a security guard told him there were visitors outside. He stepped into the corridor and faced two plainclothes law-enforcement officials who flashed their IDs and said they were taking over the station. Behind them were four uniformed policemen, and behind them were half a dozen men in black leather jackets who looked as though they had seen too many *Terminator* movies.

The only B-92 staff on the sixth floor apart from Mirkovic were a security guard and a cleaning woman. It was not much of a match, especially since Mirkovic's backpack was stuffed with some of the financial documents the police probably wanted. Stalling for time, Mirkovic asked the security guard to summon the cleaning lady, because, he said, he had her bag. When she appeared a minute later, squeezing through the leather jackets, Mirkovic casually handed her his backpack, and without missing a beat, she carried it to safety.

"When I went back into my office, a guy was already sitting in my chair," Mirkovic tells me, smiling. "The guy was asking, 'Where are the documents? Where are the folders?'"

Mirkovic refused to tell him and was tossed out of the office. He went downstairs and met with B-92 staffers who had gathered at the café on the ground floor. They decided that if they couldn't have



Radio Index's Nenad Cekic, who broke away from B-92 in a murky dispute in the early 1990s





**The building occupied by state-owned Radio Television Serbia was burned on October 5, 2000, by anti-Milosevic demonstrators.**

a tape cleaner of some sort. More important, their news broadcasts were the usual Milosevic drivel. The station was a fake, and listeners knew it; few tuned in. That was a victory of sorts for the station's former staff, but they still confronted a basic question: What do we do now to get the truth onto the airwaves?

SASHA MIRKOVIC HAS THE CRISP, let's-not-waste-a-second demeanor of a young dotcom executive, which is unusual in Belgrade. His mind even operates in a digital way, clicking from one subject to another so quickly that I find it necessary, on occasion, to ask him to slow down and explain something before clicking to another subject. He got his start in broadcasting as a disc jockey, which seems to have trained him to dread silence. Our encounter at the Window Café is a classic

the station, they wouldn't let the government have it, either.

The station's engineers logged on to the computer terminals in the lobby of Dom Omladine and hacked their way into the B-92 computer system. They deleted whatever they could find—not just financial information but even audio files that contained the jingles that identified the station to its listeners. When the government reopened B-92, the following Monday, most of the staff showed up ostensibly to interview for their old jobs and pledge their loyalty to a new management. But they were in fact there to cause as much havoc as possible. Disc jockeys filched as many CDs as they could lay their hands on. Technicians, asked to show their skills or just show how the systems worked, logged on to the computers and deleted files. The station's music director managed covertly to stick a screwdriver into an electrical outlet, shorting the station's wiring and causing everything to crash.

Regardless, the state-run B-92 went back on the air several days later, with a new staff that hadn't a clue about the alternative music the station used to play. They thought Radiohead was

illustration of Mirkovic's manic lifestyle, as he talks on his cell phone (he quickly reattached the battery after his demonstration) and jots reminders in his leatherbound datebook, which tracks his multiple appointments with diplomats, politicians, and journalists. A natural-born organizer, Mirkovic even keeps a list of every movie he has seen (he's a film buff; there are several thousand titles on the list). I suggest that his life seems a bit frenetic. "It would be worse if I had a normal life and didn't do anything against this regime," he replies. "One of the main reasons I was doing this job at B-92 was because I could not live in this country without acting against this regime. That was the meaning of my life. But I was also thinking, of the people who left the country, *One of us is making a mistake, them or me.*"

In the early 1990s, B-92 occupied the same cultural ground in Serbia as *Rolling Stone* did in America in the 1960s; one of B-92's slogans was "Trust no one, not even us." Under the guidance of Veran Matic, its editor in chief, B-92 soon evolved beyond the alternative realm and organized get-out-the-vote campaigns while disseminating [CONTINUED ON PAGE 155]



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## BOOKS

### BILL GATES UNDER OATH

BY FLOYD ABRAMS

When President Bill Clinton was interrogated in August 1998 before Ken Starr's grand jury, he was repeatedly asked about the accuracy of his prior testimony in Paula Jones's civil action against him. The president responded by saying that his general approach in that deposition had been "to be truthful, but not particularly helpful." When asked specific questions about that earlier testimony, the president retreated into now unforgettable prose: "It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is" has become a piece of American memorabilia.

Within a few months of Clinton's testimony, another man of enormous power and influence raised his hand and swore to tell the truth in a case of infinitely greater national import than one relating to a president's sexual misconduct and subsequent efforts to conceal it. When David Boies began to question Bill Gates in his deposition in the Microsoft antitrust case, no one doubted that the case was one of transcendent consequence.

No one was in doubt of other realities as well: that Gates was brilliant, that he was the richest man in the world, and that he was personally responsible for Microsoft's stunning success in creating a company whose software was the essential code in 90 percent of new personal computers sold and whose profits dwarfed those of almost every other company in the world.

There was something else knowledgeable observers believed that turned out to be false. It was that Bill Gates would be, as

Microsoft's own witness for the prosecution ● Paperback flower power ● To wit: Katha Pollitt ● The genesis of cool ● Dana Milbank opens his *Smashmouth* about election 2000 ● A real-life easy rider ● First ladies' memoirs throughout history ● A journalist investigates foster care ● Gay Talese on a revealing book about China ● America's literary sleuth

he always had been, Microsoft's best spokesperson. In fact, as two splendid, complementary, and competing accounts of the Microsoft trial—*World War 3.0: Microsoft and Its Enemies*, by Ken Auletta (Random House), and *Pride Before the Fall: The Trials of Bill Gates and the End of the Microsoft Era*, by John Heilemann (HarperCollins)—make plain, Gates turned out not only to be a hopelessly inept defender of Microsoft but also to have walked the line between evasiveness and lying in a manner that should lead him to be grateful that no Ken Starr had been empowered to watch and read his deposition.

Like Clinton (whose testimony was also, to his grievous harm, videotaped), Gates fought every question. He denied that he understood the meaning of words such as "compete" or remembered what he meant by "market share." He quibbled about the meaning of words such as "concerned," "definition," and "we." As to what he expected to ask of Apple Computer in one proposed transaction, he responded by saying, "I have no idea what you're talking about when you say 'ask.'"

Confronted by Boies with an e-mail he had written, marked "Importance: High," Gates denied that he had typed those words. Asked who had typed the legend, Gates identified the villain: It was a computer.

"A computer. Why did the computer type in 'High?'"

"It's an attribute of the e-mail."  
 "And who sets the attribute of the e-mail?"  
 "Usually the sender sets that attribute."  
 "Who is the sender here, Mr. Gates?"  
 "In this case it appears I'm the sender."  
 "Yes. And so you're the one who set the high designation of importance, right, sir?"  
 "It appears I did that."

Any lawyer who has prepared a client for a deposition will recognize this sort of preposterous overresponse. I frequently tell clients about to be deposed that our opposing counsel is his enemy, that she is interested not in learning truth but in doing



Bill Gates's own testimony did him in.

DAVE C. WONG

harm, and that my client has no obligation to be affirmatively helpful. Answers should thus generally be terse—"yes" or "no" with little explanation. Sometimes—sometimes—the client overreacts to the situation or to the advice by fighting every question in an absurd and self-destructive manner.

An overprepared client, an overly defensive client, an overly arrogant client occasionally winds up sounding like Gates. Like him, such a client winds up losing credibility with anyone who reads—or, far worse, sees—the deposition.

But Gates went dangerously farther down the obstruction road than simply interpreting questions in a comically literal manner or feigning a lack of understanding. Lawyers frequently tell clients not to guess, not to assume, and thus not to respond to questions if they do not actually recall the answer. A witness who truthfully answers that he does not recall something generally does himself less harm than one who tries to re-create a reality that he simply does not recall. What this does not mean, however, is that it is permissible to deny recalling what one does recall.

When Gates claimed to be unable to interpret a 1996 e-mail he wrote that had said winning Internet browser share is a "very, very important goal for us," he strained credulity. When he feigned inability to remember what he had meant in a 1997 e-mail that had asked if Microsoft had "a clear plan on what we want Apple to do to undermine Sun," his testimony was incredible. When he testified that he did not know if Apple was, as Boies put it, "free to ship Netscape's browser without also shipping Internet Explorer," Gates passed the point of no return.

It is no surprise that repeated testimony of this sort led Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson to conclude, as he told Auletta, that

Gates had demonstrated a "total lack of candor." After 37 years in law practice and as a judge, Jackson said, he can tell when a witness is "evasive, dissembling, defiant, arrogant"—all of which Gates had been. (What was, incidentally, extremely surprising was that Jackson spoke so candidly with Auletta for ten hours—something that makes a major contribution to the book but seems highly imprudent for a judge who desires his judgment against Microsoft to survive appeal.)

### GATES WALKED THE LINE BETWEEN EVASIVENESS AND LYING.

Both Auletta and Heilemann describe with gusto the background of the case, the players in it, and the likely impact of the trial on Microsoft's future. Heilemann's book (based on his 50,000-word *Wired* magazine story), more than 150 pages shorter than Auletta's, is insightful and witty. A longtime observer of and writer about Silicon Valley, Heilemann describes with lucidity the awesome growth of Microsoft, the quickening pace of fear and opposition to its power, and the critical decision of the Justice Department to intervene.

His recitation of interviewing Gates midway in the trial, asking him on six separate occasions whether there is any limit to what Gates regarded as appropriate to put in Microsoft's operating system and receiving mushy and evasive answers on each occasion, is memorable. The old Gates, Heilemann writes, would have defended

the notion that Microsoft should be free to add whatever it wanted to Windows. The midtrial Gates "was flaccid, lifeless; all the piss and vinegar had been drained out of him. In more than an hour, he didn't call me stupid even once."

Auletta's book offers more commentary on the industry and far more moment-to-moment analysis of the legal proceedings. He appears to have had a stunning degree of access to everyone of note in the trial. As a result, one reads Auletta's description of each event in court, each side's characterization of the event, and then Judge Jackson's reaction to it. I cannot recall a book written about a complex civil trial that describes it as completely and compellingly.

While Heilemann's sourcing is substantial, Auletta's is staggering. What became, for example, of the mediation effort undertaken by federal Court of Appeals judge Richard A. Posner at the request of Judge Jackson? Heilemann devotes a few general pages to the mediation but gives no indication of just what was said to Posner and by him. Auletta devotes a full chapter to Posner and another to a day-by-day recitation of proposals and counterproposals by each side to the other, including a previously unrevealed page-and-a-half summary by Judge Posner himself of the Justice Department's "final demands" for settlement, a detailed comparison of the terms the parties seemed ready to agree to, and a summary of the demands of the states that had sued Microsoft that ultimately made settlement impossible. Obtaining information of this sort was a journalistic tour de force.

In the end, Gates is inevitably the star of both books, and both authors offer indelible images of his testimony—"stunningly implausible" according to Auletta, "petulant and passive-aggressive, obfuscatory and obscurantist" according to Heilemann. They are both right. But by focusing on the harmful impact of Gates's impossible-to-credit testimony on Microsoft's case, neither author goes quite far enough.

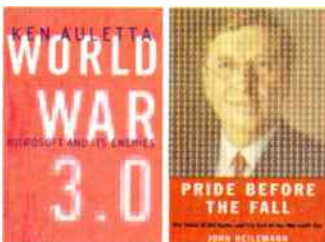
Dissembling in court is, after all, not only counterproductive; it is—as President Clinton was so often instructed—wrong. Gates himself was harsh in his judgment of Clinton: "If I did what he did in my office, the shareholders would throw me out!" True enough. But it is also true that if Clinton had testified as Gates did about matters as significant as those in the Microsoft trial, the Senate might well have thrown him out. ■

#### BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

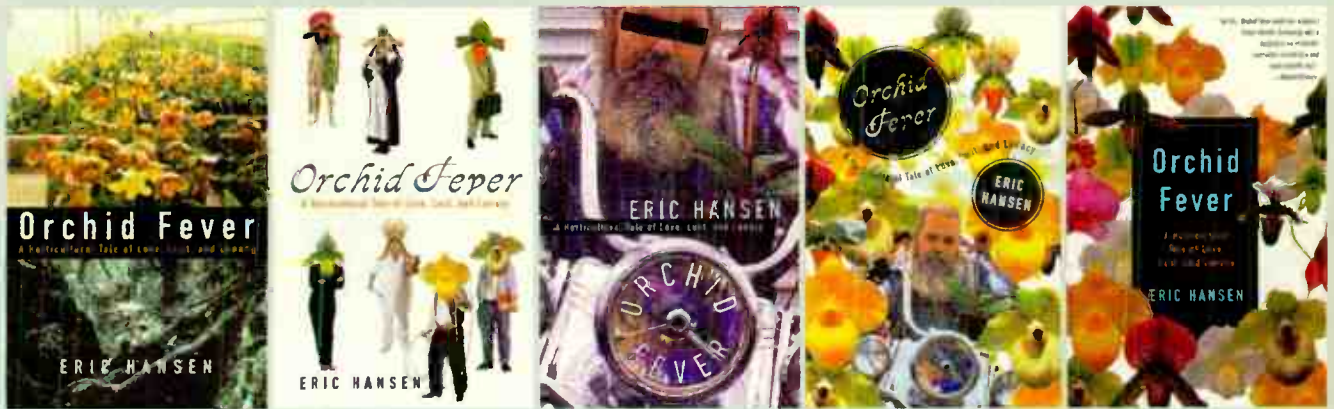
Ken Auletta's *World War 3.0* and John Heilemann's *Pride Before the Fall* share more than subject matter—both books appeared in stores on the same day, January 9. Piggybacking is common in publishing, but the agent who represents Auletta, Esther Newberg, cried foul: "It's not unusual, but is it fair?" Her answer: "No." She says, "No one wants their book to be reviewed with another book, especially a lesser book." Random House announced Auletta's January release date months before HarperCollins asked Heilemann to expand his 50,000-word *Wired* story on Bill Gates into a book. Auletta, who says he was helpful to Heilemann while the two were covering Silicon Valley for *The New Yorker*, isn't quite as aggrieved as his agent: "I tip my hat to him for writing a good magazine

piece." Auletta says, "I didn't know until sometime probably in November, maybe December, that John was racing to take that [article] and make it a book—to come out roughly at the same time." Newberg insists that "the non-Auletta book is a magazine piece, slightly expanded." Heilemann declined to comment on the hullabaloo and has nothing but praise for Auletta: "He's a terrific journalist.... I have not read his book, but I always expected it would be very good and I'm sure it is."

EVE GERBER



# SAYING IT WITH FLOWERS



Archie Ferguson went through some 30 designs for the paperback cover of *Orchid Fever* before arriving at the final version, far right.

Every year, paperback publishers single out a few acclaimed books that sold modestly in hardcover but might have a second chance for big sales in paperback—and the cover is key in the books' repositioning. Pantheon Books art director Archie Ferguson designed the hardcover of Eric Hansen's *Orchid Fever: A Horticultural Tale of Love, Lust, and Lunacy*—a playful, dippy look at the world of orchids and those who covet them. The book, published last March, featured an austere and elegant jacket, but for the paperback, published this February, Vintage Books wanted a more colorful look. After an attempt to cast the book

as a travel story (far left), Ferguson was asked for a design that, he says, "reflected the personalities in the book." His next cover, with its orchid-headed people (second from left), was deemed "too clever and witty," he says, and he returned to his computer with "my orchid between my legs." Next, Ferguson riffed on one of author Hansen's photos of an "atypical orchid queen" barreling through a swirl of orchids (center and second from right). But Hansen wanted the orchids to take center stage, and some 30 sketches later, they did, in a cover ablaze with a rainbow of flowers: (far right).

HANYA YANAGIHARA

## ALWAYS OPEN TO ARGUMENT

BY KAJA PERINA



The witty feminist critic Karha Pollitt writes the "Subject to Debate" column for *The Nation*, in which she acerbically condemns all things right-of-center. More than 80 of these essays,

spanning 1994 to 2000, have been gathered in *Subject to Debate: Sense and Dissents on Women, Politics, and Culture* (The Modern Library). Each essay uses a topic in the news as a launching pad, so the collection is both a meditation on touchstone issues of the last six years (O.J. Simpson, various aspects of the Clinton presidency, the battle over welfare reform) and a dangerously dated artifact (remember adulterous Air Force lieutenant Kelly Flinn or Disney's *Hercules* movie?). Nonetheless, Pollitt's analyses are lucid and pithy, whether the issue is eternal or ephemeral.

On the never-ending debate over child-custody battles, she writes, "What I see is a society in which women get the kids if the men don't want them." When Princess Diana and Mother Teresa died, in 1997, Pollitt noted that "the two most famous and adored women of the moment are those archetypal medieval figures, a princess and a nun." Occasionally, Pollitt

resorts to rhetoric that is frustratingly vague and unpersuasive; she tends to rely on predictably liberal platitudes. In an anti-athletics screed, she declares that "sports are about creating a world from which women are absent." And on the 50th anniversary of V-E Day, she tells us, "It's really the present that anniversaries and commemorations are mostly about," and proceeds to enumerate the reasons we long for 1945. Still, for every generalization, Pollitt presents a dozen concrete insights in prose so deft that even the most partisan observations are not easily ignored. ▣

## WHAT IS COOL?

BY ALLISON BENEDIKT

There was a time in America when the notion of "cool" applied only to fringe characters. Lewis MacAdams's new book of cultural history, *Birth of the Cool: Beat, Bebop, and the American Avant-Garde* (The Free Press), chronicles how the concept of "cool" grew out of the black jazz underground. According to MacAdams, the earliest print use of the word "cool" was in 1935, when African-American author Zora Neale Hurston wrote, in *Mules and Men*, about a friend who wouldn't go anywhere without his guitar: "What makes it cool. Ah don't go nowhere, unless I play it."

From its bohemian roots, cool moved slowly into white culture, most rapidly



Quintessentially cool Marlon Brando, circa 1954, from *Birth of the Cool*

within small pockets of New York's and San Francisco's hipster communities. From there MacAdams details its spread and eventual claim on the mainstream culture and vocabulary: By the time of Dylan and Warhol it was possible to attain cool and, at the same time, celebrity and wealth.

MacAdams—a poet, journalist, and documentary filmmaker—has put together a slick book, cementing his line with anecdotes and evocative black-and-white photos of the "original cool carriers" of the period: beboppers Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, as well as

beat writers Amiri Baraka and Gregory Corso, actors James Dean and Marlon Brando, and artists Jackson Pollock and Robert Rauschenberg. These were the guys (MacAdams doesn't mention many women) who created the public's perception of cool, and although the media jumped on board, MacAdams believes that "cool can only be bestowed by your peers....I don't think advertising invented Bob Dylan....The idea of cool can be bought and sold, but not cool itself." ■

## ON THE TRAIL

BY EVE GERBER



"This is a treatise on political toilet humor." So begins *Smashmouth: Two Years in the Gutter with Al Gore and George W. Bush—Notes from the 2000 Campaign Trail* (Basic Books), *Washington Post*

reporter Dana Milbank's hilarious peek behind the headlines of the 2000 presidential election. This snide campaign chronicle, parts of which Milbank originally published in *The New Republic* and the *Post*, is best read vignette by vignette.

There's a Lamar Alexander rally with 14 people in the audience, a visit to a Dairy Queen with Al Gore's 29-vehicle motorcade, and speeding between fundraisers with Ralph Nader. Milbank's

theme is the counterintuitive idea "that negative can be positive for the body politic." He celebrates mudslinging and insists that pussyfooting is fatal to politicians. (For instance, he credits the Republican National Committee's stealth smear tactics with the suppressing of Al Gore's support, and he insists that the ugliness of the postelection ruckus piqued public interest.)

Thankfully for the reader, *Smashmouth's* shaky thesis takes a backseat to the author's colorful commentary. An epigrammatic writer, Milbank caricatures former senator Bill Bradley as "a man not of the people, but above the people" and lauds Gore for "simulating with increasing skill the mannerisms of a normal human being." He also reviews campaign grub (the "Bushies" served the best breakfast) and pokes fun at campaign slogans (he repeatedly ribs Gore as to whether he's for the powerful and not the people or "for the people and not the powerful").

Milbank is equally abusive of his subjects, but evidently did not have equal access to them. He paints a more fleshed-out portrait of Gore and his aides, based, apparently, on numerous one-on-one encounters. In contrast, Milbank describes his "fruitless six-month quest to plumb the depths—or shallows, if you ask critics—of Bush's mind."

Presumably, in his new role as the *Post's* White House correspondent, Milbank will become better acquainted with George W. ■

## AN EASY RIDER

BY BOB ICKES



Long before "synergy" entered the modern media vocabulary, pop icon Terry Southern was a one-man, multi-platform content provider. Southern, who died in 1995 at the age of

71, cowrote such era-defining screenplays as *Dr. Strangelove* and *Easy Rider*. An outrageous satirist, he published short fiction and reportage in *Esquire* and literary journals; his anarchic novels, among them *Candy* and *Flash and Filigree*, are underground classics. Lee Hill's *A Grand Guy: The Art & Life of Terry Southern* (HarperCollins) shows how, by the sheer force of his subversive writing, Southern became, however unwittingly, part of our collective story—whether rioting with Allen Ginsberg and Jean Genet at the 1968 Democratic convention or whooping it up with Jane Fonda on the set of *Barbarella* (which he also cowrote). His brand of satire sprang from the world of ideas, not self-referential irony; perhaps that's why his cult status endures (attention, Quentin Tarantino). "The most important thing about writing," Southern once said, "is the capacity to astonish." He retained this capacity even on his deathbed—where, having reconciled himself to his fate, he remarked, "What's the delay?" ■

### BEHIND THE BOOK

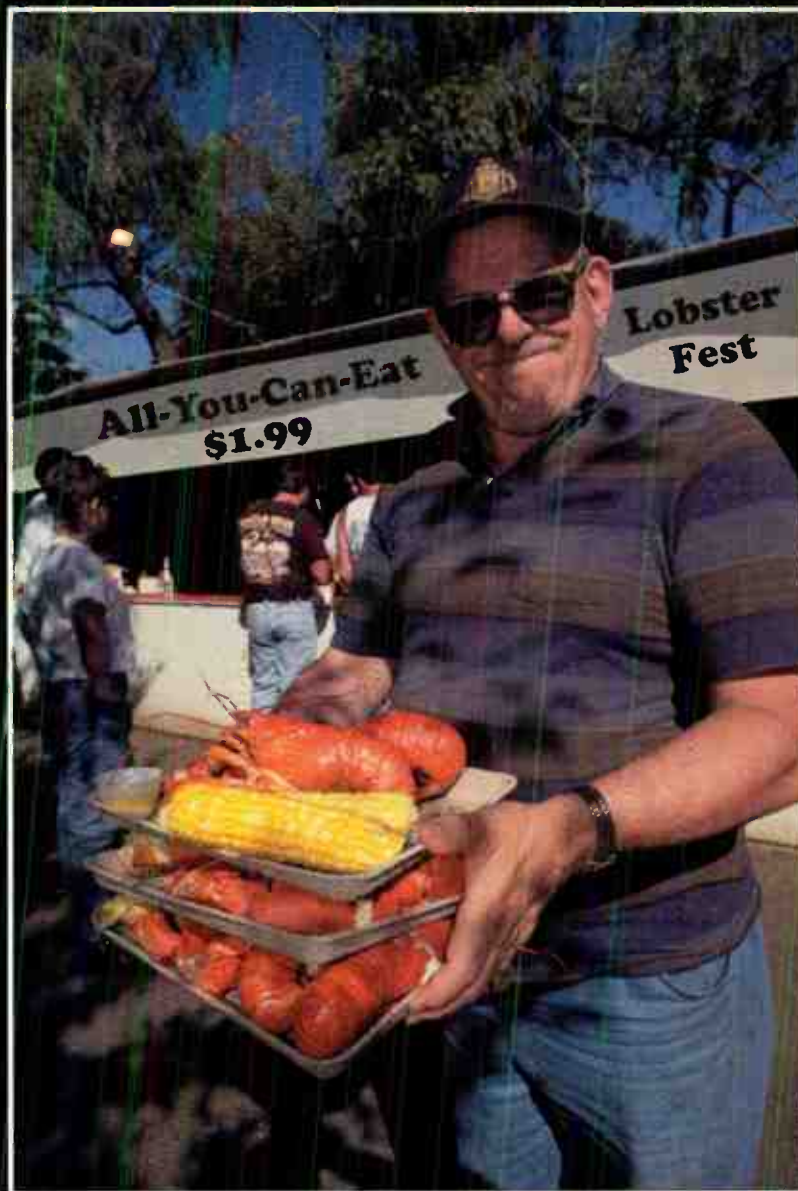
## THE BUSINESS



**FIRST-LADY TALES** Last year, Hillary Rodham Clinton (at right) scored \$8 million for her memoir, but she's not the only president's wife to pen her story. Louisa Catherine (Mrs. John Quincy) Adams titled her personal papers from the 1820s "Adventures of a Nobody," but they were never intended for publication. Other first ladies have been more public; below are some volumes from this long tradition. KAJA PERINA

FIRST LADY	TITLE, DATE	NOTES
Julia Dent Grant	<i>Personal Memoirs</i> , published in 1975	Mrs. Grant shopped her book at the turn of the 20th century, but she was asking for \$100,000, a sum deemed too high. The book was finally published in 1975.
Helen Herron Taft	<i>Recollections of Full Years</i> , 1914	Mrs. Taft's autobiography, the first to be published during a first lady's lifetime, was largely apolitical, but she did lightly criticize her husband's predecessor, Theodore Roosevelt.
Edith Bolling Wilson	<i>My Memoir</i> , 1938	Mrs. Wilson earned \$40,000 for serialized installments in <i>The Saturday Evening Post</i> .
Eleanor Roosevelt	<i>This I Remember</i> , 1938	She didn't discuss FDR's infidelity or illness, and Mrs. Roosevelt received no advance. She did earn a 15 percent royalty, though, and sold serialization rights to <i>McCall's</i> for \$150,000.
Lady Bird Johnson	<i>A White House Diary</i> , 1970	Mrs. Johnson treated her White House years in detail. She received an undisclosed advance for the book, which was based on daily tape-recorded notes.
Betty Ford	<i>The Times of My Life</i> , 1978	Mrs. Ford detailed her battle with breast cancer and her treatment for alcoholism and drug addiction. She and President Ford, who published his own memoir the following year, were jointly paid \$1 million.
Rosalynn Carter	<i>First Lady from Plains</i> , 1984	Mrs. Carter earned an advance of less than \$500,000, but she did go on to write a number of best-sellers about spirituality and mental health.
Nancy Reagan	<i>My Turn</i> , 1989	Mrs. Reagan earned \$2 million for perhaps the most politically revelatory (albeit inadvertently) memoir, as America learned that an astrologer had affected some of President Reagan's decision-making.
Barbara Bush	<i>A Memoir</i> , 1994	Mrs. Bush also received \$2 million for her book, which, although written in the form of diary entries, didn't shed much light on her notoriously guarded opinions.

# Like Good Deals?



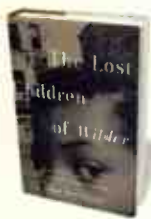
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# CHILDREN OF THE SYSTEM

BY KIMBERLY CONNIFF



The architects of New York City's foster-care system envisioned nurturing homes where the children of troubled families could find refuge. But that promise vanished long ago,

and the system became a purgatory for children with nowhere else to go.

In *The Lost Children of Wilder: The Epic Struggle to Change Foster Care* (Pantheon Books), *New York Times* reporter Nina Bernstein chronicles the fate of a lawsuit brought by a crusading lawyer, Marcia Lowry, that challenged the structure of New York City's foster-care system. Lowry took on the practices of private Catholic and Jewish child-care agencies that were lavishing funds on Catholic and Jewish children but turning away black Protestant children—even though most of their funding came from the city. The lawsuit languished in the courts for more than two decades, and Bernstein recounts its twists and turns in (sometimes laborious) detail. But in the spirit of journalists such as Alex Kotlowitz and Ron Suskind, she brings the story to life by focusing on one family ravaged by the system.

The book takes its title from the case of Shirley Wilder, a foster-care child who was denied entry into one agency after another because of her race and religion. Shirley lingered on in inadequate group homes, where sexual assault was common and she was confined to a windowless five-by-eight-foot cell when she misbehaved. When she was only 14, Shirley had to give up her own son, Lamont, to the city.

It is Shirley's son who becomes the focus of Bernstein's book, which, as she traces his repeated rejection by anyone he allows himself to love, suggests that Lamont and children like him are the real casualties of the system. Those looking for neat solutions to the foster-care debacle will be disappointed with Bernstein's work. It recounts, more than anything else, the stagnated efforts to rescue a system too overburdened and inflexible to change. Whether or not they had escaped their troubled families, Bernstein shows, the bleak reality is that the lives of the lost children of Wilder were doomed. ■

**BY GAY TALESE** I'm reading *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*, by Peter Hessler (HarperCollins), an exquisitely reported nonfiction book about China. There is so little coming out about that country that gives a real picture of Chinese life other than hard-core journalism, which is more often about bashing China than about the country's people. If you read *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* or watch the networks, you get politics about President Jiang Zemin or something about

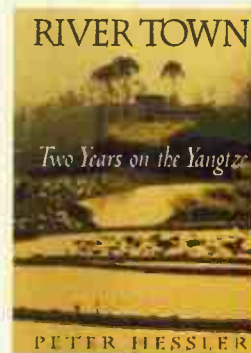


Gay Talese

Tiananmen Square or human rights. Such subject matter is written and talked about without any apparent understanding of the people, because the journalists are too busy projecting their perceptions of China's politics.

Hessler went to China in 1996 as a teacher under the auspices of the Peace Corps. He was one of the few volunteers who went to a particular part of China called Fuling, an old, remote area with no great culture or affluence. At its center, *River Town* is about these ordinary Chinese—how much they earn, how they live, and where they go. Hessler describes the politics and the history of China in ways that I've never seen matched by practically any historian—and I've read a number of books on Chinese history, such as those by Edgar Snow, who was given unprecedented access to China because he was on the right side of the Maoist revolution. Hessler writes beautifully and with balance—he has a great eye for detail and understands character in the same way any good novelist would, and occasionally a novelist can be equaled or even surpassed by a very fine nonfiction writer. He is someone who has not lost his soul to journalism, a field that tends to encourage finding and exploiting the negative aspects of a given scenario.

The challenge of any writer is to give the reader the feeling of being there. But unless the writer truly understands how it feels to be there, there's no chance that he'll be able to communicate this experience through the written word to a reader miles away, sometimes across the entire world. Hessler succeeds in this admirably. As a writer with an interest in people—which can't be emphasized too much—he's able to communicate with the skills of a sensitive author, in the tradition of Graham Greene. When Greene wrote *The Quiet American*, the reader knew plenty about Vietnam and what it was like to be in Saigon. Hessler is telling you what it's like to be in China—and this is not what you get from the newspapers or television pundits. I've been to China several times in the past two years and seen firsthand some of what Hessler writes about, and his descriptive authenticity resonates throughout the book.



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

**BY DON FOSTER** I'm a professor of English literature at Vassar College, where I've taught for ten years, and the response to my book *Author Unknown: On the Trail of Anonymous* (Henry Holt and Company) has been gratifying. The reviews, all but one, have been suitable for framing. The book is one of literary detective stories—I identified a long-forgotten poem as the work of Shakespeare, and



Don Foster

fingered Joe Klein as the "anonymous" author of the novel *Primary Colors*. But the story that received the most play is the one asserting that "The Night Before Christmas" was written by an 18th-century army major named Henry Livingston Jr., not by Clement Clarke Moore. Much hoopla ensued, and I was everywhere, from ABC News to *People*. But it turns out that there's a downside to all this public interest in my work. Suddenly, everyone in the world seems to have an authorship problem—a disputed will, a forged contract, a letter of harassment, a ransom note, a threat to kill the family cat—and I'm often the one who gets called. Since the book's publication, I've received queries by the dozen (some trivial, others urgent) and theories by the cartload: that Shakespeare did not really write the works of Shakespeare, that Stephen Sondheim did not really write the lyrics for *West Side Story*, even that Lee Harvey Oswald shot JFK by mistake (he was aiming for Jackie).

I don't have time to investigate such matters. But what about these? A handicapped teenage boy is found fatally shot in his room with a typed suicide note at his side, and a parent has been charged with homicide. A white female salesclerk has received threatening racist notes concerning her relationship with a black colleague. Should I get involved? It's sometimes unwise to ask whodunit—the answers can be unsettling, but it's just as unsettling to think that someone who deserves help with a critical document may be unable to get it.

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



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# CATCHING CABIN FEVER

Need to fix that dripping faucet? Want to plumb the depths of drywall? Here are the best sources for all those home improvements. By Emily Chenoweth

You've been cooped up all winter, sheltered from the elements by that thing—house, apartment, yurt, whatever—you call home. But spring's just around the corner, the spirit of the handyman's special is whispering to you, and you need to start planning those home improvements: There's the drafty front door to replace and the crack in the bathroom ceiling to spackle. With countless do-it-yourself resources available for every conceivable home-repair or construction project, it's hard to know which ones to trust. We've combed bookshelves, newsstands, the airwaves, and the Internet for the best sources on home improvement (for home decorating, see the November 1999 Sources) so you can take off those reading glasses and strap on the tool belt.

## BOOKS

Home-improvement books generally fall into two categories: straightforward how-to manuals and literary explorations of "Why do we do it?" and "What does it mean?" Here are three classics in each genre.

### NEW COMPLETE DO-IT-YOURSELF MANUAL

(THE READER'S DIGEST ASSOCIATION, INC., 1991, \$35)

This guide, which looks and reads a bit like a high-school shop textbook, starts with the basics, such as "Emergency repairs" and "Hand tools and how to use them." Each chapter, whether on woodworking or electrical systems, eases in the neophyte with a discussion of the "nature of wood" or "electricity: understanding how it works."

At 500-plus pages, it probably contains more information—charts, photos, illustrations, and text—than the average do-it-yourselfer could ever use. But it's an excellent primer, as well as a good reference for more complicated projects.

### THE COMPLETE PHOTO GUIDE TO HOME REPAIR

BLACK & DECKER (CREATIVE PUBLISHING INTERNATIONAL, INC., 1999, \$34.95)

The folks who manufacture your cordless drill and glue gun offer a comprehensive guide addressing hundreds of the most common home-repair problems. The book is full of photographs (featuring Black & Decker tools, but that's the extent of the product placement) to guide your efforts to, say, install a vinyl gutter system. The pictures seem to imply that the process of home repair is perfectly neat and organized, which may not be realistic. But the directions are clear, so success is within reach.

### THE FIX IT YOURSELF COLLECTION, \$13.99 EACH; THE HOME REPAIR AND IMPROVEMENT COLLECTION, \$16.99 EACH

(TIME-LIFE BOOKS INC., 1976-98) If the idea of a 12-pound "How to fix everything" tome doesn't appeal to you, consider one or two of the slim single-subject volumes in either of these two series. The *Fix It Yourself* collection focuses on specific repair problems—this series has "Walls, Ceilings & Woodwork" and "Lighting & Electricity"—while the broader-based *Home Repair and Improvement* collection covers "Adding On" and "Outdoor

Structures," among other topics. There are troubleshooting guides, tool charts, and clear, if somewhat unattractive, illustrations. For details on ordering, visit [timelife.com](http://timelife.com).

## HOUSE

BY TRACY KIDDER  
(MARINER BOOKS, 1985, \$13)

In this best-seller, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Tracy Kidder tells the story of the building of a couple's Greek Revival house, from blueprints to move-in day. *House* reads like a novel, and though there's plenty of detail, the book is less about construction than about the people involved—clients, builders, and architect. The project created a kind of "ménage à trois," Kidder says. "This kind of home-building is a pretty intimate process conducted among strangers, and it's potentially explosive...what seems to be the most pedestrian of subjects turned out to be pretty fraught." A moving investigation of relationships, craftsmanship, and even social class, *House* reveals how the construction of a home is far more complicated than the pouring of a foundation or the hammering of nails into two-by-fours.

## HOME: A SHORT HISTORY OF AN IDEA

BY WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI  
(PENGUIN BOOKS, 1986, \$13.95)

This intelligent and engaging book examines, as the author writes in the foreword, "not so much the reality of the home...[but] the idea of home." Witold Rybczynski explores matters of comfort, privacy, and domesticity through a detailed history of architecture and decor from the Middle Ages to the 1980s. Rybczynski, a professor of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, says of *Home*, "The reason for its durability is that it deals...not with fashions or home decorations [but] with the underlying cultural history of our homes, and that's something that doesn't change."

## THE WALLS AROUND US: THE THINKING PERSON'S GUIDE TO HOW A HOUSE WORKS

BY DAVID OWEN  
(VINTAGE BOOKS, 1991, \$14)

"I love buying expensive power tools and using them to wreck various parts of my house," begins David Owen's funny and educational book about the various projects he



These books and magazines could inspire the handyman within.

undertook on his own dwelling, a 1790 colonial in Washington, Connecticut. The author ruminates on carpenter ants, siding materials, and joint compound and provides an engrossing examination not only of how home improvements are accomplished but also why we're compelled to do them in the first place. Owen, a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, says the book "was designed to explain how a house works...what's there and how it all fits together." For the do-it-yourselfer whose appetite is whetted by all of Owen's information, an extensive list of resources at the back of the book points to additional publications and associations.

## MAGAZINES

### HOUSE BEAUTIFUL HOME BUILDING

(HEARST COMMUNICATIONS, INC., \$3.95/ISSUE)

Though it's published only twice a year—and is sometimes difficult to find on newsstands—*House Beautiful Home Building* has a lot to offer anyone thinking about building or remodeling a home. It rather explicitly assumes that someone else will do the actual work: There are no how-to articles here—unless you count the ones about how to hire a builder—but there are plenty of glossy pictures of finished projects to help you pick out your roofing, skylight, or door. The "Before You Begin" section offers advice on choosing a home site and a heating and cooling system, for example, and an "Ask the Experts" page features industry professionals answering construction questions. Overall, the information in the magazine is relatively basic, but it's a great place to begin looking when you're struck with the urge to build. You can order issues by calling 1-800-925-0485, ext. 4258, or through [hearstspecials.com](http://hearstspecials.com).

### FINE HOMEBUILDING

(THE TAUNTON PRESS, INC., \$6.95/ISSUE)

*Fine Homebuilding*, published eight times a year, is not for the novice: Nonexperts can probably follow the directions to "Setting Prehung Doors" or "Installing Grab Bars" but are likely to skip "Soil: The Other Half of the Foundation," an exploration of dirt and digging in it,

complete with U.S. government topographic and soil maps. The articles—and most of the advertisements—are more for the home-building professional. Contractors, engineers, and carpenters write detailed how-to articles, rate new tools, and discuss lighting fixtures. *Fine Homebuilding* also offers book reviews, a Q&A section, and "Tips and Techniques"—a handyman's *Hints from Heloise*, complete with diagrams.

## TELEVISION

### THIS OLD HOUSE

PBS; PRODUCED BY WGBH BOSTON

The original and best-known home-improvement show, *This Old House*—often credited with starting the modern do-it-yourself trend—was created in 1979 "to demystify the home improvement process and to celebrate the fusion of old world craftsmanship and modern technology," its press kit says. In the current season—its 22nd—the *Old House* team, led by host Steve Thomas, tackles a three-story, 1865 townhouse in Charlestown, Massachusetts. *This Old House* doesn't actually teach you how to renovate from top to bottom, but it provides the background and context necessary to converse intelligently with your contractors. "We teach the language with which you can engage in a dialogue with your house," observes Thomas. The *Old House* franchise includes a website, a magazine, and 12 companion books, including the recently released *This Old House Homeowner's Manual*. Check local listings or [pbs.org/thisoldhouse](http://pbs.org/thisoldhouse) for airtimes.

### HOME & GARDEN TELEVISION

THE E.W. SCRIPPS COMPANY

A cable channel dedicated to all things domestic, Home & Garden Television's mission is to provide "information, ideas, and inspiration that empower people to make the place they live the best it can be," says senior vice-president and general manager Burton Jablin. HGTV's many shows (which do not appear to favor advertisers' products) focus either on particular projects or on general lifestyle topics. The shows about projects give helpful information about landscaping or home repair, for example, while the more conceptual lifestyle programs seek to provoke

both thought and grand home-improvement schemes. This season's new offerings include a few shows of each type, such as *Help Around the House*, which demonstrates common home-repair tasks, and *Weekend Warriors*, which focuses on the personal and psychological aspects of home renovation. Should you choose to tackle the projects featured, the network's website, [hgvtv.com](http://hgvtv.com), provides detailed instructions. The site also offers weekly live chats, instructional video clips from past programs, and articles from the magazine *HGTV Ideas*. Check local listings or the website for shows and schedules.

## WEBSITES

The information on these websites is free, and no registration is required. They all feature advertising, but ads and sponsored content are distinguished from editorial content: Do-it-yourself instructions, for example, do not include recommendations for particular brands.

### HOMESTORE.COM

Homestore.com integrates the content of half a dozen other home-related sites (including HomeBuilder.com and Remodel.com) and is a well-organized, nearly encyclopedic source for information, products, and services: You can learn how to install laminate on your kitchen countertop, but you can also find an apartment, a loan, decorating advice—even crime statistics for the city you're thinking about moving to. The home-improvement section has how-to guides covering 13 project categories, and directions for applying stucco or installing soffit vents come complete with safety tips, shopping lists, and step-by-step, illustrated instructions. Watching Homestore.com's animated segment about fixing damaged shingles, for example, would make most people confident enough to make the attempt. Other features include a tool dictionary, material and project calculators (plug in a few numbers and find out how much drywall you'll need for the new addition), message boards, and a list of remodeling and home-maintenance links.



**Bob Vila: His name has become a home-improvement brand.**

### BOBVILA.COM

Bob Vila, the man whose name is synonymous with home improvement—he was the original host of *This Old House* on PBS—has been busy overhauling his website, which will offer "complete solutions for the homeowner," he says. "The foundation of the site is the three-pronged concept of inspire, design, [and] achieve." Vila has enjoyed media ubiquity for years: He appears in commercials for Sears Craftsman tools, has written books, and has made cameo appearances on—what else?—the sitcom *Home Improvement*, and his own syndicated TV show, *Bob Vila's Home Again*, is in its 11th season. The website will be command central: "We're taking all the elements that make up Bob Vila and pouring them into the site," says director of content Melissa Marchand. A preview version of the revamped site is up; it will launch officially this month.

### BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS

BHG.COM

In addition to the familiar crafts-and-recipes features of the classic *Better Homes* magazine, this website offers quite a bit for larger projects. It's a good place to start if you're truly a beginner—the coaching is gentle and reassuring, and for the simpler projects (which make up the bulk of the content), little experience is assumed. Though the directions for building a redwood and brick bench suggest that the do-it-yourselfer have rudimentary skills in "bricklaying, cutting and fastening lumber," most aspects of the site assume that you won't. Pop-up definitions of basic tools and materials are available throughout. ■

# TELLING STORIES ON OSCAR NIGHT

On March 25, Louis J. Horvitz, the TV director behind nearly every big awards show, will bring the drama and suspense of the Academy Awards from the Shrine Auditorium into our living rooms. By Jesse Oxfeld

The excitement of Oscar night, one would think, takes place onstage. That's where Academy Award winners are announced, endearing acceptance speeches are delivered, and, occasionally, memorable scenes unfold—think Sally Field, or Sachée Littlefeather, or Roberto Benigni. There will be suspense and excitement inside the Shrine Auditorium on Sunday night, March 25, but the truth is that the real action of the evening will be in the parking lot. Come Oscar night, the most exciting, suspenseful, adrenaline-soaked spot will be just outside the Shrine, in a 53-foot-long tractor-trailer.

This is the production truck from which the annual telecast—the “Oscarcast,” as people associated with the event call it—is created. The truck contains hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of top-of-the-line digital video equipment, and on Oscar night it will control close to 35 television cameras in and around the Shrine as well as a matching trailer parked next to it that will ready the graphics and titles for the show. What comes out of the truck will be broadcast live on ABC to about 45 million people nationwide and live or on tape delay on other television stations in about 100 foreign countries. In the middle of the truck, sitting at a desk, surrounded by about two dozen tightly packed assistants, overseeing nearly 150 technicians and another 150 or so stagehands, giving commands to all of the camera operators, looking at about 75 televisions displaying images from those cameras and from VCRs and graphics machines—running the entire TV show, in other words, and doing it for the fifth consecutive year—will be Louis J. Horvitz.

Horvitz is a live-event television director—the live-event television director—and that makes him the guy who determines what appears on your screen at home. He has directed several thousands of hours of programming, including installments of nearly every major awards show you can think of. Producers praise his copious preparation,

his intensity during a broadcast, and his instinctive showman's feeling for putting on a riveting presentation. “He's fast, he's experienced, and he's very clever,” says Gil Cates, who is producing this year's Oscars show, his tenth. “But what I specifically like about Lou is that he tells the story.”

The Oscars isn't simply a stage show put on for people sitting in the Shrine; it's also one of the biggest television shows in the world, and Horvitz, as director, is the man

**IT'S THESE CUTAWAYS, WHAT HE CALLS THE “RELATIONSHIP SHOTS,” THAT ARE SO IMPORTANT TO TELLING THE STORY.**

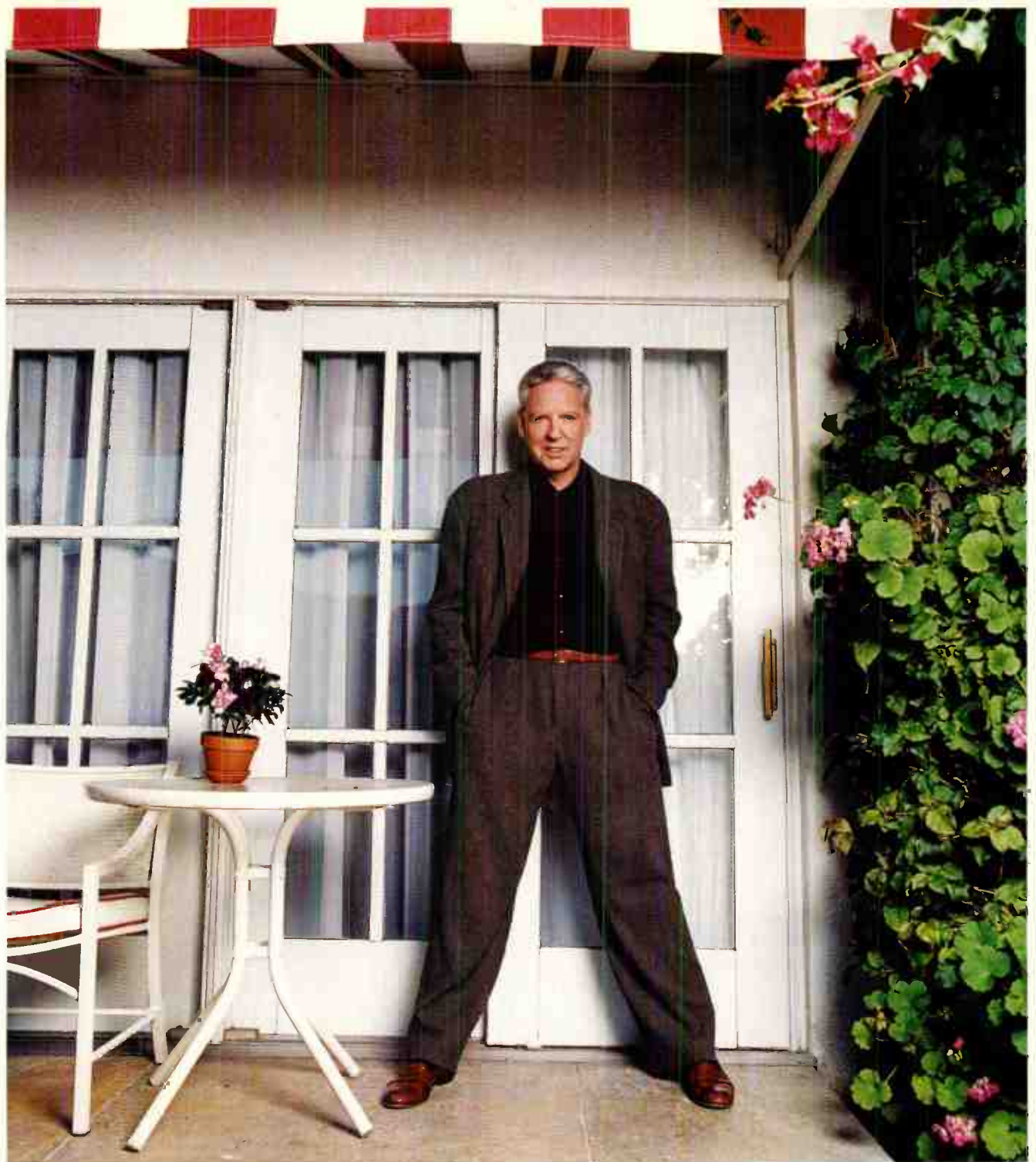
who makes the split-second calls that determine what goes on the air. Every decision Horvitz makes—which costar's reaction to broadcast, when to cue the next presenter, how long to keep the camera on Angelina Jolie and her brother—must be made in real time. “For him to do that, he's obviously some kind of thrill seeker,” says Lili Fini Zanuck, who with her husband, Richard Zanuck, produced last year's Oscars show. “If he wasn't doing these live shows, he'd be bungee jumping.”

A big part of making the Oscarcast successful is turning it into compelling television, and what makes it compelling television is understanding that the evening isn't simply about a rote recitation of winners. There is suspense and drama throughout the show; the question isn't just who will win but also how the losers will react, how genuinely the winner will emote, how friends and loved ones and associates will cheer. Any show needs a narrative arc, and Oscar night has at least

22 of them, a tiny soap-opera episode for each award. But there are even more story lines than that—and some are real cliff-hangers: When Elia Kazan won an honorary Oscar two years ago, no one was sure what the audience would do. Would the crowd, most of Hollywood, applaud him as the director of *On the Waterfront* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, or would it shun him as the man who named names in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee? When Kazan walked onto the stage, some people stood to applaud while others remained seated in silence. Horvitz showed people doing both, using a wide shot that showed the dichotomy. Then even those who had been pointedly sitting began to stand, and Horvitz showed that, too. “I thought Lou, in the split-second time he had to make those decisions, told a very fair and equitable story,” says Cates, who also produced that year's show.

These days Horvitz gets a lot of chances to tell those stories. In addition to directing the Oscars show each year since 1997, he's done the past eight Primetime Emmy Awards, the past ten People's Choice Awards, and eight of the last ten Daytime Emmy Awards. He's helmed countless celebrity-tribute specials, a Super Bowl halftime show, and all sorts of high-profile televised rock concerts, including the legendarily mammoth Live Aid concert in 1985. In 2000 alone, he directed a dozen major live-event programs. He's won three Emmys for his directing work and one Directors Guild of America award.

It was Live Aid that marked the turning point in Horvitz's career. A native of southern California—though not of the entertainment world centered there—he was attracted to film and television production while at UCLA. He went on to get a master's and begin his career as a summer-relief cameraman at NBC. Horvitz moved through the camera ranks, did some work as an associate director, and along the way met, learned from, and—maybe most important—caught the attention of many influential variety- and music-show producers and directors. He became one of the top directors of music programs, presiding over the popular early-eighties show *Solid Gold*. By 1985, it made sense for Horvitz to direct Live Aid, which was essentially a marathon version of what he'd been doing since 1979. It was his first big live production, and Horvitz discovered he liked it. A lot. Live Aid led to televised concerts of Paul Simon in Central Park and Madonna in France; those led to more prestigious shows, like American Film Institute tributes. “And then,” Horvitz says, “I started getting calls to do the live-event programming and live-event awards shows.”



Louis J. Horvitz, who will direct his fifth Oscars telecast in March, in Beverly Hills, California. Photograph by Alison Dyer

I FIRST MET HORVITZ in his Los Angeles office a few days before he left for Washington to direct the Kennedy Center Honors. (The show is taped in early December and aired later that month.) He looked very L.A. cool, fit and silver-haired, in prescription shades and a black-and-gray outfit. Once we began talking about directing, though, much of the surface coolness disappeared. When he directs—I

later saw him at work, in Washington—Horvitz exhibits a confident, capable mania. In the heat of the live or live-to-tape moment, he bounces with excitement, talks quickly, and waves his hands as he gives commands. As we talked in his office, he exhibited that same excitement. Horvitz was elaborating on his theory about live-event directing, about telling the story and showing the interactions

among and between presenters and nominees and winners and their friends and families. It's these cutaways, what he calls the "relationship shots," that are so important to telling the story and that play a big part in making the viewers' experience of the Oscars enjoyable. These shots seem natural to us, but for folks on Horvitz's end, it's tough work. Consider his anecdote from the 1997 show, when

Cuba Gooding Jr. won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor.

Mira Sorvino, who was presenting the award, announced Gooding's name as the winner. The *Jerry Maguire* star bounded up to the stage, and Horvitz gave us the shots we expected: a beaming Tom Cruise, an excited Renée Zellweger. Then Gooding started his speech, and that was the tough moment for Horvitz and his crew—they had no idea what the happy winner was going to say. "I am so thankful to be here today," Horvitz remembers Gooding saying. "I thank God, and I want to thank somebody who's here tonight who was the biggest influence on my life. As a little boy I watched his pictures, and he's going on and on." Horvitz, recounting the scene, starts to get bouncy. "And I'm saying, 'Who is it? Who is it? Come on, guys, look. Who is it?' Well, Sidney Poitier's up here. He got two Academy Awards; well, there's Sidney over there. Tom Cruise is responding to that. It could be Tom, but he said it was when he was a little boy. Forget Tom; it's not Tom." By now Horvitz's hands are waving, and he's snapping his fingers—which he does during a show as a signal to take a different shot. "It's an older, experienced, seasoned veteran actor. It's got to be Sidney Poitier. And then he goes, 'Sidney Poitier.' Take it, and we get it, you know?" Just remembering that moment, Horvitz becomes nearly as worked up as I'd later see him when he was directing a number at the Kennedy Center. His story finished, Horvitz laughs hysterically, with a sort of relief, and it's easy to see how tense those few minutes were. To a viewer at home it all flows naturally, and the viewer might assume that's because the director had a copy of Gooding's speech. But that's not the case; it's all done on the fly. "We don't have anything," Horvitz says.

A big chunk of the Oscarcast can be



Horvitz directs "An Evening of Stars," a four-hour benefit concert, in October.

rehearsed, or at least mapped out—and not just the interpretive-dance segments. For any show Horvitz works on, his job starts months before the opening credits roll. At the Kennedy Center Honors, where everything is planned in advance, Horvitz worked out of a single, very thick three-ring binder with his marked-up script. That book contained information on each presenter, performer, and special guest—how they would enter or leave the stage, what they would say or do, and where onstage they would do it. When I watched Horvitz rehearse Kennedy Center bits, he was constantly trying new shots and lighting and stage placements to make his

### THE CAMERA OPERATORS HAVE "IF-WIN" ASSIGNMENTS FOR EACH NOMINEE FOR EACH AWARD.

pictures look better. The setups that worked best—the cool angles, the right cut from one singer to the next—were noted in his book. Each of the ten cameramen had a briefing packet on the shots expected of him throughout the night.

The Oscar show is live and spontaneous and can't be fully planned, which—counterintuitively—dramatically increases the preparation needed. Horvitz's Oscar guidebook fills five binders. His crew—the core group is largely the same from show to show, and many have worked with Horvitz for decades—starts with outlines for almost every conceivable situation. That means Horvitz has considered camera blocking for

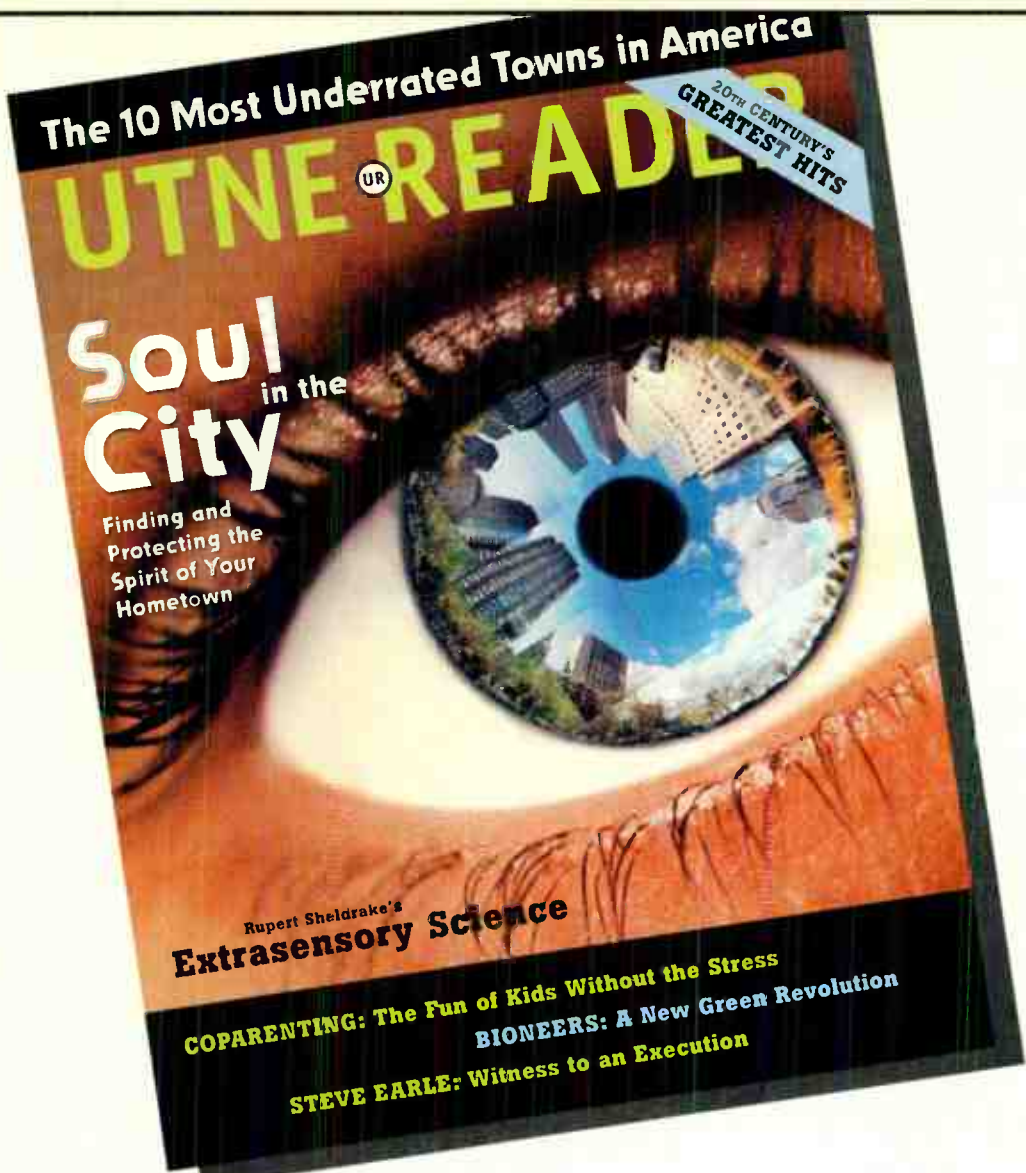
every potential winner. To start, there's a scheme that Horvitz, who's fond of football analogies, calls "zone coverage." Throughout the broadcast, each camera is assigned a certain "coverage zone," an area that the camera operator knows to shoot as a default. The coverage zone for one camera might be the stage-left podium, while another has stage right. One camera is responsible for wide shots during musical sequences, and another is charged with

getting close-ups of the singers.

Several cameras are assigned audience-reaction coverage, and among those cameras the planning becomes particularly complex—even with the aid of a celebrity seating chart. Each year the Academy presents 22 awards, and each award has up to five nominees (sometimes a handful have fewer). For most awards, therefore, Horvitz has 25 camera assignments for the audience shots alone and—if you do the math—as many as 550 assignments for the whole awards presentation. And that doesn't include introductions, special honors, musical numbers, or the swooping shots into and out of commercials.

Huh? 550 assignments? Let's think, for example, of Sam Mendes's Best Director award last year for *American Beauty*. There were more than 20 cameras being used inside the Shrine that night, but only some were on the audience. When the five nominees were announced, Horvitz needed a camera on each for that familiar five-way split screen. Mendes's name was called, so his camera followed him. But the other four cameras also had to react. One was on Spike Jonze, nominated for *Being John Malkovich*. Once Mendes's name was announced, that camera had to swing around to, say, Annette Bening, who was sitting nearby, for a reaction shot. Another camera, initially on Michael Mann, director of *The Insider*, was assigned to get another reaction shot, perhaps of Kevin Spacey. Horvitz calls these assignments "if-wins," and the camera operators have if-win assignments for each nominee for each award. Had Jonze and not Mendes won the award, the camera trained on Mendes might have swung around to a reaction shot for Jonze's award. Horvitz, together with the Academy official in charge of seating, maps it all out. "It's a nightmare to even conceive," he says.

But that nightmare is the necessary cost of being ready to tell Oscar night's stories. And even before the nominations have been announced—and even though many critics have lamented 2000 as a bad year for the movies—you can already see some of those stories shaping up. Will *Erin Brockovich* finally bring Julia Roberts a Best Actress trophy? Will Tom Hanks, reunited with Robert Zemeckis, win a third Best Actor award? Will Steven Soderbergh face off against Steven Soderbergh for Best Director—and if so, which Soderbergh will win? Other stories will undoubtedly arise in the weeks leading up to March 25, and still more will develop in the Shrine Auditorium that night. And from his truck in the parking lot, Louis J. Horvitz will make sure we see them all unfold. ■



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# IT IS ROCKET SCIENCE

Hypothesis: These journalists help us compute the latest scientific news. By Emily Chenoweth

## CAROL EZZELL SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN



B.S., biology,  
The College of  
William & Mary,  
1984

### Work highlights:

Life-sciences and  
biomedicine editor, *Science News*,  
1991–93; *The Journal of NIH  
Research*; science writer, science  
editor, 1993–97; member, board of  
editors, *Scientific American*,  
1998–present

**Where do you get your story ideas?** *The best source of stories, in my opinion, is from having a network of scientists you call on a regular basis...I think as science journalists we rely too much on the peer-reviewed journals.*

**How did you become interested in science journalism?** *I basically found out that there was this niche of journalism called science writing, and I...got my foot in the door...I have not had any structured classes or education in journalism...I think I learned more about science in my first couple of years as a science journalist than I did in the four years of my college degree, because I was doing it eight hours a day or more.*

## RICHARD HARRIS NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO



B.A., biology,  
University of  
California, Santa  
Cruz, 1980

### Work highlights:

Science reporter,  
*San Francisco Examiner*,  
1983–86; science correspondent,  
NPR, 1986–present

**Do you rely on a daily source to keep informed?** *There's a [website] service called EurekaAlert!, which is put out by the AAAS [American Association for the Advancement of Science]... I will look at that most days.*

**Have you ever thought you needed an advanced science degree to do your job?** *There's a danger in being too educated in this field...I think it's very important to understand how science works, and my education certainly provided me with that. But in terms of knowing all the details, that's certainly something I can learn as I go along.*

## ROBERT LEE HOTZ LOS ANGELES TIMES



B.A., English;  
M.A., drama, Tufts  
University, 1973

### Work highlights:

General assignment/  
investigative reporter, science  
writer, *The Pittsburgh Press*,  
1979–84; *The Atlanta Journal-  
Constitution*: science writer,  
assistant metro editor, science  
editor, 1984–93; science writer,  
*Los Angeles Times*, 1993–present

**Author:** *Designs on Life* (Pocket  
Books, 1991)

**How do you write about complex scientific information for lay readers?** *I have an enormous amount of faith in my own ignorance...I think that's really a very important thing to keep hold of. I think it's true for any journalist: We get in trouble when we think we know what we're talking about... We read the*

*papers, we talk to the people who did the research, we run it past the experts...and then we sit down and try to turn it into English.*

**How did you come to be a science writer?** *I grew up in a house steeped in high technology....On holidays we went to rocket launches...I was never interested in being a scientist, but I always wanted to be a journalist who covered science.*

## PAUL RAEURN BUSINESS WEEK



B.S., physics,  
Massachusetts  
Institute of  
Technology, 1972

### Work highlights:

The Associated  
Press: general-assignment reporter,  
editor, science writer, science  
editor, 1980–96; *Business Week*:  
science and technology senior  
editor, senior writer, 1996–present;  
commentator, NPR's *Morning  
Edition*, March 2000–present

**Author (selected works):** *The Last Harvest* (Simon & Schuster, 1995); *Mars: Uncovering the Secrets of the Red Planet* (National Geographic Society, 1998)

**How did you get into science reporting?** *My first full-time newspaper job was for the Lowell, Massachusetts, Sun....Anytime anything happened that had to do [with] energy shortages, nuclear power...they would say, "Send that guy from MIT over there"...It just sort of went on from there...I could see this was going to get me page one more often than a lot of local government things, and it was very interesting, so I stayed with it.*

## PAUL RECER THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



University of  
North Texas  
(Denton),  
1957–61

### Work highlights:

Houston bureau  
chief, science editor, *U.S. News &  
World Report*, 1976–81; The  
Associated Press: aerospace  
writer, correspondent, newsman,  
senior science writer, 1963–76,  
1981–present

### How do you stay informed?

*I read the journals Science, Nature, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences...Physics Today....I also read a lot of the websites...from various scientific organizations.*

### How do you write about complex scientific information for lay readers?

*[The AP is] not like a specialized magazine, so we try to cast it at about a ninth- or tenth-grade level....As a science writer, it's my job to convey this information to people who are not interested every day in science. So you have to cast the story in a simplistic sort of way that uses easily understood terms, and you have to tell the reader why it's important.*

## JOHN NOBLE WILFORD THE NEW YORK TIMES



B.S., journalism,  
University of  
Tennessee, 1955;  
M.A., political  
science, Syracuse  
University, 1956

**Work highlights:** Staff reporter,  
*The Wall Street Journal*, 1956,  
1959–61; contributing editor,  
*Time*, 1962–65; *The New York  
Times*: science news reporter,  
assistant national news editor,  
director of science news,  
1965–present

**Author (selected works):** *Riddle of the Dinosaur* (Knopf, 1985); *Mars Beckons* (Knopf, 1990)

**How do you write about complex scientific information for lay readers?** *I approach a story as an intelligent layman....I want to convey the spark that moved me to write the story...I'm a middleman between scientists and readers.*

### What drew you to science reporting?

*The Russians did it... [After] Sputnik was launched...a number of editors were expanding their coverage of science, and the managing editor of The Wall Street Journal asked me if I'd like to try... writing medical articles...I came to The New York Times specifically to cover the Apollo moon project, and when that was over I sort of settled down into...science writing.*

# BINN THERE, DONE THAT

Publisher Jason Binn struck gold with *Hamptons* and *Ocean Drive*, glossy giveaway magazines with a frothy mix of advertising and party shots. Will the formula work for his new title, *Gotham*? By Kaja Perina

At some point in his professional evolution, it must have occurred to Jason Binn—a leading publisher of a fawning and often lucrative genre of upscale giveaway magazines—that the Bill Clintons and Donald Trumps of the world already have plenty of friends and are in no immediate need of another. If Binn wanted an invitation to the White House or Trump's Florida Mar-a-Lago estate, he'd have to, well, make it happen himself. And so it came to pass that the baby-faced Binn—through a combination of pluck and compulsive charm—was seen hugging Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago and mingling with the president at the Amagansett, New York, beach home of Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger. It's debatable whether Binn crafts celebrity "friendships" to promote his not-about-the-words magazines or launches the giveaways to get closer to the A-listers (and B-listers) his publications chronicle. But make no mistake: Jason Binn, 33, is the Zelig of the boldface crowd.

Binn's magazines—*Ocean Drive*, based in Miami's hyperfashionable South Beach neighborhood, and *Hamptons*, named after the celebrity-saturated communities on the tip of New York's Long Island—grossed more than \$16 million in ad sales last year, according to Binn and his *Ocean Drive* business partner Jerry Powers. Though often criticized by the mainstream media for their fluffy content—last summer *Hamptons* featured an article about the social itinerary of local pets—and often lax editing, the magazines have nonetheless captured a newly affluent audience. "The world I hang out in and the circles I run in, it's all part of this thing....I intertwine my personal and professional life," Binn says.

In a now-notorious 1999 article in *The New York Observer*—a weekly paper for Manhattan's chattering classes—Binn's spirited courtings of celebrities were chronicled in great detail. One story began with Binn spotting Arnold Schwarzenegger dining with wife Maria

Shriver in a Miami restaurant. Binn then called rap kingpin Russell Simmons, who was in a movie theater nearby. According to Simmons, Binn suggested that he go to the restaurant if he wanted to run into the couple. Meanwhile, Binn—whom Schwarzenegger and Shriver had never met—wrangled his own table nearby. Simmons arrived, greeted the couple, and Binn rushed over to photograph them. (Binn declined to comment on the event.)

The article was much discussed in certain Manhattan circles for its colorful description of Binn's social networking. But an altered version, which was printed on heavy paper-stock identical to the salmon-hued *Observer* and then sent anonymously to hundreds of media and Hollywood types, raised even more eyebrows. The "revised" article omitted more than 30 references from the original, including anecdotes that painted Binn as starstruck and obsequious. (Binn says he was unaware of the changes to the article at the time and refuses to name the "friend" who sent it out.)

This month, Binn will expand his stable of "controlled circulation" publications—magazines that have few or no subscribers or newsstand sales and therefore rely almost entirely on advertising revenue—by launching *Gotham*, an urban sibling to *Hamptons*. The free monthly, on which Binn says he is risking more capital than he did on *Ocean Drive* and *Hamptons* combined, will be distributed to numerous upscale Manhattan locales.

Magazines like Binn's have multiplied during the past 15 years in cities with an established, or up-and-coming, wealthy social set—image-conscious consumers for whom party shots may be of greater interest than articles. Most of these upscale controlled-circulation titles are products of the nineties wealth explosion: Los Angeles's *Angeleno* was founded in 1999, *Chicago Social* and *Manhattan File* in



1994, and *Manhattan Style* just last year. (*Hamptons*, which Binn acquired in 1998, was founded in 1977. *Quest* and *Avenue*, two older New York City-based controlled-circulation titles, were founded in 1987 and 1975, respectively.)

The publisher of a controlled-circulation title can't offer advertisers as high a circulation as traditional, newsstand- and subscription-driven high-end glossies. So instead, those publishers, including Binn, claim a more focused and homogeneous readership by zeroing in on the very rich by direct mail and by distributing their magazines to upscale restaurants, boutiques, and hotels.

COURTESY JASON BINN



**Left to right: actress Jada Pinkett Smith, Jason Binn, Binn's girlfriend Niki Novak, and actor Will Smith at The Strand restaurant in South Beach, 1999**

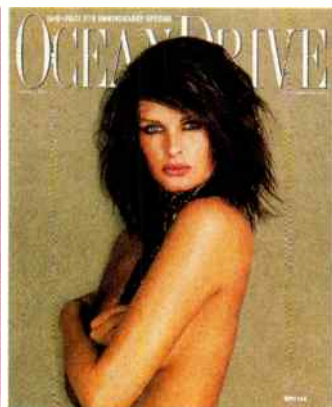
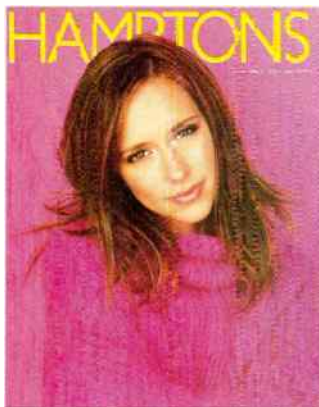
(Only 30 percent of *Ocean Drive's* monthly print run goes toward subscribers outside the South Beach area; the remaining 70 percent is distributed locally for free.) This is a crucial bargaining chip that Binn uses with his advertisers: Based on a survey of *Hamptons* readers, Binn tells *Gotham's* potential advertisers that four out of six people who live, dine, or shop in the areas where *Gotham* will be distributed own a luxury vehicle and spend an average of \$33,000 a year on accessories and fashion.

Advertisers traditionally consider controlled-circulation publications a mixed bag; many of them are turned off

by the difficulty of tallying and analyzing a controlled-circulation title's actual readership. And because the magazine is free, it's harder to convince advertisers that the consumer will actually spend time with it. Alan Jurmain, executive director of media services for the advertising agency Lowe Lintas & Partners in New York, says, "We're looking for two things: eyeballs and envelopes. [Luxury lifestyle magazines] are thin on the content, or envelope, but the eyeball is wonderful. So the bad news is that they're read at an arm's distance. But the good news is that they're focusing in on the right eyeballs."

Another bonus for advertisers is these

magazines' porous ad/edit boundaries, which means that, subtly or otherwise, the advertising often *becomes* the centerpiece of the publication. "I know people in L.A. who get [*Ocean Drive* and *Hamptons*] just to look at the advertisements," says Manhattan public relations maven Lizzie Grubman. (Sixty-five percent of a typical issue of *Ocean Drive* is advertising.) Binn's singular accomplishment, says Jane Hertzmark, general manager of Donna Karan Cosmetics,



Left: Actress Jennifer Love Hewitt on a September 2000 issue of *Hamptons*. Right: Model Kylie Bax on the January 2001 *Ocean Drive*.

who has advertised in *Hamptons* and *Ocean Drive*, is that he has “taken the concept of the regional magazine and put it into the national spotlight.”

WEARING A BAGGY BLACK Prada suit and flanked by two publicists, Jason Binn sits down behind a huge conference table in his publicists’ 30th-floor Manhattan office. When asked to name his best friends, Binn—who has been mocked for his tendency to promote his celebrity friendships—appears nervous. “I have quite a few best friends,” he says, looking away. “They’re not people who you’re gonna want to hear their names. They’re not celebrities....” Binn doesn’t finish, and a publicist politely suggests another subject.

Binn is hardly the only magazine mogul to court the famous. Indeed, many editors of mainstream magazines have themselves become celebrities, mingling with and befriending the stars they cover. Binn has said that the circumference of his social circle rivals that of the late Andy Warhol. But where Warhol bestowed notoriety on his friends and acquaintances, Binn often does the reverse.

“It’s a bit of the [movie mogul] Harvey [Weinstein] formula: You surround yourself with celebrities and it creates buzz,” says Miramax film acquisitions executive Andrew Stengel, a friend of Binn’s. A journalist with whom Binn has worked says that Binn’s “lack of polish helps. He’s goofy, and there’s something about him that’s vulnerable.”

At his second job after college, at a New York-based clothing wholesaler called The Warren Group, Binn passed around color photocopies of himself with Cindy Crawford, Elle Macpherson, RuPaul, Muhammad Ali, Donald Trump, and others. “We used to think he’d superimposed himself in the photos—until

we went out with him and realized he really knew these people,” says Marcy Warren, whose husband, Michael, was the president of The Warren Group. Says another acquaintance of Binn’s, also a magazine publisher: “You know that expression ‘He’ll go to the opening of a door or an

envelope?’ That’s Jason.”

JASON BINN WAS RAISED in posh Roslyn Harbor, Long Island, the son of Moreton Binn (born Binnstock), the CEO of the multimillion-dollar bartering company Atwood Richards Inc. Moreton Binn made his sons work during the summer; one of Jason’s early jobs was busing tables at the legendary Concord Hotel in the Catskill Mountains, where, Binn’s father relates, he charmed many of the hotel’s elderly patrons.

After graduating from Boston University in 1989, Binn sent birthday cards—with his résumé enclosed—to the CEOs of ten top advertising agencies, and

**“I HAVE QUITE A FEW BEST FRIENDS,” JASON BINN SAYS.**

landed a job as an account executive at D’Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles in New York City. In 1991, after a brief stint at the agency (and an equally brief stint at The Warren Group), Binn met Jerry Powers, onetime publisher of Miami’s first underground newspaper, *Daily Planet*, at a party for the Actors Studio in New York City. Powers was in town from Miami, and Binn invited him out clubbing. “Wherever we went, people knew him,” recalls Powers, who, impressed by Binn’s connections, asked him to come to Miami to help launch and co-publish *Ocean Drive*.

Binn has an uncanny sense of when a restaurant or region is on the cusp of mainstream trendiness, and he went to Miami at just the right time. Before the mid-1980s, Miami’s South Beach neighborhood was rundown, its

crumbling Art Deco buildings inhabited by drug dealers and elderly pensioners. But an influx of foreign fashion photographers and artists quickly attracted a hip, wealthy crowd, and by 1992, partyers and investors had made South Beach and its main drag, Ocean Drive, into a celebrity hotspot.

Since its debut eight years ago, *Ocean Drive* has rarely strayed from its advertiser-pleasing mix of stories: A typical issue might profile hot young actors or singers, the latter drawn from Miami’s Latin community, and feature Q&As with South Beach denizens whose claim to fame is often their proximity to fame, such as Kevin Aoki, son of Benihana restaurant founder Rocky Aoki and brother of supermodel Devon. *Ocean Drive* also features a stable of gossip writers, including the New York-based Richard Johnson, who produces the *New York Post*’s Page Six (Manhattan’s gossip bible), and Michael Musto, of *The Village Voice*.

Lizzie Grubman has known Binn since they were teenagers and attributes Binn’s magazines’ success to their balance of celebrity coverage and lightheartedness: “[*Ocean Drive*] isn’t trying to be anything other than pleasure reading. A lot of magazines you pick up and it’s work. This is bubblegum.”

*Ocean Drive* has always been a financial success, according to Powers and Binn, though the two are fuzzy with their figures. The January 1993 debut issue racked up \$57,000 in ad sales. Powers told the *South Florida Business Journal* in 1996. Eight months later, though, Binn told *Folio*, a trade publication about the magazine industry (which is owned by a company with a financial stake in the parent company of this magazine), that the figure was \$25,000. Today, Powers says that last year *Ocean Drive* grossed \$10 million, with a print run of 74,000 (the magazine has yet to be approved for membership in the Audit Bureau of Circulations). Powers declined to discuss the magazine’s net profits, saying only that the figure was “substantial.”

The magazine’s success is attributable in large part to Binn’s charm. Miami nightlife impresario Tommy Pooch, perhaps *Ocean Drive*’s most faithful advertiser, recalls his first encounter with Binn: “I think I bought the first ad he ever sold. Jason walked into the restaurant we were building. He showed me a piece of cardboard with a picture of Claudia Schiffer taped on to it, and said he was starting *Ocean Drive*.” Pooch paid about \$1,000 to run an advertisement for his

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restaurant in the magazine.

And *Ocean Drive* delivered. "Jason made me a legend in this town," says Pooch, laughing, via cell phone from the deck of his nightclub, Nikki Beach Club, which *Ocean Drive* called "Miami's sexiest party" in a six-page spread in last September's issue. "They call me the mayor of South Beach and I call them the Bible of South Beach," he jokes.

*Ocean Drive* has done well enough to spawn offspring in Venezuela, London, and Canada, a brand extension rare in the zip-code-dependent world of controlled-circulation titles. In late March, Powers will launch *Ocean Drive en Español* for Miami's Latin market. *Ocean Drive* even has its own line of sunglasses, with some 60 styles by Moja Design.

Despite *Ocean Drive's* success, when Binn showed up at *Hamptons*, in 1998, his reputation as a celebrity devotee preceded him, and many considered him ill-equipped to turn around the cash-strapped weekly. "When I came on board, we were doing \$1.4 million in [ad] sales and putting out 96 pages a week," says Binn. Back then, *Hamptons* was a thin, stapled magazine with mostly black-and-white party shots—Hamptons residents jokingly called it "Models on Drugs." One photo caption infamously misidentified former New York City mayor David Dinkins as Nelson Mandela, and some articles went to press trailing dummy type. "I wanted to make *Hamptons* something that people would go, 'I love *Ocean Drive* and I love *Hamptons*,'" says Binn. "And the only way that would happen was if I took control of the company."

*Hamptons* was subsumed by Binn's Niche Media (which is also *Gotham's* parent company), and founder Randy Schindler retains a stake in it, as well as the title of chairman. But Binn's hand can be detected everywhere in the magazine, especially in the sort of features that proved popular at *Ocean Drive*: endless pages of party shots, profiles of celebrities and wealthy locals, and gossip columns. Binn's formula appears to have worked. In the summer of 2000, Binn says, *Hamptons* grossed more than \$6 million in ad sales and sometimes topped 400 photo-saturated pages. The magazine, which claims a per-issue print run of 35,000 copies, had become a fat, slick, perfect-bound glossy.

With *Hamptons*, Binn solidified his reputation as a serious publisher, if not a publisher of serious magazines. Steven Gaines, a longtime East Hampton resident and author of *Philistines at the Hedgerow*, a chronicle of the battle between old and new money in the Hamptons, says that he was at first dubious of Binn but was won over by his enthusiasm. "He truly loves the magazine business," says Gaines. "When Jason hears the word *circulation* he gets an erection." Perhaps because Binn may now be more secure, he has for the most part retired the camera that was for many years his trademark accessory. "His high school days in this business are over," says Gaines.



Binn with (top) the late fashion designer Gianni Versace at a party in 1992; (left) Hillary Clinton in New York last year; and (right) actor Mark Wahlberg in 1998

That may be, but the Manhattan magazine market is a high-stakes gamble for even the most experienced publisher. Binn has promised his *Gotham* advertisers—Gucci, Raymond Weil, and Bottega Veneta among them—that every month, 80,000 copies will be distributed at such hotels as the venerable Waldorf-Astoria and Ian Schrager's trendy new Hudson; at boutiques up and down Fifth and Madison Avenues and in SoHo; at airport VIP lounges; at restaurants from Odeon to Jean Georges; and at high-profile parties and, in Binn's words, "special events." Indeed, to hear Joseph Steuer, *Gotham's* editor in chief, describe it, you'd think the ads are the magazine.

"Jason's sold a hell of a lot of ads, and that brings excitement—and buzz—to a whole community," he says.

Winning advertisers is one thing: keeping advertisers, as well as generating editorial excitement, is another, and the track record for controlled-circulation publications aimed at Manhattan is mixed—Cristina Greeven's *Manhattan File*, which has published such writers as Candace Bushnell and Bret Easton Ellis, is a sassy, irony-intense read, but the three-month-old *Manhattan Style* has yet to find a distinct voice.

Despite its editors' and backers' insistence that *Gotham* will have no such problems, Steuer, who was the executive editor of the youth-oriented celebrity monthly *Interview* before joining *Gotham*, sounds concerned about his magazine's editorial content and about producing the debut issue. "If I know Jason, he'll sell hundreds and hundreds of ads," says Steuer. "And yet it's a catch-22, because I want him to sell ads, of course, but I have to put this thing out in 60 days..." Steuer trails off in midsentence. "It's very celebrity-driven," he says. "I mean, there aren't gonna be many *New Yorker*-type, 10,000-word articles." Of

the advertising/editorial ratio, Steuer says, "I think it's gonna be just like any other magazine." He hesitates. "That's not even fair, because I don't know what other magazines have. Look, from what I gather, there's gonna be a lot to read in there."

If Steuer sounds slightly fazed—it is

December, and he has just placed ads in *The New York Times* for a senior editor, an art director, and a photo director, and the magazine must be ready by February—Binn is serene. He's always had a long-term vision—"I wanted to [start a magazine in] New York the day I moved down to Miami," he admits—although he's guarded about whether his successes as a controlled-circulation publisher will lead to a career in mainstream magazines. When asked if he wants to be part of a publishing empire such as Condé Nast, Binn is carefully modest: "Can I be a part of these groups someday? Probably, maybe—I don't know." But he brightens when he thinks of *Gotham*. "I've been fortunate enough to have a formula that works, and I don't want to ruin it. And my advertisers don't want it differently. My clock is telling time, and it's pretty accurate." ■

# How to make your car *invisible* to radar and laser

Rocky Mountain Radar introduces a device guaranteed to make your car electronically "invisible" to speed traps beyond 200 feet—if you get a ticket while using the product, the manufacturer will pay your fine!\*

by Phil Jones

It seems that as speed-detection technology has gotten more and more advanced, speeding tickets have become virtually unavoidable. And although devices exist that enable motorists to detect these speed traps, they are outlawed in many states... including mine.

### The solution

Today, Rocky Mountain Radar offers drivers like me a perfect solution—the Phazer. Combining a passive radar scrambler with



### Double protection from speed traps—The Phantom II

If the Phazer sounds good, but you prefer to be notified when you are in range of a police radar, the Phantom is for you. The Phantom combines the Phazer (including the Ticket Rebate Program) with a radar detector. It's legal in every state except California, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Virginia and Washington, D.C. Ask your representative for more details!

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an active laser scrambler, the Phazer makes your automobile electronically "invisible" to police speed-detecting equipment. The radar component works by mixing an X, K or Ka radar signal with an FM "chirp" and bouncing it back at the squad car by way of a waveguide antenna, effectively confusing the computer inside the radar gun. The laser component transmits an infrared beam that has the same effect on laser Lidar units.

### Perfectly legal

Some radar devices have been outlawed because they transmit scrambling radar beams back to the waiting law enforcement vehicle. The Phazer, however, reflects a portion of the signal plus an added FM signal back to the police car. This, in effect, gives the waiting radar unit an electronic "lobotomy." Best of all, unless you are a resident of California, Minnesota, Virginia, Oklahoma or Washington, D.C., using the Phazer is completely within your legal rights.

### How it scrambles radar

Police radar takes five to 10 measurements of a vehicle's speed in about one second. The Phazer sends one signal that tells the radar the car is going 15 m.p.h. and another signal that the car is going 312 m.p.h. Because police radar can't verify the speed, it displays no speed at all. Works with laser, too! The Phazer also protects your vehicle from Lidar guns that use the change in distance over time to detect a vehicle's speed. The Phazer uses light-emitting diodes (LEDs) to fire invisible infrared pulses through the windshield. Laser guns interpret those pulses as a false indication of the car's distance, blocking measurement of your speed.

### Range up to three miles

The Phazer begins to scramble both radar and laser signals as far as three miles away from the speed trap. Its range of effectiveness extends to almost 100 feet away from the police car, at which point you should be able to make visual contact and reduce your speed accordingly. While the Phazer is designed to help you (and me) avoid speed



The Phazer is only 3"W x 4"L x 1.5"H!

◆ The Phazer will "jam" both radar and laser guns, preventing police from measuring your speed.



traps, it is not intended to condone excessive speeding. For that reason, within the first year, the manufacturer will pay tickets where the speed limit was not exceeded by more than 30%, or 15 miles per hour, whichever is less. California is excluded from the Ticket Rebate program.

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# SWEET-TALKING MY RECORDER

Sony's new digital audio recorder promises to transform your mumbblings into text. Unfortunately, its "voice recognition" software has a problem recognizing voices. By Mark Boal

I knew it would be mine. On my daily pilgrimage to the electronics store, an upscale one in midtown Manhattan, it was idling on the shelves, crying out to be taken home and smothered with geek love. It is the Sony ICD-MS1VTP, also named Memory Stick Digital Voice Recorder (retail \$300). It promised: "full-function dictating," with voice-recognition software, and, most important, a data-storage device—the size of two Scrabble pieces—called a "removable Memory

Stick." Translation: Talk into the thing. Pop out the Memory Stick and insert it into your disk-drive adapter, upload file, click mouse, and, presto, out comes text formatted for word processing.

Gazing at this device, I imagined all the private thoughts I'd finally be able to share with the world now that I didn't have to bother with the agony of writing. I read somewhere once that Saul Bellow dictated all of *Herzog* into a tape recorder. He had to hire an army of secretaries to

slosh through the transcription, but my path would be straight to hardcover.

At the checkout counter, a moment of doubt. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a mini-CD-burning audio recorder. There was also the \$199 Olympus DS-150, another digital recorder, which was hot but not as bleeding-edge as the Sony. The salesman blithely assured me that "The Stick is the future"—his exact words—and I wanted to believe him. Three hundred dollars seemed a fair price for removable memory and the promise of prose as smooth as the spoken word.

Technology ought to be sexy. If only because if it doesn't feel good in my hands, I'm not likely to keep using it. (I once mercilessly forced a salesman to watch me fondle a dozen laptops.) And so when I liberated the

Sony from its packaging, I was happy to find that it feels and looks nice, although not as dreamy as Sony's VAIO line of laptops. Tiny and lightweight, the recorder has that silverish color that seems in permanent vogue with gadget designers, and the screen is backlit in a pleasing ultramarine.

It comes loaded with almost every button you need. There's a nifty mouse-wheel type of thing, for fast-forwarding. There are buttons for indexing and prioritizing your digital files, and even for adjusting microphone sensitivity. And—this is more of a curiosity than a complaint—it has two STOP buttons.

I got it running right out of the box, but then I couldn't locate an OFF switch. A search of the manual revealed nothing, and in desperation I finally called Sony. A publicist representing the company informed me that the recorder does not have an OFF switch per se—it never sleeps—and as a result its batteries require changing more frequently than a traditional recorder's. That was strike one.

**THE SALESMAN ASSURED ME THAT "THE STICK IS THE FUTURE." I WANTED TO BELIEVE HIM.**

This was strike two: Dragon NaturallySpeaking, the voice-recognition software bundled with the device, may be state-of-the-art, but that's not saying much. Voice-recognition software has never worked as advertised, and although this iteration was supposed to change that, I am here to report that the software's developers still have developing to do.

The crippling fact is that you have to "train" the software (which retails for \$200) to recognize your voice, and that's an irritating and time-consuming process. The software prompted me to train it in the nuances of my voice by reading a passage from Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. This seemed harmless enough, until the passage turned exceedingly dark. Charlie is starving, literally wasting away because his family can't afford anything but scraps of bread. I finished the passage but refused to read anything else to my computer. As a substitute, I'll take James Fallows on faith; he wrote about Dragon software in *The Atlantic Monthly* and concluded that if it's trained extensively, it recognizes most of what you say. (Mistakes can be edited by voice or key



The Sony Memory Stick Digital Voice Recorder

command.) But Fallows must have spent a lot of time commuting with his software, because when I told Dragon that I hoped that "as I go along, Dragon will improve," it transcribed as "Dragon system doesn't prove." Go figure.

But the recorder shines on its own. I gave it its first thorough tryout on the street, to test its ability to filter background noise. I mumbled into it as I walked to a friend's house one night, until a couple of cops gave me a funny look. Then I discovered that when held upside down, the recorder looks approximately like a cell phone, and thus disguised, I rambled on for the remaining blocks. When I arrived at my friend's, I played back my mumbling, and we both judged the audio quality to be a tad better than tape. Another nice touch is the ability to scan recordings just like one does with a CD player.

When it came to getting the Memory Stick out of the recorder and onto a PC, I encountered loading trouble. I couldn't

get the Sony Memory Stick Floppy Disk Adapter (sold separately for \$80, but definitely required) to work on my friend's 1999 Gateway computer. The battery-powered disk adapter kept crashing the system, randomly going "to sleep," and generating drive errors.

**I IMAGINE THE  
FUTURE OF THIS  
PRODUCT MIGHT BE  
IN E-MAILING VOICE  
MESSAGES.**

After fiddling with every conceivable driver, I gave up—and confided to my friend that "I'm going to decimate this thing in my review."

"Are you, like, the Candace Bushnell of technology?" she teased.

The next day, an almost famous

journalist friend of mine pointed out that to really do Bushnell, I'd have to have sex with the gadgets.

I had better luck on my own PC. The software worked right away. I easily uploaded my recordings, attached an e-mail message, and successfully sent it to a mix of Mac and PC users. I imagine that the future of this product might be in e-mailing voice messages to a list of people—I can see a tech-fetish couple sending an audio-file wedding announcement, or perhaps a hyper boss nagging underlings with it. Sony dumped a lot of R&D into the Memory Stick technology, and as a next-generation storage solution, it proved reliable. Who needs magnetic tape, susceptible to unspooling and snapping, when you can store information directly on a portable microchip and have all the flexibility of being digital—including the ability to easily edit and put files on the Web? For those jobs, the Sony works as promised. It's just that, sadly, it doesn't make writing—or transcribing—any easier. ■

## REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22] The distribution of magazines is almost nightmarish. *Brill's Content* is printed in Virginia, and the magazine is mailed from there to subscribers who live east of the Rockies. Magazines addressed to persons who live west of the Rockies are trucked to Los Angeles, where they are taken to the post office. "This two-point entry scheme is the result of a computer analysis that is designed to reduce delivery time, as well as minimize the costs of delivery," Mr. Jordan writes.

At the same time, copies that will be sold in major bookstores are trucked from Virginia to Tennessee, where they are boxed and shipped out to the stores. But copies that are to be sold at other places—smaller newsstands and drugstores and the like—are trucked from Virginia to about 200 wholesalers around the country. Those wholesalers then deliver the magazines to the newsstands.

What this means is that once those trucks leave Virginia, the timing is out of the hands of the people at *Brill's Content* or at the printer. The packer in Tennessee or the unpacker at Barnes & Noble in San Francisco might be having a great day, and the magazine will show up early. The postal machines in Los Angeles or Berkeley might be having a slow day, which will delay delivery. ("The mails suck," Steven Brill wrote in an e-mail message.) The truck could break down; the weather could turn bad. One wholesaler might be really good, another really bad.

The result isn't perfect, acknowledges Mr. Brill. He wants the subscribers to get the magazine at least as quickly as the bookstores get it. Among other things, the scattered delivery dates

make it hard to coordinate publicity about the issue. Each issue has a "release date" around which the magazine is promoted, and that's the date the *Brill's Content* executives want the magazine to be delivered or put on newsstands. The *Brill's Content* people also keep the copies from newspaper writers until a day before the magazine is supposed to arrive in mailboxes. "I don't want our prized customers reading an article about an article that they've paid to have delivered to them but have not yet gotten," says Mr. Brill. And, in a glancing shot at some competition, he adds, "By contrast, I regularly read stuff in the press about magazines like *Vanity Fair* a week or ten days before I get the magazine."

Complaint No. 3: Edgar Falk of New York City is incensed because *Brill's Content* renewed his subscription without asking him and then sent him a bill. This is "blatantly unethical" and "probably illegal," he writes. Another subscriber, M.B. Godown of Tallahassee, calls it "sneaky and underhanded."

It's not unethical. It's not illegal. It's not sneaky. It's not underhanded. But it might be annoying.

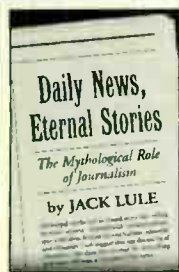
One big challenge for magazines is to get customers to renew. That's why some

magazines start sending you renew-now-and-save-a-gazillion-dollars letters months before your subscription is due to expire. This is costly for the magazines and irksome to the subscribers. Thus many magazines have changed their pitches. They now say that they will automatically renew your subscription when it expires unless you tell them not to. This seems to work.

"Various market tests have determined that customers are most likely to accept this service after they have already subscribed to the magazine, as opposed to at the time of the first subscription," Mr. Jordan writes. So *Brill's Content* came up with a

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WITHOUT ASKING HIM.**

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## REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

variation. On the first renewal, subscribers are told they can have 10 percent off the regular price if they'll sign up for the automatic renewal in future years—always at the 10 percent discount. The renewal form says: "Yes! Enter my Charter Renewal to *Brill's Content*. I will continue my subscription each year at a savings of 10% off the regular subscription rate unless I notify you otherwise." People who don't want to do that can renew the old-fashioned way, signing up for a year—without the discount—and then either re-upping or letting their subscription lapse. The whole thing is clear and straightforward.

Those who choose the automatic renewal are sent a letter a year later reminding them of the deal and telling them they can write, e-mail, or call a toll-free number to back out. If they don't, they are billed. Even then, they can still back out by marking "cancel" and sending it back—or just ignoring it and waiting for the magazine's accountants to cut them off for nonpayment.

This doesn't seem sneaky or underhanded or unethical at all, and Mr. Jordan says the practice has been reviewed by lawyers at large publishing houses as well as at the Magazine Publishers of America and The Direct Marketing Association, "and none of them [has] found the program to be illegal."

Mr. Falk says he is simply ignoring his letters. He wrote to me about this last August. Presumably he has been dropped from the subscriber list by now.

Circulation is an often difficult, sometimes messy, and occasionally dishonest effort at magazines and newspapers. But I'm convinced that the people at *Brill's Content* are honest and direct in dealing with readers and potential readers. Indeed, Mr. Jordan believes that "some of the most positive things about the circulation of *Brill's Content* are the things that we do not do. We don't sell with deep discounts. We don't encourage subscription sales with cheap premiums or sweepstakes giveaways. And we shy away from third-party agents and telemarketing. Our goal has always been to attract a serious, quality reader."

A check of websites offering surfers bargains and discounts for hundreds of magazines found only a few sites offering *Brill's Content*. And all but one of these were at the usual price of \$16.95 for ten issues—a figure that since has been raised to \$21.95. The one

exception offered the magazine at \$14, which *Brill's* says is unauthorized and plans to correct. Here's another thing about that firm price: Many magazines keep lowering their price for renewals as renewal time gets closer and closer. This penalizes the magazine's best customers, the ones who renew early because they are loyal and like the magazine. *Brill's Content* doesn't do that.

But not everyone has to pay for the magazine. Between 2,000 and 3,000 people receive a free copy of the magazine by mail each month. The list includes advertising agencies, advertisers, and prospective advertisers, as well as all the members of Congress. Several thousand more copies are given—but not mailed—free to other people. These include some students who receive the magazine when they buy a certain textbook on the media at college bookstores, as well as travelers on the air shuttles between New York and Boston and Washington, D.C. But the shuttle giveaways are being phased out, Mr. Brill writes. "I hate the practice, but it helps build circulation," he says. "People see it, pick it up, then fill out the annoying circulation card."

All of this is probably much more about circulation than you ever wanted to know, but the choice was to write 2,000 words or nine. The nine would have been: "Circulation is complicated. *Brill's Content* is honest. Trust me."

It's strange to have an entire ombudsman's column without any mention of the news, so here's a final bit that isn't on circulation. It's a quote from the cover article on George Stephanopoulos, in the January issue:

"All that I can do is try to approach each situation as honestly as I can," Stephanopoulos continues, as he downs a sesame bagel with nova and cream cheese."

Who says *Brill's Content* doesn't provide detail?

Even if it's inane and irrelevant.

**Steven Brill responds:** Michael Gartner's suggestion that we let people "opt out" (of having their names rented) more easily is a good one. We are now taking steps to have an opt-out box added to the bills sent to subscribers. That way they needn't look for the notice on our masthead. But I still think that most of the "junk" mail they'll get if they don't opt out isn't junk; besides, though we don't make much from list rentals, it is money we can use as we make our way toward profitability. ■

## Power of the House

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 83] squeeze and directs me to a big leather chair. Within a minute, he has me laughing over a hunting story. Then he's telling me how to grill "Billy Bites" (strips of deer back sliced thin, pounded, seasoned, stuffed with jalapeño peppers, and rolled up with bacon). It's easy to see why Tauzin is such an accomplished politician. His is a business that operates largely on personality, and Tauzin is blessed with a big, loud, funny one. When he focuses his charm on you, it's hard not to be drawn in.

Tauzin's office, like those of most congressmen, has the requisite large wooden desk, the U.S. flag, and his state's flag. But that's where the similarities end. First, there are the deer heads—seven of them ("all Democrats," says Tauzin's spokesman)—carefully mounted on the wall. There's also a stuffed turkey, with its wings stretched out. Tauzin shot them all. He's particularly proud

of one of the deer, an 11-point whitetail, which he shot from 435 yards while hunting in Texas. Then there are the pictures. While most politicians have a few nicely framed photos of themselves with presidents, Tauzin has pictures with Martha Stewart that were taken when he did a cooking episode on her television show. (He was promoting a cookbook on Cajun food written with his cousins.) Another picture shows the congressman dressed as General Patton in a film put out by the National Republican Congressional Com-

### The network heads crumbled in front of Tauzin and quickly owned up to their election-night mistakes.

mittee. (Tauzin is considered a talented amateur thespian who has no problem hamming it up.) In a nod to Washington convention, there are also pictures of Tauzin with General Norman Schwarzkopf and George W. Bush.

Even by his adversaries' accounts, Tauzin is not only one of the smartest members of Congress but also one who thrives on

dealing with complicated public policy. He worked tirelessly to put satellite-television companies on the same footing as cable television, spearheading legislation that ensured they had equal access to the same program content and allowed them to broadcast local television signals so that consumers could watch their local stations on their satellite systems. Tauzin was also an important player in forcing the entertainment industry to adopt the current television-rating system, which is more specific (V for violence, L for language, S for sexual situations, and D for sexually suggestive dialogue) than the movie-rating system. He recently held hearings about Internet privacy, and he is pushing the industry to create its own set of rules for protecting individuals' online data.

Lobbyists say they love him because they don't have to educate him. "He knows these issues cold," says Jack Valenti, president and chief executive officer of the Motion Picture Association of America, who helped negotiate the television-rating guidelines Tauzin pushed. "You would think, well, he's a good ole boy, but he's got a brain that's as sharp as three lasers," Valenti continues. Tauzin's fans describe him as one of the new power brokers in the Republican Party and compare him to another Southern-bred politician: Bill Clinton. The two share a strange hybrid of wonkiness and people skills, and are known for their lust for public life. Like the former president, Tauzin is famous for his communication talents and his ability to size up a crowd and give them exactly what they want. He prepares his own speeches and rarely speaks with notes. "Billy is the type of guy who, when you go into a cocktail party, you realize that there are five or ten people in a circle and there are gales of laughter coming from that circle," says Andrew Jay Schwartzman, a telecommunications lawyer with the public-interest group Media Access Project who has tussled with Tauzin on countless occasions. "Billy is always in the middle."

Tauzin wasted no time getting in the middle of the election controversy. On November 9, two days after the vote, he was already homing in on the networks. He sent letters to all the network presidents, demanding to know how and why they had made their projections. Not one to miss a chance for publicity, Tauzin also called a news conference and announced that he was planning on bringing in the CEOs of all the networks' corporate parents for a public hearing on the fiasco. "I don't intend to violate the law or the spirit of the First Amendment," Tauzin said. "The intent is to find out what went wrong in this system."

Tauzin also directed investigators on the committee to meet with and investigate the networks and VNS. Then, on November 16, Tauzin called another news conference to announce his preliminary findings. Armed with charts that showed all 50 states and the time that CNN had projected the winner in each, Tauzin complained that the network had delayed calling states for Bush nine times—even those in which his margin had been more than 6 percent. But CNN had

called every state that Gore had won with a similar margin at the time the polls closed. "There may be other reasons for why what happened on election night actually happened," Tauzin told the crowded room, "but the presumptive conclusion that I think any reasonable person will reach, after reviewing this evidence, is that there must have been—there probably was—bias in reporting of the election on election night by the major networks of our country."

## News executives worry that Tauzin's power over their organizations' parent companies could trickle down to the news divisions.

Tauzin contends that the disparity in announcing the state winners reduced voter turnout on the West Coast. The networks, he claims, possibly caused at least five Republican House members from California to lose. And he argues that Bush could have won the popular vote if Republican voters on the West Coast had thought he had a chance to win. "The impression—if you are a [Republican] voter—is the election is over, so why bother to vote?" says Tauzin.

The network heads crumbled in front of Tauzin. Although they all insist that their reporting was not biased, they quickly owned up to their mistakes. Within days, ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, and CNN announced that they were conducting internal reviews. In late November, ABC News announced a set of reforms, including a commitment to make projections only after polls closed in each state. In January, CBS News and NBC News released reports detailing their investigations. Both networks also pledge that from now on they will not make projections until polls have closed. All the networks have been critical of VNS as well, with Fox and NBC saying they may withdraw from the organization. At the very least, all networks pledged to check other sources besides VNS before making projections. (VNS is also conducting an internal review.)

Tauzin says the networks need to stop shielding themselves behind a stock answer that they are not politically biased. "I think they are getting awfully defensive before studying what I have asked," Tauzin says. "The question is, what caused this biased result? Can it be fixed, or is it a problem of human interpretation?" He says he hopes the answer will turn out to be that the model for making projections on election night was flawed. But he is not backing away from his suspicion that the networks lean toward the Democrats.

Tauzin has a host of motives for jumping into the election-coverage fray. First, bashing the media is an easy way to win points with Republicans and

shore up his conservative base. Second, Tauzin can show independence from the broadcast lobby—a group to which he is often accused of being too close. (Tauzin's daughter, Kristi, even worked for a few years at the industry's main trade group, the National Association of Broadcasters.) In 1997, conservative columnist William Safire labeled the congressman



Tauzin gestures during a debate with Armeiy at the GOP Convention last summer.

## Power of the House

“a wholly owned subsidiary” of the broadcasters.

Taking on the networks is a win-win for Tauzin, particularly because the result will likely be inconsequential. At worst, the networks will get a public lashing, and their executives will have to hang their heads and apologize before Tauzin's committee. To make any real difference, the networks would have to sign on to specific agreements, then police themselves. Since the 1960s, when television became an important force in politics, the networks have periodically drawn the ire of legislators. Congress held hearings in the sixties and again in the eighties, when lawmakers griped about the networks' power to disrupt voter turnout. Both times, the upshot was that the networks agreed not to project winners in states until the majority of the polls there had closed. The agreements obviously left the networks plenty of room for making bad projections. “Everything I'm hearing now from [Tauzin] strikes me as so much hollow rhetoric, kind of like Gore and Lieberman posturing on violence in Hollywood,” says Charles Lewis, executive director of the Center for Public Integrity, a politics and money watchdog group. “Let's be honest. Lawmakers beat up on the networks every four years after the presidential election.”

One major roadblock stands in the way of any legislation Congress may want to aim at network news: the First Amendment. Tauzin concedes that the Constitution is straightforward in this situation. “There is nothing I know of in the Constitution that would prevent them from making these projections in the middle of the afternoon and really screwing things up,” says Tauzin. “This has to come by agreement.”

Still, some news executives worry that Tauzin's power over their organizations' parents could trickle down to the news divisions. “Once you use the authority of the United States government to talk about news, that is a slippery slope that we all ought to try to avoid,” says Bruce Collins, corporate vice-president and general counsel of C-SPAN. “Business people tend to be more responsive to the pressure of Congress—to the detriment of the newsgathering.”

Tauzin knows the business side of journalism well, and he is friendly with most of the lobbyists for the big media companies. Since he has so much power over their industry, it's not surprising that they speak fondly of him. But none would chide the congressman even anonymously. “If I had to drive across the country and I had to pick one man to drive...with me, Billy Tauzin is one of the people I'd think of,” says Valenti. Tauzin often plays tennis with a group of lobbyists, including Robert Okun, the chief lobbyist for NBC, and Timothy McKone, the top lobbyist at SBC Communications, a large telecommunications provider. They play in the morning at courts in Tauzin's condominium complex. His partners say he isn't the prettiest tennis player—his form leaves something to be desired—but Tauzin is nothing if not ferocious on the court.

Tauzin also often invites lobbyists to hunt on his farm on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The place isn't fancy—just a mobile home on about 200 acres with duck and deer blinds. “I would venture to say that Cecile doesn't spend a lot of nights there,” says McKone, referring to Tauzin's wife of eight years (Tauzin has five children from a previous marriage). “It's definitely a guys' place.” And the guy who rules the kitchen is certainly the host himself. McKone, whom Tauzin taught to hunt, says

that on a recent trip, the congressman dazzled his guests with grilled oysters.

Tauzin himself has no problem accepting perks: fact-finding missions to foreign countries and resorts, sports events watched from corporate boxes, and lavish parties underwritten by corporations. A recent report by the Center for Public Integrity found that between 1997 and mid-2000, Tauzin and his senior staff took 42 media-sponsored trips (more than twice as many as any other member of Congress) to places ranging from Paris to New York City to Palm Springs. Tauzin took his wife on the six-day trip to Paris for a conference on e-commerce paid for by Time Warner and Instinet, a subsidiary of Reuters. The total cost: \$18,910. Tauzin's spokesman Johnson defends such trips as an important educational tool. “You can't make decisions involving billion-dollar industries with your head stuck in the sand back in Washington,” says Johnson, who has taken a number of trips with Tauzin.

The report also found that from 1993 to 2000, Tauzin received \$109,575 in contributions from media companies. All the money and trips, says Lewis of the Center for Public Integrity, make it hard for the congressman to be credible when he is bashing the media. “I don't know too many sledgehammers that Mr. Tauzin has tried to knock out the networks with over the years,” he says. “I can't think of any issue where he has gone after them or, God forbid, regulated them. There is a credibility problem here. He is arguably their best friend in Congress.”

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, a nonpartisan research group, Tauzin raised \$67,776 from entertainment industries and \$92,268 from telecommunications companies for his 2000 campaign. Some of Tauzin's top corporate donors included The Walt Disney Company, which gave \$12,000; the National Association of Broadcasters, which donated \$10,000; and SBC Communications, which kicked in \$10,250.

## Taking money from media companies and hobnobbing with their lobbyists are just part of the game for Tauzin.

Tauzin doesn't disagree that he has been close to media companies. “I tend to be sympathetic to them,” he says. “I'm sympathetic to anybody in the communication industry that is overregulated and restricted.” Toward that end, he has sponsored a bill that would prohibit the Federal Communications Commission and states from making rules that govern the emerging broadband Internet. Tauzin's bill would allow the market, not the government, to determine how much Internet access would cost and what conditions companies would have to fill to get into the business. “What guides me is whether consumers have choices,” says Tauzin. “If industry is on the side of free markets and opening markets, they'll find me as a friend.”

Perhaps the best example of Tauzin's coziness with media companies was his party at last year's Republican National Convention. The Mardi Gras-themed fête, held at the Philadelphia Navy Yard for about 2,000 of Tauzin's friends and supporters, was the marquee event of a week of over-the-top parties. Organizers imported floats from New Orleans, and guests feasted on fried turkey and alligator, roast pig, and po'boys. Hurricanes, a specialty drink of the French Quarter, flowed freely from the bar. Revelers danced to the Neville Fam-

ily Celebration and the Bayou Boys. Tauzin, chomping on a cigar, stayed late, shaking hands and basking in the attention. The estimated \$400,000 tab was picked up by media, telecommunications, and energy companies, including Disney (ABC), Time Warner (CNN), and General Electric (NBC). "George W. Bush probably had no clue that Tauzin was having a party, but for many people who went, it was more important than seeing Bush," says one telecommunications lobbyist. "Frankly, a lot of telecommunications policy will run through that [energy and commerce] committee, and if you are in the business, you're going to be more interested in talking to Billy Tauzin than [to] George Bush."

Tauzin makes no apologies for taking media companies' money. "[ABC] did a hit-piece on my [Mardi Gras] party," he says with pride. ABC called it "a huge corporate event with hidden donors, but the funny thing was that ABC was one of the sponsors of the event." Tauzin says he passed out dozens of tickets to ABC executives and that all of the tickets listed the "hidden" sponsors on the back. Preston Padden, Disney's chief Washington lobbyist, laughs at Tauzin's comments. Padden, who was scrambling for more tickets himself, says he had no idea what the news division was doing.

The party also showcased Tauzin's growing importance as a fund-raiser for the Republican Party. Aside from raising money for his own re-election (according to the Center for Responsive Politics, Tauzin spent more than \$1.3 million on his race in 2000, though he faced only weak opposition), he also has his own political action committee, the Bayou Leader PAC, which raises money for other Republican candidates and for the party. Last year, the PAC gave \$293,204 to candidates. Tauzin also hosted at least 15 "Cajun cookouts" on behalf of candidates; in all he raised close to \$9 million for Republican candidates and the party. Tauzin is such an effective fund-raiser that the congressional leadership sent him to see Microsoft mogul Bill Gates, whose company was famous for its lack of political donations. Tauzin showed up at Gates's office with a lemon meringue pie—a not-so-subtle message to Gates, who had recently had a pie tossed in his face by a heckler. Microsoft's donations to the Republican Party increased.

Tauzin's friends, and even most of his adversaries, say that taking money from media companies and hobnobbing with their lobbyists are just part of the game for Tauzin. "I don't think Billy plays favorites," says SBC's McKone. "He [believes] in general terms....the government should not have a hand in the business world. I think most businesses agree with that philosophy." Reed Hundt says that while he was chairman of the FCC under Clinton, he felt like a "drum for Billy to beat." But, Hundt adds, "I don't think that Billy does one thing because of a contribution."

As the subcommittee chairman, Tauzin was a force behind the deregulation of the telecommunications industry and has been fighting with the FCC for slowing the Bell companies' entry into the long-distance market. He has long supported pet issues of the broadcast industry, such as opposition to auctioning off the digital spectrum, giving free airtime to political candidates, and regulating liquor advertising. Tauzin is also working to reform the FCC's role in approving media mergers; he has been critical of that agency's review of the America Online Time Warner merger, complaining that the process allows competitors to seek unfair restrictions against the new company. He opposes most taxes on e-commerce and is working to eliminate taxes on long-distance phone service.

While on the subcommittee, Tauzin authorized the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's budget each year, and was generally supportive of budget increases for the CPB, although he has taken PBS, its beneficiary, to task in the past few years for swapping its donor lists with political organizations. Tauzin, along with the subcommittee's ranking Democrat, Edward Markey of Massachusetts, introduced a bill that would prohibit PBS from accepting advertising and limit the amount of airtime used for corporate sponsor identification. (Markey and Tauzin recently teamed up to introduce a bill that would provide for uniform poll closing across the country on election night.)

Now Tauzin will be in a position to carry out much more of his legislative agenda. Having a Republican in the White House will make it easier for him to push through his priorities. Most observers say Tauzin will dominate the committee like no other chairman before him. "He will be the most powerful commerce chairman in history, mark my words," says pollster Frank Luntz. That's a fact that won't be lost on the networks as they prepare to come before Tauzin's committee.

Leaving Capitol Hill in early January for his brief Texas vacation, Tauzin calls me on his car phone. He's been working almost nonstop for two days and he sounds tired. He is still committed to bringing the network executives before his panel. His goal, he says, is to build a case for uniform poll-closing across the country and then get the networks to agree not to report any projections until 15 minutes after the polls close. His investigators are busy probing VNS, and Tauzin wants to find out how the service operates. As Tauzin sees it, VNS is the only source the networks use for the election story—and journalists, he notes, pride themselves on not doing a story until they have at least two sources. So now Tauzin is doing his own reporting on the reporters, and he enjoys the role. "It's the reverse of what they do when they cover a politician who has messed up," he says, laughing. ■

## Black Publishing's New Colors

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 87] *Ebony* was read in the fifties and sixties by blacks who were not yet a part of the middle class but hoping to get there. Johnson's *Savoy* may also be viewed as an aspirational publication—a guidebook for those looking to join the "black privileged class," as Ellis Cose, a *Newsweek* editor who writes frequently about race, calls it.

But amid all this promise, the question remains: Will the masses that have made *Ebony* a fixture at barbershops, beauty

parlors, and supermarket checkout stands flock to a more upscale magazine like *Savoy*?

Seven years ago, Roy Johnson, then a senior editor at *Sports Illustrated*, brought the idea for what would become *Savoy* to the powers that be at Time Inc. "I would constantly go to the newsstand and not see any publications that reflected this new growth in our community," he says. "For me, it was mostly about the *Vanity Fairs*, the *GQs*, the magazines I was reading at the time; I was saying, 'I don't see myself, I don't see anyone who looks like me, who lives my life; I don't see

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anybody I know.” He pitched the idea to Time Inc., which was interested, if apprehensive about the project’s ability to generate a large enough circulation.

In that nascent stage, Johnson was thinking of calling his magazine *Renaissance*. “The word ‘renaissance’ turned out to be too long—it didn’t look good,” Johnson says, laughing. Instead, he settled on the name *Savoy*, a reference to the legendary Harlem ballroom. “It was the place [where] blacks and whites first socialized,” he says. “Whites would come from downtown, and blacks who lived uptown, would come together and celebrate life, to have great discussions.”

Leonard Burnett Jr., now Vanguard’s group publisher, was then also at Time Inc. as the associate publisher of *Vibe* magazine (*Vibe* has since been sold to the Miller Publishing Group, which also publishes *Spin*). “I went out to lunch with Roy a time or two, and he said he wanted to steal me away to be the publisher of *Savoy* back then,” Burnett says. “But even at that point five or six years ago, I was hesitant to say that advertisers were ready to open up and have the vision and understand the need for a book such as *Savoy*.”

Burnett recalls that Time Inc. allocated Johnson the funds to set up a business plan and do some editorial development, but “the question during all this time was, ‘Do we actually do a prototype or a test issue?’” Burnett says. “And then the answer came back: ‘No, we won’t do the test issue—it’s not the right time.’” The idea remained in limbo at Time Inc. for several years. In the spring of 2000, Johnson tendered his resignation (he was then an editor at large at *Fortune*) and brought *Savoy* to the nascent Vanguard team.

One Time Inc. writer, who asked to remain anonymous, recalls the sense of surprise that *Savoy* never got off the ground: “Roy got lots of props from Time’s [executive] thirty-fourth floor, so it was a bit of a shock when *Savoy* died a crib death,” the source says. “I don’t blame Roy for leaving, because Time Inc. carried a dog like *Life* for years.”

Of course, Time Inc.’s decision to pass on *Savoy* seems a little ironic now, considering the conglomerate’s subsequent decision to buy into African-American properties such as *Essence* and *Africana.com*. But a Time Inc. spokesperson says that Johnson’s pet project was never on a big enough scale. “We thought *Savoy* was an interesting idea, but there were other projects in various stages of development here at the time,” says spokesperson Peter Costiglio. “And given the dimensions of our company, and the size and scale of the ventures that we normally pursue, we always thought it would work better in a smaller-sized environment.”

Johnson is diplomatic about his Time Inc. years. “I have nothing but praise for people there, because being the premier publisher in the world, they gave me the tools to do what I’m doing now,” he says. “I totally understood their trepidation and their reasons for not going forward—that was certainly their choice. I also believe that everything happens in its own time, and maybe the marketplace wasn’t ready for *Savoy* five years ago.”

Indeed, in spite of Time Inc.’s early wariness regarding *Savoy*, many of the writers and editors who’ve jumped on board the Vanguard startup have left behind high-profile jobs at

establishment publications, a reversal from the days when black writers would be scooped up from “ethnic” papers by the likes of *Newsweek* and *The New York Times*.

“In a way it was a challenging decision to come here because I had a great job at *Newsweek*,” says Veronica Chambers. “I really believed in the vision of *Savoy*; I really believed that this market was underserved.”

Chambers says her friends in the mainstream media often have misconceptions about the type of company Vanguard is. “My friends who aren’t black thought my leaving *Newsweek* might be this militant thing, but when you walk into Vanguard, it’s pretty Benetton; there’s Asian, Latino, black, white, and yet we’re all creating these products for what’s commonly referred to as the ‘urban market.’”

**T**he urban market that Chambers describes has a rich media history. Many organs of the black press, such as the *Chicago Defender* (the first African-American newspaper to hit a circulation of 200,000) and the *Crisis* (founded in 1910 by W.E.B. DuBois and still published under the chairmanship of historian and journalist Roger Wilkins), solidified their

journalistic reputations by crusading for civil rights, and by publishing strong-minded, impassioned editorials. There is no disputing the historical role that these papers, and later *Ebony* and *Jet*, played for black America, documenting the lives of a community that hungered to see itself in print.

*Ebony* represented the voice of the great migration of Southern blacks to the Northern cities, and in John Johnson, himself a product of that great migration, African-American publishing found its own Horatio Alger story. Born in Arkansas and transplanted to

Chicago, Johnson famously took out a \$500 loan on his mother’s furniture to launch *Negro Digest*, *Ebony*’s precursor, in 1942.

“John Johnson worked for a black insurance company as a young man, and his job was to gather black news and mimeograph it for the executives in the company,” says Richard Newman, research officer at the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research at Harvard University. “It occurred to him that other people would like to know this news also, because you couldn’t find it in the *Chicago Tribune*.”

In 1943, Johnson wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt, then the first lady, asking her to write an article on race relations for a small, struggling black publication she’d never heard of. She declined, but Johnson was dogged in his pursuit of her, and she finally agreed. He ran the piece under the headline “If I Were a Negro,” which was a regular feature of the magazine. When the issue hit the newsstands, *Negro Digest*’s circulation exploded. “It was sensational,” Newman says. “That magazine sold and was a success for years.”

To see how black-media entrepreneurship has shifted through the years, one need look no further than an infamous exchange between *Ebony*’s John Johnson and Robert Johnson, the founder of BET. According to a 1997 article in *The Washington Post*, Robert Johnson told a group of stock analysts gathered at the World Trade Center earlier that spring: “You simply cannot get big anymore by being 100 percent black-owned anything.” In language that foreshadowed his decision to sell BET to Viacom three years later, Johnson cautioned that African-American



From left: *Savoy*’s Gary Lewis, singer Kelis, *Honey*’s Sydne Bolden, and *Savoy*’s Keith Clinkscales



media entities risked losing their independence in the age of corporate takeovers and mergers. "I can see a day where there probably won't be any major black-owned companies in the media," he told the Wall Street group. He cited the venerable John Johnson as a likely casualty, telling the stock analysts that Johnson Publishing Company would likely not survive long after its founder's death.

John Johnson was livid. He told *The Washington Post* that after learning of Robert Johnson's comments, "I called him up and cussed him out. I said, 'Really now, how dare you? You just got started, and I've been number one for 50 years. I am the biggest in my field. I don't want to be in the white field.'"

This sense of self-sufficiency, of not needing to "be in the white field," is evident in every issue of *Ebony*. To flip through the early issues is to see an encapsulation of the whole of post-war black America, from the 1945 photographs of the 99th Pursuit Squadron under the command of Colonel B.O. Davis to James Baldwin's 1965 essay "White Man's Guilt" ("I have often wondered, and it is not a pleasant wonder, just what white Americans talk about with one another," he begins). Then there's the devastating immediacy of the "I've Been to the Mountaintop" Martin Luther King Jr. special issue of May 1968, less than a month after his assassination. ("Martin Luther King died at 7:02 on the evening of a bright spring day, April 4, 1968. No more will he link arms with those in the forefront of a phalanx of marchers for freedom.")

No one knows the story of *Ebony* and John Johnson better than Lerone Bennett Jr., who has been writing for and editing at the magazine since 1953. The author of the recent, controversial book *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream*, Bennett says that John Johnson's publishing formula was remarkably simple. "What made *Ebony* successful in the beginning was that white media did not show the human dimensions of the African-American personality," he says. "White media didn't show blacks getting married; we didn't marry in *The New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*; nobody cared. *Ebony* showed black people getting married, which is a simple thing but it's a very powerful thing." It didn't hurt that the magazine's splashy, *Life*-style photography was accompanied by the prose of acclaimed black authors such as Richard Wright and Langston Hughes. "To 'accent the positive' as *Ebony* has done, is to give Negro America a sorely needed psychic lift," wrote Hughes in a 1965 essay celebrating the magazine's 20th anniversary.

Yet today, as *Ebony* continues to "accent the positive," it has come to seem less groundbreaking and uplifting and more like an innocuous Afrocentric version of *Us Weekly*. "*Ebony* had more edge once upon a time," says writer Ellis Cose. "It's decided to become—presumably that's because they figure that's where the numbers are—a personality- and people-focused kind of magazine. It's a very different magazine than it was a generation or so ago." Indeed, all too often, the tone of its journalism now stands in sharp contrast to the kind of sophisticated, nuanced magazine writing that was *Ebony*'s hallmark, and that Roy Johnson is promising with the launch of *Savoy*.

One case in point: In the November 2000 issue of *Ebony*, in a feature called "The Fifty-Five Most Intriguing Blacks of 2000," you'll find Sean "Puffy" Combs side by side with Mumia Abu-Jamal, Colin Powell cheek by jowl with Prince, and the following assessment of the legacy of O.J. Simpson: "With all of White America blaming him for the deaths of his former wife and her

companion, Ronald Goldman, Simpson had to turn back to Black America, for legal representation, for a not-guilty verdict, and for absolution." Leaving aside questions of factual accuracy—doesn't anyone at *Ebony* recall the names Shapiro, Scheck, Bailey, and Neufeld?—much of *Ebony*'s tone prompts the question: Is black America's leading magazine merely a forum for cultural boosterism?

"I don't think it's fair," Bennett says of the characterization. "I think you're talking about a slightly different thing...I think that it's true to say, in general, black media don't rush to tear down major African-American figures. I think that's true; I think that's been true throughout the history of black journalism in this country."

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"It is about boosterism," Stanley Crouch acknowledges. "The one thing that we know...is that if a Negro tears his pants in public, they don't need to report it, 'cause white folks definitely will. That's their attitude. That's something you don't have to worry about covering, because it will get covered from every possible angle."

George Curry, who was the first black president of the American Society of Magazine Editors and the former editor in chief of *Emerge*, puts it another way: "You'll always get criticism from people who don't feel you should be washing your dirty laundry in public. But I say, why go to another laundromat?...If there's anybody who has credibility to hold [our leaders] accountable, it should be us."

**V**eronica Chambers and the editorial team at *Savoy* are nothing if not ambitious. They say that they're aiming to begin a sea change in the way that the black press covers its own community. Chambers tells me this over lunch at Trattoria Dell'Arte, a crowded Italian restaurant in midtown Manhattan where she looks decidedly more East Village than East Flatbush, dressed in dark capped blue jeans, her dreadlocks peeking out from a floppy pink cap that nearly covers her eyes. "I think that as black journalists, we have been cheerleaders for the community for a long time. And I think in some contexts it's been important—not so much in an us-against-them mentality...but we've really paid attention to and supported...some amazing leaders and visionaries." But Chambers and others at *Savoy* say that they don't want to be a magazine writing about "firsts." "It wasn't going to be the first black scientist, the first black astronaut," Chambers says. "You'd have to be more than black and have a job to get into *Savoy*."

Still, it is easier to throw out sound bites than to create a publication that embodies these words, and Chambers acknowledges that she and others at *Savoy* are at the beginning stages. "How do we do investigative journalism about our own community that really has weight? We're struggling with that," she says.

Implicit in this analysis of the state of black-magazine journalism is a critique of the prevailing "cheerleading" style of writing found in *Ebony* and *Jet*. Like most other African-American journalists and editors I spoke to, however, Chambers is critical only in an oblique way ("We're trying to reflect more than just the people that everyone's talking about; we're trying

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to shape the dialogue as well"), and she's quick to add a glowing appraisal of the octogenarian founder of the *Ebony* empire. "We all acknowledge and respect that John H. Johnson is the [Condé Nast chairman] S.I. Newhouse and [former Condé Nast editorial director] Alex Liberman of our people," she says, "and in that context anything we do is in some part an homage." Even the consistently contrarian Crouch says enthusiastically: "I think that any serious American should be a subscriber to *Jet*."

Clinkscales describes visiting the *Ebony* headquarters as if it were a pilgrimage. "If it wasn't for *Ebony* I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now," he says. "If I hadn't gone to Chicago and seen that building on Michigan Avenue, it would never have occurred to me that a person of color could be running a major publishing company."

Despite *Ebony's* unflagging positivism, the black press used to enjoy a different sort of tradition. "If you go back a bit to the *Chicago Defender* and a number of black papers, back in the heyday of black newspaper journalism, they did really gangbuster investigations; they were the ones, among other things, that got the lynching story out," says Ellis Cose. "So there is a history. But I think if you look at the black press now, it's a press that's been eviscerated."

How, then, to account for this lack of an inward-looking, investigative tradition in magazines like *Ebony*? Is it somehow attributable to a change in the culture?

"If you call self-preservation cultural, then yes, it's cultural," Ken Smikle, of Target Market News, says with a booming laugh. "We ain't about to tell about each other. The basic attitude is 'Why would I tell on someone else for me to be a part of the forces of evil trying to tear them down?'"

The only black magazine in recent years that did, in Smikle's words, "tell" was *Emergence*. Started in 1989 by the late *Time* reporter Wilmer Ames, *Emergence* offered a rare forum for politically charged journalism. (BET gained full control of the publication in 1993, after Ames's death.) Under the helm of editor in chief George Curry, a former reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, the magazine won kudos for its hard-hitting reporting, most notably for its 1996 piece "Kemba's Nightmare," about a 22-year-old woman, Kemba Smith, sentenced to 24½ years in prison for her minor role in a nonviolent drug ring. (In December 2000, President Clinton pardoned the young woman.) *Emergence* was also accused of sensationalism: A 1993 cover featured Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas sporting an Aunt Jemima handkerchief on his head. Describing the magazine as marginally unprofitable, *Vanguard* made a "business decision based on past performance" to place *Emergence* "on hiatus" in June 2000, says Clinkscales.

"The subscribers for *Emergence* will get *Savoy*, and that's the foundation for our magazine," says Roy Johnson, who stopped short of calling *Savoy*, as others have, a "rebirth" of *Emergence*.

Curry suggests that the looming but then-undisclosed Viacom-BET deal was behind the closing of *Emergence*. "What [Robert Johnson] did in the process was shed a lot of his subsidiaries, and basically turn them over to other people while maintaining an interest in them," he says. "In *Vanguard's* case they had this dream for *Savoy* for a while, so consequently BET had three publications and they closed two [*Emergence* and *BET Weekend*] in order to do *Savoy*....That was their dream and that's what they're entitled to do."

In a phone interview, Curry did little to mask his displeasure at the notion that *Savoy* is a re-emergence of *Emergence*. "There's no

question that [*Savoy*] is not doing what *Emergence* was doing," Curry says, adding that he is trying to shore up funding for a new publication, called *Clarity*, which will be a successor to *Emergence*. "[*Savoy* is] more like *Ebony*....It's a soft feature magazine that's really not doing any news."

**F**or years, the drawing-board concept of *Savoy* was of a "black *Vanity Fair*"—a somewhat wishful comparison that has been bandied about in the media. Indeed, *Savoy's* debut issue is filled with the kind of stories not likely to be on *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter's radar screen. There's a provocative essay by *Newsweek's* Gregory Beals about racial bloodlines and the Human Genome Project; a photo portfolio documenting master chef Marcus Samuelsson's first trip to his homeland, Ethiopia, in 26 years; and an essay by Deborah Mathis, the former White House correspondent for Gannett News Service, that offers a critical assessment of the Clinton legacy for black America. But Mathis's sobering analysis of the Clinton years would no doubt have been better served without the easy accompaniment of a computerized Bubba-as-black-man photograph. (With a café au lait complexion and an Afro, Clinton could be mistaken for Bryant Gumbel.) And the cover story on 28-year-old actress Gabrielle Union seems at times strained in its efforts to pin the Next Big Thing sash on an engaging young woman whose biggest role to date was costar of the teen cheerleader hit *Bring It On*.

The diversity of *Savoy's* monthly columnists is more promising—conservative syndicated radio host Armstrong Williams arguing in favor of school vouchers, for example—with the kind of wide-ranging and counterintuitive perspectives so often lack-

**"If a Negro tears his pants in public, they don't need to report it," says Stanley Crouch, "cause white folks definitely will."**

ing in the lockstep world of African-American feature magazines. And where *Ebony* and *Essence* are apt to write uncritically—if not worshipfully—about the latest Louis Farrakhan spectacle on the Mall in Washington, *Savoy* is unafraid to poke fun at black America's sacred cows. For the debut issue, Jill Nelson, a columnist for *USA Today* and a commentator for MSNBC, penned an article titled "Stop the Million March Madness," which begins: "Not to be outdone by the Million Man, the Million Women, the Million Youth or the Million Family Marches, extremely youthful organizers announced the Million Toddler March on Washington this spring. Organizers called on all toddlers to demand that their parents bring them to the nation's capital for a day of atonement for the Terrible Twos." With tongue then removed from cheek, Nelson launches into a scathing critique that would be unthinkable in most existing black publications: "Let the Million Family March be the last time we follow a dubious leader's call for the catharsis of mass atonement for a day."

One of the most well-known contributors in the issue is fiction writer Walter Mosley, who has written the first of ten interconnected stories that will run in *Savoy*. "The reason he wrote them and the reason he wanted them to be published in a magazine created for and by black people is that he was inspired by Langston Hughes's 'Simple' stories that ran in the *Chicago Defender* for over twenty years," Johnson says. "He felt it was important for a writer of his stature to help us retain ownership of things that we've created. Walter's always said that we create great products, and then we lose them."

Mosley's sentiment may be Johnson's own publishing mantra. After all, if by default rather than design, Johnson is creating his product not for Time Inc. but for a smaller black-owned media company and for a black middle class that, Johnson hopes, will see itself reflected in the pages of *Savoy*.

**B**ut the success of *Savoy* is predicated on more than the magazine's content. And the complex structure of the Viacom-BET deal has greatly complicated the future, not just for *Savoy*, but for the entire Vanguard Media portfolio of magazines. In light of this, I venture to ask Roy Johnson: Doesn't the sale of your largest shareholder affect your future? "Change affects everybody," he says tersely. "There's no answer to that yet. That answer will make itself clear over the next few months. Right now, things are as they were....Our focus is on products and profitability."

Vanguard's publisher, Leonard Burnett Jr., tries to paint the Viacom deal in the best possible light, saying that BET's investment in Vanguard Media was a one-time capital infusion. "We are not financially any worse off or any better off than we were before the deal," he insists. "We're separate companies, so we're not as dramatically affected by that as what people thought. BET had already made a major investment; they were just as much...a strategic partner."

But the magazine business is increasingly precarious, a fact that becomes all the more pressing when a media startup like Vanguard loses the backing of a conglomerate like BET. "You can't tell me that this won't affect them. It does," says Samir Husni, the head of the University of Mississippi's magazine-journalism program, who says that half the magazines that launched in 2000 didn't make it to the year's end. "They need to prove themselves faster and quicker than they would if they knew BET was behind them....Even if it was a one-time infusion, they always knew that BET was there. They could always tell themselves, 'If we need the money, there's always the source.'"

In spite of these uncertainties, the *Savoy* staff is publicly remaining upbeat. The premiere issue, which comes in at 138 pages, has 50 full-page ads (a one-time, full-page, full-color ad costs \$15,000) and includes such upscale advertisers as Salomon Smith Barney, Lincoln Navigator, and Courvoisier. The magazine is launching with an announced 200,000-circulation rate base, but "has the potential to be a comfortable four- to five-hundred-thousand circulation magazine," says Clinkscales. Its numbers are healthy for a startup, says Husni, who is confident in Clinkscales's and Roy Johnson's abilities. More than 100,000 former *Emergence* subscribers will now be receiving *Savoy*. "The proof will be in the content," says Husni. "Will the content pull enough people back to buy a second or third issue? Will they subscribe?"

Indeed, the success of the magazine may depend on its appeal beyond the black community. "It's almost like that scene in *Do the Right Thing* when Spike Lee is asking the John Turturro character, 'How can you say you don't like black people when your favorite basketball player is Michael Jordan and your favorite

actor is [Eddie Murphy]?" says Chambers. "If your favorite basketball player is Allen Iverson and your favorite actor is Denzel Washington and your favorite author is Toni Morrison, then this is your magazine, regardless of what color you are."

The fact that many of *Savoy's* contributors come from mixed cultural backgrounds—Mosley, for example, is both black and Jewish—suggests that the magazine may really be looking to throw out the old us-and-them paradigm that defined so much of African-American publishing.

Robert Johnson's BET programming has been criticized within African-American circles for being too downmarket and "ghetto," filled with too many hours of raunchy standup comedians and booty-shaking videos. I ask Roy Johnson if there is a danger of *Savoy's* content being a little too upmarket—elitist, even.

Johnson visibly tenses in his swivel chair at the mention of the word. "I don't think it's an elitist magazine," he says. "I get offended—no one asks *GQ* when they write about fifteen-hundred- or three-thousand-dollar suits if *GQ* is an elitist magazine; no one asks the *Robb Report* when they write about hundred-thousand-dollar cars if it's an elitist magazine. If we have readers who are traveling to all parts of the world, who are able to buy custom clothes, drive anything they want to drive, who are able to send their kids to any school they want to send

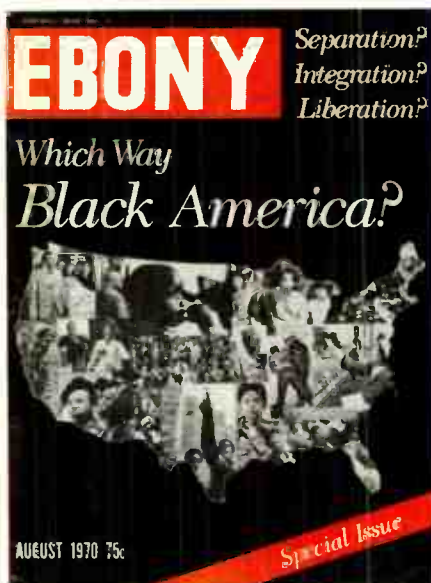
them to, if you are writing a magazine that in part reflects that audience, why is that elitist? Why are we not able to reflect that aspect of who we are?"

It might be argued, of course, that some people *do* accuse *GQ* and the *Robb Report* of reflecting elitist values. But my question has touched a raw nerve in Johnson, and I wonder if his defensive posture is perhaps more a result of the years he spent describing the existence of this affluent black demographic to skeptical white publishing executives, of the countless hours patiently explaining that black upper-middle-class tastes were just as sophisticated as those of their white counterparts. Perhaps he's simply fed up with having to justify—and to a white inquisitor, no less—his journalistic baby any further.

"We often talk about people needing role models, and yet here's a publication that attempts to reflect some of the most successful aspects of our community, and some people think that's elitist," he tells me. "I do get offended by it."

**O**n the walls of Johnson's office hangs a bucolic photograph of a seaside golf course that seems out of place next to his portraits of Frederick Douglass and Muhammad Ali. "That is the sixteenth hole at Cypress Point, out near Pebble Beach," he says. "It is the best course I've ever played, and that's the hardest hole." The photograph was taken by a friend of Johnson's, a *Sports Illustrated* photographer; Johnson finds it inspiring to stare at that daunting par three when he comes to work every morning.

"When I first started playing golf, black people didn't talk about playing golf," Johnson continues. "This was well before Tiger Woods came on the scene. I wrote an article in *Fortune*



The August 1970 issue of *Ebony*

## Black Publishing's New Colors

about how when I started playing we didn't talk about it and how that began to change."

Why on earth, I wonder, was golf such a taboo topic in black middle-class conversation?

"We were all raised not only to be thankful for the opportunity we were given, but to not forget that there were many of us who were not so fortunate," Johnson says.

In that same vein, Benilde Little, the author of the novel *Good Hair*, has a perspicacious essay in *Savoy's* debut issue titled "The Challenge of Privilege," about raising her daughter in an affluent home in the context of family members who have less material-filled lives. (To Little's daughter, the family SUV is just "the truck"; to her wide-eyed, less affluent cousins, it's a Mercedes.) With the burgeoning ranks of black American millionaires, Little notes, the quandary for African-American parents who "are newly minted in our wealth" is how to "raise children in a way that provides a balance between a sense of entitlement and security without arrogance or ignorance of the past." The conclusion she reaches is gracefully succinct: by "conveying that black and lack are not synonymous—and that lack of things is no indicator of lack of character or worthiness."

"[It's] one of the things that does make this community different," Veronica Chambers tells me. "Yes, the black middle class

reads *Travel & Leisure*, they do read *Esquire* and *Vanity Fair*, but even if we're doing well, we're much more likely to be connected to somebody who isn't doing well."

And it just might be the cultural subtleties like these that lend *Savoy* its distinctive voice, that give it the potential to stand out as something unique—possibly important—in the world of African-American publishing. With middle-class black America now larger than ever before, having risen in recent years, as Harvard's Richard Newman notes, "up several notches" on the socioeconomic scale, the fact remains that many of the newly comfortable who form *Savoy's* core demographic still have intimate knowledge of the stark realities of another black America.

**"I don't think it's an elitist magazine," Roy Johnson says. "I get offended; no one asks if *GQ* is an elitist magazine."**

"We're much more likely to be connected to somebody in the prison population, on welfare, or struggling with any number of issues of the underclass," Chambers says. It's a theme that's been hovering for decades, since the advent of *Ebony*, over the rising African-American middle class: how to chronicle the lives of the few, like Roy Johnson, who've managed to grab hold of the American dream, without losing sight of the many who may never get there. ■

## Nice TV

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 93] For Cella—and, by extension, for Alstrup—*Young Americans* provided experience in advertiser-backed script development and lessons about just how heavy-handed one could be in terms of product placement. Rather than taking it as evidence that such experiments don't work, they saw it as something that could be fine-tuned to work on an even larger scale.

**T**he role of advertisers in affecting the content of television shows has never been clear-cut. On one extreme stands the 1950s quiz show *Twenty-One*, which fell from grace when its sponsor, Geritol, prodded NBC to give certain contestants the answers ahead of time, thus setting up long-standing champions the audience could root for. That was considered corrupt, and a congressional probe ensued. But how do we feel about undisclosed sponsorship of advertisers whose products receive prominent placement on a show, or about advertisers who pull their commercials if they disagree with a show's content or tone? Should we trust television to the producers and demand that advertisers know their place?

Of course, the landscape of TV has changed since the days of *Twenty-One*, when it was common for advertisers to double as the producers of shows. For many years after that, the networks enjoyed a period of creative freedom; they could show what they liked, and advertisers could take it or leave it. As for taste, the networks all still followed guidelines developed by advertisers (from the days when they were making the shows) that kept the language tame and the sexual situations (even for married couples) almost nonexistent. And for a while, because there were only three networks, everyone was guaranteed big audiences and everyone was happy.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, the advent of the remote control allowed viewers to flip channels whenever a com-

mercial came on. Then cable TV proliferated, offering alternative channels with racier programming. Viewers clicked away from the cozy confines of the three main TV networks and wandered into a Siberia of lesser-known shows with comparatively tiny viewerships. By the 1990s, the networks (which retain the largest, albeit dwindling, segment of the viewing audience) responded by programming more outrageous material. Programming family material for prime time, always somewhat unglamorous, then fell wholly out of fashion. ABC, for instance, abandoned its longtime family-oriented TGIF lineup. "They're finding that the family programming is being done by family networks—Fox Family network is [Fox's] family umbrella; Nick[elodeon] has a family umbrella," Cella says. "So they have turned away from it." In its place have come shows like *Friends* and professional wrestling, shows that lots of people like but that lots of mainstream advertisers are uncomfortable with. "I don't think *Friends* is an 8 o'clock show," says Cella. "Most people would agree with me because it has sexual—it's a great show—has sexuality, and shouldn't be at 8 o'clock at night."

When Cella makes comments like that, you can bet the networks will be listening. He is part of an elite corps of advertising executives that gets to sit down each May with the networks and prescreen their fall pilots—a process followed quickly by deals locking up billions in advertising payments, known in the industry as the "upfront." But while Cella and his cohorts may control huge sums of money, it's generally too late for them to have much influence over the scheduling, let alone the content. This only adds to advertisers' frustration over what they see as their growing powerlessness, especially compared to the days when they literally owned programs.

And for advertisers it could soon get even worse. A new generation of digital video recorders—sporting names like TiVo and ReplayTV—allows viewers to skip TV commercials altogether, not just when watching taped shows but even when they're watching "live" TV (the machines can create a short time-delay to allow a

buffer to skip ads). This all means that if advertisers want to reach people through popular television shows, they'd better start thinking harder about how to do that beyond traditional commercials. Suddenly, missteps like *Young Americans* don't look so foolish. And suddenly, the idea of advertisers getting together to fund and exert influence over scripts seems less like a moral crusade and more like a shrewd bid for self-preservation.

**T**he Family Forum's TV-script development fund, its most ambitious undertaking thus far, began in earnest last year. As Alstrup recalls, "Jamie Kellner [who runs the WB network] said why don't you give us some seed money to go out and try to attract writers who would be interested in doing this?" WB executives were "quite surprised that they got eight scripts in, and in fact several of the scripts came from writers who wouldn't necessarily write something like that," says Alstrup, who got to examine the scripts.

Here's how the Family Forum's maiden voyage into script development played out: The Forum gave about \$1 million to WB, which invited writers and producers to submit scripts. Creating TV scripts is a speculative, high-risk business for TV networks, so the Forum's extra money in effect extended the network's programming choices. The only string attached was that the resulting scripts had to be, according to Alstrup, "appropriate for family viewing." WB and the Forum agreed that if any of the scripts funded by the Forum got picked up by the network, the Forum would be reimbursed for its seed money and Forum members would get first refusal on advertising airtime within the show.

Ultimately, WB made pilots of three Forum-backed scripts. One show, called *Finally Home*, was being developed by Aaron Spelling, the producer responsible for the kind of early prime-time jiggle dramas (such as *Melrose Place*) that Alstrup has long complained about. Another was *Gilmore Girls*, a quirky drama about the travails of a single mom raising her 16-year-old daughter in a quaint Connecticut town. *Gilmore Girls* got picked up, and it made its debut last fall. The Forum got its money back, and Cella's clients who had kicked in the seed money got their family-friendly venue.

Lauren Graham, one of the stars of *Gilmore Girls*, acknowledges she was nervous about the Forum's involvement in the script. "It makes it sound like something that is going to be a watchdog organization, or that's going to be telling me what I can or can't say," she says. "And that just has not been the case." Still, Graham makes a point of distancing the program from the Forum. "It was not developed for them. It existed already and then they acknowledged it or funded it or said yes, we're interested in this, but it was not developed with them in mind. It was developed separately."

Fittingly, *Gilmore Girls* airs at 8 P.M. on Thursday nights—the same time as *Friends*. The Forum had no hand in the network's scheduling decision, but nevertheless advertisers have now established a family-friendly beachhead against the toothsome Manhattan roomies. The show has gotten positive reviews and has been renewed for a full round of 20 shows this year. It's being watched in 3 million homes per week—hardly a record-setter but a big achievement for what insiders refer to as the "death slot" opposite *Friends*, which can claim *Murder, She Wrote* as its most famous

victim, plus a sad cavalcade of such forgotten fare as *Extreme*, *Due South*, *Prey*, *High Incident*, *Promised Land*, *C-16*, and *Vengeance Unlimited*.

As of last month, *Gilmore Girls* is facing the double-whammy of *Friends* and CBS's *Survivor: The Australian Outback*—not a good turn of events for a new show. Still, with *Survivor*'s nudity and occasional foul language, *Gilmore Girls* may well retain its status as the default family alternative in America's more staid households. As Steve Johnston, vice-president of advertising and brand management for Nationwide, an insurance company that is part of the Family Forum, says: "If in fact you're seeing a high concentration of females [watching *Gilmore Girls*]...which is what you're seeing right now, then those [advertising] folks who are looking for that audience are going to say, 'We're sticking with it.'...[Forum advertisers] need to have that opportunity and that option. Not everyone is going to watch half-naked people running around on that island."

So far, *Gilmore Girls* has avoided the production problems and PR fumbles that *Young Americans* experienced. There are no clumsy product placements, and beyond the original pilot script, there's no business connection with the Forum at all. The network owns the show, and neither Cella nor his clients nor the Forum has any direct creative oversight. The Forum gets first dibs on advertising time, but that's it.

Sort of. Although it's true that WB could turn Lauren Graham's character into a stripper and the Forum technically wouldn't be able to do anything about it, as Alstrup says: "I have my serious doubts

that Jamie Kellner would do that." The reason Alstrup can be so sure is that she knows the network wants the Forum to fund future scripts. And, not insignificantly, WB knows that Alstrup and Cella will want to continue to buy commercial time on *Gilmore Girls* as long as the show meets their expectations.

Nothing about the advertiser involvement in *Gilmore Girls* seems particularly over the top. Yet the show stands as proof that advertisers don't have to sit back and merely hope that networks will produce the shows that are right for their products.

That's a big change, and we should brace for more. Once *Gilmore Girls* established itself as a show that wasn't going to be immediately added to *Friends*'s list of victims, ABC and CBS signed up with the Forum and are now kicking in a fresh infusion of script-development money for various unspecified projects. The Forum, meanwhile, is shopping around *Finally Home*, the Aaron Spelling drama; WB commissioned the pilot but ultimately decided to pass, so the Forum is urging other networks to take a look. The show stars Melissa Gilbert—best known for playing Laura on *Little House on the Prairie*—and centers on a married couple who adopt a diverse group of children after their twin daughters are killed in a car crash. According to Kaki Hinton, a Forum committee member and a senior director of advertising services at Warner-Lambert, the Forum is trying to drum up interest for the 2002-2003 TV season in the third pilot, *Welcome to Holland*, a drama about a couple raising three children, one of whom is autistic.

Cella recently announced the creation of Universal McCann Entertainment Group, a division at his agency devoted solely to developing TV shows (with clients' needs in mind, naturally). The group has begun putting the pieces together for a series of A&E-style biographies of prominent African-Americans, and has been



Family Forum cofounder Andrea Alstrup

## Nice TV

trying to hook up advertisers with programmers for those and other projects. "There are really important African-Americans out there who really should be more exposed," he says. "Clients want to address something to that market that's quality, that they can have continuity for." Cella says one network is interested. And just before Christmas, CBS aired *The Christmas Secret*, a show that was developed with an undisclosed amount of seed money from three of Cella's clients—Johnson & Johnson, Nestlé, and General Motors—who got to review an early draft of the script and request changes, according to Cella's colleague Reisenberg. "The best way an advertiser can really control their ultimate destiny," Reisenberg says, "is to control the content." Cella is a little more circumspect: "Programming is a way of defining the things that you care about."

**W**hat does Johnson & Johnson's Andrea Alstrup care about? In one sense, that's a simple question. Her company makes countless products for people of all ages, and she wants to advertise those products to as many people at one time as possible in a programming environment she considers suitable.

Alstrup, who would say only that she's a bit older than the 50-year-old Cella, works out of a corner office on the tenth floor of company headquarters in the bustling college town of New Brunswick, New Jersey. She's been at Johnson & Johnson since she interned there in high school, and from that perch, she's watched the changing face of prime time. And she hasn't liked what she has seen. In 1976, Alstrup helped write Johnson & Johnson's advertising rules for acceptable TV programming, which are famous in the industry for favoring family-friendly fare. "We have had a policy to prescreen every episode of prime-time programming that we were in," she says. In the late seventies and early eighties, she says, she began to notice that "there were many times when the agency, or we ourselves, would look at episodes and we just became more and more concerned about some of the content."

"We all attend the same black-tie dinners and there are many times when, with other advertisers, we would sit around talking and say the programming is getting worse and worse. We're finding it harder and harder to advertise in the early evening hours," Alstrup continues. "I would go out to Los Angeles and meet with programmers and the networks," she says. "They basically said, 'You know, the viewers will tell us what they want to watch.'"

Alstrup knew plenty of people who were also growing tired of hearing the networks say they were merely producing the sorts of shows viewers wanted. Jeff Sandore, for instance, is vice-president of strategy at Tyson Foods Inc., the chicken marketer. He was quick to join the Forum. Sandore says he often watches TV with his two teenagers and "I've had to turn off the television on some occasions due to the content of the programming. They know. They'll look at me and they'll go, 'You want me to change the station?' 'Yes, I need you to change the station.'" (Sandore prescreens episodes of *Friends* before allowing Tyson spots to run during the show.)

As programming on the networks became increasingly risqué, Alstrup's discontent festered. In the 1990s, says Mary Lou Quinlan, a friend of Alstrup's and an advertising consultant, Alstrup underwent something of a personal transformation. "She was this very, very quiet, close-to-the-vest, nose-to-the-grindstone type of person," says Quinlan. "I have watched her change over these ten years into someone who's taken all of that from the inside and [brought] it

outside. [Now] she's much bolder; she's much more vocal about what she feels. And incredibly determined."

That determination has led Alstrup to an important juncture, not just for her company but for television and for viewers. If the shows the Forum and its members fund turn out to be profitable for the networks, then expect more of them. Networks go with what works. Replacing jokes about condoms with tamer family-viewing fare does not guarantee ratings, though. Dan Rank, a managing partner at Optimum Media Direction, an ad-buying firm and a rival of Cella's, agrees that the island of family-friendly TV is shrinking, but the main problem, as he sees it, is that the alternatives just don't deliver the eyeballs the way the raunchier material does. "Why don't they put anything good on television?" Rank asks rhetorically. "They do. It's called *Masterpiece Theatre* and no one watches."

Yet these are treacherous times for network television, with increased competition and fractured audiences, and executives are pretty much open to anything. John Landgraf, a former vice-president for prime-time series at NBC, notes that the Family Forum's involvement is more welcome now than it would have been just a few years ago because the financial risk attached to any show the Forum is behind is reduced. "Somebody crunches the numbers and they look at how profitable a show is," says Landgraf, adding that if advertisers like a show, "that will be looked at." Another former executive in charge of programming at one of the TV networks is blunter: "Their influence is they pay the bills, you know? The networks aren't in business without these guys."

**"[The networks] do it because it's good business. It isn't because they're great churchgoing people."**

Judd Apatow was the executive producer of *Freaks and Geeks*, an NBC sitcom (canceled last year) about a group of high-school kids, circa 1980, who have complicated attitudes toward sex and drugs—exactly the kind of material that Family Forum members want to avoid. But Apatow doesn't feel threatened by the advertisers' campaign. "It doesn't hurt me, it doesn't hurt anybody, because there's always a certain amount of cop shows they need, a certain amount of hospital shows, edgy comedies, reality shows, game shows, and they have to fill those niches," Apatow says. "It makes [the networks] look like nice people to show interest in creating family-friendly shows," he continues, "but they do it because it's good business. It isn't because they're great churchgoing people." Apatow is right about one thing: In Hollywood, at bottom, it's all about what sells, and you need to be careful before you conclude that *anyone* is doing anything because of family values. For example, WB, which is airing the family-friendly *Gilmore Girls*, is owned by AOL Time Warner, which, through its Warner Bros. Television division, also happens to produce *Friends*.

**Q**uestions of morality aside, it's clear that if the concept behind the Family Forum's script-development plan catches on, prime time will be different, as the Family Forum is not looking for shows that will shake us up or push the envelope. But then again, prime time doesn't exactly offer an abundance of such shows right now anyway. And both Alstrup and Cella say they favor shows that are both high-quality and family-friendly.

Still, even some critics who admire the quality of *Gilmore Girls* have concerns about expanding the role of advertisers in the creation of television programming. "It sets a precedent," says

Robert Thompson, director of the Center for the Study of Popular Television at Syracuse University. Thompson says he's a fan of *Gilmore Girls* and agrees that the Forum's efforts "could actually result in something interesting on TV." But at the same time, Thompson argues, such initiatives may "open the door for them to do a lot more insidious things," and his remark evokes a recent incident in which a movie about poisoned pain-reliever pills was yanked from the USA Network lineup following a complaint from Johnson & Johnson, which markets Tylenol.

Cella and Alstrup aren't worried about insidious advertisers,

of course. And they say that the TV audience wants what they're willing to provide, even if we don't quite know it yet. In that same 1998 speech at the New York Hilton that so shook up those in attendance and perhaps started a programming revolution, Alstrup began by quoting something comedian Jerry Seinfeld had said in an interview with NBC's Katie Couric about his own smash sitcom: "You have to think of the audience as a child that you're in charge of, and you have to do right by that child....They'll be glad you did."

Will we? Stay tuned. ■

## Advice for Ari

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 97] people to talk because there are just too many news outlets." Siewert was in charge of a staff of 20.

**F**ollowing Fleischer's appointment as press secretary last December, the press-secretary-in-waiting got on the phone and called many of his predecessors. He spoke with Democrats and Republicans: Marlin Fitzwater, who served Presidents Reagan and Bush; Larry Speakes, who served President Reagan; and Jody Powell, President Carter's spokesman. Fleischer also called a quartet of Clinton spokesmen: George Stephanopoulos, McCurry, Lockhart, and Siewert.

One of the few living former press secretaries—and the only one of the last decade—that Fleischer did not call is Dee Dee Myers, who was Clinton's press secretary in 1993 and 1994. (He's not going to be able to get her advice from the pocket of Nessen's bulletproof vest, either. "I never wrote anything," Myers says. "I guess I just never got around to it.") But Myers might be singularly qualified to advise Fleischer on how to navigate his situation. When Myers was named press secretary, she took over the daily press briefings once handled by Stephanopoulos, who remained in the White House as a senior adviser. Stephanopoulos had the respect of the president; he had access to top meetings and could demand an audience with Clinton. Myers did not have that ability, and the press corps knew it. Proximity to the president, Myers says, is "the first test of the press secretary...It was sometimes a problem for me. Karen Hughes is clearly going to be in the room [when important decisions are made]; the question is, will Ari?...He's going to get some of that pressure. He's going to have to walk the line, as all press secretaries do, between giving accurate and substantive answers and saying more than he wants to to prove that he knows what's going on."

And Bush has already indicated he expects Fleischer will not always know what is going on. In a pre-inaugural interview with *The New York Times*, Bush recalled telling Fleischer, "When I tell you you are not going to know something, you say, 'Yes, sir.'"

Even before Fleischer moved into the White House, he was facing questions about his access to Bush. On January 9, Linda Chavez, Bush's first nominee for secretary of labor, announced that she would be holding a 4 P.M. news conference. At his 1 P.M. briefing at the transition headquarters in Washington, Fleischer was asked whether Chavez would withdraw. Bush was in Texas, where he spent most of the transition.

**QUESTION:** Ari, on the question asked earlier about whether Bush had spoken to Chavez, you said that "not to your knowledge."

**FLEISCHER:** Right.

**Q:** And earlier you said it "had not been brought to your attention."

**F:** Same answer.

**Q:** Is it possible that Bush in fact has spoken to her, and you are unaware of it?...

**F:** Well, of course, I'm not aware of every phone conversation he has....

**Q:** Could I ask you a broader question? As the incoming president's designated press spokesman, how often do you talk to Mr. Bush or how are you informed of his thinking on a daily basis?

**F:** I talk to him regularly, as often as necessary. Clearly, with the president-elect being in Texas and me being here, he has other staff in Texas who he's in much more frequent contact with....

**Q:** When did you last talk to President-elect Bush?

**F:** I'm not going to talk about my conversations with the president. I don't think that's necessary. But I appreciate the question.



Ari Fleischer's January 9 briefing did not win him much praise among the press.

Speaking of Fleischer's performance the next morning, Myers said, "That felt familiar." Reporters were probing about the fact that Fleischer was in Washington while his boss remained in Texas—about his proximity to power, about whether he even knew what was going on.

Helen Thomas, who's been covering the White House for more than four decades and writes a regular column for *Hearst Newspapers*, rates Fleischer's January 9 performance a failure: "I think he definitely should reassure reporters that he has access, that he has direct access. If he doesn't, he's in trouble. And if he's not going to talk about how much access he has, it sounds like he doesn't have it. You answer questions directly. If he had talked to Bush, he should have said so—said, 'Of course I did.'"

Lockhart thinks Fleischer's early struggles might have been the result of Fleischer and Bush being in separate parts of the country. "I think Ari made the right bet as far as what was the most important thing to do right away, which was to go do transition," Lockhart says. "But transition was more a [Vice-President Dick] Cheney show. So while everyone was all down in Austin, he was here [in Washington]. In terms of solidifying a relationship, that probably didn't look great."

One former Democratic spokesperson says Fleischer is

## Advice for Ari

already seen as being unconnected. "They think he's just reading from a script. The Texans are in charge. They're very tight and controlling, and they want to ensure that they know exactly what gets said," says the former spokesperson.

Speaking of Bush's longtime inner circle, Hearst's Thomas says, "Everybody is going to try and control what he says. It's not just Karen [Hughes]. They're all very protective. You can already see a protective ring around [Bush], and that's not good. Those in charge are always protective about their turf, and it's very important that it's set very quickly, that [Ari] has direct access to the president himself. If he doesn't, it's going to be difficult to get respect in the eyes of the press."

Another former Democratic spokesperson agrees. "Ari's got real problems. He's seen as a spinner, not a substantive person, and he doesn't know the boss. That's two huge, huge problems, and the press is going to focus in on those."

**A**ccess—or lack thereof—to President Bush is not the only challenge Fleischer will face. He's relatively unversed in foreign policy, a crucial area for any press secretary. "After I was announced," Lockhart says, "I spent two months in NSC [National Security Council] school, talking to senior directors at the NSC. In foreign policy, you need the exact words in the exact right sequence." That's especially important

## Desperately Seeking Madonna

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 103] normally photographed that it seems to demand more, not less, attention. Dornoch's woolen traditionalism gave the wedding a different kind of substance, made people stop and reconsider this overfamiliar icon.

Then there are the lights, another cooperative gesture of sorts. It gets dark early this far north, and two orange-painted, gas-generated stadium lights have been set up above the entrance. The rumor goes around the pack that Madonna has provided the lights for the gathered press. It's a fair assumption, considering that none of the TV stations present claim responsibility for them, but later, Rosenberg denies that Madonna had anything to do with the lights: "I cannot believe that those lights were provided by Madonna," she says.

It's getting darker, and two burly guys in Skibo sweatshirts are let out of the gates. They walk over to the generators next to the mobile stadium lights and fill the gas tanks. The itchy-fingered paparazzi snap their picture.

**M**eanwhile, back at the Royal Golf Hotel, Mohan has returned from his interview about Madonna with CNN and is drinking another beer. His colleague Derek Brown is on his cell phone with his mother, reassuring her: "They can't arrest you for trying to get in. The law in Scotland is different." (There was a rumor circulating that trespassing laws in Scotland are more relaxed than England's.)

A few blocks away, Colin Thompson, co-owner of the Dornoch Castle Hotel, which happens to be right across the street from the cathedral, has found himself hosting media central. He sold good camera angles looking down on the cathedral for 500 pounds each.

when speaking for George W. Bush, who has referred to Greeks as "Grecians" and has confused Slovenia with Slovakia.

"Synonyms are not synonyms in the foreign-policy world," Jake Siewert says. "There's a difference between 'narrowing differences' and 'bridging differences.' If you display any weaknesses on foreign policy on the White House podium, you can very quickly lose the ability to speak on those issues. And then White House reporters lose out as well because all foreign-policy stories end up being written at [the] State [Department]."

As Mike McCurry, who served as a State Department spokesman before moving over to the White House, explains, being well versed in foreign policy has other advantages: "The ability to wax poetic at great lengths about foreign policy can put the most ornery press to sleep. It's a great trick to have in your bag." McCurry, like many former spokesmen, got a high-paying private-sector position after leaving the White House; he is chief executive officer of grassroots.com, a nonpartisan Internet company that provides services for political organizations.

Fleischer says he's not worried about his knowledge of foreign policy. "There's an old expression in this business that says don't speak unless it improves the silence. I won't be shy about not saying things if I don't know what the right answer is," he says.

Ari Fleischer also insists access will not be an issue. "Anytime I need him, I'll be able to talk to him. That's the understanding with the president and with [chief of staff] Andy Card. It can't work any other way, or the press would be able to sniff it out." ■

At the siege camp, it's twilight and the horde has doubled in size. The lack of news has long since become the news itself. Not much has changed since the morning—reporters pick their way around the drive's muddy patches, mumbling into their cell phones. The photographers ready their ladders. A lone bagpipe player, an enterprising townsman, invests "Jingle Bells" with a kind of windy profundity into the darkness behind the agitated throng.

"Why are we wasting our time?" complains one of the paparazzi, who are rapidly becoming the Greek chorus for the siege.

### **"Why are we wasting our time?" complains one of the paparazzi, who are the Greek chorus for the siege.**

The ceremony is reportedly scheduled for 6 P.M. At 5:10 P.M. a BMW leaves the castle. "Guy changed his mind!" someone shouts.

At 5:12, there's a shout of "incoming," but the car doesn't turn in; it might have gone around to the service entrance. Meanwhile, an *Entertainment Tonight* producer is on her cell phone, trying to figure out if the last car to enter contained Madonna's 4-year-old daughter, Lourdes. "We think that was her, from looking at the digipics. But we only got a fleeting glimpse. I've got an idea—we should throw down some nails to get them to stop," she says grouchyly.

At 5:40, a nonmedia person in a quilted tweed jacket ambles up the road with a tray full of coffee and soup in Styrofoam cups. The photographers are beginning to despair.

"We need to think this one through," says a member of the AP team, which includes two photographers, two TV crews, one wire-service reporter, and one radio reporter. "If this starts at 6, for all we know, it'll end at 11 P.M."

"Hell, if it's Madonna's wedding, it doesn't end till 4 A.M.," says one of his photographers.

The AP radio correspondent switches into her radio voice and



begins broadcasting over her cell phone: "We are outside the ancient stronghold of Skibo Castle..."

Another reporter begins reading from her TelePrompTer: "For one night only, Dornoch was transformed into the showbiz capital of the world..."

Shortly after 6 P.M., the bagpipe player, standing just outside the cul-de-sac, begins playing "Here Comes the Bride," but nobody's paying attention. Instead, they swarm around the passengerless car that's sliding toward the gates. "No guests turned up for Madonna's wedding," a photographer jokes. Minutes later, there is another visitor, but it's only the man returning with a fresh tray of coffee and soup.

**T**hat evening, one of the *Sun* reporters busts into the bar at the Royal Golf with his laptop. "This wedding's just a cuts job," he declares, meaning there's no original reporting to add. *The Sun* has an early deadline and he needs to start writing. "We should wait till it happens; I heard a rumor that it's going to be delayed until tomorrow," says Mohan.

"What? Why would they be arriving now?" asks the other.

"I don't know," Mohan admits.

After they send their pieces to their editors, Mohan settles down with another cigarette and another pint of Miller. The football game between Bristol City and Bristol Rovers is on the tube. Mohan is rooting for City, and City's winning. He says they're "waiting for some calls from inside the castle." It's apparently a Skibo Castle tradition to set off fireworks when a wedding ceremony is completed, and the *Sun* team is still waiting. "We don't expect [the fireworks] till after midnight," Mohan says confidently. (They never did go off.)

His team isn't too pleased. "That was a f—ing debacle, wasn't it?" asks one reporter, who's holding a glass of chardonnay. "We should have just driven through their gates and gone click-click-click!"

At 9:15, Brown comes in and reports that the police say that nobody else is coming out of the castle tonight. But Mohan and his team are waiting for the ceremony's vicar, Susan Brown, to return home so they can confirm the wedding with her. She's not answering her phone, so a reporter is dispatched to knock on her door.

The reporter sipping chardonnay is still angry, though: "They never give you anything." Someone points out that Guy Ritchie's dad does give some quotes. "Yeah, he talks to everyone. He's a nice guy. That won't last long," he grouches. There's something insatiable about these guys and their inability to put the absurdity of their situation—waiting outside in the dank cold three days before Christmas to catch a glimpse of a pop star—in perspective. Clearly they are frustrated with the situation, but they are also just as clearly committed to making the most of what they had managed to observe. Theirs is not an exercise in writing the thoroughly correct history of the wedding, but about finding scoops: compelling, probably- and almost-true exclusives.

Now the team is breaking up: Most of them are going back to London in the morning. None of them is too happy. But at least City won.

**B**y Saturday, December 23, pretty much everyone's gone except for the guy from *People*, who's stalking around in his parka with its fur-trimmed hood. "Do I look happy?" he growls between cell-phone calls. With the satellite trucks gone, Skibo sends out a tractor and a few guys with rakes to clean up the mess of coffee cups and trash strewn around the entryway. The only cameraman left is a freelancer working for the British network ITN. "My desk is just paranoid that we'll miss someone," he explains. "I think they think she's going to go out."

At 2 P.M., one of six or so remaining paparazzi says that "apparently her car is getting ready to go to the airport." Just then a Range Rover with blacked-out windows comes roaring down the entry path.

The next day, the *Sunday Mirror* and the *News of the World* run a snapshot of Madonna and Ritchie in her car, looking grumpy and tired: "Bride & Gloom," the headline reads. The lack of real information means Madonna garnered another day of publicity, this one dedicated to rehashing the speculative odds and ends about the wedding.

"I think the Sunday papers were rather annoyed," says Mohan later, admitting defeat. "We did expect a photograph. I think the Sunday editors were expecting all the details, what she wore, what they ate. It'll be interesting to see if the photos ever come out; they'll probably come out in *Vanity Fair* or something." (Rosenberg says Madonna will not sell the pictures to anyone.)

**'A**s a press agent, I felt a little bad for the press. I'm glad [they] didn't get too pissed off," says Rosenberg, who adds that on the whole, she's pleased

with how the wedding came off.

Still, the media "made up a lot of stuff," she says. "That Luciano Pavarotti was going to sing. They made up that Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston were going to be there. They made up the planting of a tree"—with which *The Sun* led, on the Thursday before the event, a story that the happy couple commemorated their wedding arboreally—"completely untrue. Who was the maid of honor, who designed which outfit..." Then the information was reprinted in America. One can all but track the erroneous reports' sojourns through the British press before they bounced overseas: The Pavarotti bit appeared in the *Daily Record* of Scotland before being picked up in the *New York Post* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. The Brad Pitt speculation surfaced in *The Times* of London, *The Mirror*, and the *Daily Mail* on December 8 before being printed in the *New York Post*, *USA Today*, and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. The tree-planting rumor was also reported in *The Times* of London, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Record*, and *The Sun*, as well as the *Post* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "I think people in England take a lot of the information in their newspapers with a grain of salt," Rosenberg says, apparently including such innovations as the *Daily Record's* clip-and-paste photo montage of the couple's probable wedding attire. "In America, they take it as fact."

Rosenberg is irritated about the media's intrusiveness and relentlessness, but she's too smart to affect a sort of injured righteousness; after all, the explosion of publicity the couple has



The stakeout's payoff: a grainy photo of Madonna and her new husband, Guy Ritchie

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received is priceless, and Ritchie's profile—his previous movie, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, was released in the States two years ago to critical acclaim but modest success—has skyrocketed. It's a greater media feat than any publicist—or individual—could have arranged on her own. Unless, of course, that individual is Madonna.

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[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 107] paper, contributed to conservative and charitable causes, and even found time to serve as a Reagan appointee to the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, which oversaw the U.S. Information Agency. In 1992, Scaife saw an opportunity to move his paper into the heart of the city when Teamsters drivers went on strike at Pittsburgh's major dailies, the *Post-Gazette* and the larger *Pittsburgh Press*. Suddenly the city of 370,000 lacked a major paper. Scaife responded by putting out a Pittsburgh edition of his suburban daily, which began with a handful of reporters in Station Square, a historic section of Pittsburgh. Meanwhile, he tried to buy the *Press* from its owner, the E.W. Scripps Co. Despite Scaife's reported \$125 million offer, Scripps sold the *Press* for less to the Blade Communications-owned *Post-Gazette*, which immediately folded the *Press* into its own daily. (Scaife sued, charging a monopoly. The suit was settled out of court for an undisclosed sum.) Unable to buy one of the big dailies, Scaife pumped money into the *Tribune-Review*, hoping to make it into a major presence in Pittsburgh. (He eventually bought seven other small Pittsburgh-area papers and an ownership stake in a local radio station.)

TOOAY, THE *TRIBUNE-REVIEW*'s Pittsburgh headquarters, crowded with more than 100 employees, spans the third floor of a red brick building along the Allegheny River, and sits in the shadow of the ballpark the paper so strongly opposed. (Scaife also fought against a new football stadium for the Pittsburgh Steelers. Voters defeated a referendum to fund both stadiums with a tax hike; a different proposal was pushed through by local politicians in 1999.) Downtown Pittsburgh looms across the river, blurry in the rain on a late-fall afternoon. In a brightly lit pub on the ground floor of the building, Frank Craig, the *Tribune-Review*'s editor, takes a long drag on what must be his sixth cigarette in two hours, making up for all the time he spends in the smoke-free newsroom. Wearing a dark gray suit, his neatly trimmed beard flecked with gray, Craig has the appearance of a community college professor but the efficient, direct manner of somebody always on deadline.

Craig arrived at the *Tribune-Review* in January 2000 straight from the enemy: For four years, he was an assistant managing editor at *The Blade*, in Toledo, Ohio, which has the same owner as the *Post-Gazette*. As he looks out across the river toward his rival's headquarters, Craig disputes that Scaife's views warp the *Tribune-Review*'s news coverage. "I have never felt constrained by our editorial opinion with regard to how we cover the news," he says. "I think that every publisher, particularly independent publishers, have particular views just like editors do."

But many who've worked under Scaife disagree. According to interviews with 21 current and former employees at the *Tribune-Review*, Scaife frequently pushes his political and personal

"I know some people say it was part of a master plan to get even more publicity, but it wasn't," Rosenberg insists. "She wasn't doing it to be a bitch.

"Madonna's feeling about this wedding was that she really wasn't getting married for the entertainment of other people," Rosenberg continues. "And she felt very, very strongly about keeping it private. Just because she posed nude in a book doesn't mean that she can't get married in private." ■

agendas into the paper, often misleading readers in the process. "As a reporter, I want to make a solid argument that my reporting is objective," says one staffer at a Scaife-owned paper. "I don't think I have the high moral ground to do that anymore."

Scaife—or close associates acting on his behalf—usually issues commands via a small circle of editors, who communicate what he wants, often cryptically, to reporters and the production staff. His influence is not all-encompassing: Some reporters are adamant that Scaife has never pressured them to spin their stories. But for issues close to his heart, such as local development or particular politicians, Scaife's views often drive the coverage.

In the newsroom, a sort of code is bandied about to distinguish between stories that would make Scaife happy or unhappy. The shorthand is either FOP (Friend of Publisher) or EOP (Enemy of Publisher) or, more affectionately, FOD (Friend of Dick) or EOD (Enemy of Dick). When an editor drops the code word, a story either gets special treatment or gets canned. "You'd look around at an [editorial] meeting, and if someone said FOP, [the story] would be bumped up" to a prominent spot, says one former employee.

Few EODs were targeted as frequently as former president Clinton or his administration. Last November the *Post-Gazette*, relying on anonymous sources, reported that on the Sunday before the presidential election, Scaife ordered that no pictures of Vice-President Al Gore appear on the front page of the *Tribune-Review*. According to the *Post-Gazette*, he also demanded that editors alter an Associated Press story so that all mentions of the Democratic candidate would be relegated to the bottom paragraphs of the piece. (*Tribune-Review* editor Frank Craig would neither confirm nor deny the story, saying that he was away when the paper's piece ran and that he wouldn't respond to a *Post-Gazette* article that did not contain a "single attributed quote.")

### In the newsroom, a sort of code is bandied about: either FOD (Friend of Dick) or EOD (Enemy of Dick).

One staffer who recently left the *Tribune-Review* says that when he challenged the placement of an article in a news meeting, editors would tell him, "This is a mortgage I have to pay." The implication was that Scaife was behind the decisions. Former *Tribune-Review* editor David House says he quickly learned that disagreeing with Scaife was not an option. In 1998, House placed a story that took a negative view of the Pirates baseball team's financial outlook on the bottom of the front page. He quickly got a phone call. "I don't think you get it," the publisher growled, according to House. "I don't want the Pirates on page one." (House was fired in late 1999 while he was on leave for quadruple bypass surgery. Gutnick, Scaife's lawyer, explained that House was let go because he was ill and couldn't give the "total commitment" the job required.)

One reporter who works for the *Tribune-Review* says he was discouraged from writing about Pennsylvania senator Arlen

Specter after the politician opposed Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court in 1987, which Scaife supported. "He was one of [Pennsylvania's two U.S.] senators who came to town and we couldn't even write about him," says the reporter.

In another instance, the paper deleted Specter's name from a story about a Senate subcommittee hearing on breast cancer he had chaired in February 1997. Lynne Margolis, a *Tribune-Review* features reporter (who later quit the paper), often wrote about the issue and was eager to cover the story. Margolis says she attended the hearing, wrote her piece with Specter as a main player, and handed it off to editors. When she picked up the paper the next morning and saw her story on the front page, however, she was surprised to read about a hearing "held by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education." Says Margolis, "They took out all the references to the guy that organized the hearing!...It's our job to be accurate and fair. But we're not being accurate if a major focal point of the story is missing." House says he remembers being told that relations between Specter and Scaife were strained, but he says he was never ordered not to cover the senator's appearances. Comments Specter, "I have no complaints. I make it a practice not to complain."

Scaife most famously used the paper to advance his own views in 1994, when he hired reporter Christopher Ruddy, who had been dismissed from the *New York Post* (as Ruddy confirms), to investigate the death of Vince Foster. Ruddy relentlessly pursued conspiracy theories and even questioned whether President Clinton was involved. "Rarely did [Ruddy] go anywhere other than page one," says House. "Scaife just loved Ruddy." (In fact, Scaife so appreciates Ruddy that although the reporter has moved on to start his own conservative news website, he occasionally contributes to the *Tribune-Review*.) Ruddy says that he never worked directly with Scaife on his stories and that concerns about the publisher's influence at the paper are overblown. "I do not believe...that [Scaife] sits there and dictates coverage in any way," says Ruddy. "He has other things to do." Ruddy's articles got national play: Outlets including *The Hotline*, a widely read Capitol Hill newsletter; the *Detroit News*; the *Chattanooga Free Press*; and the (Charleston, South Carolina) *Post and Courier* cited Ruddy's reporting that Foster's death was not a suicide. Other newspapers, including *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, largely downplayed Ruddy's work, but they still disseminated his ideas.

Not only has Scaife occasionally suited news coverage to his taste, he has done it in a way that leaves readers unaware of his tinkering. He pushes the paper to run stories that rely on quotes or reports from organizations he funds, yet the articles rarely disclose Scaife's connection. The result is a kind of "information laundering," as one former reporter calls it. When a Scaife-inspired article that quotes a Scaife-funded foundation is published in the *Tribune-Review*, the story appears more reputable than it otherwise would.

During the *Tribune-Review*'s reporting on the controversy about the Pirates' new stadium, for example, it quoted the organization that led the fight against the ballpark, a think tank called the Allegheny Institute for Public Policy, in more than 100 stories. What the paper rarely mentioned is that Scaife has given nearly \$2 million to the institute. (Scaife halted his contributions

after disagreements with the organization's president.) Two former reporters say they almost always disclosed the connection in their copy, but that editors almost always removed it. (Craig, the *Tribune-Review*'s editor, says he didn't know about the extent of Scaife's connection to the institute. But even if he had, he says, it wouldn't be necessary to mention it in the paper: "I think people would get tired of reading that.")

The *Tribune-Review* is also a megaphone for national Scaife-funded organizations. The paper regularly tracks lawsuits brought by Judicial Watch, a conservative watchdog organization that has filed some two dozen suits against the Clinton administration, but rarely mentions that Scaife has contributed \$2 million to the organization.

Scaife and his staff have also apparently tweaked the paper's news coverage to get his favorite local candidate elected. In 1999, Allegheny County ended its 205-year tradition of electing three county commissioners and held an election to choose just one county executive. Republican Jim Roddey, a Pittsburgh businessman, squared off against Democrat Cyril Wecht, the county coroner. It was no secret whom Richard Scaife supported: He contributed \$75,000 to Roddey's campaign (making him Roddey's second-largest donor), and the *Tribune-Review* gave Roddey a rousing endorsement on its editorial page. (Roddey won by a slim margin.)

But the newspaper's preference was also evident in its news articles: In the three months before the election, the paper ran two articles critical of Roddey and ten critical of Wecht. One story, headlined "Pitt splits from Wecht backer," trumpeted that the University of Pittsburgh was "distancing itself" from a

former professor who appeared in a Wecht commercial. In fact, the school had simply released a statement affirming that it "does not take positions on political campaigns or endorsements"—something that was downplayed in the paper. Only two articles, both of which detailed each campaign's major donors, noted that Scaife had contributed money to Roddey.

Although Scaife's positions on local issues aren't always easy to define (he supported the transformation of Station Square into a shopping and restaurant district, though he is generally anti-development), this much is clear: If the Democratic mayor of Pittsburgh, Tom Murphy, is for it, Scaife is against it. "He hates the mayor," says House, the *Tribune-Review*'s former editor. "Orally, verbally, and philosophically, Scaife doesn't cotton to him." While others on his local-enemies list are often relegated to the inside of the paper, "Murphy's fine on page one," says House. "As long as it's something awful about him."

One former reporter, Tom Smithyman, says that his editor greeted him with the joke "What can we do to make the mayor's life miserable today?" A December 1998 story clearly exhibited that kind of thinking. The article noted that the mayor "has become a political pariah with a number of people in the Capitol." The piece included quotes from some of the mayor's critics. ("He is toast," said one.) Another detractor quoted in the piece was "longtime political consultant" Dennis Casey. The article failed to disclose that Casey, who died last year, had handled public relations for Scaife for decades.

"There's definitely a slant to all of the stories," says one former reporter. "You don't embellish facts, but take those parts that would be most unflattering to the administration and play those



Scaife at the *Tribune-Review* in 1997

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high." Apparently the feelings were mutual. The administration often gives exclusives to the *Post-Gazette*, acknowledges Craig Kwiecinski, a spokesman for the mayor. According to one former production staffer, when the mayor was digging with his golden shovel at a groundbreaking ceremony, he used it to toss dirt at a *Tribune-Review* photographer. "It was purely accidental," says Kwiecinski. (The picture did end up in the *Tribune-Review*.)

Former Republican county commissioner Bob Cranmer, who initially opposed the new Pirates and Steelers stadiums, also incurred Scaife's wrath. After Cranmer switched positions and supported the ballparks, the paper ran a photo of the commissioner rising from his chair that made him "look palsied," says a staffer who had objected, unsuccessfully, to using the photo. "It was a bias they were trying to put into the pages," says the staffer. "They had a gentleman's disagreement, but why demonize him?"

Other local politicians have noted that Scaife uses the paper's news pages to reward those who agree with him. One longtime city official says that after a meeting with Scaife during his campaign for office five years ago, he was told that the publisher liked his politics, and that if he followed through on his promises, he'd be guaranteed favorable coverage. ("Dick Scaife does not talk like that," says Scaife attorney Yale Gutnick. "He does not ask for anything from anybody. It's a bald-faced untruth in my opinion.") Another local official says that in a meeting about a bond issue, county executive Jim Roddey expressed his approval by commenting, "Dick Scaife says it's OK to do this." (Roddey declined requests for comment.)

NOT EVERYTHING IN SCAIFE'S MEDIA universe centers on politics. In September 1999, the paper ran a story—with no quotes or named sources—claiming that "some residents of Shadyside's most exclusive neighborhood" are "grumb[ling] privately" that an expensive addition to a neighboring home might harm property values. The unnamed resident who complained the loudest, according to four reporters, was Richard Scaife—who, they say, also suggested the story. ("I've never heard that," says Gutnick, who adds that "it has taken forever to complete that addition.") The reporter for the piece, Jason Togyer, who now works at the Greensburg edition of the paper, says he spent two days reporting, didn't find a story, and told his editor as much. When the editor demanded that a story run anyway, Togyer says, he handed over his research and "washed his hands of it," insisting that his name not be used (it ran under the byline "*Tribune-Review*"). As for the residents "grumbling privately," Togyer says none of those he interviewed ever talked about property values.

Another member of the Scaife family also makes her opinions known at the paper. In the late eighties, as many press accounts have noted and Scaife's lawyer acknowledges, Scaife began an affair with a doyenne of Pittsburgh society, Margaret "Ritchie" Battle. In May 1991, four days after Scaife divorced Frances Scaife, his wife of 35 years, Scaife and Battle were married. (Battle, also interviewed by John F. Kennedy Jr. in *George*, jokingly remarked that she and Scaife "had lived in sin for years.")

Today, Mrs. Scaife is a frequent presence at society functions in Pittsburgh and in the local society pages, including those of the *Tribune-Review*. In one piece, the paper reported that Mrs. Scaife had won an award for philanthropy and described her as a "celestial honoree" whose "good deeds often light up our town."

According to current and former staffers, Mrs. Scaife, who serves on the board but has no formal job at the paper, exerts her own brand of influence over the *Tribune-Review*, particularly when it comes to lifestyle coverage.

"In a lot of cases [the coverage] feels like whatever form of self-indulgence Ritchie chooses," says former *Tribune-Review* reporter Margolis, who's now a freelance writer. Fashion and the symphony are Mrs. Scaife's favorite topics; in 1998, while the newsroom was struggling to cover the city with a tight budget, the paper sent music critic Todd Gutnick, who's the son of Scaife's lawyer, to Japan to cover the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra performances there. An editor at the paper's Greensburg edition says that the same year, she was told she was being demoted because Mrs. Scaife thought she was giving too much attention to art and not enough to fashion.

## Even some of Scaife's critics acknowledge that his paper has provided a needed jolt to Pittsburgh's city leaders.

David House, the former *Tribune-Review* editor, says that he rather enjoyed Mrs. Scaife's interest in the paper. "Ritchie is like Dick," says House. "She's extremely bright, and there were times when I saw flashes of excellent news judgment."

Craig, the *Tribune-Review's* current editor, also acknowledges that Mrs. Scaife affects the paper's coverage. "Do I ignore what she says? Of course not," he says. But he insists that he balances both the Scaifes' suggestions with his own sensibilities. So has he ever rejected any of the Scaifes' recommendations? "I can think of a couple that I won," Craig says with a tight smile, although he declines to specify. "I don't want to remind them that I won because I want to win again."

THE LIGHTS OF THE DOWNTOWN buildings flicker behind a screen of rain as the sky gets darker, and in the pub on the ground floor of the *Tribune-Review* building, Craig is drinking his third cup of black tea. As he smokes another cigarette, he brings up the *Post-Gazette*, the city's top paper. "It's very possible to knock off an entrenched daily," he says.

Craig and his boss are gaining ground. The *Post-Gazette* is still the dominant newspaper, with a 240,000 Monday-through-Friday circulation; the *Tribune-Review's* is 85,000 Monday through Wednesday and 130,000 Thursday through Saturday. Between 1995 and 2000, the *Post-Gazette's* circulation declined by 9,000, while the *Tribune-Review* gained more than 16,000 new subscribers between 1995 and 1998. Although staffers at the *Post-Gazette* dismiss the competing paper—John Craig, the *Post-Gazette's* editor (and no relation to Frank Craig), likens Scaife to an "eccentric uncle"—the *Tribune-Review* is one of six papers pinned up in the *Post-Gazette's* newsroom every day.

Ironically, as much as Scaife meddles with his paper, his ability to trumpet his views—which include a deep desire to question city government—may be helping the paper win readers. It may also be a good thing for Pittsburgh.

"Pittsburgh has always had a top-down approach and historically everyone just supports the leadership," says Arthur Ziegler Jr., the well-respected president of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation (Mr. and Mrs. Scaife are on its board). "That's changing. And the *Trib* is part of that change."

As *Tribune-Review* editor Frank Craig points out, the rival paper can't claim to be pristine: The *Post-Gazette* owns a \$2 million stake in the Pirates, and many staffers at that paper privately confirm

that they are uncomfortable with the fact that their editor cochairs a task force on developing the city's riverfront.

Even some critics who abhor Scaife's politics acknowledge that some of the *Tribune-Review's* stories have had a positive impact. In February 2000, for instance, the *Tribune-Review* published a 13,000-word series that examined the city's debt, which the paper put at \$1.68 billion. Though some city officials criticized the story as being alarmist and for fudging numbers, many in town acknowledge that it raised an important issue.

"They do a pretty decent job of covering [the city]," says Chris Potter, managing editor of the *Pittsburgh City Paper*, an alternative newsweekly, and no fan of Scaife's conservative politics. "I'm sort of glad" Scaife publishes the paper, Potter continues, "because every once in a while they do kind of shake some things up."

The *Tribune-Review* did that in 1998 by revealing that the

Pennsylvania Game Commission relied on armed but poorly trained volunteer wardens to enforce hunting regulations, and that there was no tracking system to log hunters' frequent complaints of verbal and sometimes physical abuse. The series of stories led the state government to require the commission to enact reforms, and the head of the agency was eventually fired.

The paper has also begun to win some awards. In a competition last year against large Pennsylvania papers like the *Post-Gazette* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Tribune-Review* took four first-place Keystone Press awards (the *Post-Gazette* took seven and the *Inquirer* six).

Ultimately, it's the competition between Pittsburgh's two major papers that benefits the city, says Sally Kalson, a columnist at the *Post-Gazette* who once worked for a Scaife-owned publication. Says Kalson, "Readers pay their money and take their chances." ■

## Radio Wars

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 111] news not only about the wars that were taking place in Croatia and Bosnia but also about Serbia's economic free fall. As Milosevic's grip on Serbia's media tightened through the 1990s, B-92 became the most influential antidote to government propaganda.

In late 1996, Milosevic's Socialist Party stumbled in municipal elections but refused to cede control of the city halls it lost; nightly demonstrations ensued, and one of the first things the government did, hoping to short-circuit the protests, was ban B-92's broadcasts, which had spread the word about the growing agitation. But the station's journalists began broadcasting on the Internet, and their reports were bounced back into Serbia on shortwave broadcasts of the BBC and Radio Free Europe. Milosevic, who still cared about his international reputation, relented, letting the station resume its broadcasts and eventually letting the opposition take control of the city halls it had won.

This was the beginning of the end for Milosevic because it led to a blossoming of independent media outside Belgrade, where city councils ran their own radio and television stations and controlled licensing for new ones. These city-run stations parroted the government's line while Milosevic's Socialist Party was in charge, but that changed once the opposition took over. Mirkovic and Matic used this opening to establish a network of independent stations outside Belgrade that broadcast reports by the team at B-92. It was called the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM is the acronym for the Serbian name for the group).

The members of ANEM—eventually 33 radio stations and 17 television stations—were shoestring operations; many used homemade transmitters. But even shoestring outfits need money, and this posed a problem for ANEM. Businesses were reluctant to advertise on antigovernment stations, and the country's economy was in ruins, so there was no way that even a pro-Milosevic station could survive on advertising revenue alone.

This is where the U.S. government stepped in. Since the early 1990s, the independent media in Serbia had received modest support from a handful of private donors, including the Open Society Institute, funded by financier George Soros to promote democracy in places such as Serbia. After the 1996 municipal elections, the U.S. and its European allies became aware of two facts—that Milosevic was not an unstoppable force of nature and that

his control over voters could be weakened by the work of the independent media. So the White House and its allies in Europe decided to funnel financial support not only to prodemocracy forces in Serbia—including opposition parties and student groups—but also to the media. This was a new approach: In the days of the cold war, programs that were designed to bring down foreign governments tended to involve covert support for coup makers or rebel factions. Serbia, however, had opposition parties and independent media, and they could topple the regime democratically if given the means.

"Support for the independent media and the democratic forces was crucial," notes Jim Hooper, a former U.S. State Department expert on Yugoslavia and, until recently, executive director of the Balkan Action Council, a think tank that often criticized U.S. policy. "It was one of the elements without which Milosevic wouldn't have been overthrown." Some of the other key factors, Hooper believes, were the bombing of Yugoslavia, which weakened popular support for Milosevic, and international sanctions, which isolated the country.

**It was a guerrilla media war. And the U.S. and its European allies realized that in today's world, an undesirable and unpopular government can be undermined with information.**

By 2000, the U.S. was budgeting more than \$25 million for democracy-building programs in Serbia, and nearly half of that was devoted to civil-society development, which included media-related projects, says Don Pressley, an assistant administrator at the U.S. Agency for International Development. Pressley tells me that a "substantial portion" of the media funding went to ANEM, though the exact amount is not forthcoming from Washington or Belgrade. U.S. officials say the problem is that their "partners" in Serbia do not wish to have the amounts publicized even now, because this could provide fodder for Serb nationalists who want to portray the anti-Milosevic uprising as having been made in the United States. "For a country in which 50 deutsche marks [about \$25] is a lot of money, people would not understand these figures," Mirkovic tells me.

Whatever the amount, the money was not wasted on expensive consultants or salaries for American expatriates, which often happens with U.S.-government-run foreign programs. This time, the funding went directly to local journalists, providing them with the resources to continue broadcasting.

"This can be done everywhere, and should be," says John Fox, director of the Washington office of the Open Society Institute. "This can be done in all places, in Africa, in Asia, wherever there

## Radio Wars

are independent journalists who are already taking risks, who are already showing the enterprise, and who already have credibility.”

In Serbia, it was the information age's equivalent of a guerrilla war. Journalists who exchanged e-mail with foreign donors (and one another) used PGP, an encryption program, and instructed their foreign contacts not to fax sensitive documents because faxes are easy to intercept. Even nonsensitive faxes could cause trouble. The head of the Belgrade office of Norwegian People's Aid, a small nonprofit organization that quietly provided independent journalists with money and equipment—everything from transmitters and laptops to air conditioners—tells me of his horror at receiving a faxed invitation from the State Department to speak at a seminar it was organizing. The next day, the fax was leaked to the leader of the pro-Milosevic Radical Party, Vojislav Seselj, who used it to portray the Norwegian group as an instrument of U.S. policy.

One of the point men in Belgrade for distributing U.S. aid is Dusan Masic, a former news editor at B-92 who has worked, since April, for the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), a Washington-based nonprofit that is one of the principal channels for U.S. funding to independent media. When I meet with Masic in Belgrade, he is still operating in a quasi-fugitive manner, with no office or business cards. We get together at a café in downtown Belgrade, and he begins by asking wary questions about my background and this magazine.

His caution eases somewhat, but when I bring up the issue of U.S. financial aid, he smiles and says, “I can't talk about that.” Still, I ask him which media outlets receive funding from IREX. He won't say. How did he transfer the money into the country? He won't say. He agrees, however, to disclose a trick of his unusual trade: Whenever he has a confidential, face-to-face talk with someone, he detaches the battery from his cell phone.

BY THE TIME B-92 was taken over by the Milosevic regime, in April 1999, the flow of foreign assistance was well under way, so resources were available to bring the station to life on the Internet and to allow its journalists to produce radio and television programs that could be shown on ANEM stations elsewhere in the country. B-92 was renamed B2-92 to differentiate it from the government-hijacked station on the FM dial, and it broadcast on a new website, freeb92.net.

It was not by chance that an English name was used for the site and that its content was translated into English. The site's domestic impact was limited because few Serbs have the high-speed modems needed for real-time broadcasts, but with texts and programs in both English and Serbian, the site was a useful resource for journalists and diplomats outside Serbia, as well as an important PR tool for the station's editorial team, which wanted to demonstrate to the outside world that they were still at work.

Security was a critical issue as the station went into its guerrilla mode; the NATO bombing in the spring of 1999 prompted Milosevic to declare martial law, giving his regime sweeping powers. Just a few days after the takeover, Slavko Curuvija, an independent publisher who was critical of Milosevic, was gunned

down on a Belgrade street. The assassination was widely blamed on thugs working for the government, and independent journalists like Mirkovic took the warning to heart. Mirkovic attended Curuvija's funeral and recalls, “Everybody was saying, ‘Take care; take care.’” Mirkovic went semiunderground, often staying with friends, and on the 50th day of the bombing, his boss Matic fled to Montenegro because of rumors he would be murdered. Mirkovic stayed behind, in sole control of the B2-92 team.

Once the bombing ended, in June 1999, the political atmosphere relaxed and the B2-92 team was able, from August, to broadcast on a Belgrade frequency controlled by a sympathetic opposition party. But in May 2000, when Milosevic initiated another media crackdown, B2-92 was yanked off the air again and returned to the Internet. It was not heard on the FM dial until Milosevic was deposed in October.

During the crackdowns in April 1999 and May 2000, B-92's role as the principal outlet for honest and current news was assumed by a scrappy station, Radio Index, which was founded by Nenad Cekic, who had broken away from B-92 in a murky dispute in the early 1990s. Depending on whom you believe, Cekic was either fired or asked to resign for stealing equipment or cutting a deal with the government or opposing alleged corruption at the station—or for other reasons that neither he nor his detractors wish to mention. In any event, Index played second fiddle to B-92 throughout most of the 1990s until B-92 was forced off the air. Cekic kept his station on the air by, among other things, hiding one of its transmitters in an unfinished home on a hill-

top above Belgrade. It seems that some of the independent media's most bitter feuds are conducted between people who should be allies, and the Index and B-92 teams are no exception: They despise each other more than they appear to despise Milosevic.

“B-92 became popular in the West because of their self-promotion,” Cekic tells me in his smoke-filled office on the 17th floor of Belgrade's tallest building. While we talk, he waves a pair of scissors in the air, saying, “I have a strong impression that your government wasted your money.”

Cekic notes that when Milosevic lost the first round of the presidential election on September 24, Index spread the word about the results and about Milosevic's attempt to tilt the ballot-counting in his favor. In the subsequent ten days, which decided the future of Serbia, everyone relied on Index for up-to-date information. Cekic is acid in his assessment of B-92: “They were not around when the revolution happened. Oops.”

The two stations represent different cultural styles. B-92 was always cool and trendy, though perhaps a bit too highbrow for the working class. Index was downmarket, the *New York Post* of the Serbian radio world, playing top-40 hits and featuring, on its advertising posters, a woman's scantily clad torso. Foreign donors were well aware of the differences, both cultural and political, between the two stations and brokered a truce after the local elections in 1996, persuading the B-92 team to bring Index into the ANEM network. But Cekic, arguing among other things that his station was a major player in the media world, demanded greater say within ANEM than Matic and Mirkovic wanted to give.

“We were not so happy because we knew Cekic,” Mirkovic tells



Ousted from power, Milosevic is now living in a posh suburb of Belgrade.

me one day. "He really started to be destructive. He is telling these stories that we didn't want to show him the books. But he is not the person who I am going to show books to. I show ANEM's books to donors, and he can ask donors if he has questions. So we expelled him."

Cekic's bitterness is extreme, though it's certainly true that his station was more influential than B-92 in the final months, perhaps even the final year or two, of Milosevic's regime, thanks to Index's ability to continue broadcasting. Despite this, ANEM received the bulk of foreign aid for the independent media, and little of it reached the coffers of Index, much to the dismay and rage of Cekic, who now faces the possible demise of his station due to lack of funds.

"They are not a news organization," Cekic says of his nemesis. "They are a private group for collecting money. That must be recognized in the West. They are interested in money, not journalism."

When I ask Mirkovic about these accusations, he initially says he doesn't want to exchange insults—then proceeds, as we walk through town toward his office, to do precisely that. He accuses Cekic of collaborating with a fascist party that was part of Milosevic's coalition government. "They were in a kind of deal with the Radical Party, especially with the minister of information, who protected them," Mirkovic says. (Cekic denies it.)

We soon arrive at Mirkovic's new office in a dull building above a pharmacy and grocery store in the center of town. There are a couple of desks and chairs, a poster for a Moby CD, several new computers, and, of course, a haze of cigarette smoke. "Do I look like a person who has a lot of money?" Mirkovic asks. "This is stupid, you know."

IT IS A MONDAY EVENING three weeks after Milosevic was overthrown, and Sasha Mirkovic is heading from his office to a reception at the Turkish Embassy. This is a big part of his life now: schmoozing with diplomats and politicians and businessmen. The corridors of power are wide-open, and they are crowded with friends, not enemies. Mirkovic walks up Kneza Milosha, a boulevard that is a visual reminder of Serbia's recent history. At its lower stretch lie the ruins of the Defense Ministry and Army Headquarters, bombed by NATO in 1999. Farther along the boulevard is a looted office of the political party controlled by Milosevic's much-despised wife; the office was attacked and destroyed in the uprising in October, and the graffiti on its walls reads, in English, "Freedom! Revolution!"

As Mirkovic walks by, he passes the head of the U.N. office in Belgrade; they exchange warm greetings. The city remains in a celebratory mood. Inside the embassy, several waiters recognize Mirkovic—who, amid the suited diplomats and politicians, is wearing a T-shirt under a frayed sweater—and they congratulate him on regaining control of B-92 after the long blackout that began in April 1999...a lifetime ago, it seems. Mirkovic scans the room and notices the two ministers of the new government; they are friends of his from the University of Belgrade.

An acquaintance approaches him and mentions that a businessman is coming to Belgrade to find a publishing partner for Serbian editions of *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan*. Would B-92, which published several political books in recent years, be interested?

### Mirkovic does not expect foreign donors to remain generous to B-92 for much longer now that Milosevic is gone and the country is no longer crisis-ridden.

The long-range plan is to turn B-92 and ANEM into self-supporting media companies producing provocative programs that the state-controlled media, now slavishly loyal to the new president, Vojislav Kostunica, will shy away from and that most commercial stations will shun in favor of sitcoms and soap operas. In November, B-92 broadcast a 30-minute NPR documentary about war crimes committed by Serb soldiers in Kosovo—precisely the sort of program that other media outlets even now wouldn't touch. Mirkovic hopes that B-92's hallmark radio program, *Catharsis*, which delved into issues of war and guilt, will be expanded into a television program, and he's hard at work putting together a new television studio for a nightly news broadcast.

Matic and Mirkovic do not expect foreign donors to remain generous for much longer now that Milosevic is a private citizen living in a villa surrounded by high walls in a posh suburb of Belgrade. Although their foreign donors may not realize that the removal of Milosevic does not mean the full advent of democracy and openness, Serbia is no longer as crisis-ridden as it used to be, and the kindness of strangers is unlikely to linger.

ANEM and B-92 need to stand on their own commercial feet, and already ANEM—with Mirkovic as vice-president—has acquired the rights to broadcast NBA games. ANEM is also negotiating with MTV to broadcast its music programs.

Mirkovic does not bother to detach the battery from his cell phone before replying to his acquaintance's query.

"*Playboy? Cosmopolitan?*" he says. "Sure, I'll meet with the guy." ■

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**DRILLS**  
**CONTENT**  
FIRESTONE  
Switching Sides  
Journal Politics  
to Journalism

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20] Mr. Zaneski's original letter, which stated that in an otherwise "stellar" career, Haner made "a couple of errors in daily stories" and that Ms. Witt and Mr. Zaneski had "no doubt they were honest mistakes made on deadline," referring to these mistakes as "a few corrected errors."

To me, those comments do add up to a dismissal of Haner's errors, and I wrote as much. Ms. Witt and Mr. Zaneski may disagree with me, but they can't say I "attribute remarks to [them] that [they] never made." I summed up the gist of their point: that my article made a mountain out of a molehill.

As to their suggestion that I "examine newsroom reaction" to Haner's errors, I did do exactly that when I reported this story, though I was constrained by the anonymity requested by the majority of those who spoke to me.

## WORKING MOM

The most disturbing thing about Christiane Amanpour's self-congratulatory article, "Why Do I Do It?" [At Work, January], isn't the undeniable corporate influence on newsroom decisions. Rather, it's the author's determination to maintain her torrid work



CNN Christiane Amanpour

pace and travel schedule—in order to "tell the world about the bad guys"—that will bring insurmountable difficulties to her new role as a mother.

I kept waiting for her to exclaim her joy over the good fortune that her disenchantment with her

profession coincided with her desire to cut back on her career and pay more attention to her duties as a parent. Not only did that message never come, but she seemed to say quite the opposite. Amanpour implies that she'll have to work even harder to defeat the demons that are tearing down quality journalism.

PAUL NOLAN, PLYMOUTH, MN

## VOICING THE NEWS

I work on a research vessel offshore for six-week stints, so I'm always looking for insightful, interesting reading material [and] recently purchased my first copy of *Brill's Content*. I was sure I'd made a good purchase after I'd read Christiane Amanpour's article, "Why Do I Do It?"

I work with many foreign nationals and hear a fresh take on American culture and politics. I [lived in] Atlanta and am always proud that CNN [which is based in Atlanta] is a recognized news source worldwide. But as Amanpour illustrates, even CNN has commercialized its organization.

[Amanpour] makes the point that journalism is often the only voice for people's problems [and that] our culture hears of these foreign problems through the news media. It continues to be a very necessary structure in society but will serve us well only if the [news] organizations make a concerted effort to tell responsible, relevant stories. Let Jerry Springer provide the entertainment. We look to CNN, the networks, and print-media sources to provide us with the news.

BRYAN L. HERRIT, DALTON, GA

## MILITARY MEN

Alex S. Jones, in his article "Divided They Stand" [October], sought to make the point that journalism today would be better served in covering the military if

more journalists had served in the armed services.

Mr. Jones used CNN's retracted Tailwind report to illustrate his point. Mr. Jones failed, however, to report that three of the journalists who were centrally involved in the Tailwind report were indeed U.S. Army veterans.

First, Jim Connor, a manager at CNN when Tailwind aired, was Lt. Jim Connor serving stateside during the war in Vietnam. Connor was [one of the supervisors] for the Tailwind report, the CNN manager with day-to-day responsibility for overseeing the report.

Second, John Lane, a former CNN senior producer, served as an editorial consultant on the Tailwind report. Lane served as an NCO (noncommissioned officer) and is a combat veteran of the Korean War.

Third, I served during the best of times—peacetime 1959–1960—as a PFC (private first-class) in the Quartermaster Corps with the 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii.

I assure Mr. Jones that each of us brought our individual experiences in the Army to the reporting and producing that went into the Tailwind report. Mr. Jones's error of omission underscores fundamental failures by the press in covering the Tailwind controversy. Before writing its stories, the press, by and large, either fails to report the side of the fired producers (myself and April Oliver) in the controversy or fails to talk directly to either Oliver or myself.

Mr. Jones failed to make a telephone call to Oliver or myself for his article in your magazine. Had Mr. Jones taken the time, in the interest of accuracy, fairness, and balance, to make that

call, I would have told him about the military service of Connor, Lane, and Smith. For the record, all three of us served the U.S. Army honorably and proudly.

JACK SMITH, CHICAGO, IL

## DOUBLY OFFENSIVE

I agree with the general sentiments expressed in Mike Pride's column ["The Mail Call," Out Here, January]. However, he missed one point completely in printing a reader's letter that made offending comments about a picture of President [Clinton] with some Indian women. Those comments [the picture made the reader wonder which Indian woman Clinton "selected to be escorted to the presidential chambers and given the honor of dropping to her knees to execute a Lewinsky"] castigated not only Mr. Clinton but also those women. There is no evidence to indicate that those women were willing to be "selected" by Bill Clinton or would have considered it an "honor" to provide sexual services to him. I am sure Mr. Pride would not have published that letter had his family members been in that picture.

SESHADRI GANJUR,  
MONMOUTH JUNCTION, NJ

## SCHOLARLY OPINION

Michael Korda, in his article "Loaded Words" [Critical Condition, February], claims that the media, biased against guns, uncritically gave praise to Michael Bellesiles, the historian who wrote *Arming America*, a study of American gun culture, because Professor Bellesiles calls into question numerous myths about gun owning in America.

Mr. Korda in particular dislikes Professor Bellesiles's characterization of the militia. As one of very few



scholars who have written at length on the history of the militia, I can say with some authority that Michael Bellesiles's conclusions on the militia are a) strongly rooted in historical fact and b) in accord with the historical literature on the subject.

In addition, I would like to note that my own research on militia arms seems to corroborate many of Professor Bellesiles's claims about arms scarcity in early America. (In the interest of full disclosure, I would like to note that my work is mentioned and complimented by Michael Bellesiles in his book and that I met casually with Professor Bellesiles on one occasion several years ago.)

In point of fact, Mr. Korda seems quite obviously guilty himself of the same crime he accuses the media of committing, relying on gun-rights ideologues such as Don Kates as well as "cartons" of items sent to him by disgruntled gun enthusiasts. Mr. Korda gives the impression of being a partial observer who could hardly sit still while some of his cherished myths were dismantled.

MARK PITCAVAGE, PH.D.,  
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF  
FACT-FINDING, ANTI-DEFAMATION  
LEAGUE, COLUMBUS, OH

### DEFENDING GUN OWNERS

"I almost can't believe it! After some 40 years of the media attacking and deriding the private ownership of firearms in America, someone actually has the courage to tell it like it is. Yes, Virginia, the media are overwhelmingly opposed to the Second Amendment and the private ownership of firearms.

Mr. Michael Korda has said

pretty bluntly what we "good ol' boys" have been saying for many years: that the media have an anti-firearms bias that is both fatuous and class-oriented.

I, too, have taken note that the silly book by Professor Michael Bellesiles has been reviewed in nearly every magazine and newspaper I read, and it's all over TV. There are many books that need to be reviewed (*The Hunting of the President*, by Joe Conason and Gene Lyons, comes to mind) but aren't being reviewed. Yet we have a dozen reviews on a fatuous book that is wrong on the facts, is wrong on history, and, even if true, which it is not, amounts to a non sequitur.

Mr. Korda makes the telling point that the Bellesiles School seems to be of the opinion that the founding fathers, whom most people regard as pretty intelligent men, seem to have suffered a mass attack of insanity when they formulated the Second Amendment, and then returned to normal from then on. [This is a] point I made in a letter to [the author of] a refutation of Professor Bellesiles's book in *American Rifleman*.

While Mr. Korda observes that "this bias, I believe, has both a regional and, to a certain degree, a class component," my experience is that it is mostly a "class" phenomenon. Indeed, most journalists think of themselves as chic and sophisticated. On the other hand, anyone who would possess a firearm is regarded as a beer-swilling cretin who goes into the forest in the autumn to shoot Bambi.

Thanks for Mr. Korda's offering. It was a breath of

fresh air. Of course, it won't have any effect. Minds were made up a long time ago.

PAUL J. PETROZZI, FAIR OAKS, CA

### TROUBLING COVERAGE

There are several disturbing aspects about your coverage of Israel's consultation with PR experts in New York ["Spinning a Biblical Battle—In New York," Notebook, February]. First is the implication that, yet again, the "Goliath" that is Israel (when is someone going to look at a regional map again to offer some perspective on the scale of the land in question?) is wielding its power to "spin" the story. The considerable access of the State of Israel to such media pundits is taken unquestioningly as power to spin the story in their favor—a correlation that has proved unarguably false.

Why not ask why the international media have never made a serious effort to contextualize the current crisis? And why not ask why the media are so uncritical of the lack of free press in the Palestinian Authority?

In truth, no one, to my knowledge, has actually aired any of the footage that would have been taken by Israeli soldiers. No one is airing the cries for the destruction of the State of Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by Hamas and Hezbollah, which are played daily in [Mideast] local news (and without which the Israeli response does seem disproportional).

The ADC [American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee] boasts that it hasn't resorted to PR agencies to tell the story. In truth, it hasn't had to. The international media (with

astonishing consistency) have served that role for them.

NOMI JOVAL, NEW YORK, NY

### READING THE SOAPS

"I was the senior editor of *Soap Opera Weekly* (1989–1999) until I voluntarily left to become a full-time freelance writer (disclosure: I still write for the publication). There are some points of interest that I believe should be made regarding Jim Edwards's fascinating article, "Another World" [Niches, February].



Edwards writes that "journalistically, the stakes are, well, low. After all, [*Soap Opera Digest* and *Soap Opera Weekly*] are fan magazines." I think the editors at *Weekly* would agree with me when I say that the staff doesn't think that way. Granted, the target audience consists of viewers of daytime (and prime-time) dramas, but statistics have proved that the audience is quite broad in terms of age, gender, level of education, and vocation. The content found in *Weekly* is written for both the industry professional as well as the consumer. When I was on staff, I often described the publication as a hybrid of *Entertainment Weekly* and *Variety*.

IRENE KEENE, MAMARONECK, NY

## The Hillary Index

Hillary Rodham Clinton recently announced she'll be writing a memoir to be published by Simon & Schuster. The publisher is paying close to \$8 million—a near record—for the book, fueling speculation about the revelations it might contain. Speculate no more.

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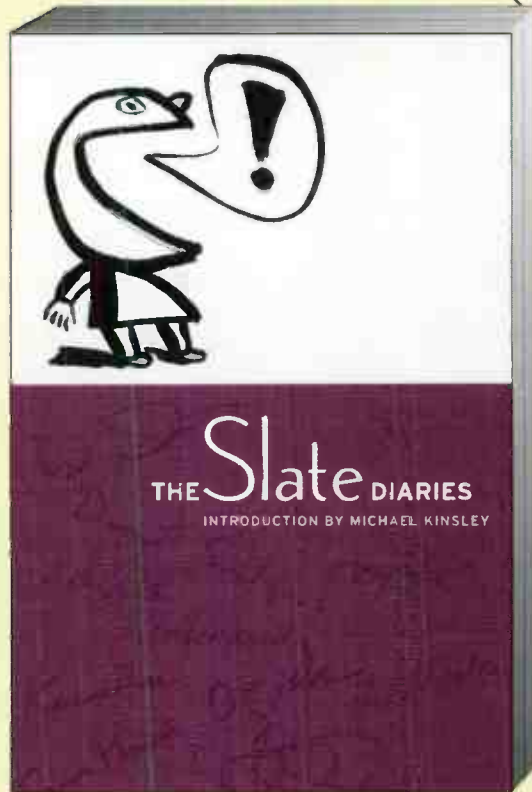
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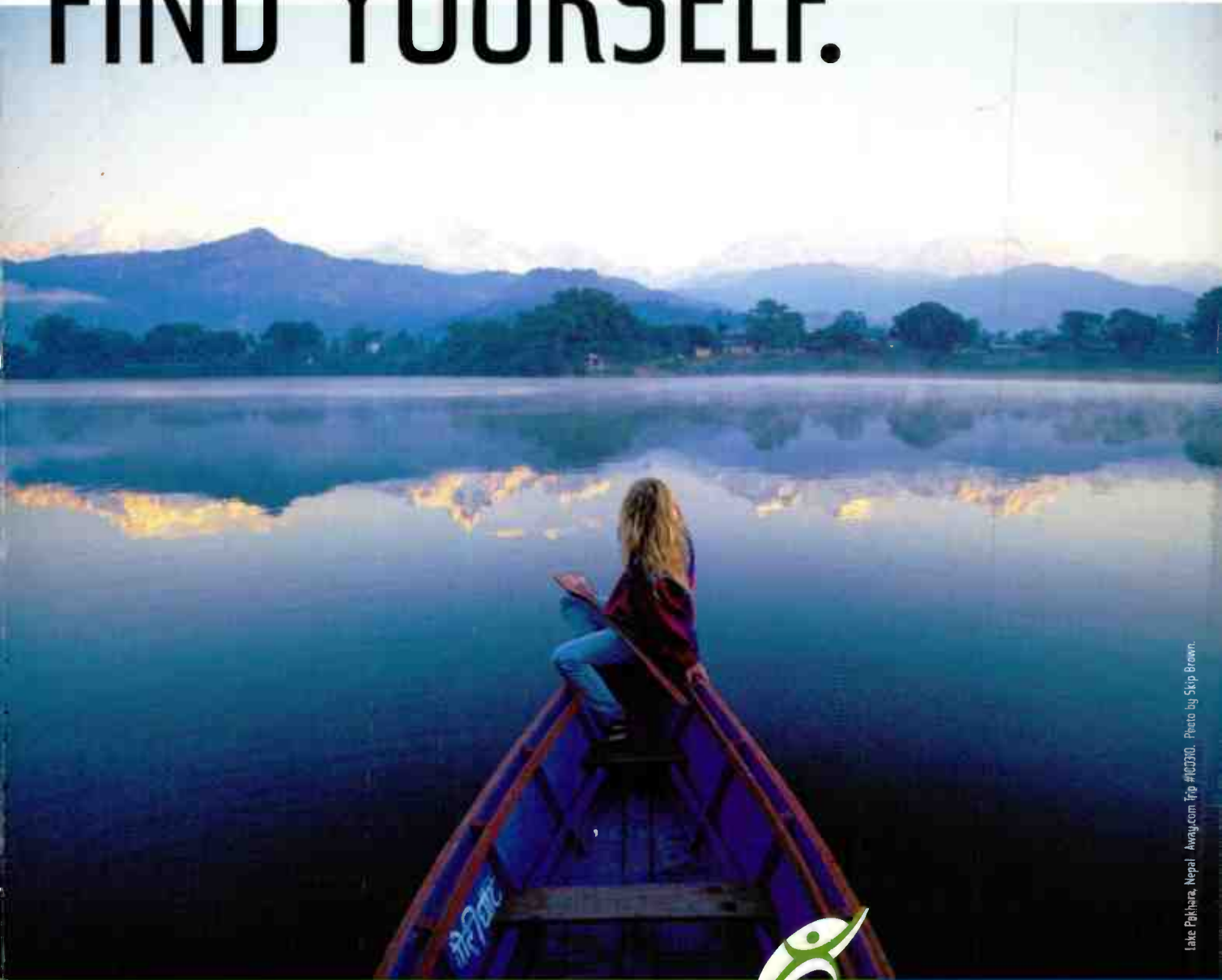
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