the weekly
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P.J. O'Rourke

...And Hillary Doesn't

Updike's American Faith
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the weekly Standard

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Dole's Two Messages

It's not true that Bob Dole lacks a message in his presidential campaign; actually, he has two. It depends on who gets to Dole last—will it be his campaign staff, or his Senate aides? When Dole addressed the National Governors Association on February 6, Senate staffers drafted his conciliatory, bipartisan remarks. "Our cooperation must increase," he said. Republicans must be "flexible." President Clinton really wants a budget deal this year. And so on. Not surprisingly, Dole's campaign advisers, who put together his tough response to Clinton's State of the Union, loathed the NGA speech.

But it was music to Clinton's ears. The president believes Dole is the key to a long-term budget deal but that serious talks with him must wait until after the New Hampshire primary. If Dole wins there, he'll be free to ignore attacks by GOP presidential rivals and negotiate (and compromise) with the White House. That's Clinton's view, but his chief political adviser, Dick Morris, has a slightly different take. Morris argues there's no reason to wait until post-New Hampshire. A budget deal now will help Dole win the GOP nomination. Thus, Morris leaked those poll results buttressing that point to a Dole operative. Morris, by the way, also thinks a deal will help Clinton enormously by erasing his image as a tax-and-spend liberal.

The division among Dole aides is nothing compared to the ill will at the White House between political adviser Morris and Harold Ickes, Clinton's deputy chief of staff. Their feud is preventing Clinton from appointing a campaign manager. Ickes, who is close to Hillary Rodham Clinton, balks at anyone who might have a connection with Morris. Morris, who believes his greatest achievement is having pulled Clinton to the right, recoils at the thought of an ally of Ickes, the White House's most unswerving leftist, in charge of the campaign. One name acceptable to Ickes is Kevin Thurm, a pal of George Stephanopoulos who is chief of staff to Health and Human Services secretary Donna Shalala. But the Morris forces are skeptical of him, and thus there's no consensus. Clinton might not have a campaign chief for a few months.

Every Man a Dupe

Blazing his way through Louisiana in early February, Pat Buchanan reinvented himself yet again. His ambition, he told crowds, was to be, we're not kidding, "a Huey Long for the '90s." (Apparently "Franco for the '90s" didn't click with focus groups.) It's a curious aspiration for a conservative Republican. Which planks of the Kingfish's platform will Pat take for his own? Nationalization of the banks? The 100 percent marginal tax rates? The kickbacks and payoffs? Or just the demagoguery—the exploitation of frightened and ignorant voters? Probably just the demagoguery.

When it Rains, It Pours

That scene in *Casablanca*—you know the one we mean—is such a journalist's cliché that we were not shocked, so to speak, when a search of the Nexis news database for the words "*shocked*, *shocked*" returned a stern warning from the Nexis gods: "Your search has been interrupted because it probably will retrieve more than 1,000 documents." The herd instinct explains reporters' overuse of an allusion to a movie scene when a simple "how cynical!" or "how hypocritical!" would do the trick. But how to explain ludicrous over-explaining of this same cliché?

In a choice specimen of the genre, the *Washington Post Book World* last week offered this feast for the cinematically starved: "In the movie classic 'Casablanca' the worldly police captain played by Claude Rains tells saloon keeper Humphrey Bogart that he is 'shocked, shocked' to find gambling in this casino."

Crains Detroit Business wins the booby prize with this passage: "This righteous indignation reminds us of one of the best scenes in 'Casablanca,' the Bogart-Bergman classic. To impress his Nazi guests, the French police commander, played by Claude Rains, allows that he is 'shocked, shocked' to discover that gambling occurs on the premises of Rick's famous cafe. A cafe worker then presents Rains with his own win-

Scrapbook

nings from the gaming table, and Rains quickly stuffs them into his pocket."

Gentlemen, the purpose of an allusion, after all, is for the reader to get the point with merely a slight nod in the direction of the original source.

Guess Who?

A blurb on Ben Wattenberg's book *Values Matter Most* reads: "It is a lucid look at the major 'hot button' issues, including welfare, and constructively breaks out of the usual liberal-conservative mindset." Who wrote that? E.J. Dionne? One of the Beyond Left and Right thinkers from the Democratic Leadership Council? Actually, it was Steve Forbes, who bills himself as a "Conservative for President," not as a Beyondist.

This might be of interest to Forbes's donors. He has raked in nearly $1.5 million in contributions, including a cool thou' from Ann Landers, a thou' each from Bob and Georgette Mosbacher, and a surprising thou' apiece from Jackson and Warren Stephens—Arkansas bankers widely thought of as Bill Clinton's political godfathers. Forbes also pulled in $500 from Robin Leach of *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* and, amazingly, another five bills from none other than Olivia Newton-John—even though Forbes has, we would guess, never really been mellow.

The New Nixon Enemies List

The Republican Congress has attracted a lot of enemies, but none so visceral as two old Nixonians, Kevin Phillips and Herbert Stein. A recent Phillips broadside in the *Los Angeles Times* called the current Congress the worst in half a century; things would only improve, he said, when Newt Gingrich was dethroned and Democrats regained control. In the *New York Times*, Stein argued that "responsible" Republicans (going back to Ike) understand the need to raise taxes. What's striking about Phillips/Stein opposition is the tone. Stein has dropped his usual amused and whimsical voice and adopted one that is hectoring and scornful. It almost seems personal. Surely the Nixon veterans couldn't expect all Republicans to live up to the high standards of the Nixon domestic policy, which gave us wage and price controls, expanded the welfare state, and laid the groundwork for stagflation.

The Reading List

The Reading List is, it must confess, tired. Week after week, coming up with book after book, and trying hard not to make too many mistakes has taken a toll. Even its deliberate errors are probably too easy: In only a few days, it has received several missives (including one from noted legal scholar Nelson Lund) pointing out that we purposely misidentified the author of *Medea* last week. It's Euripides, not Aeschylus.

So, like George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*, the Reading List needs to know if you truly wish it to continue; if, to paraphrase Sally Field, "you like it, you really, really like it." If you find the List of value, and wish to see it appear weekly in this space, let us know by writing or faxing us (you can find address and fax number on the Correspondence page). Or maybe you have ideas for other lists you can let us know about; a Video List, perhaps, or Recordings. Or something. Something else. Something different.

Casual

Derek Richardson, Where Are You?

People don't usually rap on my car window at red lights, so I was a little startled when, on my way to work a few months ago, I turned to find a man peering in at me and mouthing what seemed to be an urgent message. "My car got towed," he said once I'd rolled down the window. "Can you help me?" The light was changing and the man was reasonably well-dressed so I told him to get in. It didn't take long to discover that he was hoping to borrow money.

We drove on and my new friend explained his recent travails, but I wasn't really listening. My thoughts had turned back four years, to the last time a "stranded motorist" hit me up for a short-term loan. My editor and I had pulled into a service station in a seedy part of northeast Washington, D.C., for a fill-up. As I walked back to the car after paying for the gas, a man in his 30s in a ratty-looking parka sidled up to me. "Can I talk to you for a second?" he asked. It turned out his car, a rusting heap parked across the street, had just blown a distributor valve. Or a Johnson ring. Or a fribulator gasket. Or some other vaguely esoteric but absolutely vital piece of engine equipment. A replacement would be cheap and easy to get, but unfortunately—and this was the worst part, he said—he had left all his credit cards at home that day. All he needed was $7 to get his car going again, and could I lend it to him? He'd mail me a check as soon as he got back to his house. He promised.

I stepped back to take a look at the man. He looked dirty and shaky and short of teeth. And he talked too fast, managing to come off as demented and sly at the same time. I should have walked away then. His story didn't make sense. No civilized nation would have issued this guy a driver's license, much less let him drive. But I didn't walk away. Instead, I forked over the money, along with my address, written on the back of a parking stub. I wanted to believe I had found Washington's one honest beggar.

"Think you'll ever see your seven dollars again?" my editor asked when I got back into the car. He spoke with a mixture of pity and fascination, in the tone one reserves for the truly stupid. "No question," I said. "I'm sure he's good for it."

To nobody's surprise, he wasn't.

The con artist at the gas station and the fellow I had just picked up seemed to have little in common. For one thing, this guy didn't look like a drug addict. More telling, he appeared to have a legitimate job. His name, he said, was Derek Richardson, and he worked as a teacher at the "Foreign Service School in Bonn, Germany." He had been in Washington on vacation for less than 24 hours when his car, which contained his wallet and passport, had been carted away by over-zealous parking police. "I should have known it would happen," he said. "I went to school here. At Georgetown."

Pretty convincing stuff. So I lent him $48 to get his car out of hock. "Please send back the money," I said before dropping him off near the DMV. "You'll wreck my faith in this kind of thing if you don't." He looked surprised I'd even question him. "No doubt, man. And I really appreciate it."

Needless to say, that was the last I heard from Derek Richardson. After a few weeks of waiting for the check, I decided to track him down. I called the State Department personnel office, scanned the federal employees' directory, harassed the lady at the registrar's office at Georgetown. Not a trace of Derek Richardson. Finally, I called the American embassy in Bonn. The woman I spoke to seemed confused, both by the name Derek Richardson and by the institution he had claimed to work for. "The Foreign Service School?" she asked, the familiar pity creeping into her voice. "There's no such thing."

Normally I would have given up, but by this point I was determined to catch up with Derek Richardson. So I ran his name through Nexis, in the hope he might have cheated somebody else in a newsworthy way. He hadn't, but his name certainly had been a lot of places. Derek Richardson, it turned out, was a fireman in Louisville, an astrophysicist in Toronto, an employee of a dog-food company in London, a high-school debate champion in Atlanta, the chairman of the National Farmers' Union in England, and a referee in the NBA. Several years ago, he was a murder victim in New Orleans.

Derek Richardson seemed to be everywhere. Except where he really was, cadging money from dummies like me at red lights. That was the one identity he didn't seem to have. I guess they never do.

TUCKER CARLSON

Discontented with Civil Society

David Brooks's ambiguity concerning "'Civil Society' and Its Discontents" (Feb. 5) reflects an attitude toward "greatness" that demeans the common person.

It may be, in Brooks's mind, that pure ambition and power need shed the constraints of authority to succeed, but if this were so, those "Americans who can't sit still" would be the epitome of anarchy.

The development of stable, prosperous neighborhoods and communities by means of citizen involvement doesn't preclude or deter those who strive for greatness.

Quite the contrary, civil society is a springboard for ideas and accomplishments. The great achievers of history may rise to the top, but the bowling league remains a metaphor for the foundation upon which develops a forum for discussion and development of ideas.

Perhaps the elite could exit their limousines and walk for a day. It wouldn't be a matter of "taming"—it could be a source of enlightenment.

Jessie Adams
Wilsonville, OR

Order, authority, and decency David Brooks opposes to the virtues of "audacity, high ambition, self-sufficiency . . . courage, steadfastness, might, and pride." He extols the latter, decries the former. Unbelievable for a senior editor of a conservative publication. Without decency, order, and authority, there will be no society, civil or otherwise.

Brooks's championing of the United States over these United States—of the totality over its parts—is again surprising to me as a conservative. In the day when finally we have a Congress bent on returning power to the states, to find Brooks on the side of the populist liberals is indeed disturbing.

Without respect for authority we have "if it feels good do it!" Without decency we have a degradation unknown to any animal other than man. Without order all is chaos.

James Madison Barr
Hot Springs Village, AR

We Haven't Won Yet

Bill Clinton may have said, "The era of big government is over," but conservatives haven't won yet ("We Win," Feb. 5). As Molière said, "Words and deeds are far from being one. Much that is talked about is left undone."

To truly end big government you must tackle the sacred cows of middle class society. The dirty little secret is that Americans like bloated government as long as it serves their needs. Republicans should understand that the real obstacle to smaller government is

not bleeding-heart liberals or welfare queens. It is the middle class, whose interests transcend party affiliations.

Matthew Feely
Philadelphia, PA

Gramm, His Own Man

Paul Gigot's article "I, Phil Gramm" (Feb. 5) was curious indeed. The main criticisms of Gramm are that he doesn't "sound themes Forbes wanted to hear" and that he doesn't follow the advice of various advisers or Gov. Stephen Merrill.

Since when is being a puppet a virtue? That's the very thing that hurt Dole when he returned campaign contributions from a gay organization, which advisers said would offend the Christian right.

The "I, Gramm" style with the "I know who I am; I know what I believe in" is a good contrast to Dole, who speaks about himself in the third person and will be whichever "Bob Dole" it takes to get your vote.

Barbara Auch
Athens, AL

Reconsidering Reagan

John Podhoretz is both thoughtful and provocative in suggesting that it is time to go back to the drawing board on the current Republican strategy that rejects compromise ("A Reaganite Reconsiders," Feb. 5).

But Podhoretz, Phil Gramm, and other Republicans are emphasizing a "green eyeshade" approach exemplified by the concern for a balanced budget at the expense of individual freedom.

When they gave undue attention to the balanced budget, they were trumped by Clinton, who eventually submitted a balanced budget. Both Podhoretz and Gramm miss a major point. One of America's greatest problems is an over-dependence on government. Even a socialist can submit a balanced budget simply by raising taxes.

Samuel J. Orr, III
Beaver, PA

John Podhoretz was right in his article. We cannot get greedy in the long-term struggle for the soul of America. While the budget and abortion battles have strong moral implications, they are being fought in a democratic public policy arena.

Just as the "all or nothing" approach in the battle to outlaw abortions has produced only a stalemate, so has the recent "all or nothing" approach toward the balanced budget.

The only way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time. Republicans need to learn that problems that took decades to amass cannot be erased in one bright shining moment.

Paul Comfort
Sudlersville, MD

Embrace the Millennium

David Frum sure is jumpy in his review of *Millennium: A History of Our Last Thousand Years* ("Defaming the Last Thousand Years," Feb. 5). As a

Correspondence

result, he hasn't listened to author Felipe Fernando-Armesto. Frum sees Fernando-Armesto as waging a marauding ideological battle to demean the West, but Fernando-Armesto makes his purposes perfectly clear in the prologue: "Part of the mission of this book is to rehabilitate the overlooked, including places often ignored as peripheral, peoples marginalized as inferior."

Expecting assaults like Frum's, Fernando-Armesto specifically says, "I had better say at once that I am a committed advocate of the traditional humanist curriculum for teaching history in schools and universities."

Gus Franza
Moriches, NY

Conservative Sports

In making his point about the essential conservativeness of football, Fred Barnes quotes Vince Lombardi as stating, "Winning isn't everything. It's the only thing" ("From Bradley to Barkley," Feb. 5).

Barnes must be working from memory and from the oral tradition that attributes this remark to Lombardi. What the coach really said, however, is, "Winning isn't everything, but making the effort to win is." (*Sports Quotes*, Joseph Klein). This statement differs in its implications and, I believe, undermines Barnes's view of the essential conservativeness of football.

John J. Di Clemente
Tinley Park, IL

After reading Fred Barnes's Casual, I noticed one omission. Many conservative sports have sidelines adorned with beautiful women whose sole purpose is to arouse the crowd. Amazingly, feminists scorn the cheerleading profession, where women are empowered to lead a predominately male crowd that follows their cues.

As an Indiana University graduate and a lover of Bobby Knight basketball, I feel special consideration should be given to Hoosier basketball. Consider that it has the most brash, politically incorrect coach in college basketball and a history of a high-scoring offense coupled with a stingy one-on-one defense. Outside politics, Hoosier basketball is my only true passion, and I could never conceive of this style of hoops as liberal.

Steve L. Lutes
Tuscaloosa, AL

Championing Reason

In her review of Philip E. Johnson's *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education* ("Reason's Champion," Feb. 5), Mary Sydney Leach objects to the presumption that naturalism should dominate the public square.

Leach is right that the prevailing attitude of intellectuals is generally dismissive of the theistic world view, but she forgets that this has not been the case over the long haul. Theism could hardly have asked for a more extended and careful hearing than it has received in the past 2,000 years in the West.

The history of evolutionary naturalism in the 18th and 19th centuries is a sober story of earnest and halting steps taken by gifted thinkers out from under the "cultural assumptions" that had accumulated during theism's epochal sway. David Hume, for example, was mortally afraid to publish his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (which attacked the argument from design) before he died. And while he was not himself a religious man, he respected those who were. As one of the founders of the modern conservative tradition, Hume resisted its nontheistic strains.

Allen Zoroya
Alhambra, CA

Accountability at the CIA

Richard Pollock ("The CIA Goes P.R.," Feb. 5) writes that openness is at odds with intelligence and that we must ultimately choose one or the other. Since openness can "boomerang," Pollock favors secret intelligence, as if it did not pose hazards of its own.

But this is a false dichotomy—indiscriminate secrecy has undermined the utility of intelligence far more often, and to far more damaging effect, than openness ever did.

Remarkably, the word "accountability" does not appear in the piece. But accountability is the point of greater openness, which is required in order to subject intelligence to democratic controls, not to raise employee morale or to "educate" the American public.

Unfortunately, the current Congress has little interest in intelligence oversight. The insistence by House Republicans on covert action against the government of Iran suggests that we may need a new system of checks and balances on Congress as well as on the CIA.

The CIA has scarcely begun to establish a defensible, post-Cold War information policy. It is still the Agency's official position, for example, that the size of its original 1947 budget is a national security secret.

Steven Aftergood
Washington, DC

Formal Fridays

The mandatory casualness Evan Gahr describes in his piece "Be Casual . . . Or Else" (Jan. 29) demonstrates society's irritating ambivalence towards the middle-aged products of the flower-child generation. Now the business crowd obediently shuns formality by dressing each Friday as if for light work in Grandma's garage.

For Friday's wardrobe, I recommend a starched shirt, Brooks Brothers suit, and spit-shined oxfords. If your colleagues whine, speculate aloud whether more intense carpet-bombing of North Vietnam might not have concluded the war on better terms. The next Friday, wear a pith helmet and wax nostalgic about British colonialism. Who knows? If they don't fire you, maybe they'll drop the Chairman Mao routine on Fridays.

Scott K. Gibson, III
Fort Leavenworth, KS

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An Ounce of Cure

Not long ago, health-care reform was almost fatally wounded by association with one of the greatest domestic-policy bellyflops in American political history: the Clinton "Health Security Act" of 1994.

For most of that year, incremental health-care reform was a Republican standard. Virtually every congressional Republican supported changes designed to ease the concerns millions of Americans have about continued access to medical coverage when they switch or lose their jobs. But Democrats rejected and mocked such incremental reform as inadequate to the "crisis"—and even counterproductive in the absence of a system-wide federal makeover. And President Clinton famously threatened to veto such reform in his 1994 State of the Union address. It wasn't enough, he said. He wanted the whole, terrifying ball of "universal coverage" wax.

> CAN ANY HEALTH-CARE BILL SUPPORTED BY BILL CLINTON REALLY BE WORTHWHILE? AMAZINGLY ENOUGH, THE ANSWER IS YES.

What now, barely a year after that particular question was resolved to the president's indelible partisan disadvantage? Surprise. In his recent speeches and campaign appearances, Clinton promises to sign bipartisan insurance-market reforms in free-standing form—reforms significantly less ambitious than even the most conservative GOP proposals of two years ago. And he complains that *Republicans* won't let him have those reforms.

Can this be true? Can any health-care bill esteemed by William Jefferson Clinton really be worthwhile?

Amazingly enough, the answer, for the most part, is yes.

The bill in question is the Health Insurance Reform Act of 1995. This legislation, also known as Kassebaum-Kennedy, was approved by a key Senate committee in a unanimous vote last August. It is endorsed by the National Governors Association, the state insurance commissioners, and the American Medical Association. Insurance companies in the "group policy" market are mostly okay with it. And a variety of important business organizations—the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce, for example—have offered conditional support. Kassebaum-Kennedy is almost, *almost*, entirely uncontroversial.

Most significantly, the bill limits the ability of insurance companies to restrict coverage for recently diagnosed or treated "pre-existing conditions" to 12 months, after which those conditions must be covered, even if a patient changes jobs or health plans. The legislation also guarantees access to group-plan insurance for most employers, bans the exclusion from such plans of any employee on the basis of health status alone, and requires that paid-up insurance policies be offered for renewal except in cases of policyholder fraud or misrepresentation. No one much objects to any of these provisions.

The Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA) *does* strenuously object to one further part of the Kassebaum-Kennedy proposal. In order to secure insurance coverage for people who lose their jobs, join businesses without group plans, or enter self-employment, the act guarantees their access to an individual policy if they choose to buy one. HIAA worries that this "no refusal" requirement will force rate increases that render individual coverage unaffordable and prompt some current policyholders to drop coverage.

It's not a preposterous complaint. Individual insurance is an unusually rate-sensitive market niche. Policyholders pay premium costs entirely out of their own pockets. So the decision to take such relatively expensive insurance tends to make marginally more sense if you're sicker, not healthier. And the addition to the individual insurance market of a new group of such higher-risk policyholders *will* probably produce rate increases of some degree.

But even here, the options extended by Kassebaum-Kennedy are markedly narrower than those contained in legislation every Republican senator endorsed in 1994. And their application will be much more limited. In order to take advantage of this "group-to-individual portability" provision, you must (in most cases) have maintained uninterrupted, paid-up coverage in an employer-based insurance plan for three full years. You must also be ineligible for group coverage under an employer's plan—your own or your spouse's. And you must be able to *afford* individual coverage; the bill allows insurance companies to charge anything they want.

In any case, insurance companies in states that adopt other means to expand coverage opportunities to newly uninsured individuals—and many states already have—are exempted from the bill's relevant requirements.

However the specialized dispute over individual insurance coverage is ultimately settled, the bottom line on Kassebaum-Kennedy will remain essentially the same: no new taxes, no new spending, no new federal bureaucracy, no state mandates, no rate restrictions, and no Hillary-style mandatory purchasing alliances and national expenditure caps. Nothing that should frighten the vast majority of Americans, in other words, and much that should satisfy them. And nothing, on balance, that violates conservative principle.

Kassebaum-Kennedy will be debated by the full Senate sometime between mid-April and early May. It is a delicate animal, and its political fortunes are impossible to predict this far in advance. If the bill gets larded up with the pet health-care amendments of various individual senators, business groups have sworn they will (justifiably) revolt—and probably kill the measure. Can Senators Kassebaum and Kennedy hold the line on such amendments from their respective party caucuses, and thus keep the bill clean and passable? And will the House, which has a large freshman class with no experience of 1994's health-care debate, be willing to move on comparable legislation, now still in its infancy? It's anyone's bet.

Republicans may be forgiven any instinctive resistance they might have to a Clinton call for incremental health-care reform. Some probably fear that Democrats will attempt to leverage Kassebaum-Kennedy into something genuinely terrible in future sessions of Congress. Maybe so. But that risk can only be avoided by doing *nothing*. And it would be nice if this Republican Congress could enter the fall campaign having done a little bit more than it already has for average American voters. States can't enact all these insurance reforms, after all; federal law prevents state regulation of certain insurance plans that now cover a huge number of Americans. In 1994, remember, most congressional Republicans *promised* to fill that gap.

Not to worry: Clinton won't get the bulk of credit, no matter what. The experience of 1994 cannot be expunged from popular memory; health care, for the president, will always be an embarrassing issue. Republicans should get the credit they deserve for incremental insurance-market reform. It was *their* idea. And it's still an idea worth pursuing with the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill.

— David Tell, for the Editors

Spendthrift Steve

by Matthew Rees

Everyone knows that Steve Forbes has mounted a major spending blitz in his quest for the Republican presidential nomination, disbursing some $25 million since late September. To put this in perspective, consider: At this point in the race in 1988, the six Republican presidential candidates' total *combined* spending was slightly more than $25 million.

More recently, at the height of the costliest Senate campaign in American history, average television viewers were seeing 10 ads a week each for Dianne Feinstein and Michael Huffington. In New Hampshire, the average television viewer is seeing more like 34 ads a week for Forbes. During four days in January, front-runner Bob Dole beamed 118 ads to New Hampshire voters watching Boston television stations—a heavy ad buy for anyone but Forbes, who aired *384* ads in that market in the same four days.

"We've crossed the last bridge from organizational politics to media politics," opines Alex Castellanos, a media consultant for Phil Gramm. He might be right. Traditionally, candidates for the presidential nominations declare early, then devote huge amounts of time and personnel to key states like Iowa and New Hampshire, where voters supposedly insist on looking them over in person. Speeches before coffee klatches and senior citizens groups are standard practice until about a month before the primary or caucus, when the candidates launch their television ads. The formula is so

well established that David Carney, a trusted Dole adviser in New Hampshire, said back in June, "If there's anyone out there stupid enough to think they can win the New Hampshire primary with TV ads and no organization, I think that's great. I encourage them to undertake that activity."

Forbes accepted the challenge and has been running strong ever since. He launched his campaign on September 22 and immediately started buying lots of media time. Until recent weeks, he had bare-bones staffs in Iowa and New Hampshire. In Arizona, which has a February 27 primary, he has five full-time employees; in giant California, four. As for personal campaigning, before the February 12 Iowa caucuses, Forbes spent about 20 days in the state. Bob Dole had been there more like 40 days, Phil Gramm 70, and Lamar Alexander 80. Forbes didn't even set foot in New Hampshire *between December 13 and January 18*, yet he has catapulted to first in some New Hampshire polls. Regardless of how he ultimately fares, Forbes has shaken up the presidential selection process in a way no one expected.

How did he do this? Money is part of the answer. Forbes has spent up to $20 million on radio and television ads alone, beaming into voters' homes so often they feel like he's a member of the family. A representative of WMUR-TV, the only statewide station in New Hampshire, told the *Los Angeles Times* about meeting with the Forbes campaign in September. "They wanted to do a megabulk buy," she said. "That's what they called it. They wanted tonnage, frequency, and they said, 'Here's the money and you help us work out the schedule.' . . . It was carte blanche. It had never happened to me before and never since. They wanted to buy every stitch of advertising they could get."

And so they have. Because he is self-financed and doesn't have to spend on raising money, Forbes gets more bang for his buck. He is devoting an estimated 80 percent of his campaign budget to advertising, double the norm. Gramm, whose campaign has floundered, has devoted just 10 percent of his budget to television. The *Arizona Republic* estimates Forbes's broadcast and cable advertising in that state has cost him roughly $2 million. Dole has run no television ads in Arizona. In South Carolina, which holds its primary March 2, Forbes has outspent Dole and Gramm on WIS, the most widely watched television station, by four or five to one.

In the face of this barrage, the other candidates have found it increasingly difficult to convey their messages. Dole recently told the *New York Times*, "I've got to go out and sell Bob Dole and Bob Dole's ideas, and I can't do that if I'm spending half my time picking a fight with somebody else." Nevertheless, the Forbes campaign is confirming two political truths: Negative advertising works, and the American people have nothing against multimillionaires' financing their own campaigns.

While polls show that voters dislike negative ads, experience demonstrates they are effective. Between half and two-thirds of Forbes's ads have been negative, and they've reinforced doubts about Dole. Demanding that dishonest ads be pulled, meanwhile, is a Catch-22. When Gramm challenged the Forbes campaign on an ad falsely claiming he had voted for the 1990 budget agreement, "not only did they never respond," he told *Nightline* on February 5, "they never pulled the ad off, and when we responded, they quadrupled the buy of the ad."

Castellanos calls the Forbes effort "the campaign of the future." GOP media consultant Larry McCarthy predicts Forbes will "make it more acceptable for wealthy candidates to jump into politics." Indeed, increasing numbers of candidates are financing their own campaigns. Whether this brings success remains unclear: According to Ann McBride, president of Common Cause, only four of the 14 Senate candidates who spent over $1 million of their own money in 1994 were elected, and three of those were incumbents. Of the 16 House candidates who spent over $400,000 of their own money, only two were elected.

The reasons for the losses varied, but voter resentment of a candidate's trying to "buy an election" à la Forbes was rarely an issue. Republican pollster Fred Steeper points out that many voters actually *prefer* self-financed candidates, on the theory that "if you're super-rich, you're less corruptible." Wisconsin Democrat Herbert Kohl spent $7.5 million to win a Senate race using the slogan "Nobody's senator but yours." McCarthy, who has worked for self-financed candidates Huffington, Lew Lehrman, and John Heinz, says personal spending has never been a liability.

The voters may not resent it, but rival candidates, editorial writers, and many political professionals do. Mike Murphy, adman for Alexander, complains, "Federal law says [the primaries] will be a rubber-band fight, and Forbes has come with a machine gun." In Iowa, candidates who accept public funds must observe a spending limit of $1.1 million; in New Hampshire, $600,000. In both states, Forbes is spending at least three times the limit.

Alexander pleaded in a January *Boston Globe* interview: "I am trusting the voters to add up all the private conversations [I've had with them] and make that worth more than all the money spent on television." Two weeks from now, Alexander's words may look hopelessly naive. ♦

Hear Them Roar

by Christina Sommers

Helen Reddy warbled her signature song "I Am Woman" in lieu of the national anthem as 3,000 of her gender gathered in Washington to join Gloria Steinem, Molly Yard, Bella Abzug, and Patricia Ireland at "Feminist Expo '96 for Women's Empowerment."

Reddy's appearance was not the only unintentional comedy of the Expo. There was Steinem, always good for a laugh, calling for the overthrow of the "jock-ocracy" by cutting the military budget 50 percent immediately: "We don't have enemies anymore," she declared, except, perhaps, for jocks. Lest Steinem seem too militaristic, Frances Fox Piven of the City University of New York later assured the audience that "the 50 percent cut in the military was just the first stage toward total demilitarization!"

And so it went, seemingly just another gathering of the kind of feminists who believe that women are under siege in our "hetero-patriarchal" society. At one session, a middle-aged woman stood up and told the audience that when she was a medical student at Wayne State University in the 1960s, she had been forced to sign an agreement promising she would never get married and would never have children. The younger women in the audience were enraged but not surprised at this example of patriarchal injustice. Steinem, who was at the podium, shouted, "This woman deserves a national medal! . . . I think it would be great if you considered writing a book. I would be happy to help you to find a publisher!"

> WAS EXPO '96 JUST ANOTHER GATHERING OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE WOMEN ARE UNDER SIEGE IN OUR "HETERO-PATRIARCHAL" SOCIETY?

I later asked this woman if she still had a copy of the agreement she had been forced to sign. No, she said quickly. "My house was burned down twice, once by an enraged ex-husband. I lost everything." Was there anyone at Wayne State who might have a copy? "No," she said. "The man who forced me to sign the form is dead. The medical school does not have a copy because when bureaucracies change, they purge all the records. You will never find it. Don't even try."

Several women on the "Let's Change the Rules!" panel called for abolishing college entrance tests because examinations like the SATs are sexist, classist, racist—and, as one participant observed, "tests impact negatively on self-esteem." A group called FairTest reported significant progress in its fight against the Educational Testing Service. Professor Ronnie Steinberg from Temple University offered herself as proof that patriarchal tests are useless for measuring women's intelligence: "I did very poorly on the SAT and even worse on the GREs, and I am a professor of Women's Studies!"

Officially, Expo '96 was intended to celebrate feminist achievement and "visualiz[e] a feminist future for the new millennium." The more immediate vision the organizers have in mind is defeating Republicans in the 1996 elections. When one participant plaintively objected to the unprecedented dearth of lesbian workshops, a speaker gently explained that it was her understanding that lesbian workshops would have been a distraction: "What I

was told by the people who were organizers is that the primary purpose of this conference is political. It's to articulate the women's agenda for the 1996 election. It's to get out the vote."

In a sense, Expo '96 was a gigantic workshop on how the 299 sponsoring feminist tax-exempt "nonprofits" could remain nonpartisan while putting the resources of their organizations to work for the Democratic party. President Clinton sent a welcoming letter to the conference participants in which he alluded to the role the Expo '96 feminists were expected to play in November. Repeating the word "empowerment" four times in a single page, Clinton praised the conference's attention to "voter mobilization."

IT WAS A GIGANTIC WORKSHOP ON HOW FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS COULD BE NONPARTISAN WHILE SUPPORTING THE DEMOCRATS.

One victory was already chalked up. Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL), claimed that in the recent Oregon Senate election won by Democrat Ron Wyden, her group deployed "five hundred volunteers . . . trained in sophisticated voter recruitment." The NARAL volunteers did not merely make sure people were registered, they made up to five follow-up calls to make sure people sent in their ballots. According to Michelman, the Democrats won support from between 20,000 and 25,000 pro-choice Republican and independent women her group had influenced.

Anne Bryant, executive director of the American Association of University Women, talked about the association's new approach to political action. The AAUW was founded in 1881 to foster excellence in women's education. In recent years, however, its leadership has pushed a hard-line feminist agenda. With its 150,000 members and a multimillion-dollar budget, the association has proved itself to be a past master of nonpartisan partisanship. Two years ago, it successfully lobbied Congress to pass the Gender Equity Act, which provides millions of dollars to deal with a "national tragedy" the AAUW had uncovered—the tragedy of our demoralized, "shortchanged" schoolgirls, who need federal protection from gender bias in the schools. More recently, AAUW has initiated a Voter Education Campaign whose goal is "to build broad networks of women's communities by providing *concrete nonpartisan information* about congressional action that will affect their lives." Bryant reported on studies on why women vote and whom they trust for reliable information on the issues. Women voters do not trust politicians, Bryant proudly announced: "They trust other women!"

Bryant told the assembled feminists how the AAUW acted on this finding by forming an umbrella group called the Women's Network for Change. The network is a coalition of some 40 women's groups, which, among other activities, disseminates information "alerts" on congressional action and "women's issues." Each group is charged with getting the alerts to as many women as possible. Among the member groups are feminist activist organizations such as NOW, Planned Parenthood, and the Ms. Foundation. But the AAUW has attracted more mainstream organizations, such as Girls Inc., the American Jewish Congress, and—the AAUW's most prized acquisition—the YWCA of the USA.

The YWCA is the nation's oldest and largest women's organization, and its leadership has recently changed from mainstream to activist. Prema Mathai-Davis became the YWCA's national executive director less than two years ago. According to *Ms.*, "Mathai-Davis did not initially see it as an activist organization." Now, the YWCA has joined the AAUW's political network, and Mathai-Davis herself is heading the campaign to save affirmative action in California. Mathai-Davis, along with Candace Gingrich (Newt's gay half-sister) and Susan Sarandon, has just been honored as a *Ms.* magazine Woman of the Year; she spoke at Expo '96, manifesting the right feminist consciousness and drawing nodding agreement when she said, "Men have shown us that they do not know how to be inclusive."

In a session called "Funding Feminism for Tomorrow" a woman from the Philadelphia Main Line dispensed tips on how to get donations from wealthy conservative women: "They regard women's causes as kooky. . . . But if you have a reputation for being involved with flowers or music, you can get through the door. . . . You do have to be a little sneaky."

Expo '96 is an object lesson on how successful the feminist activists have been at politicizing women's organizations whose leaders have hitherto been moderate and politically nonpartisan. The leaders and troops of Expo '96 are aggressive, very well organized, ideologically committed, and, so far, not seriously challenged. They are not overly fond of Bill Clinton, but he can confidently depend on their loyalty and zealotry. Their kind of "voter education campaign" cannot be allowed to go unanswered.

Christina Sommers is a professor of philosophy at Clark University and author of **Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women.**

Fair-Weather Flat Taxers

by Bruce Bartlett

A FOOLISH CONSISTENCY is the hobgoblin of little minds." So said Ralph Waldo Emerson back in 1841. Perhaps so. But when two major newspapers change their opinions 180 degrees without offering any acknowledgment of their earlier views or any explanation for the change, one has to wonder if there isn't something foolish about inconsistency as well.

As it happens, the flat tax presents an opportunity to look at this question. In recent months the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* have reversed themselves on the issue. Both previously supported the flat tax; now both oppose it.

Back on April 15, 1982, the *Washington Post* thought the flat tax was a great idea:

> The ideal income tax would be a flat percentage of all income above an arbitrary threshold of, say, $10,000 per year. It would be simple, quick and easy. As for fairness, it would be no less fair than the present tangle of exemptions, deductions and credits that are currently producing not equity but a widespread public cynicism and hostility. The flat tax is the obvious remedy.

And lest anyone dismiss this as the work of a rogue editorial writer, another *Post* editorial on June 3, 1982, noted that the public "is thoroughly fed up with a tax system that is not only of baroque complexity, but also downright arbitrary in impact." Moreover, the "progressivity of the current income tax is, in any event, bought at enormous price in inefficiency and unfairness."

The solution, according to the *Post*, was "replacing the system with a low-rate tax on income—with few, if any, exclusions allowed." This, the *Post* said, "is an idea that, by promising efficiency, equity and simplicity, appeals to all parts of the political spectrum."

Now skip ahead to January 19, 1996. If anything, people are even more frustrated with the complexity and inefficiency of the tax code, and there is even wider acceptance of the flat rate idea. But now the solution that the *Post* found "obvious" 14 years ago has suddenly become "a flawed idea, less a serious tax proposal than a slogan in the name of which the advocates claim to be able to accomplish several contradictory things at once."

The *Washington Post* of 1996 now attacks advocates who believe "a flat tax will lead simultaneously to greater simplicity and 'fairness' in the system." It concludes that "a flat tax wouldn't be an improvement."

The *New York Times* underwent a similar metamorphosis. Back in 1982, the *Times* also thought a pure flat tax was a great idea. In a June 6, 1982, editorial the *Times* asked, "Who can respect an income tax system that allows many wealthy citizens to pay little or no tax yet claims close to half the marginal earnings of the middle class? Who can defend a tax code so complicated that even the most educated family needs a professional to decide how much it owes?"

The solution, according to the *Times*, was a flat tax. "The most dramatic fresh start, without changing the total amount collected, would be a flat-rate tax levied on a greatly broadened income tax base." Specifically, the *Times* praised the flat tax bills introduced by Sen. Jesse Helms and then-congressman Leon Panetta.

The *New York Times* maintained an interest in the flat tax. In fact, in a March 27, 1992, editorial the *Times* criticized former California governor Jerry Brown for proposing a watered-down flat-tax proposal on the grounds that it was not flat enough. Here is the *Times*'s view in 1992:

> The present tax code is riddled with wasteful contradictions and complexity. For example, profit from corporate investment is taxed twice—when earned by the corporation and again when distributed to shareholders. That powerfully discourages savings and investment—the exact opposite of what the economy needs to grow.
>
> The remedy is, in a word, integration, meshing personal and corporate codes so that the brunt of taxes falls on consumption, not saving. Tax reform should also simplify the code, making loopholes harder for Congress to disguise, and enact. And for reasons of elemental decency, tax reform shouldn't come at the expense of the poor.
>
> Remarkably, there is a reform that achieves all these objectives. Robert Hall and Alvin Rabushka, economists at the Hoover Institution, have proposed an integrated code that applies a single rate to both personal and corporate income. Their plan wipes away most deductions and exemptions, permitting a low tax rate of 19 percent.

The *Times* went on to praise the pure Hall-Rabushka proposal, which is the basis for the flat tax plans of both Steve Forbes and Congressman Dick Armey, and criticized Brown's deviations from it. It concluded by calling the Hall-Rabushka plan "a superb idea."

But today the *Times* sings a different tune. On January 18, 1996, the *Times* attacked the flat tax. "Flat taxes have a glaring fault," the *Times* opined. "They lower tax burdens on the richest families and raise them on many middle-class families." Furthermore, the integration of corporate and individual taxes, which the *Times* praised in 1992 as necessary to increase saving and investment, "would shift taxes away from wealthy shareholders." The *Times* concluded that tax reform was desirable, but not a "Forbes-style flat tax."

One is tempted to conclude that the only difference between the "ideal" tax of 1982 or the "superb

idea" of 1992 and the "flawed" tax of 1996 with "a glaring fault" is that in 1982, or even in 1992, no one thought there was any real chance of enacting a flat tax. By contrast, there seems to be serious discussion of the idea today, as shown by the wide support for the Forbes and Armey proposals. Apparently the *Post* and *Times* preferred the flat tax as a curiosity, a theoretical possibility, rather than a real tax system. Once they thought there was an actual chance of enacting a flat tax, both of them turned against their earlier endorsements.

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The Blob on the Border

by Jorge Amselle

On March 18, the House of Representatives is scheduled to vote on the most radical change in immigration policy this country has seen since 1965. Rep. Lamar Smith's bill would cut legal immigration by 30 percent, add 5,000 Border Patrol agents, and fund the construction of 14 miles of new and improved fencing along the most vulnerable parts of our border with Mexico. Yet, while many people—from the Jordan commission on immigration reform and President Clinton to presidential candidate Pat Buchanan—are clamoring to stop illegal immigration and restrict legal immigration, bureaucrats at the Department of Education are busy trying to erase the border entirely.

They are doing this through the department's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, which has funded something called the Border Colloquy Project. Also known as La Frontera ("the border" in Spanish), the project is the brainchild of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) in Austin, Texas, one of 10 publicly funded "private" regional education research labs created by Washington in the mid-1960s and kept busy with assorted grants ever since. The purpose of La Frontera is to "advocate, facilitate, and participate in [the] development of comprehensive, bi-national plans for realization of the vision."

William Bramhall

The "vision" in question is one of regional integration ushered in by the North American Free Trade Agreement. According to SEDL's newsletter, "NAFTA will ideally create an integrated borderland. . . . Nationalism gives way to an internationalist mind-set that encourages each nation to offer up part of its sovereignty for the mutual good." The best way to achieve this, according to La Frontera, is to mesh the educational resources and curricula of New Mexico and Texas with those of the northern Mexican states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas.

From April to June of 1995, La Frontera hosted six meetings in the United States and Mexico, attended by officials from U.S. and Mexican state departments of education; representatives of health service agencies; staffers of Jeff Bingaman, Democratic senator from New Mexico; state elected officials; and, most surprisingly, members of the U.S. Border Patrol. If people in the U.S. Border Patrol want to erase the border, they should probably start by resigning.

Participants at these gatherings were asked to visualize what the border region would look like in the year 2010. Their answers—compiled in the report "Imagining La Frontera: SEDL's Border Colloquy"—would shock most Americans. What little time they didn't spend attacking the United States they devoted to defending Mexico and giving away our sovereignty. "If this side of the border is always perceived as better, if this side is always ideal, if this side is always the dreamed place, *el norte famoso magico*, then I don't think we're ever going to get the change we're looking for," said one

participant. Most Mexican immigrants would probably disagree.

These U.S. and Mexican officials also agreed that "educational requirements, curricula, and teacher training [should be] compatible." They wanted to "maintain a focus on equality and the well-being of people and the environment." Some called for "the creation of a regional government or oversight agency that spans national boundaries." They agreed on the need for "full service schools" providing child care, parent education, and health services, a "system of integrated services from the womb to the tomb" that would be "available to all regardless of place of birth or residency."

Participants seemed to think that the way to make Mexican and U.S. schools equal is to institute in Mexico the very reforms that are ruining schools in the United States. Recommendations included such ivory-tower ideas as that "progress through school should be based on concept mastery rather than on grade levels. Use of the bell curve will become a felony. Schools will stop sorting students into winners and losers," and "schools will be structured differently with non-graded classrooms."

And in a masterstroke of doublespeak, participants felt that education should "conjugate freedom with work, justice with efficiency, dignity with democracy, innovation with tradition, identity with integrity, [and] individuality with collectivity."

Needless to say, supporters of making English the official language of the United States will find no comfort here. According to La Frontera's participants, "It is time for some people and organizations in the U.S. to stop being intolerant and accept the use of our language in their communities." Not surprisingly, they also called for increased resources from the federal government to improve education and alleviate poverty. Some even recommended "moving toward a common financial and currency system" in order to equalize the economies of both countries.

One official maintained, "The attitude exists in the U.S., relative to other countries, that we are the greatest. . . . We need to be seen as one country." In a moment of candor, another person said, "This reality, this beautiful reality that we talked about creating this morning, we're going to have to drag some people along kicking and screaming all the way."

SEDL makes it very clear who wears the white sombreros in its scenario. "Ethnic strife is born when mainstream societies coerce assimilation of all groups in a nation—a notion that inspires strong nationalistic resistance from minorities interested in preserving their national identities. Mexico has officially enacted measures to protect its language and culture from its larger, and sometimes overbearing northern neighbor." This begs the question: Why is it acceptable for Mexico to protect its language and culture but not for the United States?

On October 12, Education Secretary Richard Riley announced that SEDL's $4.4 million annual grant would be renewed for another five years; this sum does not include dozens of additional grants for "research" projects like La Frontera. The other nine regional education labs received renewed funding, too.

These laboratories have long outlived any usefulness they ever had, yet they continue to subsist off the taxpayers, all the while promoting worthless or counterproductive ideas. What will it take for Congress to notice and end such nonsensical waste?

Jorge Amselle is communications director for the Center for Equal Opportunity in Washington, D.C.

A Gap, Not a Chasm

by Everett Carll Ladd

In a lead story last month in the *Wall Street Journal*, Gerald Seib argued that President Clinton's electoral fate now hangs on the gender gap. "There have, of course, been gender gaps in past elections," wrote Seib, "but today the gap appears to be widening into a chasm." He cited a December 1-5 *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll that found 54 percent of women saying they would vote for Clinton "if the presidential election were held today," but only 45 percent of men—a "gender chasm" of 9 points.

This kind of hype is just plain silly. There are indeed gender differences in partisan preferences, following a pattern that began taking shape in the 1970s. Nothing much is happening to this pattern—which finds women regularly giving more support to Democratic candidates and causes than men do; it shows no signs of expanding or shrinking. And it is far from clear how the partisan consequences of the gender gap should be read.

Exit polls found Ronald Reagan backed by 55 percent of men in the 1980 three-way contest and by 47 percent of women—an 8 point difference. The gap was 4 points in 1984, 7 points in 1988, 4 points in 1992. The composite of the Dole-Clinton trial heats taken

over the past two months falls within this range.

Seib argued that the president's support among women voters "has increased amid fierce debate over the budget," but the preponderance of available data says otherwise. I've reviewed the presidential approval scores, for example, from 18 surveys taken in November, December, and January. The proportion of women saying they approve of Clinton's handling of the presidency ranges in these surveys from the low 40s to the high 50s with no consistent change over time. Overall, Clinton's approval percentage averaged 5 points higher among women than among men—almost exactly the average gender gap throughout his presidency.

These men-women differences in presidential job approval reflect well-established gender differences in party identification. In 24 surveys taken from November through January where party data were available, the proportion of women identifying themselves as Democrats exceeded the proportion of men calling themselves Democrats by an average of 5.5 points. Conversely, the percentage of men identifying themselves as Republicans surpassed the percentage of women by an average of 6 points. Again, these recent differences match what polls have been finding for 15 years.

Finally, partisan differences by gender mirror differences about the role government should play. When questions of government's responsibilities are raised in surveys or in state ballot questions, women typically declare themselves more supportive of government intervention than men do—by proportions similar to what we see on party preference. The rising incidence of economically needy single-parent, female-headed households since 1960 probably goes far to explain the emergence and persistence of the gender gap.

So it's real—but hardly a chasm. And there's no indication that it's widening. Researchers plumbing divisions in American politics need to keep gender in their analytic arsenal, along with other key demographics. Yet if gender belongs in this company, the divide it locates is by no means the most prominent. Differences between blacks and whites are obviously much larger; but so are those among educational and income groups, among Americans by their level of religious participation, and between union members and non-unionists.

Like many students of electoral behavior, I've long been especially interested in the party preferences of the young. Young people are hardly blank slates politically—parental influences are clearly evident, for one thing—but they are less bound than older people by experience and thus usually more reflective of today's trends. Well-designed political surveys of teenagers are few and far between, but one such was taken by ABC News January 24-28. It gives us a glimpse of the gender gap among the next generation of voters.

Asked which is more important, balancing the budget or maintaining the current level of domestic programs, the teens (ages 12-17) divided roughly two to one (60-33 percent) in favor of budget balancing. President Clinton fared roughly the same with males and females in the sample: 52 percent of the former and 54 percent of the latter said, for example, that the congressional Republicans' position on the budget is closer to their own than is the president's. And 45 percent of the males, along with 49 percent of the females, said they approved of the way Clinton is handling his job as president. No hint here of a widening gender gap—and no hint of Republicans' being in trouble with the next generation.

> PARTY-LINE DIFFERENCES BY GENDER ARE REAL. BUT THEY HARDLY MAKE UP A CHASM. AND THERE'S NO INDICATION THE GAP IS WIDENING.

The party identification data on the teens are striking. Like earlier generations when they came of age, today's teens have a large proportion (50 percent) of self-described independents. But the 46 percent of the sample who declare a party preference break two to one Republican (30-16 percent). Republicans do 10 points better among the boys than among the girls (36 percent to 26 percent), but the Democrats do only 4 points better among the girls (18 percent to 14 percent). Democrats trail Republicans in both groups, but gender differences in party preferences among these young people are substantial.

On the key political question—which party, if any, has drawn advantage since 1980 from the relatively modest but persisting gender gap—there can be no conclusive answer. Obviously the GOP should be especially interested in strengthening its position among women, the Democrats theirs among men. It is worth noting that the proportion of women identifying themselves as Democrats now is similar to what it was 25 years ago. If the electorate comprised women alone, its partisan make-up in 1996 would resemble that in 1968 or 1976. Men, however, have shifted a lot over this span. The Republican party's rise nationally from minority to parity status has occurred as the party has gone from being way behind among male voters to being modestly ahead.

Everett Carll Ladd is president of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

Mrs. Clinton's Very, Very Bad Book

By P. J. O'Rourke

"When Chelsea needed permission at school to get aspirin, she told the nurse to 'Call my dad, my mom's too busy.'"
—Eleanor Clift and Mark Miller,
Newsweek, *March 1, 1993*

It takes a village to raise a child. The village is Washington. You are the child. There, I've spared you from reading the worst book to come out of the Clinton administration since—let's be fair—whatever the last one was.

Nearly everything about *It Takes a Village* (Simon & Schuster, 318 pages, $20) is objectionable, from the title—an ancient African proverb that seems to have its origins in the ancient African kingdom of Hallmarkcardia—to the acknowledgments page, where Mrs. Clinton fails to acknowledge that some poor journalism professor named Barbara Feinman did a lot of the work. Mrs. Clinton thereby unwisely violates the first rule of literary collaboration: Blame the coauthor. And let us avert our eyes from the Kim Il-Sung-type dust-jacket photograph showing Mrs. Clinton surrounded by joyous-youth-of-many-nations.

The writing style is that familiar modern one so often adopted by harried public figures speaking into a tape recorder. The narrative voice is, I believe, intended to be that of an old family friend, an old family friend who is, perhaps, showing the first signs of Alzheimer's disease:

> On summer nights, our parents sat together in one another's yards or on porches, chatting while the kids played. Sometimes a few of the fathers dressed up in sheets and told us ghost stories. We marched with our Scout troops or school groups or rode bikes in holiday parades through our town's small downtown, to a park where all the kids were given Popsicles.

Elsewhere the tone is xeroxed family newsletter, the kind enclosed in a Christmas card from people you hardly know:

> One memorable night, Chelsea wanted us to go buy a coconut. . . . We walked to our neighborhood store, brought the coconut home, and tried to open it, even pounding on it with a hammer, to no avail. Finally we went out to the parking lot of the governor's mansion, where we took turns throwing it on the ground until it cracked. The guards could not figure out what we were up to, and we laughed for hours afterwards.

Hours?

However that may be, let us understand that we have here a Christmas card with ideas, "a reflection of my continuing meditation on children," as Mrs. Clinton puts it. And we need only turn to the contents page to reap the benefits of her many lonely hours spent in philosophical contemplation of puerile ontology: "Kids Don't Come with Instructions," "Security Takes More Than a Blanket," "Child Care Is Not a Spectator Sport," "Children Are Citizens Too."

Bold thoughts. Brave insights. "It is often said that children are our last and best hope for the future," claims Mrs. Clinton. "Children," she ventures, "need to hear from authoritative voices that kindness and caring matter." And she flatly states, "The teenage years, we all know, pose a special challenge for parents."

"Children," says Mrs. Clinton, "are like the tiny figures at the center of the nesting dolls for which Russian folk artists are famous. The children are cradled in the family, which is primarily responsible for their passage from infancy to adulthood. But around the family are the larger settings of *paid informers, secret police, corrupt bureaucracy, and a prison gulag."* I added the part in italics for comic relief, something *It Takes a Village* doesn't provide. Intentionally.

The profound cogitations of Mrs. Clinton cannot help but result in a treasure trove of useful advice on child rearing. "[T]he village needs a town crier—and a town prodder," she says. I shall be certain to propose the creation of this novel office at the next Town Meeting in Sharon, New Hampshire. I'm sure my fellow residents will be as pleased as I am at the notion of a public servant going from door to door at convenient hours announcing, as Mrs. Clinton does, "We can encourage girls to be active and dress them in comfort-

able, durable clothes that let them move freely."

Some of this needful counsel is gleaned from Mrs. Clinton's own experience of partly raising one child with only a legion of household help courtesy the taxpayers. Not that Mrs. Clinton always had it easy:

> But for two years when Bill was not governor (and Chelsea was still very young) our only help was a woman who came during work hours on weekdays. . . . My own version of every woman's worst nightmare happened one morning when I was due in court at nine-thirty for a trial. It was already seven-thirty, and two-year-old Chelsea was running a fever and throwing up after a sleepless night for both of us. My husband was out of town. The woman who normally took care of Chelsea called in sick with the same symptoms. No relatives lived nearby. My neighbors were not at home. Frantic, I called a trusted friend who came to my rescue.

Whew, that was a close call.

Anyway, Mrs. Clinton has swell tips on everything from entertaining toddlers ("Often . . . a sock turned into a hand puppet is enough to fascinate them for hours") to keeping older kiddies fit ("If your children need to lose weight, help them to set a reasonable goal and make a sensible plan for getting there"). She is determined that every child should reach his or her full potential in mind and body ("One of my pet theories is that learning to tie shoelaces is a good way of developing hand-to-eye coordination"). And what parent will not applaud Mrs. Clinton's hint "to explain to the child in advance what the shots do, perhaps by illustrating it with her favorite dolls and stuffed animals"? This is also an excellent method of educating offspring about sexual abuse and, perhaps, capital punishment. Don't call the White House if the kid refuses to be left alone in the room with Fuzzy the Bunny.

Furthermore, Mrs. Clinton taps the expertise of—what else to call them?—experts. "The Child Care Action Campaign . . . advises that 'jigsaw puzzles and crayons may be fine for preschoolers but are inappropriate for infants.'" And Ann Brown, the chairhuman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, is cited for suggesting that "baby showers with a safety theme are a great way to help new and expectant mothers childproof every room in their homes." Oh, Honey, look what Mom brought—a huge bouquet of rubber bands to put around all the knobs on our kitchen cabinets.

But *It Takes a Village* is so much more than just a self-help book for idiots. Mrs. Clinton also shares her many virtuous thoughts with us. "From the time I was a child I loved being around children." And she lets us in on her deep personal sorrows. "Watching one parent browbeat the other over child support or property division by threatening to fight for custody or withhold visitation, I often wished I could call in King Solomon to arbitrate." Though one shudders to think of the lawsuits the Children's Defense Fund would have brought against old Sol for endangering the welfare of a minor, bigamy, and what Mrs. Clinton calls "the misuse of religion to further political, personal and even commercial agendas."

Mrs. Clinton explains, however, that church is good. "Our spiritual life as a family was spirited and constant. We talked with God, walked with God, ate, studied, and argued with God." And won, I'll warrant. "My father came from a long line of Methodists, while my mother, who had not been raised in any church, taught Sunday school." Interesting lessons they must have been. I myself am a Methodist. But Mrs. Clinton apparently belongs to the synod from Mars. "Churches," she says, "are among the few places in the village where today's teenagers can let down their guard and let off steam." She says that in her Methodist youth group, "we argued over the meaning of war to a Christian after seeing for the first time works of art like Picasso's *Guernica*, and the words of poets like T.S. Eliot and e.e. cummings inspired us to debate other moral issues." I can only wonder if any of those words were from *one times one* by cummings:

> *a politician is an arse upon*
> *which everything has sat except a man*

Until now the First Lady has had two media aspects or avatars. There was Hillary the zealous and committed, ideological wide-load, antithesis to that temporizing flibbertigibbet and political roundheels her husband. Then there was Hillary guile incarnate, swindling the widows and orphans of Arkansas in bank stock, real estate, and cattle trading deals, sending her minions to rifle the office of Vince Foster before his body had cooled and loudly touting the virtues of feminism while acquiring her own wealth and prestige by marriage to a promising lunk. But *It Takes a Village* contains plentiful evidence that we members of the press do not know the true woman. We have failed to penetrate the various masks of the public persona. We have neglected to learn who the real Hillary Rodham Clinton is. She's a nitwit.

But Mrs. Clinton really can't be stupid. Can she? She has a big, long résumé. She's been to college. Several times. Very important intellectuals like Garry Wills consider her a very important intellectual like Garry Wills. Surely the imbecility of *It Takes a Village* is calculated, cynical, an attempt to soften the First Lady's image with ordinary Americans. Mrs. Clinton chooses a thesis that can hardly be refuted, "Resolved: Kids—Aren't They Great?" Then she patronizes her audience, talks down to them, lowers the level of discourse to where it may be understood by the average—

let's be frank—Democrat. This is an interesting public-relations gambit, repositioning the Dragon Lady to show how much she cares about all the little dragon eggs. But if the purpose of *It Takes a Village* is to get in good with the masses, then explain this sentence on page 182: "I had never before known people who lived in trailers."

Is the First Lady a dunce? Let us marshal the evidence:

Arguments Contra Stupidity	*Arguments Pro*
President of her class at Wellesley	It was the 60s, decade without quality control
Involved in Watergate investigation	So was Martha Mitchell
Partner in most prestigious law firm in Arkansas	Examine phrase "most prestigious law firm in Arkansas"
Went to Yale	Went to Yale
Married Bill	Married Bill
Is good on television	Not as good as Tori Spelling

The jury seems to be out. We will have to rely for our answer on old-fashioned textual analysis.

In *It Takes a Village*, Mrs. Clinton is highly critical of *The Bell Curve* by Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray. One whole chapter of her book is titled "The Bell Curve is a Curve Ball." Mrs. Clinton shows no evidence of having read even the dust-jacket of *The Bell Curve*, but never mind; let us take her underlying point that innate intelligence is hard to measure. Then let us postulate something we might call a "bell trough" and draw a conclusion from this that innate stupidity is hard to measure too. "Smart is not something you simply are, but something you can become," says Mrs. Clinton. And ditto, my dear, for dumb.

There are times in *It Takes a Village* when Mrs. Clinton seems to play at being a horse's ass, when she makes statements such as "some of the best theologians I have ever met were five-year-olds." Mommy, did they put Jesus on the cross before or after he came down the chimney and brought all the children toys?

But some kinds of stupidity cannot be faked. Says Mrs. Clinton: "Less developed nations will be our best models for the home doctoring we will then need to master." And she tells us that in Bangladesh she met a Louisiana doctor "who was there to learn about low-cost techniques he could use back home to treat some of his state's more than 240,000 uninsured children." A poultice of buffalo dung is helpful in many cases.

Mrs. Clinton seems to possess the highly developed, finely attuned stupidity usually found in the upper reaches of academia. Hear her on the subject of nurseries and preschools: "From what experts tell us, there is a link between the cost and the quality of care." And then there is Mrs. Clinton's introduction to the chapter titled "Kids Don't Come with Instructions":

> There I was, lying in my hospital bed, trying desperately to figure out how to breast-feed. . . . As I looked on in horror, Chelsea started to foam at the nose. I thought she was strangling or having convulsions. Frantically, I pushed every buzzer there was to push.
>
> A nurse appeared promptly. She assessed the situation calmly. . . . Chelsea was taking in my milk, but because of the awkward way I held her, she was breathing it out of her nose!

The woman was holding her baby *upside down*.

But let us not confuse stupid with feeble or pointless. Stupidity is an excellent medium for the vigorous conveyance of certain political ideas. Mrs. Clinton is, for instance, doggedly pro-Clinton. Anyone who makes the least demur to the Clinton administration agenda (whatever it may be this week) is an extremist: "As soon as Goals 2000 passed, it was attacked by extremists." And she says the "extreme case against government, *often including intense personal attacks on government officials and political leaders* [italics added by an extremist, me], is designed not just to restrain government but to advance narrow religious, political, and economic agendas." That crabbed, restrictive screed the Bill of Rights comes to mind. Mrs. Clinton claims to have once been a Goldwater Republican. Perhaps she just muffed her note-taking during his 1964 nomination acceptance speech. I suppose that looking back at her diaries, rediscovered in the East Wing book room, she found the following entry: " 'Extremism in the defense of liberty is (illegible).' Remind myself to ask that nice girl in PoliSci class who's president of SDS what the Senator said."

Nor does Mrs. Clinton miss a chance to swipe at family values, often putting the phrase in quotation marks to signify ironic scorn. Clever device. "This is real 'family values' legislation," she says of the Family and Medical Leave Act, a law she calls "a major step toward a national commitment to allowing good workers to be good family members"—something workers never were, of course, until the government made them so.

Poverty, injustice, the need to take a couple of days off work—in the Mrs. Clinton world view there is no social problem that's not an occasion for increased political involvement in private life.

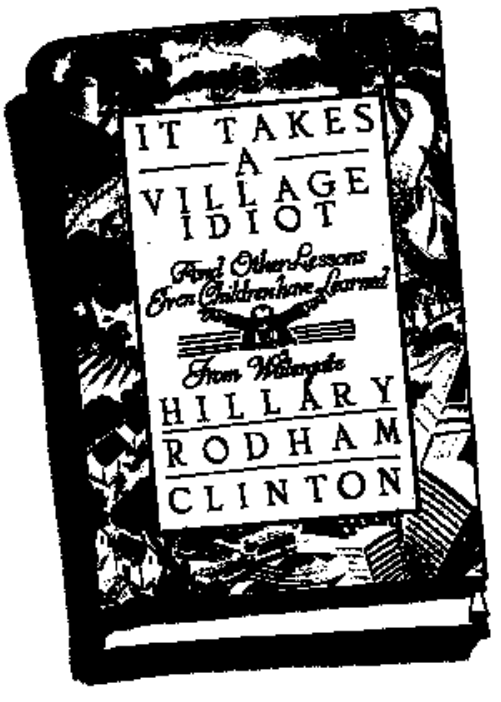
> Imagine hearing this kind of "news you can use" sandwiched in the middle of the Top Ten countdown: "So

> you've got a new baby in the house? Don't let her cry herself red in the face. Just think how you'd feel if you were hungry, wet, or just plain out of sorts and nobody paid any attention to you. Well, don't do that to a little kid. She just got here. Give her a break, and give her some attention now!"
>
> Videos with scenes of commonsense baby care—how to burp an infant, what to do when soap gets in his eyes, how to make a baby with an earache comfortable—could be running continuously in doctors' offices, clinics, hospitals, motor vehicle offices, or any place where people gather and have to wait.

You think getting your driver's license renewed is a pain now? Just wait until the second Clinton administration.

There is no form of social spending that Mrs. Clinton won't buy into (with your money). "I can't understand the political opposition to programs like 'midnight' basketball," she says. And no doubt the Swiss and Japanese, who owe their low crime rates to keeping their kids awake till all hours shooting hoops, would agree.

Mrs. Clinton has no thought for the infinite growth of cost and dependency inherent in entitlement programs. She blithely speaks of "a single mother in Illinois who . . . described herself as falling into the childcare netherworld because she makes too much to qualify for state programs but finds that the price of daycare 'is well out of reach.'" Why should every taxpayer in the nation become Miss Illinois's husband when there is one particular taxpayer honestly obliged to do so?



And Mrs. Clinton is oblivious to the idea that the government programs she advocates may have caused the problems the government programs she advocates are supposed to solve. "Whatever the reasons for the apparent increase in physical and sexual abuse of children, it demands our intervention," she says. But what if the reason *is* our intervention?

Only the lamest arguments are summoned to support Mrs. Clinton's call for enormous expansion of state power. She uses a few statistics of the kind that come in smudgy faxes from minor Naderite organizations: "135,000 children bring guns to school each day." She recollects past do-goodery: "In Arkansas we enlisted the services of local merchants to create a book of coupons that could be distributed to pregnant women. . . . After every month's pre- or postnatal exam, the attending health care provider validates a coupon, which can be redeemed for free or reduced-price goods such as milk or diapers." (In 1980, Arkansas had an infant mortality rate of 12.7 per 1,000 live births, almost identical to the national average of 12.6. As of 1992, the Arkansas rate was 10.3 vs. a national average of 8.5.) And Mrs. Clinton offers pat little anecdotes of this ilk:

> I will never forget the woman from Vermont whom I met at a health care forum in Boston. She ran a dairy farm with her husband, which meant that she was required by law to immunize her cattle against disease. But she could not afford to get her preschoolers inoculated as well. "The cattle on my dairy farm right now," she said, "are receiving better health care than my children."

Of course the dairy farmers could have, I don't know, sold a cow or something, but that would have been playing into the hands of anti-government extremists. Clucks the First Lady: "The influence of profit-driven medicine continues to grow."

Indeed the profit motive is to blame for many, many of America's problems. Mrs. Clinton talks long

and often about the "harsh consequences of a more open economy." So unlike the lovely time people are having in North Korea. Mrs. Clinton opines that "one of the conditions of the consumer culture is that it relies upon human insecurities to create aspirations that can be satisfied only by the purchase of some product or service." Such as vaccinations for kids, maybe.

Yet, at bottom, Mrs. Clinton cannot really be called a commie or a pinko or even a liberal in the contemporary hold-your-nose sense of the word. She spends too much time arguing both sides of the social, if not political, issues—a thing done deftly by her husband and rather less so by her. Says Mrs. Clinton, "It would be great if we could get kids to postpone any decision about sex until they are over twenty-one." Though perhaps they may be allowed to decide what sex they are, since adolescents, says Mrs. Clinton, "need straight talk about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases to help them deal with the consequences of their decisions." But, she says, "After many years of working with and listening to American adolescents, I don't believe they are ready for sex or its potential consequences."

"I share my husband's belief that 'nothing in the First Amendment converts our public schools into religion-free zones,'" says Mrs. Clinton, and on the next page she endorses the joint Justice Department/Department of Education guidelines on religious activities in the public schools, which state: "Schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach *about* the Bible." It's real old. Its real long. There are Jews in it. Quiz tomorrow.

And on the subject of pedagogics in general, Mrs. Clinton crafts this jewel of equivocation: "I strongly favor promoting choice *among* public schools" (italics *not* in the original).

Mrs. Clinton does her best to steal conservative thunder or, anyway, troglodyte rumblings. She frames herself as wife, mother, and Christian, favors making divorces harder to get, mentions responsibility about every third page, and goes as far as to tell this bald-faced lie: "We reject the utopian view that government can or should protect people from the consequences of personal decisions." CC: Miss Illinois.

Mrs. Clinton doesn't even dislike business, as long as business is done her way. She gives examples of corporate activities that statists can cozy up to. For instance, "A number of our most powerful telecommunications and computer companies have joined forces with the government in a project to connect every classroom in America to the Internet." And she vapors: "Socially minded corporate philosophies are the avenue to future prosperity and social stability."

If a name must be put to these stupid politics, we can consult the *Columbia Encyclopedia* under the heading of that enormous stupidity, fascism: "totalitarian philosophy of government that glorifies state and nation and assigns to the state control over every aspect of national life." Admittedly, the fascism in *It Takes a Village* is of a namby-pamby, eat-your-vegetables kind that doesn't so much glorify the state and nation as pester the dickens out of them. Ethnic groups do not suffer persecution except insofar as a positive self-image is required among women and minorities at all times. And there will be no uniforms other than comfortable, durable clothes on girls. And no concentration camps either, just lots and lots of day care.

Nonetheless, the similitude exists. The *Columbia* article points out that fascism "is obliged to be antitheoretical and frankly opportunistic in order to appeal to many diverse groups." "Elitism" is noted, as is "Fascism's rejection of reason and intelligence and its emphatic emphasis on vision." Featured prominently in the fascist paradigm is "an authoritarian leader who embodies in his [or her!] person the highest ideals of the nation." The only classical fascist element missing from *It Takes a Village* is "social Darwinism." It's been replaced by "social creationism," expressed in such Mrs. Clinton statements as "I have never met a stupid child."

Lest the reader think I exaggerate the First Lady's brown-shirt (though from a New York designer and with nice ruffles) tendencies, let me leave you with a few vignettes from Mrs. Clinton's ideal world:

> At the Washington Beech Community Preschool in Roslindale, Massachusetts, director Ellen Wolpert has children play games like Go Fish and Concentration with a deck of cards adorned with images—men holding babies, women pounding nails, elderly men on ladders, gray-haired women on skateboards . . .
>
> Journalists and news executives have responsibilities too. When violence is newsworthy they should report it, but they should balance it with stories that provide children and adults with positive images of themselves and those around them, taking care not to exacerbate negative stereotypes.
>
> I tried some rice pilaf with lentils, beans, and chick peas with a group of fifth and sixth graders, who not only ate what was served but said they liked it.

"Children have many lessons to share with us," says Mrs. Clinton. And on page 153 of *It Takes a Village* we share a good one:

> When my family moved to Park Ridge, I was four years old and eager to make new friends. Every time I walked out the door, with a bow in my hair and a hopeful look on my face, the neighborhood kids would torment me, pushing me, knocking me down, and teasing me until I burst into tears and ran back in the house. ♦

What George Washington Knew

By Noemie Emery

In 1748 or thereabouts, a surveyor's apprentice on the Virginia Tidewater with ambitions toward social advancement and battlefield glory copied out 110 "Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour, in Company and Conversation" in a small, plain notebook. They came from an English translation of a book of manners compiled by French Jesuits in 1595. George Washington was always civil, and he soon became great. Richard Brookhiser believes the two are connected, and he spends much of his new book, *Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington*, telling us why (Free Press,224 pages, $23).

Illustrations by Neil Shigley

Civility, as Washington learned it, is concern for, and deference to, the interests and feelings of others. Democracy is a system of government that responds to the will of the people, who agree to honor themselves and each other. Civility not only trained Washington to govern, but allowed him to master his ambition and temper. These were the qualities that gave him the power to lead other people, but would, in their raw state, have been dangerous. As a word, "civil" relates to "civilized," which is about taming nature and its dangerous elements. Men who are not dangerous make inadequate leaders, as they cannot control evil. Dangerous men who cannot control themselves become tyrants. A dangerous man who controlled himself, Washington became a true leader—not just a model president but a president-model, a template for the exercise of responsible power. Leaders as different as Andrew Jackson, Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, John Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan have had some of his qualities, which is why they were leaders. Others—as different as John Adams, James Madison, Herbert Hoover, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Jimmy Carter—were bereft of Washington's qualities, and failed.

"Begin with an individual, and before you know it, you find that you have created a type," F. Scott Fitzgerald tells us. "Begin with a type, and you find that you have created—nothing." Beginning with an individual—the insecure, undereducated first son of the second marriage of a marginal planter on the Virginia frontier—Richard Brookhiser has given us a type, a prototype of republican leadership, which all politicians, and voters, should heed. His Washington is a revelation, illuminating not simply his success, but the success and the failure of others. What are the keys—of mind, body, morals—that make some people leaders? Frequently, not what we think.

His Body. A president has to look, and be, dangerous. Without this he cannot do his job, which is, of course, to keep order, by suggesting that those breaking the peace will suffer for doing so. The key to this is leashed ferocity; power under firm control. Force must exist, or intent will not matter. Franklin Roosevelt, who created the safety net, was a relentless hot warrior. Abraham Lincoln is remembered as saintly—the "martyred Christ of the passion play of democracy," murdered, of course, on Good Friday—but he was

Noemie Emery's "Abortion and the Republican Party: A New Approach" appeared in our December 25, 1995, issue. She has published biographies of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton.

ruthless in his pursuit of the Civil War. Since Lyndon Johnson, who was *un*controlled power, Democrats have nominated men who looked as if they could be crossed all too easily. Which is why they have so often lost.

IN ONE OF BROOKHISER'S BEST MOMENTS, HE SHOWS A PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON TO A BODYBUILDER, WHO TELLS HIM, "*NICE* QUADS!"

Washington's mien was a study in discipline: grace taming the massive and powerful body; the iron will tempered by manners and courtesy; the face suggesting "habitual conflict with and mastery of passion" in the compression of the mouth and brow. "Body language" is an apt expression, as is "*figure* of speech." Richard Nixon's awkward gestures and Bill Clinton's softness are clues to their governing styles. By contrast, the physical grace of Reagan and Kennedy suggested men of composure and confidence, who were not rattled by the blows of daily life.

The body is a unit of physical power. It is also a prop that a leader must always direct. As Brookhiser reminds us, Reagan was not the first actor to have served as president; merely the first to have acted for money in films. Reagan's model, Franklin Roosevelt, was a consummate actor, as were Roosevelt's contemporaries, Churchill and de Gaulle. Washington, a devotee of the theater, also made a drama of governing style. He spent much of the Revolutionary War carefully creating false impressions as to the size of his army, its whereabouts, and what it intended to do. He designed his own uniforms, and wore them effectively. Leaders of men tend to share in his magic, a blending of power and verve. Teddy Roosevelt had his athleticism, Eisenhower the easy assurance that comes from command at high levels. Franklin Roosevelt had wasted legs, but what the public saw was the great, handsome head and radiant smile, the heavy muscles of the arms and shoulders, the massive upper body strength. In one of Brookhiser's best moments, he shows a portrait of Washington to a bodybuilder, who tells him, "*Nice* quads!" The Father of His Country had a great body. Seekers of power should seek out a gym.

His Cast of Mind. Our first president was also the first to doubt his own mental credentials for holding the office; and the first to have those doubts confirmed by other men. Correctly, he called his education "defective." Thomas Jefferson said he read "little." John Adams called him "too illiterate, unlearned, unread for his station and reputation." He himself described the George Masons, James Madisons, Alexander Hamiltons, and John Jays with whom he consorted as having "abler heads" than his own. He was also the first in a long line of men, from Andrew Jackson to Ronald Reagan, who were neither intellectual nor well-educated, but who understood the office and succeeded in it. His successor, John Adams, was the first of an even longer line of mentally adept and expensively educated presidents who did not understand the office, and failed. Ending his formal education before the age of 16, Washington was a much better president than Adams; a better president than Jefferson, who was a good one; much better than Madison, who was a disappointment. The only man greater than he, Abraham Lincoln, had even less formal schooling: Between them, the two greatest men in our history barely passed sixth grade. Woodrow Wilson, the only true intellectual to reign in this century, was a long-term failure, a victim of the rigidity that did in Herbert Hoover. Bill Clinton was an academic star and Rhodes scholar. Academic skill does not indicate political leadership. But if it does not, then what does?

Washington was followed by Adams, better educated and (in his own eyes) more brilliant, who did not shine in the office. Kennedy was followed by two brilliant men of long experience, who disgraced the office and were driven from it. Reagan was followed by a Phi Beta Kappa from Yale who was intermittently presidential and by a Rhodes Scholar and star student who does not "get" the office at all.

Adams resented Washington and denigrated him as an illiterate poseur, "the greatest actor of the presidency who ever lived." Similar complaints about Reagan came from frustrated Democrats, as they had come from John Kennedy's critics too, who traced his successes to nice teeth and good hair. Academics attribute the popular allegiance to Reagan and Kennedy to their cosmetic attractions; FDR's success to charm and swagger; Teddy Roosevelt's to dramatic effect. Brookhiser, who knows more than they do, knows that looks, swagger, and drama are part of the package. Few leaders succeed without physical drama. Lincoln was a man of depth and reflection, but his campaign posters showed him bare-armed, splitting rails.

A leader, Brookhiser suggests, does not need many ideas, and they need not be original. But they need to be big. Brookhiser knows something else as well: that physical presence makes its maximum impact when it expresses what the leader is thinking and when that is what the country is about. Politicians explain many

small programs. Leaders explain big ideas. Washington, Lincoln, and FDR led the country in war. Reagan and Kennedy set the terms of the Cold War. Lincoln and Kennedy explained civil rights. Our three great unlettered presidents—Washington, Jackson, and Lincoln—shared one big idea, an idea so large and basic it can be summed up in one word: union.

Washington had two other big ideas. One, held by everyone then in his government, was that rights were inherent and derived from Providence. The other, held only by some of them, was that a strong, efficient, and effective government, willing and ready to enforce structures of order, was central to the stability in which human rights flourish. Washington understood that freedom and power were inseparable. Ronald Reagan, too, understood that power was the only thing that could ensure peace. Reagan's military build-up was meant to bring peace without bloodshed, just as Washington's deployment of overwhelming force to disperse the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 was meant to express his conviction that the enemy of freedom was not law, but anarchy. Washington understood the synergy of freedom and power, as Reagan understood that of power and peace. The finer intellects of their time scoffed at both men.

What does this say about the mind of the leader? That it may be less crucial to have trained intelligence than to have the right *kind* of mind—a mind that is perceptive, thematic, conceptual, and often imaginative. It is a finely tuned judge of ideas and of people. It is conditioned to forests, not trees. And it knows its own limitations. Washington's "consciousness of a defective education" made him willing to listen to others, if not to believe their nostrums. Intellectuals, on the other hand, have been told all their lives how clever they are, and tend to believe it; they think that there is little they do not know. They know many things, but there's no guarantee they know a thing about the big things—the things George Washington knew.

His Moral Sense. Correctly, Brookhiser puts Washington's moral sense at the core of his power: "If there is one aspect of Washington's character that was more important than the other two, it was his concern for his civility and reputation, which tamed and smoothed his natural endowments, and brought his ideas into daily life. Morals integrated him, and held his being together, even as they connected him with his fellow Americans. . . . Without his physique, and the threat of his temper, he would have been inconsiderable; without his ideas, he might have been passive and directionless. If he had lacked any of the three, or possessed any to a lesser degree, he could not have been the Father of His Country."

If his physique commanded awe and deference, and his ideas summoned loyalty, his moral sense supplied the last critical level, by which he justified and legitimized his power and office. Johnson and Nixon had powerful minds, and could command fear in others. It was the "credibility gap" opened by both of them that in the end swallowed them whole. A president is expected to be ruthless, and allowed to be devious, if his fundamental objectives are seen to be valid and selfless. The devious nature of Franklin Roosevelt was not held against him. Iran-contra did not destroy Reagan, as he was thought to be acting in the interests of others. Johnson and Nixon were suspected of lying to save their political skins, and it did them in.

> A PRESIDENT IS EXPECTED TO BE RUTHLESS, AND ALLOWED TO BE DEVIOUS, IF HIS FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES ARE VALID AND SELFLESS.

Washington was ambitious (in youth, *very* ambitious) and obsessed with his personal standing. Fundamentally, he was a moral person, as the focus of his life was not himself. He was trained to respect, and to consider, others. He was civil because he was civilized, politic because he was polite. This training was symbolized by, if it did not begin with, those "Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour." Other

writers have treated this as a quaint sort of exercise, one that showed Washington's unworldly nature. Brookhiser knows it was not. "The focus," he writes, "was established in the very first rule: 'Every action done in public ought to be done with some sign of respect for those that are present.'"

The "Rules" were Washington's primer in politics, a "system of courtesy appropriate to equals and near-equals." Democracy is based on consideration for the rights and opinions of others, courtesy on the highest of possible levels. "When the company for whom decent behavior was to be performed expanded to the nation," Brookhiser writes, "Washington was ready." Ready to be a republican leader, a plausible chief of free men.

"The way men behave in polite society is related to how they order society," Brookhiser tells us. "Politeness" and "politics" share one common root. Exquisitely courteous, Washington was loved by the country, an act of reciprocal courtesy. Conversely, the men who have gotten the back of the hand from the American people have been—shall we say—impolite. Johnson was infamous for forcing interviews with fastidious members of his administration while using the toilet. Nixon used scatological language to describe his own appointees. Both also set records for using public funds to embellish their residences. It stands to reason that both were careless with the truth, with the Constitution, and sometimes with the lives of others. They did not show due "respect for those who are present." People sensed this, and came to detest them. They turned on them. And they turned them out.

And what of the Clintons? Where do they fit in? They came, let us remember, to "put people first." Which people? Let's see. Since assuming office, they have fired innocents, libeled friends, expected associates to take the fall for them. They got rid of the Travel Office staff to help friends make money and then, to make themselves look better, defamed the staff. Clinton nominated a close personal friend, Lani Guinier, to a sensitive post in the Justice Department without checking her writings and then, when the nomination became controversial, dropped not only it, but her. "What many people found most strange," wrote the *New York Times*'s Maureen Dowd, "was that once Mr. Clinton dropped Ms. Guinier, he never called her again, not even when they were both on vacation, . . . not in all the months since." The Clintons have sent aides to face hostile congressional committees, leaving those aides open to perjury charges even as they have been forced to impoverish themselves. Last year, Joe Klein writes in *Newsweek*, Mrs. Clinton's chief of staff wept on the stand explaining that she had spent more than $140,000 in legal expenses. That was in August. Since then, Maggie Williams has testified more times, and may face serious legal problems. Soon, her legal fees may equal those of Billy Dale.

And now that the Travel Office staffers have been cleared in court trials, friends of the Clintons continue to defame them, to make their employers look good. Of course. This is standard procedure. This is their m.o. It is one more step to build up what Klein calls the "Body Count," the pile of corpses, literal and otherwise, that surrounds the First Couple, the testament to their true politesse. "Every time Mr. Clinton slips into something more convenient, others suffer," Dowd has written. "What is surprising . . . giving his hugging-and-sharing political style, is the absence of sentimentality when he cuts people loose." Quoth Mark Shields, a Democrat: "Loyalty goes only one way in this White House." Mickey Kaus told *New Republic* readers that "Clinton is inconsiderate. . . . His campaign was habitually late . . . requiring audiences to wait for hours. Even as president, he makes kids shiver waiting for him in the White House rose garden."

These are small matters. But the principle works in the big. As in what Martin Nolan in the *Boston Globe* calls the "lingering toothache in Clinton's character, . . . that slow motion pursuit by his Arkansas draft board of the young Rhodes Scholar," which ended, of course, in successful evasion, after he had expressed the desire to "protect myself from physical harm." Citing the self-importance of the boomer crowd, Nolan then posits, "Many of Clinton's generation avoided the

draft, not simply out of fear or prudence, but because they considered themselves too important to serve." Quite. What the Clintons don't get, and never have gotten, is where the real problem lies. It is not that he protested the war or diminished by one the body count of the armed forces. It is that *he sent someone else.* Someone else without the savvy to finesse the system. Someone else without friends or connections. Someone else from Hope without patrons to help him. One of the poor or deprived. Someone's name may be on the Wall in Washington, someone may be in a veterans' hospital, so that Bill Clinton could safely network at Oxford and continue to schmooze his way upward.

These are not people who Put People First. These are people who put themselves first and others a very poor second. Simply put, they are not respected because they do not respect others. If they truly wish to better their ratings in the polls, as in Heaven, they might seek out a copy of the "Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour, in Company and Conversation" and commit it to memory. And read Richard Brookhiser's neat little book. ♦

Why Schools Don't Dare To Discipline the Disabled

By Stuart Anderson

In a Virginia school, a gang of five students assaults a lone teenager in the hallway. One of the attackers uses a meat hook. Three of the gang are kicked out of school but the other two—because they are in special education—are not. At another Virginia school, six students show up with a loaded .357 Magnum; five are suspended but the sixth, thanks to a "writing disability," gets to stay in school. In New Hampshire, a 17-year-old pushes a fellow student up against the wall outside the school cafeteria, presses a starter pistol into the boy's stomach, and says, "I'm going to kill you." The 17-year-old later tells the principal that he was just "playing around." The principal does not expel him "because he was in special education."

Such are the perverse results of a federal law known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Passed in 1975 to guarantee a "free appropriate public education" for children with disabilities, IDEA, in part due to the Clinton administration's interpretation of it, has also helped keep lawyers active and made schools more dangerous. Although the law did not specifically address discipline, in effect it has enshrined into federal law a double standard for discipline that defies common sense and leaves children, particularly other special education students, to face dangerous peers who are above the law. This has been the practical consequence of the premise that has guided implementation and enforcement of the law—namely, that without federal intervention, public schools would try to exclude kids with disabilities. What's known as the "stay-put" provision therefore prevents school districts from removing a disabled child without parental or court approval.

The case of 7-year-old Jimmy Peters in Huntington Beach, Calif., illustrates how the myriad federal rules and regulations on special education can tie the hands of teachers and school administrators. In the spring of 1994, the Ocean View School District told Jimmy's father that the boy, who was becoming disruptive and had hit other students, needed to be removed from his kindergarten class and placed temporarily in a special day class where he could be observed by a special education teacher. Jimmy's father has never permitted the school district to assess the boy, so the exact nature of Jimmy's disability has never been agreed on.

A short time later, Jimmy hit a classroom aide and bit the teacher, and in a final incident, he attempted to hit another child with a chair. This time, the school felt it had to act. However, under the U.S. Department of Education's rules, a school needs a court order to transfer a special education student for more than 10 days without the parents' consent. If the parents refuse, the school must allow the child to stay put until

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a formal hearing is held. In Jimmy's case, school officials believed going to court was their only choice. "In that type of setting, psychologically it has an effect upon the children seeing the teacher and the aide being hit or bit," says Jim Hemsley, West Orange County director for special education. "He's basically a disruptive force in that classroom. The best way to describe it is you had a classroom of 30 [with a teacher], and you had a classroom of one with an instructional aide. He was doing things independently everywhere in the classroom—physically, emotionally, and mentally." Yet without the father's permission, administrators' hands were tied. "If the federal law would have given us some flexibility we could have moved him temporarily into another environment, worked with him, and then transitioned him back," says Ronald Wenkart, general counsel for the Orange County Department of Education.

CLAIMING A SON OR DAUGHTER NEEDS TO BE PLACED IN SPECIAL EDUCATION HAS PROVED AN EFFECTIVE TACTIC TO DELAY OR PREVENT EXPULSION.

A lengthy court fight has ensued. After an Orange County Superior Court judge sided with the school and issued a temporary restraining order to remove Jimmy to a special day class, his father's lawyer requested and received a federal court hearing. However, the classroom teacher whom Jimmy bit refused to appear at the hearing. She had begun receiving workers compensation for stress and declined to testify, based on her doctor's recommendation. Without the teacher's testimony, the federal judge ruled the school had not demonstrated Jimmy was a danger, so he was returned to class.

Parents of other kindergarten children picketed the school to protest Jimmy's return. Parents of 12 of his classmates removed their kids from school. After one day, Jimmy's father pulled him out of the school to be taught at home. Meanwhile, the school district and the father wrangled in court.

Jimmy's father offered to settle the case if a series of demands was met by the district. He wanted Jimmy in a regular classroom and asked that the school hire his son's babysitter as a classroom aide. He wanted the babysitter, not the teacher, to have the authority to opt Jimmy in or out of any classroom activity. He wanted the school to buy Jimmy two computers, one for home and another for school, each with a color monitor. He wanted unlimited class visitation for himself but would not allow any other parents to visit the classroom. The school refused to settle.

The school district's most recent federal complaint is pending; over a two-year period Ocean View has spent $85,000 on the case, though it expects its legal fees to reach at least $150,000. "This one father, because of the way IDEA has been interpreted in the courts, and at the [U.S. Department of Education's] Office of Special Education Programs, has literally been trying to pull apart this school district," says Hemsley.

Congress and the Clinton administration have proposals to amend and reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act this year. The administration is a booster of the law, as are disability-rights

William Bramhall

activists and a number of lawmakers in both parties. Among its critics are GOP Sen. Slade Gorton of Washington and conservative House Republicans such as Duke Cunningham of California. The discipline provisions are only one problem with the law, they say. Another is the over-identification of children as disabled. Since federal funding is allocated based on the number of special-education students in a district, schools have an incentive to place children in special-ed classes.

But the restrictions on discipline have become the most controversial aspect of IDEA. "The initial intention of the law was to keep the children in school," says Wenkart. "I don't think they contemplated there would be discipline problems or they wouldn't have written it the way they did." However, the program's biggest defender, Sen. Tom Harkin, says he would "stand in front of the schoolhouse door" to block reforms relating to discipline. The Iowa Democrat says he fears "unintended consequences."

The disciplinary loophole of the disability law is now commonly exploited by creative parents and their dangerous children. Last February, a senior at El Capitan High School in San Diego County brought a gun to school and was suspended. Before the school could enforce the suspension, the boy's family hired a lawyer, who asserted that the school could not suspend him because he had a disability.

This was the first the school had heard of it. The student had no history of disability, nor had the parents ever requested that he be evaluated. The judge, while ruling that the school had to readmit the young man, allowed that IDEA "can be used as a manipulative tool to undercut a school's ability to discipline students and, frankly, I think that these are the kind of situations that can cause [other] parents, if they have any money whatsoever, to remove their children from a public school."

Last June, in testimony before the House Early Childhood, Youth and Families Subcommittee, Rebecca Sargent, president-elect of the California School Boards Association, noted that the state has seen a doubling in cases where parents and their attorneys seek referrals to special education only after a student is about to be expelled. "It has resulted in situations where the students who committed the violent acts are returned to sit in the same classroom with those who were victims of their behavior."

Claiming a son or daughter needs to be placed in special education has proved to be an effective tactic to delay or prevent expulsions and suspensions. "The network among special education people is extremely good," says Sargent, "among parents, among advocates, among attorneys. They get very good information and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that, except that there are many parents who are not as honest as others, and they choose to use a rule or a law that's designed to protect youngsters with special needs. They abuse it. I wouldn't call it a scam. It is an abuse of process."

In one California case, the parents of a student caught selling drugs accused school officials of "missing" his disability and wanted him placed in special ed. This effectively foreclosed police involvement. Although some say the case does not set a precedent, a judge in Tennessee even ruled that a high school overstepped its authority when it called police to arrest a special education student. "It's pretty clear that, by gaming the legal rules, parents can effectively hamstring school officials under IDEA," says Michael Heise, an assistant professor at the Indiana University School of Law.

Even when parents do not abuse the system, IDEA forces schools to make bizarre distinctions in meting out punishment. At the public school in Fairfax County, Va., where one of the six students involved with a .357 Magnum had been labeled "learning disabled" due to weak writing ability, an extensive review found no relationship between poor writing and gunslinging. Yet in light of federal policy the student was not kicked out and "later bragged to teachers and students at the school that he could not be expelled," according to a deposition filed with the state by Fairfax County school officials.

Judith Heumann, the Clinton administration's assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services, insists that "there is nothing that precludes a principal from expelling a child from school if there is an appropriate reason for doing that under IDEA. What we state is that if the child is expelled from school they cannot cease educational services."

> A STUDENT WITH A WRITING DISABILITY "BRAGGED TO TEACHERS AND STUDENTS AT THE SCHOOL THAT HE COULD NOT BE EXPELLED."

"I think that's nonsensical," says John Cafferky, a Fairfax, Va., attorney who serves as outside counsel to several Virginia school districts. He notes that expulsion typically means ceasing educational services. "When a school cannot expel a student who was centrally involved with a loaded .357 Magnum short of

getting the school system involved in a federal lawsuit . . . and when the student crows about it later, this is where the rubber meets the road in terms of federal policy. Does it affect student behavior? Sure it does. Do the kids know someone got away with something? Yes, they sure do."

Efforts to toughen IDEA's disciplinary rules have produced only minimal reform. A special education student once risked no more than 10 days' removal from a classroom for carrying a gun in a public school. The 1994 Improving America's Schools Act pushed that to 45 days. But the Department of Education still requires school districts to give gun-toting special education students an alternative placement during the 45-day suspension. A special education student who wielded a knife, on the other hand, would not be affected under these "tighter" procedures, since the disciplinary provisions of the 1994 reform apply only to guns.

"Making a Good Law Better" is how the Clinton administration labels its reform proposals for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. But while the administration recommends expanding the discipline procedures to include weapons other than guns and would allow hearing officers instead of judges to rule in some discipline cases, it has not ceased insisting that states provide an appropriate education to special education students who are expelled for disciplinary reasons. And the Education Department has fought states, most prominently Virginia, that stray from this permissive regime.

In December 1993, the Clinton Education Department decided that Virginia must pay for and continue alternative special education for expelled special education students, even those who had sold drugs or assaulted other students. The administration threatened to withhold $58 million in special education assistance earmarked for the state. Virginia contested this action, noting that its expulsion policy had gone unchallenged during the Bush and Reagan years. Last April 1995, a hearing officer chosen by Secretary of Education Richard Riley ruled against Virginia, arguing that the law needed "to be read broadly to effectuate its purposes."

Virginia state officials argued that the Department of Education could not produce any studies to support its contention that expulsion or long-term suspension creates "severe" and "long-term" consequences for special education students. In fact, Virginia educators testified that not expelling or suspending them can be devastating to the prospects of special education students. Undisciplined, not held accountable for their acts, the students will fail to learn community values and expectations.

Rep. Robert Scott, a Virginia Democrat, opposes his state's stance on special education and discipline. At a congressional hearing, he told one witness that he was glad her state "didn't throw youngsters out on the street" as Virginia did. But state officials say this is a caricature of their position. Expulsion is often a wake-up call for both students and parents, who must pay for private schooling. Current federal policy, the state argues, not only creates a double standard, it "promotes an anti-community 'badge of honor' (misbehavior without consequences) that inner city schools are fighting to eliminate." Virginia has appealed the Education Department's ruling in federal court.

VIRGINIA OFFICIALS FEAR THAT STUDENTS WHO ARE *NOT* SUSPENDED WHEN THEY DESERVE TO BE WILL FAIL TO LEARN COMMUNITY VALUES.

It is an open question whether horror stories from across the country will persuade Congress to change the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act this year. Few lawmakers want to court accusations that they have an animus against disabled children. "Any time we tried to change [special education policy] we would be overwhelmed," says Michael Horowitz, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and general counsel at the Office of Management and Budget from 1981-86. Federal funding for special education, he says, "goes to well-organized and middle class service providers who know how to work the government."

In the meantime, Jimmy Peters's father is still pressing his case. And to be fair, Jimmy was accused only of biting a teacher and attempting to hit another student with a chair. In Washington state, a first grader carried a large screwdriver to school, held it to the throat of a classmate, and threatened to plunge it in. Under IDEA, the kid was returned to class. A fourth grade girl, also in Washington, carried a knife in her backpack that she used to extort lunch money from other students. She pulled it out on at least one occasion. When the school tried to take action against the girl, her parents said that she had been in special education at a previous school, though there were no records to support this. But in the upside-down world of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, that was enough to land her right back in class, presumably without the knife. ♦

Updike's American Faith

By James K. Glassman

John Updike is an odd duck among novelists: a bourgeois golfer, a non-dove during Vietnam, a conservative who writes beautifully about sex, and, most of all, a believer. "I was, by upbringing, a Lutheran," he wrote in his 1989 memoir, *Self-Consciousness*. "Faith alone, faith without any false support of works, justified the Lutheran believer."

The first protagonist of his new novel is a Presbyterian, the Rev. Clarence Wilmot. One hot late spring day in Paterson, N.J., Wilmot suddenly "felt the last particles of his faith leave him." A graduate of Princeton Seminary, Wilmot is an intellectual who read the doubters but still believed—and then, many years later, suddenly doesn't: "The fault was in himself. Not Darwin or Nietzsche or Ingersoll or scientific materialism with all its thousandfold modern persuasive corroborations was to blame for his collapse, this invasion of his soul by the void: The failure was his own, an effeminate yielding where a virile strength was required. Faith is a force of will whereby a Christian defines himself against the temptations of an age."

These temptations were great, even in 1910, when the novel begins. Wilmot leaves the church, becomes a half-hearted encyclopedia salesman, falls ill—and we're off on an eight-decade family saga across America from Paterson to Basingstoke, Delaware, to the hills of Hollywood and the ski slopes of Colorado.

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The temptation to which Wilmot surrenders, the temptation to disbelieve, may be due to God's isolation from America—an idea that has concerned Updike from the very beginning of his career as a writer. His new novel, his seventeenth, is titled *In the Beauty of the Lilies* (Knopf, 528 pages, $25.95). Updike has alluded to Julia Ward Howe's phrase before, in a passage in *Self-Consciousness* in which he discusses his early writing: "*In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea*—this odd and uplifting line from among the many odd lines of 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' seemed to me, as I set out, to summarize what I had to say about America, to offer itself as the title of a continental magnum opus of which all my books, no matter how many, would be mere installments, mere starts at the hymning of this great roughly rectangular country severed from Christ by the breadth of the sea."

In the Beauty of the Lilies is, in some ways, the fulfillment of a lifetime project, a novel about American faith—about losing it or ignoring it or thinking oneself satisfied without it. The subject matter is certainly ample grist for a miller of Updike's prodigious talent, and it's a good novel. But it's not an entirely satisfying one, partly because Updike has little to say about faith that's new and powerful, partly because this book (unlike the Rabbit novels) is more contrived than passionate, and partly because the multi-generational saga doesn't seem to be Updike's best medium—there are too many diffuse main characters.

In the Beauty of the Lilies is really four distinct books. In the first, Clarence Wilmot loses his faith—a deeply textured, dark and wonderful tale which, doubled in length, would have made a very fine novel on its own. In the second, Clarence's son Teddy moves to Basingstoke, wounded by his father's collapse and afraid of life (like an Anne Tyler character) but finding his place as a mailman. In the third, Teddy's beautiful daughter Essie leaves Delaware and becomes a movie star. This is the thinnest part of the book, begging unfortunate comparison to Gore Vidal. Finally, Essie's son Clark bums around Hollywood and Colorado, then finds his calling in an apocalyptic cult led by a David Koresh-like religious fanatic who brings the theme full circle, reminding his followers as the police close in, "Faith, faith is the jewel, the pearl of great price."

Genes pull the stories together, but the movies provide the real glue. The book begins with Mary Pickford making a film for D.W. Griffith in Paterson. Later, encyclopedia salesman Clarence deserts "the sunny harsh streets of door-to-door rejection for the shadowy interiors of those moving-picture houses that, like museums of tawdry curiosities, opened their doors during the day." Teddy's wife-to-be is described as having eyes with "bigger whites than those, of ordinary girls: they were the eyes of the movie stars Gloria Swanson or Lillian Gish on posters outside the Roxie." And Essie (renamed "Alma DeMott" by Harry Cohn, real-life tyrant of Columbia Pictures during Hollywood's golden age) makes movies by the dozen.

In the Hollywood section, Updike gets star-struck himself and wanders off-course. He indulges himself making up movie titles. Essie appears in *Safe at Your Peril*, *Colored Entrance*, *Cream Cheese and Caviar* (with Paul Newman), and *Uh-Oh, My Show Is Slipping* (with Jerry Lewis and Jack Lemmon, between whom we're told there was "an utter lack of chemistry"). She's considered for "a television adaptation of *Memento Mori*," Muriel Spark's fine novel about old folks. Updike insinuates Essie into real movies and has her steamed up because she wasn't "considered for the Natalie Wood part in *The Searchers*." She makes films with Gary Cooper, Bing Crosby (a genius for whom Updike shows the proper respect), and Clark Gable, who "had loved Lombard; in a Hollywood that had matched him with its every giantess from Jean Harlow to Ava Gardner, Lombard, all soft gay golden toughness, a foul-mouthed publicity hound and frenetic practical joker, had been his heart's match," etc., etc.

Essie's wandering son Clark—who, like his grandfather, may have deserved a whole novel of his own—can be forgiven for not being movie-obsessed like his relatives: His mom was on location all the time and generally considered him a nuisance. But Updike gives him the best movie line of all, spoken in his head, during his cult's fiery demise: "He heard a noise, soft but pointed, over where the cups and plates used to be: a cup settling on a saucer or a twig snapping in the fire or the bolt of a rifle being stealthily socketed. *Go ahead and shoot. You'll be doing me a favor*." That's Bogart, of course, in *Casablanca*. And Clark, finding the faith that Clarence lost, is consumed.

"Then," writes Updike, "there was no more pain, but for the briefest burning edge, like the crinkly orange margin that consumes the paper of a cigarette in advance of the growing tobacco ash."

It's such a pleasure to watch Updike at work that it almost doesn't matter what he's doing. Here's his description of a chair lift, geared during a busy day to move too quickly: "The skier in the middle, with no sidebar to grab on to, was especially threatened; three times that morning some little kid failed to get his ass in his slick Gore-Tex jumpsuit up on the seat in time and went sprawling in the slush here at the base, headfirst in the thousand bucks' worth of flashy equipment his parents poured all over him like Technicolor paint."

And ordnance: "The Ruger's rear sight was an intricate leaf shape, the front sight a beaded ramp that seemed to Esau, waving the barrel through the window, to swing into its target like a ball of mercury popping to the bottom of a cup."

And more tobacco: "He snorted, and hot cigarette ash topped into his gray chest hair, sending up a scent of singe." And more scents: "It was strange, to be again in a church—its spiky varnished woodwork, its warm haunted smell of flowers and wax and coal-gas and dust."

And old Jared, in a line with almost too much virtuosity: "His hand on his knee was like tobacco leaves wrapped around chicken bones."

But this is a book about faith, not language, a book about America's estrangement from the Christ born across the sea and its yearning for Him. If Teddy hadn't been so disappointed with God for beating his father down, we can conclude, he might have lived a less constricted life. And if Essie had embraced her faith more forcefully, she might have gone through fewer husbands, created better art, loved her son.

The character who speaks the book's theme most clearly is the blustery but charitable entrepreneur Mr. Dearholt, pillar of Clarence's church. When an Italian immigrant woman complains that hard work in the silk mills killed her husband, Dearholt protests,

Chas Fagan

John Updike

"'Work is the way of the country, my good lady. Those afraid of work should have stayed home. . . . We have cleared the way for you! . . . Am I overstepping, Reverend? I mean everything I say kindly, to encourage *all* of my fellow Americans. Courage and faith, that's all we need. *Faith* . . . "

So far away from God, this is a country whose creed requires faith. "My era was too ideologically feeble to wrest [my faith] from me," Updike wrote in *Self-Consciousness*. The current era, where a certain noxious ideology pervades the academy and the pulpit, may be another matter entirely. ♦

Books

Kingsolver of All Media

By Jessica Gavora

In 1991, as the novelist Barbara Kingsolver marched outside the Tucson federal building to protest America's involvement in the Persian Gulf war, a man sped by in a pickup truck and screamed, "Hey Bitch, love it or leave it!" Kingsolver, whose anti-war animus had already driven her to rip yellow ribbons off car antennas, obliged her heckler. She ran off to Spain to ride out what she called the "clamor of war worship" that had taken hold in the States.

Kingsolver herself has become the object of literary cult worship among a multiplying sect of young, white, mostly female readers. They are hooked on her soft, multicultural tales of strong women in strange circumstances. Still, ask one of them about her self-expatriation during the war, and you're likely to be met with surprise, if not disbelief. Like devotees of daytime soap stars, Kingsolver's fans identify her with her fictional heroines: She is their girlfriend, their confidant. But what would they think of the unmediated agitprop of the real Kingsolver at Ladies Night Out?

Kingsolver is an unreconstructed leftist. But her first rule of writing fiction, she told the *Arizona Republic*, is that in the U.S. "you're not allowed to mix art and politics." To do so is to risk the censorship that the American establishment imposes on "cultural workers" who dare to question prevailing national passions. In her nonfiction, Kingsolver labels the U.S. soldiers in Desert Storm war criminals and baby killers; but she is cagier in her novels. There, she conveys her message by stealth, layering it under easy, flowing prose, engaging characters, and a biting wit. Though her politics are radical, her aesthetics are quaintly didactic. "The artist's maverick responsibility," she writes in a new collection of essays entitled *High Tide in Tucson* (HarperCollins, 320 pages, $22), "is sometimes to sugarcoat the bitter pill and slip it down our gullet, telling us what we didn't think we wanted to know."

Artificially sweetening her bitter political medicine has paid off for Kingsolver. Since 1988, three of her feel-good, eco-feminist novels—*The Bean Trees*, *Animal Dreams*, and *Pigs in Heaven*—have become best-sellers.

Once in paperback, her books stay in print and continue to sell. Kingsolver's publisher, HarperCollins, boasts that she has had combined paperback fiction sales of 1.5 million. That's a lot of recycled paper. What's more, Kingsolver has built up her following largely by word-of-mouth, almost entirely outside the "literary-industrial complex." Independent booksellers, whose customers tend to be particularly receptive to her multicultural, New Age message, love her. She packs their customers in at her frequent signings and readings, spending time to talk with fans and linger over autographs.

It's not that her novels aren't political—they're full of descriptions of the rapaciousness of Western culture, paeans to Mother Earth, and some not-so-subtle disparagements of men. Two of them deal with a deep dilemma for the politically correct: Can a single white mother adopt an Indian child, taking her off the reservation and into the white world? Or is she denying the child her cultural heritage and continuing the cultural genocide of white against Native American?

Her politics are consciously inclusive; the aim of the novels is to (as they say) bring us together. Kingsolver's characters are not crusaders but ordinary people made heroes because they battle forces larger than they. Her protagonists are all women—single women, mostly—yet they are not man-haters, and they retain their sense of humor. Her villains are distant, ubiquitous forces—corporations intent on exploiting workers and raping the land, or governments bent on oppressing the working class. There are no unhappy endings.

Success seems to have emboldened Barbara Kingsolver. In *High Tide in Tucson,* her first major work of nonfiction, she dispenses with the soft focus she uses in her fiction to blur the sharp edges of her politics. In interviews publicizing the book, as well as in the essays them-

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selves, she has become more direct and less artful in packaging her message. Above all, she seems relieved. The weight of her art has been lifted: She can finally speak her mind.

And if Kingsolver the novelist is a gentle allegorist, Kingsolver the essayist is a screechy polemicist. She has a long list of grievances—everything from the Contras to private property—but she reserves special ire for the "information industry." The media, she charges, are feeding Americans a steady diet of empty news calories. She'd like us to sink our teeth into something more nutritious, albeit less tasty. The U.S. role in Latin America, for instance. "Few U.S. citizens are aware that our government has routinely engineered assassinations of democratically elected heads of state in places like Chile and Guatemala, and replaced them with such monstrous confederates as Augusto Pinochet and Castillo Armas," she writes. "Why do those dictators' names fail even to ring a bell in most red-blooded American heads? Possibly because our heads are too crowded with names like O.J. and Tonya."

Unlike the New York publishing houses she berates for turning away Ramsey Clark's accounting of alleged U.S. Gulf war crimes even as they eagerly embrace O.J.'s musings from jail, Kingsolver takes her role in the information industry very seriously. And she sees limitless possibilities for enlightening her fellow citizens. For men, she is the wise post-feminist teacher. "Through art, a woman can give a male reader the unparalleled athletic accomplishment of childbirth, or the annihilation of being raped," she writes in *High Tide in Tucson*. "If every man knew both those things, I would expect the world to change tomorrow." For taxpayers, she is the voice of conscience: "Public debate dickers and rages over our obligation to fund the welfare system—a contribution of about $25 a year from each taxpayer on average, for keeping the poorest among us alive. How can we haggle over the size of this meager life preserver, while shiploads of money for death sail by unchallenged? What religion of humankind could bless the travesty of the U.S. federal budget?"

Barbara Kingsolver

Kingsolver looks at America and sees a nation in need of a new set of national stories—and she'd like to be the one to write them. Our old ones, grounded as they are in the glorification of the individual, have accomplished their objective. They gave us the courage we needed to populate the West, conquer the great rivers, and bring the indigenous peoples to heel. But somewhere along the line, in celebrating the individual, we lost our sense of community.

Reconstructing our sense of community for Kingsolver means deconstructing and discarding those old myths. Foremost among these is the American dream. The great hoax of the American experiment is that it has legitimized wealth and stigmatized poverty. In other words, the flip side of our celebration of Horatio Alger is our demonization of the welfare mother. The notion that anybody can make it in America with a little brains and a lot of hard work "allows us to perpetuate this huge gulf between the well-off and the desperately poor. If you fall through the cracks you must be stupid or lazy or both."

Particularly vulnerable to this trap are single women, especially single mothers. Although Kingsolver writes eloquently of the self-discovery of parenthood, she, like the First Lady, believes that parenting is a communal responsibility. This is a truism that virtually every country has managed to grasp except for the U.S., which she compares unfavorably to Cuba and Slovenia in its treatment of children. "If it takes a village to raise a child," she writes, "our kids are knocking on a lot of doors where nobody seems to be home."

It doesn't really matter if Heather has one mommy or two, or whether she has a mommy at all. The only parent that matters is government, and the current government has produced what she calls an "anti-child political culture." And you, dear reader, must

remember to do your part by always voting to increase taxes and school spending. "If you're earning enough to pay taxes at all, I promise, the school needs those few bucks more than you do," she writes.

And apparently, Kingsolver feels that, for now at least, America needs *her* more than Spain does. She decided to return home after the Gulf war, she says, because "I couldn't imagine criticizing only from the distance." The man in the pickup truck outside the federal building in Tucson taught her a valuable lesson. "'Love it or leave it' is a coward's slogan," she told *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* recently. "I think a more honorable slogan is 'Love it and stay,' 'Love it and get it right.'"

Or, perhaps, her third choice: "'Love it and never shut up.'" Although she promises to return to fiction, *High Tide in Tucson* is selling faster than Kingsolver's novels. Is this a sign that America is ready for Barbara Kingsolver, uncensored? Maybe, but until her message takes hold, Kingsolver's fidelity to her native land appears to be tenuous. *High Tide*'s success, she told the *Arizona Republic*, "gives me faith that this so-called mandate, this right-wing revival that's doing such horrible things in this country, maybe isn't so all-inclusive. If I had to believe that the people in this state and in this country really supported that, I would have to leave." ♦

Television

Debauch Delayed

By John Podhoretz

Last week on *Friends*, the NBC situation comedy that has launched a thousand magazine covers, the star-crossed friendship between the cute nebbish Ross (David Schwimmer) and the adorable Jewish-American princess Rachel (Jennifer Aniston) finally erupted into romance after almost two seasons of waiting. First, Ross loved Rachel, but Rachel had just fled from marriage with a suburban dentist and was more inclined to quickie affairs with Italian hunks who barely spoke English. Next, Rachel loved Ross, but Ross had given up on her and fallen for somebody else.

Ever since *Moonlighting* and *Cheers* thought it up simultaneously in the early 1980s, the most prevalent romantic arrangement on American television has been unfulfilled, unconsummated love. There have been literally dozens of sitcoms in which the lead characters are clearly wild for each other but never go to bed, and the plot device has turned up on literally every ensemble TV drama in the past 10 years. There have been more uncoupled couples on television than married couples. There have been more longing glances exchanged than deep-throated kisses. There has been more jealousy expressed when one of the two participants in these unfulfilled romances decides to date somebody else.

What does it all mean? Part of the answer comes from daytime soap operas, which feature a host of characters who come together and spin apart over a great many years. Soap operas have the most loyal audience in television, and the key to sustaining a soap opera, said Claire Labine, one of the form's leading lights, was to follow this simple formula: "Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em wait."

But there is far more to it than this. It's no accident that the unconsummated romance made its debut around the time that AIDS became a national obsession. The AIDS scare pulled the American elites out of their two-decade-long debauch. They discovered that sex was not simply a pleasure, an itch satisfied by a quick scratch, but something more powerful and mysterious. "Time to murder and create," T.S. Eliot said. Although he was talking about art, not sex, this fairly well describes the elite opinion of casual sex in the aftermath of AIDS, particularly in the arts, where a disproportionate number of homosexuals have always found a home.

But that was not all. The arts community may have had its consciousness raised by AIDS, but the signs were everywhere that free and easy sex was no longer culturally viable. What would have seemed like playful foreplay in the age of *Playboy* became date rape. Sexualized images of adolescents like Brooke Shields stopped being cute and provocative and became pornographic instead. Woody Allen had an affair with a 17-year-old girl on screen in *Manhattan* in 1979 and nobody said boo; in 1993 he had a real-life affair with his 19-year-old stepdaughter and the world went mad.

The assumptions that animated the sexual revolution—repression is bad, self-expression is good, and it's all just so natural—fell very quickly by the wayside. Casual sex became tawdry. And what has replaced it, on television at least, is something weirdly poetic: a yearning for the beloved; the idea that love must be earned over time, with a lot of suffering (and banter).

No, the chivalric age has not returned to us through the agency of the television networks. The fact is that the sexual messages on these shows are bizarrely muddled; they are utterly, completely obsessed with sex. *Friends*, for example, is riddled with breathtakingly crude innuendo, and a lot of talk that is practically explicit. You might think its writers were 13-year-old boys surfing the Internet for naked pictures of Teri Hatcher, and the same can be said for most of the other programs on which *romance interruptus* is a regular feature.

And yet the mixed messages are maybe not so mixed after all. There is precious little joy and enthusiasm when these characters talk dirty; instead, their sex-talk is riven with anxiety, as though a cruel Providence is forcing them to undergo all manner of trial and tribulation.

There is no better example of this than *Seinfeld*, surely the most sexually explicit program ever to air on national television. Its four characters are promiscuous in a 1970s way, but the show's lesson (if there is one) is unmistakable: *Don't live like these people. They are miserable, unhappy, selfish thirtysomethings incapable of honest emotion.* If it weren't for all the talk of contraceptive sponges and masturbation, *Seinfeld* could be shown to a class of 14-year-olds at a Christian academy as a depiction of the soulless Hell premarital sex might plunge them into.

Of course, *Seinfeld* is funny, as is *Friends*. But when it comes to sex and romance, it puts me in mind of the great saying of Mel Brooks's 2,000-year-old man: "To me, tragedy is, if I'll cut my finger. That's tragedy. It bleeds, and I'll cry, and I'll run around, and go into Mount Sinai for a day and a half. I'm very nervous about it. But to me, comedy is if you fall into an open sewer and die. What do I care? That's comedy! My finger is important." ♦

Media

Anthony Powell, Anti-Communist

By Arnold Beichman

The intellectual phenomenon called "anti-anti-communism" ought to be dead by now, along with the system that the anti-Communists successfully delegitimized even as the anti-anti-Communists were doing their worst to delegitimize them. But an

Anthony Powell

essay in the December 18 issue of the *New Yorker* demonstrates that anti-anti-communism is unfortunately alive, though not very well. The occasion for the essay by the British critic Jeremy Treglown was the release, by the University of Chicago Press, of a new edition of *Dance to the Music of Time*. That is the collective name for Anthony Powell's 12-novel cycle about the writer Nick Jenkins and his life among the U's in Britain.

Treglown admires *Dance to the Music of Time*, and he should, because it is one of the great works of contemporary literature. He remarks on Powell's "comi-tragic diagnosis of English upper-middle-class life from the First World War through the sixties." The novels, he says, are "a satirical elegy for an era marked by the Second World War, about which Powell's historical sense is at its clearest and his social sympathies are broadest." And yet Treglown fails to mention, let alone imply, anything about what Powell's "historical sense" tells us and where the novelist's "social sympathies" lie. *Dance to the Music of Time* is a portrait of an England that, sadly, will never return, an England peopled by upper-middle-class solipsists and their louche hangers-on. Powell devotes a good deal of time in the book to skewering those of his countrymen who indulged in the most destructive passion of our time: the passion for Communist ideology and the Soviet Union.

Take, for example, his memorable character Kenneth Widmerpool—intellectual crook, fellow-traveler, Soviet agent. Powell describes Widmerpool, the socialist M.P., as accommodating about Stalin's Moscow trials. Later, Widmerpool laments the Poles' pigheadedness over the Katyn Forest massacre, which he attributes "almost certainly, from what we know of [the Russians], to the consequences of administrative inadequacy, rather than willful indifference to human life and the dictates of com-

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passion." Widmerpool's wife, the ineffable Pamela Flitton, says her husband regularly passed information on to the Russians. There are questions in Parliament about Widmerpool's "business" activities in Stalinist Eastern Europe. Treglown describes Widmerpool, Labour party left-winger, as a man who "rises irresistibly in politics." But what "politics," what political party? He doesn't say.

But Widmerpool is far from the only character in the cycle with fashionably Stalinist politics. There's Dr. Belkin, part of a Stalinist espionage ring, who later defects and exposes Widmerpool as a Soviet agent, and his fellow spy Leon-Joseph Ferrand-Seneschal, man of the Left.

The servants of Stalin are not the only Communists to make their appearance in *Dance to the Music of Time.* It is enough merely to be an intellectual, it seems. Like J.G. Quiggin, Communist writer, defender of Stalin's purges, essayist on artistic decadence in a capitalist society. And Howard Craggs, left-wing publisher and fellow-traveler of long-standing. Not to mention Gypsy Jones, CP member, described as "resembling Soviet posters celebrating the Five-Year Plan." And Professor Sillery, admirer of Stalin, probable CP member and Labour peer. The arts, too, are represented, by Daniel McN. Tokenhouse, "Social Realist" painter, publisher, Communist, whose house in Venice is used for years as a postbox for passing secret information to the Kremlin.

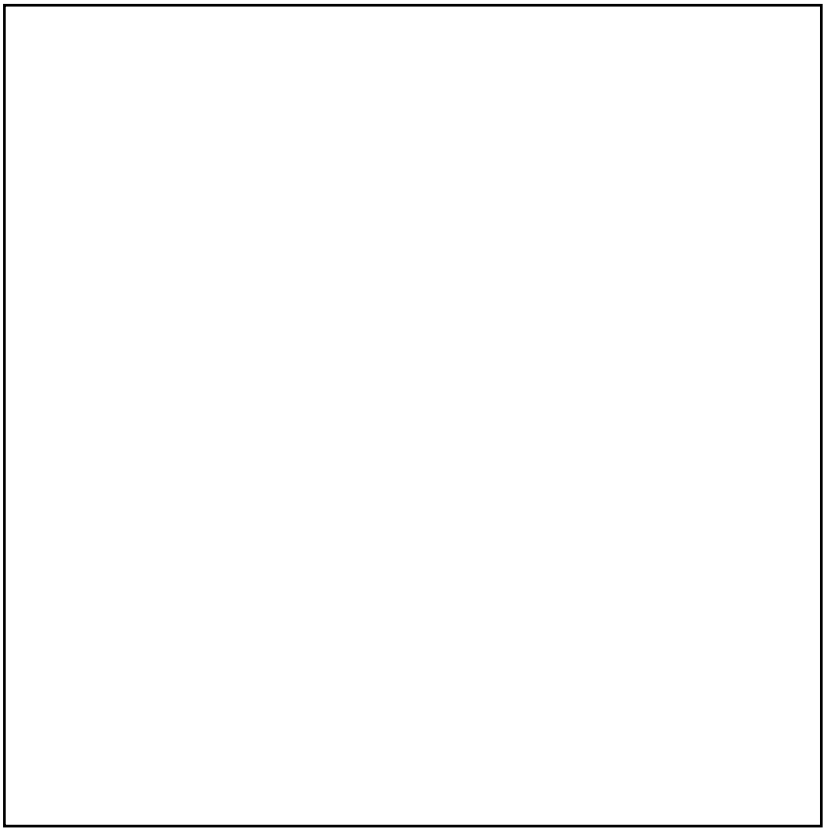
In listing this cast of characters (with the help of Hilary Spurling's superb guidebook to *Dance to the Music of Time*) to the exclusion of others far more interesting, I may be giving the impression that *Dance to the Music of Time* is little more than a crude exposé of British left-wing opportunists and a few Soviet spies. That would be to do Powell an injustice. His work is no more political than, say, Balzac's or Dickens's, both of whom were deeply influenced by the political ideas of their day and yet transcended the narrow bounds of ideology.

Indeed, the *Dance* sequence is Powell's version of the human comedy; Widmerpool is to Powell as Vautrin was to Balzac—a criminal mastermind, but in this case less interested in pulling the financial strings than in secretly aiding a totalitarian dictatorship.

What is so instructive, and infuriating, about Treglown's essay is his unwillingness to say anything about Powell's anti-Communist ideas—as though such an admission would sully the name and reputation of a writer he admires. But it would be incredible, would it not, for a critic to discuss George Orwell purely as a literary critic and ignore Orwell the anti-Communist polemicist? Or to write about Tolstoy only as a military strategist?

In the 1960s in London, Powell and I were members of a Tuesday luncheon club created out of thin air in the 1960s by Robert Conquest, peerless scholar of the Stalin purges, and the late Kingsley Amis. We lunched weekly at a Charlotte St. restaurant called Bertorelli's and we prided ourselves on our politics, defined by the name of the club, The Reactionaries. Powell was a frequent attendee, enthusiastically participating in conversations about fellow-travelers, whether Tory or Labour, and other wafflers, or about some new Soviet trespass on human rights.

Now in his 90s, Powell deserves his due as a writer of enduring greatness. He does not deserve to have his passion for freedom and his enduring opposition to totalitarianism ignored by a supposedly admiring critic. ♦



Going away to prep school "was a great liberation," he says. "Getting away from siblings. Having a fresh start. I can understand why pioneers went out."
—*Steve Forbes,* Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 1996*

The Brooks School Buckaroo

Chapter 1

The sun rose savagely over the hills of Northern New Jersey. Somewhere a stray hunt dog could be heard howling at a passing Mercedes. Horses shuffled in their stalls. Down in the valley, the Forbes ranch was quiet, save for a few stirrings in the breakfast nook. There, you could hear the sounds of scones being cracked open, and the weeping of Ma Forbes.

There comes a day in every mother's life when her children leave home, striking out to make their fortunes in the West, pioneering their own destinies. That day had come for Ma Forbes. Her son, Malcolm Stevenson Forbes (known as "Steve"), would that morning hitch up his wagon and set out on the dusty trail that led to the Brooks School. Ma Forbes didn't know when she would next see her boy, maybe not until deb season began at the Waldorf in early winter.

A mother must comfort herself in moments like this with the knowledge that she has prepared him well for life as a pioneer. Steve was not the most rugged of young men, but he sure knew how to stay on-message. He would not be the quickest gun in the West, but he was an excellent marksman. He was handy with a horse, especially in the field of dressage. But Ma Forbes could not sit long with these reflections, for the butler had just brought in a last-minute delivery from Abercrombie & Fitch.

"The master's chaps have arrived," Gerald announced.

Upstairs, Stevenson Forbes awoke with a start. He ran to the window and watched the sun rising over the helipad. "The West!" he exulted. "Today, I set out to make my fortune. Independent and alone." No dream was too big for Stevenson that day. Perhaps he would someday get to run his father's magazine. After that, given copious ad buys . . . He let his mind wander.

The Conestoga wagon was brought round to the front. Stevenson shoveled down a few last flapjacks, and threw back a slug of espresso. He stepped out onto the front steps of the house. His jaw was set, his eyes focused on the distance. His mother received a kiss on the head, and he gave a manly shake to his brothers, Kip, Bip, Rip, and Tip, whose restaurant reviews were known from here to El Paso. Stevenson ripped the tassels off the reins and set out down the long driveway away into the hot, hot sun.

The sweat poured from under the brim of his hat. The Perrier in his canteen was almost gone. But the thought of graduated tax rates enraged him, and kept him going. Forbes would be no cattle-driving man, no cowpoke. He was after gold—a basket of commodities at the very least. And nothing would stop him. He pushed on. He hoped to be off the driveway and onto the main road by nightfall.