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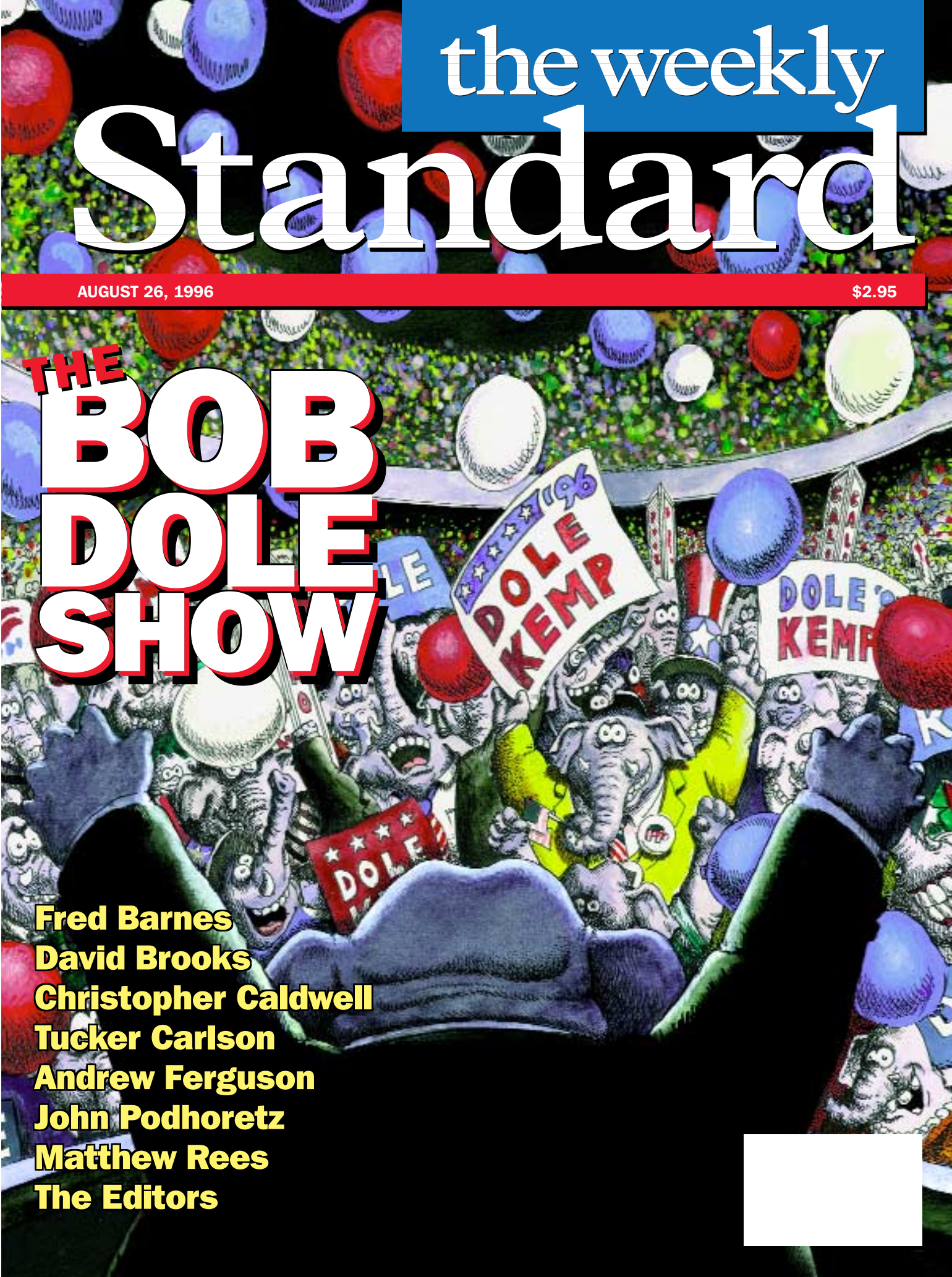

THE BOB DOLE SHOW

Fred Barnes
David Brooks
Christopher Caldwell
Tucker Carlson
Andrew Ferguson
John Podhoretz
Matthew Rees
The Editors

the weekly Standard

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Cover art
by Sean Delonas

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Let's Rate the Convention!

It is with great pride and humility that we at The Weekly Standard present the first set of convention awards. In honor of the spirit of San Diego, we are calling our awards the Treaclys. A partial list of nominees and winners:

For Worst Speech: Two standouts here among many mediocrities and minor embarrassments: Newt Gingrich and James A. Baker III. *And the Treacly goes to* **Newt Gingrich.** Two words: Beach volleyball.

For Best Speech: Nancy Reagan, J.C. Watts, Colin Powell, Elizabeth Dole, John McCain. *And the winner is* **Nancy Reagan,** whose understated speech was moving and didn't make you feel a little sick for having been touched by it.

Best Rhetoric: The nominees are John McCain and Mark Helprin . . . um, we mean Bob Dole. *And the winner is* **John McCain,** who briefly reminded the convention what honor, duty, and country mean—and whom nobody actually listened to because we were all still recovering from Elizabeth Dole.

Best Vote: **James Ball,** of Lake Charles, La., a chemist at an oil refinery and a Gramm delegate who cast a first-round ballot for Robert Bork because "the American people need to be reminded that one of the reasons we vote for a president is to appoint judges to the bench. Judge Bork, in the finest tradition of jurisprudence, didn't legislate from the bench. I wanted to bring his name up because I hope he'll be renominated."

Best Soundbite: **Gerald Ford,** for "What we have in the White House is neither a Ford nor a Lincoln. What we have is a convertible Dodge." *Runner-up:* Ford's "As we gather here this week, our Republican hearts and minds are in hospitable San Diego—and our FBI files are in the White House."

Worst Soundbite: **James A. Baker III,** for "So when people say Bill Clinton has *been around* and is *wise in the ways of the world*, they're sure not talking about his *foreign* policy."

Best Red Meat: **Kay Bailey Hutchison,** for "America, it's time to wake up to President Clinton and his high-taxing, free-spending, promise-breaking, Social Security-taxing, health-care-socializing, drug-coddling, power-grabbing, business-busting, lawsuit-loving, U.N.-following, FBI-abusing, IRS-increasing, $200-haircutting, gas-taxing, over-regulating, bureaucracy-trusting, class-baiting, privacy-violating, values-crushing, Medicare-forsaking, property-rights-taking, job-destroying friends. And that's just in the White House!"

Biggest Jerk of the Convention: **Pete Wilson,** who made trouble on the platform, threatened a floor fight, then spent hours on television talking about the five minutes' time he was denied on the podium because of the trouble he had caused—and then got to introduce Liddy Dole!

Best Guy of the Convention: **J.C. Watts,** who was genial everywhere he went and gave a remarkably powerful and inspiring speech.

Beach Volleyball, Part 2

When a bunch of Olympic athletes hit the podium on Wednesday, their medals swinging around their necks, the band struck up a familiar march that seemed to be making a mockery of their appearance. In fact, a few of us laughed aloud at the sound. Why? Because the march that introduced them doubled as the theme song for *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Maybe one of the medals was for Silly Walks.

Ed vs. Arianna

Ed Rollins doesn't like Arianna Huffington. We know this. We also know that Ed Rollins got $1 million for his new book in part because he decided to attack Arianna Huffington—even though he worked for her husband's senatorial campaign in 1994 and collected a great deal of money from it.

We know she is intending to sue Rollins for libel. We know, further, that Rollins hasn't returned any of the money he made from the Huffingtons to the Huffingtons, despite his great disgust with them and his pleasure at his own client's defeat.

But was *this* outrageous behavior really necessary? At a CNN party on the night before the convention, Rollins's 22-year-old assistant aggressively approached Mrs. Huffington bearing a copy of Rollins's book, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms*. An inscribed copy. "To Arianna, with love from Ed," read the inscription.

"Ed really wanted you to have this personally," the aide said. To her great credit, Mrs. H. remained cool. "I really don't have my hands free," she said. "Please give it to my assistant Terrell."

"No," the aide replied, "Ed insisted I give this to you personally."

"Well, I appreciate that," Arianna calmly returned service, "but I wouldn't know where to put it at the moment. Terrell will take it."

Finally, the aide relented, handed the book to Huffington's assistant, and left.

"That's the most disgusting thing I've ever seen," said one onlooker. Others could not really disagree.

Lights Out

The first promise Susan Molinari made in her keynote address Tuesday night was to keep the speech short. She did. She had no choice. Like every other speaker at the convention, Molinari faced three lights as she stood at the podium. The first light was timed to go off when a speaker was 30 seconds from the end of his time. The second went off when 20 seconds remained. By the time the third light brightened, the speaker had ten seconds to shut up. After that, the microphone was set to go dead—the electronic-age version of the old vaudeville hook. Nor was ad libbing encouraged; the convention staff controlled the TelePrompTer. (We can understand why: After all, Newt Gingrich's "beach volleyball" opening was not in the prepared text.) The only speakers who didn't face the lights were the various clerics who opened the show each day—which may explain why the invocations tended to ramble.

To make as certain as possible that the message coming from the podium was the one that ended up on television, convention planners did their best to deny floor passes to political handlers. These are the sweaty-looking assistants who set up interviews for the politicians they work for. A pro-choice governor looking to air his views at an impromptu press conference on the convention floor couldn't find a national audience because his handler wasn't there to direct the right film crew to him. "Without their handlers," chuckled one convention choreographer, "they don't know WABC in Pittsburgh from Lesley Stahl." That was the point.

Ten-foot Poles

Martin Mawyer, president of the Christian Action Network, found himself arguing on his adversaries' turf Tuesday when he debated Rich Tafel, president of the Log Cabin Republicans, on "The Role of Homosexuals in the Republican Party."

Mawyer's difficulties arose when a questioner asked what Mawyer meant by the term "homosexual agenda." Mawyer responded by listing gays in the military, multiculturalism, condom-dispensing, and a number of other measures. Tafel acknowledged that the Log Cabin Republicans backed some, but not all, of the items.

"So you admit that you have an agenda!" Mawyer

SPECIAL CONVENTION Scrapbook

exclaimed, turning to Tafel.

"Yes," Tafel said. "We have a big one."

Mawyer paused and said, "It's not the size that matters, Rich."

"I'm not going to touch that one," Tafel replied, as the largely gay audience dissolved into laughter.

Let's Hear It for the Secret Service!

Tuesday night, Sidney Blumenthal of the *New Yorker*—the most notorious Clinton suck-up in the American media, bar none—sat having a drink in the bar in the Marriott lobby with a number of fellow liberal scribes, including Jeff Greenfield, Hendrik Hertzberg, Garry Wills, Jacob Weisberg, and Michael Tomasky. Blumenthal, slipping into his occasional role as Republican strategist, turned to Tomasky and observed that if Bob Dole really wanted to help his party retake the White House, he would drop dead at the convention and pass the mantle to Jack Kemp.

Blumenthal must have uttered his delightful remark in a loud voice, because a woman at the bar, a Buchanan alternate from Alaska, overheard him. She immediately called the Secret Service and reported that a man had threatened to kill Bob Dole. Before Blumenthal could order another drink, maybe 10 Secret Service agents showed up and escorted him into the hallway, where they spent 45 minutes asking him pointed questions and waited for a computer background check to go through. Meanwhile, as the group huddled 15 feet from the lobby of the most crowded hotel in America, a stream of passersby approached to find out what was going on. "It was," says Blumenthal, "an *X-Files* moment."

Not that there were any hard feelings when it was over. The next day, Blumenthal ran into occasional dinner partner and Gingrich press secretary Tony Blankley. If it happens again, consoled Blankley, I'll be your character witness. So, no doubt, would the Clintons.

Keynote Poop Scoop

Leading up to Susan Molinari's keynote speech, NBC's Tom Brokaw let drop one of those colorful little anecdotes that campaigns love to feed willing anchorfolk. According to Brokaw, Molinari was changing the diapers of her telegenic infant Susan Ruby Paxon the other day when the baby "had an accident" on the Paxon family word processor, on which Mom was supposedly "working on her speech." It's an anecdote only a focus group could love, seemingly targeted to

the relevant demographic cohorts. It tells us 1) that Molinari is a working mom, and 2) that Molinari wrote her own speech.

Proposition One is indisputable. Proposition Two is false. But the suburbanite working mothers at whom the anecdote was aimed must have been puzzled. Why would anyone change a baby on top of a word processor?

One Big Happy Dole Family

When 15 or so close relatives of Bob Dole's appeared outside the convention center Monday morning, they were denied entrance by the ubiquitous security guards. Why? It seemed no one in the Dole campaign had bothered to obtain credentials for them. When deputy campaign manager Rick Davis learned of the situation, he did what any loyal campaign staffer would do: He yanked the credentials from the neck of any Dole campaign staffer standing nearby and passed them to the Dole clan.

Good Parties, Bad Parties

Time was, a conscientious reporter could travel to a convention, study the proceedings, interview the delegates, calibrate their controversies, absorb the party's message, filter it through to a waiting nation, and get ripped.

Getting ripped was the fun part.

No longer. The nation's press corps has changed. Here is the chief complaint about accommodations among the hacks in San Diego: Owing to security concerns, the gym at the media hotel, the Marriott, was closed. It was a painful adjustment, as the country's finest political reporters wondered how they would manage to exercise their First Amendment rights without their morning workout on the Butt Buster.

So there were no morning workouts, but the larger irony was that the reporters had nothing to work out every morning. The paralyzing press hangover seems to be a thing of the past.

The convention's opening gala for the press, generously sponsored by the Copley newspaper chain, featured towering heaps of sumptuous food, fabulous fireworks, loud music, and—no open bars. A little beer, a little wine, champagne, some sweet punch with a thimbleful of tequila, and a poorly attended promotional booth sponsored by Stolichnaya—but none of the gut-barrel bourbon and bathtub gin craved by the ink-stained, sozzled hacks of the past.

The other big media party, sponsored by chi-chi *George* magazine, was even more hopeless. The San Diego Zoo setting was darkly exotic, though serving mystery-meat burgers next to empty animal cages was a disconcerting touch. Pretty women dressed in black sashayed coyly around the host, editor-in-chief John Kennedy, and third-tier movie star Billy Baldwin caused some rubber-necking. But not much. And again the earmark of the nineties press corps: a little beer, a little wine, lots of soda pop. But no bar. Even Norman Mailer wasn't imbibing! The era of big drinking is over.

Hotel Spin

Reporters are deluged at conventions by press releases, faxes, speech texts, free copies of newspapers and magazines, and other forms of printed detritus meant to elevate the profile of a pol, a news organ, or a political party. But the Marriott Corporation took the concept of "spin" to new heights in San Diego. When reporters woke up in the morning and staggered to their doors for the (complimentary) copies of *USA Today* and the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, they found another piece of paper: "Fun Facts" from the "San Diego Marriott Hotel & Marina." Some fun facts were: Room Service was sending out orders at a rate of one every 2.7 minutes; Rudi's Bake Shop served over 9,800 cups of coffee; the most frequently asked question by the media was "Where's the lobby?"; and Christie Todd Whitman made an impromptu stop at the hotel's employee cafeteria for lunch. ("It's some of the best food I've had all week," she told a hotel official.) Is there no limit to the lengths to which PR agents will go? To find out, contact Gordon Lambourne at the San Diego Marriott.

We Have A Job Opening

The Weekly Standard has a full-time position available for a staff assistant/receptionist. The job is administrative, and the responsibilities include phones, mail, back issues, correspondence, and other general administrative duties. The ideal candidate would be organized, hard-working, and energetic. Please send your resumé to: Jennifer Felten, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, NW, Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036. Or fax us at (202) 293-4901.

Casual

Live! From the Lobby!

Above, on his perch, the parrot sleeps, but below, in the lobby of the San Diego Marriott, the Pundit Gods sweep by. CNN's William Schneider is soundbiting his way across the room, a radio microphone shoved in his face. James Carville is chatting with the *Washington Post*'s Richard Cohen as Norman Ornstein sidles up. The *Wall Street Journal*'s John Fund is sharing a laugh with the *Nation*'s Alexander Cockburn, but swivels to shake hands with a rushing Ed Rollins. Over by the couches, I think I see William Safire taking notes while interviewing a delegate, but he is only signing autographs.

Somewhere up in heaven, Plato, Shakespeare, Voltaire, and George Eliot are participating in a celestial edition of *The Capital Gang*, but here on earth, at this Republican convention, the Holy of Holies is the Marriott lobby. The organizers of the convention put the party poohbahs at the neighboring Hyatt, where the lobby is pristine and elegant. But the media Bigfeet are encamped here, so the tabletops are littered with journalism—newspapers, magazines, convention specials—and the air is filled with confident assertion.

George Stephanopoulos is spinning NPR's Mara Liasson. A C-SPAN camera crew materializes, while from one of the couches, in front of which *National Review*'s Kate O'Beirne is standing, an actual non-pundit shouts at Stephanopoulos, "Where's Craig Livingstone?" Chris Dodd walks in and shares a photo-op with Republican representative Ben Gilman and the ubiquitous Stephanopoulos. I think I see ABC's Jeff Greenfield signing autographs, but apparently he's lost his voice and is communicating by note.

David Broder, God bless his soul, was seen interviewing an authentic Republican, but from the sound of it, the interviewee was only repeating the pundit nuggets he'd heard David Broder utter that morning on one of the talk segments.

Nothing moves slowly in this lobby except Strom Thurmond, embracing a female admirer. Trent Lott's entourage roars by, and one of the security guards nearly runs down the senior senator from South Carolina. That could have been the end. Lott has that politician's speedwalk that forces aides to jog alongside, fumbling their papers. John F. Kennedy, Jr. has the speedwalk too. His entourage—followers and camera crews—is twice the size of Lott's.

Ranking according to size of entourage: Sex-god editors #1, former presidents like Gerald Ford #2, pro-choice Republican women senators #3, Senate leaders #4. Network on-air talent have a few producers in tow. PBS personalities walk alone. We print reporters don't have entourages; we just travel in little clouds of irony.

If you go to the other side of the hotel, you can watch people lounging by the pool and observe that Kevin Phillips is the only person who looks gloomy while sunning himself. I run into E.J. Dionne poolside, and Frank Luntz stops by with the lowdown of the dial-test results on Monday night's speeches, and some beautiful young women stroll past in string bikinis. Sen. Olympia Snowe is being interviewed at a nearby table (you don't suppose she was talking about, oh, say . . . tolerance, do you?). The surroundings and weather here are so comfortable the Republicans could have nominated a slug for the presidency and they'd all be feeling cheerful about it.

But one can't stay poolside for long, because upstairs in the lobby the world is going by. Candace Gingrich, who is surprisingly short, has settled into one of the comfy couches by the door and is laughing with her friends at the Republicans who are spotting her and laughing about her. Jonathan Schell, writing for *Newsday*, Daniel Franklin of the *Economist*, and I are figuring out which parties we can crash, when GOP media guru Mike Murphy slides into view. We're rooting for him to get within quote range, but he drifts away. Sidney Blumenthal of the *New Yorker* crosses Murphy's path and joins Jonathan Alter's conversational clique, while a guy dressed up in an elephant suit is giving everybody high-fives. A cell phone rings and everybody grabs his pocket to see if it's his.

Carville is back signing autographs, and two reporters from India come up to me to ask who he is. I explain that he's a politico who has become as famous as a movie star and now gives speeches at $25,000 a pop. They can't get their minds around this concept. "You mean he writes speeches for Democrats?" one keeps asking.

The power hour is 5 a.m. The media celebrities have just finished their gigs on the morning shows—pegged to East Coast time, they begin here before dawn, at 4—and now they're back with five hours before anything else gets rolling. In a little while, Larry King will come down for his morning jog (no suspenders), and later Peter Jennings will go out for his run (baseball cap low, to hide his fame).

As the day goes on, the lobby gets more and more crowded. We complain that this convention is a vacuous event, knowing this complaint has become so commonplace as to become vacuous itself. So vacuousness chases vacuousness, and punditry rebounds off punditry, and except for the times when we wonder exactly why it is we're all here, we're having a wonderful time. And above us all, the parrot sleeps.

David Brooks

Perot: Strange and Scary

I read with interest Tucker Carlson's article "Ross Perot and His Very Strange Party" (Aug. 12). Ross Perot is not a fit candidate for the presidency. In fact, he is a very scary candidate. For one thing, Perot has contempt for the Constitution. He told a Las Vegas audience there would be a "constitutional revolution" if he were elected. In Tampa, he said, "You've got to change the system. Keep in mind our Constitution predates the industrial revolution. There's a lot they didn't know about. Just keeping it frozen in time won't hack it."

Ross Perot may well be an American Caesar, a populist with a fascist streak. In any case, he is a dangerous force in American politics.

Ray F. Dively
Baden, PA

Tucker Carlson's article was absolutely wonderful. As a Libertarian and an avid reader of The Weekly Standard, I want to know, when will you get to us?

The Libertarians have managed to avoid mainstream media attention, even though we are the original cranks who advocated getting the government out of Social Security, getting our servicemen out of NATO, and ending the income tax. Our dedication to these principles will not allow us to get air time on *Fulani!* A magazine willing to print information about a political party that believes in reducing the powers of the federal government could win a lifetime subscription from me.

Alas, for now, I can only dream about Leon Panetta's calling us extremists on national television.

W.T. Buller
Bethesda, MD

Tucker Carlson has issued another anti-Perot tirade—at least his spin is consistent.

If Ross Perot were so "anti-democratic," would he have told Richard Lamm that he could use the Reform party mailing company to send out letters? When the Lamm camp said it didn't have the money for such letters, Perot responded that he wouldn't send any either, in fairness. At the time, Lamm said, "Perot has been more than fair."

Lamm then wanted voter lists to set up phone banks; the names would have come from petitions. But this was hardly a good idea, as many fair-minded Democrats and Republicans signed Reform party petitions in order to have another option on the ballot—that doesn't make them Reformers.

Barbara Gradisher
Cuyahoga Falls, OH

Two Eyes for a Tooth?

After reading "Six Steps Against Terror" (Aug. 5), I came to the conclusion that Zalmay Khalilzad needs to seriously consider returning to reality.

There is only one point with which I agree: We do need a "different approach in how we perceive the terrorist threat and what we do about it." But Khalilzad's approach is certainly not the answer.

This country was founded on a few basic principles and concepts, not the least of which were freedom (self-determination) and justice. The idea of taking two eyes for a tooth is not justice. A dozen men planting a bomb and hiding in a country friendly to their cause is not justification enough to launch a "campaign by missiles and attack aircraft" that will destroy a country. That will be the end result when you target that country's "security forces, its economic infrastructure, its communications, and other sources of support."

What would make Khalilzad think this is a viable approach? According to him, we are the only military superpower left. Those countries that sponsor terrorists are economically and militarily weak. Since they are no real threat, we don't have to "tread lightly in our effort to domesticate and defang them." And since these governments are unstable and their citizens want political and economic change, we should help them. I'd like to know how! By sponsoring terrorists and "revolutionaries" of our own? Didn't we get enough of this in Central America? Or maybe through invasion à la the Soviet Union in Afghanistan?

Furthermore, I'd like to know how he proposes to secure *our* "information infrastructure—computers and phones and the like." Through nationalization, which is a polite way of saying let the federal government run them?

Yes, we do need a different approach when it comes to combating terrorism, but come up with an objective and reality-based list, please. To implement this list of actions is to make Us no better than Them.

Jerr L. Leonard
Sumner, MI

No Gay Gene

Unfortunately, Jeffrey Marsh's review of *A Separate Creation* by Chandler Burr ("Debating the Gay Gene," Aug. 5) contributes to the creation and perpetuation of two myths: the existence of a "gay gene" and the belief that "homosexual orientation is fixed by nature." Neither is the case.

Almost half of Burr's book—which is a clever and interesting attempt to institutionalize the immutability of homosexuality and the existence of a gay gene—is devoted to the story of Dean Hamer's "discovery" of the gay gene.

Unfortunately, Marsh seems to have fallen for the story hook, line, and sinker. "The gene discovered and named by Hamer is now listed in the geneticists' directory as GAY-1, locus Xq28." Marsh raises no questions about this "discovery." Others, though, have.

The facts suggest that for certain individuals homosexuality is not immutable. As with all forms of personality configuration, the degree of the

Correspondence

motivation to change determines whether the individual can change the patterns of his emotional life. To change is hard psychological work, and no one will volunteer to do such hard work unless circumstances compel him, and he has the psychological strength to do so.

There have been examples of non-medical conversions of sexual orientation. Such men may be unambiguously homosexual for many years and then do a complete about-face, sometimes accompanied by a religious conversion. They then get married and settle down to a stable family life.

The most famous case of spontaneous sexual conversion (without the help of religion) is that of John Maynard Keynes. From the time he was a student at Eton he was an unregenerate "sodomite"—a word he used to describe himself and his homosexual friends. Then, for no known reason, at the age of thirty he wrote to his lover Duncan Grant from abroad that, for the first time, he had "had a woman." Subsequently he appeared to lose interest in homosexual relationships and turn instead to the companionship of women. When he was forty he married Lydia Lopokova, one of Diaghilev's prima ballerinas, and remained happily married until he died at the age of sixty-two.

All this is to say that the claim of a gay gene is premature. Gay men who are conflicted about their homosexuality should not have to bear the burden of this myth. And parents of boys who suffer from Gender Identity Disorder or severe effeminacy should not be advised to accept this condition as genetically determined and immutable without first seeking a second opinion.

Yale Kramer, M.D.
New York, NY

Having been involved in my own research on the cause of homosexuality, I read Jeffrey Marsh's review with interest. People make the mistake of thinking that homosexuality must be genetic since so many homosexuals claim they have no choice. But homosexuality does not have to be explained genetically. It can be explained environmentally.

Some scientists seem to be bending over backwards to try to show that homosexuality is genetic, because research has indicated that people will accept it more readily if it can be shown to be a God-made, naturally occurring phenomenon. We should be compassionate toward people who find themselves in this dilemma, but I do not believe truth should be compromised to make it more acceptable.

In the past, homosexuals who researched or wrote on this subject had their work discounted because they had a vested interest in the outcome, and rightly so. Now the media favor their work and, as a result, their studies are the only ones discussed.

Joann Scofield
Nineveh, IN

Animals: Not Just for Libs

In "Welfare for Agri-Giants" (Aug. 5), Stephen Moore writes, "Doris Day's League for the Protection of Animals and other liberal animal rights groups . . . "

In what way is the Doris Day League liberal? Does Moore consider all animal-protection groups liberal? Is he thinking of political liberalism?

For some reason, I find in my favorite publications—The Weekly Standard, *National Review*, the *American Spectator*—a bias against animal-rights groups. Why? Newt Gingrich supports animal-protection groups. Is he also a liberal?

I have been voting since 1940, and not once have I voted for a Democrat for president. Nor, for that matter, have I voted for any liberal GOP candidate. But I have sought, all my life, to curtail the suffering of animals.

James Madison Barr
Hot Springs Village, AK

Bad News? No Surprise

Regarding Charles Murray's "Bad News About Illegitimacy" (Aug. 5): Why wouldn't we have a high illegitimacy rate when we encourage illegitimacy (with permissive liberal sex education); subsidize it (with welfare programs); and glorify it (by taking away stigmas attached to it)?

Joan Pruitt
Edinburgh, IN

Stepping In It

In "Gourmet Dung for a Happy America" (Aug. 12), David Brooks seems to have run into what Tom Wolfe calls Muggeridge's Law: "There is nothing you can imagine, no matter how ludicrous, that will not be promptly enacted before your very eyes."

A case in point: There already is such a thing as a gourmet slurpee, although most vendors call them "smoothies." I have yet to see any made from sun-dried tomatoes, spinach, and feta cheese, or arugula-cappuccino with orzo sprinkles. Mostly they are made from exotic fruits like mangos or kiwi, and can cost upwards of $5.15 a pop. They have taken southern California by storm and are slowly but surely making their way into the rest of the country. I even saw them in New York on the menu at a Second Avenue Greek diner, and, with the exception of fast-food chains, such diners tend to be the most conservative and predictable eating establishments in the world.

But let us hope that Brooks's prophecy about dung will turn out to be an exception to the rule.

Michael Anton
Claremont, CA

If one undertakes to write a patronizing article like David Brooks's, the facts should be correct. Brooks places the Masai tribe in Ethiopia, even though it actually lives in Kenya and Tanzania. His "Ukranian wild boar droppings" are suspect, but I draw the line at "Pacific manatee dung." Manatee naturally live in Atlantic waters.

Robert Sindeli
Miami, FL

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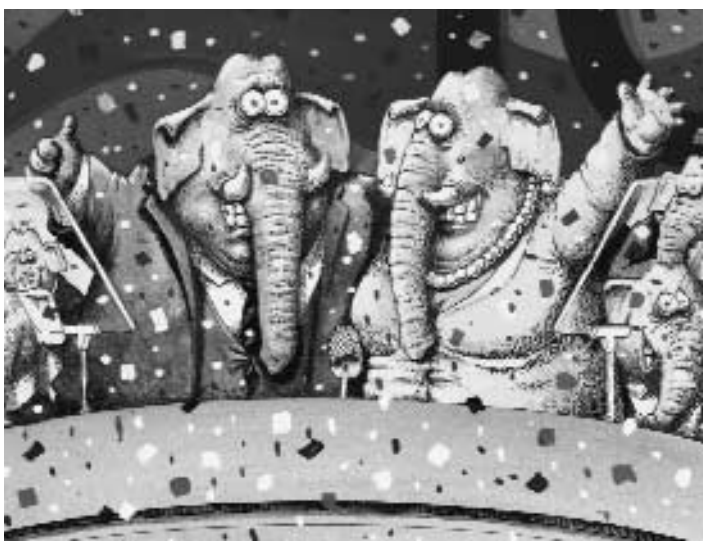
the weekly Standard

The San Diego Republicans

Republican party officials leave their San Diego convention in ostentatious good cheer. And they are not faking it. Their satisfaction is real. For maybe six hours of network television time over a four-day period, the GOP looked just as the convention organizers wished it to look—which is to say, different. Republicans are no longer the grumpy, do-nothing old men on display at the Houston convention in 1992. Neither are they the callow, tantrum-throwing young men suggested by the party's failed congressional budget strategy of 1995.



Sean Delonas

Today, instead, Republicans are the world, as the 1980s feel-good anthem had it. They are a black child who has been infected with AIDS. They are Kim Alexis, supermodel with a heart of gold. They are perky Rep. Susan Molinari of ethnic Staten Island, high school cheerleader *cum* keynote speaker—attagirl, Susie! They are even Newt Gingrich in the worst and most embarrassing speech of his career, locating the spirit of American freedom in Olympic beach volleyball and a well-trained helper-canine.

And Republicans are also, of course, Bob Dole. Kind, honorable, persevering Bob Dole. He's for a tax cut.

We're good folks, just like you, the convention's commentary on itself made clear. And if you dared to disagree, you were obliging yourself to reject the heartfelt TV-screen entreaties of a truly astonishing succession of people with physical and neurological disabilities. You cad.

It worked (or didn't fail, at least), this image-transformation effort. The 20-or-so-point polling advantage President Clinton enjoyed over Bob Dole two weeks ago—before public opinion could register the combined effect of the Dole economic plan, the Jack Kemp vice-presidential selection, and the convention—has been cut in half. The gain seems to come, delightfully enough, mostly from three groups of essential voters: the more affluent elderly, women, and 1992 Perot supporters. Republicans running for Congress in the fall also stand to benefit, in some general, generic sense, from this uptick. And, most important, the GOP is happy and enthused: Finally, after months of waiting, they have good news.

That good news is only grudgingly acknowledged by the 12,000 journalists who have just finished covering the activities of 4,000 convention delegates. For most reporters, truth be told, a modern convention's highest purpose is the late-evening time they spend schmoozing one another in hotel bars and lobbies. But before that time arrives each day, they face print deadlines and camera calls. They must report what's happening and tell us what it means. And when there isn't much of anything happening, and its meaning seems so vaporous, this work is especially difficult. The media grow irritable.

At the San Diego convention, this media irritability took the form of high-minded disgust at the alleged "dishonesty" of Republican self-presentation. The GOP was on its best, Dr. Jekyll behavior during prime time. But the Republicans, most reporters complained, were hiding Mr. Hyde. And he was there, in the party platform. The document was Houston all over again, the story went: frighteningly conservative, "Buchananite," even.

This charge is bogus. First of all, there is nothing fundamentally Buchananite about the new GOP platform, despite Buchanan's predictable assertions to the contrary.

It is not perfect, to be sure. There are seven proposed constitutional amendments, which is five or six too many. The document does a bit too much preemptive populist pandering on trade and global diplomacy—so as to protect a basic free-trade, internationalist position. And the plank on immigration, symbolized by the proposed withdrawal of citizenship privileges for U.S.-born children of illegals, is foolish. But these are hardly extremist attitudes in *either* major party at the moment.

And the rest of the platform is really nothing new—and nothing scary, for that matter. It is a pretty well-written, intelligent expression of bedrock Reagan and pre-volleyball Gingrich conservatism. They've even added some sweetener: references to Americans as a "diverse and tolerant people," concessions that Republicans have "deeply held and sometimes differing views," promises that those views will be resolved "in a spirit of civility, hope, and mutual respect." The platform's abortion language, otherwise practically indistinguishable from past years' editions, adds a provision *opposing* legal penalties against women who undergo the procedure.

Some Mr. Hyde. And how completely can the platform be said to reflect "hidden" Republican intentions, in any case? After it was formally adopted by the convention, most leading Republicans treated the document as a trifle—a party favor for the party's conservative foot soldiers. Haley Barbour, Jack Kemp, and Bob Dole each went out of his way to insist he hadn't even *read* the damn thing.

In American politics, the "out" party challenging for the White House is, more than anything else, what it *says* it is. If the rhetoric of that party's nominating convention does not seriously and consistently reflect the arguments in its platform—and as the media said, this convention's rhetoric didn't—there must be a reason. It must be by design. The party must mean to be saying something else. The question is: what?

The Republican answer in San Diego was best expressed in the convention's three most important speeches. Elizabeth Dole's Wednesday night tribute to her husband was a signal moment in the long slide of American political discourse into high-gloss kitsch. She sauntered down from the speakers' podium and wandered across the floor with a wireless microphone, instantly substituting the emotional immediacy of the family breakfast table for the physical remove at which traditional convention audiences have listened—and *thought* about what they heard. The mike went dead; she grabbed another and continued on her course, with a thoroughly dazzling, just-like-real-life smile. She asked her audience to feel warmth and admiration for her husband—and they did. But she didn't really *say* anything.

In his vice-presidential acceptance speech the following night, Jack Kemp said one thing, and said it well. Dole's surprise choice of Kemp for veep made sense on a number of grounds: Kemp's continued appeal across factional lines within the Republican party; his famously irrepressible energy; and the open-armed "inclusiveness" with which the man has courted traditionally Democratic constituencies for many (largely thankless) years. But Kemp is also associated with an actual *idea*. And a good one: the universal benefits of pro-growth tax reduction. This idea, Steve Forbes's exclusive property during the presidential primaries earlier this year, has now been adopted by Dole as the substantive centerpiece of the Republican campaign for the fall. Kemp did the tax-cut standard proud.

And then he left the podium to his running mate. To our ears, at least, Bob Dole spoke many passages of unusual beauty and power. That much was impressive. *He* was impressive, just as the convention had already promised he would be. But the beauty and power were mostly a function of thematic mood—they were gravy, not meat. And the long, flatly inflected central section of the speech, where serious ideological and policy advocacy was hinted at but never fully voiced, was a disappointing blur.

This, too, we must assume, was done on purpose. Both major parties now, as a matter of apparent official strategy, decline to promote any but a small fraction of their most cherished ideas. Each defines itself by the negative example of its most recent painful failure: the Democrats by 1994, and the Republicans by 1995. Neither *speaks* in any meaningful sense. They emote instead.

The choice of affect over argument may be enough to close half the distance by which Bob Dole has trailed Bill Clinton over all these past many months. But a real argument will assuredly be required to close the rest. Are tax cuts, in an otherwise healthy economy, argument enough? They had better be. For now at least, the GOP appears to have precious little else.

—David Tell, for the Editors

THE BOB DOLE SHOW

Hell of a Convention

by John Podhoretz

San Diego

As I write, the Republican convention has only been over for 12 hours, and yet it is already a cliché to compare it to NBC's coverage of the Atlanta Olympics. Sports and politics are traditionally boys' pleasures, and so both NBC and the RNC decided profound changes in tone were needed to capture a female audience—NBC because it needed women viewers for ratings, the RNC because it needed women voters to close the gender gap. It has also become a cliché to say that these events represent a new kind of "feminization"—a feminization that is either (a) long overdue or (b) another step down the path to a terrifying androgyny. Instead of focusing on competition and victory, the very things boys love about politics and sports, the respective poohbahs of the Olympics and the convention decided to focus on "real stories."

Here is a partial list of the "real people" with "real stories" who appeared on or around the podium of the Republican National Convention:

2 legal immigrants
1 deaf Miss America
1 paralyzed cop
1 supermodel (who is the celebrity spokeswoman
for a hemorrhoid ointment and
has just published her first novel)
1 up-from-welfare mother
1 dog that helps people with MS
1 Olympic beach-volleyball player
1 bunch of other Olympians
1 Cuban-American Medicare recipient
2 AIDS victims
1 gas-station owner
1 teacher
1 nurse of Bob Dole's
1 widow of an Armenian doctor of Bob Dole's
1 guy in a wheelchair Bob Dole was nice to
1 rape victim named Jan Licence

Jan Licence's appearance on the podium was the most striking moment of the convention—indeed, the heart and soul of its four days. She was introduced by Gov. Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania: "Ladies and gentlemen, a woman of extraordinary conviction, a woman of extraordinary courage, my friend Jan Licence."

She walked out from backstage as though she were being presented with an honorary Oscar, and proceeded to give a really gruesome speech: "Good evening. The morning of August 23, 1993, did not start the way I had planned. I did not wake up to my alarm clock. Instead, I woke up to a stranger grabbing and touching me. I am a rape survivor. . . . Words cannot describe the 45 minutes of terror, the helplessness, the violation, the humiliation. . . . I can tell you that being raped is not every woman's worst nightmare. We wake up from nightmares. It's a living hell. Some people may think I look okay, but there is much you don't see. . . . You do not see as I deadbolt myself into my bedroom and I get into the very bed I was raped in. . . . Have you ever sat outside at night and tried to count the stars? I used to. Now I stand in my home at a window and try. Someday I hope to reclaim that simple joy. . . . The sex offender, the rapist, he takes the body. But I must fight to keep him from taking my mind, my spirit, my soul."

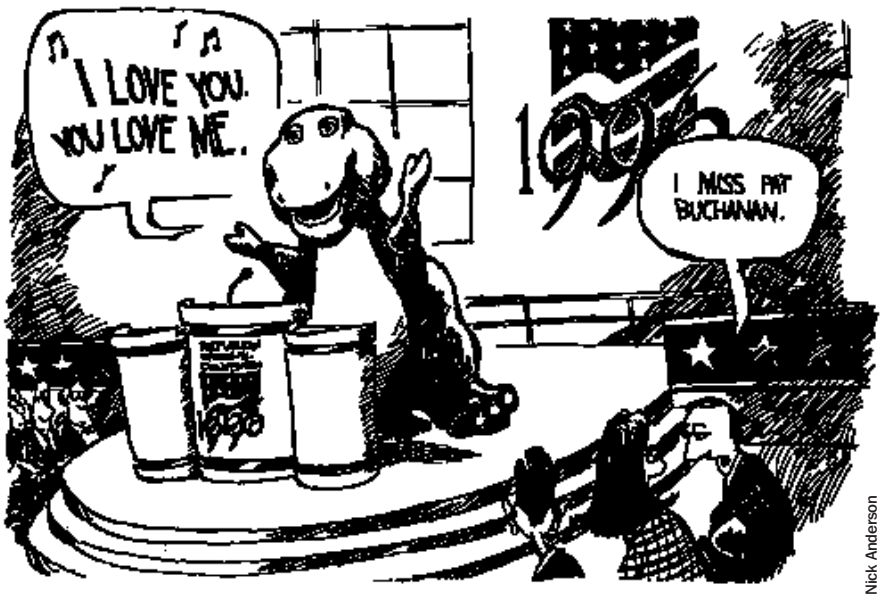
I know we all think this sort of public confession is the result of Oprah Winfrey's influence on American culture, but in truth there is something ineffably male about the act of asking Jan Licence to stand center stage and tell her story in horrifying detail at a major media event. The "real stories" we heard from the podium of the convention, like those at the Olympics, actually had a great deal in common with the tales boys tell around the campfire to frighten and thrill each other, tales of death and blood and gore and doom. It may be that stories of rape and disease appeal to women—there's a whole genre of TV movies on these subjects whose advertisers seem exclusively to produce remedies for yeast infections—but the violent and clinical detail works like a drug on us boys too.

That's not really surprising, considering that both events were designed, directed, and stage-managed not by women but by men: Dick Ebersol and Don Ohlmeyer at NBC, Haley Barbour and Paul Manafort at the RNC. In pursuit of painting a giant smiley face on the Republican party, Barbour and Manafort staged a convention as ruthlessly efficient as a Joan Crawford or Bette Davis tearjerker from the 1940s. Like the convention, those movies were made to appeal almost entirely to an audience of women, but they were actually the work of men, and notoriously tyrannical men at that—men like studio chief Jack Warner, and directors King Vidor, William Wyler, and Michael Curtiz. There was very little these men would not do in pursuit of an emotional wallop. And there was nothing, it seemed, that Barbour and Manafort would not do.

Jan Licence received a standing ovation for talking about her rape. And why not? That was why she was there in the first place—to sadden, thrill, disgust, and excite all of us, male and female alike, with her tale and somehow tie it into the idea that the Republican party stands for victims' rights. Jan Licence was,

therefore, someone with whom women were supposed to identify, someone whose horrible personal experience was supposed to humanize the Republican party's message. But how? By proving that Republicans can feel sorry for rape victims?

And what was the meaning of the appearances of the other "real people"? To prove Republicans can feel sorry when a little black girl and a Jewish mother get AIDS? To show that Republicans don't just want to throw Cuban-American Medicare recipients into the street? To show that Republicans love a dog, and Bob Dole had an Armenian doctor, and that Dole could be nice to a guy in a wheelchair?



Nick Anderson

By making the point over and over again that Republicans *do* care, and making it with such insincerity, one is tempted to believe that Manafort and Barbour believe Republicans actually *don't* care, and thus found it necessary to trick America into thinking they do. But you have to hand it to Barbour and Manafort: They put on a hell of a show. One might even follow Jan Licence's example and call it a living hell. ♦

Bob and Jack Together

by Fred Barnes

San Diego

THE BEST IDEA TO EMERGE from the Republican convention is political synergy. Bob Dole and Jack Kemp campaign better together than apart: The whole turns out to be greater than the sum of the parts. Dole draws energy from Kemp. And, with Dole looking over his shoulder, Kemp is under control and less verbose. "They play off each other wonderfully," gushes a Dole aide.

So it's small wonder that Dole and Kemp will continue making joint appearances between now and Labor Day. They may even attempt to upstage the Democratic convention, which meets in Chicago next week, through what one aide calls "counter-programming." That would consist of special high-visibility events designed to be more attractive to the media than tedious speeches at the Democratic convention lionizing President Clinton. (Some Dole aides are dubious, fearing this tactic would make Dole look unpresidential.)

Anyway, don't jump to the conclusion that Dole and Kemp have integrated smoothly. They still have a ways to go. True, Kemp is enormously grateful to Dole for plucking him from near-oblivion. And he and Dole have gotten along extraordinarily well in their lengthy meetings, strategy sessions, and meals. There's still a bit of awkwardness, though. Kemp is very physical, a hugger and backslapper. But he can't treat Dole as he would an old football buddy because of Dole's World War II wound.

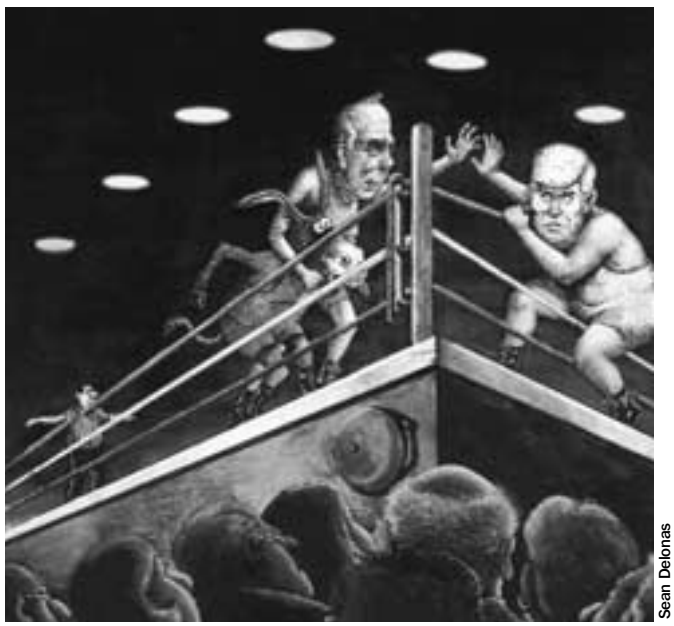
Kemp has been deferential, in public and private, but his entourage has still managed to irritate Dole. Kemp insisted on recruiting John Sears, a Washington lawyer who ran Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign for a while, as a top strategist. Also, Jude Wanniski, the supply-side publicist, showed up at the GOP convention in San Diego to advise Kemp. Both had urged Kemp to run against Dole this year, first in the Republican primaries, then as the candidate of Ross Perot's Reform party.

On August 14, the day Dole officially won the presidential nomination, Wanniski was quoted in *USA Today* criticizing Dole. Dole saw the quote and, natu-

rally, was furious. He already had strong feelings about Wanniski, who last year tried to become a Dole adviser. "There's nobody he dislikes more," says a Dole adviser. Yet Kemp keeps Wanniski as an influential adviser.

Wanniski and Sears fought with Kemp's writers over the acceptance speech Kemp delivered at the convention. Wanniski wanted Kemp to mention Charles Beard, the Marxist historian, and his notion of a "fluid society." The Kemp writers blocked that. Sears produced a draft in which Kemp did not refer to Dole at all. Instead, Kemp would respond to "elitists" who have mocked his advocacy of tax cuts.

When Kemp suggested providing the poor with capital, Sears's draft said, "their derision reached its zenith." The speech ended up considerably more eloquent than that, though there was another fight, this time between the speechwriters and Kemp. The vice-presidential candidate thought it would be demeaning to talk about the specific benefits of the Dole tax-cut plan. It's like buying votes, he said. In the end, a compromise was reached.



Sean Delonas

One reason for keeping Dole and Kemp together for now, a Dole aide said, is so Kemp can learn to fit into the Dole campaign. "The last thing we need is two camps inside the campaign," the aide said.

There's one thing that binds Dole and Kemp closely: the tax cut proposed by Dole. What's surprising is that Dole has become so committed to his economic package, especially the tax reduction. He stuck with the big cut even when its main element was changed two days before the package was unveiled on August 5. Dole had initially endorsed a rollback of the 1990 and 1993 tax hikes. But once Dole's economic experts discovered that the rollback tilted the benefits too much toward the rich, he suddenly substituted a 15 percent cut in individual tax rates.

Dole spent many hours discussing the economic plan with his advisers. He knew a lot of details from his days as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. And they gave him what one called the "broad macro-thematics." Dole soon became comfortable with a large tax cut. "He likes it, he understands it, he cares about it, he believes in it," an adviser says.

The question is whether he can sell it to the public. A TV spot touting the tax cut begins August 19, but it was rushed into production before the Dole team had figured out how to keep the tax issue in the forefront of the campaign this fall. One aide proposed a campaign train trip by Dole and Kemp aboard the "Tax Cut Express."

Tax cuts will be the chief topic of a presidential candidate as never before. Reagan played up a 30 percent across-the-board cut in 1980, but he had plenty of other issues on his agenda, notably restoring America's standing in the world. George Bush stressed cutting the tax on capital gains in 1988, but he relied more on pillorying Michael Dukakis as a liberal who allowed convicted criminals like Willie Horton to leave prison for weekend furloughs.

Dole and Kemp plan to devote half their time in the 10 weeks of the campaign to playing taxes up. And their emphasis on it will be frontloaded in September. The political calculation involved is simple: When the tax issue is the centerpiece of a campaign, Republicans usually win.

Nearly everyone in the Dole campaign agrees. Many advisers, including campaign manager Scott Reed and policy chief Donald Rumsfeld, also agree that Clinton's veto of the ban on partial-birth abortion should be used against him. And Ralph Reed, the head of the Christian Coalition, has urged the Dole campaign to raise that issue over and over. "We believe the partial-birth abortion issue is important to many ethnic Catholics in the battleground states from Wisconsin and Illinois to Pennsylvania and New Jersey," Reed says.

Reed shouldn't get his hopes too far up. One senior figure in the Dole campaign isn't comfortable with the issue: Dole himself. In his acceptance speech at the convention, he uttered the word "abortion" once, listing it as one of America's moral diseases. Further than that, he wouldn't go. But maybe Kemp, as he hangs out with Dole, can change his mind. ♦

Battle of the Network Dolts

by Andrew Ferguson

San Diego

Since the Republican convention was supposed to be the most sophisticated television production in political history, you'd think the place to watch it would be on TV. But you would be wrong. I spent a couple of evenings on the convention floor and a couple evenings watching the show on the networks. On the floor I was overwhelmed by pointless noise and surrounded by people wearing elephant costumes and Bob Dole sunglasses and colored shirts with placards stapled to their chests, while politicians hollered from behind a podium shaped like the grillwork of a 1956 Plymouth. But watching it on TV was weird.

The greatest distractions were provided by the networks themselves. By tradition, conventions are filled with people wearing silly hats, but this year those people were network correspondents. Isn't this supposed to be the age of microtechnology? Then why can't they do something about those *Forbidden Planet* headsets? Watching poor Candy Crowley or Lesley Stahl or Gene Randall wobbling around the convention floor, I was amazed they could even stand up. Why not just go all the way and wear a lampshade? Carmen Miranda never looked this silly.

And looking silly is what the network newshounds want to avoid at all costs. At every turn the TV coverage of the convention showed their terror at being taken for chumps and shills—mere patsies of the vast and sinister Republican public-relations apparatus. But the hacks would not be fooled, and they devoted the bulk

of their airtime to proving they were not being fooled. Hence the odd spectacle of TV stars warning their TV audience that the TV show it was watching was "made for TV."

"Infomercial" was the cliché of the hour, with "highly scripted" finishing a close second. "It's an infomercial, if you will," Tom Brokaw announced. "This convention is more of an infomercial than a news event," said Ted Koppel. The spectacle so repulsed Koppel that he packed up his *Nightline* crew Tuesday night and left town in a cloud of dudgeon, with not a hair out of place. In case anyone missed the point, he declaimed his decision on the air, and the ABC office handed out copies of his statement to all comers. And the offense he took has had lasting repercussions. He will not—*he will not*—take the show to Chicago for the Democratic convention next week, notwithstanding that it will be filled with pompous donkeys like himself.

> THIS YEAR THE PEOPLE WEARING THE SILLIEST HATS ARE THE NETWORK CORRESPONDENTS WITH THEIR *FORBIDDEN PLANET* HEADSETS.

The other network newsfolk remained at their posts, of course, so they could continue to emphasize that their networks were spending millions of dollars to broadcast something that really wasn't worth watching. "It's not the reality on the floor that matters," Brooks Jackson said on CNN, "but what's seen on TV." And so the TV people made sure that what you saw on TV was very distant from the "reality on the floor." If the Republicans were aggressively packaging their convention, the networks one-upped them by packag-

ing the packaging. Of the hour's worth of prime time ABC, CBS, and NBC devoted nightly to convention coverage, no more than 25 minutes were concerned with actual speeches.

And the rest? You got moments like Michel McQueen's ABC interview Tuesday night with a Buchanan delegate, which I reprint in its entirety:

McQueen: You're unhappy that Buchanan won't speak tonight, isn't that right?

Fat Guy in a "God Bless America" T-shirt: Yes, it is.

McQueen: Mm-hmm.

Fat Guy: I think he should speak.

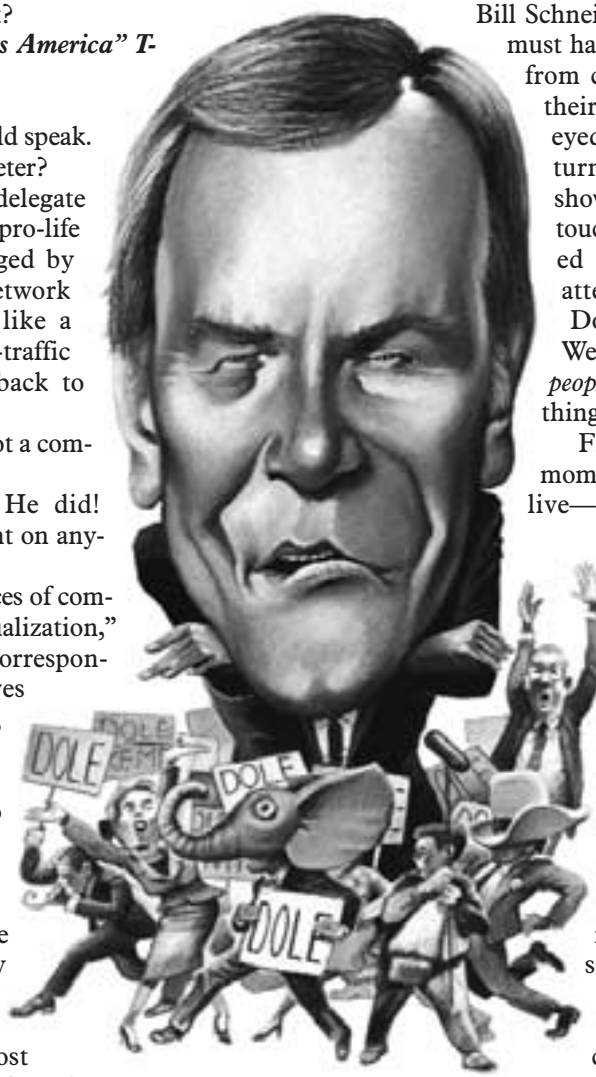
McQueen: Thank you. Peter?

And when a Buchanan delegate showed up on the floor in a pro-life cowboy hat, she was besieged by *Forbidden Planet*-headed network correspondents (it looked like a gang rape by a group of air-traffic controllers). Then it was back to Bernie Shaw in the booth.

"Bill Schneider, you've got a comment on the hat."

And you know what? He did! That Schneider can comment on anything.

In the trade, such instances of comic relief are called "contextualization," a technique by which the correspondents interpose themselves between viewer and event, between the consumer of news and the news itself. In doing so, the hacks hope to place the news in perspective; it has the delicious added benefit of giving them tons of airtime. While the overarching message may have been that the convention was not worth watching, the network stars almost exhausted themselves explaining why.



Kevin Chadwick

Bob Dole's acceptance speech, as is customary nowadays, was introduced by a brief video clip summarizing his life ("The Man from Hopeless," you might call it). None of the Big Three networks found it fit to air in its entirety. But the moment it was over, they set to work telling us what was in it. "What is it they want us to get from this video?" Peter Jennings asked Jeff Greenfield on the convention floor. "Peter," Greenfield responded from beneath his headset, "they want us to get that Bob Dole *is* Russell, Kansas . . . " and so on for another half-minute. CBS wasn't broadcasting the film, either, but it did show Elizabeth Dole watching the film it wasn't showing. At last, in the final seconds, Dan Rather cut to the video. "This is the essence of the film," he assured us. Ah. Well. Thanks so much for sharing.

When Dole finally appeared in the flesh (very tanned), he made his way to the podium across the convention floor, greeting delegates as he went. Bill Schneider was again on the case. He must have assumed that CNN viewers from coast to coast were staring at their sets, slack-jawed and goggle-eyed, utterly flummoxed by this turn of events. "He's trying to show simplicity and the common touch, Bernie," Schneider reported professorially. "This is attempting to show that Bob Dole is a man of the people. We're seeing him *emerge from the people*. . . . It's a very symbolic thing."

Finally, there were those TV moments for which all Republicans live—examples of arrant Liberal Media Bias. The Media Research Center monitored the leftward tilt with its customary vigilance. "It was grand TV," said ABC's Jim Wooten after Colin Powell's speech, "well-scripted, well-staged, craftily designed for a broadcast image of tolerance and diversity that's starkly at odds with reality." For his part, Brokaw lost no opportunity to report the poll results showing that one out of five delegates was a white male millionaire. In an amazing coincidence, three out of three network news anchors are white male millionaires.

But this is not so much liberal bias as typical TV stupidity. Even as the Republicans imposed the idiotizing standards of TV entertainment on their convention, with its mini-speeches and interactive video and celebrity walk-ons, the networks compounded the debacle by imposing on top of it the idiotizing standards of TV news. And with viewership down by 22 percent from 1992, we now know viewers were turning it off. At least somebody was doing something smart last week. ♦

What the Dems Did

by Christopher Caldwell

San Diego

WHO WAS THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL of the speakers to address the nation from the Republican convention last week? George Stephanopoulos, of course. For the first time in living memory, spokesmen of the opposition party—Stephanopoulos, James Carville, Ann Lewis, Sen. Chris Dodd—came into the very heart of a convention to make television appearances.

Republicans, who didn't know what had hit them, were livid that the Democrats were given floor passes by the networks, saying the practice marked the end of a protocol that had lasted through a century of conventions. But Democrats claim there's a perfectly good reason for it. "Media organizations would request interviews," says Democratic National Committee consultant Marla Romash, "and they wanted to do them from their studios. The only passes our people had were to do television." But to get to the television studios, they had to cross the convention floor. It was only after Republican National Committee chairman Haley Barbour said he felt lucky some delegate hadn't accosted Stephanopoulos that the networks began bringing their interview subjects in as stealthily as possible.

Both sides are right: Rival-party interviews at a convention *are* unprecedented, and the Democrats *were* only responding to interview requests. But those requests were the result of a huge Democratic party effort to court them. There are two real innovations here: the organization to send dozens of operatives to an opponent's convention, and the unabashed forwardness to send them onto the floor.

In a week in which Democrats consistently damned the convention for being "highly choreographed and well orchestrated," they were running a highly choreographed and well-orchestrated operation of their own. Their collective focus was the Kemp/Dole economic plan, which (the wording never varied) would "blow a $500 million hole in the deficit."

The DNC and the California Democratic party's campaign joined forces to sublet office space previously occupied by a swimwear manufacturer in a warehouse district ten blocks south of the convention center. There were at least 32 staffers—14 from the DNC, 10 from the California campaign, and eight others—along with a host of volunteers. Heavy hitters included DNC communications director David Eichenbaum, Clinton campaign press secretary Joe Lockhart, pollster Marc Penn, and ad guru Bob Squier. And that's leaving out James Carville, in San Diego under his own financial steam. While not officially with the campaign, Carville "has a role as a surrogate," says Lockhart. "He's a valuable asset." There were other surrogates: The AFL-CIO used part of its $35 million education fund to send a small delegation, and AFL-CIO president John Sweeney gave a "working people's picnic" on the first Sunday of the convention. People for the American Way held a "Right Wing Convention Watch" at 8 every morning.

Also every morning, in a rented art gallery a block from the convention center, Dodd and Lewis would rebut the previous night's speeches, release news to muddle the day's media message, and try to poison the well for the speeches to come. The high point of the Tuesday morning briefing came when Dodd, Lewis, and Colorado governor Roy Romer called out a half-dozen of their own "real people" to vie with the Republicans' similar presentations the night before. After their minute-long speeches, Susan Page of *USA Today* confronted the real people and asked them how they had been contacted. The senior citizen who had complained about Dole's Medicare cuts answered that it had been through "a local Democratic operator" and that he was active in Democratic politics. A student complaining about cuts in loans admitted he'd been contacted through a campus political group.

David Eichenbaum, communications director for the DNC, is quick to make clear that there's a distinction between this and a covert operation. "It's not a secretive thing," he said. "It's all out in the open." But DNC offices in Washington would not reveal the San Diego office's location over the phone, and the office answered its own phones, "Good afternoon. Dorothy speaking. May I help you?"

Romash, who spent a month coordinating the events, thinks the visit served the purpose not just of stepping on Republican stories but of creating Democratic ones as well. "I think of media the way I think of chocolate," she says. "It's hard to ever consider having enough." And a consensus has emerged that the rapid-response team the Democrats unveiled last week can be a formidable tool. Lewis and Dodd alone got into 130 news stories by the third day of the convention, according to a Nexis search. Some Republicans are even heartened by this development. In the wake of controversy over the Stephanopoulos interviews, the GOP has been granted similar access to the networks for the Democratic convention in Chicago next week. And some Republicans argue that the Clinton convention, bound to be focused on negative attacks on Republican policies, will be more vulnerable to short-

circuiting by this kind of *Crossfire*-ization of convention debate. Current plans call for Haley Barbour to attend, and Washington representative Jennifer Dunn wants to go. House Budget Committee chairman John Kasich has been asked to go but has shown some reluctance; that kind of attack-dog role is not his thing. One high-level Dole adviser has recommended the RNC send former South Carolina governor Carroll Campbell, Stanford economist John Taylor, and Hoover Institution economist Martin Anderson.

If the party is hoping to lure interviews with star power, that would be a mistake. But a decision to go with economist types reflects a confident willingness to run on the tax cut. And here the Dole and Clinton campaigns are on common ground. For the Democrats revealed in San Diego that the Clinton campaign is anxious to address the Kemp/Dole economic plan as swiftly as possible—and not, as some have speculated, by drifting towards it. Romash absolutely rules out a tax-cut bidding war with Republicans.

Ann Lewis

Kent Lemon

This in itself is a major break with Democratic party conventional wisdom on presidential elections, which holds that Ronald Reagan beat Walter Mondale in 1984 by disingenuously promising lower taxes than the government could afford. "Mondale?" says Romash. "That's the wrong comparison."

The San Diego operation is evidence, then, that Democrats will bet heavily on their belief that supply-side economics has been thoroughly discredited. "We think the electorate is sophisticated enough," says Lockhart, "to understand that this supply-side money-growing-on-trees philosophy doesn't work."

The Clinton response team is reluctant to say the president favors budget balancing over tax cuts: "We've got a plan for both," says Lockhart. The Clinton White House shows no such reluctance. "If the Republican party no longer worships at the shrine of the balanced budget," says Clinton spokesman Mike McCurry, "we're happy to genuflect at it." ♦

Who Is Scott Reed?

by Matthew Rees

San Diego

Scott Reed was one of the most powerful people here, but hardly a soul among the 20,000 others in town for the convention would have known who he was if his golf cart had rolled over their feet. Perhaps the most self-effacing and least-known campaign manager in post-Watergate presidential politics, Reed is the anti-Carville. He spent convention week almost entirely absent from public view, holed up in the campaign's office at the Hyatt, poring over Bob Dole's speech.

In the constellation of Dole campaign advisers, Reed stands out in one simple respect: He still has his job. In two previous runs for president, Dole distinguished himself not by his performance in the primaries, but by his shabby treatment of campaign aides. In 1988, he notoriously left a group of out-of-favor advisers on an airport tarmac in Florida. That negative reputation has inadvertently benefited Reed. This time around, Dole needed to silence the talk that he is a mean SOB, so he couldn't go around leaving people on tarmacs—even people running presidential campaign efforts that seemed to be going nowhere.

The secret to Reed's success has been his low-key, unthreatening approach with Dole. Reed prods his candidate to act when necessary, but mostly he just lays out the relevant information and leaves him to make the final decision. "Scott understood from the beginning that a staff trying to manipulate Dole is bound to fail," says a top campaign aide.

The Dole/Reed relationship is as strong as it's ever been—indeed, in a rally the day after the convention ended, Dole specifically praised Reed, in part, he said, because Reed hadn't received enough attention—but there have been conflicts. Last year, it was Reed who

decided—without Dole's knowledge—to return a $1,000 campaign contribution made by a group of homosexual Republicans, only to have Dole reverse the decision a few months later and criticize his staff in the process. According to Bob Woodward's account of the episode in *The Choice*, Reed told Dole the reversal was "a terrible, terrible mistake" that was "a blemish on your character." Reed played his trump card in the same conversation, telling his candidate the move sent a signal "that you have no confidence in me and your whole campaign team. And that's bad—not for me—*but we go back to the old Dole*."

Scott Reed

Kent Lemon

Many times in the past year the long knives have been out for Reed, and political writers have been at the ready with his professional obituary. After unexpectedly tying Phil Gramm in an Iowa straw poll last summer, and then failing to meet expectations in a Florida straw poll a few months later, Dole only narrowly won the Iowa primary and placed second in New Hampshire and Delaware. It seemed a change was needed at the top—but it was not Reed who was changed. Instead, Reed convinced Dole to allow him to demote chief strategist William Lacy. This was no small gesture: Lacy, a longtime Dole adviser, had not only recruited and hired Reed to join the campaign, he was also Reed's close friend. Coincidence or not, Dole began chalking up victories soon after the shakeup.

Prior to signing on with Dole, Reed spent two years as chief of staff to Republican National Committee chairman Haley Barbour, where he was one of the engineers of the Contract with America. That effort, national in scope, involved coordinating hundreds of congressional campaigns and was ideal training for Reed's job as campaign manager for Dole.

So was Reed's experience with Jack Kemp. Reed was a field director in Kemp's disastrous 1988 presidential campaign and served as his chief of staff at HUD. Reed owes at least some of his success with the notoriously unmanageable Dole to having spent four years with someone as undisciplined as Kemp.

We'll see whether he can keep a lid on Kemp, and whether he is prepared for the gargantuan task of running a general election campaign. But after a successful vice-presidential selection and convention week, he's in a stronger position now than at any point since signing up with Dole in January 1995. The unknown giant of the Dole campaign won't be able to remain in the shadows for long. ♦

Dial 1-800-Voter Fraud

by Tucker Carlson

Long Beach, California

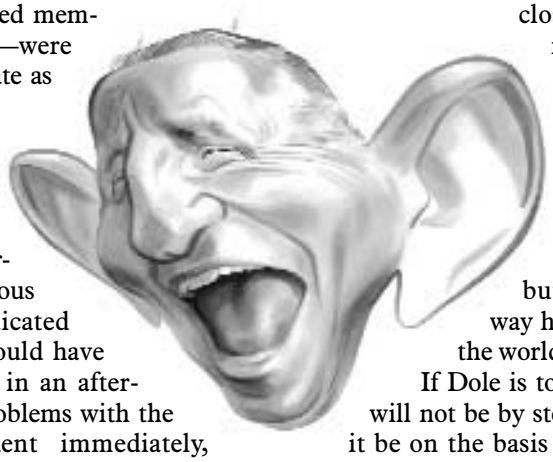
Ross Perot has always argued that technology can make the political process more democratic, and so more equitable and effective. Earlier this month, he tested his theory. Following the August 11 Reform party convention here, members had a week to choose either Perot or Dick Lamm as their presidential nominee. The Perot-conceived voting scheme allowed party members to cast ballots at the convention itself, by mail, even by signing on to a special site on the Internet. Most, however, voted the same way they order commemorative Norman Rockwell plates from the Franklin Mint: by calling an 800 number.

The Reform party had set up two such lines, both of which were advertised heavily at the convention and on television. One line registered votes for Perot, the other for Lamm. Party members were told to dial one of the numbers, punch in an 11-digit personal identity code supplied by the Reform party, and wait for the attractive female voice to declare, "Your vote has been counted." Each PIN was unique and recorded in a computer database, a precaution meant to

ensure that only registered voters voted and that nobody voted more than once.

The balloting system was hailed by Perot employees as fraud-proof—and in a party created to make politics cleaner and more responsive to ordinary people, this was not an insignificant point. At the Long Beach convention, Reform party officials went so far as to haul an executive from the accounting firm of Ernst & Young on stage to assure that a crack team of "information data security specialists" from his company would be overseeing the process, guaranteeing its integrity.

Something happened on the way to a legitimate election. As it turned out, the party's automated voice-vote system was unable to distinguish between a genuine PIN and a randomly selected 11-digit number. This meant that callers—registered members of the Reform party or not—were able to vote for the same candidate as many times as they liked. Doubtless many did. I did, as I tested the flaws in the system. It wasn't even necessary to vary the bogus number; the computer didn't seem to notice. The opportunities for voter fraud were obvious and awesome: A couple of dedicated Perot partisans with speeddial could have won their man the nomination in an afternoon. Moreover, although the problems with the tele-voting system were evident immediately, Reform party officials apparently did nothing to fix them. Six days after the voting began, the vote-for-Ross Perot line was still accepting any 11 digits a caller cared to enter.



As commentary on the ethical sloppiness of the Reform party, the story is revealing. In the hands of a Dole campaign flak hoping to illustrate why Ross Perot is not a legitimate presidential candidate, it could be devastating. But don't expect to hear it anytime soon, at least not from the Dole spinners. They've decided to give Perot a pass.

According to Gary Koops, deputy director of communications for Dole '96, there will be no negative ads against Perot, no concerted campaign to undermine his candidacy. In fact, as yet, there is no real strategy even for responding to Perot. The reason: There doesn't need to be. Recent polling, says Koops, shows a Perot ticket pulling votes from Clinton, not Dole. If anything, it might not be such a bad thing if Perot's support increases from its present single-digit range.

That's the official line anyway. It sounds plausible enough—and it is true that some polls have shown Perot hurting Democrats in the fall—but the savvier Dole advisers don't buy it. They argue that as a third-party candidate Perot can do nothing but cut into the anti-incumbent vote. Common sense and recent history bolster this view. Worse, many in Perot's core constituency—veterans, older voters, middle-class voters—are instinctively conservative in many ways, and unusually hostile to Bill Clinton. These are people Bob Dole can and should woo.

And, in his way, Dole is trying to woo them, mostly by making the case that Republicans have already addressed the issues Perot raised in 1992. "The Republican party *is* the Reform party," Dole says in speeches. Again, this approach is not irrational, but it does constitute a fundamental misreading of the Perot voter. Perot people aren't terribly interested in The Issues, not as most politicos understand them—which is to say, as ideas. Instead, they're animated by what are close to ordinary class resentments: of politicians, of lobbyists, of the media, of anyone who wields power in mystifying and apparently malignant ways. At Reform party gatherings, it is not talk of deficit reduction that draws the strongest reaction, but attacks on inside-the-Beltway hacks who seem to be running the world.

If Dole is to wrest support from Perot, it will not be by stealing his platform. (Nor will it be on the basis of superior rhetorical skills. Anyone who has watched Perot deliver a stump speech recently can testify to the Texan's ability to mesmerize a crowd.) Instead, Dole can neutralize Perot by discrediting him as a political figure, by pointing out his demagoguery, reminding voters of his creepy behavior. And he should. Perot deserves it.

As it stands, the Dole campaign does not appear ready to take Perot seriously, much less engage him aggressively. There is no plan, for instance, to try to make sure that only the two major candidates participate in the presidential debates later this year—which would clearly seem to be in Dole's interest. It's true that Perot plans to run a huge advertising campaign (rumors had him angling to purchase television time even before he won his party's nomination). Still, no amount of money can buy the legitimacy, not to mention the tens of millions of television viewers, a place in the debates would give him. Does any of this concern the Dole campaign? Have campaign officials thought through a strategy on this? "We haven't even had a meeting on the debates," says Gary Koops, in the tone one reserves for those who ask ridiculous questions.

Maybe they should put it on the agenda. ♦

John Kascht

The Death of Jeffersonian America?

By Andrew Peyton Thomas

"The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body." So said Thomas Jefferson—with fitting pugnacity—and who would take issue with him these days, given the horrendous troubles afflicting American cities? One need not agree with his conviction that his rural neighbors plowing the Virginia soil were the "chosen people of God" to be wistful for the country-fried images of local democracy and peaceful communities his writings evoke. His fears that industrialism would mark the demise of the agrarian age and usher in a wave of ominous social disruptions seem to have been borne out in spectacular fashion, especially in the criminal violence loosed in America's largest cities.

Yet for all the complaints we are used to hearing from city-dwellers about the crime, pollution, traffic, and general pandemonium raging around them, such grievances always have been just talk. Until now. Buffeted and harassed by the worsening conditions of city life, Americans may finally be heeding Jefferson's warnings. After over two centuries of industrialization and accompanying shifts in population from rural to urban areas, there is now hard evidence that these trends are being reversed. Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau show that between 1990 and 1994, 74 percent of America's rural areas grew in population. In contrast, during the 1980s, 55 percent of rural areas lost population.

Today, unemployment rates are falling, and employment is growing, faster in rural areas. Fifty-six percent of the new growth in the rural population is the result of new arrivals moving in. Alan Ehrenhalt of *Governing* magazine recently conducted a survey of small towns in Oklahoma in response to these statistical trends and confirmed that there is indeed a "small-town comeback" taking place. He noted that the influx of new residents is spurring an "investment boomlet" in previously moribund downtowns, turning near-ghost towns into thriving dots on the state's map.

Of course, these statistics suggest the beginning of a gradual change in population patterns rather than widespread urban flight. Nonetheless, we may well be experiencing the first stage of a momentous transformation of American life. Fed up with big-city living and economically free to return to smaller towns, Americans seem to be voting with their feet in favor of the rural republic lionized by our third president. Jeffersonian America is making a comeback.

Jefferson's declarations on behalf of the yeoman farmers around him were a defense of a way of life he knew was gravely threatened by technological progress. It is a telling sign of how much these apprehensions have remained with us that, when Jefferson's name is used as an adjective today, it is generally in connection with his love of rural folk and their institutions and not with democracy, liberty, and his other, less earthy preoccupations. This judgment of posterity might well make a smile curl up from the stone-carved lips of Jefferson's statue by the Potomac. For just as it is fitting that "Jeffersonian" is used to describe the ideas of this philosopher-president and not his deeds—who would call the Louisiana Purchase "Jeffersonian"?—it would undoubtedly please him that his name has become securely fastened to the view that a society is asking for trouble unless it is anchored to an economy of gentleman farmers.

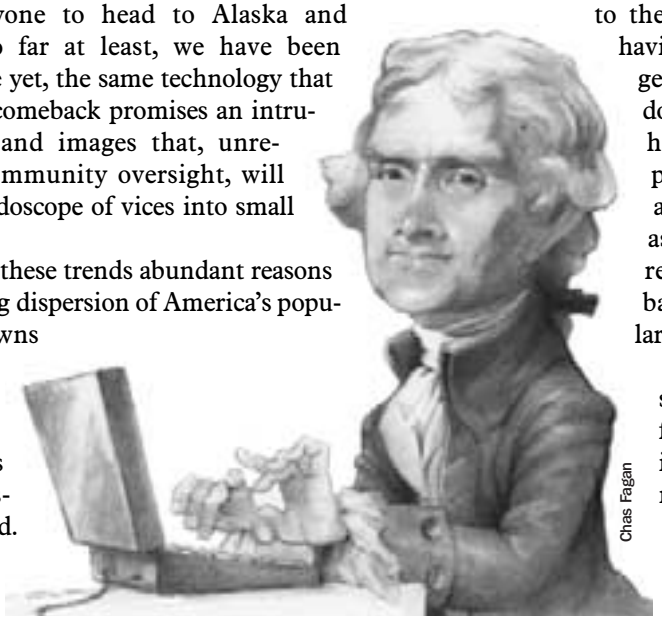
Jefferson was saddened by the very phenomenon that may restore his vision: the fact that commerce is the sultan of demographics, and that people generally move where the money is. The huge cities of our time sprang up as a response to the Industrial Revolution, which dangled the lure of higher wages before the farmers and sharecroppers who had the courage and drive to abandon their fields for urban factories and offices.

Now, technology is restoring our ability to live outside large cities while receiving roughly the same pay. As the transmission of information has become more important to the economy than the manufacture of goods and appliances, it is increasingly true that all one needs to conduct business is a phone line. Ehrenhalt found companies in Oklahoma's small towns deal-

Andrew Peyton Thomas, a Bradley Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, is general counsel for the Arizona Department of Agriculture and the author of Crime and the Sacking of America: The Roots of Chaos.

ing in commodities as varied as computer software and racing silks for horse jockeys, companies that were able to set up shop there precisely because of this very recent technological freedom.

Liberated from the financial enticements of the big cities, city-dwellers on America's coasts are looking with new interest to the scantily inhabited towns of the nation's interior. But these would-be urban nomads should be informed before they pull up stakes that Jeffersonian America, in its fullest sense, long ago vanished and probably for good. For one thing, there are too many of us now: 220 million more of us than in Jefferson's time. The only way to replicate the string of small, self-contained towns that characterized America then is for everyone to head to Alaska and Wyoming—which, so far at least, we have been unwilling to do. Worse yet, the same technology that is enabling this rural comeback promises an intrusion of information and images that, unrestrained by law or community oversight, will inject a veritable kaleidoscope of vices into small towns.


Chas Fagan

And yet we find in these trends abundant reasons to hope that the coming dispersion of America's population to smaller towns will make us a safer and better society. To find out if there are solid grounds for this optimism, three questions must be answered. First, do small towns, as Jefferson believed, produce better citizens than cities do? Second, regardless of where we live, will the new technology of the Information Age improve or corrupt us? Third, will the former city-dwellers moving to small towns become better citizens because of their move, or will they simply transform small towns until they resemble the crime-plagued places they thought they had left behind?

The issue of whether rural life is more wholesome than city-dwelling has hounded philosophers from the beginning of their trade. In the fourth century B.C., as Athens and its surrounding city-states were sliding into fratricidal chaos, the Chinese philosopher Chuang-tze was admonishing his countrymen to flee government and society and seek the serenity and spiritual enrichment of life in the woods. This was 1,500 years before Rousseau would so chide Westerners, and thereby earn Voltaire's stinging retort in defense of city life and civil society: "On reading your book one feels tempted to go on all fours."

Let us join this perennial city-vs.-country argument to add a few lessons learned the hard way from our high-crime age. Small towns offer certain unassailable social advantages over cities. The individual in a small town, first of all, is not able to hide his transgressions amidst the urban multitudes. His loss of anonymity allows for two important social controls lacking in the metropolis. Peer pressure can effectively be brought to bear against unruly neighbors in small towns, because the people there feel the sting of being singled out and held up for public censure. Such informal community punishment is far cheaper than cops and jails, and far more efficacious. This writer, who grew up in the Ozarks of southern Missouri, can attest to the strength of such sanctions, having been the well-justified target of harsh gossip at the town donut shop for being at once the high school's student-body president and a habitual truant and drunkard. Such barbs assuredly promise better results, by and large, than the banging of a judge's gavel in a large, impersonal city.

The lack of anonymity in a small town offers an even more fundamental benefit for the individual and society. It requires people to acknowledge their neighbors as individuals, not as merely indistinguishable faces in a crowd. The most amiable example of this small-town advantage is to be seen in the way country folk wave at each other as they pass in automobiles—even from behind the steel-and-glass armor of a motor vehicle, even to complete strangers. It is considered impolite not to recognize the individual humanity of a person you have encountered along the way to your destination. After all, he is most likely one of your neighbors.

A mass return to small towns, then, can only be cause for cheer among those concerned about America's current social breakup. Yet it remains to be seen whether Information Age technology will complement or hinder the social benefits of a rural renaissance. On one hand, new telecommunications will inevitably further fragment society; the Internet, virtual reality, and other devices vitiate the need for direct human contact. The potential for a mass surrender to a narcissistic fantasy world at the expense of family and civic ties is real and obvious.

But before we despair that science has become an agent of national suicide, we can find plenty of reason to hope that these new-fangled modes of communication will mean more than simply exporting urban decadence to small towns. The same technology holds the prospect of strengthening the family by permitting large numbers of us to work at home for the first time since the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization changed the family farm from the centerpiece of our economy to a quaint and vanishing oddity, and swept away with it parents' ability to work alongside their children on their own land. Parents were no longer able to teach their children simultaneously an honorable profession and solid social values.

With computers, fax machines, and other equipment installed in residences, people could forgo commuting to central work sites, performing their quota of work from their homes. This decentralization of work might isolate us more than ever, especially those of us without family. But it would also enable parents once again to spend large amounts of time with their children. The increased exposure to home and hearth would seem to promise better child-rearing and less criminal mischief by those children once grown.

We are compelled to ask, finally, if these trends will mean the reemergence of something like Jeffersonian America on a broad scale, or merely the corruption of small towns by urban expatriates. And in answering this question, we must look first to the ideological chasm that has opened between city-dwellers and country folk. The chasm is evident in everything from voting patterns (city-dwellers are more liberal, townspeople more conservative) to the social clashes that are flaring up in the small towns where city folk are making their new abodes. This growing divide runs roughly between those who follow the philosophy of the computer and those who remain the loyal disciples of Jefferson.

City folk—particularly the college-educated professionals inventing and manning the cutting edge technology of our day—espouse the philosophy that justifies and sustains both these new technological changes and their live-and-let-live urban lifestyle. This theory is libertarianism. Every economic age requires a philosophy to justify it, if only so that its participants can find some civic meaning in earning their daily bread. The Industrial Revolution produced two main philosophies, which squared off through proxies until the end of the Cold War—Marxism and capitalism. Marx supplied a respectable theory for revolutionaries wishing to steal the property of the masses; Adam Smith came to the service of those who wished to accumulate wealth without fear of government meddling and confiscation.

Libertarianism, which traces back to the British philosopher John Stuart Mill, is the philosophy of the Information Age. And while it seeks to conscript Jefferson for its cause, libertarianism harbors certain ideas that would unsettle even the iconoclastic Virginian. Libertarianism teaches that government and the community it represents should be highly limited in size and function, so that they do not infringe upon individual liberty and economic decision-making. In political circles, libertarianism can be recognized as the yuppie philosophy of "fiscally conservative and socially liberal." It embraces the new technological changes because they permit greater personal autonomy and freedom of choice.

Things become somewhat dicey, however, because libertarianism offers a set of ideas that has proved unstable in practice. The more extreme, and increasingly popular, versions of libertarianism preach that moral relativism should be written into law. The community cannot rightfully exercise authority over sexuality and family life, free expression, even drug use, because decisions in those areas must be made by the individual, no matter how irresponsible and in need of social guidance he may be. The lonely but titillated individual at the center of the new libertarianism finds his closest ally in the technology that permits people to move away from cities and their problems—and, more fundamentally, from other people in general. Ironically, then, libertarianism encourages a flight to rural life—if not necessarily to small towns—while also emphasizing a system of values that would change these towns so that Jefferson, and the rest of us, would not recognize them.

The resulting conflict between libertarian refugees from cities and the small-town defenders of Jeffersonian America was well documented in an April 1994 article in the *Wall Street Journal*. It observed the "cultural mismatch" that has taken place as Californians have moved into St. George, Utah, and other small towns in the area. The Californians complain about a lack of urban entertainment, the strict liquor laws, and grating, goody-goody morals. St. George natives, predominantly Mormons, lament steep rises in the town's crime and illegitimacy rates (crime rates doubled in only four years), the Californians' love of the lawsuit, and a general rudeness in the newcomers. Observed a wise local rancher: "People don't like it where they are, so they come here and try to make it just like the place they left." Those of us who prefer quiet neighborhoods to anything-goes urban thrills may instinctively side with the residents of St. George and share their somber fears that such places will become smaller ver-

sions of our violent urban cores.

The return of small-town living will earn the name "Jeffersonian" only when both newcomers and natives follow more carefully the values that distinguished the simple rural folk idealized by the master of Monticello: industry, integrity, civic-mindedness, self-denial. These values conflict with the moral *laissez-faire* disorder of libertarianism, the value system that guides most of the young couples escaping the libertarian-created problems of southern California and elsewhere. The wide-scale introduction of such values to our small towns would mean, at last, the death of Jeffersonian America, rather than its rebirth.

It remains to be seen, then, whether small towns will absorb these newcomers and change them for the better, or whether it will be the towns themselves that change. For those people who would move from our dysfunctional big cities to small towns, thinking they can thereby escape all their problems without taking a hard look at their own lives and thoughts, make a fundamental miscalculation that will forever frustrate their efforts. They bring themselves with them. ♦

Peer Review and Its Discontents

By Neal B. Freeman

The most terrifying moment in journalism occurs when two scientific studies thump on your desk simultaneously. One study, from Ph.D. Smith, says, roughly, that the sky is falling. The other study, by Ph.D. Jones, says, roughly, that the sky is just fine. In fact, the sky may be *rising*. These studies can be about the air we breathe or the water we drink or the food we eat or the drugs we take. The anxiety attack is quick and sure.

What to do, as the clock on the wall ticks toward deadline? Most journalists (including those of us who produce science television) face such moments armed only with a semester or two of hard science. The practical options reduce to these: 1) Read the studies and try to make sense of them. This never happens. 2) Yield to the natural instinct and fire off a slightly hedged version of "the sky is falling." This happens only occasionally, but still too often: Journalistic careers are not built, after all, on thick files of "the sky is just fine" stories. 3) Search for an authoritative source, a credible third party on which to hang the story. This is the option of choice—and the source of serious problems now emerging in the scientific community.

What a journalist needs in these anxious moments is protective cover, and he finds it in these magic words: "peer review." It's a marvelously reassuring phrase, summoning images of avuncular mentors looking over the shoulders of researchers at the bench, double-checking data, approving methodology. And in some cases, the images are reasonably close to reality. If you want to see your tax dollars effectively at work, check out a peer-review hearing at the Food and Drug Administration. The agency invites top experts in the field—FDA staff, academics, practicing physicians. They sit around a horseshoe table in the middle of which stands a bare microphone. In the audience are professional rivals, investigators from related studies, corporate reps, Naderites, kibitzers of all sorts. The atmosphere is polite but tightly structured. The author of the study introduces his thesis and the group then has at it. For eight hours or more. Peer review at this level is full-contact intellectual roller derby, and only the rigorous survive.

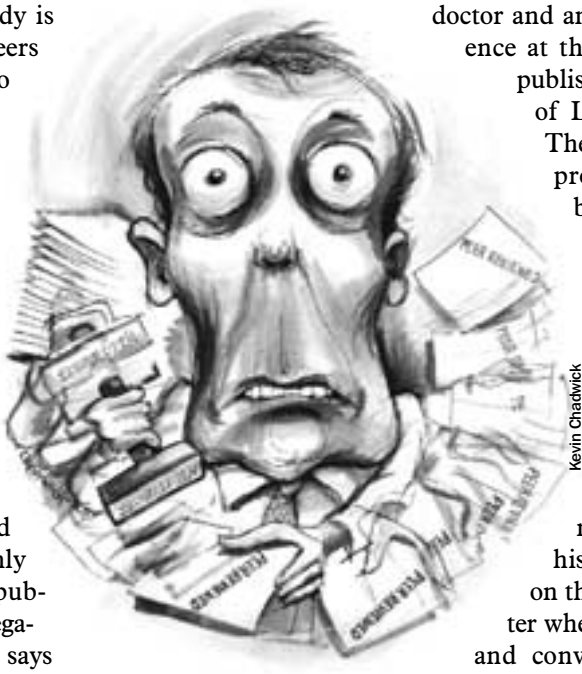
But there's peer review, and then there's peer review. Take the case of magazines invariably referred to as "leading medical journals"—the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (*JAMA*) and the *New England Journal of Medicine*, to name the two most prestigious. The fact that they are peer-reviewed casts the same tranquilizing spell over journalists as does an open FDA hearing. When *JAMA* comes out with a big story, it jumps the editorial queue and appears immaculately on the evening news. How many times have you heard Tom Brokaw or Peter Jennings speak the ominous words, "The prestigious *Journal of the Ameri-*

Neal B. Freeman is a Peabody Award-winning television producer for The Blackwell Corporation. Tom Knisely assisted in the research for this article.

can Medical Association reported today that . . . "

Note the verb: Leading medical journals *report*. The pope doesn't report. The dean of Yale doesn't report. Even Colin Powell doesn't report. The president of the United States is lucky if he *announces*. More often these days, he *charges*, or if he's having a bad verb day, he *denies* or *shrugs off*. The poor speaker of the House *claims*, which is the journalistic equivalent of an FDA warning label. *Report* is a heavy word, and one is hard pressed to think of another institution routinely entitled to use it.

Which begs this question: Just how reliable is the peer-review process upon which this extraordinary authority is based? Here's how *JAMA* subjects an article submitted for publication to peer review. First, the study is sent out to as many as 10 peers with credentials in the field. So far, so good—but then the exceptions begin to creep in.



Kevin Chadwick

For starters, there are times when only three, two, or even one reviewer actually participates—for all kinds of reasons. And there is no rule that reviewers must recommend unanimously that a study be published. Indeed, there is no *JAMA* rule that a study must command even a *majority* of reviewers. (The distinguished British journal *Lancet* uses only two reviewers, but will not publish if both of them review negatively. "It wouldn't be right," says staff editor Clair Thompson. The *New England Journal of Medicine*, which also uses two reviewers, will print studies panned by both reviewers. "It's rare," says editor Jerome Kassirer, "but we do it.") One scientist who publishes frequently (but not in *JAMA*) treasures a note from a journal editor clipped to a file of negative reviews: "F— it, I like it and we're going to publish." *JAMA* does not feel obliged to inform its readers when reviewers recommend against publication.

And then there's the policy that reviewers are never identified with a particular study. *JAMA* explains that anonymity secures a higher level of objectivity while insuring reviewers against professional reprisal. (A curious response, at least to the journalistic ear. The reporter's experience has long been that, in most circumstances, a source willing to go on the record is more credible than a source who requests anonymity. And of course it's the rare lawyer who assumes anonymous allegations to be intrinsically more credible than charges made in open court.)

What we have, in the case of *JAMA*, is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes articles selected by an editor after he has consulted with unidentified reviewers who may or may not have deemed the article worthy of publication. In other words, peer review does not mean peer approval. For the editor, this comes pretty close to absolute power, and we all know what absolute power can do.

Fortunately, *JAMA*'s incumbent editor is a man of distinguished background and, by all accounts, high character. George Lundberg is himself a medical doctor and an editor with 14 years' experience at the magazine. But if *JAMA* is published with integrity, it's because of Lundberg's sterling conduct: There is not much of a system, a process, on which other, lesser beings can rely. *JAMA* is practicing "trust-me" journalism, the scientific equivalent of Bob Woodward's deathbed interviews. Woodward gets away with it because he's Woodward, and Lundberg gets away with it because he's running *JAMA*, which appears to speak for most American doctors. The history of the human race is clear on this point: Free societies do better when power is restrained by rules and conventions rather than by the unfettered judgments of individual men, however high-minded. (Another scientist, generally an admirer of Lundberg's, told me that all editors play favorites and researchers must game the system to avoid reviews "by people who hate me.")

Just as peer review tends to take idiosyncratic shape in the eye of the beholder, so do the adjectives velcroed to medical journals. They all seem to be "prestigious" or "authoritative." Take the case of a journal much in the news lately, the *American Journal of Hypertension*. It is a relatively new publication, eight years old, and serves a readership of less than 4,000. It is not generally considered a first-tier journal, but it is one of the industry's most energetic practitioners of science by press release, in which a study's findings are summarized, and hyped, for media distribution.

Follow the likely chain of evidence and you'll see

the problem. The researcher, an expert in a narrow specialty, reports to the editor, who is perforce a generalist. The editor then explains the study to his publicist, who then explains the story to a network-news producer. The producer's natural query is, "How far can we go?" The publicist wants to be cooperative. The producer then explains the story to the broadcast's managing editor/anchorman, whose first question is, "What's the headline here?" The anchorman then takes 22 seconds to explain it to the rest of us. Anybody who played Telephone in second grade will be able to calculate the odds that the researcher's nuance survived this journey. In *Hypertension*'s case, one of its own officials complained in an internal document that a recent press release was "as inflammatory a statement as can be imagined." That inflammatory statement, of course, made the network news intact.

Hypertension is the beneficiary of a happy confluence of motives between journal staffers and the news outlets they flak: The staffers wish to elevate themselves to "prestige" status for all the obvious reasons, and the media types seek to hang their sky-is-falling stories on "prestige" sources. Thus is a prestigious publication born. The press traditionally sees its role as questioning authority, but in this circumstance the press is vesting authority. Reporters who wouldn't think of taking handouts from, say, the Pentagon, snatch them from obscure medical journals.

When dealing with peer-reviewed science—the point at which even skeptics and ideological opponents must be prepared to say as a society that the jury is now in and the truth is now out—laymen have a right to expect solid fact and sound process. We have a right to expect transparency—the traditional scientific approach in which the researcher's work is open to inspection, the reviewers stand by their critiques, the debate is joined, and the community works toward consensus. The public has placed great trust in our scientific institutions—in many cases, the trust to make life-and-death decisions for the rest of us. It's time for the peer-reviewed journals to undergo some rigorous peer review. ♦

Was Punk Rock Right-Wing?

By Daniel Wattenberg

Punk, the most notorious pseudo-movement in the history of 20th-century popular music, is becoming cuddly with age. The Sex Pistols, punk's most outrageous act, has reunited after almost two decades to travel the United States in the aptly named Filthy Lucre Tour. The Pistols are without their famous bassist Sid Vicious, who could not join his former colleagues because he died of a heroin overdose in 1979 while awaiting trial for the murder of his wife. Even so, the Sex Pistols tour has generated friendly and amused press coverage about the bald spots, pot bellies, and mellow attitudes sported by these once-vilified nihilistic revolutionaries. And if you just can't get enough romantic celebrations of junkies and speed freaks, you can turn to *Please Kill Me*, a brand-new oral history from punk journalist Legs McNeil.

I was a part of the punk scene in late 1970s New York, where it was invented—fast, brief songs which playfully evoked rock 'n' roll's pre-acid-rock Age of Innocence. The New York scene had an ethos different from the militant class-consciousness of the British punk the Sex Pistols represented. New York punks were unapologetic about their comfortable suburban origins, playful and irreverent in tone, and pretty affirmative about modern American life. Indeed, in many ways, New York punk represented a first skirmish within American popular culture with the then-gathering forces of political correctness.

A small but very influential segment of the punk community (centered around the group known as the Ramones and the fanzine *Punk*, the closest thing there was to an encyclical for orthodox New York punks) explicitly rejected at one time or another just about every one of the reverse pieties then associated with the Left: anti-commercialism, anti-Americanism, reverse racism, you name it. This was coupled with an assault on the stale residue of the sixties counterculture, the whole sleepy, slit-eyed, vegetative, sexually, intellectually, and emotionally subdued, value-neutral, tie-dyed, and forever-fried cannabis cult that worked its way through suburban basements and college dorm rooms in the seventies.

> MANY PUNKS LEFT SUBURBIA FOR NEW YORK, AND WHEN THEY LEFT, THEY LEFT BEHIND LIBERAL WHITE SUBURBAN GUILT.

While Malcolm McLaren, the anarchist conceptual agitator behind the Sex Pistols, may have scorned "commodity capitalism," New York punks breezily celebrated consumer sovereignty. Mary Harron, a journalist who interviewed the Ramones for the first issue of *Punk*, described it this way in Jon Savage's book *England's Dreaming*: "For the first time Bohemia embraced fast-food. It was about saying yes to the modern world. Punk, like Warhol, embraced everything that cultured people, and hippies, detested: plastic, junk food, B-movies, advertising, making money—although no one ever did. You got so sick of people being so nice, mouthing an enforced attitude of goodness and health."

Many punks left suburbia for New York, and when they left, they left behind liberal white suburban guilt. While McNeil is mysteriously reticent about punk political leanings in his own book, he described them explicitly in Savage's:

"We all had the same reference points: White Castle hamburgers, muzak, malls. And we were all white: There were no black people involved with this. In the sixties hippies always wanted to be black. . . . We had nothing in common with black people at that time: We'd had ten years of being politically correct, and we were going to have fun, like kids are supposed to do. It was funny: You'd see guys going out to a punk club, passing black people going into a disco, and they'd be looking at each other, not with disgust, but 'Isn't it weird that they want to go there.' There were definite right-wing overtones."

Consider. The Ramones' third album was called *Rocket to Russia*. Its back-cover cartoon provides a punk map of the world: An ICBM has been launched at "Russia" from South Florida. Pacing his island,

Daniel Wattenberg is a contributing editor of George.

Fidel Castro looks up nervously, scared the missile might drop on him. Russia is depicted as a giant labor camp, with a slave-laborer hauling a bag marked "Salt" groaning under the whip of a slave-driver. Other regions are denoted by ethnic caricatures of the kind that were staples of Saturday morning cartoons in the sixties, were subversively insensitive in the seventies when they were drawn, and would today be grounds for a lawsuit. *Punk*, the fanzine, regularly tweaked "commies," Russia, hippies, drug addicts, *High Times* magazine, the *Village Voice*, "lesbos," and "faggots."

Savage is embarrassed by such attitudes. He interprets them in terms of "put-on" or the "excitement of the broken taboo." In the case of, say, the anti-gay stance, he's right. There were too many gays involved in punk as performers and fans for that stance to be taken at face value.

But was it *all* put-on? Johnny Ramone described his politics as "ultraconservative" in an interview with a college newspaper in Oregon in 1985, long after it could have been considered fashionably outré. "I like Ronnie," he said of Reagan. "Except he's a little liberal." *Punk*, for its part, even attacked the Clash, then England's biggest (and most dogmatically left-wing) band. "They started with 'I'm So Bored with the U.S.A,'" a high-school student named Jolly wrote in a concert review. "I didn't like it as a song to start with, because it's anti-America and they're playing in America, so if they don't like it then why did they come?"

In an interview, Jolly and *Punk* editor John Holmstrom make militant Clash frontman Joe Strummer look like a posturing blowhard. In one exchange, after Strummer comes pretty close to condoning political terrorism, high-schooler Jolly lowers the boom:

Strummer: Anyone who goes into a terrorist action has gotta be on his own. He's got to have thought it through. It's such an extreme action—pullin' out a gun and shootin'—right. . . . We play with these symbols because we feel

Kevin Chadwick

there's some kind of reality that's our lot. We've had explosions in London—waves of them.

Jolly: From what?

Strummer: From the I.R.A. They come over and bomb London because they're tryin' to get attention. They're tryin' to get some support for their cause—which is the wrong way to go about it.

Jolly: They should raise their *hand*!

Elsewhere, Holmstrom keeps interrupting a disjointed Strummer rant about capitalism to point out the obvious: England has been living under degrees of socialist paternalism since just after the war.

Jolly: What's all this communism jazz?

Strummer: Let me tell you my politics are and have always been and always will be to the left. . . I'm not into f—ing people working away in factories doing useless boring jobs just for some c— to take the rake off. But I don't want to say that I'm a socialist or that I'm a communist, 'cause I f—in' hate parties and party doctrine. . . . So that's what it is, the communist jazz—the fact is we are left and that we ain't into any sort of capitalist scene like it's set up so they say what they want in the papers. They con everybody and they've got control of the media and they can say what they want you to think.

Holmstrom: You think that's capitalist?

Strummer: Yeah, they're capitalists.

Holmstrom: I don't think so. . . . Capitalism is a way of distributing wealth.

Strummer: Yeah! But look at the way it operates in England—lorry drivers on strike, right?

Holmstrom: That's socialism.

Strummer: All the press has printed strike stories just to whip up the feeling of—Bring in the army! Break up the strike! When all those f—ing guys wanted was 60 quid a week and that to me is the way the capitalist system works.

Holmstrom: But you're talking about newspapers in a socialist system.

Strummer: But we ain't got no socialist system in England. Now they're talking about socialist millionaires. I've read that countless times. What the f— is a socialist millionaire?

Strummer was soon to find out what the f— a socialist millionaire is. He became one. Alone among the first generation of British punk bands, the Clash ultimately made it very big in America. Their diatribes against American consumer culture and paeans to Castro and the Sandinistas endeared them to America's leftish rock critical establishment, which gave them a free ride long after they had grown musically insipid.

For a long time after racial injustice or fear of the draft had stopped pushing the young into the arms of the Left, a kind of lingering countercultural sex appeal continued to seduce them, well into the 1970s. But then the punks came along, and almost overnight, it seemed, that mystique evaporated.

It started in the Bohemian circles of the Lower East Side, and I saw it unfold after a lag of a couple of years on the Columbia campus. Suddenly, the undergraduate activists who spent summers harvesting coffee in Nicaragua were devoid of any romantic allure; they were just badgering mouthpieces of a Left rapidly institutionalizing itself in the academy. And the freaks, amiable and inoffensive though they were, seemed less like intrepid cultural explorers and more like cultural museum pieces—something out of a Cheech and Chong movie.

There was in punk a recurring note of revulsion at what the liberal permissiveness of the sixties and seventies had wrought, whether it was the blissfully zonked inertia of the "freaks" or the middle-aged lewdness and collapsed nasal septa of the disco scene. For example, Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers were punk pioneers, and their anti-drugs, pro-monogamy, pro-parents, pro-America messages expressed a basic decency and respect. It is a measure of the times that such attitudes could be considered either a little reactionary or cutting-edge. In "Someone I Care About," Richman sang:

> I don't want some cocaine-sniffing triumph in the bar
> I don't want a triumph in a car
> I don't want to make a rich girl crawl
> What I want is a girl that I care about
> Or I want nothing at all.

In "I'm Straight," he told a girl he liked why she should lose her hippie boyfriend and take up with him:

> I saw you today walk by with, y'know, Hippy Johnny
> Look, I had to call up and say I want to take his place
> See, he's stoned—Hippy Johnny
> Now get this, I'm straight, and I want to take his place.

A LINGERING COUNTERCULTURAL SEX APPEAL CONTINUED TO SEDUCE THE YOUNG WELL INTO THE 1970S. BUT THEN THE PUNKS CAME ALONG.

The bits of anti-drug rhetoric scattered through punk would crystallize a few years later into the strict no-drugs, no-booze regimen of the hardcore bands, punk's immediate successors. In "Modern World," Richman implored a college girl to drop out and leave all that mopey undergraduate negativism behind her:

> I'm in love with the U.S.A.
> I'm in love with the modern world
> Put down the cigarette
> And drop out of B.U.
> The modern world is not so bad.

Christian Hoffman, leader of a band called the Swinging Madisons, once described himself as a "punk prude." His band's songs included "Guilty White Liberal" and a little valentine to feminists, "Put Your Bra Back On."

In *England's Dreaming*, Savage explains that among British punks too there was some disgust with the extreme sexual license sanctioned by Britain's liberal consensus. But this disgust was expressed in terms that exploited the extreme license granted to creative expression by that same liberal consensus. Savage ignores the song that best exhibits punk's use of liberalism's expressive license to indict liberalism's relaxed standards of personal morality, the Sex Pistols' "Bodies." Punk legend had it that "Bodies" was anti-abortion. Rock critics have twisted themselves into pretzels trying to deny it, but they've got it wrong:

> Dragged on a table in a factory
> Illegitimate place to be
> In a package in a lavatory
> Dying little baby screaming
> Bodies—screaming . . . bloody mess
> I'm not an animal
> It's an abortion
> Bodies—I'm not an animal
> Mommy—I'm an abortion.

The explicit politics of punk should not be overemphasized. Punks were pop formalists, and most of them, like most formalists, were either apolitical or at least careful not to mix their politics with their aesthetics. If for the New Left and the hippies the personal was the political, then for many in or influenced by the New York punk scene, the political was strictly personal. One effect of this was that punk was pretty ecumenical politically. People in bands were commonly inspired, but the common inspiration was only infrequently political. The only revolutionary ideal that commanded the allegiance of all punks was a revolution in the record companies and album-oriented rock radio stations that would march the Eagles and the Bee Gees and the like off to a

rock gulag and usher in a millennium of the Dead Boys and the Damned.

But this apolitical chic was not without its indirect political significance. First, the only really politicized people one ever encountered in this milieu were on the left. So if punks shunned politics, they were effectively shunning *left-wing* politics. Second, punks replaced raised political consciousness with style consciousness. Objectively, this concern with form, attitude, look was a rejection of a hippie counterculture premised on authenticity. The quality that probably mattered the most for hippies in rock was all the *feeling* that went into it, while one of the most distinctive things about early Ramones was all the feeling that was left out.

I have been told that long ago it was generally understood among educated young males that "Communist girls put out." It is hardly a secret that generations of young American males picked up a cultural signal that if you wanted sex, it was probably a good idea to get involved with some chic leftish causes (if you've ever wondered why it is that for a long time the Right won all the arguments and the Left won all the fights, you could do worse than to begin here). Maybe punk sent a cultural signal that this was no longer necessary, and in the process made for a fairer fight between Left and Right.

It is possible that the emergence in the late seventies of a hip youth subculture less left-wing than any before it had no influence on the awakening of a young conservative presence in the country more hip and culturally aware than its conservative predecessors. I think it did. Punk was both hip and very anti-authoritarian. Imagine a hypothetical college conservative in the early eighties. He's muting himself to "pass" in a social and academic environment ruled by an intolerant Left. Then along comes this new sensibility that is both hip and very anti-authoritarian but isn't hardwired with the usual politics, and—Liberation! You Get the Girl and Question Authority and—Say it Loud: I like Ronnie, and I'm Proud.

Of course, there's no way to prove this, and it may simply be a *post hoc* argument. Perhaps it's enough to say that in the eighties, a lot of young conservatives came out from behind the pillars, and America won the Cold War—without ever having to fire a "Rocket to Russia." ♦

Books

Can Novels Be Gay?

By J. Bottum

If I were to say that the novel is an utterly heterosexual form of art—simultaneously an instrument and an expression of the relations between men and women—I would be entering realms so socially awkward and aesthetically complex that it hardly seems worth the effort. An openly homosexual critic might be able to get away with the claim, much as an old-fashioned Marxist could brand novel-writing a middle-class enterprise without being thought to despise the working class. But the rest of us have no such luxury. Since homosexuals obviously have written about their experience, any effort to locate the form's origin in heterosexuality must only seem an effort to strip homosexuals of the power to write fiction.

> THE ABSENCE OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES FROM AMERICA'S GAY SUBCULTURE MAKES THE TASK OF THE HOMOSEXUAL NOVELIST DIFFICULT.

Nonetheless, I think the critical fact of it true. Apart from any moral consideration, an author attempting a homosexual novel faces at least three obstacles. There is a *narrative* problem, for the natural rhythms of the novel—encounter, pursuit, conflict, resolution, and conclusion in promise for the future—are the patterns of idealized heterosexual intercourse, from which the serial patterns of homosexual sex manifestly differ. There is an *aesthetic* problem, for any novel's particular story gains some of its power from the way it ties into the general story of humankind—links that are forged ultimately by the promise, however tenuous, of the bearing of children.

And there is a *social* problem, for American homosexuality lacks meaningful social structures—structures, for instance, that could help a novelist show how a much-pursued young homosexual ages into a much-pursuing old homosexual. In a famous essay on Nathaniel Hawthorne's novels, Henry James set a catalogue of all the strong British class institutions America fails to provide for its novelists to praise or condemn. But though intelligible and visible social structures may be weak for all Americans, they are utterly

absent from America's gay subculture. And that absence makes the task of the homosexual novelist extremely difficult.

We can see these problems at work in the novels of Andrew Holleran. Holleran is probably America's finest author of homosexual fiction, and he is a very good writer by any standard. First in his 1978 picture of New York's gay scene, *Dancer From the Dance*, and now in his latest work, *The Beauty of Men* (Morrow, 272 pages, $24), he has given strong and yet sympathetic accounts of his characters. If pornography seeks its readers' arousal, then Holleran is not pornographic. But his work is anatomically and psychologically precise about the cruising life many homosexuals live, and he manages to capture the deliberate camp and self-irony which make that life bearable—while he simultaneously casts over his books a pall of something deeply sorrowful, decadent, and autumnal, as though a Swinburne poem like "The Garden of Proserpine" had come to life in realistic fiction.

The most interesting feature of Holleran's fiction, however, may be the way in which he manifests what I believe is his knowledge of the essentially heterosexual quality of the novel. He makes use of the failure of his characters to live novelistic lives that develop toward a novelistic conclusion, and thus uses the intuition of heterosexuality to create the strange, sad cloud that broods above his stories of homosexuality.

The Beauty of Men follows Lark, a graying and lonely homosexual, as he drives back and forth across the deserts of suburban Florida. Living without a job, without a lover, and without even a complete name, Lark is defined primarily by the absences in his life. His friends from his days in New York are all dead (AIDS taking most of them, and suicide the rest), the mother he returned to Florida to care for is dying in a nursing home, and the one handsome young man he's managed to seduce recently won't return his phone calls. America, too, seems empty and dying. How did popular culture go from "Some Enchanted Evening" to "Me So Horny" in less than fifty years, he wonders, as he drives from his mother's bedside to the local boat ramp where he and the handful of other survivors of his generation perform sex upon strangers, "kneeling on the dirty tiles" of the men's room: the act that is his "main connection to the human race—the part currently living, that is."

The novel contains very little story, as the author presents mostly an interior monologue of Lark's memories and observations about the world he drives through—made, for the most part, to his dead friends. The years have not brought Lark much wisdom, and how far Holleran intends the reader to trust the narrator is unclear. Lark is properly ironical and fatalistically funny about the superficiality of his observations, but superficial they remain. Homosexuals "*are* their looks . . . *are* their bodies," he declares about the pains of growing old. "In the United States . . . nobody seems happy anymore," he explains about his country. "So I'm shallow," he at last decides about himself—and so he is, and growing shallower as he detaches himself more and more from any contact with life.

Lacking all the traditional assurances of a future life—deprived of children to carry on his name, shorn of friends to carry on his memory (as he has carried on theirs), and missing any sense of a God to carry on his being—Lark is haunted primarily by his mortality, and he yearns for an encounter

with some transcendental grace. But though he has near the end of the novel one cathartic sexual tryst with a stranger in a bathhouse, and though he invariably describes sex in religious terms (especially sex with Becker, the lost Florida lover whose memory obsesses him), he can find at last no salvation. The novel ends, after the long-expected death of his mother, with Lark—the windows tinted so no one can see in—sitting all day alone in his car, staring out at the men at the boat ramp.

Too honest to pretend that homosexuality is simply heterosexuality directed toward a different object, Andrew Holleran has made a fascinating move in *The Beauty of Men*—admitting the obstacles and allowing them to define the book. His narrating hero fails to fit the rhythms of his life with the expected rhythms of a novel, grows increasingly isolated from any part in the continuing human story, and (despite his superficial stabs at self-understanding) remains incapable of making intelligible the fact that he has grown old, ugly, and unwanted. But it is precisely Lark's inability to live a novelistic life that gives Holleran his sad, elegiac tone and enables him to make his narrator an object of the reader's sympathy and pity.

And yet Holleran's technique is, I think, a dead end for the novel, an attempt that can be made successfully only once. Novelists can write of homosexuality, of course, but the novel itself resists them in a way that other arts—modern dance, for instance, or lyric poetry—do not resist their makers.

Gay fiction may have been easier to write early in the twentieth century, before D.H. Lawrence convinced his generation with *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) that a serious book could present explicit sex. Edwardian novelists had several techniques for introducing homoerotic themes. They could frustrate homosexual desire by leaving it unacknowledged, as Thomas Mann did in *Death in Venice* (1911); or they could celebrate the desire and blame society for frustrating it, as E.M. Forster did in *Maurice* (finished around 1914, though not published until 1971); or they could even mask the desire with a condemnation of homosexuality, as the interesting minor novelist E.F. Benson did in his British schoolboy tale, *David Blaize* (1916).

But these suggestive techniques gradually decayed, as explicit depictions of fictional sex made frustrated desire less and less plausible. *The Beauty of Men* remains, I think, a successful novel (although if his account of the sorrows of gay life is more than just a novelistic effect, Holleran has actually written a homosexual book that is a deep artistic indictment of homosexuality). But the rest of homosexual novelists are face to face with obstacles that will prove, finally, insuperable. ♦

Movies

Golfers Beware!

By Jay Nordlinger

It's not every day that golfers are treated to a movie about their sport, so they rejoice at every crumb from Hollywood's table—or recoil from it. The latest such crumb is *Tin Cup*, a Kevin Costner vehicle about a no-account practice-range operator who gets it together and shines at the U.S. Open. So golfers at last have their *Rocky* (sort of). But unlike the original, this one won't win any prizes, and shouldn't.

Tin Cup was anxiously awaited in the golf world for over a year, and the golf press reported on every stage of its development: the hiring of the *Bull Durham* team of director Ron Shelton and leading man Costner; the tutoring of Costner by journeyman pro and TV announcer Gary McCord; the actor's progress; the effort to achieve an air of authenticity by giving cameos to a host of PGA Tour players. The Internet's most prominent golf site created a special sub-site just for the movie. *Golf* magazine put it this way in its August issue: "All right, this is the last you'll hear from us about the movie, due out this month."

> *TIN CUP* WAS ANXIOUSLY AWAITED IN THE GOLF WORLD FOR OVER A YEAR, AND THE GOLF PRESS REPORTED ON EVERY STAGE OF ITS DEVELOPMENT.

Golfers were nervous about *Tin Cup* for good reason: The game has never been accurately or meaningfully portrayed on the big screen. So, perpetually insecure about their image in larger society, golfers fretted about the impact of a big-time movie with big-time names (the links equivalent of "Is it good for the Jews?"). Spike Lee says that when he was making *Malcolm X*, black people would come up to him and say, "You'd better not mess this up."

Tin Cup: *They look like golfer and caddy, but wait till he swings.*

Golfers were fairly sure that the *Tin Cup* folks, however well-intentioned, would mess it up.

It so happens that American golf and the movies were born at about the same time. In 1888, a band of Scotsmen, nostalgic for their national pastime, scratched out a course in Yonkers, N.Y. (dubbing it "St. Andrew's"); eight years later, the first golf movie was made, a one-reeler called *Golfing Extraordinary* that consisted of a poor klutz's taking a swing and missing. It's been pretty much the same treatment ever since. The Little Rascals made a golf movie, as did the Three Stooges. Hope and Crosby—who were superb amateurs—incorporated the sport in several of their Road movies. Tracy and Hepburn made *Pat and Mike*, in which Kate (who had grown up with the game in New England) played a pro and Babe Didrickson Zaharias strutted her stuff.

Things picked up a little in the early 50s when Glenn Ford starred as Ben Hogan in *Follow the Sun*, about Hogan's stirring recovery from a near-fatal car accident. But many golfers, including Hogan, were disgusted by the movie because Ford, on the course, was unbelievable as a professional, and virtually nothing of the game's emotional power was realized.

Strangely, the truest and most enduring golf movie of all is not really a golf movie but a raunchy, *Animal House*-inspired comedy: *Caddyshack* (1981). To say that this movie has a cult following among golfers is too mild; it has seeped into the bloodstream of most every golfer under 45, its sensibility and language rendered permanent, like Scripture or Shakespeare.

When preparing a shot: "Be the ball, Danny." When admonishing a balker: "You're going to play golf and you're going to like it." When fudging a score: "Mark me down for five." When fantasizing about a Masters triumph: "Cinderella story . . . ." In praise of another: "That's a peach, hon.'" When refusing to leave the course in torrential rain: "Looks like the heavy stuff won't be coming down for quite some time." When engaging in the kind of hyperbole endemic to the game: "Big hitter, the Lama—long" (that's Lama as in Dalai). When Bill Murray, a *Caddyshack* star, hits the pro-am circuit, he is bombarded by fans who shout swatches of the movie's script to him in unison.

So what of *Tin Cup*? The movie starts out promisingly, showing a tumbledown range in west Texas ("Last Chance to Hit Balls Fore 520 Miles"). But we quickly ascertain that the movie will be a gentle piece of nonsense: A charming rogue (Costner) will try to steal a fetching girl (Rene Russo) from a snooty, dislikable Tour pro (Don Johnson). The movie is sluggish and trite. But worse, it does a disservice to golf—and this from a film that was to help erase a bagful of bad cinematic memories.

How golf-ignorant is it? When Russo shows up for her first lesson, Costner has her hit a driver (unthinkable), unteed (unheard of). He, the pro, hits obvious chunks that are meant to be perfect. She slices a shot right of right, and they both point down the middle, beaming.

A charity best-ball tournament is played as a cut-throat competition and is broadcast on television. Golfers have caddies hit shots in the middle of play. Peter Kostis, one of the smartest teaching pros in the country, is made to say ridiculous things. Frank Chirkinian, the longtime "ayatollah" of CBS golf production, is furious that an unknown is leading the Open, when in fact he'd be thrilled out of his gourd. The expression "chilidip" is egregiously misused. At one point, the gallery appears to be standing on the green.

So golfers don't yet have the movie they long for, and they may never: The sport may be impossi-

ble to capture in this medium. It is different from football, basketball, and baseball in that it is solitary, mental, interior. A golfer's struggle takes place in his head, and the mask seldom betrays much. The rhythms of golf are ponderous, subtly discerned. There is no team, with its various characters, all coming together for victory (or not); there is no coach (except for some pricey gurus); there is no frenzied stadium or arena (in golf, the applause comes later and is of a different nature). How could a moviemaker convey the chaos in a golfer's stomach and throat when he's facing a slick double-breaker on the 18th hole of a Friday round when he absolutely must make the cut and earn a check? How could a movie demonstrate the stark terror a golfer feels when he wakes up in the morning to find that, whereas he had it yesterday, he has totally and inexplicably lost it today?

Golf has fared slightly better in literature: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ring Lardner, and P.G. Wodehouse wrote excellent short stories, and Walker Percy was and John Updike is golf-haunted in the extreme. Dan Jenkins, the sportswriter-novelist, has translated some of the game's nobility and devilishness, as in his *Dogged Victims of Inexorable Fate* and *Dead Solid Perfect*. But ultimately, golf may be a little like a religion—difficult to articulate and impossible to persuade others of. They will have to encounter it for themselves.

> THE SPORT MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CAPTURE IN A MOVIE: A GOLFER'S STRUGGLE TAKES PLACE IN HIS HEAD, AND THE MASK SELDOM BETRAYS MUCH.

As golf's popularity increases, its custodians and devotees are going to have to get used to seeing their pet in movies, for better or worse. Clint Eastwood has bought the rights to Michael Murphy's novel *Golf in the Kingdom*, a fable of New Age mysticism that has befogged countless golf minds. A slew of other golf movies are forthcoming, with titles like *Swingtime*, *Fast Greens*, and *Out of the Rough*. And most portentously, there will be *Stroke of Genius*, the Bobby Jones story starring heartthrob Brad Pitt. Jones is the icon of American golf, our spiritual guide, the father of us all. *Don't mess this up*. ♦

Parody

On Wednesday night of the Republican convention, as Elizabeth Dole was delivering her speech, a call was placed from the office of the First Lady to the home of Susan Thomases in New York . . .

Hillary Clinton: Can you believe this? Liddy Dole is more robotic than I am. I mean, have you ever seen anything like this?

Thomases: No, I can't remember anything like this.

Hillary: Well, we're going to counter, let me tell you. I'm going to be out there at our convention, I don't care what Dick Morris says. And goodbye podium! That helmet-headed prom queen won't know what hit her. Remember the Olympics?

Thomases: Sorry, I have no specific recollection of that.

Hillary: Well, we're going to leak it that I've strained my ankle ligaments. Then I'm going to do a vault onto the podium—Kerri Strug-style! Pike with a half twist. Will that drive them bananas or what?

Thomases: I'm afraid I don't have that information.

Hillary: Trust me. It'll be great. And that's not all. We're sitting around here bouncing around ideas—me, Ickes, Maggie Williams, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Mahatma Gandhi. I'm conferencing them all in now. The other thing we've got to get is some cripples. The Republicans got their hands on thousands. I mean, have you ever in your life seen so many cripples on one stage without Jerry Lewis?

Thomases: I'm trying to remember. I just can't.

Hillary: Anyway, the message is this: The Republicans show you cripples, Hillary heals them. I walk out into the crowd and lay my hands on them. And then they get up and walk! It'll be awesome! Can you get some cripples? Not too crippled. They don't have to walk far.

Eleanor Roosevelt: That's actually not the way Franklin handled the wheelchair issue at the 1936 convention. He thought it best to hide . . .

Hillary: Shut up, Eleanor! This is the nineties. Wake up and smell the decaf latte!

Gandhi: Tell her about the dress.

Hillary: Oh yeah. This is brilliant. Mahatma here lends me one of his white robes and so I go out and give my speech in this simple white shift and a big walking stick. It speaks to all America. It says: Virtue.

Gandhi: And it hides your legs if we cut it long enough.

Hillary: Right. It turns out Mahatma is great at this image-crafting stuff. He makes Dick Morris look like a piker.

Gandhi: Thanks, Hill. By the way, are you going to finish your fettucini? That bolognese sauce looks most delicious.

Hillary: Sure, you can have it. Anyway, Susan, I want you to call Ira Magaziner. He's writing my speech. He's working really hard and he's already cut it back down to 47,000 pages. What I need is the flowchart in case I want to reorganize mid-delivery. Do you have Ira's number?

Thomases: I know I had it somewhere, but at this point in time I just can't recall . . .