the weekly
Standard

NOVEMBER 4, 1996 $2.95

WRITERS & THEIR BLOCKS
JOSEPH EPSTEIN

ONE WEEK TO GO

Just How Bad Will It Be?

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BEWARE CONSULTANTS

NOVAK:
TERM LIMITS

WINKLER:
SCHOOL CHOICE

REES:
FRESHMAN WOES

FERGUSON:
THURMOND'S LAST STAND

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HELMS GETS CUDDLY

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CLINTON'S DEMAGOGUERY

the weekly Standard

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Cover art
by Kevin Chadwick

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CCRI: Doing Well, No Thanks to Republicans

The California Civil Rights Initiative on the ballot next week seems to be headed for passage. The latest *Los Angeles Times* poll has the anti-quota initiative ahead, 54 to 31 percent. The proposition is receiving strong support not only from Republicans and conservatives, but also from Democrats and liberals. What's more, it barely trails among black and Hispanic voters.

But the ham-handed efforts of the California Republican party to capitalize on CCRI's strength has some CCRI supporters worried. With Dole trailing by 20 points in California and various Republican officials down-ballot endangered, the state Republican party is now trying to hitch a ride on CCRI—having utterly neglected it early on when resources for CCRI were scarce. Indeed, prominent California Republicans spent quite a bit of time a couple of months ago distancing themselves from CCRI. But now the California GOP intends to advertise on its behalf.

Judging by the hapless first ad party leaders cut, they would be better served if they kept their hands off the initiative. Its centerpiece was a clip of Martin Luther King—a boneheaded idea, one that was opposed by the CCRI campaign itself and that offered the entire affirmative-action establishment an opportunity to wax indignant about this misappropriation of King's legacy. The ad also linked CCRI to the 1994 anti-immigration initiative Proposition 187, thus endangering Hispanic support.

Meanwhile, efforts to get the Republican party simply to finance the successful, upbeat, and positive equal-opportunity message that had been devised by CCRI's chief strategist, Arnie Steinberg, were rebuffed. And so there were several days of press stories about disarray around CCRI as California state GOP chairman John Herrington waffled on which ads would air and what they would say. Herrington's defense of quoting Martin Luther King? "A couple of people have said, 'Would Martin Luther King support quotas?' I don't know." Herrington adds: "The main thing is our intentions are kind. I am not trying to make it a racist-type thing." Of course, this silly defensiveness wouldn't have been necessary if he hadn't insisted on a foolish ad in the first place. Republicans!

Bob Dole is to give a major speech on CCRI early this week. We only hope he makes the principled case against preferences and thereby helps the cause of the proposition rather than damaging it.

The Return of Jack Blum

Last week's Senate hearing on the alleged links between the CIA, the contras, and drug-dealing in inner-city Los Angeles saw the return of one of Washington's peskiest, and most partisan, investigators: Jack Blum. Described by the *New York Times* a few years ago as a "doggedly liberal Democratic muckraker," Blum first made a name for himself while serving as a special counsel to the Foreign Relations Committee, investigating drug smuggling and money laundering in Nicaragua. His investigation was distinguished by a single-minded focus on the contras, with little attention given to charges that Sandinista leaders were part of a drug-distribution network. A few years later, Blum turned his attention to the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), and he charged—incorrectly—that BCCI was the "original banker" for Oliver North's arms network. He also claimed—again incorrectly—that the Federal Reserve was covering up evidence of BCCI bribes paid to American officials. Blum's testimony last week discounted the links between the CIA, the contras, and an inner-city drug network, which does him credit, but he also used the occasion to try and boost the reelection prospects of his former boss, Massachusetts senator John Kerry. Blum charged that Kerry's opponent, William Weld, was responsible for the Justice Department's "absolute stonewall" of investigations into CIA-contra links when he was deputy attorney general during the Reagan years. There is, apparently, nothing people like Blum will not say, given the chance, and there is no excuse for such a discredited investigator's getting to spend hours before a Senate committee trying to revive yet another leftist conspiracy theory from the 1980s.

Carter Plays with Nicaragua Again

Jimmy Carter is at it again, making his best effort to muddy and confuse things in Nicaragua by coming to Sandinista party leader Daniel Ortega's assistance for the *third* time in less than two decades. In 1979, Carter helped Ortega fight his way into power and establish a Communist dictatorship worse than the Somoza tyranny

Scrapbook

that preceded it. When Ortega was voted out of power in a 1990 landslide, Carter and his assistant Robert Pastor brokered a deal that allowed Daniel's brother to keep the army under Sandinista control. Ortega was buried in yet another landslide last week, and like the Communist he is, he refused to concede his defeat and complained of fraud. Carter, who had been photographed laughing and smiling with Ortega before the vote, legitimized Ortega's ludicrous complaint by calling for a reexamination of the ballot count. And so, thanks to Jimmy Carter, Ortega still has never had to accept the results of a democratic election.

Carter and Pastor take credit for bringing "reconciliation" to Nicaragua, but all they've brought is misery. Maybe the Nicaraguan people should vote on whether they ever want to see Carter and Pastor in their country again. We think we know how that vote would turn out, too.

But another American behaved in a genuinely praiseworthy fashion in the walkup to the Nicaraguan election: the State Department's usually diplomatic spokesman, Nicholas Burns. He proved very undiplomatic, indeed. When he was asked whether the U.S. government believed Daniel Ortega was a democrat, Burns replied that he would not use the word "democrat" to describe Ortega. Pressed further by the shocked gathering of journalists, Burns went on to say that the American people "remember the 1970s and '80s. . . . We remember anti-American acts; we remember outrages against the American people. . . . I don't believe if you took a survey of the American people that 99.8 percent of our population would describe him as a good democrat—not with friends like Muammar Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein." Bravo.

Al Gore, In Denial Again

As we stand in awe at Bill Clinton's shamelessness, we should not overlook the prowess of his vice president, next to whom the president can seem positively refreshing. Last week, Al Gore denied that he had the slightest inkling that fund-raising—fund-raising of all things!—was going on during an event at a Buddhist temple out in California in April. He thought that Democratic National Committee operative John Huang had arranged a simple "community outreach event," "not billed as a fund-raiser." (Huang, by the way, seems to have "disappeared," his whereabouts unknown like a character in a bad Washington spy novel; with charges of campaign-finance malfeasance and the promotion of the interests of an Indonesian bank you once worked for hovering around, you'd disappear too.)

Well, the Democrats "reached out" to their guests—many of them impoverished monks and nuns—by shoving $5,000 cash into their hands and asking them to write checks in that amount to the DNC (five grand being the maximum contribution allowed by law).

The evening's take was $140,000, not a tremendous sum by Indo-Lippo-Clinton standards, but the DNC has no intention of returning it. Said Gore to the gentlefolk at National Public Radio, "I did not know at the time. The people with me did not. Obviously, somebody didn't handle it right." But not to worry: "I trust people to see the truth of the situation."

Really, Mr. Vice President? Even when you open yourself to the charge that you are lying through your teeth?

Casual

My Two-Step Recovery Program

About ten years ago, a gaunt, bald man in sandals walked up to me at Logan airport in Boston and handed me a book. "This is for you, friend," he said, smiling. "I wanted you to have it." The unsolicited gift turned out to be a hard-bound copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the holy Hindu poem, done up in leatherette and faux-gold lettering with lots of illustrations. I was grateful for it, if a little confused, and under normal circumstances would have stayed to talk to the man for a while. But I was late for a plane to California, so I thanked him quickly and started off toward my gate. He stopped me before I'd gone three feet.

"People usually give a $15 donation for the book," he said.

Suddenly it was clear: This guy was a Hare Krishna, doing his fund-raising shtick. Only the fact that I was in a hurry had kept me from seeing it earlier.

Well, I said, that's great, and I appreciate the book, but I'm not going to give you any money. Sorry.

A brief but intense argument ensued during which I attempted to explain the concept of Indian-giving. He didn't buy it and just got madder, poking his finger at me as we walked through the terminal. Just before we got to the X-ray machine, the man turned to me, eyes bulging, and spat out his parting words: "Something *bad* is going to happen to you, man. Something *real* bad."

My plane to California didn't crash, but in another way something bad *did* happen to me: I became afraid of flying. Whether because of the Krishna's curse or not, over the next decade I came to dread air travel.

One morning several years ago, as my plane taxied down the runway on a flight out of Hartford, I decided I'd had enough. Marching up the aisle toward the cockpit, I informed a stewardess I'd like to get off. Turns out I just don't feel like flying today, I explained. Thanks anyway. With no trace of the usual professional perkiness, she told me to sit down and be silent or face arrest.

Most of the time, though, it wasn't abject terror I experienced when I flew, but gnawing anxiety. Planes I boarded seemed to have an inordinate number of problems: An emergency landing on an airstrip in Georgia because of hydraulic failure. An electrical malfunction that forced an unexpected detour to Louisville. Weather so rough the flight attendants were sick. On flights like these I spent hours in gut-churning dread, moist palms gripping armrests, smiling weakly at strangers across the aisle.

Then, about a year ago, it struck me: I don't have to go through this anymore. There is, as the Krishna in Boston might have said, a Better Way. So I declared myself powerless and entered a treatment program. Instead of 12 steps, my recovery regimen only had two: Head for the bar. Drink till you feel better. No reassuring tours of the cockpit or lectures about the statistical safety of air travel. Just vodka screwdrivers, usually doubles.

After about a year in the program, I've become convinced of two things. First, there's no use being embarrassed or furtive about drinking in airports. Recovery is a process, after all. Second—and call me superstitious if you want—good things happen to those who drink before they fly.

The proof came last spring when I found myself in an airport in Fort Meyers, Fla., waiting for a flight to Dallas. I located the bar and before long was having such a good time listening to two mid-level insurance executives from Michigan argue about basketball that I lost track of my reason for being in the airport in the first place. By the time I made it to the gate my plane was boarding. Only, as I soon discovered, it wasn't my plane. This plane was going to Cleveland. My plane had left an hour before.

All around, it was pretty bad news: The departed jet had been the day's last flight to Dallas. I had an interview at 8 the next morning in Texas. Severe thunderstorms had closed just about every major airport in the region, making the chances of getting a connecting flight remote. Under ordinary, sober conditions I would have been upset. As a fearful flyer in recovery, I didn't bat an eye. No problem, I thought: I'll charter a Cessna! In my condition, heavy turbulence in a rickety two-seater seemed an entertaining prospect.

Thanks to a sympathetic desk agent, I never had to find out. Sensing immediately that I was a two-stepper, the kindly woman charted a circuitous course for me through a couple of southern cities, getting me to Dallas with time to spare. Then she upgraded me to first class. Big seats. Ample pillows. Free drinks.

I was sincerely grateful, yet somehow not surprised. The agent smiled knowingly. "It's on the house," she said.

Tucker Carlson

Debating The Facts of Labor

In "John Sweeney and the State of His Union" (Oct. 21), Matt Labash attacks both the old guard and the new at the AFL-CIO: the moderate Left, the near-Left, the far-Left, the Left Bank (given his disdain for an AFL-CIO-owned Paris apartment), feminists, civil-rights leaders, young activists, and . . . well, just about anyone and everyone else slightly more liberal than Genghis Khan.

But with all seriousness, Labash has written a scathing article, and he must be held to certain standards of truthfulness. Let me take this opportunity to set the record straight about Arthur Coia and the Laborers' International Union of North America.

First, Labash suggests that General President Coia has amassed a great personal fortune as the head of the nation's largest construction-trades union, including a mansion in Rhode Island. Mr. Coia worked his way through college and law school, as a laborer and as a musician, to become a successful attorney in private practice. He purchased his house thirty years ago at a low cost and a high mortgage, and can hardly be held personally responsible for the appreciation of Rhode Island real estate. The salary he receives is set by the union's constitution for whoever holds the office of general president—not for Mr. Coia personally.

Second, Labash reports that in 1994 the Justice Department characterized Mr. Coia as a "mob puppet," but he fails to mention that the department now questions that view of Mr. Coia. Paul Coffey, chief of the Justice Department's Organized Crime and Racketeering section, testified that "[Mr. Coia] did what you normally don't see puppets do, he said, 'I can kick [the mob] out too.'"

Carl E. Booker
LIUNA Vice-President
Washington, DC

Matt Labash responds: ***Glad to hear Mr. Coia's youthful investment has paid off so handsomely. I suppose the red Ferrari, the home in Delray Beach, and the expensive dog-breeding business that saw him try to mate his stud with the bitch of a New England mob boss were also the result of Rhode Island real-estate appreciation. Mr. Booker would surely deny such prosperity had anything to do with a real-estate partnership, as reported by the*** **Washington Monthly,** ***that saw Coia illegally act as a landlord for his own union offices and sell a souring real-estate investment to a LIUNA legal fund for $2.3 million. (The magazine reported that this outside income augmented Coia's salary by $218,959 in 1994.)***

As the **Washington Monthly** ***also reported, it should be remembered that Coia's successful law practice saw him indicted in 1981 along with his father, Arthur Coia, Sr., and crime boss Raymond Patriarca "for racketeering and***

taking bribes from an insurance swindler" who had been Coia's client. The case didn't go to a jury since a judge ruled that the statute of limitations had expired.

While Mr. Booker portrays Paul Coffey as exonerating Honest Arthur, Coffey actually said at the hearings, "I think Mr. Coia has elected to turn . . . on La Cosa Nostra because he has no choice." Coffey also said that while Coia's lawyers insisted he was going along voluntarily, "I don't know anything about that—we're skeptical. But the way this agreement works, he's got to do it."

Jumping the GOP Ship

Regarding the editorial "Saving the GOP From Dole-Kemp 96" (Oct. 21): The editors are just scratching the surface. Sen. Dole should never have been the Republican candidate, proving again you can't strike a deal with the devil and expect dreams to be realized. I pray that conservative Republicans jump ship and turn to Howard Phillips's Tax Reform party and get leaders like Judge Bork, Dick Cheney, and Dick Armey to put together a new Contract With America.

Charles Wood
Oro Valley, AZ

Secret Service, Not so Bad

As a veteran of several presidential campaigns—as both a volunteer and paid staff member on the state level—I was stunned to read Tucker Carlson's ode to advancemen, "The Quixotic Quest for the Perfect Dole Picture" (Oct. 21).

Carlson writes derisively of the traveling "senior staff" and slams the Secret Service, yet tosses bouquets to the advancemen. While the lack of enthusiasm for the "senior staff" is certainly understandable, the rest of his account is the opposite of my personal recollection.

I found most campaign advance crews to be officious, self-important, and dismissive of the efforts of local volunteers. The Secret Service agents, on the other hand, were unfailingly polite, helpful, and kind.

I've seen advance teams storm into a local campaign headquarters and turn it upsidedown. At a moment's notice, Plan A would be scrapped in favor of Plan B; then Plan A would be reinstated at the drop of a hat. The agents told us that the advancemen were just testing our mettle, to see if we'd crack under the pressure. But the fact is, the Secret Service never made us jump through hoops for their own amusement. They just did their jobs, and helped us do ours.

Carol A. Arscott
Ellicott City, MD

Tucker Carlson's somewhat amusing but snide piece on the Dole bus trip through New Jersey contains a touch of "If it didn't happen, just make it up" reporting.

He writes that I was: "fidgeting with a small instamatic camera . . . trying to

Correspondence

get a shot of Dole for the album back home, but Secret Service agents keep getting in the way." Not true. Either Carlson cannot tell a Sony TCM-59V cassette-corder from a Kodak camera or he needs glasses. It might help if he talked to one of the Dole "advisers" he so scornfully writes about. But then, I guess this is the "new reporting" and we don't need to waste time on those pesky interviews.

Martin Anderson
Portola Valley, CA

Tucker Carlson responds: ***Point taken. Perhaps if I had interviewed Mr. Anderson he could have explained why he seemed to be looking through the view-finder of his "cassette-corder."***

What Gives in Louisiana?

Matthew Rees's article on the Louisiana Senate race is amusing in its naiveté ("Woody and the Moon Child," Oct. 21). On the one hand, he says what a strong candidate Mary Landrieu is (and I agree she is a strong candidate); on the other, he writes that Gov. Foster won a year ago "against a weak opponent."

Landrieu was one of the opponents Foster beat in the open primary in 1995. Then Rees reveals one of his key sources on Louisiana politics: John Maginnis. This is the same John Maginnis who is very much an active supporter of left-wing Democrats and who always comes down on the port side of his writings. That is a most unusual source of political insight for a conservative magazine.

Henry E. Heatherly
Lafayette, LA

Think of the Men

John J. DiIulio has failed to notice the changes in our society regarding motherhood and equal rights ("Bring Back Shotgun Weddings," Oct. 21). Invoking archaic solutions would be useless and counterproductive.

By telling fathers that they have to marry the mothers of their children, one is also telling mothers that they must marry the fathers. I'd love to see DiIulio even try to enforce that.

Those "male chauvinist pigs" of the '50s told us exactly what would happen, however inarticulately. "If women are free to do as they please, men will no longer be responsible for women." Trying to force men to support the children whom women can abort or give away to a unilaterally selected third party clearly tells us that parenthood is a woman's option.

A society cannot, to any beneficial effect, reward and subsidize amoral motherhood while trying to control it by pursuing the sperm donors.

If DiIulio really wants to promote the quality of American fatherhood, he could start with the meager but natural modification of insuring fathers the first right of adoption for their own children when the mother is giving them away or even selling them through surrogate motherhood. So long as America has reduced fathers to unappreciated paychecks, it should surprise no one that our society decays.

Gene Hopp
Bellevue, WA

Pardon the Duality

Regarding "Pardon Me, Ms. Rodham" by Gary Schmitt (Oct. 14): it is quite apparent to this lifelong Democrat that the Clintons speak with forked tongues. If the Democrats (read Clinton) grant a pardon, it's in the best interest of the community (or is that "village"?). If the Republicans grant a pardon, they are being mean-spirited and self-serving.

Jack Gabriel
Carson, CA

Labeling Helms is Easy

Apparently The Weekly Standard is puzzled as to why the *New York Times* labeled Sen. Jesse Helms "anti-homosexual" (Scrapbook, Oct. 14). Let me try to explain.

Sen. Helms opposes legislation designed to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination—he believes that it should be legal, for example, for a bigoted employer to fire a gay or lesbian employee simply because of his or her sexual orientation. He also favors legislation, such as the misnamed Defense of Marriage Act, that is explicitly designed to deny gays and lesbians some of their constitutional rights as citizens.

Essentially, Sen. Helms favors making gays and lesbians second-class citizens. It is entirely appropriate to call him anti-homosexual.

Mark Wylie
Los Angeles, CA

Give Brock a Break

Midge Decter's "How Hillary Rodham Seduced David Brock" (Oct. 28) seems to confuse "the real David Brock" with his fabricated persona as The Consummate Hatchet Man.

The Real Anita Hill and Brock's tour de force review of Hill's *Strange Justice* suggest that no one in this world better understands Anita Hill's personality. Once you get past "a little bit nutty and a little bit slutty" (which may be a fabrication), Brock's endless, fully footnoted evidence is matched only by his openminded, reflective efforts to understand. Decter is right: "Gentlemanly" describes *The Real Anita Hill*, as inoffensive as the evidence allowed. So I wonder why she seems surprised at a second gentlemanly book?

Brock perhaps "expos[ed] Anita Hill's lies," but he plainly does not believe that Prof. Hill intentionally lied or fabricated. Brock's portrait of Jimmy Carter was also sympathetic and powerful.

Given the fog of reflexive lies peculiar to all things Clinton, the half-truths, and the inevitable honest confusion in all human affairs, a journalist like Brock would be useless if we could always predict his conclusions.

Ted Lindsay
Westport, CT

The Weekly Standard

welcomes letters to the editor. Letters will be edited for length and clarity and must include the writer's name, address, and phone number. All letters should be addressed:

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The Demagogue President

The Republican presidential campaign has stripped its poorly tooled sprockets in the effort to illuminate Bob Dole's advantages over Bill Clinton as a guide and steward for the next four years of American public life. It remains possible, nevertheless, through the smoke generated by the GOP's gunning but motionless engine, to discern meaningful policy differences between a Dole presidency and a second Clinton administration. Those differences alone are reason enough to cast a vote for Bob Dole.

Federal policy is not the only thing in question on Election Day, however. The future direction of conservatism, on the one hand, and of the Republican party, on the other, will be affected, too. But even that stuff is "just politics." Something still grander is at issue in the Dole-or-Clinton choice, something hinted at but never fully captured by the Dole campaign's lurching, nervous assaults on the president's "character." It's something, in our view, that commands support for the Republican ticket of Bob Dole and Jack Kemp. That something is this: The current president of the United States is a self-conscious demagogue. And so a vote for Bill Clinton is a vote, in effect, against the very soul of America's constitutional order.

Demagoguery is a shrunken word in modern discourse. The term has come simply to connote a politician's use of expansive dishonesty to frighten the public about his partisan opponent. It once meant more. Along with aristocracy, demagoguery was one of the evils the Founders drafted our constitution to help forestall. In place of aristocracy, the Founders made an electoral democracy. And to ensure that democracy might be just and virtuous, they gave it republican form. A vitally important distinction was made between momentary popular will and reasoned public judgment. A certain space was established between the people and their government. It was a space intended for *deliberation*.

The demagogue makes war on this deliberative space. His god is Popularity. He seeks power purely through the manipulation of mood—by encouraging people to believe that their instantaneous and shifting wishes can and should be realized in the instantaneous and shifting decisions of his government. He calls this process "leadership."

The Founders did not mean for Americans to be demagogically "led" by their own passions like this. And they believed they had done much to address this central risk of democracy. It is a "moral certainty," Hamilton wrote, "that the office of President will never fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed by the requisite qualifications." The country would be too big for that: "Talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity, may alone suffice to elevate a man to the first honors in a single State; but it will require other talents, and a different kind of merit, to establish him in the esteem and confidence of the whole Union, or of so considerable a portion of it as would be necessary to make him a successful candidate for the distinguished office of President of the United States."

If that was ever true, it is no longer. The institutional independence of American government from its citizens—its republican character—has eroded more than a bit. We now vote every day, for all intents and purposes, in the polls that control political news. And our president constantly and compulsively responds, as no president has ever responded before, with a charismatic smile, or a close-set jaw, or an empathetic touch to the knee for some victim of tragedy.

"Low intrigue" and "the little arts of popularity"? Notoriously so, where this president is concerned. A Clinton-Gore television ad scores Bob Dole for being "against vaccines for children," a reference to Dole's vote against an almost universally derided and counterproductive public-health initiative. Our colleague Charles Krauthammer calls the "against vaccines" charge "vintage Clinton." He's right, but each week brings fresh examples of the infection, each more outrageous than the last. A series of Clinton commercials on welfare reform, gay rights, abortion, and campaign-finance reform all spin slowly around the truth—none of them ever actually touching it.

Another series of commercials does much, much worse. "Melissa lived every moment," the grieving mother of a childhood cancer patient says at the begin-

ning of one. "My daughter Polly was only 12 years old," Marc Klaas says at the beginning of another, but someone "kidnapped her and took it all away."

Other politicians do a slippery to-and-fro from time to time. Some have been known to use the occasional dead-baby-style emotional slam as a tool for electoral victory. But few American politicians—certainly no modern presidents—have ever employed classical demagoguery's dark arts to such great and complete effect. And no major American politician has ever bragged about it. Bill Clinton brags about it. His government, remember, is a "permanent campaign."

The American political system was not designed to function this way—with its executive administration permanently and biorhythmically attached to popular sentiment. It is fundamentally un-American, this presidency by Q-rating. Bill Clinton is a high priest of political popularity. Bob Dole has never mastered the liturgy. This difference between them will likely defeat Dole. Ironically, it is the strongest possible reason why he deserves to succeed.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Jesse Helms Gets Cuddly

by Fred Barnes

Statesville, N.C.

Jesse Helms has pulled off one of the most surprising feats of the 1996 campaign: He's sharply reduced the gender gap that bedevils many Republican candidates, particularly Bob Dole. The 75-year-old senator from North Carolina credits a TV spot in which two of his granddaughters appear. "My grandfather is just a kind and caring and warm person," Ellen Stuart says in the ad. "The real Jesse Helms is a very loving man," echoes Jennifer Knox. "My grandfather's just a great guy and I wish everyone could see that," Ellen chimes in. Pretty hokey, but it has helped Helms enormously with women. He's likely to win reelection to a fifth Senate term.

There's more to the story. Helms, the most unswerving conservative in the Senate, has campaigned against type—or at least against caricature. In public appearances, he's not a rigid, mean, intolerant right-winger; far from it. He's avuncular, sentimental, prayerful. He does still zing homosexuals, labor union bosses, and the press, but most of his message is softer and far less polarizing. Helms begins his stump speeches with a rendition of his recent chat with evangelist Billy Graham and Graham's wife Ruth. And he relays a message from Graham: America must clean up its act morally before it can solve any other problems. Then Helms praises young people, recalling a session in his Senate office with four college students that ended with a prayer led by a young woman. He concludes with the suggestion that leaders in Washington ought to turn to prayer, too.

Other TV ads aired by his campaign have buttressed the image of a milder, more attentive Helms. Separate spots for the Charlotte, Raleigh, and Greensboro media markets touted what Helms has done for those cities (he claimed partial credit for bringing the Carolina Panthers football team to Charlotte). Helms, an ardent pro-lifer, has also curbed his comments on abortion and has spoken respectfully of his pro-choice opponents. "I've tried not to offend people who don't agree with me," he told the Associated Press. "People are sincere on both sides." Helms told me: "I'm not going to go around picking fights." And on abortion, he hasn't.

Is this makeover believable? Pretty much. Helms hasn't jettisoned any positions or principles. He's simply planed off some of the sharper edges of his persona. And why not? In private anyway, he's never been the ogre his opponents have cracked him up to be. If he seems paranoid, it's because he has real political enemies. (Gay activists once put a 15-ft. condom on the roof of his house in the Washington suburbs.) Helms has kinder feelings toward more people in Washington than you'd expect. He likes secretary of state Warren Christopher and secretary of defense William Perry. His meetings with President Clinton have been "delightful." On social occasions, both the president and Hillary Rodham Clinton have been "charming to me," he says. When his daughter, Nancy Stuart, accompanied him to a state dinner, she and Hillary chatted warmly and giggled. "That was a warning to me," Helms says. "If the Clintons could charm us . . ."

In earlier campaigns, Helms usually trailed a week or two before Election Day. Like Ronald Reagan, Helms underpolls; some voters are embarrassed to say they support him. "We were 9 points down with ten days to go in 1990," says Alex Castellanos, who worked on that campaign. Helms won by 6 points. Now, he's running slightly ahead of Democrat Harvey Gantt, the black ex-mayor of Charlotte and the man Helms beat six years ago. "We're so far ahead of where we were in 1990, it's not funny," says Helms. On a personality

scale, his favorability is 6 points higher than in 1984 and 17 points above 1990, says Terry Edmondson, Helms's campaign manager.

This is no accident. Helms was jarred into lightening his public countenance by the arrival of 600,000 new voters in North Carolina since 1990. About half are Republicans, but they aren't Helms conservatives. "All those people you see in traffic jams in the Research Triangle are economically where Helms was ten years ago," says Castellanos. "Socially, they're in the other lane." A poll by the Helms campaign found many reluctant to vote for him. So Helms has sought "to lower their resistance," says Castellanos, who left the Helms campaign last spring in a dispute with Edmondson. He's deemphasized—but not abandoned—his social conservatism, except on gays, and his popularity has improved, especially among women.

Michael Ramirez

Helms hardly comes across as a moderate. He declares union bosses are flooding the state with money in hopes of defeating him and killing the state's right-to-work law. That law, he says, "is the reason North Carolina has prospered." Gays and lesbians are also eager to beat him, Helms insists, and he makes no apologies for attacking them. (Some of his advisers worry that gay-bashing may unsettle new voters in the state.) Homosexuals oppose him, Helms told me, not because he believes their behavior "objectionable" but because he seeks to cut federal support for gay concerns, including what he considers disproportionate funding of AIDS research. His relations with gays are now at a standoff: "They don't like me and I don't like them."

More interesting than Helms's stump speech is the mini-confrontation with the press that often occurs afterwards. Reporters gather as Helms shakes hands with supporters, then pop several questions at him. Helms frequently bristles. When asked in Morganton why he has injected race into the campaign with a TV commercial criticizing Gantt for using his minority status to profit from the sale of a television station, Helms testily denies the charge: "I don't have to explain it. You let him get away with murder." Asked again in Statesville, he responds with a question: "Did Harvey tell you to ask about any particular ad?" Later, Helms says he doesn't trust reporters. "Anything we do in our commercials, that's [called] racist," he says. "He calls me an SOB in his, and it's boys will be boys. Everything I do is injecting race. He injects race by being black, by that standard."

While warming his image, Helms has done little to ease tension with the press. When North Carolina newspapers and TV stations joined in a "civic-journalism" project to cover issues the voters supposedly care most about, Helms stiffed them. He refused to be interviewed. He figured they were trying to force him into a debate with Gantt "at a time designated by them, at a place designated by them." Helms hasn't debated since 1984, when he and his Democratic opponent, governor Jim Hunt, sparred bitterly. Helms says he and Hunt didn't speak for three years, and he regretted that. Now, he and Hunt, who's running for reelection as governor, have cordial relations. Helms, once a TV commentator in Raleigh, contends that the voters learn nothing of value from televised debates.

Helms is regularly twitted in the "Under the Dome" political column in the *Raleigh News & Observer*, the paper he detests the most. Occasionally he gets the paper to respond to his complaints. On Oct. 19, the column said Helms was claiming undue credit for acquiring five helicopters for North Carolina sheriffs from the Defense Department. "Helms had nothing to do with the award," the paper said. "This is what I have to put up with all the time," Helms told me. The next day, the *News & Observer* carried a story in which Helms, several sheriffs, and a state official claimed the senator played a significant role in getting the helicopters. "State and local officials confirmed that Helms had interceded with federal officials to get the helicopters," the story said.

With Gantt as his opponent, Helms has made no effort to attract blacks. He expects to win no more than 1 percent or 2 percent of the black vote. The number he's looking at is 61 percent: If he wins that percentage of white voters, he's in. That might have been impossible if Charles Sanders, a chemical company executive, had beaten Gantt in the primary. Strategists for Helms feared Sanders and proposed to attack him in TV ads during the Democratic primary race. Castellanos, then the media consultant, refused, and the ads never appeared. For his part, Helms says Sanders would have been a "weak candidate." Still, when Sanders lost, the Helms camp breathed easier, and the senator began thinking about what he would do if reelected. Beyond seeking again to reorganize the State Department and opposing Clinton ("I'll be for the opposite of Clinton's initiatives"), Helms isn't specific: "I'm going to have a lot of fun and be busy." ♦

Outfoxing the Status Quo

by Claudia Winkler

Hamilton, Ohio

Michael Fox calls school vouchers "the civil-rights issue of our generation." Two years ago, when Republicans took control of the Ohio House of Representatives for the first time in his 22-year legislative career, Fox pushed through an innovative voucher experiment in Cleveland. As a result, right now, 1,800 inner-city children (average family income: under $7,000) are attending parochial and other private schools on $2,500 public scholarships. Anti-voucher forces have mounted a "Fox hunt" to fight his reelection—and to demonstrate the wrathful consequences for candidates anywhere who dare to support vouchers. Suddenly, a race for an Ohio statehouse seat has taken on importance for school reform nationwide.

Already last June, the president of the Ohio Federation of Teachers held a press conference in Fox's district, north of Cincinnati, and unveiled TV, radio, and newspaper ads attacking Fox on vouchers. A representative of the American Federation of Teachers flew in from Washington to support the campaign. "Don't get out-Foxed!" the "informational" messages admonished the voters of Butler County. Local public schools "are barely scraping by," the ads said, yet Fox voted to "give away" $5.5 million to private schools in Cleveland. "Is the Fox guarding the chicken coop?"

The campaign was timed to coincide with oral arguments in a suit challenging the constitutionality of Fox's program in state court. So far, though, pro-voucher forces have won the legal skirmishes, and the Ohio Court of Appeals won't rule on the constitutional issues until late this year. The chicken-coop ads ran for only a week, whereupon Butler County sank back into its usual politically unruffled condition.

A Republican stronghold—the local congressman is conservative John Boehner, fourth-ranking member of the House GOP—Fox's district returned him to Columbus two years ago with 68 percent of the vote, about standard for him. "People like Mike Fox," says Ron James, political reporter for the Hamilton *Journal-News*. "He's a good politician. He takes money from every side on every issue. And his party is a well-oiled machine. The Democrats have been out for over 20 years. Last time I checked, they had a war chest of $318 and were roughly $70,000 in debt."

Fox's Democratic opponent is Donald Hershner, AFL-CIO liaison with the Butler County United Way. A kind of cheerful Ernest Borgnine, he gamely accuses "Big Brother Mike" of everything from bounced checks, absenteeism, and links with Hell's Angels to short-circuiting democracy by passing the voucher program as part of the biennial budget instead of as a free-standing bill. But Hershner says he hasn't received a dime from his party. Most of his modest backing comes from the AFL-CIO, along with $1,500 from the Ohio Federation of Teachers.

Help for Hershner is still expected in the form of a pre-election anti-Fox mailing masterminded by the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers and the AFL-CIO. Even they, however, don't expect to unseat the incumbent. Teachers'-union leaders have therefore turned to a more promising strategy for neutralizing Fox: evict him as chairman of the education committee by winning back the Ohio House for the Democrats, which would mean recapturing seven seats. That's where the unions are concentrating their efforts.

Tom Mooney, longtime president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, is an especially implacable and articulate opponent of the Cleveland scholarships. "I simply don't think this is a sincere attempt to give a better education to deprived kids," he says. The way to do that, he insists, is to institute high academic standards in all public schools and provide alternative settings for disruptive students. "The bottom-line question is whether we still believe in the goal of a solid system of common schooling—whether we think that's an important component of a democracy and an essential foundation for economic competitiveness."

Mike Fox, portly and genial, is just as fervent in his longstanding dedication to reforming the schools. He cites the evidence that Cleveland's schools are the worst in the state. All of 9 percent of ninth graders passed the state ninth-grade proficiency test; only 32 percent of eighth-graders in the class of '96 went on to complete twelfth grade; of the one-third of Cleveland public-school teachers who live in the district, 40 percent send their children to private schools.

"Public schools like that aren't a way out for the poor," he says. "They only mirror the hopelessness and powerlessness of the surrounding communities and reinforce a failed social order. Parents deserve the option of schools they believe can educate their kids now."

Fox's next project is a radical version of charter schools that has the unions and other organized education interests apoplectic. Increasingly, they're coordinating their efforts to block what they see as a deadly threat to public education. "We and the Democrats and the AFL-CIO have pretty much a consensus on which legislative seats to target," Mooney says. "We're looking at one big battle plan."

If the voucher idea is ever to receive a fair test, its

supporters too must arrive at one big battle plan—one that embraces statehouses and state courts as well as the federal government. For if the foot soldiers of the movement—the Mike Foxes—are deflected by coordinated firepower, school choice might remain the pet of think-tank intellectuals and politicians long on talk and short on effective innovation. And that is no road to reform. ♦

Testing-Time for Term Limits

by Robert D. Novak

WHILE ENUMERATING THE SINS of his opponent in his rambling closing statement at the second presidential debate, Bob Dole blurted out this indictment: "President Clinton opposes term limits." Perhaps supporters of limiting congressional terms should have been grateful for those five little words, in a campaign where the issue has gone largely unmentioned by either side.

Nevertheless, as I sat in the University of San Diego theater, questions crossed my mind. Granted that Bill Clinton opposes term limits, but when did Bob Dole start supporting them? When did this congressional "lifer" experience his epiphany? There surely was no announcement of his conversion.

Nor of Jack Kemp's. Rather, the Republican vice-presidential nominee has been unrepentant in his insistence that he was a much better congressman at the end of his 18-year hitch in the House than at the beginning. Two of the most dynamic Republicans on Capitol Hill, Senate majority leader Trent Lott and House majority whip Tom DeLay, are avowed and unapologetic opponents. House speaker Newt Gingrich occasionally promises that passing term limits will be the first item of business in the 105th Congress, but he supports a generous limit for House members of 12 years—not six, as leaders of the term-limits movement insist on.

So the reality is unchanged from what it was two years ago. Democrats hate term limits and, for the most part, admit they will do everything in their power to defeat them. Republicans hate term limits and, for the most part, pretend to support them while working clandestinely to impede progress.

The remaining question is whether former House speaker Thomas Foley was correct in predicting that the public's infatuation with term limits would gradually subside while politicians whose life work is at stake would persist in blocking them to the bitter end. Indeed, the establishment is now fully mobilized, with "No" spending outdistancing "Yes" spending in the campaigns for this year's ballot initiatives. No longer can the politicians be taken by surprise.

One professional politician drowned in the 1994 term-limit tide was Foley himself, but it might seem that he will be among the last of his kind to be swamped by this movement. For in 1995, the U.S. Supreme Court found—by a 5 to 4 vote—invisible writing in the Constitution to decree that voters cannot limit the terms of members of Congress.

Yet Foley and the lifers of both parties have always underestimated the staying power of the 70 percent-plus of voters who want limits. Evidence of how deeply the people care about this will be forthcoming on November 5. Voters in 13 states that day (it was 14 until the Arkansas Supreme Court recently blocked an initiative from appearing on the ballot) will have an opportunity to vote on a six-year limit for House members. Howie Rich of U.S. Term Limits predicts victory in two-thirds of those contests (though two-thirds of all ballot initiatives generally lose). He is likely to do better than that. The movement is still alive and moderately well.

Initiatives instructing members of Congress to support three-term congressional limits are favored to pass in Alaska, Colorado, Maine, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon and, yes, Tom Foley's state of Washington. Here's how it works: If these initiatives carry, those congressmen who vote against strict six-year limits will have this notation next to their names on the 1998 ballot: "DISREGARDED VOTER INSTRUCTION ON TERM LIMITS." By this route, the movement seeks to achieve term limits without necessarily amending the Constitution (though the amending track is also being pursued).

Here are some of the sterner and more unusual tests for the term-limits movement on Election Day this year:

WYOMING: This is a classic case of the determination of the political establishment to hold back term limits. Back in 1992, Wyoming was one of 14 states to pass congressional limits that year—by 77 percent of the vote. The state legislature tried to roll back limits in 1993 and succeeded in 1995. But the movement overcame Wyoming's rigorous requirement of collecting signatures from some 25 percent of its voters and was able to put a referendum on the ballot this year to

repeal the state anti-limits law.

IDAHO: Right-wing opposition to term limits by the John Birch Society and other such organizations (which fear a constitutional convention) is concentrated here, where polls show more opposition from Republicans than Democrats. Conservative Idaho might be the only state that defeats term limits this year.

NEBRASKA: The movement is pressing for the defeat of Supreme Court judge David Lanphier, who twice has voted with the court's majority in throwing out term limits passed by nearly 70 percent of the electorate. This is a test election; the other six judges on the court are up for retention by the voters in 1998.

NORTH DAKOTA: This is the first state where voters are being asked to go the "direct application" route—calling for a constitutional convention to enact a term-limits amendment.

NEW YORK CITY: Voters are being asked to add another four years to the eight-year limit on City Council members approved by voters in 1993. The establishment, topped by a *New York Times* editorial endorsement, is in full cry for four-more-years.

With so many ballot initiatives on the table, the term-limits movement is not doing much in the way of voter education to boost individual candidates. An exception is Republican state representative Al Salvi, running an uphill battle in Illinois against Democratic representative Dick Durbin for the U.S. Senate. Such backing was instrumental in Salvi's primary-election upset victory over lieutenant governor Bob Kustra, who was backed by the entire state GOP machine, headed by Gov. Jim Edgar.

Two other instances show term-limits strategists following Samuel Gompers's old adage that labor should reward its friends and punish its enemies—with unfaithful friends placed in the category of enemies.

In Washington state, term-limits commercials played a decisive role in Republican representative George Nethercutt's 1994 upset over Foley. But the movement's leaders believe Nethercutt, once elected, undermined the congressional struggle for term limits. Consequently, it is giving him no help in a tough battle for reelection this year.

In Kansas, term-limits voter education helped Rep. Sam Brownback win a hotly contested primary for Dole's Senate seat. But Democrat Jill Docking has signed the U.S. Term Limits pledge. The movement is repaying Docking by staying neutral.

If most or all of the initiatives carry on Election Day, the professional politicians of both parties will have to confront the harsh reality that the public has not surrendered. This will send a message that the worst nightmare for office seekers who desire a long and comfortable life on Capitol Hill has not ended.

Robert D. Novak is a syndicated columnist.

Less Surfing, More Learning

by David Gelernter

MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR EVERY 12-year-old to "log on to the Internet" is one of President Clinton's main goals for the schools. The Democrats would be foolish to waste this occasion for another helpful, informative TV ad, so here is a suggested script:

SCENE: DOCTOR'S OFFICE

PATIENT: Doc, I've got acute chest pains, my head is bursting, and I got hit by a truck on my way over. You've got to help me!

DOCTOR: Have an ice-cream cone. (*Hands over a double-scoop of chocolate.*)

PATIENT: But my brain is melting, my bones are cracking, my heart is falling out, I'm *hemorrhaging,* and you're offering me—*an ice-cream cone*?

DOCTOR *(puzzled)*: What're you telling me, you don't *like* ice-cream cones? (*Aside*) What kind of crazy extremist position is that?

VOICE-OVER *(as patient dies and orderlies cart him out)*: This guy's troubles are *over*. Reelect President Clinton and he'll fix yours, too. Paid for by Americans Against Cancer-Gingrich, Muscular-Gingrich-Dystrophy, and Multiple-Gingrich-Sclerosis. Remember, your vote counts!

The president's Internet proposal is absurd. Not because there is anything wrong in itself with Internet access for children, but because our schools are in crisis, and it is ludicrous to suppose that Internet access will fix or even address the main problems. We don't have time or money to waste on quack cures, whether or not they are harmless; this patient needs help desperately.

A teacher explains in the fall '96 *Public Interest* why she quit the public schools to found a charter school of her own. "Public school was preventing education,"

Sarah Kass writes. "Could he read? Could she write? Did he know how to calculate percentages? Did she understand the First Amendment?" No one cared, and she walked. We have been aware of this education crisis at least since the *Nation At Risk* report more than a decade ago. We have shrugged it off, and the consequences are upon us. The Doles, Bennetts, and Borks condemn the trashification of popular culture, but vulgarity is the consequence of ignorance, never mind Hollywood. Here is John McPhee on the entertainment industry in a California gold-rush town: "While you drink your tanglefoot whiskey, you can watch a dog kill a dog, a chicken kill a chicken, a man kill a man, a bull kill a bear." An uneducated audience demands bear-baiting, rap music, movies awash in blood—whatever is convenient. Young people increasingly don't read the newspapers or watch the news on TV—in part, granted, because the mainstream news outlets are full of cant. But it is also true that, always and everywhere, ignorant people care less about the world around them and are less capable of deciphering it than educated ones. What did we expect?

Our schools are in bad trouble. Almost no one denies it, left or right. The president has a plan, naturally, and Internet access is a big part of it. But is there a teacher, parent, principal, child, even *teacher's union bureaucrat* anywhere in the country, anywhere in the *world*, who believes that our children are in educational trouble because they are *data-deprived?* Because they lack sufficient opportunities for chatting online? Because they can't get enough pictures to satisfy them and lead visually impoverished lives? Because they find credit-card shopping by phone so inconvenient that they are driven to distraction and can't concentrate on their homework?

I have used the Internet or its precursor nearly every day since the fall of 1982 and would be hard pressed without it. Nowadays I search for arcane data on the net, shop for books at a Web site, stay in touch electronically with people all over the world. It's great, and every high-school graduate ought to know how to use it—should know how to drive too, for that matter, how to manage a bank account, apply for a job, and dance the rumba. But none of those skills ought to be treated as an academic topic at a time when (in a 1993 finding cited by Charles Sykes in *Dumbing Down Our Kids*) "80 million Americans are deficient in the basic reading and mathematical skills needed to perform rudimentary tasks in today's society."

Moreover, virtually everything the Internet is selling, our children already have too much of and are choking on. The Web is a wonderful source of raw data. But our children are barely able to handle the data they already have—the databases and computer CDs and videotapes at many public libraries, the newspapers they don't read, the 24-hour news channels and C-SPANs they don't watch, the old-fashioned books they ignore. Couldn't we teach them to use what they've got before favoring them with three orders of magnitude *more*? Everyone knows what you do with the Web: You *surf*, sliding from site to site at the click of a mouse button. Exactly which problem will Web-surfing attack? Our children's insufficient shallowness? Excessive attention spans? Unhealthy fixation on in-depth analysis? Stubborn unwillingness to push on to the next topic until they have mastered the last? We need *less* surfing in the schools, not more. The Web is a great source of pictures—are we trying to cure our children of excessive interest in the written word? Depraved indifference to glitz and snazzy graphics?

And yet computers stand at the center of the president's schools program. "I want to build a bridge to the 21st century," he says, "where computers are as much a part of the classroom as blackboards." Fine, and meanwhile a 1990 survey of *college* seniors found that 42 percent couldn't date the Civil War correctly to within half a century.

"We should finish the job of connecting every classroom to the Internet by the year 2000," says the president. All right, and meanwhile a late 1980s survey of high-school seniors found that fewer than half could define "profit" or "government budget deficit."

Where education is concerned, the president's whole worldview is loopy. The only thing crazier is the Dole campaign's tactful near-silence on the topic.

Fact: The National Education Association and the Democratic party are bosom buddies and strong mutual supporters. Fact: The schools that NEA people run are in crisis and everyone knows it. Conclusion: The Democratic party relates to education the way bug zappers relate to mosquitoes. And yet in the public mind the *Democrats* are the education party.

Why didn't Dole say any of the following during either debate? *You* figure it out:

• "You have argued repeatedly, Mr. President, that opposing the Department of Education is tantamount to opposing education. Is this the same Department of Education to which NEA officials referred (according to Charles Sykes), on the night before Jimmy Carter signed it into existence, in this toast?—"Here's to the only union that owns its own cabinet department"? Do you actually believe that the schools are better today than they were in the benighted pre-Education Department era? And what percentage of high-school students, do you think, could define 'benighted,' except by noting that it is the answer young Lancelot used to give when folks asked him 'What do you want to do when you grow up?' Do you think *federal bureaucrats* will teach our children to read? I am in favor of education, Mr. President. I am also in favor of good

software, sunny skies, and pretty girls, especially when they work for me. And does that mean, Sir, that I ought to favor cabinet departments of Software, Sunshine, and Paula Jones? What kind of idiots do you take us for?"

• "Like any other well-off person with half a brain, you, Sir, would sooner bludgeon yourself to death with a two-by-four than send your child to the D.C. public schools. So why did you oppose Congress's effort to make private schooling available to poor D.C. residents? And you claim you are not the NEA's devoted shill? What kind of fools do you think us, anyway? (Why, every man, woman, and child in this country knows that you have 'I ♥ NEA' tattooed in hot pink over your heart. That last charge is completely phony, of course—like your claim that Republicans tried to cut Medicare.)"

• "You keep telling us, Mr. President, that every 12-year-old ought to have access to the Internet. Now we understand, Sir (as you've said), that no attack ever created a job. That no insult ever cleaned up a toxic-waste dump. That no turnip ever taught Peter Jennings to dance the fandango. That no Kleenex ever talked a single American into blowing his nose. The nation thanks you humbly for pointing these things out. Just one more item: No glorified electronic shopping mall ever taught a child arithmetic or history, how to read and write English, or tell right from wrong. And those are the things our children need desperately to learn. Just how stupid, Mr. President, do you think we are?

"*That* stupid, huh.

"Sorry I asked."

Contributing editor David Gelernter is professor of computer science at Yale University.

Petty's Toughest Race

by Matt Labash

North Carolina

I AM RIDING WITH THE KING, and not your bush-league Huey Long or Elvis variety of royalty either. For in the Piedmont, where they crank out stock-car racing champions like western Pennsylvania does quarterbacks or East St. Louis does crack dealers, Richard Petty is still the King of NASCAR—even four years after retirement.

We are on a bone-crushing eight-stop-a-day campaign swing for Petty, who wants to be the next secretary of state of North Carolina—a job many locals regard as a comedown for His Majesty. Though Petty's supported Republicans going back to Nixon and even served 16 years as a county commissioner, it's still hard to see him pushing papers around Raleigh dealing with securities regulation. Not that he plans on moving to the state capital from his Petty Enterprises home base in Level Cross if he wins.

Like any good American folk hero, Petty comes sinewy and leather-skinned and looks like he just shot his way out of a Peckinpah movie. He wears a Charley One-Horse hat with python skin and mink bones, and has a mean-*muchacho* mustache offset by beautiful piano-key teeth, kept clean, he explains, by his Skoal habit: "The tobacco keeps the other stuff off."

The Pettys are North Carolina's Kennedys—a long line of Tarheel speed demons, with such vaunted standing that Petty's political victory initially seemed a foregone conclusion. His father was venerable dirt-tracker Lee, and his son is Kyle, and even his pre-NASCAR great-grandfather died in a souped-up Model T ripping through the Piedmont backroads. "It was a good way to go," Petty says.

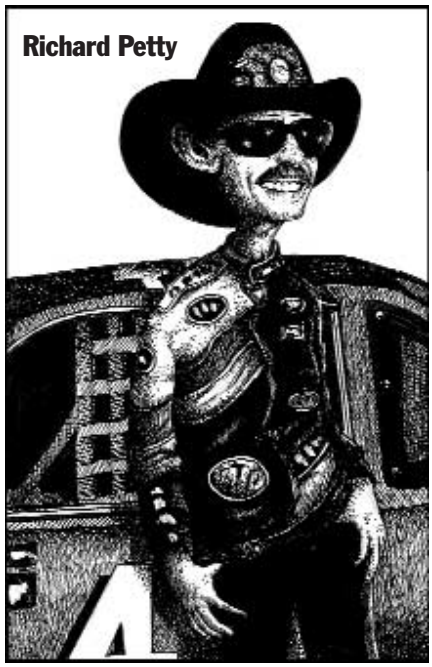
Petty himself became a living legend by winning 200 Winston Cup races, a record considered as unassailable as Wilt Chamberlain's 100-point game. So it is no surprise that state Republicans tried to push him for a gubernatorial run, though he ruled that out because "it's one of them 24-hour-a-day deals." He settled on secretary of state and intends to forfeit the $90,000-a-year salary as a matter of public duty, though he'll hold onto his numerous business ventures and endorsements—and so what if media types have their panties in a wad over "conflicts of interest and stuff."

Even after Petty lowered his sights to the third spot on the ticket, Republicans thought lesser candidates could draft off of his favorite-son luminescence. But Petty's poll numbers are dropping like a rock. He had a comfortable lead, but now finds himself six points behind a spoilsport Democrat lawyer named Elaine Marshall, who bills herself a "serious candidate for a serious job."

Petty's at a loss to explain his decline—maybe it was that little incident last month on Highway 85 when his Dodge truck gave a little tap to another driver who was moving too slowly in the fast lane and wouldn't move over. Petty claims he kissed the other driver's bumper only because the guy hit his brakes and "my reflexes were slow."

That on-the-road aggressiveness "probably helped him with the 'necks,'" as in red, says one GOP consultant, "but it hurt him elsewhere, and I don't think people want somebody who can't put two sentences together."

Resentful that he's not making appearances at their pleasure, and because down-ticket GOP candidates aren't getting the expected bounce, most Republicans here are telling me that the King is going to lose. But I have cause to doubt. True, he's not exactly Daniel Webster on the stump, giving his low-watt good-ol'-boy rumble for about five minutes before marathon autograph sessions. But while crossing the state, I found he does something very few politicians do: He makes people happy. I heard the testimonials, from the tract mansions of the furniture burghers to the naugahyde'n'wood-paneled pig-pulling joints.


Richard Petty

Sean Delonas

Like a heavenly chorus, they all sing heartfelt hosannas to the King—the grown men with STP ties and the usually disaffected bucks at the state fair trying not to look too enthusiastic in front of their girlfriends as they run after his golf cart in spite of themselves. Even institutional Democrats like agriculture commissioner Jim "the Sodfather" Graham tell me about Petty's open houses for his fans and his accessibility.

They tell me how he was always at the track four and five hours after a race, even before the media started coming around, signing every last autograph with those ornate curlicues and his number 43 that takes at least five seconds to get down, but that he never refuses anyone.

I checked his autobiography out of a public library all the way up in Virginia, and it was signed. He signs everything: ducks and dashboards and body parts, and when some wiseguy on the campaign trail brought a pony doubling for a donkey, he cocked his hat, took out his felt pen, and signed the bridle.

"Ain't nobody no bigger," attests the aptly named Man Lane, a dead ringer for Junior Sample who has a Petty museum in his backyard. Lane drives a truck replica of the Petty Pontiac to nearly every campaign stop, not just because he's a fan, but because 20 years ago, his 5-year-old son "fell into a scalding vat while we was killin' hogs. He couldn't walk."

To cheer him up, Lane requested a meeting with Petty, who not only got the kid pit passes for a race at Rockingham but had the family over to the house the next morning. "We stayed there all day," says Lane, "and he picked that young'un up and carried him all over that complex. Nobody knows about it. But anywhere he goes on his campaign, I try to make sure that truck's there."

Coming out of the official Petty museum in Level Cross after seeing the Petty video and Petty belt buckles and the sweat-stained socks in which Petty won the Firecracker 400, I spotted an overpermed, raspberry-eyebrowed number who looked like she'd just come out of Graceland.

"What do you like about Richard Petty for secretary of state?" I asked.

She eyed my cellophane bag with two Petty hats and a Petty patch all signed with one of my four Petty pens. "What's not to like?" she said. ♦

By the Seastrand

by Matthew Rees

Santa Barbara, Calif.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN Andrea Seastrand, the freshman Republican representative, and Democratic challenger Walter Capps couldn't be greater. She's sorry only two-thirds of the Contract with America has been enacted; he calls the contract "a total and complete failure." She identifies her influences as Phyllis Schlafly and Paul Weyrich; he opts for Vaclav Havel and Thomas Jefferson. She had Dan Quayle in for a fund-raiser; he had Michael Douglas. Beyond their mutual opposition to offshore oil drilling, their only shared trait is that both are musicians—he plays the tuba, she the clarinet.

This may be the most laid-back district in the country—almost always sunny, not too hot, and politics a low priority. Yet Seastrand and Capps act as if the whole world is watching their bitter rematch (two years ago Seastrand won by just 1,563 votes). Perhaps the world ought to watch. Seastrand's struggle for reelection mirrors that of many of the 73 House Republican freshmen. Democrats and their interest-group allies have had some success portraying these rookies as extremist Newt Gingrich clones responsible for the government shutdown last year. And with freshmen making up roughly one-third of the House Republican caucus, how they fare November 5 will determine whether the GOP controls the House and Gingrich remains speaker. This suggests that as Seastrand goes, so goes Congress.

The district's voter registration is split almost evenly between Republicans and Democrats, which usually helps Republican candidates (Republicans, more affluent and better informed, are better at showing up on Election Day). So the real surprise is that Seastrand isn't ahead. The explanation is simple: The political mood has shifted in Clinton's favor, and a *Congressional Quarterly* analysis of 1995 voting found she voted with President Clinton less frequently than any other member of the House. And Seastrand has been targeted by liberal pressure groups ranging from the Sierra Club to the AFL-CIO to the National Abortion Rights Action League. The groups have been littering the district with hostile television and radio advertising. She estimates their total spending against her to be in the range of $1 million, which is more than Capps expects to spend on his entire campaign. The attacks aren't exactly subtle. One of the ads has an image of what looks like sewer sludge spewing into the ocean while a narrator intones, "It's time to dump Andrea Seastrand before she dumps anything more on us."

Capps adopts a pious tone when asked about the negativity of the campaign. He points out that he's spent 30 years as a professor of religion at the University of California at Santa Barbara, during which time he's written 14 books and taught popular seminars on the Vietnam War and Tocqueville. "My goal in going [to Washington] is to increase civility," he says, and he sells himself as the embodiment of the Jeffersonian citizen legislator. "I'm running as a citizen and a teacher who believes in democracy," he solemnly intoned in an October 21 debate.

But such rhetoric only underscores the Faustian bargain Capps has struck this year. He's done nothing to distance himself from the distorted attacks on Seastrand. He begs off with the lame explanation that the ads are only exposing his opponent's record. (One of his daughters, by the way, works for George Stephanopoulos.)

Capps probably won't pay a price for his hypocrisy on Election Day, though his time in the ivory tower won't help him much. Much of the district is rural, and the university is viewed with some disdain in smaller towns like Solvang (where one elderly gentleman told me Santa Barbara is "full of guacamole-heads").

It also hurts that while Capps insists on calling himself "mainstream," he is an utterly conventional California liberal. He says he would not have voted for the congressional welfare reform bill and disagreed with the president's signing of an anti-gay marriage bill. He liked Clinton's veto of the ban on partial-birth abortion, and in a recent debate he called abortion a "civil right" (Seastrand is staunchly pro-life). He also boasted of his support for the United Nations ("a worthy enterprise"). Closer to home, he opposes the California Civil Rights Initiative.

Those positions go over well in Santa Barbara, the biggest city in the district, but leave Capps vulnerable to the charge that he's out of step with the rest of his constituency. Which explains why, like so many other Democrats, he's running as much against Speaker Gingrich as he is against Seastrand. The election, he told me, "is a referendum on Gingrich," and his summer polling showed the speaker is viewed negatively by 51 percent of district voters. Capps methodically points out that Seastrand voted with Gingrich 96 percent of the time, and then recites the familiar and false litany about Republican attempts to slash Medicare benefits and gut environmental protections.

Seastrand is unrepentant: "I have nothing to be ashamed of." The GOP's biggest mistake, she argues, was not responding to attack ads when those ads began having a real effect in the late summer of 1995. In speeches, she extols the accomplishments of the Gingrich-led Congress, emphasizing procedural reforms (like eliminating ice delivery to congressional offices) over policy reforms. She's had Gingrich to the district on three occasions, most recently in August. "I really do admire the man," she told me.

Bob Dole may have more to do with whether Seastrand is reelected than Gingrich. While Dole has little chance of winning California, he could bolster Republican turnout in swing districts like Seastrand's if he maintains his quest for the state and warns voters about a Democratic Congress. Capps will benefit from a massive voter registration drive undertaken at his university (Toad the Wet Sprocket, a local band gone big-time, helped out). But students often don't vote, and Seastrand has history on her side: The district hasn't elected a Democrat to Congress since 1942. ♦

The Consultant Culture

By Tucker Carlson

It's hard to imagine Ed Rollins playing moralist, but there he was at the National Press Club in Washington last month, a Jeremiah with warm-up jokes. Distrust of the political system has reached dangerous levels among voters, he told his audience; the public is "cynical," even "disgusted," with the process, and with the duplicitous people who participate in it. "We all suffer as a nation when that occurs," he said sadly. Moments later, he recalled his brief tenure as Ross Perot's campaign manager during the 1992 presidential campaign. "The greatest contribution I've made to American politics," he said, "is I took Ross Perot from 39 percentage points to 17 in six weeks."

If it seemed strange to hear Rollins show savage disloyalty to a former paying client in the middle of a speech on the horrors of cynicism, the journalists listening didn't catch it. Actually, they laughed and applauded. But then, his comments were no stranger than the fact that Rollins was speaking publicly on politics at all. Just three years ago he was humiliated and disgraced after bragging that he had paid black people not to vote while running Christie Whitman's campaign for governor of New Jersey. Those unsophisticated in the ways of politics might have assumed that Rollins's public life would end right there. Those very same naïfs probably think Dick Morris's career in politics has ended too. Wrong again.

> NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME OF POLITICAL RACES, ONE SMALL GROUP OF PROFESSIONALS ALWAYS SEEMS TO WIN.

Political consultants, even scoundrels like Rollins and Morris, never really go away. They don't have to. Vanquished politicians retreat to think tanks and anonymity, often minus their reputation and dignity. Consultants who lose move on to another campaign. The really bad ones write books and become television personalities. In their professional remove, political consultants resemble nothing so much as vendors at a ball park: Long after teams have won or lost and moved on, consultants are still in the stands, hawking their product, waiting for a new season to begin.

It's not a bad job if you can get it, which may explain why political consulting has gone from an innovation to an industry in only 30 years. Until the 1960s, most major political races were run by amateurs—by friends, relatives, or followers of a candidate who took temporary leave of their regular lives to help him get elected. Today, it is a rare candidate for federal office who doesn't hire professional consultants at every step along the road to election: strategists to formulate the message, pollsters to shape it, ad makers to present it to the public, and marketers who can raise enough money to make it all possible. Thanks to the expertise of consultants, political races have grown slicker, more sophisticated, and probably more informative. At the same time, consultants are now becoming more famous and better paid than the clients they work for. This small group of dedicated professionals has succeeded in taking the risk out of politics, at least for themselves: No matter what the outcome of the race, the consultants always win.

Of course even now the debate continues over what, in a strict sense, "winning" means. Politicians have a tendency to take full credit for their victories while placing the blame for defeats on their consultants. Consultants, particularly in conversations with reporters, almost always return the favor. ("We won Michigan," the consultant says, meaning *my firm*. "He lost Ohio," the consultant says, meaning *the candidate.*)

In the spring of 1995, *Campaigns and Elections* magazine decided it would publish the previous year's win/loss tally for every significant political consultant in the country. Collecting the data for the article seemed like a straightforward enough task—the outcome of an election is, after all, a matter of public record—but it turned out not to be. "A lot of the consultants hated for us to do it," says editor Ron Faucheux. "And some of them fought it pretty vicious-

ly." The magazine's staff ran into "dozens of examples of duplicity" from consultants who pretended their clients had won, or denied working for candidates who had lost. When they weren't lying about their records, many consultants argued it was unfair to judge them simply by the number of races won, since some races are tougher to win than others. Though there is some truth in this defense, it is nonetheless clear that in consulting, there is not necessarily a link between victory and prominence.

Consider the case of Republican consultant Frank Luntz. Luntz is among the most famous political pollsters in America, a man whose advice on election strategy is sought avidly and openly by Newt Gingrich, among others. Luntz's fame and self-regard are so great that when the Dole campaign neglected to ask for his help in the race this fall, he seemed every bit as confused as he was outraged. "Here he is, the man I want to see win, yet he doesn't want to hear of my findings," Luntz complained to the *Washington Times*.

Maybe the Dole campaign knows something television audiences don't: Frank Luntz has very little experience winning actual political races. During the 1994 cycle, when as one consultant put it, "I think even Forrest Gump had 32 winning Republican House seats," Luntz signed on to only four contests. Three of his candidates lost, two of them during the primaries.

FRANK LUNTZ, WHOSE ADVICE IS SOUGHT AVIDLY AND OPENLY BY MANY REPUBLICANS, HAS LITTLE EXPERIENCE WINNING RACES.

Rollins fared even worse that year: At the height of the most Republican-friendly campaign season in memory, five of his six clients lost. By contrast, Public Opinion Strategies, a polling firm all but unknown outside of obsessive political circles, signed up with 147 candidates in 1994 for a total of 175 races, including primaries. Its candidates won 139 of those races, an impressive record in any year. Nobody has offered the company's pollsters a TV contract.

There are a number of theories about the effectiveness of consultants. One holds that the skill of consultants is the single most important factor in politics—the Dick-Morris-is-running-the-White-House story so popular with the media. Another contends that consultants only get in the way, tempering a candidate's true beliefs and hiding his best qualities from a public that clamors for intellectual honesty—the Let-Reagan-be-Reagan trope beloved by ideologues.

Neither holds much weight with consultants themselves, who, characteristically, tend to take a fatalistic view of elections. "I'd rather be lucky than good," consultants often say (to each other), and they mean it. As Mark Goodin, a longtime GOP consultant who has been retired from politics long enough to admit such things, puts it, "There is an awful lot of luck to this business. The simple truth is, oftentimes the guys who win are the guys who are lucky."

Fortunate circumstances may be the deciding factor in many political races, but there's no profit in telling candidates that, and most consultants don't. Instead, like any good salesman, a savvy consultant works hard to emphasize his own indispensability. Alex Castellanos, the Dole campaign's chief ad maker, makes the point with a story: A blind man stands on a street corner. In one hand, he holds a sign that says "I am blind." In the other, he holds an empty cup. As the blind man waits for passersby to notice him, an advertising man approaches. The ad man produces a pen and writes something on the blind man's sign. In an instant, the sightless beggar is deluged with contributions from sympathetic pedestrians. "What did he write on the poster, the few words that could make so much difference?" Castellanos asks. He answers his own question: "Where it had said 'I am blind,' the advertising guy had written '*It is spring*, and I am blind.'"

Moral: "Even though nothing had really changed, everything really had. The ad guy didn't change the truth of that situation. But he elevated it. And that's our job. That's what I try to do in campaigns: I try to find the truest thing and reveal it in some important and dramatic way. That's what we do when we do a good job."

There is another, unspoken parallel here: In politics, the candidates are like blind men standing with hands outstretched, political consultants the ad guys who embellish their signs. For consultants do believe they know a lot more about politics than the people they work for. Distracted, rendered gullible by insecurity and often a lack of experience, many candidates seem almost touchingly willing to believe that consultants know what they're talking about. It is not uncommon for candidates—many of them hard-nosed businessmen in former lives—to hire consultants entirely on the basis of a smooth sales pitch, without so much as a reference check or a complete list of former clients. Once hired, consultants frequently

assume Merlin-like powers and authority. Several years ago, the wife of one Senate candidate refused to choose her own Christmas card before talking it over with political consultant Mike Murphy.

In such a climate, there are almost limitless opportunities for hucksterism. Or worse: In 1990, consultant Dick Dresner was forced to repay more than $65,000 to three Republican candidates running in statewide races when audits revealed he had pocketed money given him by the campaigns to buy air time for commercials.

More often, however, consultants who cheat their clients do so subtly. A favorite consultant routine is the bait-and-switch. Like many cons, this one relies on the mark's sense of vanity. "You're a unique leader," a consultant might tell a prospective client during a sales pitch. "I think this campaign should be all about *you*." The hook set, the consultant returns to his office, contract in hand. "And that," complains a senior staffer for a Democratic senator running for reelection this year, "is the last you see of these guys. We write these big checks to them, we get them on the phone periodically, but it's not like we're getting a lot of personal attention." Meanwhile, says veteran consultant Jay Smith, "while the candidate is still sitting there feeling like he's going to be the next president of the United States, the real work is being done by some 22-year-old right out of college who's part of the consultant's shop. That's done all the time."

Kent Lemon

Alex Castellanos

So are so-called "cookie cutter" ads. These are the carbon-copy political spots favored by media consultants too lazy or cheap to come up with original advertising. "He's not a career politician. He's an innovator, a doer, a leader . . . a breath of fresh air," proclaimed a recent ad for Guy Millner, running for the Senate in Georgia. The exact same words appeared in an ad for Robin Hayes, who's running for governor of North Carolina. What do Millner and Hayes have in common? Tom Perdue, the media consultant who billed them both for essentially the same spot, complete with identical background music. And it's not just Perdue who does it. The practice is so widespread that one creative film editor was able to string together an entire short movie out of cookie cutters produced by political ad maker Stuart Stevens. According to one consultant who sat through it, "There were only about three basic commercials, and they ran so seamlessly together that you couldn't tell the candidates apart."

Perhaps no consulting field is more ripe for scams than polling, because nobody except pollsters is sure what exactly they do. Since the most accurate polls are invariably the most expensive, there are real incentives to cut corners.

In crude terms, the corner-cutting might work like this: A pollster might decide to survey 100 Hispanic voters between the ages of 35 and 50. Ten of those subjects are not home when the pollster (or, more likely, the phone-bank employee in Utah he has hired for the task) calls. Follow-up calls are expensive, so the pollster decides to skip the 10 missing Hispanic voters, and instead try to balance (or "weight") the responses of the other 90 to make up for their absence. Or he might call ten *new* Hispanic voters, not all of whom match the exact demographic description of the voters they replaced—some might be younger than 35 or older than 50.

If the pollster knows what he is doing and weights his poll accurately, the poll's findings could be unaffected. Such fine-tuning rarely happens, however, since very few political pollsters have been formally trained in social-science research techniques. Which means the poll is liable to be markedly off, enough to cause a poll-obsessed campaign spasms of joy or paroxysms of panic. Either way, the candidate is not likely ever to know there has been an error.

Disloyalty is the greatest sin in consulting, and

consultants are quick to draw a clear distinction between themselves and mercenaries like Morris and Rollins. "What they say about us all being egomaniacs, that's all very valid," offers Democratic campaign manager James Carville without being asked. What Carville won't admit to, what he adamantly denies, is personal disloyalty to candidates: "I can certainly—and I think with some justification—be accused of cashing in on my celebrity," he says. "But I ain't *never* shit on any of the people I worked for in doing it."

That seems somewhat fair; it is true that very few consultants take clients from more than one party, as Rollins and Morris have. On the other hand, few consultants have problems working for candidates from the opposite ends of the ideological spectrum as long as they share the same party affiliation. Media consultant Alex Castellanos, for instance, a genuine and self-described "right-wing guy," has taken jobs with both Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina and Gov. Arne Carlson of Minnesota—two politicians so far from each other on so many basic issues that it is hard to see any philosophical common ground between them. Asked if a Republican client could espouse a policy position so repugnant to him that he would refuse to take the job, ad maker Stuart Stevens seems stumped. "The mandatory putting of puppies in microwaves?" he wonders aloud. "I don't know."

FOR ALL THE MONEY THEY MAKE, EVEN THE BEST MEDIA CONSULTANTS PRODUCE ADS LIKE SOMETHING FROM A BULGARIAN FILM SCHOOL.

Consulting, in other words, is less a calling than a good way to pay the bills. Salaries for consultants on a presidential campaign, for instance, generally top out at about $20,000 a month—fairly extravagant by most people's definition, but not much compared with what a well-connected and media-friendly consultant with a range of clients in the private sector could be taking in. "In 1988, I was making $15,000 a month" managing campaigns, recalls James Carville. "Now that's one speech."

Moreover, campaign work is time-consuming. A consultant might put in 18-hour days for months at a time during an election year, so a responsible freelancer usually doesn't have the time to take on many political clients. Of course, if he's a media consultant, he doesn't need many clients.

Alone among political consultants, ad makers have the potential to grow rich doing campaign work. In addition to a healthy retainer and production fees, media consultants typically receive a percentage of the money used to buy advertising time on radio and television. "Industry standards" call for 15 percent off the top, but the number is usually lower, between 5 and 10 percent. In any case, the average statewide campaign can net a media consultant anywhere from $250,000 to $500,000. And this is not a full-time job. Ad makers usually work for several candidates during an election cycle, so you can see how fees like this add up to a healthy living, no matter how substantial the ad man's costs are.

Presidential races, the Super Bowls of media consulting, can bring in a lot more. Commercials produced for the Clinton campaign alone are expected to cost $100 million this year, much of it from public funds. Of that amount, Bob Squier and former Clinton consultant Dick Morris will undoubtedly receive large percentages. By November, Squier will have earned profits in the millions. It's less clear how much the numerous Republican consultants who have worked on Dole ads this season will come away with in the end, but the figure can't be small.

For all the money they make, even the best media consultants frequently produce ads that look like something churned out of a Bulgarian film school. Grainy, blunt, and artless, political advertising is nowhere near as sophisticated or visually appealing as commercials for even the cheapest consumer products. Media consultants defend themselves by pointing to their limited budgets and accelerated production schedules. "We're guerrilla marketers, the Vietcong of marketing," says Republican ad man Mike Murphy. "We do a hundred miles a week on one bowl of rice, we fight at night, and, dollar for dollar, we're hard to beat." But, he concedes, "there's not a lot of beauty in it." Privately, some consultants acknowledge that there is another reason for the sloppy, heavy-handed ads: The ads work. "The fact is, our bottom-line stuff moves numbers," says one. "You give me $10,000, I'll make an ad that sells McDonald's hamburgers. I'll say, 'Here's a Burger King hamburger. It's got worms in it.' I'll guarantee that would sell a load of McDonald's hamburgers."

Traditionally, the ranks of successful full-time consultants have been tiny, almost incestuous. Of the five best-known Republican media consultants—Don Sipple, Greg Stevens, Mike Murphy, Alex Castellanos, and Stuart Stevens—every single one has worked on the Dole campaign this year. That in-breeding may be a thing of the past, because word is out about how

good a job consulting can be. "Political consultants obviously get a lot of play in the press, which makes it attractive to recent college graduates," explains Amy Marcenaro, executive director of the American Association of Political Consultants. And young people entering the employment market like the job because, she laughs, "it doesn't take anything to become a political consultant."

That's for sure. "With political consultants, you just call yourself one and you're one," says consultant Jay Smith. "It's one of the biggest scams of the modern era." A fellow longtime consultant agrees: "Political consulting has gone from a small fraternity of mutually respecting professionals to a Wild West collection of confidence men and unqualified charlatans," he says. "More than half of the people who try to charge money for political consulting are totally incompetent. There are a lot of veterinarians doing heart surgery out there."

Maybe so. Or maybe the older guys are just spooked by the new competition. Whatever the case, and despite their duplicities and limitations, it is clear that consultants can make a measurable difference to a struggling campaign, particularly when they help a candidate pick a message and stick to it. College political-science departments and K Street law firms are littered with the remains of would-be officeholders who should have listened more closely to their hired guns.

> DESPITE THEIR DUPLICITIES AND LIMITATIONS, IT IS CLEAR THAT CONSULTANTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO A STRUGGLING CAMPAIGN.

The same seems true of the near-dead Dole campaign.

When they were hired by Dole earlier this year to formulate an advertising strategy, consultants Don Sipple and Mike Murphy quickly came up with a plan to raise Dole's approval rating, while at the same time undermining the public's confidence in President Clinton. Most of Murphy and Sipple's advice was reasonable: Explain what a good guy Dole is, focus the economic program exclusively on the 15 percent tax cut, and forget the notion of convincing voters that the economy is in worse condition than they think; emphasize solutions to moral problems, while subtly underlining Clinton's character deficiencies; and so on. Nothing radical here, just elemental, field-tested campaign strategy the two had used successfully many times before.

Unfortunately, some of the more senior staff—notably campaign manager Scott Reed—had comparatively little experience in political races. They distrusted Murphy and Sipple, Johnny-come-latelies to Dole '96 who had worked for rival candidates in the Republican primaries. Before long, the ad men found their access to Dole blocked, their strategy suggestions ignored. Soon, they left. "It was the triumph of managers over warriors," says one consultant who watched the power struggle unfold. "Managers are good at running bureaucracy, but warriors know how to win a campaign." A little melodramatic, but probably true.

Reclining in a chair in his Virginia office, dead cigar in hand, is Alex Castellanos. Castellanos replaced Murphy and Sipple on the Dole ad team, and he is the most important Republican consultant in America right now. Behind Castellanos's desk hang two pictures. One is a photo of Harry Truman holding the famously incorrect *Chicago Tribune* headline announcing his own defeat—a defeat predicted by the leading polling consultants of the day. Beside the smiling Truman is a framed quote from Aeschylus almost painful in its severity: "He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God."

In front of this backdrop, Castellanos outlines how he plans to present Bob Dole to American voters. "There's only one story," he begins. "You've seen it in the bookstore, you've seen it at Blockbuster video, you've seen it at the movies, it'll be on again tonight." It is "the oldest story known to man, the story of sacrifice, the story of the Cross, the story of what it means to do for others. That is the story of politics, that is the story of family." In this story, Castellanos says, there are three acts. "Somewhere in Act Three," he explains, "there's the final battle that encapsulates the whole journey. This election is about that. Somewhere near the end of the story, your hero, your good guy, realizes that he's got to take a stand against being hollowed out and being somebody else. That's what it's all about—resisting that pressure. There's only one story."

Castellanos pauses, relights his cigar, ponders what he has just said. "In the best campaigns," he says with what could be a sigh, "we just disappear." What about in this campaign? "In this campaign? With Bob Dole? That's hard for me to say. You know, politics is a wonderful thing . . ." ♦

Why Strom Thurmond Will, and Ought to, Win

By Andrew Ferguson

Barring some unforeseen occurrence—such as his staying alive for six more years—this fall marks Strom Thurmond's last campaign. So let's get this over with right at the beginning:

How old is Strom Thurmond? When Thurmond was born in 1903, Tolstoy was working on a new novel. The first World Series had just been played. Henry Ford was raising capital to start the Ford Motor Company.

How old is Strom Thurmond? Old enough to remember wooing the votes of Civil War veterans. Old enough to have run against Harry Truman for president almost half a century ago.

How old? *Old enough to be Bob Dole's father.*

Perhaps a better question is, How young? Consider these two facts: At the age of 41, Lt. Col. Thurmond was the oldest man to land behind enemy lines during D-Day in 1944. When the 50th anniversary came two years ago, Thurmond missed the celebration—because he was at his son's high-school graduation.

Age is the consuming issue of Thurmond's last campaign, obsessing everyone but the candidate and a majority of South Carolinians, who will most likely return him to the Senate next week for an eighth term. Certainly it obsesses Thurmond's Democratic opponent, Elliot Close, a wealthy and by now extremely frustrated businessman. And certainly it obsesses members of the national press, who fly in and out of South Carolina in hopes of catching the senator in mid-drool.

The tone of the national media's Strom reportage was set earlier this year with a pair of hit jobs in the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek*. The *Post* article, written in a tone of almost delirious priggishness, was designed to horrify Washingtonians. The charges were comprehensive. Thurmond, the *Post*'s Lloyd Grove discovered, is old, and "totally dependent on his aides." As chairman of the Armed Services committee, he has "done away with the committee's tradition of bipartisanship." He has "focused on the funding of South Carolina military installations to the exclusion of weighty national security issues." He doesn't pay his staff lavish salaries. And he really, really likes girls.

This is all true, and Washingtonians may have been duly appalled, but there's not much in the bill of particulars to which most South Carolinians wouldn't say "That's fine," or whatever they say in South Carolina. Imagine a senator totally dependent on staff—preoccupied with pork—motivated by partisanship—heterosexual! In a city as dull and conformist as Washington, where more hairspray is bought by men than women and argyle socks are considered a sign of eccentricity, Thurmond is indeed sui generis, a true character, a man worthy of fascination. The Washington press corps senses this but is not sure how to account for it, and so for years it has tried to make of Thurmond something he is not.

> IN A CITY AS DULL AS WASHINGTON, WHERE MORE HAIRSPRAY IS BOUGHT BY MEN THAN WOMEN, THE SENATOR IS SUI GENERIS, A MAN WORTHY OF FASCINATION.

The *Post*'s Grove, for example, stressed that Thurmond "fashioned a career out of defending the old order of racial separation." This too is true, but misleading. Thurmond challenged Truman as the presidential candidate of the States' Rights, or Dixiecrat, party in 1948, but some historians believe his primary object was less to give voice to the voiceless redneck than to position himself for a Senate run in 1950. Given the repulsive southern politics of the day, his were only moderately disgusting. As governor of South Carolina in the '40s, he called for more money for the "separate but equal" black schools, moved to eliminate the poll tax, and instituted the secret ballot for general elections. He was never a colorful vulgarian like the quintessential southern pols, Theodore Bilbo or Gene Talmadge or Big Jim Folsom. He lacked the rabble-rouser's gift. It is impossible to imagine Strom Thurmond saying, as Big Jim Folsom did about an opponent's plan to blackmail him, "Boys, if they want to trap Big Jim with a beautiful blonde and a bottle of

fine whiskey, why, they're going to catch him every time!" For one thing, Thurmond is a lifelong teetotaler. (Never smoked, either.)

"I change with the times," Thurmond has often said, and today his politics are moderate Republican—to the right of Mark Hatfield, but to the left of a conservative-movement true believer like, say, Rick Santorum. He is pro-life but supports fetal-tissue research, is big on SDI but approves gun control in moderate amounts, talks a good free-market game but voted for the minimum wage increase. He is resolutely non-ideological and intellectually uncomplicated. He adequately reflects the conservative leanings of his constituents, and he directs most of his staff's energy to servicing their needs: rustling up stray Social Security checks, fixing passport problems, and the like. As disappointing as it is to admit, Strom Thurmond is an utterly conventional politician.

Kent Lemon

As a man he has some eccentricities. A fitness buff and, as the *Post* noted, a notorious cheapskate, he can be seen nightly grazing the buffet tables of the receptions that clog the Senate office buildings whenever Congress is in session. The first time I saw him, in the mid-1980s, he paused thoughtfully at the buffet, unfolded a napkin, filled it with boiled shrimp, and stuffed it in his coat pocket before making his exit. Later in the evening, at another reception, I saw him do it again. One congressional staffer tells of being introduced to the senator in a Capitol hallway. "You look like a nice young fella," Thurmond said, withdrawing a bulky item from his coat pocket and extending it toward the staffer. "Would you like a nice roast beef sammich?"

And whatever keeps his furnace roaring after all these years, no one doubts that the fuel is to a large extent libidinal. At 44, he married a 21-year-old beauty queen; at 69, he married a 23-year-old beauty queen. (His first wife died in 1960, and he's separated from his second wife.) Even now he becomes visibly reenergized in the presence of young women, and his staff is filled with them. After a couple of narrow escapes, the nearby office of one senator established a policy: No woman was to ride alone in an elevator with Sen. Thurmond. Still, his record remains unsullied by Packwood-like accusations. (The blessing and the curse of the ancient Casanova: You can get away with anything, but only because they don't take you seriously.) The most famous remark about Thurmond in this regard, or in any regard, was made by Sen. John Tower: "When he dies, they'll have to beat his pecker down with a baseball bat to close the coffin lid."

But even here, Thurmond isn't terribly exceptional; salacious senators are as much a fact of life in Washington as the malarial summers. The fascination he holds over Washington observers, and the affection he elicits from South Carolina voters, is more than anything an accident of gerontology. I remember a Dole rally this spring, on a decommissioned World War II vessel in a park called Patriot's Point, outside Charleston. Thurmond was on the dais with Dole, of course. The old man (I'm referring to Thurmond now) sat perfectly erect on the platform for Dole's address, staring straight ahead, chewing mysteriously. When Dole was done, Thurmond charged for the microphone, placed his mouth right against it, and hollered in his thick accent for a full half-minute. He was perfectly unintelligible. He tried to present a plaque to Dole, who was standing behind him. He rotated slowly this way then that, never quite figuring out where the majority leader was. For any other politician it would have been a harrowing performance.

But a woman beside me said: "Isn't he just the cutest thing?"

"You gotta love ol' Strom," answered her companion.

Yes, you do. I interviewed him last spring, and as I entered his office the cheap shots from the *Post* and *Newsweek* were still ringing in my ears. It may have been a dereliction of journalistic duty, but I was determined not to trip him up. No fewer than three members of his staff sat in to make sure I didn't.

He was seated at his desk, gazing at a note card, one of his enormous hands absently stroking his forehead. He didn't notice me until I was almost on top of him. He stood to greet me. He is improbably tall, almost six feet, and bulky—with muscle, by the look of it. Shaking hands with him is like getting your hand throttled by a boa constrictor. (He still lifts weights every morning.)

He hitched up his pants, which he wears very high, at the mid-chest, Fred Mertz-level, and then sat down. He stared at me with his tiny blue eyes.

I led with my toughest question. What, I asked him, were the three issues that most concerned South Carolinians in this election? (I'm not Mike Wallace.)

"We must get this budget into balance," he said. "We want a balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution. And we're going to get one."

Then silence. The aides shifted in their seats behind me. The tiny blue eyes stared.

Any others? I asked.

Staring, staring . . .

Like, say, immigration?

"Oh, yes," he said.

It went on like this for some time. He spoke of "leadership" and "experience"—vacuous words, but quaint in their vacuousness; a pol of the '90s would speak of his "vision for the future." He grew more animated the longer we talked, and at last came alive at the interview's close, when he shuffled me over to a wall covered with portraits, each one framed and autographed to Strom Thurmond.

"These are all the presidents I have served with—I say served with, not under, because the Constitution says that Congress and the executive are equal branches." He leaned on the edge of a table and pointed. Suddenly he didn't look a day over 85.

At the top, up by the ceiling, was a yellowed portrait of FDR. Thurmond went through the presidents one by one, with a comment for each. It was clearly a set piece, performed thousands of times for thousands of visitors, but it was entrancing nonetheless.

"And this here is President Truman," Thurmond said. "He and I didn't get along, of course. You know, back in '48, a few more votes in a few more precincts, and we would have thrown the election into the House of Representatives." He winked. "And we woulda had some fun then."

Did Truman ever forgive him for running in '48?

"Oh, no," he said. "I remember the inaugural parade, early '49. I'd come up with my wife, she was a very pretty girl, and I was there in my capacity as governor. When we went by the president, my wife, who was a very pretty girl, kind of bowed, and I waved my hat. And [Truman's vice president, Alben] Barkley, who was up there, started to wave back. But Truman said, 'Don't you wave at that son-of-a-bitch!' And it went out over the radio! Into every home in the United States."

IT MAY HAVE BEEN A DERELICTION OF JOURNALISTIC DUTY, BUT I WAS DETERMINED NOT TO TRIP HIM UP. NO FEWER THAN THREE MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF SAT IN TO MAKE SURE I DIDN'T.

When you hear Strom Thurmond reminisce, you can't help but think: *Of course* we should cut him all the slack he requires. He survives a vanished past. He knew, in fact shaped, a political era we can only conjure up from history books, when deals were cut in the lobby of hotels by men in white suits, bargaining among the palmettos as ceiling fans wheeled lazily overhead. Not only did he know Franklin Roosevelt, he traveled to the Chicago convention by slow train from Aiken, S.C., in the summer of 1932, to help nominate him for his first term. He is the only man in history to have been interviewed by both H.L. Mencken and Chuck D, the "rap artist" who covered the San Diego convention for MTV. ("What'd you say now?" Thurmond said, in answer to Chuck D's first question.) The press is right to be awed by him, even if it doesn't quite understand why. We should be awed by American history in the flesh.

As I left his office he pressed into my palm a key chain, an embossed seal of the president pro tempore of the Senate. "Don't forget I'm president pro tem," he said, "fourth in line for the presidency of the United States. That's in the Constitution."

Out in the hallway the thought brought me up short: President Thurmond? Well, we could do worse. And so, this November, could the people of South Carolina. ♦

Clinton and Indonesia: The Real Scandal

By Robert Kagan

Not all that long ago, revelations about an American president's shady financial entanglements with an Indonesian businessman would have stirred up a debate about more than campaign finance. During the Cold War, liberal Democrats and left-wing activists would have made a big fuss over the administration's increasingly cozy relationship with the corrupt, thirty-year-old authoritarian dictatorship of President Suharto. And conservative Republicans would have responded, à la Jeane Kirkpatrick, that the liberals were hypocrites with a "double standard," favoring warmer ties with anti-American Communist dictatorships in Cuba, Vietnam, and China, but not with "friendly" dictators like Suharto.

But these days there are no more double standards about dictatorships. If they're big "emerging markets" for American exports, we love them all. Republicans nowadays welcome closer trading ties with Communist tyrannies in China and Vietnam. If conservatives once decried the (liberal) idea that trading with the Soviets or Cubans would lead to political reforms, today they find such notions unusually persuasive, especially when it means big Chinese contracts for Boeing and General Electric. Democrats, meanwhile, make no complaint about their president's chumminess with the Suhartos of this world. True, twenty years ago liberals condemned such relationships when they were justified on the grounds of anti-Communist containment. But today they find them perfectly justifiable if they mean more jobs for American workers.

Sean Delonas

In the world after the Cold War, the moral dilemmas and difficult political and strategic judgments that used to bedevil American foreign policy in our dealings with unsavory governments are melting away in the solvent of narrow economic interests. In place of those old qualms, a remarkably powerful consensus has formed in both parties, a conviction that the business of American foreign policy should be, simply, business.

There is, as usual, intellectual buttress for reducing American foreign policy to a simple matter of dollars and cents. We live, it is alleged, in the era of "geo-economics," a time when, as Martin Walker cheerfully reports in the *New Yorker*, "the new virility symbols are exports and productivity and growth rates, and the great international encounters are the trade pacts of the economic superpowers." In such a world, national power is less important than the power of corporations. The nation-state itself is an anachronism. What will ensure "America's global leadership into the 21st century," Owen Harries argues, is not the State Department or the Pentagon but America's "great economic companies, its universities, its Silicon Valleys and its cultural and mass-entertainment industry." The job of government in the age of geo-economics is merely to assist these institutions in their quests, to wield American power and influence in the service of American corporations.

That is what the Clinton administration has been doing for the past four years, more than any other administration in recent memory, in places like Indonesia and China and anywhere else a market can be found for American goods and services. And if gaining a niche for American exporters means sacrificing America's traditional support for universal, inalienable rights, then so be it. In this new era, foreign policy is made by the Commerce Department and the U.S. trade representative, and their job is to pry open markets, not societies.

In places like Indonesia, you can't do both. American firms want access to the Indonesian market, but President Suharto *is* the Indonesian market. He, his children, and his grandchildren maintain a vast business empire of their own, and nobody does business in Indonesia without the dictator's approval. Gaining access to Indonesia's market, therefore, means gaining access to Suharto. And you can't do that and demand reform of his repressive rule at the same time, as President Clinton has learned.

In 1992, candidate Clinton attacked Suharto's government for its brutal repression of East Timor, the former Portuguese colony invaded and annexed by Indonesia in 1975. He denounced the "unconscionable" indifference of previous U.S. administrations to Suharto's human-rights record. In March 1993, his administration supported a U.N. resolution criticizing Indonesia for abuses in East Timor, including the 1991 army massacre of civilians in the East Timorese capital, Dili.

But Clinton's assault on Suharto's domestic policies didn't last much longer than the president's early hard line against the dictatorship in Beijing. His reversal of the Bush administration's see-no-evil policy annoyed and worried Suharto. Indonesia's foreign minister denounced the intrusion into Indonesia's internal affairs, employing the Chinese defense—cultural relativism. A government's treatment of its citizens, he insisted, had to be viewed in the context of the "different economic, social and cultural realities and the unique value systems prevailing in each country." Suharto, meanwhile, began taking steps to improve his relationship with Clinton. He sent an emissary to Washington to propose a summit between the two leaders—a mission aided by Indonesian businessmen, like the now-infamous James Riady, who subtly reminded the Clinton administration that contracts for American corporations, and jobs for American workers, were at stake.

As the *Los Angeles Times* and other news organizations have reported, the Clinton administration quickly changed course. The Commerce Department designated Indonesia one of ten "big emerging markets" in the developing world, which entitled the Suharto government to all kinds of special favors, both economic and diplomatic. In May 1993, the president, declaring that "we have enormous opportunities" in Indonesia, announced he would meet with Suharto on the margins of the G-7 summit in Tokyo later in the year.

It would be a juicy scandal, indeed, if it turned out that Clinton agreed to meet with Suharto as a favor to his old buddy Riady in return for Riady's large contributions to the Democratic National Committee's campaign coffers. And it would be juicier still if the Riady connection were responsible for the Clinton administration's other friendly actions toward Indonesia over the succeeding months, like U.S. trade representative Mickey Kantor's decision to halt a review of Indonesia's repressive labor practices in return for a written pledge by the Suharto government to change them. Or like Suharto's private visit to the White House last year, when he met with vice president Al Gore, secretary of state Warren Christopher, Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman John Shalikashvili, Mickey Kantor, and then-commerce secretary Ron Brown. "No one used to treat the Indonesians like this," a senior U.S. official told the *New York Times*. Suharto's special handling "said a lot about how our priorities in the world have changed."

It was these shifting priorities, not Riady's generous donations, that best explain Clinton's turnabout on Indonesia. After flirting briefly with the archaic idea of advancing American principles abroad, the Clinton administration had simply embraced its role as the servant of American business. "Riady may have been a factor" in the decision to end the review of Indonesia's treatment of workers, one labor-rights advocate told the *Washington Post*, but any Indonesians hoping to influence the administration "would have had to get in line behind U.S. corporate money." As another human-rights activist told the *New York Times*, "American companies were afraid that there would be retaliation, and that big contracts would go to the Europeans and the Japanese. And that's how you really get this administration's attention."

The truth is, the Clinton administration has not been afraid to put pressure on Indonesia, but it only does so on behalf of American business interests seeking access to Suharto's market. Clinton officials have slapped Indonesia's wrist for permitting the pirating of "intellectual property" like American computer software and movies. They're threatening to bring Indonesia before the World Trade Organization for discriminating against foreign automakers in favor of the national car business run by—you guessed it—

Suharto's son. And Indonesian businessmen have begun complaining of rough treatment by the United States.

But Suharto doesn't have to worry about similar rough treatment in response to his repression of Indonesians and East Timorese alike. The "driving dynamic" behind U.S. policy, one senior official told the *Washington Post*, has been the desire "not to totally screw up the trade relationship" while keeping up demands for a better human rights performance. In practice, that means Clinton and his advisers "raise" human-rights issues whenever they meet with Suharto and his ministers. One can imagine how much force these private admonitions must carry when the administration's hunger for access to the Indonesian market is trumpeted so much more loudly and frequently. "Quiet diplomacy" didn't work for the Bush administration in China. Even former Secretary of State James Baker admits that four years of subtle warnings in Beijing left the administration "tread[ing] water." The same lack of success can be expected in Indonesia, and for the same reason. To paraphrase and update George Will, American governments these days love commerce more than they hate communism, or authoritarianism—and the dictators know it.

There's nothing wrong with promoting American business abroad, of course. Presidents have been doing it in one form or another, and bragging about it, for more than a hundred years. Revisionist historians like William Appleman Williams and his many disciples once argued that all of American foreign policy, from the time of McKinley right through to the Vietnam War, could be understood primarily as a search for markets and the promotion of American corporate interests. They were wrong, at least about the period before the end of the Cold War. Throughout the past century, the pursuit of economic interests was always balanced by, and most of the time subordinated to, the pursuit of other, broader national interests, both strategic and ideological. Indeed, had the United States just been doing business all those years, it could not have risen to its present position of world leadership.

That leadership has been moral and ideological as well as economic and geopolitical. America outlasted the Soviet Union in the Cold War not just by getting rich, but through the strength of its military and the strength of its commitment to democratic governance. In the 1980s, the United States pressured even reliable allied dictators like Ferdinand Marcos to hold elections and allow a transition to democratic rule. We did the same in South Korea, in South Africa, and in Central America. Didn't these transitions toward greater democracy, undertaken even in the dangerous strategic circumstances of the Cold War, ultimately accrue to our benefit? Now, when the world is a much safer place, we can well afford to push for similar changes in places like Indonesia, even if it costs us the chance to sell some cars. ♦

Music Without the Words:
The Torture of Writer's Block

By Joseph Epstein

The past few years have seen the deaths of Ralph Ellison and Joseph Mitchell, two of America's most remarkable writers. The one a novelist, the other a journalist, each was thought by many people the best at his respective trade.

Invisible Man, published in 1952, may well be the most solidly made and most intelligent novel produced by an American in the past half century. Wildly comic, philosophically deep, socially significant, it is a book of a kind that, if one had written nothing else, would be enough to give one a strong reputation for the rest of one's life, and perhaps beyond. And in the case of Ralph Ellison, who wrote no further novels, it did just that.

As for Joseph Mitchell, he represented, at its highest power, the urban tradition at the *New Yorker*, the tradition of John McNulty and A. J. Liebling, as opposed to the small-town tradition of James Thurber and E. B. White. Mitchell was fortunate to live long enough to see his own reputation revived in 1992, when *Up in the Old Hotel*, a compendium of all his earlier books, appeared with heavy jeroboams of praise.

Ellison and Mitchell both had famous—perhaps the country's most famous—cases of writer's block. Block is the supreme torture for a writer. When a writer is "blocked," he cannot write; his craft and talent and energy suddenly flee him. The condition can last a week, a month, a year, a lifetime. And like inspiration, writer's block can show up utterly without warning. It is a condition that seems inexplicable, and is painful in the extreme.

I believe most cases of writer's block do have an explanation, and one not necessarily to be found down in that dark psychic disco where the superego is doing the tango with the id. Sometimes a writer may be blocked because he really isn't prepared to write what he has promised to write; he just doesn't have the knowledge, experience, or wit to carry out the job. Or sometimes, midway through a lengthy piece of writing, he discerns the falsity of all that he has written up to now and hasn't the stomach or stamina to return and begin again. Sometimes he simply cannot bring the introspection and honesty to the job that it requires, and sometimes contemplating the serious consequences of what he is writing—in loss of friendships, status, or future earnings—may be more than he can bear.

The great fear of a writer is that he will find himself locked into the kind of writer's block that afflicted both Ellison and Mitchell. The one question you didn't ask Ralph Ellison was, "Hey, kiddo, how's the new novel going?" For after the splendid success of *Invisible Man*, Ellison was never able to produce that novel. There were stories about his having lost nearly an entire manuscript to a fire. After *Invisible Man*, forty years passed, during which Ellison produced two books of essays, collected a vast number of honorary degrees, served on endless editorial and other boards, and kept his cool and courage at a time when it was easy for a black writer to make a serious jerk of himself. But the thing he was put on earth to do, write more beautiful novels, was precisely what he was unable to do.

Joseph Mitchell's block was of a different order, though it lasted thirty years. Mitchell's last book, *Joe Gould's Secret*, was published in 1965, and its first sentence shows his perfect touch: "Joe Gould was an odd and penniless and unemployable little man who came to the city in 1916 and ducked and dodged and held on as hard as he could for over thirty-five years." Many of his admirers, myself among them, longed for more such sentences, though they were never to come.

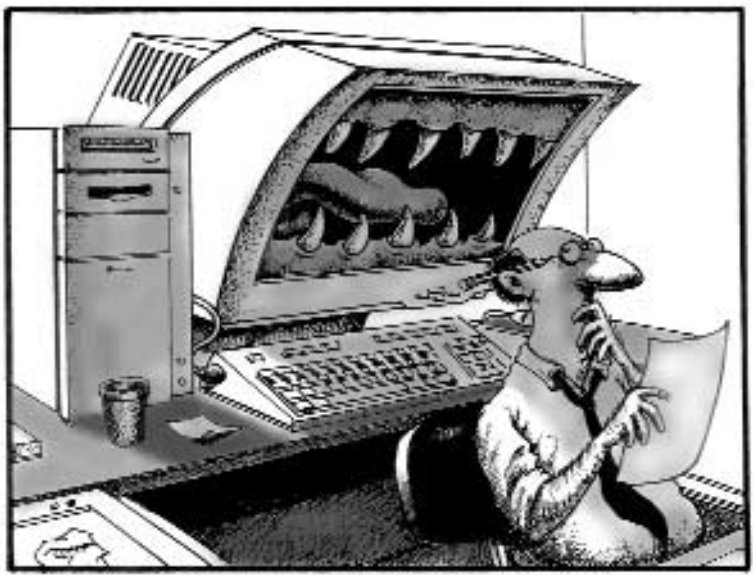
Mitchell once described to me, in his deep North Carolinian accent, the book he said he was working on. It was about "double exile," which, he went on to explain, was the peculiar condition of feeling a stranger wherever he was: In New York, he felt himself a southerner, while in the South he felt himself a pure New Yorker. The book seemed one of the purest of "enchanted cigarettes," the term Balzac gave to those books one dreams about but almost are certain never to get written.

Another of the things Ellison and Mitchell had in common is that each treated me to a single memorable afternoon, the better part of both of which I spent in the same chair on the second floor in the ample room facing onto 43rd Street at the Century Club in New York. I met each man once, felt I had made a friend, and afterwards never had another contact with either of them.

I spent the afternoon of January 26, 1978, with Ellison. He had earlier published a fine essay in the *American Scholar*, the magazine I edit, called "The Little Man from Chehaw Station," which I had read in its first-draft form as a commencement address and which he added onto and greatly improved for publication. My journal entry for the day notes: "He is a smaller man than I had imagined him to be, though, as I had imagined, well turned out sartorially (the only flaw here being too large a wristwatch) and with the manner of a courtly gent." He nicely broke through this formal manner by using the phrase, ten or so minutes into our lunch, "f—ing distinguished" to refer to a pompous figure in publishing who came up to our table. Our conversation was desultory—we told jokes, he told Depression stories, we discussed literature, personalities, politics—and unrelievedly wonderful. I arrived at 12:30 and left, in the dark of a Manhattan evening, at 5:00.

I thought I had a friend for life. When I returned to Chicago, I wrote Ellison a brief note, thanking him for the lunch and for the fine afternoon. No answer. A month or so later, I wrote again, this time proposing an essay for him to write for the *American Scholar*. Again no answer. Perhaps a year later, I wrote yet again, and again no response. All very strange. It was as if you had gone out with a very attractive woman, and thought you had both had a swell time, except that she refused afterward to take any of your calls. What was going on?

Five or six years later, I corresponded with a man who, in the course of one of his letters, asked me if I knew Ralph Ellison. The reason he asked was that he and his wife were once on a cruise with Ellison and his wife, and during that cruise they were nearly inseparable. The four of them seemed to have a perfectly lovely time. Yet when they returned to the United States, Ellison failed to answer any of this man's letters. Did I have any idea what was going on?



Sean Delonas

The only reason I can come up with to explain Ralph Ellison's odd behavior is his writer's block. He was a naturally friendly, happily gregarious man, I think, and yet he must have worried about the cost of his sweet openness of spirit. With that uncompleted second novel hanging always before him, like surgery that he knew he couldn't postpone forever, though he somehow did, what he least needed was lots of new friends: insistent, responsibility-exacting, time-consuming friends. Friends may have been fine things, but it was the consequences of friendship that he couldn't afford, the consequence of time above all—time that would have to be taken from that damn unfinished novel to be a friend. That the novel wasn't getting written anyhow still didn't mean that one could take time from it. Such is the nightmare of a writer's block—one can't for more than a moment take pleasure in the leisure it imposes or think of anything except the writing one cannot do.

My one meeting with Joe Mitchell was less lengthy but no less enjoyable. We had corresponded years before, and had even spoken over the telephone a time or two. From his few letters to me, I was surprised to learn that Mitchell, whose specialty as a writer was observation of the common life, was a regular reader of intellectual journals and knew all about "the boys on the quarterlies," as his old friend Joe Liebling used to say. He wrote to me, who was nobody if not one of the boys on the quarterlies, and said that he had read me over the years in *Encounter*, *Commentary*, the *New Criterion*, the *TLS*, and elsewhere.

In print, Mitchell was all cool objectivity, without opinionation, self-effacing, benevolent in his views of human nature. In private he was sly, opinionated, witty in a way that his writing didn't quite reveal. He turned out to be greatly interested in visual art and apparently spent much time going to exhibitions and galleries. When I told him that the art critic Hilton Kramer was a dear friend, he expressed admiration for him, especially for the courageousness of his views. Straightforward expression

of views was never part of Mitchell's own modus operandi, at least not as a writer. That didn't mean he didn't have views, quite strong ones. He talked a good deal about missing his friend Liebling. He was critical of E. B. White, the preachiness of whose writing he couldn't abide.

Much in the current scene put him off, not least its liberationist tendencies. "You know, Joe," he said, "I am of a generation that can never consider sex a trivial act. When I was a young man, growing up in the South, if you did ugly to a girl, his brother would shoot you." *Did ugly to a girl* is a phrase I am not soon likely to forget.

I had no sense that Mitchell suffered greatly from not writing. My best explanation for his writer's block is that his subject matter had disappeared on him, and my guess is that he knew it. Mitchell had made his reputation writing about characters in New York, but characters, interesting idiosyncratic characters, had long since been replaced by cases, some of them quite dangerous. Joe Gould today would be viewed as a slightly menacing homeless person; the amiable drunks at McSorley's, the "wonderful saloon" which is still there on East 6th Street owing in good part to the fame Mitchell gave it in various *New Yorker* essays, would now just seem hopelessly lost. Mitchell was left as bereft of a subject as Hogarth might have been under communism.

Writers who have written something substantial and then are blocked are one thing; writers who are blocked long before they hit their peak quite another. The toughest trick, and one of the greatest causes of writer's block, may be that of following one's own strong opening act. Writing a good or financially successful book the first time out can be filled with peril. This appears to have been not only Ellison's problem. It was also, at a lower level of literary creation, the problem of Thomas Heggen and Ross Lockridge, the authors, respectively, of *Mr. Roberts* and *Raintree County*. Both men had enormous commercial successes and each killed himself before producing a second work.

Frank Conroy took nearly twenty years between *Stop-Time*, his fine autobiographical book, and his next work, a collection of stories not many people remember. When I knew him, Conroy seemed in no hurry to produce a second book; having gotten it right the first time, perhaps he felt there was no rush. As the author of eleven books, with a twelfth in press, I often wonder if I would have written less if I had got it right on the first try—or, for that matter, on the eleventh.

Sometimes quite good writers, usually highly productive ones, will suddenly go silent. When inquiries are made of people who know them, one learns that they are blocked. This apparently is the case with Michael J. Arlen, who wrote some excellent television criticism for the *New Yorker* and a fine book about his Armenian forebears and who hasn't been in print for a number of years. Renata Adler, a key writer at the *New Yorker* and at the *New York Review of Books*, also has a block that has caused her to close up shop for the better part of a decade.

The saddest case of writer's block I know was that of my friend, the late Marion Magid, for many years the managing editor of *Commentary*. Marion began brilliantly, in her twenties, writing winningly about such varied subjects as Tennessee Williams for *Commentary* and hippie life in Amsterdam for *Esquire*. She straightaway had a style and a point of view—perhaps they are the same thing—and could, as they say about the best infielders, really pick it. You have to imagine a young Joan Didion, but smarter, more amusing, without the depression.

And then, for no good explanation I ever heard, the flame went out. Through her thirties, forties, fifties, up to her death at the age of sixty, Marion never really broke out of her block. All that I can remember her publishing those many years was a single review, in *Commentary*, of a book about American communism by a woman named Vivian Gornick. I made the mistake of complimenting her by calling that piece "a nice little review"; she rejoined by telling me that if I knew what effort went into it, I would never call it "little." On another occasion, when a letter she sent to me failed to arrive, she all but groaned and said, "God, talk about being blocked—now even my letters aren't getting through."

I don't think I can hope to understand the suffering Marion Magid went through. She was the real thing, a true writer, and the early evidence shows a brilliant one, but unable to work at the trade she loved above all others. How immensely frustrating! She could hear the music, but never find the words.

One of the signs of a real writer is the need to write almost all the time; and along with this need goes the feeling of self-loathing when one isn't writing. To what can one compare the pain of the blocked writer? Perhaps to a fine athlete, still in his prime, banned from playing the game he most loves. It has to be hellacious.

When I lived in New York, in the early 1960s, a time when psychotherapy was a dominant force among artists and intellectuals, lots of writers seemed, if not altogether blocked, then highly costive. If in the course of a year these people wrote a single book review, or an essay, or short story, or two or three poems, it seemed production enough. Wallace Markfield, in his novel *To an Early Grave*, captures the spirit of the blocked writer in a

character, a literary critic named Holly Levine, whom he shows moving the word "certainly" in about six or seven recastings of the same sentence, until he is saved by a phone call that allows him to abandon the effort. Another day of nothing accomplished.

So endemic was writer's block in New York in the '50s and early '60s that there was a shrink named Edmund Bergler, one of whose specialties was unblocking writers. In a Teutonic accent, or so I have been told, he all but yelled at his patients, telling them that they were immature, they must knock off this nonsense, return to their typewriters, pay his fee. It may well be that some blocked writers derive a perverse pleasure from their blocks. But I doubt that pleasure had much to do with it.

Perfectionism is yet another important reason for writer's block. For a writer stuck with perfectionism, writer's block just about comes with the territory, and such a writer figures to be blocked fully half the time. A one-book novelist named Hannah Green—her one book is a novel that she finished at the age of forty-six and that I have never read titled *The Dead of the House*—died a week or so ago, and her obituary in the *New York Times* noted "her almost obsessive pursuit of a perfection that always seemed just one rewrite away." The real wonder, her husband tossed in, was that she finished a book at all. "She never wanted to let go," he said. (One never truly finishes a poem, Paul Valéry said, one merely abandons it.) Miss Green had been working on a second book for the last twenty-five years when she died at the age of sixty-nine.

I write all this in trepidation, lest I incur the wrath of the furies and they strike me with a block of my own. Fifty years in the business, Zero Mostel moaned in *The Producers*, and I'm wearing a cardboard belt. More than 30 years in the business, say I with merely a grin and a great thumping knock on wood, and I have had the good luck to write pretty much what I have wanted without any hint of block. Perhaps a few people who have felt themselves unkindly treated by me are even now sticking pins in my books and ringing their own ever-so-slight change on the old football chant, "Block that kick."

I suppose that every writer for whom writing is not the painful drama it is often made out to be, but is instead an intense delight, worries a little about exhibiting this delight too frequently in public. Edith Wharton coined the term "magazine bore" for those writers who appear too often in too many magazines. You pick up a magazine and there they are, like the fellow in the orange fright-wig and the Jesus Saves T-shirt who used to show up at all major sporting events.

It is probably a mistake to make writing look too easy. Anthony Trollope's having done so by recounting his writing regimen in his autobiography—he averaged 10,000 words a week, and some weeks wrote as many as 28,000 words—caused his reputation to suffer for many years. He made writing seem altogether too mechanical an activity. A writer, Trollope believed, must approach his task as if he were working at the post office, which Trollope, in fact, for many years did: "He should sit down at his desk at a certain hour." He should eliminate the *Sturm und Drang* aspect of writing: "He need tie no wet towels round his brow, nor sit for thirty hours at his desk without moving,—as men have sat, or said that they have sat." Writing cannot be done in one's sleep, but for Trollope it could be done on the

edge of sleep: "A man to whom writing well has become a habit may write well though he be fatigued." Trollope prided himself on having published twice as much as Carlyle and even more than Voltaire, and having accomplished this while holding a second job much of the time.

Writing quickly does have its own odd satisfactions, among them the delusion that one has mastered one's craft. Usually, one hasn't. More likely one has only had a lucky good day. I once had an essay reprinted in a college reader, and the editor offered me an additional $600 if I would write a thousand or so words explaining any difficulty encountered along the way of composing the original essay. I told myself I would do it if I could complete the job in less than an hour. And—yippee ti yo!—I did. Not only was this gratifying in itself, but I could now tell myself that I was a $600-an-hour writer. Unfortunately, the next thing I wrote, a long essay on the Austrian writer Robert Musil, took me so long to write that it returned me to thinking of myself as a minimum-wage man.

I once asked the critic F.W. Dupee, at that time freshly retired from the English department at Columbia and a finely polished prose writer, to write for the *American Scholar*. He wrote back to thank me for my invitation, but told me, in a sentence that sent a little chill through me, "I have stopped writing."

"I have stopped writing." That is the admission that Ellison could not make, nor Mitchell, who went into his office at the *New Yorker* every day for thirty years before his death without ever submitting a word to his editors. I cannot imagine myself, short of a knock-out stroke or severe illness, ever saying that. My guess is that Dupee, good as he was, didn't really *have* to write. He must have been among those perhaps fortunate people who can write, and write extremely well, but can get through life quite nicely without having to write. A true writer, for better *and* worse, needs to write.

Needs to—and, despite all the widely advertised agonies, loves to. Writing has given me pleasure like nothing else I have ever done, and I mean the very act of writing itself. Raymond Chandler, when he learned that the detective-story writer John Dickson Carr disliked writing, speaks for me when he writes:

> A writer who hates the actual writing, who gets no joy out of the creation of magic by words, to me is simply not a writer at all. The actual writing is what you live for. The rest is something you have to get through in order to arrive at that point. How can you hate the actual writing. . . . How can you hate the magic which makes of a paragraph or a sentence or a line of dialogue or a description something in the nature of a new creation?

The only argument I would have with that passage is the use of the word "creation." Best, when thinking about writing, to keep the pretension level as low as possible. The first rule in avoiding writer's block is never to think of writing as in any way a creative activity, with its own dramas and tensions. For as soon as one does think about writing as "creative"—a bogus word in any case—one thinks about all that can go wrong with it. Much better, I have always found, to demystify writing as completely as possible. I frequently remind myself that formulating sentences remains one of the most amusing of all pastimes—and, besides (though I shouldn't want this to get around) it beats working all to hell. ♦

Books

In Praise of Courtesans

By Jennifer Grossman

Whether you will admire, despise, or dismiss the subject of Sally Bedell Smith's new biography of Pamela Harriman depends on how you react to the following anecdote, which appears in the introduction of *Reflected Glory* (Simon & Schuster, $27.50). Flying to the Adriatic for an inspection tour of the U.S.S. Eisenhower, Mrs. Harriman refused to wear the safety helmet required for landing because she feared it might muss her bouffant do. The aircraft's engines were powered down while pilots executed an elaborate landing sequence to create perfectly still hair conditions on deck.

Having risked her life, breached protocol, disrupted naval operations, and probably kept the battle-group commander waiting while she reapplied lipstick, our official envoy deplaned with every lacquered lock in place.

Any woman who denies the guilty stirrings of admiration for such touch-my-hair-and-I'll-kill-you chutzpah is either lying or bald. This is not, of course, a proper reaction for a woman of the '90s. As Smith is at pains to point out throughout the book's competently written and thoroughly researched 411 pages, Pamela (as she calls Mrs. Harriman) may be rich, powerful,

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glamorous, and famous—but none of this really matters because it is all "reflected glory," borrowed from men, and therefore not quite legitimate.

The next Friday night I am dining alone on Chee-tos and peach wine coolers, I'm sure this insight will prove immensely comforting. Meanwhile, I predict that most women will be less interested in the "borrowed power" thesis than in learning how to borrow more of it themselves. In this way, *Reflected Glory* might be a companion volume to *The Rules*, the wildly popular how-to tome on snagging your man.

Here's how Pamela Harriman did it: "Her techniques mirrored those of the successful wife—the woman in the 1950s *New Yorker* cartoon wearing a negligee and holding a martini for her husband—but she elevated them to high art and used them audaciously." Smith continues: "Her role as courtesan was in fact a rigorous discipline that required preparation, shrewdness, concentration, willpower, organization, taste, patience, attention to detail, and thorough knowledge of the social arts." To "Pamelize" a man, she perfected "a ballet that was both artfully flirtatious and comfortingly maternal: the forward tilt of her upper body, the cocked head, the rapt gaze, the flattening small talk and questions . . . the sunshine smile with its tantalizing glimpse of her tongue pressed against the back of her teeth." *Ladies*, are we taking notes?

Actually, American men appear safe from such solicitous and soliciting attentions these days. As Pamela's contemporary Jeanne Thayer pointed out: "The interesting thing is that [Pamela's] attentiveness should be easy to imitate. But American women don't want to bother. They want to be competitive."

Pamela was indeed competitive, but she was far less interested in beating men at *their* own game than in bedding them in *hers*. CBS mogul Bill Paley, millionaire Jock Whitney, legendary playboy Aly Khan, Fiat heir Gianni Agnelli, aristocrat Elie de Rothschild, and shipping tycoon Stavros Niarchos numbered among the notches on her lipstick case. "She was, in effect, a sophisticated social entrepreneur always willing to strike out for new territory," observes Smith. She was a risk-taker, with "a gambler's eye" for the main chance—displayed when the young Pamela Digby accepted Randolph Churchill's marriage proposal on the first date, and on the day she decamped from Khan's Riviera mansion to set sail with Agnelli, whom she had just met, for ports unknown.

Pamela Harriman

Chas Fagan

Though Pamela had few qualms about luring away wandering husbands, she was herself an assiduously devoted wife, widowed by Broadway producer Leland Hayward and statesman Averell Harriman after having nursed them in infirmity, and leaving first husband Randolph Churchill (son of Winston) only after his alcoholic outbursts and abusive behavior became unmanageable. And, despite her prospecting approach to romance, her greatest love appears to have been the famous though financially unendowed CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow.

All through the book there is a tension between "Pamela's mythology" and Smith's less "idealized" version of events. Pamela "spun a glamorous scenario of weekend house parties and hunt balls" at the Digby ancestral estate; Smith reports a more "limited social life." "Pamela liked to say . . . that she had been steeped in politics practically from birth"; Smith insists her parents "abhorred politics." Pamela "would offer increasingly inflated accounts of her education"; Smith exposes her degree from "Downham College" as little more than a high school Home Ec certificate from the Downham School. And so on.

Smith's game of gotcha wears thin after the first fifty or so rounds, so much so that one wishes she would spend less time nit-pick-

ing Pamela's "exaggerated claims" and simply get on with the real thing. Who cares, for instance, whether Pamela spent three nights in the basement of 10 Downing, sleeping in the bottom bunk of Churchill's bed during the wartime Blitz, or thirty? Embellished or unadorned, hers is an extraordinary life. Smith concedes that "few people in the past fifty years dealt so intimately with so many powerful men in so many different arenas."

There is Pamela in late-night bezique matches with Winston Churchill, partying till dawn with visiting soldier Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., visiting the ancestral Kennedy home with the young future president, engaging Dwight Eisenhower to help out in the kitchen of her officers' club during the war, sitting by Edward R. Murrow during his famous broadcasts, trading information between American diplomat Averell Harriman and British generals, discussing politics with Bill Clinton in the Oval Office.

Unlike Christopher Ogden, whose *Life of the Party* biography of Pamela was published two years ago, Smith did not have access to her subject (Pamela originally collaborated with Ogden, but bailed after Random House made it clear that, for $1,625,000, the international affairs they were interested in were not those she had been pursuing at the Council on Foreign Relations). Smith compensates for this handicap with elegantly intersticed quotations from over 400 interviews, which gives her account more depth and detail than Ogden's version.

Too much detail, in places—as in the last thirty-five pages documenting Pamela's recent financial and legal difficulties, the particulars of which are so mind-numbingly boring that the author herself seems to collapse with facts-and-figures fatigue on the final page, lamely summing up Pamela as "secure in her bloodlines, toughened by the hunting fields, entranced by glamour and wealth, and always ready to fight—again, again, and again."

Strangely enough, by the conclusion, I found myself rooting for Pamela—against the heirs, against her snotty Georgetown rivals, against even her biographer Smith, who never passes up a potshot at the grande dame. Pamela is clearly intelligent but, Smith hastens to add, "only up to a point." Pamela was attractive, but "not endowed with exceptional beauty." Though socially gracious, her "utterances were neither witty nor memorable."

> AT TIMES SMITH SOUNDS LIKE THE DEBUTANTES WHO DISSED PAMELA AS "A RED HEADED BOUNCING LITTLE THING," A "FAT, STUPID LITTLE BUTTERBALL."

At times Smith sounds like the debutantes who dissed Pamela as "a red headed bouncing little thing," a "fat, stupid little butterball." But it would be simplistic to ascribe Smith's snide asides to mere cattiness. Consciously or unconsciously, they reflect assumptions about femininity and sexuality that have been perpetrated by modern feminism.

Like Pamela's great-great-aunt Jane Digby—who scandalized Georgian society by jilting her British lord, escaping with an Austrian prince, seducing a German king, and marrying a Greek count (and sleeping with his son) before eloping to Syria with a Bedouin sheik—Pamela played a role as international siren with precedents dating back to ancient Greece. The *hetaerae* were the courtesans of Athens, mistresses who cultivated beauty and knowledge (proper Greek wives shunned learning as the "mark of the harlots"). Aspasia, the most famous, was Pericles' lover. Like Pamela's, "the power she derived from serving men," as Smith puts it, was surely no less heady for having been "reflected."

Theodora, the Byzantine empress, began as a stripper, whose trick of having geese peck grain from her nether regions so charmed Justinian that he changed the law banning marriage between royals and commoners and gave her an empire. Catherine the Great began her climb to power by showing off her gams in a page costume at the Russian court's weekly transvestite ball. Ex-Ziegfeld girl and gold-digger extraordinaire Peggy Hopkins Joyce called the diamond bracelets stacked up her arm her "service stripes," and made one of her five husbands slide a check for a million dollars under the bedroom door before she would admit him to the bridal bed.

But like a great religious reformation, promoting some icons to sainthood and relegating others to purgatory, the changes that took place in feminism in the late '60s and early '70s cast the courtesan into the outer darkness. And though Pamela Harriman managed to rise to serve as the U.S. ambassador to France, she is clearly a type out of time, incorrect for our age.

Sally Bedell Smith has done a service by preserving the story of the most legendary seductress of the 20th century—even if her tale is told at times in the tone of a disapproving headmistress. Perhaps, in fact, that will only burnish her appeal. As literary critic A.C. Bradley once observed of one of Pamela's precursors: "Many unpleasant things can be said of Cleopatra; and the more that are said the more wonderful she appears." ♦

Books

Dos Passos's America

By James W. Tuttleton

As a writer, the novelist John Dos Passos wanted to be "the architect of history." The trio of novels he called *U.S.A.*, much esteemed in their day but neglected in the years after Dos Passos's death in 1970, were an effort to rebuild the recent past in a condensed and dramatic form. Dos Passos offers interwoven portraits of twelve major characters whose lives are presented as representative of American national experience as it altered under the impact of the industrialization, World War I, the Red Scare, the Jazz Age, the Sacco-Vanzetti case, and the Depression. The trilogy, composed of *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), *1919* (1932), and *The Big Money* (1936), has just been reissued in a handsome and well-edited volume by the Library of America (1,288 pages, $40), and it affords the pleasure of rediscovering a major American fiction achievement.

Like Dos Passos's 1925 *Manhattan Transfer*, the narrative of *U.S.A.* is decentralized; it is a story without a single protagonist. We read instead about Mary French, who starts out a secretary and ends up working for the Sacco-Vanzetti defense team; Mac, an Irish-American printer who turns Communist and then drifts down into Mexico; J. Ward Moorehouse, the executive who invents public relations and becomes a spin-doctor for "the establishment"; Dick Savage, a would-be poet gone sour in a philistine America; Joe Williams, a merchant seaman whose life is an empty waste; Charley Anderson, a World War I pilot and mechanic turned executive whose very life is destroyed in the corporate rat race; Ben Compton, the revolutionary who gave his life to the cause, only to be expelled from the Communist party for deviationism (or independent thinking). The American Dream, for Dos Passos, is a story of these failures, and the trilogy ends during the Depression with Vag, a hobo on the road, hitchhiking to who knows where.

John Dos Passos

Chas Fagan

Dos Passos wanted the book to mirror what were then commonly called the "objective conditions" of American life. Anyone who has read around in the magazines and newspapers of the 1930s will immediately recognize the term "objective conditions" as a left-wing synonym for "capitalist exploitation." And indeed, the young Dos Passos was so slavishly Marxist in his reading of social conditions that his fiction was usually considered an example of proletarian literature. Even so, Dos Passos was not a proletarian by birth. He had, in fact, grown up as the bastard child of a wealthy American businessman of Portuguese descent who did not acknowledge John until the boy was 16. Still, the father gave him a great many privileges, like international travel and private schooling at Choate and Harvard. These advantages, however, only seemed to confirm the boy in his rebellion against capitalism and the class to which his father belonged.

The political rebellion of Flaming Youth, as *les jeunes* were called in the 1920s, was in part a generational phenomenon, evident in the superficial socialism of many other young writers of the time, Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Edmund Wilson, and Theodore Dreiser among them. Still, Dos Passos was for a time vehement about his left-wing faith. During the Great War, he drove ambulances for the Red Cross, and afterward, when Ameri-

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ca entered the war, he enlisted in the army. His experiences in France confirmed his belief that the war had been provoked by a capitalist conspiracy. He felt that Harvard did not prepare men for life in the modern world, and he remarked to Arthur K. McComb in 1917, "Until Widener [Library] is blown up and A. Lawrence Lowell [the Harvard president] assassinated and the Business School destroyed and its site sowed with salt—no good will come out of Cambridge." He told one of his friends: "My only hope is in revolution—in wholesale assassination of all statesmen, capitalists, warmongers, jingoists, inventors, scientists. . . . My only refuge from the deepest depression is in dreams of vengeful guillotines."

Fortunately, his dreams remained unrealized. After the Great War he was constantly on the road, writing novels, plays, political reportage, and travelogues. He was especially popular with the editors of left-wing magazines like the *Liberator*. For a time he was even a contributing editor to the Communist *Daily Worker* and the *New Masses*. Like other "socially conscious" writers, he toured the Soviet Union and liked what he saw; he covered strikes in America and didn't. The execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, anarchists who in a robbery had murdered a factory paymaster and guard, Dos Passos called "judicial murder," and he twice got himself arrested in protest against it. In 1932 he voted for Foster and Ford, the Communist ticket.

To suggest the "objective conditions" of American life, Dos Passos engaged in a number of stylistic innovations that prove him to be one of the most creative fiction writers of his time. These innovations include some 68 intercalated passages called "newsreels," each of which presents a string of newspaper headlines, overheard conversations, radio broadcasts, political speeches, advertising jingles, and popular songs. As the trilogy moves forward, decade by decade, these of course change with the times and create a sense of the chaotic fluidity of American popular culture as it rushes headlong into a meaningless future.

U.S.A. also features biographical vignettes of public men and women whose lives were coterminous with and ominously revelatory of the changing times. Politicians like Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, capitalists like Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan, efficiency experts like F.W. Taylor, and journalists like William Randolph Hearst are caricatured in *U.S.A.* with rhetorical verve and a savage economy. It is these "establishment" figures who suggest an entrenched power structure preventing the evolution of a wholesome American culture. Meanwhile, the sentimental favorites of Dos Passos are exalted here—leftist icons like Eugene V. Debs and Big Bill Haywood, whose defeat or imprisonment presumably accounted for the decline of America into a moral wasteland.

FOR ALL HIS MARXIST SYMPATHIES, DOS PASSOS WAS TOO KEEN A NOVELIST NOT TO SEE THE ESSENTIAL VACUITY OF SOVIET COMMUNISM.

Less "objective" is a third major stylistic innovation—the 51 "camera eye" passages that are devoted, James Joyce-like, to the development of the artist (Dos Passos himself) who sees and records the "objective conditions" of American life. The fleeting glimpses of John Dos Passos we catch in these passages suggest that he was not willing to surrender to the canons of Socialist Realism, which demanded naturalistic portraits of "the grim horrors of life under capitalism." Even so, the purpose of all these stylistic innovations was to aid Dos Passos in his portrait of America's failure to become the utopia of social and economic equality that supposedly only communism could realize.

So overdetermined is the left-wing ideology of *U.S.A.* that it would be easy to dismiss the trilogy as mere propaganda. And, to be frank, the dustbin of history is full of thirties proletarian fiction that needs no revival. But *U.S.A.*'s manifest self-contradictions, and the sheer art of the author's prose, make the trilogy still engaging more than a half-century after its publication. For all his Marxist sympathies, Dos Passos was too keen an observer and too fine a novelist not to see the essential vacuity of Soviet communism. *U.S.A.* is therefore shot through with evidence that Dos Passos could not stomach the coercive and repressive diktats of the literary commissars. (At a *New Masses* organizational meeting, according to Malcolm Cowley, Dos Passos once derisively announced: "Intellectual workers of the world, unite, you have nothing to lose but your brains." The party-line Communists knew him for the bourgeois liberal that he was and ostracized him accordingly.)

Dos Passos's insistence on the writer's right to see with his own pair of eyes and judge with his own intelligence—evident everywhere in *U.S.A.*, despite the occasional ideological sludge—finally led him, toward the end of the Depression, to break with the Left. Though he found big business still unfair to organized labor, he came to prefer the defects of American capitalism to the coercion of Earl Browder, Mike Gold, and the other Ameri-

can Communists who had tried to dictate what he should write about. Of course, in spurning the Left, Dos Passos incurred the wrath of the party hacks (and their liberal fellow travelers in the reviewing media), and his reputation has never completely recovered.

What is finally most intriguing about Dos Passos is not his flirtation with the Left. After all, many American writers were likewise seduced during the Depression by an *apparat* preying upon their utopian dreams. What redeemed him was finally waking up to the evils of Stalinism and the Left. In grasping the threat they represented to democracy everywhere, he became increasingly passionate in the defense of republican American political traditions. His growing detestation of Stalinism and its leftist derivatives was quite vocal. And, by the mid-fifties, he had embraced a conservative Republican vision of America for which Sen. Barry Goldwater was then the principal spokesman.

Late works like Dos Passos's *The Head and Heart of Thomas Jefferson* (1954), *The Theme is Freedom* (1956), and *The Men Who Made the Nation* (1957) all reflect an older, wiser, more mature and historically well-informed student of democratic political principles. And his mélange of history, fiction, and biography in *Midcentury* (1961) is an attempt to define from a conservative perspective the more recent conditions of American life. Besides the intrinsic merit of his fiction, Dos Passos is worth knowing for another reason: His literary and political odyssey expresses in a particularly pure way the fate of a great many early twentieth-century American artists and intellectuals who innocently and naively accepted but then recoiled in horror from the lethal embrace of communism. ♦

The Washington Times

Parody

Reed tries for more endorsements

By Ralph Z. Hallow
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Undaunted by the failure of his outreach to Ross Perot and vowing to do "anything that will help Bob Dole get elected, no matter how personally degrading I may find it," Dole campaign manager Scott Reed set out on a whirlwind day of meetings with the presidential candidates of other parties.

Reed first spent an hour meditating with Natural Law Party candidate John Hagelin. Upon leaving Dole headquarters, Reed had been hopeful that he would gain Hagelin's support for Dole, but his inability to achieve higher consciousness led Hagelin to declare the encounter "bad karma" in a speech at the Maharishi Vedic University. "If he had managed to levitate, or disappear, then I would have considered it a sign to drop out," Hagelin said. "As it is, I think I stand a pretty good chance of beating Dole in Key West."

Reed's visit with Harry Browne of the Libertarian Party went no better. Browne asked Reed to recite, from memory, the concluding 94-page speech by the character John Galt in Ayn Rand's novel "Atlas Shrugged." Reed's failure to do so led Browne, in a speech at the Cato Institute, to denounce him as "an illiterate statist."

Ralph Nader of the Green Party skipped the meeting and went directly to the National Press Club, where he gave a speech describing Reed as a "tool of corporate interests, when what we really need is a tool of the trial lawyers."

Reed found a modicum of success when he met with Pat Paulsen, the comedian and perennial joke candidate for the presidency. Paulsen demurred until Reed offered him the post of secretary of state in the Dole administration. Bargaining hard, Paulsen insisted on a commitment that the Smothers Brothers would also receive cabinet-level appointments. Reed agreed, and in a speech at the National Press Club, Paulsen declared his support for Dole. "Tommy Smothers will be a great CIA director," Paulsen said.

At day's end, Reed was taken into custody when he arrived unannounced at the White House gate and refused to leave until he could see Bill Clinton. "He's got to drop out, he's just got to," Reed said, weeping, as he was taken to St. Elizabeth's overnight for observation.

Dole expressed his frustration with the day's events, and lashed out at the other candidates: "Wake up! Drop out!" he said in a sparsely attended speech in his hometown of Russell, Kansas. "Or go back to Indonesia where you came from."