the weekly
Standard
AUGUST 18, 1997
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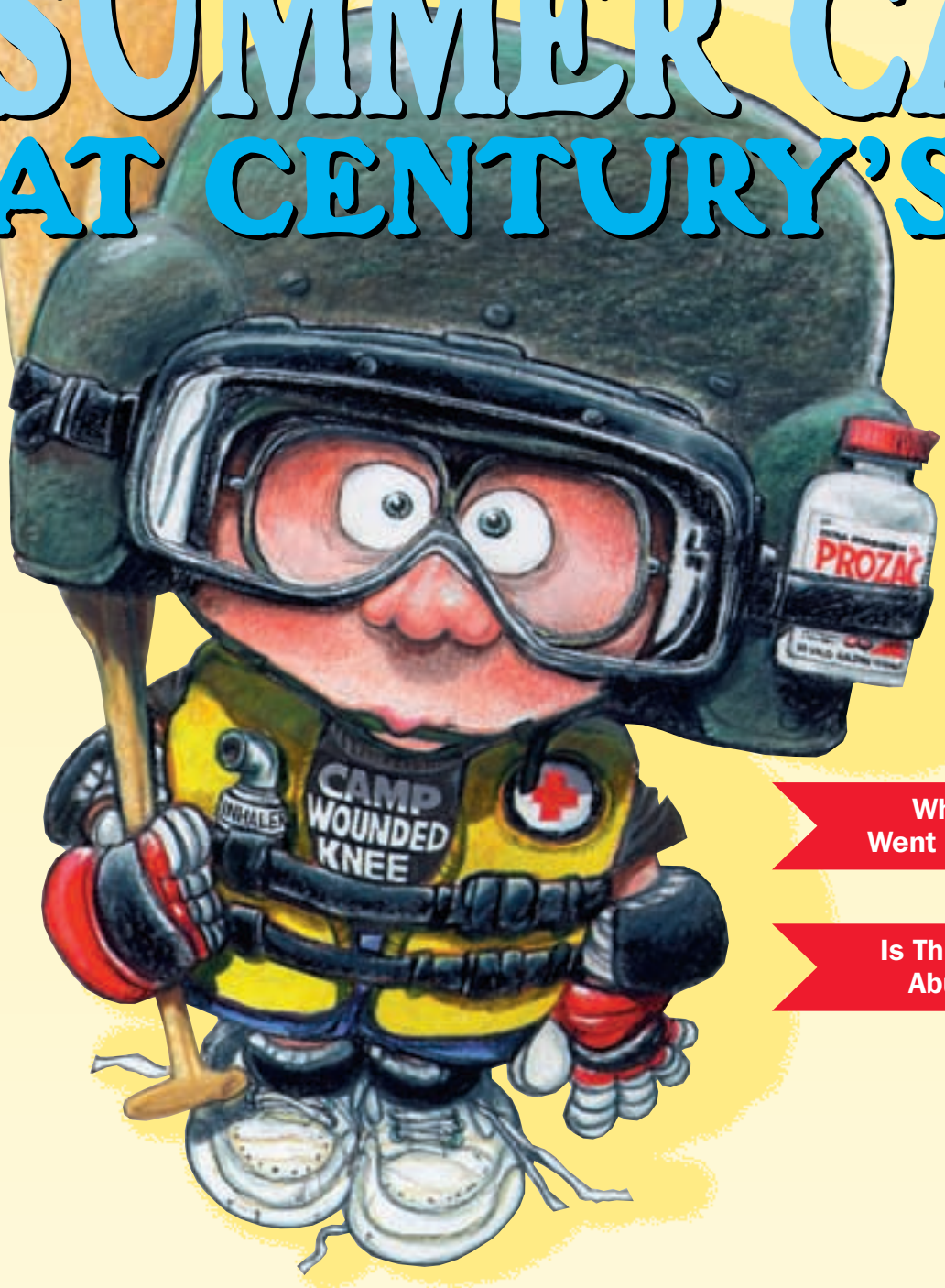
OUR DIVERSITY-CRAZED MILITARY
MATT LABASH

SUMMER CAMP AT CENTURY'S END

by David Brooks



Why the Cultural Elite Went Hollywood DAVID SAMUELS

Is This an Era of Perpetual Abundance? DAVID FRUM

the weekly Standard

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Cover illustration by Michael Ramirez

Books & Arts

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Our Toilets, Ourselves

The Scrapbook hopes to be the first media outlet to write about the following issue without cutesy puns, double entendres, or cheap scatological allusions.

For the issue is important, and credit goes to Congressman Joe Knollenberg of Michigan for bringing it to Washington's attention. Many other Americans already know about it—particularly anyone who has redesigned a bathroom, bought a new house, or replaced an old toilet in the last several years. The 1992 Energy Policy and Conservation Act mandated that all flush toilets, in all 50 states, would henceforth be restricted to a waterflow of 1.6 gallons per flush. Most previous toilets operated at 3.5 gallons, and consumers quickly discovered that the new standard is not enough, as some have delicately put it, to get the job done. Less delicately: The new toilets don't work. You have to keep flushing and flushing, plunging and plunging. A black market in the old, hardier toilets has developed, even though anyone caught installing one faces a $2,500 fine.

Knollenberg has proposed the Plumbing Standards Improvement Act, now in committee, to undo the ludicrous 1992 mandate. Strangely enough, what appears to be an egregious example of federal busybodyism is in fact an instance of another Washington pastime: special interest pandering. The tighter standard was initially requested by the Plumbing Manufacturers Institute, which wanted a uniform, nationwide standard to make life easier for its big, national manufacturers—and if the standard required the manufacture of lots of new commodes, so much the better. Environmentalists soon made common cause, believing (incorrectly) that the new standard would conserve water. Environmental extremists and plumbers: That's some coalition.

But opposition coalitions are possible, too. After all, this is an issue at once social and economic; the Knollenberg bill thus unites traditionalist conservatives with libertarians. Touching on the most personal issues of what one does with one's body, it should also bring prochoicers into the big tent.

You will notice that we have not advised the Republican Congress to stand up like a man, not take this sitting down, flush the bill out of committee, let it pass, tell the plumbers to pipe down, and wipe this inane regulation off the books. Such vulgar wordplay would trivialize a winning issue. But our point should be clear. This could be the beginning of a great movement.

Hillary Hates Inhaling, Too

It's been a bad few weeks for smokers. A bad decade, in fact. This is not news. But as the anti-smoking hysteria intensifies, the news becomes increasingly surreal. The first lady used a recent newspaper column—did you know the first lady is a columnist, like her confidante Eleanor?—to blast the movie *My Best Friend's Wedding*, because the lead character smokes. As Maureen Dowd pointed out in the *New York Times*, the character also lies, cheats, and manipulates the lives of other people to her own ends. But it was the smoking that Mrs. Clinton couldn't abide. The first lady, we've often been told, is a devout Methodist with a highly refined moral code. It has grown so refined indeed that the rest of us will have a hard time distinguishing it from an ad hoc collection of popular enthusiasms and fashionable punctilios. She aspires to be the era's Simone Weil, but she's closer to Madame Blavatsky.

A few days later word leaked out that her husband the president plans to ban smoking—get ready—not only inside federal buildings, but outside them, too. Federal bureaucrats who smoke, like every other American who smokes, have grown used to puffing away around the entrances of their buildings, since they can't smoke inside. This offends the president, himself the purveyor of a highly nuanced moral code. So henceforth smoking will be banned within some unspecified range of any building owned, operated, or leased by the federal government.

The president's new mandate calls to mind the story—a true story, honest—of the German businessman recently on his first trip to the United States. His host walked him around downtown Washington, and he was finally unable to contain himself.

"You have the most beautiful prostitutes here," the German exclaimed. "So well dressed!" Of course, he had noticed the throngs of women gathered on the sidewalk outside their office buildings, smoking. He'd gotten it exactly wrong, needless to say. In the great tobacco wars of the 1990s—involving countless lawyers, tobacco executives, professional busybodies, and cynical politicians—the people on the sidewalk are the only ones who aren't whores.

Scrapbook

Bye-Bye, New Columbia

In the weeks leading up to the budget deal—while District of Columbia mayor Marion Barry was junketing in Africa, and the *Washington Post* was detailing his city's epic mismanagement under bureaucracies Barry has bloated during four terms in office—D.C. delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton was closeted with members of Congress, nailing down a plan to rescue the foundering city. Some people, apparently including Norton at the time, refuse to concede that the capital of the Free World must necessarily have Third World roads, crumbling schools, insolvent and unresponsive agencies, and a fleeing population. It was with a palpable sense of accomplishment that Norton announced to the press on July 30 "the most important legislation for the District of Columbia in the 20th century" except for the act that granted the District home rule.

But Barry was having none of that. The rescue plan provides a federal transfusion of nearly $1 billion over five years and temporarily shifts more power from elected officials to the presidentially appointed Control Board, a panel of private-sector types enlisted two years ago to usher the city out of crisis. Barry leapt to the barricades, railing against the "rape of democracy" and soon adding the threat to "do something to the perpetrator of the rape"—i.e., "big, bad conservative Republicans." And Norton?

In a conversion of quasi-Stalinist swiftness, she shifted her energies from selling her constituents on the best deal she had been able to get to encouraging their "visible protest." Where initially she spoke of "a few regrets" about the emergency management arrangements, within days she was decrying a "perverse and intolerable reversal of democracy." This is a bit of a disappointment. Washingtonians are used to the theatrics of their mayor, but Mrs. Norton sometimes at least seemed like a grown-up.

Free Wei

President Clinton's national security adviser Sandy Berger is in China this week for meetings with numero uno Jiang Zemin—in order to make arrangements for the Chinese capo's expected visit to Washington this fall. As Berger was leaving, he was probably unhappy to receive a polite letter from the Family Research Council's Gary Bauer. Bauer, who has been among the most prominent critics of the Clinton administration's softness towards China, called Mr. Berger's attention to China's most prominent dissident, Wei Jingsheng. Mr. Wei, having already spent years in the Chinese gulag, was reimprisoned in 1994 shortly after meeting with our assistant secretary of state for human rights, John Shattuck. It's hard to understand, Bauer wrote, "the appropriateness of receiving President Jiang with full honors in the United States, should Mr. Wei continue to suffer . . . in direct consequence of his willingness to meet with an official representative of our government." Bauer's letter signals what promises to be a high-profile campaign over the next two months to pressure Clinton into making Wei's release a condition for receiving Jiang in the United States.

Correction

In Jim Sleeper's "Ward Connerly Gets Pinched" last week, it was stated that 40 percent of black voters in California had supported Proposition 209. Exit polling suggested that, in fact, about 25 percent had done so.

Casual

Petula's Back!

As a proud baby boomer I feel it is my right—indeed my generational obligation—to shove my personal tastes in music, food, and clothing down the throat of every person who has the misfortune to be either older or younger than I. This is what baby boomers do, what we are called to do. And so I'm especially pleased to announce the beginnings of the Petula Clark revival. The singer of "Downtown," "Don't Sleep in the Subway," and other hits from the late '60s is about to see her career revived, whether she likes it or not, and herself become the object of semi-ghoulish curiosity. "My God," a whole new generation of fans will cry, overcome with the joy of discovery, "is she still alive?"

Come to think of it, I don't know the answer to that question. But let's assume for the sake of argument that she is. A more relevant question is why the magic wand of boomer nostalgia hasn't yet fallen on her. Many far less deserving veterans have already been reinflated, propped up, and wheeled out for public display. The Monkees, for example, are now ubiquitous on VH-1, the cable music-video channel that has become the favored venue for this sort of thing. If in idle moments you happen to switch it on after dinner, you're likely to spot old episodes of the Mike Douglas or Dick Cavett show. These almost always repay re-viewing. One night I saw Mike sitting in a hot tub with Stevie Wonder, circa 1974. "What do colors mean to you, Steve?" Mike earnestly asked his guest. "I mean, you're blind." Some scenes verge on the surreal. I recently watched a Cavett show with Jimi Hendrix seated beside, I swear, Robert Young, of Marcus Welby fame, who looked at the great guitarist as if he were a piece of roadkill brought in by the family dog. This was a few months before Hendrix died, although you couldn't really be sure. He seemed distracted by the potted plant next to Cavett's desk, wondering whether he should smoke it.

Boomer nostalgia is indiscriminate; the cash register rings for the worthy and unworthy alike. Burt Bacharach has recently been the subject of a revival that is proceeding along classic lines: stories in *People* and *Entertainment Weekly*, tribute albums, a new musical revue. Bacharach wrote a dozen inventive, engaging songs, and the Aretha Franklin version of "I Say a Little Prayer" is by itself reason enough to forgive him anything, even those Martini and Rossi ads he did in the 1970s. But for every Bacharach, there are three Tom Joneses. The puffy, midriff-thickened singer, fresh from lengthy sessions under a cosmetic surgeon's knife, has squeezed himself into leather pants and a studded vest and gone gyrating across America, wheezing a half-tempo version of his only hit, "It's Not Unusual," as his graying chest hairs detach themselves and waft lazily to the stage. And he's right: It's not at all unusual any longer to see a 60-year-old man behaving this way.

If there is room in the capacious baby-boomer heart for Tom Jones, there must be a space the size of a football field for Petula Clark. She was not herself a boomer, but her songs could be enchanting. By the time of her three or four pop hits, she had entered her mid-thirties, which today must make her—what?—150 years old? For a long time her records have mouldered in the category of "guilty pleasures"—a term developed long ago by baby boomers to describe songs, movies, and comic books they once loved but should have outgrown. In boomer revivalism, however, there are no pleasures about which one should feel guilty; all questions of merit and excellence are swept away in the joy of imposing one's tastes on the rest of the culture. We Petula-lovers can even cite highbrow authorities. The eccentric classical pianist Glenn Gould, in an essay called "The Search for Petula Clark," described her hit "My Love" like so:

"The only extradiatonic event which disturbs [the] proceedings is the near-inevitable hookup to the flattened supertonic for a final chorus—two neighborly dominants being the pivots involved. Indeed, only one secondary dominant, which happens to coincide with the line 'It shows how wrong we all can be,' compromises the virginal propriety of its responsibly confirming Fuxian basses, and none of those stray, flattened leading-tones-as-root implies a moment's lack of resolution."

Take that, you Tom Jones-lovers! I couldn't have put it better myself. Within months, I predict, the Petula revival will be well under way nationwide. It's already in full swing at my house, where her CD of Greatest Hits is a great favorite of myself and . . . well, myself. There have been complications. The other night I asked my children what music we should listen to during dinner. "I don't care," said my son. "Just no more Petula Clark, please." Little does he know he has no choice in the matter.

Andrew Ferguson

The New New Math

Lynne Cheney's informative article ("Exam Scam," August 4) spotlighted several anti-new-math parents, yet I am still amazed that more American parents aren't uniting to make this more of an issue. The Third International Math and Science Study demonstrated that American students have suffered at the hands of new new- math proponents. To say that the new "national" test is "a little more appropriate for the United States," as acting deputy secretary of education Mike Smith put it, is tantamount to changing the rules of a game so that you can win.

I recently witnessed a teenage cashier delay a group of customers because the computer was down, and he was incapable of computing the amount of change to give back. He explained to the angry customers that he had to go find a calculator and would return in a moment. How's that for a "real-life" application? The fact is, if more citizens fail to rally for change, our students—and inevitably our country—will end up paying the price in an increasingly competitive world.

Judi Connor
Alexandria, VA

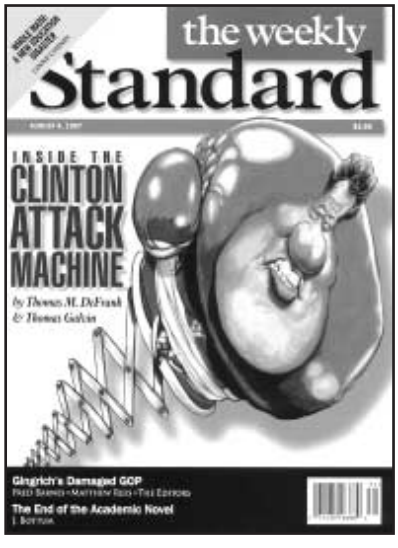
I have been a math teacher in California's public schools for 11 years. Lynne V. Cheney makes us all look like Clinton liberals who do not know how to teach fundamentals. I was trained in the "whole math" concept, but I do not entirely buy into it. Students do need to see how math skills are applied in their everyday life. They also need the old "drill and kill" to become proficient in those skills.

Another issue is one of assessment. Tests are given and the scores are used as ammunition by the Clinton administration to justify creating a national assessment to give to all eighth-graders. How can we have one national test to determine how or what students are learning when we do not have a national curriculum to determine what teachers should be teaching? A test has to measure what has been taught, and unless we are all teaching on the same page, the test results will just be more fodder for the feds to feed to the American public, in an effort to scare them.

Control of curriculum needs to be returned to the counties, cities, and individual districts. If test scores are not what they should be, parents should hold responsible the schools and the teachers.

In sum, please remember that there are over 10,000 public schools in California. Not all of them are staffed with Clinton liberals, and many of them do an excellent job of educating children.

Russell Barnes
New Cuyama, CA



We respectfully request that you inform your readers that Lynne V. Cheney's description of the Interactive Mathematics Program is both incomplete and inaccurate.

For example, the article states that this curriculum is taught in classrooms without a textbook. The curriculum is published as a hardcover student textbook by Key Curriculum Press. The article also asserts that important mathematical formulas, such as the Pythagorean theorem, are taught without practice to reinforce concepts and skills. This is not true. Students in the program are given many opportunities to review and practice their mathematical knowledge.

The program has also received comments from many parents, students, teachers, and administrators who support the Interactive Mathematics Program as a rigorous, four-year college preparatory mathematics curriculum.

Dan Fendel, Diane Resek,
Sherry Fraser, and Lynne Alper
San Francisco, CA

Counterattack Machine

I pray that Thomas M. DeFrank and Thomas Galvin are themselves prepared for the Clinton attack machine ("Inside the Clinton Attack Machine," August 4). Wow! What an article!

Every day, we read about the spins and cover-ups, and many of us are so disgusted and tired of it all. Denial and lies: Are these now what predominate in America? I guess this is what the many years of liberal schools and churches have reaped.

How can Bob Bennett, the president's lawyer, look himself in the mirror? I suppose money and power are truly the gods of America.

Again, thank you for this article. I hope many people discover it and praise you for it.

Mrs. Jack W. Hayden
Houston, TX

No, Do Lots

The idea that we should remove all limits on campaign contributions is an absolutely absurd proposal, one that I would expect from a congressman who would benefit grandly ("For a Doolittle Congress," July 28). In place of competing special interests, what do we get? An even smaller number of high-rollers. This is campaign "deform" at its best.

Is it now acceptable to take even bigger bribes, providing that you disclose it to the voters? If so, then we can simply vote based upon which special interest did the highest bidding for which candidate. We'll know to whom they are beholden, how much they cost, and what to expect of them.

While politicians now define a "constituent" as a possible "contributor," we must remember "constituent" to mean what our founding fathers took it to mean: "voter." We must remember that our representatives owe their alle-

giance first and foremost to taxpayers, not to private interests. If Congress doesn't reform itself, then we the voters must re-form Congress in 1998.

Jack E. Lohman
Milwaukee, WI

More Novels, Please

In his review of recent academic novels by Richard Russo and John Hassler, J. Bottum concludes that "we have come to the end of the academic novel in English. All its plots have grown stale" ("The End of the Academic Novel," August 4). No, this staleness extends only to the small-college novel, the genre perpetuated by the likes of Russo and Hassler. This running out of steam does not apply to the big university novel, the writing of which has rarely been attempted. There are at least three themes that remain to be explored in the big-university setting.

First, what are the consequences of the rise to power of the radical generation—those who went on to graduate school following the failure of their "revolution" and have since risen to positions of power as chairmen, deans, and presidents of universities? This is a complex story.

Second, what are we to make of the intensifying radicalization of graduate students and young faculty in the humanities?

Third, how do we depict the corruption that results from the circulation of hundreds of millions of dollars that flow into the research and teaching budgets of the major universities?

The academic novel is far from dead. Rather, it needs to focus on the issues now prevalent on major university campuses, not small colleges off in the boondocks.

Norman F. Cantor
Sag Harbor, NY

Under His Skin

I cannot express how disappointed and angry I am to have been portrayed so unprofessionally by Matt Labash ("A Visit to Sinatrapalooza," August 4).

Once a year, people from all over the Northeast gather to pay tribute to Frank Sinatra, a man for whom they have felt a kinship over the years. Sinatra's music represents stability, and it is probably one of the few things left in this country that do. I know old-timers who speak of the days when Sinatra performed at the Paramount Theater. The Bobby-soxers would line up as far as the eye could see—just to get a glimpse of those sparkling blue eyes.

Despite all the triumphs and catastrophes the world has faced, that old man keeps on singing the same old songs. As far as using TelePrompTers is concerned, Labash could probably get a better opinion about their usefulness from any of the last five presidents!

I was described by Labash as a "21-year-old . . . who wears a black suit with an open butterfly collar and keeps all his money in a roll, the bills arranged from high to low, with the presidents facing the same way." He didn't describe me as a 21-year-old MBA student who works for Merrill Lynch. Actually, I noticed how well presented everyone was—except for Labash. Perhaps that is why my black suit appealed to him so much. Or maybe Labash observed "the presidents facing the same way" from the reflection in my shoes. Either way, his behavior and lack of class clearly separate Matt Labash from a Sinatra fan!

Joseph M. Mizzi
Manalapan, NJ

Party of Zeroes

In your editorial "Party of One," (August 4), you write that House Republicans "will have to remember how to act like elected officials: men and women who owe fealty to their constituents and to the principles they campaigned on." It is time conservatives admit that waiting for the Republican party to come back to conservative principles is like waiting for Godot. We have been shut out of the party and locked up in the attic like a crazy aunt.

Since the government shutdown, the Republicans have been controlled by a coalition of liberals. Truly conservative Republicans are fed one excuse and lie after another as to why the party cannot be conservative today.

The 1996 convention was the clearest example. We were told the top priority was that it would not be another Huston (i.e., a conservative convention). It was tightly controlled so that nothing conservative, except for a general belief in tax cuts, would be mentioned. Victim stories and beach volleyball were typical topics. When conservatives did manage to add their agenda to the platform, the Republican National Committee chairman and the Republican presidential candidate proudly told the media that they hadn't even read the platform.

After the convention, the Republican Congress passed Clinton's big-spending budget without a fight. We were told this was necessary to expunge from everyone's mouth the bad taste of the shutdown, and that soon the party would return to conservatism.

But after the election, we were told a new story: Republicans can only act conservative if we have a Republican president and a Republican Congress. We were told that we will have no (conservative) agenda until the year 2000. Until then, our job as conservatives is to provide our votes and our money, and keep our mouths shut because someone might hear our crazy ideas.

Now the party has agreed to an unbalanced budget agreement, which is basically Clinton's budget with more spending and a few tax cuts added. The main purpose of the agreement is to delay balancing the budget, which the economy has already almost done, until at least the year 2002.

The party leaders realize that sooner or later we conservatives will catch on to what is happening. They are almost daring us to try to do something about it. Will we?

Russell Van Zandt
Northbrook, IL

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the weekly Standard

Stand By Jesse

In Boston they love their losers. If you lose selfishly—but do it with a certain blasé *style*—they love you all the more. And if you claim virtue while you're at it . . . well, then you're William Weld, bucking for Beantown sainthood.

The saga begins in November 1994, when Weld gets himself reelected governor of Massachusetts. He immediately leaks word that the office bores him silly. Maybe he'll run for president! It doesn't work out. Instead, he spends part of 1995 working for Pete Wilson's campaign. That doesn't work out. So Weld announces that his gubernatorial work is done, less than a year after reelection, and that he is now needed in Washington as a U.S. senator. *That* doesn't work out; John Kerry beats him handily on November 5, 1996.

On November 6, 1996, Weld tells the *Boston Globe* that he is delighted to be back on Beacon Hill. He will be a "high-performance governor" for "the next two years." And, no—with total nonchalance—"I don't feel disappointed." Red Sox fans go wild. Weld's poll numbers soar.

But within a week, like Ted Williams hocking a loogie at the Fenway box seats, Weld is on the phone to the Clinton White House, begging for a new excuse to quit his job. "Sources close to the governor" start reporting that he might replace Janet Reno as attorney general, or might become secretary of commerce, or undersecretary of state. These sources remind everyone that Weld would be a good fit for the Clinton administration because he has "never dipped into the vitriol that came out of the Republican right wing."

Of course, signing up with Bill and Hillary would further restrict Weld's already limited influence over the national Republican party. *But the ideological character of the GOP is no longer a serious concern for him*, "well-placed sources" insist. Weld, after all, is already badly "alienated" from his party and "not optimistic" about his role in it. Let some other Brahmin dirty himself herding the right-wing untouchables back to their primitive villages. Bill Weld has an urgent career move to make.

He doesn't get the Janet Reno or Commerce or State Department gig. So he threatens to break a term-limits promise and run for governor again in 1998. The Kennedy family is alarmed. They want a clear gubernatorial field for Congressman Joe. And that does it. The White House is suddenly eager to rescue Weld from Boston. In April it offers him the ambassadorship to Mexico.

This kind of scheming happens all the time in politics. What has happened since is rare, indeed.

As the world now knows, Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate committee that must approve such nominations, has quietly but firmly made clear that he thinks Bill Weld's views on illegal drugs are incompatible with U.S. diplomatic goals in Mexico City. Helms refuses to hold a confirmation hearing. The impasse has official Washington flummoxed.

There is the problem of protocol. Weld has behaved like a boor. Last month, Weld convened a freelance press conference during which he essentially called Jesse Helms a liar. At the same event, Weld issued an even more spectacular provocation, questioning the president's courage in the face of Republican "extortion."

Under ordinary circumstances, an ambassadorial nominee would be dropped like a rock for such an outburst. But the White House is worried over President Clinton's reputation for the quick, dishonorable cut-and-run. They have reluctantly decided to go with Weld "to the mat," in spokesman Mike McCurry's words. Only they don't want to mess up their working relationship with the Foreign Relations Committee, so McCurry is quick to add that the administration will not actively support "anything that circumvents the authority of Chairman Helms."

No, circumventing the authority of Chairman Helms is something Republicans will have to do. They should not.

William Weld has resigned his governorship, he says, to fight his battle for confirmation full-time. That's bunk. Mexico was his fourth-choice parachute, and resigning the governorship was always the bottom

line. The rest is pure gravy. But the gravy is very rich. Weld has turned his nomination into a vote of confidence by the Republican party on its own ideological soul. "I am not Senator Helms's kind of Republican," Weld thunders, because "I do not pass his litmus test on social policy." Weld *must* be confirmed to his ambassadorship, he warns. Otherwise, the GOP will have proved itself, once and for all, a philosophically closed and exclusive shop.

Bunk again. Congressional Republicans are seething about the empty symbolism of the entire affair. Bill Weld is pro-choice and whatnot, sure. It doesn't matter much. He is not now being "excluded" from anything by Jesse Helms. Helms has privately offered to confirm Weld to another ambassadorship—India, for example. Weld has rebuffed the offer. Come to think of it, conservative Republicans have never excluded Weld from the party's ranks in *any* meaningful sense. They have campaigned for him, as a fellow Republican, in his races for governor and senator. They have raised money for him. Their only sin, so far as Weld is concerned, is that they refuse to be ashamed of what they think. That is what he's demanding they do now: roll Jesse, knuckle under, acknowledge their own vulgarity, apologize.

At least since its Houston convention in 1992, the Republican party has feared the disdain of the world's Welds. It's no fun being called a troglodyte. Over in the House, Newt Gingrich has spent most of the past two years fleeing that label. He now lusts for an opportunity to provide "bipartisan leadership across the planet," whatever that means. Behind the scenes, and increasingly in public, an alarming number of Senate Republicans are trying to figure out a way to do Gingrich one better. They are searching for a way to give Bill Weld his prize.

Symbolism matters. In American politics right now, it's all too often all there is. Weld has provoked a purely symbolic battle. It's a battle Republican conservatives can't afford to lose. Some people think Jesse Helms and his GOP colleagues are cavemen. They will think that anyway, no matter what happens. But Republican voters who admire Jesse Helms and his colleagues—for their ideas—will smell weakness and defeat should Weld find his way to Mexico. And their noses will be right.

It's time for the Senate majority leader to make his presence felt. Trent Lott should make it unambiguously clear that he'll stand by Helms. He should enforce a little party discipline. He should act to prevent Republicans on the Foreign Relations Committee from end-running the chairman. Then Sen. Lott should let President Clinton know that if he wants bipartisan cooperation in a whole host of areas, he should withdraw Weld's nomination sooner rather than later. Bill Weld's had his fun. It's time for Trent Lott to squash him like a bug.

—David Tell, for the Editors

The Scandal That Wasn't

by Tucker Carlson

MIDWAY THROUGH A PRESS BRIEFING on the last day of July, a reporter asked White House press secretary Mike McCurry if he would "address the allegations that deal with Kathleen Willey and whether or not she was harassed by the president." In the context of a press briefing, the question was not outrageous—Willey's name had surfaced in the news the day before, when she was subpoenaed by lawyers in the Paula Jones case—but McCurry responded as if he'd just been asked something obscene. "No," he replied curtly, and moved on to the next question. Generally accommodating to the press, McCurry on this day refused even to say whether Kathleen Willey had ever worked at the White House. "I have nothing to add," he said. "And I think it's up to responsible news organizations to make editorial judgments about whether that is a matter they want to pursue."

Reporters were understandably confused. "How can we exercise news judgment if we can't get the facts?" one journalist asked. McCurry didn't explain. Instead, he pointed out that "a number of news organizations have elected not to further report on this matter." And that was it. "I'm not going to do anything here that helps to feed the story," he declared, effectively ending the discussion.

Less than a week later, the president himself held a press conference on the South Lawn of the White House. Though the Willey story had developed considerably over the previous six days, he took only one apologetic question about it and declined to answer it.

And so the Kathleen Willey affair is, for the moment at least, dead. It may have been the shortest scandal in Washington history.

Rumors of the latest sexual-harassment problems involving the president started in early July when Matt Drudge, the Los Angeles writer who publishes a

Walter Winchell-like tip sheet called the *Drudge Report* on the Internet, heard that investigative reporter Michael Isikoff of *Newsweek* was working on a story about a woman who had been groped and fondled by the president. Within several weeks, Drudge had learned the woman's name and some of the details contained in Isikoff's story and had sent the information out to the 70,000 or so people who subscribe to his online newsletter, many of them members of the media.

It took the publication of Isikoff's *Newsweek* article several days later to fill in major gaps in the story. But even Drudge's early outline—a White House volunteer sexually propositioned by the president during what amounted to a job interview in the Oval Office—was enough to send the administration's scandal managers scrambling for a response strategy. In the first 12 hours after he posted his account of the story, Drudge says, White House computers logged on to his Web site more than 2,600 times.

> "I'VE SPENT THE LAST SIX MONTHS OF THIS AWFUL JOB SAYING THAT I DON'T DO PAULA JONES," SAYS WHITE HOUSE FLACK LANNY DAVIS.

It was not initially clear to anyone what Willey hoped to gain by coming forward with her story, or even if she had in fact come forward to tell it. (To this day, every on-the-record account of Willey's interactions with Clinton has been given by her friends or former friends, not by Willey herself.) The first instinct at the White House, nonetheless, was to attack Willey as unreliable, even unbalanced. "They didn't know where she was coming from," says Matt Drudge. "Someone in Hillary's office was calling her a 'psycho' on the phone to me: 'Don't believe her, she's a psycho.'"

This approach didn't last long. Almost immediately, Willey's attorney issued a statement saying that his client was outraged to be subpoenaed by Paula Jones's lawyers, who had hoped Willey's story would help them characterize the president as a chronic sexual harasser. Moreover, the statement said, Willey and Clinton "had and continue to have a good relationship." (The statement does not confirm or deny whether that relationship was at any time a sexual one.) It became obvious pretty quickly that going after Willey's character was not going to be fruitful, so the White House tried a new angle. Willey met with Clinton in his office on November 29, 1993, to discuss getting a permanent job in the White House. That same day, Willey's husband, a Richmond, Virginia, lawyer who had been caught stealing money from clients, shot himself to death. As Clinton's lawyer, Robert Bennett, explained to at least one reporter, the president—if he met with Willey at all—was simply trying to comfort her. What kind of sicko, Bennett wanted to know, would make a pass at a grieving widow? The very idea was "preposterous."

It was a pretty good defense, but there was just one problem: Willey may have been a widow, but neither she nor Clinton knew it at the time. Her husband's body wasn't found until the day *after* the meeting in the White House. So the White House moved to Plan C: Clam up. Clinton turned media management of the Willey matter over to Bennett. White House staff were instructed in the strongest terms not to talk to the press about it. And, for the most part, they haven't.

"Really I know nothing about this," says Lanny Davis, White House flack in charge of denying campaign-finance violations. "I've spent the last six months of this awful job saying that I don't do Paula Jones, until someone told me to stop using the verb 'do.' So I don't 'do' Kathleen whatever-her-name-is." Even if he did do her, Davis says, sounding a little sad, "I'd have to refer you to Bob Bennett, who is answering the entire spectrum of questions, even the ones related to whether she worked in the White House and what she did here, which, quite frankly, I think are the ones we ought to be answering."

The normally garrulous Ann Lewis, the incoming director of communications, is equally mum. Asked to comment on Willey, Lewis sounds almost robotic: "As I understand the subject of your call to me, I think I need to refer you to Mr. Bennett, the president's attorney. Bye."

Not everyone associated with the Clinton White House has been so circumspect. Dick Morris took one look at the story and saw a perfect opportunity to get himself on television. The day the Willey subpoena made the papers, Morris took to CNBC as the president's "unofficial spokesperson" and denounced as "McCarthyite" questions about Clinton's private life. (Without apparent self-consciousness, Morris also assailed "this perverted woman, Paula Jones.") "This is like Joe McCarthy saying, 'I have the names of 236 Communists in the State Department,'" Morris said.

Morris's grandstanding enraged Bennett, who was already irritated by the few unauthorized—and sometimes inaccurate—leaks about Willey coming from the Clinton camp. But it did not detract from the overall effectiveness of the White House strategy, which remained simply to ignore Willey's existence. "When people hear things like this, it does add to the steady chipping away of what people see as the president's

character," says one administration official. On the other hand, "character only matters for challengers, or for people who are running for the first time. But this guy's president. If you're happy enough with the way the country's going that you can reasonably tune out politics, which is what a lot of people do, then you don't need any indication of what he's going to be like as president, because you see what he's like." The proof, in other words, is in the economy.

This may be a smug assessment, but it's probably also accurate. So is the feeling at the White House that one more tale of Clinton groping isn't going to sink an administration that has overcome so many other Kathleen Willeys over the years. "This sort of thing is aired so often and in so many ways," says an administration employee, "that people are inclined to discount it. There's nothing fresh about it. There's nothing here that people haven't already heard and feel they've made a judgment on one way or another. There aren't a lot of undecideds in this country about Bill Clinton's character."

Of course it also helps to be blessed with perfect timing. After a particularly scorching summer news drought, the Willey story emerged the same week as—and was quickly swallowed by—the budget deal, the UPS strike, and the crash of a Korean airliner into Guam. Willey could wind up in the headlines again if Paula Jones's attorneys succeed in forcing her to sit for a deposition, but it seems likely a judge will quash the subpoena before events get that far. "The story's totally gone now," says Matt Drudge, who wishes it weren't. "It's dead."

A victory for privacy, common sense, and seemly news coverage? Maybe. Or maybe it *is* significant that the president of the United States may have made sexual advances in the White House toward a married woman seeking a federal job. Either way, it's a shame that the Willey story has disappeared from the news because a number of interesting, unanswered questions remain, none of them having to do with sex.

What, for instance, was Kathleen Willey doing at the White House in the first place? Shortly before Willey met with Clinton, her husband embezzled more than $270,000 from two people in Richmond. Kathleen Willey personally signed a note taking responsibility and promising to repay the money. She later reneged and refused to pay, even after being ordered by a court to do so. Did any of this show up on her background check? Did anyone at the White House care?

Willey also received an unusual series of work assignments, beginning with the job in the counsel's office she got just days after her meeting with Clinton, and extending through her presidential appointment to the board of the U.S.O. last year. In 1995, the White House added Willey to the American delegation to two separate United Nations summits, one in Copenhagen, the other in Jakarta. On both, Michael Isikoff reported in *Newsweek*, she "was the only American participant who had no apparent experience in the issues under discussion."

To put it mildly. On the trip to the Jakarta conference on biological diversity, Willey's fellow delegation members included the deputy assistant secretary from the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental Affairs, the assistant secretary of state for environment and development, the deputy assistant administrator of the Global Environment Center of the Agency for International Development, a staff geneticist from the Department of Agriculture, and a representative of the National Marine Fisheries Service. On this roster of scientific heavyweights, Kathleen Willey was listed as a "public member."

What was someone like Kathleen Willey doing traveling around the world at public expense? What exactly was her relationship with President Clinton? It's likely the public will never know. Less than 48 hours after the *Newsweek* story hit the stands, the only journalists said to be snooping around Richmond hoping to talk to Kathleen Willey were reporters from the supermarket tabloids.

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NO CREDIT TO BILL

by Fred Barnes

IT SOUNDED INNOCENT ENOUGH when President Clinton made the claim at his press conference August 6 and no reporter rose to question him about it. Here's what Clinton said: The "first step" toward wiping out the budget deficit and creating a strong economy came "back in 1993 when we abandoned supply-side, trickle-down economics [and] opened a new chapter in fiscal responsibility with a new strategy of growth." Clinton had made a similar assertion a few days earlier when announcing a dip in unemployment (then, too, reporters failed to quibble). "The economic strategy we put in place in 1993 created the conditions for the extraordinary private-sector growth we have all wit-

Michael Ramirez

nessed," he said. And, naturally, other administration officials and Democrats have dutifully echoed the Clinton line. Senate minority leader Tom Daschle, for one, said Clinton's 1993 budget "set the stage" for the balanced-budget deal last month between the White House and congressional Republicans and for the booming economy.

At least Daschle couldn't keep a straight face when asked to defend his claim. And for good reason: It's a complete crock. To reach a budget agreement with Republicans, Clinton had to repudiate practically everything in his 1993 budget. Nor is Clinton singularly responsible for the stock-market boom, as he also suggested at his press conference. "When I took office, the market was at 3200," he said. Now, of course, it has climbed past 8200. "So it's growing at an unprecedented rate, to unprecedented heights," the president said. True, but only since Clinton reversed his economic policies.

Why are Clinton and his allies intent on crediting his 1993 budget with, as the president says, making the 1997 deal "possible"? One reason is they're eager to mask Clinton's total flip-flop on taxes and spending. The 1993 budget included higher taxes, more discretionary spending, no entitlement reform, and no balanced budget. Those are exactly the opposite of the Republican-oriented hallmarks of the 1997 deal. It cuts taxes, holds discretionary spending to slower growth, begins reform of Medicare, and produces a balanced budget (even a surplus) in 2002. In American political history, there haven't been many flip-flops as all-encompassing as Clinton's in agreeing to the new budget accord. His contention that his 1993 budget would keep interest rates down didn't exactly work out either. Interest rates, as measured by the 30-year Treasury bond, dropped to less than 6 percent for a while, then rose to more than 8 percent, which was higher than they'd been the day Clinton was elected. Since the Republicans grabbed Congress, though, they've dropped between one and two percentage points.

The other reason Clinton focuses on 1993 is to deny Republicans credit. Every GOP senator and House member voted against the president's 1993 budget. So if it truly did create the mold in which the 1997 budget deal had to fit, then Republicans really don't deserve any credit at all. But it merely created the mold for Clinton's budgets in 1994 and 1995, neither of which projected a balanced budget or cut taxes or restrained entitlements. In fact, in April 1995, just before Clinton changed course, the Congressional Budget Office concluded his budget would leave the deficit at roughly $200 billion annually for years to come. This is the "Clintonomics baseline," says Stephen Moore of the Cato Institute. Only after Clinton acceded to Republican spending restraint did the

deficit plummet to an expected $37 billion this year. This path, culminating in the 1997 deal, represents the real breakthrough. But if Clinton admits this, "he has to give Republicans equal or even primary credit," says GOP consultant Jeffrey Bell. Perish the thought.

What changed everything—and especially Clinton's policies—was the Republican capture of Congress in November 1994. It reassured financial markets that Clinton and the Democrats would be reined in. No longer was there a possibility of big, new spending programs or large tax hikes. From then on, the stock market roared.

In the two years after Clinton's election, while Democrats still controlled the Senate and House, the Dow Jones average rose from 3223.04 to 3807.52. That's an annualized increase of 9 percent, slightly less than the historical average. Since Election Day 1994, however, the market has more than doubled, opening on August 8 at 8188.00. That, by the way, was the 15th anniversary of the beginning of the long-term bull market that accelerated in 1994. On August 8, 1982, the Dow was at 777.92.

In citing his 1993 budget, Clinton goes out of his way to point out that it moved sharply away from President Reagan and supply-side economics and the soaring federal deficits of the Reagan era. Clinton treats the deficit as the only measure of Reagan's policymaking. This is nonsense. Reducing the deficit wasn't even Reagan's top priority. At best, it ranked fourth. Ahead of it were generating economic growth, curbing inflation, and winning the Cold War. Toppling the Soviet empire required a costly military buildup, which Democratic Congresses approved so long as Reagan maintained a high level of domestic spending. The deficit grew.

Clinton has a vested interest in ignoring Reagan's success in reviving the economy. The trends that Clinton now takes credit for—stronger growth, lower interest rates, disinflation, reduced regulation, lower taxes—actually began under Reagan. For all the ballyhoo about 10 million new jobs under Clinton, jobs were created at the same rate under Reagan. The economy grew faster in the Reagan era (3.2 percent) than during the Clinton presidency (2.6 percent). Clinton was very lucky to have followed Reagan (and George Bush). When he became president, an economic expansion had already begun (March 1991). American businesses, freshly streamlined, were globally competitive. With union power weakened, labor markets were flexible. And the economy boomed. What Clinton did in 1993 didn't have a thing to do with it.

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LOTT ON THE SPOT

by Matthew Rees

TRENT LOTT ISN'T THRILLED that Jesse Helms has decided, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to prevent former Massachusetts governor William Weld from becoming ambassador to Mexico. It's easy to see why this fight displeases the Senate majority leader: It has crowded out publicity about the balanced-budget deal, it's highlighted schisms in the GOP, and it's forced Lott to mediate a Senate Republican scrum that may dominate the news when Congress reconvenes after Labor Day. When reporters peppered Lott with questions on the subject on July 31, his discomfort showed: "Does anybody have anything other than Governor Weld?" Someone asked about judicial activism, and Lott could hardly contain his glee. "A different question! All right!" he beamed. "Hey, thank you very much. Let's have a *real* question here."

But the real question is, in fact, what Lott intends to do about the Weld nomination. He's under pressure to break the impasse, most recently from Indiana Republican Richard Lugar, who, as chairman of the Agriculture Committee, has threatened to make trouble for Helms's North Carolina tobacco interests unless Helms allows Weld a hearing before Helms's committee. At least nine Senate Republicans have declared that Weld deserves a hearing. They include moderates sympathetic to Weld's social liberalism—Olympia Snowe, John Chafee, Jim Jeffords, Arlen Specter—but also conservatives like Rick Santorum and Judd Gregg. Two more—Lugar and Gordon Smith—are members of the Foreign Relations Committee. They could join with the committee's eight Democrats to force a committee meeting. And while they can't force a vote on Weld—only the chairman can do that—they can stir up trouble and draw attention to the obstinacy of Lott and Helms.

Complicating matters for Lott is that Helms has done little to mobilize opposition to Weld. A number of Republicans have approached the chairman asking whether he'd like their help, and he's politely turned them aside, telling them to do what they think is right. When conservative operatives David Keene and Marc

Rotterman approached Helms about running newspaper ads and lobbying against Weld, Helms didn't object, but he didn't encourage them much either.

This gentlemanly restraint hasn't been well received: "Helms doesn't seem to have a game plan or a strategy," complains a top Senate staffer sympathetic to the senator. Helms's inaction has led some senators to conclude he's using Weld as leverage to strike a deal with the administration, though on what remains a mystery. Helms counters that the only deal he'll make is for Weld to go to some diplomatic post other than Mexico.

Yet where Senate Republicans will end up remains unclear. John Ashcroft, for example, is a friend of Weld's—they were governors together—and initially said encouraging things about his nomination. Since Ashcroft is a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, this mattered. More recently, he's retreated from those statements, but without endorsing the Helms position even though Helms touts him as a presidential contender and campaigned for him as far back as 1974. Most other Senate Republicans have kept quiet on the matter, wanting some indication of how the affair will play out before getting too involved.

The person who will likely be left to straighten things out is Lott. His statements so far would indicate he's sticking with Helms. At the July 31 session with reporters, he said Weld's best option would be to "accept consideration for another position or look for work." A few days earlier on *Meet the Press*, Lott said Weld had "shot his foot off" by holding a press conference and blasting Helms. Lott's office also called the White House to ensure the president wouldn't try to sneak Weld through as a recess appointment this month. These actions have convinced Helms that Lott's opposition is genuine. "He volunteered on this one," Helms says. "He didn't like the way it smelled."

But others remain unconvinced. Lott has allowed himself a bit of wiggle room, and Senate Republican aides doubt he is willing to expend much political capital in support of Helms. Asked on July 31 whether he opposed the nomination, Lott responded, "I haven't said that." Senate Democrats know that Lott's Achilles' heel as majority leader is his desire to keep legislative business running smoothly. Should they threaten to block the Senate floor until a vote is held on Weld, it would be in character for Lott to defuse tensions by trying to strike a deal.

"Would I put any money on Trent staying where he is?" asks a Senate leadership aide close to Lott. "None. If there's any political price involved with his standing by Jesse, he's gone."

Distrust of Lott stems from his performance during the testy debate over a chemical-weapons treaty earlier this year. Helms opposed the treaty from the outset and pledged he wouldn't let it out of the Foreign Relations Committee. When Senate Democrats said they would tie up Senate business as long as Helms blocked a vote on the treaty, one of Lott's foreign-policy aides explored with the Senate parliamentarian how the treaty could be discharged from the

committee without Helms's consent. Lott quickly assured Helms he had no intention of taking this course, but Helms eventually allowed the treaty to proceed on Lott's promise to have two key provisions altered. They weren't, but Lott claimed they were, citing a letter from Clinton containing bogus assurances. And Lott's endorsement of the treaty ultimately ensured its ratification.

After alienating many conservatives with that performance, Lott has little leeway in the Weld fight. Any moves he makes to prod Helms to hold a committee vote will be interpreted as another signal conservatives can't trust the majority leader. "Were Lott to yet again go down the road of compromise, it will reinforce the perception that he forgot those who helped him become majority leader," says Frank Gaffney, head of the Center for Security Policy.

Conversely, standing with Helms against Weld would be a relatively painless way for Lott to repair his fractured relations with conservatives, many of whom plan to turn the battle over Weld into a major campaign. Keene and Rotterman mean to run full-page ads in the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times* in support of Helms. "We intend to make certain conservatives don't forget any senators who come out for Weld," says Keene.

What would suit Lott best is for the Helms/Weld fight to resolve itself without his involvement. That's unlikely, though not impossible. Tom Daschle, the Senate Democratic leader, has yet to express much enthusiasm about the nomination. Appearing on CNN's *Evans & Novak*, he said Weld "deserves the nomination" but that he "is just one of 154 [nominees] and I think it's critical that we get these nominations passed." Nor has the White House indicated a desire to spend much capital on Weld. Asked about Weld at an August 6 press conference, Clinton praised Helms, saying "I have had a good and surprisingly constructive relationship overall with Senator Helms, and it has flowed from our being completely straightforward with one another and acting in a candid and open manner."

Should Clinton decide to really fight for Weld, there is a way to get around Helms. A majority of senators could vote to discharge Weld's nomination from the Foreign Relations Committee and bring it straight to the floor. But only the majority leader—Lott—is empowered to call for a vote of the full Senate. Having explored the discharge option during the chemical-weapons debate, will Lott try it again? "I think he'll hang in there" in opposition, says Helms. Maybe, but don't bet the farm on it.

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SMOKERS AREN'T VICTIMS

by Michael Reznicek

ALTHOUGH THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES of smoking have been known for many years, tobacco companies have avoided product-liability judgments for one reason: Smokers have always been held responsible for smoking. But in recent years a new paradigm has emerged. Now smoking is thought to be an addiction, and nicotine is held responsible for smoking. If the old view was that smokers abused nicotine, the new view is that nicotine abuses smokers, which is all that the legal profession needed to bring the tobacco industry to its knees.

This new thinking is said to be based on medical science. In the February 5, 1997, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Dr. David Kessler, former director of the Food and Drug Administration, wrote of a "scientific consensus that the nicotine in cigarettes and smokeless tobacco *causes and sustains* addiction" (emphasis added). A close look at the evidence, however, shows that those who embrace this "consensus" have stepped out on a limb. While research has expanded our understanding of nicotine, it has not provided evidence that nicotine "causes" smoking. In fact, everything we know suggests that *smokers* cause smoking.

The concept of nicotine addiction springs partly from the phenomenon of nicotine withdrawal. Abruptly stop smoking, and measurable anxiety ensues. Withdrawal symptoms last several days, and every former smoker can tell you how unpleasant they are. Addiction theory has it that smokers are forced to consume more nicotine to alleviate these symptoms. But the theory does not account for the millions who endure withdrawal and quit. Rather than supporting the addiction model, the existence of withdrawal symptoms merely explains why quitting is difficult.

The phenomenon of nicotine craving is similarly used to support the addiction model—and similarly fails to do so. Recent research has demonstrated that craving is associated with biological activity in the brain—but of course all thoughts and feelings are associated with biological activity in the brain. Craving, like withdrawal, makes quitting hard.

That nicotine creates its own psychological and physiological incentives is indisputable, but it does not follow that smoking is irresistible. Smoking is complex behavior that requires a series of calculated steps. We have no scientific evidence that nicotine commandeers that process, meaning we have no reason to believe that smoking happens against one's will. We do know, on the other hand, that smokers *can* quit, as millions have.

Although smoking appears to be an addiction, it is better understood to be what psychologists call contingent behavior. People smoke to obtain rewards. The most common reward is nicotine euphoria (positive reinforcement), but over time smoking brings other rewards, like the suppression of withdrawal and craving (negative reinforcement). Smokers have the ability to quit, but instead they pursue the immediate rewards of smoking at the price of its long-term costs. That most who try to quit end up failing is not so much evidence that smoking is an addiction as much as it is confirmation of what we would expect: Smokers, as a self-selected group, place a relatively high value on short-term rewards.

Pursuing short-term rewards at the expense of long-term costs is understandable. Most people demonstrate some such behavior, if not with nicotine, then with food, sex, money, or power. Moreover, the long-term costs of smoking are not universal. Most smokers get neither lung cancer nor heart disease. Thus, reducing smoking to a "nicotine addiction" misses the much larger issue that smokers *like* to smoke, even if many have a simultaneous desire to quit.

While the weaknesses of the addiction model are evident enough in theory, real-world problems arise when that model is the basis for social policy. Policies that treat smoking as an addiction actually increase the incentive to smoke. The proposed settlement between the tobacco industry, plaintiff's lawyers, and the state attorneys general is a case in point. If smoking is contingent behavior—if people smoke to obtain rewards—then browbeating the tobacco industry (as if smoking were an addiction) absolves smokers of the moral responsibility for smoking, diminishing the personal ownership that is a prerequisite for quitting. Furthermore, if any money from the settlement ever trickles down to smokers, it will create an entirely new enticement to smoke.

For that matter, why have the states been picking up the tab for smoking-related health costs, which is what prompted the tobacco lawsuits in the first place? If smokers overuse health care in the long run (and the point is debatable), that is good reason *not* to spread the financial risk. Whether government or tobacco companies absorb the costs, the effect is the same: to remove from smokers a consequence of their actions that would otherwise have the potential to limit smoking.

Americans should oppose the pending tobacco settlement, and not simply because lawyers will be the only ones who benefit. If tobacco litigation has any effect on smoking rates, it will probably raise them. Besides, if science can be misused for the sake of routing smoking, it can be made to justify the removal of any liberty. And no one should blow smoke at that.

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Clinton's Mideast Complex

by David Twersky

The bombing in Jerusalem's open-air Mahane Yehuda market, which killed 13 Israelis and wounded 150 others, had the inadvertent effect of revealing just how confused the Clinton administration's policy on the Middle East peace process really is. A week before the bombing, a foreign-policy adviser to a Senate Democrat active in Mideast affairs told me that the White House had given up on the Middle East and wanted to cut its political losses. American Jews who support the peace process begun in Oslo in 1993 had been urging the Clinton administration to commit itself anew to the issue, but the State Department had a ready-made answer for them: *Washington cannot want peace more than the parties themselves*. Meanwhile, American Jews opposed to the peace process found their arguments about Yasser Arafat's irresponsibility and criminality earning an increasingly sympathetic hearing among the GOP majority in both houses of Congress.

The administration has not known what to make of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose election in 1996 it actively sought to prevent, and so it has made efforts to establish relations with others in Netanyahu's government—foreign minister David Levy and defense minister Yitzhak Mordechai. The latest object of U.S. affection is Israel's president, Ezer

Weizman, the quintessential man of the Israeli middle. Weizman pointedly attacked the Labor governments that preceded Netanyahu's for moving too quickly and the Netanyahu government for moving haphazardly. Now Clinton wants Weizman to visit the White House, even though the presidency of Israel is a largely ceremonial post and it is increasingly clear that Netanyahu was, is, and will be the chief negotiator on these matters, no matter what the State Department wants.

The administration has had such a difficult time adapting to the new reality of Netanyahu that it didn't really know what to do or say in the aftermath of the bombing. Despite the administration's reputation for being the best friend Israel has ever had in Washington, and despite the unambiguously evil nature of the event itself, there was an almost mad rush to find something to accuse Israel of, even as spokesmen and officials condemned the terrorism. In her first major speech on the Middle East, delivered August 6 at the National Press Club, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright did say forthrightly that Arafat would have to stop the terrorists, but offered some criticism of Netanyahu and his government as well: Israel is not sustaining "a credible environment for negotiation," Albright said, when "actions are being taken that seem to predetermine the outcome."

And yet Albright announced a shift in American policy in the speech—a shift toward Netanyahu's position. The Israeli prime minister has long advocated moving to so-called final status talks with Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. That means putting everything on the table, including Palestinian statehood and the political future of Jerusalem, at once, with no preconditions save those already agreed to in the two treaties signed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Netanyahu's support for moving directly to final-status talks shows the degree to which differences between him and the more moderate voices in the opposition Labor party have narrowed. It's not only that the first Israeli official to propose the idea was Yossi Beilin, a leftist Labor official and a politician Israeli right-wingers love to hate. The fact is that before his election as prime minister, Netanyahu seemed dead set against the Oslo accords, but since assuming office he has moved steadily to the center. Netanyahu agreed to redeploy from most of Hebron, and he recently told his cabinet that he envisioned handing over 40 percent of the West Bank to Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. The differences between the Netanyahu government and Labor under its new leader, Ehud Barak, are down to percentages of the West Bank, definitions of Palestinian sovereignty, and timing—which represents a remarkable degree of commonality in the overheated world of Israeli politics. (Not that Netanyahu has gotten any credit here for shifting away from the right. When he announced his 40 percent plan, Thomas Friedman dismissed it in the *New York Times*, while the *Washington Post* poohpoohed it as a sop to the Right!)

This convergence of views is not reflected in American Jewish public opinion, which has made it difficult for American politicians, who can't figure out what being "pro-Israel" really means these days. Before Oslo, a pro-Israel politician was implacably opposed to Arafat and the PLO and supportive of Israeli military action to promote security and quash terrorism. But matters are no longer so simple after the Labor government decided to make Arafat a partner in its peace efforts.

Consider the case of Jim Saxton, a Republican from New Jersey who has led the fight to impose tighter restrictions on Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. A hero to the Jews? Not exactly; the Jewish community in his district is divided between hawks and doves, and the doves believe financial support for the Palestinians is necessary for peace.

On the other hand, Saxton's former House colleague and fellow New Jerseyan, Sen. Robert Torricelli, found himself in big trouble among the Jews of his state following a peace jaunt to Israel, Egypt, and Syria. Torricelli called for continuing U.S. aid to the Palestinians after eliciting a commitment from Arafat to "commute" the death sentence imposed on Arabs convicted of selling land to Jews. Some commitment: Most of the "accused" were summarily executed gangland style during a month-long spree without ever being indicted, let alone receiving a trial and having a sentence passed.

Clinton, his supporters note, won colossal majorities of the Jewish vote in both 1992 and 1996. But the officials in his government responsible for Middle East policy are growing increasingly controversial. Matters may come to a head with the nomination of Martin Indyk, currently U.S. ambassador to Israel, to be the new assistant secretary of state in charge of the Middle East. The Zionist Organization of America is actively opposing Indyk's confirmation. The Jewish War Veterans wrote an anti-Indyk letter to Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Jesse Helms, who said he would keep their points in mind during Indyk's hearings. Even the *New Republic* weighed in with what amounted to a call to Helms to reject the Indyk nomination. The administration may have wanted to cut its losses in the Middle East, but with Palestinian terrorism against Israeli civilians back on the front pages, it looks like there will be no escape.

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Summer Camp at Century's End

Can Boys Still Be Boys in a Risk-averse Age?

By David Brooks

I've seen women weep before, but never with the sense of hopeless desperation that comes over them as they listen to their husbands begin their third hour of summer-camp reminiscences. When middle-aged men start recounting those Jimmy Carter-era camp-staff parties at which they drank grain alcohol and leapt over roaring fires, women are suddenly confronted with the full gamut of male infantilism, and their boredom overflows into heaving waves of exasperated rage.

But our wives need to see the other side of summer-camp nostalgia. I went to and worked at the Incarnation Camp in southern Connecticut for 14 summers, and a recent visit back produced enough treacly and Proustian reflections to ice a layer cake. It wasn't only the memories of softball victories, M-80 pranks, and midnight swims that made me wistful, but the changes that have swept through American society since the 1970s. Those changes have altered even so self-contained a community as a summer camp.

Today, there are no more staff parties at Incarnation. There is no alcohol allowed on camp grounds at all. Last year, a few counselors had to be fired when they were caught drinking in their tent, whereas in my counselor days we kept bottles of Black Label in the fridge, and the only problem was making sure everybody ponied up for the beer fund.

Our roughhousing is largely forbidden too. Camp for many of us adolescent boys was one long bruise session. If you were walking down a path and one of the cool counselors came up and delivered a thudding blow to your chest, you would bask in the glow of his attention. We would give each other dead arms and Indian belly rubs. If your birthday fell during the summer, as mine did, the staff and campers administered a ritual pounding on your shoulder—one punch for each year with a few for good luck. Now, the Connecticut health authorities have tightened the definition of physical abuse and sexual abuse, so noogies (the application of knuckles to the scalp) and wedgies (the application of underwear waistbands to the torso) are also impermissible. A psychotherapist now briefs the staff every year on child abuse, how to recognize it, and how not to engage in it.

Punishments have changed as well. Some old folks who went to the camp in the 1920s remember their penalty for talking after lights out: The minister in charge would line them up in their pajamas at the end of the boat dock on the lake. Then one by one he'd push them into the dark cold water. When I was a camper, if we were pulled out of our tents for nighttime rowdiness, the counselors made us sit on the cold shower floor in our underwear, or under an outdoor night light where the bugs could eat us. These punishments would be unthinkable now.

I don't mean to overstate the changes: Institutions carry on, preserving the same élan even as the generations roll by. One of my former campers, Derek Edwards, now runs the teenage portion of the camp, with impressive magnetism. And now that the fashions of the 1970s are back in style, kids are even dressed as we were, in canvas high-top sneakers and bell-bottoms. There are tie-dyed shirts hanging outside the arts-and-crafts shed and peace signs painted on the window, just as in my day.

But the detritus of the age of liberation has been adapted to a much different era. I was struck by how much more safety-conscious camp is, how much more protective it is towards its charges. Now, at Incarnation, everybody wears a life preserver while rowing on the lake; 20 years ago only the kids who couldn't swim did. Now the state mandates that little snow fences be erected to enclose the beaches around the swimming areas, though the camp's lake has over two miles of shoreline so the 75 yards of beachfront fencing won't actually keep anybody from wandering into the water at other points. Now the deputy director attends risk-management courses in the off-season, and fills out accident reports each time a child is hurt in case of future litigation. Now parents fill out a card on who

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can pick the child up from camp, so some banished ex-spouse or dangerous uncle won't come by for an illegal visit.

Incarnation is not atypical. Across the country there is a small wave of legislation designed to minimize camp risks. A proposal in Dallas would require counselors to accompany children on restroom trips. A Florida law requires background checks on all counselors. And the professional literature on summer camps is full of risk-reduction advice. "For most drills, [tennis] balls should be fed across the net. This protects the instructor should a camper lose control and overhit," writes Robert Gamble, a tennis director at Camp Robindel in New Hampshire, in a typical article in the magazine of the American Camping Association. "Games should never include actions such as running backward, spinning until dizzy or diving or being propelled headfirst," writes Nancy Halliday in the same magazine. The social scientists who study camps have expanded their concerns to include "psychological safety," which means that camps are supposed to reduce the number of competitive games because some kids lose. A popular guidebook called "Choosing the Right Camp" praises camps that don't give out awards to campers who win competitions, but give out good-citizenship awards instead.

Not just in camp, but across the board in the United States, we have dramatically reduced our tolerance for childhood risk. Now we all dutifully strap our kids into car seats, and we'd be horrified if we saw any parent driving around with his kids wrestling in the back seat, the way almost all parents did a quarter-century ago. Now kids on skateboards or bicycles or even tricycles wear helmets and sometimes elbow and knee pads. Now parents who grew up singing the joys of the Woodstock nation are loath to let their own kids out of their sight, even if it's just to bike around a suburban neighborhood. When I went to elementary school in Manhattan, we took the public buses to school alone. Now the crime rate is actually lower than it was then, but no parent would let a third- or fourth-grader ride unattended.

These measures have significantly reduced the numbers of children who are killed or badly hurt in accidents. And now that my own kids are approaching camp age, I have to admit I appreciate, sort of, the safety reforms my own camp has undertaken.

But still, the changes are a bit depressing. It's clear that it is harder to run a summer camp these days than it was in the 1970s and early '80s. It's not only that the camp staff now have to face issues to which we were almost oblivious—like child abuse, 9-year-olds on Prozac, and many more kids from single-parent families. But generally, Americans now tend to see the world as a more perilous place than they did 25 years ago. All the polls show—and Bill Clinton won reelection by sympathizing with the finding—that parents feel they are losing control of their own families. Just consider the names of powerful organizations (the Children's *Defense* Fund) and recent books and articles (*The War on Children*, *The Assault on Parenthood*, *Raising Children in a Troubled Society*). Now television news programs and the weekly magazines run a bone-chilling number of stories that play on the fear of childhood death. The week I visited my camp, the cover of *U.S. News & World Report* showed an empty highchair in a ghoulish blue light. "Dangerous Day Care," warned the cover line.

You can come up with your own explanation for why we now regard the child's world with such anxiety: the rise in illegitimacy, drug use, suicide, the coarsening of the culture, the litigation explosion, the rise in the divorce rates, the new trends in child development, which treat the first years as the make-or-break moments of life. But there's no question that we now regard child rearing as a more fraught enterprise than we did decades ago, and we are much more serious about it as a result.

Many social critics still complain about the permissive way America treats its children, but they are fighting yesterday's battle. Kids today are enveloped by rules, structures, and restrictions. American society is probably more protective of kids today than at any time since the Victorian era, maybe any time ever. It's just that the structure is likely to take the form of safety regulations rather than moral codes. Today's authorities talk about risk instead of sin, and health instead of virtue. Health-ism is moralism in acceptably modern garb.

After I returned from camp I rented Bill Murray's summer-camp movie *Meatballs*, which was made in 1979, one of the years I was a counselor. The movie captures the extraordinarily permissive ethos of the time, and Murray's character exemplifies the image some of us Incarnation staffers were trying to live up to. He is a disheveled counselor who arises from his bed each morning after a raucous night, flouts the official rules (he even rips up the camp rulebook and throws it in the trash), and is continually castigated for being unconventional and immature. But precisely because of his sense of amateur playfulness and his pranksterish daring, he is a wise and relaxed mentor for his kids.

The carefree attitude lionized in *Meatballs* pre-

sumes a benign view of life that no longer prevails: Kids won't get pregnant if you wink at their frolics. People won't drown if you let them go skinny-dipping at midnight. Chaos won't result if you flout authority. And when I think back to my youth, I'm amazed at how that benign view permeated institutions. The 1970s were a time when colleges winked at underage drinking, when public high schools set up smoking rooms for the students (even though it was illegal for kids under 18 to smoke in most states), when Cheech and Chong were mainstream media stars. The fact that we were returning to camp year after year was in itself a sign of the general playfulness of the zeitgeist. Now kids are drawn to specialty camps—soccer camps, computer camps music camps—to master some skill, and many general camps like Incarnation are going under. Now counselors can't return summer after summer through the twenties because there is more pressure on them to get summer internships that will prepare them for careers. In my day, we had Ph.D. students in fields like economics and astrophysics, aspiring writers and doctors and lawyers, all of whom chucked the grown-up world for the summer to return to Incarnation.

For campers and counselors alike, there were two great cultural avatars during those years that were especially out of place today: Outward Bound and Summerhill. Outward Bound, a survival/adventure program, was supposed to encourage spiritual growth through ordeal. In our scaled-down version at Incarnation, we would spend nights alone in the forest without equipment, go on four-mile swims, and otherwise try to devise challenges that would supposedly lead to spiritual breakthroughs. In the teenage section of the camp, we built a challenge course that involved scaling high rocks and pulling yourself up cables. We went down fairly serious river rapids in nothing but a life preserver. We took terrifying leaps off sand cliffs at a nearby quarry. We were allowed to play Murderball, a Hobbesian game in which the only rule was that your team was to try by any means necessary to carry a soccer ball across a goal line. I shake my head now at some of the dangerous things we were permitted to do, but we and our counselors just assumed through all of this that nothing bad would happen (nothing did). Outward Bound seems to flourish today in the adult world, but at a typical camp it would seem too risky.

Summerhill, the other great cultural influence, was a school in Britain founded by A.S. Neill that gave m, relying on their natural go to class. Neill published n 1960, and over the next million copies in the Unit- paragraph of the book, he approach: "Self govern- the pupils and staff, free- to go to lessons or stay way, freedom to play for lays or weeks or years if ecessary, freedom from any ndoctrination whether reli- gious or moral or political, freedom from character molding." In a camp environment, Summerhill seemed a pretty successful approach, though of course as we lifted restrictions on campers we plied massive doses of l pressure to get them to to our wishes. We didn't hat campers attend activi- ad long debates over when hould be allowed to play in their tents. And we had nce a week during which ed a role in setting camp a tremendous emphasis on freedom, and gave some sovereignty to the kids. And I have to confess these efforts were invigorating.

It could be that those of us who enjoyed the permissive years were living off the cultural capital of past generations—that we inherited self-limiting inhibitions that weren't passed along to those who followed us. Or that from that laxity came the world of latchkey children and single-parent families that now depends on tougher external rules to prevent disaster. I'd say my camp experience lends some support to that theory. Those of us who were staff in the '70s and early '80s tasted some of the pleasures of the period, but then got on, even in our mid-twenties, with pretty normal

careers. Among my closest camp friends, there are now an eye surgeon, a lawyer, a think-tank head, a successful documentary filmmaker, a foreign-service officer, and so on. But the campers who came after us tended to have a much tougher time in their twenties. They had more problems with drugs and alcohol and depression than we did, though they do seem to be prospering as they enter their thirties, as if they had to take some years to teach themselves the lessons that previous generations had absorbed by osmosis. The campers of the '80s were more adventurous with sex than we were at the same age—or, to put it more precisely, they had to go further sexually before they began to feel adventurous. Maybe the permissive era did breed its own destruction and require the sort of restrictiveness we have today.

And you can't argue with success. Teenage drinking has been on the decline for the past five years. Teenage sexual activity has dropped by a third over the same period. The restrictive ethos has apparently had its effect. But one senses nonetheless that even many parents are queasy about the overwhelming protectiveness of contemporary culture. Many people seem to have a nagging fear that we're creating a Nerfworld for kids, in which they are protected from bumps and bruises but also from the realities of growing up. Isn't it likely that the new restrictions on children are just one more example of us baby boomers imposing ourselves on other cohorts like the cultural bullies we are? When we were young, we demanded that society emphasize freedom, and our elders did, for better or worse. Now that we're in parenting roles, we emphasize safety, restrictions, and an incessant focus on developmental skills—all the things that give peace of mind to parents, even though these things might be stifling to children.

On this past visit to camp, I spent a lot of the time wandering around the lake and the 650 acres of forest the camp owns surrounding it. I have memories associated with many spots along those trails, and it occurred to me that the ones that come back most vividly have to do with some bit of naughtiness—the place where my buddy and I threw fireworks into the girls' unit; the spot where, at age 9, some friends and I caught a chipmunk and cut him open to see what was inside; the clearing where, as counselors, we had a barbarian night, eating big steaks, wrestling (I still couldn't find the pair of glasses I lost that evening), and engaging in other activities that will someday mar my confirmation hearings. Childhood friendships are sealed by misbehavior. And brutal punishments make childhood more real. Like the old folks reminiscing about camp in the 1920s, I vividly and fondly remembered the times I was called upon to withstand unpleasant punishment. Not everything good is safe and not everything dangerous is bad. And few things are as sweet as the memories of past irresponsibility.

THE KIDS WE LOOKED UP TO WERE THE ONES WILLING TO TAKE THE MOST DARING RISKS—TO JUMP FROM THE HIGHEST CLIFF OR TAKE THE TOUGHEST TREATMENT FROM THE BIGGEST COUNSELOR.

And it occurs to me that one of the other things that I learned at camp was to be brave, or at least less cowardly than I would otherwise have been. Incarnation was and is an incredibly diverse camp. Some kids come from Park Avenue and schools like Exeter and Andover. Some kids come from Greenwich Village and the deepest groves of bohemia. Some kids come from the South Bronx, and have never been out of the city before (on the first night of camp one year, a kid looked up at the sky and exclaimed, "It looks just like the planetarium!"). But the social structure within the camp is not based on demographics or even athletics, but on courage. The kids we looked up to were the ones willing to take the most daring risks—to jump into the lake from the highest cliff, or take the toughest treatment from the biggest counselor, or go for the most glory on skit nights. I've read a lot of social-science literature about camp over the past few weeks, and I haven't seen a single word about bravery, but I suspect kids know more about its importance than the experts do.

Zeitgeists shift so subtly that it's only when you come back to a place after a long absence that you notice the change. Permissiveness has been replaced by protectiveness. Liberating children from oppression is out, and obsessive devotion to improving their developmental skills is in. Health and safety are the basis of a new Victorianism. I'll never throw away my kids' car seats or return to Summerhill days, but I for one would lobby for more of the childhood freedom of yore. Our wives may get tired of our recounting the daring summertime risks we took at 15, but believe me, we wouldn't be who we are now, for better or worse, if we hadn't taken them then. ♦

How the Military Indoctrinates Diversity

By Matt Labash

Housed at Patrick Air Force Base in four unadorned buildings trimmed in the fecal browns and beiges favored by most military subcontractors, the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute is nuzzled against the Atlantic amidst the burnt palms, Peg Leg's seafood shoppes, and Ron Jon surf emporiums of Cocoa Beach, just down the road from Cape Canaveral.

It is here that all branches of the military annually send nearly 1,000 mostly junior and mid-level enlisted men and women (with a healthy smattering of officers) to become Equal Opportunity Advisors. The trainees are taught to enhance "leadership and readiness by fostering positive human relations" while maximizing "unit cohesion and combat readiness" at this "center of excellence for promoting dignity and worth." Put simply, the Institute is boot camp for diversity trainers.

It is hardly surprising that in light of some of its recent race-and-gender media spectaculars, the military is loath to miss an opportunity to bow in the direction of the diversity gods. But it seems a bit off the point, considering that the armed services have historically been considered our most successful model of integration. By the Institute's own reckoning (from the hundreds of thousands of surveys they've conducted), satisfaction with our military's equal-opportunity climate is solidly above average even among minorities and females—some say in spite of the valiant efforts of Equal Opportunity Advisors to sensitize the troops to any perceived slights or differences. Minority representation in the military is often disproportionately higher than in the general population, and the Institute's numbers show that even after years of budget cutbacks, white males are the only group who have seen their numbers steadily erode since 1990, while minority numbers have significantly increased even in the upper ranks.

What nobody can quibble with is the effectiveness of the military brass in carrying out the most banal directives with utter devotion and institutional solemnity, and that is all the more true in its current drawn-down, peacekeeping, bored-off-its-keister repose. Witness the Institute, which, by hook or crook or Department of Defense mandate, serves to modify not only the behavior but the internal attitudes of the armed services' 1.4 million personnel—and it doesn't care how infantile or insulting it has to be to do it.

Like its civilian counterparts—75 percent of big business now imposes some form of diversity training on its employees—the Institute is afloat in enough mission statements, vision statements, and team-building statements to publish several TQM desk calendars. Unlike its civilian counterparts, the military drafts its diversity talent not from outside consultants but from the ranks. That means many trainees become Equal Opportunity Advisors whether they want to or not.

Though enthusiasm isn't mandatory, it certainly helps, as the 15-week course is no cinch. It is the diversity trainer's equivalent of SEAL training—minus fighting riptides with 125-lb. packs on your back. Over the span of four months, the Equal Opportunity Advisors will attend countless lectures, watch videos like the "Oprah Winfrey Racism Series," peel themselves and each other like Vidalia onions down to their very raw essences in daily group processing, take six exams, write five papers, and give four speeches. After they are broken down and rebuilt and indoctrinated (some 17,000 have gone through the Institute's training), they return to their units for two- and three-year billets (except in the Air Force, where this is an actual career track) to advise their commanders on equal-opportunity issues. They also handle equal-opportunity complaints, conduct ethnic observances, and most important, "educate" all the rest of their branches with a truncated version of this same training.

The curriculum features large instruction blocks on the rather dry business of Organizational Process Theory, Survey Considerations, and Managing Statistical Data. But the meat and potatoes of the Institute is the students examining themselves for bias, overcoming any anachronistic sense of military stoicism to reveal, in the words of the abundantly sensitive public affairs officer, Maj. Gary Perugini, "This is who I think I am, this is who I feel I am." This isn't, Institute

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attendees will tell you, diversity training for political correctness's sake. "The war machine needs to be ready," Perugini says over the strains of "Volare" and between bites of eggplant parmigiana at a local Italian eatery. "There *is* a little bit of 'Here comes the morals police,'" he concedes, but he reports chipperly that "most people want us to be involved, they want us to make a difference."

Born in 1971 during the very real race-relations tumult of the Vietnam era, which saw race riots on bases and aircraft carriers pulled off line due to racial tensions, the Defense Race Relations Institute at first focused solely on black-white relations. The early sessions were intense shock-therapy affairs with crusading facilitators aggressively settling scores with privileged Caucasians. Exercises often ended in fisticuffs. By 1979, the name and mission changed to the much broader Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, concentrating on other races, gender, and anyone poking a nose under the grievance-group umbrella.

While there hasn't been a fight in years, "people cry almost every day," one of the trainers tells me. And after complete submersion in the Institute's curriculum for a week—the model for equal-opportunity training in all the services—it is easy to see why.

The first lecture I witnessed at the Institute was entitled "The White Male Club," taught, most appropriately, by a white male, Chief Petty Officer David Higgins. He started by vowing that if at any point he said that all white males discriminate or that they aren't making valuable contributions to society "we'll go to the base armory, check out weapons, and you can shoot me." Some white males already looked like they were hoping for a slip.

Higgins quickly outlined the clandestine operating procedures of this most elusive club. The only entry requirement: be born a white male. The only revocation of membership: death. The only rule: "Don't buck the system." The privileges: too numerous to catalog. The picture Higgins painted was that whether old-money WASP or first-generation bricklayer, if you are sporting a white face, every day resembles that old *Saturday Night Live* skit where Eddie Murphy transforms himself into a white guy and, as soon as there are no black people around, watches as whites break into song, distribute party favors, and make low-interest-rate loans back and forth while sipping Tattinger's out of each other's Cole Hahns.

Using the Socratic method, Higgins rolled into a quiz. Q: Who are the white males that sustain power over us? A: *Ted Turner, Alan Greenspan, and Bill Gates*. Q: When someone not in power breaks the rules, what happens? A: *They're slam-dunked.* Q: When someone in power does the same thing? A: *They change the rules.* Q: Do you think generals and admirals make decisions about and for us? A: *(unison) Yes!* Q: And they are predominantly . . . A: *(unison) White males!*

Higgins spoke of Japanese internment camps, exploitation of Hispanics, and "our forefathers" breaking over 400 Native American treaties. "Your forefathers," corrected one black soldier. Higgins spoke of the delineation between field slaves and the lighter house slaves. "And how do you suppose they got that way?" he asked. A black army sergeant responded: "With Mr. Elmo Tiptoe takin' liberties!"

Kevin Chadwick

Higgins spoke of *The Bell Curve*, forgetting its authors' names but remembering they, too, were white males. "I'm a white male, and I know a whole lot of African-American people who are a lot smarter than me," he confided, to the surprise of few. He went on to postulate that John F. Kennedy was killed for his civil-rights advocacy ("I don't know that, but it could be") and that Martin Luther King might have been whacked by the FBI ("Don't quote Chief Higgins saying Dr. King was killed by J. Edgar Hoover, 'cause I don't know that either. But is it possible?").

He'd also heard a hot rumor that the codes you hear buzzing overhead at K-mart are actually signals for employees to tail minorities in order to prevent shoplifting. Of this too, he was uncertain, which didn't keep him from holding forth: "I cannot say that's the policy and that's what those codes mean. But we're back to perception, and is that perception a reality to the person that has that perception? Absolutely."

To complement this lecture, as with all lectures, the students go "back to group" to "process" the information and participate in exercises in case the point was missed. These exercises are monitored from "the fishbowl," a room containing one of the six groups of 12 to 15 students who are viewed through a two-way mirror from an adjoining observation room, where we voyeurs listen on a scratchy speaker or at a panel straight out of NASA control. It consists of a bank of monitors, headphones, and VCRs so the trainers can come back and listen to their groups in absentia while recording them for posterity.

As I hunkered down to prepare for the White Male Club exercise, a white male Navy trainer popped in to spy a glance at the group he led. "My group's been holding back on the white males when I've been in there—now let's see what they do when I'm not," he said, as serious as triple-bypass surgery. "They've got to understand it's about *business*, it's about *duty*, it's about the *isms*." By which he meant racism, sexism, etc.

The exercise itself was deemed "an introduction to new white consciousness," as all white males in each group are called to the front of the room, where the facilitator instructs them to develop a society promoting equality and fairness by addressing issues such as employment methods and family values.

Whether they set up the mock societies independently or delegate to the rest of the class, they tried to appease all parties while carrying out their instructions. On the heels of the lecture, it didn't go smoothly. In most groups, the white males were chastised for making decisions on behalf of the group. In one group, where the white males decided to let the entire group make decisions, they were chastised anyway by a black male: "Look what you're doing, you're saying we will decide to let you all decide."

There were a few white males with a little fight left in them, like one Air Force captain who started raising his voice as the blood vessels on his burr-head began to dilate and turn deep crimson. "What you're saying is I'm going to lose either way," he protested. "I have to make a decision." He was, of course, following the antiquated, hierarchical notion of the chain of command, and was promptly condemned for having a presumptuous attitude of privilege even though the captain insisted, "That was not my intent."

Another white male kindly rebuked him: "But that's the *perception* you're giving off."

Success! This is precisely the kind of *aha!* payoff Chief Higgins promised when he told me the objective of the exercise was "to let them know that [their bias is] inherent. You're trying to do the right thing and it turns out to be wrong—because it's just inbred in you."

It is not all business at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute. The trainees play lots of games, like the Car Parts Sheet, a group-dynamics feedback exercise in which members must designate their cohorts "steering wheels (keeps the group on track, heading on line toward the goal)" or "potholes (makes every trip rough going)." They also play Power Poker, a stacked game of five-card draw between the "haves and have nots." It is an institutional-racism exercise usually headed up by white-male dealers and bankers (just to make it interesting), in which our best and brightest exhibit greed, pettiness, and venality as they quit in frustration, accuse others of bias, and, in one case, palm extra cards to overcome any deficits.

This is how they get to know each other. And if the Institute had a fight song, it would be "Getting to Know You," or maybe "Getting to Know Me," as that is even more important. It was after all, Lao-tse who said, "He who knows others is learned, he who knows himself is wise." And since he said it in 600 B.C., as the curriculum reminds us, he should be forgiven for "his exclusionary language." At the Institute, there is no aspect of the self that does not warrant rigorous examination. Students not only consider "the things I know about myself and others know" and the "things I don't know about myself but the group does know," but also "the things I know about myself but the group doesn't know" as well as the all-important "things neither the group nor I know about myself."

Just to ensure everyone knows as much about you as possible, Equal Opportunity Advisors are supplied with magic markers, clip art, and manila folders to make special Institute "badges," intended to reveal their personal characteristics. That way, when Sgt. Johnson suggests you may be a sexist cracker, you can look at her badge and it will tell you that her "socialization" is that of a pinochle-playing, bow-hunting, Presbyterian Black Female who considers herself loyal, honest, and a little bit shy. But once you characterize yourself, it's not so easy to change your badge status. If, for instance, Sgt. Johnson wants to make an alteration in her badge—admitting that she is actually a "crossbow hunter" instead of a "bow hunter"—then "changes may not go unclarified! Trainers must discuss that event."

To keep the rules straight, there are lists—lots of lists. There are the "Nine Group Norms" and the "17 Common Barriers to Effective Listening" and the "13 Trainer Expectations" ("Don't dump and run! Don't play games!"). Though humor is permitted, it is also governed by one of the "15 Suggestions to the Discus-

sion Leaders": "If someone disrupts with too much humor, jokes and wisecracks, enjoy it for a while and then say, 'Now let's get down to business.'"

Not only is cracking wise an impediment to readiness, but the levity moratorium also keeps the trainees prepped for "SEEs" (Significant Emotional Events) while they think about the Big Issues: like why the local Lobster Shanty restrooms have pink doors for women and blue doors for men, or why female actors are called "actresses" while male stewards are called "flight attendants," or whether it's appropriate to use the term "flip-chart" since "to a Filipino person, that could be very offensive."

Yes, this is the military, and maybe it takes military discipline to dog-paddle through the bottomless fjords of Gestalt theory, Abraham Maslow's "Theory of Human Motivation," and "The 1972 Handbook for Group Facilitators" as well as "The McDonnell Douglas Code of Ethics." It is no snap improving communication skills by giving impromptu speeches on "How to Make a Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich" in between filling out your majority and minority "Racism Inventories," your "Racism and Sexism Questionnaire," and your "Ain't I A Woman History Trivia" quiz. There's barely any time to "write a critical analysis of Indian art" or to "write a poem or rap about the importance of religious tolerance"—especially with so many details to remember. Just try recalling the specifics of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 or reservation policy from 1867 to 1887 while remembering all the military's "Religious Accommodations"—from the Native American Sage-Burning Peyote Dance Chants to Pagan/Wiccan seasonal observances to Santeria Animal Sacrifices—not to mention (and I'm not making this up) the Branch Davidians and Church of Satan.

By the time one digests factoids such as Jews are often "overgeneralized" as "clannish, snobbish, power-hungry and greedy," one barely has the strength to knock off reading assignments like Anne Wilson Schaef's *Women's Reality*. In this pioneering work in the field of inebrial exegesis, she asserts that the white male system is "death-oriented" and "analogous to pollution," that women suffer from "the Original Sin of Being Born Female" and from an inferiority complex so severe it has caused a cavernous "hole in their solar plexus" that is often covered by fat; and that they or anyone else who buys into the white male system will "drop dead ahead of their time from heart attacks, strokes, or high blood pressure."

This book prompted even one of the most ardent feminists I observed at the Institute to confide that she found it "a total piece of s—. I have nothing against man-bashing, but you might want to include some facts, some empirical research."

That echoes the sentiment I heard most often when bringing up the entire program to your average soldier, sailor, airman or Marine outside of the Institute (those inside were a tad less candid, as all interviews had to be conducted in the public affairs officer's office, with said officer present and taking notes on the interview). Many believe the job of Equal Opportunity Advisor undermines the command and contributes to the steady erosion of the warrior ethos. John Hillen, a national security fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, a former paratrooper and a decorated veteran of close combat, says his heavily integrated, close-knit units didn't have much patience for equal-opportunity training. "We were busy, we were either training to kill people or we were out killing people, and that gives you a pretty unique focus that eliminates all the little artificialities that diversity's based on."

As evidenced by the recent closing of the Army's Aberdeen-inspired harassment hotline (which the Army said garnered too many unwarranted, score-settling complaints), far-reaching equal-opportunity policies are often put into play simply as a media sop and as an antidote to isolated incidents—though they don't evaporate after attention has waned. "We've defined harassment to mean almost anything creating a hostile atmosphere," says Hillen. "But the military is all about a hostile atmosphere, and it's quite constructive. From the time those suburban white kids get off the bus at basic training and are barked at by a 6′5″ black man who's in charge of their lives, that can be hostile—and it helps very much."

Many of the military people I spoke with called the relentless diversity focus "insulting," "institutional intimidation," "a joke that we're all in on," with one even claiming "I could teach the damn course by now." Another high-ranking 28-year Army veteran who has had many an Equal Opportunity Advisor ostensibly serving him, says he wouldn't dare reject an EOA's request to administer diversity training no matter how useless he felt it was. "You're obligated as a commander to go through the façade of doing all this stuff," he says, "and if you think something's being overdone, you dare not say anything, or you're dead meat."

"It's becoming like Mao's Cultural Revolution," says Hillen. "Everybody knows it's built on a thousand little lies, but everybody's waiting for someone that's high ranking who's not a complete moral coward to come out and say so." And while they wait, the Institute's forces are loosed on our services from cradle

to grave as military members are grounded and pounded, sensitized, and tenderized like glistening little veal medallions.

If you are in the Air Force, you will receive some form of equal-opportunity training on Day One of basic training, and twice more during the same six weeks. The enlisted get it again at technical training school, at the NCO academy, the senior NCO academy and in every professional military course they take along the way. The same is true for officers, as it is of their progression through air command and staff college, air war college, and the general-select mandatory two-day course at the Institute (all services mandate the same for generals and equivalents). This, mind you, in addition to whatever further training an Equal Opportunity Advisor is permitted to inflict.

Navy personnel get "awareness training" throughout their careers—in petty officer indoctrination, chiefs indoctrination, prospective executive officer school, and prospective commanding officer school. It is also part of the three-day rights and responsibilities training they must attend every year.

The Army requires equal-opportunity training every six months, as well as any time a soldier goes to any Army school for any type of training. Even the Marines are not immune; a Marine spokesman told me that before a trainee ever sets foot on Parris Island, he or she receives some form of equal-opportunity training in the recruiting pool, and again at boot camp. Officers can expect five hours at pre-boot camp officers selection office and 42.5 hours at officer candidate school. Captains get 46.5 hours at amphibious warfare school. Majors get 56.5 hours at Marine Corps command and staff college. And the commander's course for those who would be generals requires 16 additional hours. When the Marine spokesman says, "We're at heightened awareness now," he's quite serious.

But not as heightened as his future Equal Opportunity Advisors back at the Institute, where the students are enacting an exercise called "BaFa, BaFa." Two sets of students are deemed Alphans and Betans, and both are given instructions the other set doesn't hear. The Alphans are a touchy, patriarchal culture with a king.

They don't let people approach their women, they communicate with hugs and pats, and all their discussion tends toward the achievements of their male spawn. The Betans are an aggressive trading culture, but in order to trade they can communicate only in a rudimentary language with words sounding like "Ba-Fa-Ba-Fa," "Wee-Hee-Wee-Hee," and so forth. They also communicate by tucking their chins to their chests, pulling their fists like a train whistle, and raising both elbows while their hands dangle.

The ostensible purpose is to prove how difficult it is to successfully operate within foreign cultures. But the message is lost as the two sides are unleashed on each other. I watch through the two-way mirror as members of the world's finest fighting force are bleating and squawking and chin-tucking and wearing paper Burger King crowns and baby-talking and flailing their arms like injured pterodactyls. And nobody seems to mind.

Not like it would matter if they did, as one Coast Guard trainer plainly laid bare. "We have an advantage over the civilian community. If Sgt. Bryant decides she doesn't want to play, I can go to her superior and say she doesn't want to play. We can play, or we can go to court-martial. And you know what? Everybody plays." ♦

Perpetual Abundance and Its Discontents

By David Frum

It's a good thing Americans have a holiday formally set aside for Thanksgiving. It means there is at least one day a year on which complaining is prohibited. Not that complaining is an altogether bad thing—America's endless dissatisfaction is an important spur to progress—but it is often a very misleading thing. Especially in politics, where Americans are prone to complain about the problems of poverty, when the country's most troubling problems may be based on its inability to cope well with abundance.

If one were to read through the past 15 years of popular analysis of the American economy, one would be horrified by the endless prophecies of disaster. Remember "deindustrialization"? "Hollowing out"? "Sunrise industries" and "Atari Democrats"? Remember the savage attacks on paper entrepreneurialism and the so-called coastal economy? And all the while, serenely ignoring the best advice of experts like Felix Rohatyn and Lester Thurow, Robert Reich and Chalmers Johnson, the American economy went chugging magnificently along.

This month is the fifteenth anniversary of the onset of one of the great booms of American history. August 1982, the month that Mexico defaulted on the debts run up by President Lopez Portillo, was the nadir of the 1980-83 slump. For a second it looked as if Mexico (and Brazil, which had sunk into nearly equally desperate trouble) would drag the international banking system down with it. But Federal Reserve Board chairman Paul Volcker arranged an elegant bailout, Ronald Reagan signed it, and since then—with a brief pause in 1991 to digest the savings and loan debacle—the American economy has never looked back.

In 1982, Americans produced $3.2 trillion worth of goods and services. This year, they will produce nearly $8 trillion worth. Those figures aren't adjusted for inflation, but then, there has hardly been any inflation to adjust for. The rate of growth of the American economy has hardly been electrifying—it's averaged a little better than 2.5 percent a year since 1982—but it hasn't needed to be electrifying. When you start with a big enough pile of cash and keep on adding a little bit to it every year for a long enough period of time, you end up with an absolute mountain of cash.

Many people, even now, find it hard to believe in the prosperity of the United States. The left-wing press sank so deeply into the habit of denigration during the Reagan years that it ended by getting stuck. There's a fascinating passage in Dick Morris's book in which he recalls urging President Clinton's White House staff to

Contributing editor David Frum is at work on a book about the 1970s to be published by HarperCollins in 1998.

stop poor-mouthing the economy. He showed them a poll that divided the public between those who thought the economy was in good shape and those who thought it was in bad shape. Whom do you think the optimists are backing in 1996? he asked. Dole, they all replied. Wrong, said Morris; they're backing the incumbent. It's a good story, because it suggests that, no matter what they say in public, the Clinton people deep down suspect that this is still Ronald Reagan's economy: They want to believe the worst of it. It's a good story too because it sheds light on an interesting curiosity of American journalism: Morris's speech to the White House staff coincides almost exactly with the sudden collapse of interest at the *New York Times* in gloom-and-doom stories about "downsizing."

Kevin Chadwick

As for conservatives, so many of us have become so transfixed by the—quite genuine and horrifying—problems of American society that we have become almost inured to the good news about the American economy. Besides, for those on record as having predicted that Clinton's 1993 tax increase would plunge the country into endless economic night, the whole topic of prosperity is an awkward embarrassment, best avoided.

But this is evasive. It's time to look America's good fortune squarely in the face, rather than engaging in partisan squabbles over exactly who deserves credit for it. And since it's August, the traditional season for journalistic thumb-sucking, maybe the best way to think about this prosperity is by indulging in a great bout of wholly speculative theorizing about the future.

Here's the question: What if it doesn't stop? What if the American economy continues to grow at its stately 1982-97 pace for another 15 years? That would imply that by August 2012, the United States will be producing $21 trillion worth of goods and services annually. What difference will it make?

It's an interesting thought experiment. Many people might be tempted to answer: very little. Most Americans would surely hesitate to describe themselves as twice as rich as they were 15 years ago. Nor do the economic statistics present a very encouraging picture: In 1995 dollars, the median household brought in barely over $34,000 in 1995. That's a small improvement over the $32,000 median of 1982, but it's only $65 more than the median in 1978.

In reply, it might be pointed out that the statistics are missing something. One reason that the average household isn't doing better is that the increased national income must be divided among a rapidly rising number of households: 16 million more in 1995 than in 1982. In 1982, remember, a child born in the baby-boom year of 1959 was still only 23 and quite likely still living with his parents; by 1995, even the most shiftless boomer had long ago moved out. And those households have changed their character: Many more of them are made up of single-parent families, of individuals living alone, and of recent immigrants than used to be the case. If one looks only at those households made up of married husbands and wives, one can see income rising smartly—by 15 percent over the past 15 years.

It could also be said, as the libertarian economist Murray Rothbard once pointed out, that in non-inflationary times, living standards tend to improve more through falling prices than through rising wages. And certainly Americans in the mid-1990s seem able to afford many more things than the Americans of the early 1980s. Robert Bartley, in his book *The Seven Fat Years*, notes that in 1982, only 20 percent of American supermarkets stocked fresh fruits and vegetables year-round; by 1990, 80 percent did. An American's home is a more comfortable place. Of the 94 million homes in the United States, more than three-quarters now enjoy air conditioning and more than half can boast a dishwasher. In 1982, only half the homes were air conditioned and one-third had a dishwasher. And these homes have readier access to information: not only the Internet, but CNN (celebrating its sixteenth anniversary this year), C-SPAN, Fox News, and ever-tumbling telephone long-distance charges.

Obviously, the debate over the living standard of the *average* American is a contentious and often murky

one. But here's something we can say for sure: One unquestionable result of the past 15 years' prosperity has been a stunning surge in the number of Americans earning above the average. And it is this that poses the most fascinating questions about the future of the U.S. economy.

In 1982, not quite 3 million of America's households took in more than $100,000 a year. This year, some 7 million households will. If the current trends were to prevail, some 16 million households, containing almost 50 million people, would exceed the $100,000 mark by 2012. America, which in the 19th century created the first society in which everyone could count on getting enough to eat, which in the mid-20th century transformed its industrial proletariat into a middle class, is at the turn of the 21st century creating the world's first mass upper class.

Drive through the exurbs of Washington, D.C., and you see the physical evidence of this mass upper class. In Potomac, McLean, Great Falls, where once were farms and orchards, there are now thousands upon thousands of houses, each of them larger than the gentlemen's houses that fed the pride of Jane Austen's heroines, each of them outfitted with luxuries that would have made a Jazz Age banker goggle: garage doors that open and shut at the press of a button, televisions in every room, climate controls that can chill a 5,000-square-foot house to 60 degrees in a south-of-the-Mason-Dixon-line summer, refrigerators that can hold a dismembered cow, underground sprinklers to keep the grass green at the turn of a dial. Fifteen years from now, how many more miles will these lavish developments extend? Clear to West Virginia? All the way to Baltimore?

Who are those people? What kind of country are they creating about them? There are so many of them that it seems unlikely that they hold any strong sense of themselves as an upper class. Our mental images of what it means to be rich are still formed by old movies and novels—movies and novels created in eras when to be rich meant to have leisure and employ domestic help, neither of which is true of the mass of newly affluent.

The new affluent work hard, and as for domestic help, it's on the Census Bureau's list of most rapidly shrinking occupations. (The bureau's intermediate forecast suggests that America will have more PR men than domestic employees by the year 2005.) And anyway, as well-to-do as one is on $100,000 a year, the fact remains that successful people like that are strivers—they tend to look up much more than they look down. Compared with what they see above them, they don't feel privileged at all. A friend of mine earns what even he considers a very handsome living at a Wall Street investment bank. Every year, the principal of the firm invites all his employees out to his Long Island estate for a picnic. My friend recalled how inexpressibly depressing it was to tour the palatial house, pass the pool, tennis courts, and orchards, and stumble upon the pen in which the great man kept his collection of ornamental goats—and to quickly calculate that those goats annually cost his boss more than his own salary and benefits did.

How will the people living in those houses vote? It might seem obvious that they would vote Republican. But an impressive number of them declined to vote Republican in 1996, and the party has no permanent claim upon their allegiance. More and more upper-income people earn their livelihoods in ways that the Republican agenda of reduced government regulation, if taken seriously, would threaten. Why should the president of a state university vote Republican? Or the administrator of a county arts program? Or a doctor with a large Medicare practice? Or the environmental-compliance officer of a Fortune 500 corporation? Republicans often complain bitterly about the Democratic sympathies of liability lawyers. But the corporate defense bar has an equally strong incentive to wish the party of litigation well.

THE REPUBLICANS ARE WRONG TO ACCUSE DEMOCRATS OF WAGING "CLASS WAR." CLINTON DEMOCRATS ARE PANDERING TO THE PROSPEROUS.

Well-to-do people are economically sophisticated people. They, or people like them, started voting Republican in the 1970s because they had got the Republican message that the power of government to help you economically is strictly limited. Many of them have resumed voting Democratic in the 1990s because they have absorbed the subliminal message of the Clinton campaign: Government's power to hurt you economically also turns out to be limited. Inflation seems to have vanished forever. So have 70 percent tax rates. And so, many upper-income voters have come to believe that they can vote their environmentalist or pro-abortion opinions without risk.

Not that the Democrats are taking any chances with that disinterestedness. The Republicans are quite wrong to accuse the Democrats of waging "class war" against upper-income voters. The strange truth is that the Clinton Democrats are pandering to the newly

prosperous with a zeal that would impress even the Clintons' Indonesian friends. They may be unwilling to give them a tax cut. But they are eager to spend money in ways that redound to the benefit of the growing constituency of the affluent—notably the president's proposed tax credits and deductions for college tuition, the heart and soul of his second-term agenda. A $3,000 remission of income tax for heads of households with a freshman and sophomore in college won't do the average migrant farm laborer much good, but it certainly would put an agreeable bump into the wallets of the newly affluent.

Will these sorts of tricks do the job? Who knows? The growth of an enormous mass of financially comfortable people is an utterly unprecedented thing. It dumbfounds all predictions. It is changing the character, tone, and style of American society in ways that we have only begun to register. It may account, for example, for late-20th-century America's susceptibility to hypochondriacal panic. A poorer America had more immediate worries than the dangers of secondhand cigarette smoke, firecrackers, fatty food, and unhelmeted bicycling.

But the main impact of mass affluence seems likely to be this: The explosion of affluence will accelerate the transformation of America into an ever more individualistic society—a society where ever fewer people feel the need to conform to other people's expectations, where ever fewer people feel bound by traditional norms.

It's possible, of course, to imagine a society where the affluent would feel themselves bound by those norms more strictly than anyone—the much-maligned Victorian epoch seems to have been a society like that. But that isn't our society. Perhaps what we are seeing is the emergence of an elite that persistently refuses to acknowledge that it is an elite—that resolutely thinks of itself as middle class and that therefore cannot easily be talked into bearing the political, military, and cultural responsibilities that elites have traditionally shouldered.

It's always possible, of course, that the trend may bend. Economic changes as yet unknown or unimagined may redirect the benefits of economic growth from the top of the income distribution to the bottom and middle. Or it may be that, as it expands, the new mass upper class will alter its behavior and show more respect toward the traditions of its society. Perhaps the real source of change will turn out to be age: The baby boom may at last acquire some old-fashioned gravitas and self-control as its leading edge enters its seventh decade on earth.

But it's at least equally possible that things will continue on their present course. Which means that it will be in America that we get our first glimpse of an answer to a question that has excited and terrified students of society since the Greeks: What will human beings do when the tremendous creative power of the human mind at last permits them to do anything they please? ♦

Hollywood or Bust

The Cream of the Ivy Crop Doesn't Go to New York Anymore

By David Samuels

It's hard to say exactly when it started, the d-girls in tight black dresses from Penn, the agents with degrees from Yale, sitcom writers from Harvard, up-and-coming young executives who knew each other at Brown, staying out all night at parties at someone's brand-new million-dollar house in the Hills and stopping off for breakfast at the Hollywood Coffee Shop before climbing back into their sleek BMW convertibles and Toyota Land Cruisers with glassed-in cabins that let you ride high above the freeway traffic as your assistant, who graduated college three or four years after you did, patches through your calls to your car. Some date the beginning of the great migration to the stock market crash in 1987. Others say it started in the early 1980s with Michael Ovitz, who turned the Creative Artists Agency into the Hollywood equivalent of Goldman, Sachs, and with Jeffrey Katzenberg, who invented the title "creative executive" at Paramount. Or with the writers from the *Harvard Lampoon* who got rich writing jokes for *Saturday Night Live*.

But the tide really hit this decade, and it is now clear that what Wall Street was to the 1980s, or Washington was to the 1970s, Hollywood is today: the land of milk and honey, the creamy center of the American pie. The equation of Wall Street and Hollywood is more than an easy journalistic trope. Last year, the Hollywood entertainment complex employed more Californians than all the giants of Cold War aerospace combined, and exported more goods than any other American industry with the exception of defense. Hollywood movies, like television shows, are less a form of art than multi-million-dollar launching platforms for a mind-numbing variety of products—from the film itself, to cable rights, to foreign rights, to the underlying value of theater chains and TV networks, to school lunchboxes, T-shirts, and the commercial products featured or advertised in the shows from Fruitopia to Reebok to IBM on up.

No wonder all the flights to Los Angeles are full. And if Hollywood is the Wall Street of the 1990s, then the talent agencies are its investment banks, entrepreneurial centers that trade access to multi-million-dollar properties like Sylvester Stallone and Jim Carrey—the stocks and bonds of the movie business—to institutional investors like Universal Studios in exchange for a 10 to 15 percent cut. "We can really recruit and draw from the best graduate students and undergrads in the country who would ordinarily go to work for Paul, Weiss or Morgan Stanley," says Jeff Berg of International Creative Management, one of the three major talent agencies that serve as post-graduate training grounds for aspiring Ivy League moguls. "And that's because there's a career path now, and a terrific financial upside if they get it right."

With his bright-blue pinstriped shirt and squash-player's build, his left foot clenching and relaxing beneath the soft polished leather of his shoe as if he were engaging in some special form of calisthenics, Berg looks every bit the banker. His sentences are filled with words like "secular" and "cyclical" and "structural," whose reassuring solidity makes a nice contrast with the lowslung SoHo couches and sun-bleached walls of his office in Beverly Hills.

The reality that young assistants encounter once they start working at the agencies, however, is nothing to write home about. They begin their days by studying the trades for signs and portents that their bosses might have missed, like the news that "Dreamworks SKG has paid $650,000 against $900,000 for *Mousehunt*, a comedy by Adam Rifkin," from the *Hollywood Reporter*. If, as a group, assistants are understandably reluctant to tell their parents all that much about their own day-to-day duties, taking their bosses' suits to the cleaners, buying birthday presents for their kids, a stint at one or another of the agencies remains the Hollywood equivalent of an MBA, offering aspiring young players an unrivaled opportunity to listen in on their bosses' phone calls and make valuable contacts throughout the industry.

Those who lack the ambition, or the personal armor, to make it at ICM or William Morris often migrate to the slower-paced world of the movie studios, where the pay is lower, the days are shorter, and the bosses rarely as abusive. Jan Finger is a vice president at Imagine, the production company of director Ron Howard and producer Brian Grazer. On an average morning, she reads new scripts, tracks the progress of scripts around town, and passes judgment on the proposals before her. "I didn't go to

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AP/Wide World

film school," she explains, as we sit by a bookshelf lined with bound scripts whose titles, written in magic-marker letters on the spines, suggest they have not and will never be made. The variety of generational archetypes Finger suggests—the junior-associate-in-a-law-firm haircut, the thirtyish-editor miniskirt, the assistant-press-secretary-to-the-House-minority-whip smile—is an accurate reflection of her place in Hollywood.

"After I graduated from Harvard," she remembers, "I traveled through Europe, and I was in Venice when the Crash of '87 hit. I remember reading about it in the *Herald Tribune*. And everyone I knew was getting fired. So my friend Betsy went home, and I stayed in Europe and I ended up in London, where I worked as a coat-check girl in an eating club." Why is she here? "I'm here because I like stories," she decides, as if choosing from the menu of possible answers before her. "And because I'm spoiled—not extravagantly spoiled, but spoiled enough to do what I want, and to know that I am not going to starve."

Beyond the great migration to the land of palm trees and hefty paychecks, one does not have to look very far to find evidence of a larger cultural shift at work. After all, people made money in Hollywood—lots of money—in the '80s and '70s too. So why Hollywood? Why now? The answers can be found, as is usual these days, in front of the tube. Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the moment is that the lines between fact and fiction, between personal experience and televised narratives and characters, have ceased, not to exist, of course, but to serve as a useful tool in interpreting everyday American reality. After six hours of daily exposure to television beginning at birth, it is little wonder that the characters and storylines have become real to us, shaping our habits and expectations with a thoroughness that the fathers of the medieval Church would have envied. "The conditions of response to the performer are analogous to those in a primary group," observed the social psychologists Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl in an article published in the mid-1950s, just after television was born. "The most remote and illustrious men are met *as if* they were in a circle of one's peers." And in a public sphere made up of billion-dollar summer movies, celebrity trials, political spectaculars, and other broadcast narratives, minutely shaped and focus-grouped and polled and linked to overarching themes and telling personal moments—from the release of *Men in Black*, to the O.J. Simpson trial, to last year's GOP convention, to pretty much the entire span of the Clinton presidency—Hollywood has become our true center of cultural gravity, the fixed point around which the rest of American life revolves.

Even the cultural gatekeepers seem to have given up and joined the rest of us in front of the tube. "Over the last two years, I've come to think of Andy almost as a friend, someone I know nearly as well as the people I actually work with, somebody I can count on," wrote Charles McGrath in a cover story for the *New York Times Magazine* that treated TV cop shows and their authors with the same yearning intensity that previous generations of critics brought to Joyce's *Stephen Hero*. If there is something comic in the notion of Chip McGrath, editor of the *Sunday Times Book Review*, former fiction editor of the *New Yorker*—mandarin of mandarins, in other words—mooning over Detective Andy Sipowicz of *NYPD Blue* and savoring the producer Steven Bochco's "baroque, mannerist phase," it is hard to find any convincing arguments for why young writers should spend their youth out in Iowa writing coming-of-age novels with printings of 5,000 copies instead of writing for tens of millions of viewers, McGrath included, at salaries that would have made even Hemingway blush. If the literate culture of the American Century—artistic, intellectual, political—rested on a pulpy pyramid of popular magazines and newspapers from *True Story* to the *Saturday Evening Post*, today's literate culture resembles a

much smaller pyramid that has been turned on its head. Reading and writing are tools of an elite: The rest of America watches television. What would the young Norman Mailer do? Or Philip Roth? The question is purely rhetorical. They would do what any other sensible person would do—take the first flight out of New York and sleep on someone's couch until they found an agent who could find them a job on *The Tonight Show* or *Married . . . With Children*.

Which is not to say that creative challenges, of a certain type, are not to be found in Hollywood. "This business necessarily assumes a very average level of intellect and education," one agent observes from behind the sliding-screen doors of his office in Beverly Hills. This agent occupies a particular niche in town: He is a conduit between executives in Hollywood and book publishers and agents back in New York. "In literary fiction," he explains, "derivative is bad. In film and in television, derivative is good: 'It's a lawyer on the run, *The Fugitive* meets *The Firm*. It's *Three's Company*, except the women are men, and the John Ritter character is black.'"

The creative act of writing for television, in other words, bears very little resemblance to the traditional image of the quietly vibrating lonely young writer locked in a struggle with his demons. Sunset Gower Studios, located in a neighborhood of run-down two-family homes on the fringes of West Hollywood, is home to Paul Simms, who graduated a year ahead of me at Harvard and is the creator and executive producer of the NBC sitcom *NewsRadio*. "So what's your angle?" Simms asks. "Wait. I know. Too much, too soon. No," he decides, tugging on the collar of his unwashed black turtleneck. "It's the money—with Paul Simms's multi-million-dollar salary, you could feed the starving children of Somalia for a year."

Simms is only the most obviously successful of the current cohort of writers from the *Harvard Lampoon*, whose alumni rule the sitcom roost the way alumni of Harvard's Porcellian Club ruled the investment banks, the State Department, or whatever universe it was to which WASPs in their starched white collars once aspired. That the field of situation comedy is ruled by Harvard graduates is by now an ancient piece of cultural trivia.

What distinguishes Simms from the younger *Lampoon* writers in T-shirts and baseball caps, competing for turns at the Sega Genesis racing game hooked up to a pair of large-screen TVs in his office, is that he didn't come straight out to Los Angeles to write for television. He began his professional life in New York, working a two-year stint for *Spy* magazine after graduating from Harvard in 1988. "I was living in a one-room apartment on 13th Street," Simms recalls of his apprentice years writing for print, "which was excellent, because the apartment I had before was like a three-room apartment with five roommates, and it sucked. You know how it is. You buy one record a week and you choose that record carefully. And the other thing is, just about everyone else at that level had some kind of income from their parents. I wouldn't say they were all trust-fund people, you know, but they all had some kind of cushion that I didn't have. Because to do that two- or three-year apprenticeship, you know—the entry-level job—you get

paid next to nothing. And if you can't afford it, there's always someone else who can."

In a perfect world, of course, whatever sensitivity to real-world problems recent Ivy League graduates might lack—what it's like to struggle and fail, to live from week to week, to be an adult, to have children, or to educate children in the public schools—would be more than made up for by the upsurge in funny, literate movies and shows that would follow their arrival in town. Despite a few actually funny shows—*The Simpsons* is funny—the late 1980s and the 1990s have been an almost unrelieved low point for Hollywood, an era of frantic, manipulative, big-budget shlock that requires ever-increasing doses of sex, violence, and hype to lure audiences into the theaters. You don't have to spend your evenings reading Proust by candlelight to be embarrassed by what passes for American culture today. Nor do you have to be much of a genius to note the coincidence of a Hollywood that subsists on empty, worn-out formulas and the flood of Ivy League graduates west. In the so-called Golden Age of Hollywood, the men and women who ran the studios, wrote the scripts, and stood behind the cameras were surprisingly representative of the audiences that sat in darkened theaters across the country. They came from all over. The writers were older, and most of them had worked at other jobs, in other places, before moving to Hollywood to write for the movies.

With little or no experience of what it feels like to live in this country as an adult, without private schools, swimming pools, and million-dollar houses in the Hills, Hollywood now, of course, relies on stock characters and lowest-common-denominator clichés to get its message across. Nor is Hollywood alone. While cultural differences among Hollywood, Washington, and New York still exist, what seems most interesting about the present moment is the degree to which the once-enormous differences in culture, style, and tone among the capital cities of our mediated republic have blurred together, lost in the common fog of sound-bites and formulas produced by the same, increasingly homogeneous group of people—well educated, rich, conventionally liberal in their politics, increasingly cut off from the lives of people unlike themselves.

These days, however, when you listen to the cultural elites talk about themselves and the United States, you find find evidence of an enormous contempt for the unseen audience that consumes what they produce. In Washington, the audience exists as a trend-line in opinion polls, or as faceless data from focus groups. In New York it barely exists at all. In Hollywood, the audience comes in two additional forms as well: sitcom tapings and previews. For sitcom writers, tapings offer a chance to hear how a live audience responds to the jokes that seemed so funny to the cast and crew during Wednesday afternoon's walk-through. In the movies, this cultural democracy takes the somewhat less direct form of preview screenings conducted by the National Research Group. "No matter the age group, they all look like enemies," writes the director Sidney Lumet, whose gritty appreciation of proletarian life in New York does not seem to extend to preview audiences in Hollywood. "Little old ladies from retirement homes in Sherman Oaks mingle with forty-year-old musclemen whose beer bellies hang over their shorts . . . The trim houses and neat lawns [of the surrounding neighborhoods] seem to have nothing to do with the cretins waiting for admission."

The view from the other side of the velvet ropes is equally unappealing, alternating between abject worship of the famous and the ferocious desire to see them fall. The combination of dependence and resentment that the celebrity culture breeds was best captured by Frederick Exley in his classic *A Fan's Notes*, the writer's account of his obsession, through his own personal failures and traumas, with the All-American football star Frank Gifford (himself a recent victim of the institutionalized resentment that Exley captured so well 30 years ago). "'Despise him?'" Exley writes. "I'm certain my voice reflected my great incredulity. 'But you don't understand at all. Not at all! He may be the only fame I'll ever have!'"

What Hollywood shows us, then, is the division that characterizes American society today in its clearest, most easily read form: The division between a distant elite that produces and manipulates images, and the unseen mass audience that passively consumes them. If this division is without precedent in our history, however, equivalent social structures have existed in other places at other times. "The expressive nature of the Balinese state," writes the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali*,

> was apparent through the whole of its known history, for it was always pointed not towards tyranny, whose systematic concentration of power it was incompetent to effect, and not even very methodically towards government . . . but rather towards spectacle, toward ceremony, toward the public dramatization of the ruling obsessions of Balinese culture: social inequality and status pride. It was a theatre state in which the kings and princes were the impresarios, the priests the directors, and the peasants the supporting cast, stage crew, and audience. The stupendous cremations, tooth filings, temple dedications, pilgrimages, and blood sacrifices, mobilizing hundreds and even thousands of people and great quantities of wealth, were not means to political ends: they were the ends themselves, they were what the state was for.

The idea of a social order devoted to the production of expressive ritual imagery for a mass audience, it might be noted, struck many academics as a

bit of an interpretive reach when Geertz wrote *Negara* in 1980: Less than two decades later, the resemblance between the Balinese theater state and America today makes Geertz's argument seem like ordinary common sense. So if your daughter just turned down a sure thing at Goldman, Sachs to bring some fast-talking Tony Curtis-type his coffee and Danish, or if you just graduated from Harvard or Brown or someplace similar this June and your parents are giving you a hard time about moving out to L.A.: Relax. The weather is great. The money is better. And, in the end, what is the '90s in America all about, if not the delightful, half-embarrassed frisson that comes with graduating from an expensive college and finding a job like Tom Hanks's in *Big*, where you can play all day and get lots of cool stuff to watch at home on your VCR? It's like never growing up at all. And what in the world could be better than that? ♦

The Future Is Now?

What Happened to All the Cool Stuff?

By David A. Price

One afternoon you're in the Cooper-Hewitt museum in New York. You're browsing through an exhibit of work by a long-dead designer, and suddenly you see . . . your phone. It's the Trimline touch-tone, with the buttons in the handset, designed by Henry Dreyfuss in 1965.

On a nearby wall, you notice another familiar item: a round Honeywell thermostat, just like the one at home. It's a 1953 design.

Then you look down at the watch on your wrist. It has a big hand and a little hand, or perhaps a late-'70s-style LCD display with a blinking colon. You pull out your wallet and finger the worn paper money inside.

Wait a minute. It's almost the year 2000. What happened to the levitating cars, the two-way wrist TVs, the robots, the three-hour supersonic flights from New York to L.A., the Pan Am shuttles into space? What happened to the future we were promised in the not-so-distant past?

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Yesterday's visionaries offered us a good-news, bad-news picture of the future—that is, today. The bad news was that we would probably be wiped out by thermonuclear war, overpopulation, environmental catastrophe, or alien invaders. The good news was that if we somehow managed to avoid that fate, we would be rewarded with astonishing gadgetry, extraterrestrial travel destinations, and a host of other wonders.

Our Millennial Dividend seems to have been lost in the mail. Although our social world would have been hard to imagine a few decades ago, our material world has scarcely budged. It certainly isn't anywhere near as far along as one would have expected back then. As things have turned out, "retro" isn't just an ironic pose—it's reality.

True, we denizens of the late 1990s love to talk about how technology is moving forward at warp speed. But next to the recent ages that saw the spread of electric lighting, telephones, cars, television, and suburbia, our own warp factor pales in comparison. We see the equivalent of model-year changes in car chassis and pronounce them quantum advances. Our embrace of the hype is understandable; we're just trying to console ourselves over what we've been denied.

Consider this: The one car that really looks and moves the way a car should these days, the Lamborghini Countach, first rolled out of the factory back in 1974. Now they aren't even made anymore.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. In the 1960s, Detroit tantalized the public with a stream of mock-ups of audacious "cars of tomorrow." They'd be gas-turbine powered, perhaps, with see-through domes instead of roofs, and they'd drive themselves on automated highways. That was the promise.

But as it happened, the actual "cars of tomorrow" are hardly any different from the ones on the street back then. There have been incremental improvements, like airbags that hit kids in the head harder than Steven Seagal. But basically, cars have stayed the same: steering wheel, rubber tires, internal combustion engine under the hood. (The innovation behind Chrysler's hottest car, the Prowler, is that it looks like a 1950s hot rod. The subtly stated selling point for Jaguars these days is that they look the way Jaguars used to look before someone in the British government messed them up.)

It's the same almost everywhere. The latest advance in human living quarters is "neo-traditional" neighborhoods, with houses built close together on small lots—mimicking neighborhoods of the 1940s. The casual uniform of the modern American male is that avant-garde combination, khaki trousers and a button-down shirt. And the next wonder drug, it's said, is going to be . . . thalidomide.

Welcome to Tomorrowland.

You cast a proud eye on your desktop PC with its Pentium II inside. But that spreadsheet you're running has more in common with VisiCalc (1979) than with HAL 9000. And it's

sitting on top of an operating system that looks and works a lot like the Xerox Star (1981) and the Apple Lisa (1983).

A chess-playing computer beat a world chess champion in 1997. So? That was supposed to happen by 1967—according to artificial intelligence researchers Herbert Simon and Allen Newell writing in 1957. And notice that Deep Blue doesn't even have a bionic arm for moving the pieces.

The movies? There, too, you'll find changes on the surface; T. Rexes in computers now follow where a stop-motion King Kong used to tread. But we're still watching basically the same medium we did three decades ago—only on smaller screens.

And about that trip into space: The new Pan Am can't even fly you over the Atlantic Ocean—let alone get you to the space station in time for your connecting flight to the moon.

The recent film *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* underlines how pathetically we have become stuck in time. Its plot has villain and hero frozen in the 1960s and then revived today. The gag is supposed to be that they awaken to find the world bafflingly different. But the film's unintended lesson is just the opposite: The filmmakers have to strain hard to find anything that's really changed. (A million dollars isn't what it used to be. Ha ha.)

The truth is that if you were actually to unfreeze '60s Man, you could just tune his radio to a classic-rock station, tell him to use condoms, and send him on his way.

Once in a while, we do come within reach of seeing science fiction become reality, but then it doesn't happen. When Scottish scientists created a clone of a sheep earlier this year, we were told that the same technology could be used to clone people. About time! So the federal government, of course, immediately ruled it out.

Yet one thing has, in fact, gone according to visionary plan: the World Wide Web. Computer guru Ted Nelson proposed a version of it and preached about it in the 1960s. A team at CERN, the European research center, wrote the first Web browsers in 1990. And today, Web pages for everyone from General Motors to your next-door neighbor to suicidal cults—though not for Pan Am—are just a click away.

We like the Web because it's useful. But we love it, we cling to it, because it's futuristic. It is the solitary, blessed development that lets us feel kinship with the Jetsons. That's why you can't turn around without reading breathless pronouncements about the Web. It's why newsstands are filled with Web-fanatic magazines. And it's why the typical price/net earnings ratio of Internet stocks is not 20, not 50, but infinity.

So we nod in self-deluding agreement as the MCI Internet ad proclaims, "Is this a great time, or what?"

Actually, it's just an okay time. We had been hoping for better. ♦

BCA

George Wallace on Cable

A Singular Politician, a Sub-par Docudrama

By Stephan Lesher

The director John Frankenheimer recently told an interviewer that his three-hour made-for-cable film about George Wallace is not intended "to give people a history lesson." That's too bad, because Americans, by and large, are not known for their sense of history, even recent history. Of a thousand students who served as extras in a scene where Wallace speaks at Harvard, "most of them never heard of George Wallace," Frankenheimer told National Public Radio's Robert Siegel. Siegel asked if that didn't impose "an enormous responsibility. You are telling a lot of people . . . all they know about George Wallace." Frankenheimer replied that he was not making a documentary, but "a dramatic story," of "a tragic figure."

Indeed, Frankenheimer's *George Wallace*, airing on TNT on August 24 and August 26, is so empty of context—"history," if you will—that viewers will be left to ponder just why they should be moved by an account of the one-time Alabama governor's rise, fall, and attempt at redemption. It's as if the Montgomery bus boycott, Little Rock, the freedom riders, the sit-ins—all of which occurred before Wallace became governor of Alabama—never happened.

Those viewers without prior knowledge likely will leave the film believing that Wallace began and ended with racism. There is no mention of how or why a man who had been the governor of a small southern state for less than a year managed to attract stunning numbers of voters in the 1964 Democratic presidential primaries in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Maryland. There is a single line devoted to Wallace's extraordinary 1968 third-party presidential campaign and scant reference to his powerful showing in the 1972 Democratic presidential primaries.

Stephan Lesher, author of a biography of George Wallace, is writing Birth of the Image-Makers: The Emergence of Marketing Mavens and Media Manipulators in American Politics, 1824-1840 *(Harcourt Brace).*

Instead, the movie focuses most of its attention on Wallace (a splendid Gary Sinise) rolling in the hay with his second wife, Cornelia (a nymphomaniacal Angelina Jolie), on fictional confrontations with his former mentor, Gov. Jim Folsom (a scenery-chewing Joe Don Baker), and on the murderous inclinations of an invented character who supposedly represents the seething anti-Wallace hatreds of Alabama's blacks (an interminably weeping Clarence Williams III).

The script attempts to capture Wallace's appeal by having Sinise deliver the following speech: "They all the time tryin' to call me a racist. Hell, won't none of 'em understand yet? Race is why all those people out there come over to us. Without me ever havin' to say the word 'race,' people gettin' what I'm talkin' about. . . . The Kennedys ain't got no idea how the common folks feel about this race-mixin' question. When they start catchin' this mess up North, it's gonna southernize the whole country out there."

If Wallace and his supporters had been all about racism and nothing more, there'd be little reason to bring him up in 1997. The truth is more intricate and more edifying: George Wallace helped set the political agenda that dominates Congress and the White House today.

One need not minimize Wallace's racism to understand that his political strength reached beyond it. In his early years, he ruthlessly played on the fears and uncertainty among Alabama's whites over the crumbling of segregation, and he would be forever stained—and properly so—by his bellicose defense of an inherently evil system. But his extraordinary showing in three northern primaries in 1964 evolved from more than his opposition to the civil-rights bill pending before Congress (a position taken by mainstream candidates like Barry Goldwater and George Bush, among others). His popularity also stemmed from his denunciation of what he called "crime in the streets." Goldwater would adopt the Wallace crime issue as his own in the general election, thus beginning the Republican party's embrace of crime as an issue.

Wallace stormed back into national politics in 1968 with his astounding third-party campaign; less than a month before the election, a Harris poll showed him with more than 20 percent of the vote. That's when Richard Nixon lifted Wallace's crime issue lock, stock, and barrel, and made it the centerpiece of his TV ad campaign in the final month. Even Hubert Humphrey started condemning "anarchists" for domestic disruptions. One political observer complained that "there are three guys running for Sheriff of the United States and no one for President."

IF WALLACE HAD BEEN NOTHING BUT A RACIST BOOB, THERE'D BE LITTLE REASON TO BRING HIM UP IN 1997.

Wallace's brilliant 1972 campaign slogan was "Send Them a Message." It allowed him to tap deep pools of public distrust of growing federal intrusion into what many considered local or private matters, and he gave voice to widespread uneasiness about increasing crime and civil disorder that few in authority appeared willing to confront for fear of seeming illiberal.

Wallace—and those politicians of both parties wise enough to adopt his central arguments—offered most Americans an outlet for their pent-up resentments. They were troubled by a faraway war claiming more and more lives and treasure, but galled by the excesses of antiwar demonstrators who seemed to them privileged, pampered, and unpatriotic. They were stunned by incendiary urban riots and stupefied that the government seemed to placate the looters and arsonists. They sensed that the country was losing its moral compass, that drugs and crime and teenage pregnancies and abortion and pornography and strictures on public prayer were symptoms of a society coming apart at the seams.

At the same time, Wallace articulated the prevalent alarm over the concentration of too much wealth in too few hands, too much dependence on foreign capital and foreign sources of energy, too many "giveaways" to foreign governments while too many Americans "live under bridges [or] lie on grates in the winter to keep warm."

One need not accept any of those views to agree that they appealed to real concerns of real people—not to mindless, unreasoning fears, racial or otherwise. And although many of those concerns continue to be arrogantly or ignorantly dismissed by some as mere racial "code words," every president from Nixon to Clinton based his successful campaign on some key elements of the Wallace political canon.

It is this, rather than the attempted obstruction of integration, that is Wallace's true legacy—and this uncomfortable truth may underlie the preference of many political historians and commentators to pigeonhole Wallace as a racist. Over the years, many of Wallace's positions have become politically respectable—among them, shrinking the federal bureaucracy, balancing the budget, strengthening local law enforcement, allowing parents freedom of choice among schools, and taxing the "super-rich."

The fact that Wallace was the spokesman for some of these views has allowed too many Americans to dismiss them as a cover for racism and to belittle those who hold them as racists manqué. That kind of reasoning is every bit as anti-intellectual and demagogic as Wallace's own appeals to bigotry. ♦

"Clinton told [Kathleen] Willey he was suffering from laryngitis. Willey suggested chicken soup. Willey told [her friend] that Clinton asked, Why don't you bring me some? Willey declined, but was 'definitely flattered.'" —*Michael Isikoff,* Newsweek, *August 11, 1997*

Parody

#1 New York Times BESTSELLER

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