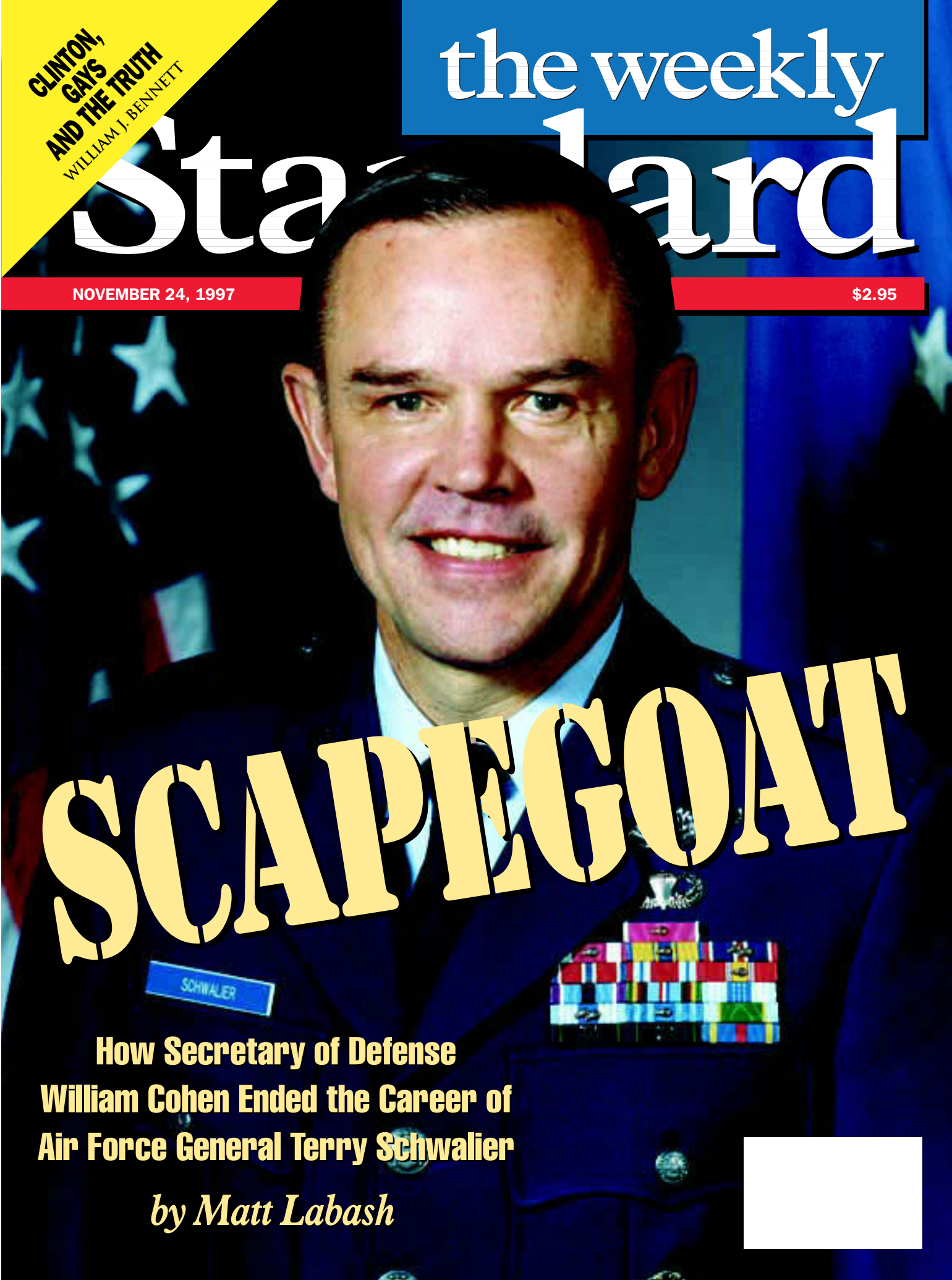
the weekly Standard

NOVEMBER 24, 1997

$2.95

CLINTON, GAYS AND THE TRUTH
WILLIAM J. BENNETT



SCAPEGOAT

How Secretary of Defense William Cohen Ended the Career of Air Force General Terry Schwalier

by Matt Labash

the weekly Standard

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 11 • NOVEMBER 24, 1997

20 THE SCAPEGOAT

How the secretary of defense ended the career of an exemplary Air Force general. *by* **Matt Labash**

Terry Schwalier was what the warrior class calls a fast burner. He had zipped through Air Force ranks and was about to pin on his second star, making him a major general. He was praised by superiors, respected by peers, and loved by subordinates. Then on June 25, 1996, 19 airmen under his command in Saudi Arabia were killed by the largest terrorist bomb ever used against our military. It was not Schwalier's fault that the men died. But a year after the bombing, Secretary of Defense William Cohen took back Schwalier's promotion—and unjustly cut short an exemplary military career.

Books & Arts

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly, except for the first week of January and the first week of September, by News America Publishing Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Send subscription orders to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00; Canadian, $98.00; foreign postage extra. Cover price, $2.95 ($3.50 Canadian). Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage and handling). Subscribers: Please send all remittances, address changes, and subscription inquiries to: The Weekly Standard, Customer Service, P.O. Box 710, Radnor, PA 19088-0710. If possible include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. For subscription customer service, call 1-800-983-7600. Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The Weekly Standard Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is (202) 293-4900. Advertising Production: call Natalie Harwood, (610) 293-8540. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 930, Radnor, PA 19088-0930.

President Clinton and the Midnight Oil

President Clinton labors tirelessly to remind the American people how hard he works for them—selflessly totin' dat barge, liftin' dat bale so all of our children may have a brighter future as they cross his bridge toward a newer tomorrow in the new American whatever. And there he was doing it again on November 6, at the dedication of the George Bush presidential library and shrine.

"There are many things that I, not only as president, but as a citizen, am grateful to George and Barbara Bush for," Clinton said. Chief among them, curiously, was that "as president, [Bush] summoned all the governors, including me, to the University of Virginia for a summit on education, where we stayed up more than half the night in a totally bipartisan fashion to write national education goals for our country."

Leaving aside how one goes about staying awake "in a totally bipartisan fashion," the president's memory jogged The Scrapbook's own memory—specifically, of the landmark *Los Angeles Times* story by William Rempel and Douglas Frantz that became known as "Troopergate." Rempel and Frantz also described Gov. Clinton's night at the University of Virginia. Their account involves yet another of those many women of the president's acquaintance who are referred to delicately as "not his wife."

"The bill for his hotel room," Rempel and Frantz wrote of that historic evening, "showed a call placed to the woman's home was made at 1:23 a.m. It lasted 94 minutes. . . . At 7:45 a.m. the same day, according to the hotel record, the same number was called again and lasted 18 minutes."

Clinton is, clearly, a public servant who never sleeps. Writing national education goals for our country, phoning babes in the wee morning hours—all in a night's work.

And Another Thing . . .

Our president's compulsive bragging erupted on *Meet the Press* last week, when host Tim Russert cited a poll in which 6 percent of Americans associated Bill Clinton with eating at McDonald's. "It's funny," said the president, about to uncork one of his gratuitous whoppers (and we don't mean the sandwich): "I haven't eaten at McDonald's a single time since I've been president."

Whoa. The White House quickly issued a lawyerly clarification that the "operative" word in the president's statement was *eaten*. The president had *drunk* an occasional cup of coffee. But an enterprising editorial writer at the *Washington Times* showed just how pathetic the president's lie and subsequent spin were. In his first term, Clinton sang the praises of McDonald's chicken sandwiches to *Prime Time Live*. He wolfed down Big Macs and French fries at a catered event with Senate Republicans. In March 1994, he told kids visiting the White House: "We love to have Egg McMuffins on Sunday mornings." Time to add some crow to your diet, Mr. President.

A Net Loss

Last week, Secretary of Defense William Cohen announced, as part of his larger reorganization, the downgrading of the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment, headed by legendary strategist Andy Marshall. For more than two decades, every secretary of defense from Melvin Laird through William Perry has counted on Marshall's tiny team of defense intellectuals for long-range strategic thinking in an otherwise sclerotic and short-sighted bureaucracy. In the 1980s, Marshall's office provided key insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet military and economy. In the 1990s, Marshall and his whiz kids have been at the forefront of thinking about the strategic threats likely to emerge in the coming decades. Guess we don't need *that* anymore. And imagine the money that can be saved by moving a dozen thinkers out of the Pentagon!

Just about everyone who knows the Pentagon has denounced this attempt to eviscerate our strategic braintrust. Democratic senator Joseph Lieberman has declared the planned move a disastrous mistake. Sens. Dan Coats, Charles Robb, and Rick Santorum joined Lieberman in warning Cohen that he will lose the "bold, innovative, and controversial thinking" previous secretaries of defense have depended heavily on. Prominent figures in the defense community like former undersecretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz have also weighed in on Marshall's behalf. The destruction of Marshall's office is being pushed by the new deputy secretary of defense and former beancounter John Hamre, who apparently wants no challengers to conventional wisdom in-house. For, as Harvard professor Stephen P. Rosen notes, Marshall has for two

Scrapbook

decades "spoken truth to power."

Cohen has so far stood by Hamre's decision with a tenacity he has not shown on other controversial issues. Maybe Marshall's best chance to change the defense secretary's mind is to file a discrimination suit.

Diversity in Minnesota

The Minnesota State Board of Education has provided the best argument so far for school choice: a chance to escape from the diversity police the board wants to unleash. Under a proposed set of "Rules Relating to Educational Diversity," each school district in the state would have to set up a diversity committee and adopt a plan for a "multicultural, gender fair, and disability aware" curriculum. Naturally, the board gives detailed orders. The committee would include people of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and also persons of both sexes and with disabilities. The committee would release an annual report including "measurable data on implementation and progress toward district educational diversity." The data would show how students—categorized by race, sex, English-language ability, and eligibility for "special education services" and subsidized lunches—fared in the following areas: enrollment, academic progress, attendance, graduation, absenteeism, expulsion, suspension, and participation in extracurricular activities. All areas had better come up equal. If not—if the data suggested that a district had failed to implement the state-required diversity plan—the district could lose its funding.

The Minnesota State Board of Education was poised to pass the rules without a public hearing until Katherine Kersten, a *Star Tribune* columnist, blew the whistle. The board, which is appointed by Republican governor Arne Carlson, was in unanimous accord. Carlson has been a leader on school choice, but it looks like someone on his staff was asleep at the switch when it came time to appoint the board.

Garbage In, Garbage Out

In the mid-1960s, William F. Buckley had a famous debate with James Baldwin in which Baldwin remarked that, in Harlem, black people threw garbage out their windows for purposes of "protest." Buckley, incredulous, replied that this was no protest at all but merely self-injury.

This debate repeated itself last week on the *Chris Rock Show*. Chris Rock is a black comedian who has little patience with black-establishment orthodoxy. He greeted his guest, Jesse Jackson, with a provocation: "What do you do, Jesse? I mean, we see you at the rallies . . ." (Jackson responded, "I fight for freedom. I fight for the American dream.") Rock went on to observe that, at a rally in Chicago led by Jackson and Al Sharpton, "Brothers were marching . . . past garbage. Of course, the white people ain't giving you a damn thing—why don't you clean up your f— house? . . . If we straightened out ourselves, people would deal with us as human beings."

Jackson echoed Baldwin: "If you live in a certain area of town where they cut off access to capital, and cut off access to jobs—"; but Rock would have none of it: "That don't mean you can't pick up a damn piece of paper in front of your house." No, it doesn't. Sometimes farce repeats itself as history.

Casual

Life Among the Carlsons

The first law of journalism is that the reporter is the one who gets to ask the questions. It may not be a fair arrangement (though I like it), but it is customary. So it was a little disconcerting when I got a phone call the other day from the subject of an unflattering article I was writing.

"We've decided to turn the tables and do a little research on you," the man said. "I was interested to note that your father is quite progressive on social issues." He is? I said. Yep, said the man. "Your father is Arne Carlson, governor of Minnesota. And he's pretty liberal. How did you get to be so right wing?"

I laughed. It was obvious what had happened. The man had punched my name into Lexis-Nexis, the electronic database of news stories, and come up with articles about Gov. Carlson's oldest son, whose nickname is Tucker.

I'd first learned of the other Tucker Carlson's existence a few years ago when a television producer I had never met introduced herself to me with the enthusiasm of an old friend. "We just had your dad on the show the other day," she said. "He did a great segment on school choice."

I explained this all to the man on the phone. Plus, I said, I'm a writer in Washington. As far as I know, Arne Carlson's son is a theater producer in Minnesota. In fact, I've never even met Arne Carlson (though I did interview him by phone once; he yelled at me, as I remember).

My protests were ignored. The next day, the man sent me a hand-delivered letter scoffing at my unlikely story. "It is extraordinary," he wrote, "that the only Tucker Carlsons of note are the same age and attended school in Rhode Island at the same time."

Extraordinary, maybe. Embarrassing, definitely. Being the son of Arne Carlson would, among other things, make me the son of the governor's former wife, Barbara Carlson, a radio personality and sometime mayoral candidate in Minneapolis. Mrs. Carlson hosts a call-in show so lowbrow *People* magazine described it as "brassy"—in other words, horrifying. "I love oral sex," the 59-year-old grandmother once announced on the air. Other topics have included Mrs. Carlson's cosmetic surgery, her Prozac regimen, and her ex-husband's performance in bed. Several years ago, *People* reported, "Barbara had her station's call letters tattooed across her buttocks."

All of this, too, is on Nexis, though I was blissfully unaware of it when I arrived in New York last month to give a speech to an organization of Republican women. The group's president met me at the door.

"I knew your grandmother," she said. "She was a lovely person." Thank you, I said, wondering how my grandmother, who lived in Hawaii for most of her life, had found time to strike up friendships with New York Republicans.

Before I could ask, another woman approached to explain the night's speaking format. I had forgotten to fax her a bio, but she seemed to know a lot about me. "Did you ever marry Emery?" she asked. No, I didn't, I said, totally confused, but trying to be polite. She looked crestfallen. "Well, that was so romantic," she said, "how you dedicated all of that to her. I just wanted to know how it turned out." I smiled, unsure of what to say. She tried to comfort me. "With all your experience as a disc jockey, I know you'll do great tonight."

It was becoming clear there had been some terrible misunderstanding, but I decided to ignore it. I was almost at the dais when the woman threw out one last compliment. "I really admire the work your father is doing," she said. A blank expression must have come over my face, because she then tried to jog my memory. "You know, your *father*, the governor of Minnesota."

There was no avoiding it now. As I explained my lack of connection to Arne Carlson, the woman who had said she knew my grandmother glared at me, as if I'd somehow lied about my heritage. The other woman just looked panicked. "But I've written a long introduction for you," she said, waving a sheet of paper in my face. ("Tucker Carlson was born into politics," it began.) "I need something else to say. Give me a couple of sentences, and I'll write them down verbatim."

No problem, I said, and began dictating: "Tucker Carlson, a staff writer at The Weekly Standard, has been awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry."

The woman scribbled furiously. She got to the end of the sentence, paused ("Two 'l's in 'gallantry'?"), then abruptly stopped. Suddenly she looked very irritated.

Under the circumstances maybe it wasn't funny, but I'm going use that line again. If I say it enough, it will probably end up in Nexis.

Tucker Carlson

On Reagan's Greatness

Kudos to William Kristol for his fine article "Reagan's Greatness: Giving a President His Due" (Nov. 10).

There are many who say that Winston Churchill is the most important man of the first half of the 20th century because he saved Western civilization. Certainly his leadership and doggedness in resisting a Nazi takeover of Europe puts him on the short list of candidates for that title.

It is reasonable to assume that when most of the old leftist historians and revisionists are long gone, Reagan will be afforded the same honor for the second half of what has now become the American century.

Ed Wells
Brentwood, TN

William Kristol's piece on Ronald Reagan and Dinesh D'Souza's book is an important step in the right direction.

No current officeholders in the GOP are willing to take up Reagan's philosophy at this time, but perhaps in their constant search for what works, they will begin to see the light and adopt Reagan's ideas as their own. Kristol replies correctly to D'Souza's warning against yearning for another Reagan: Why shouldn't we? We are surely entitled to encourage one. Perhaps the candidate is already on the scene and has yet to emerge.

Let us advance that encouragement, for it is a worthy cause for this most worthy magazine.

Stuart Scheer
New York, NY

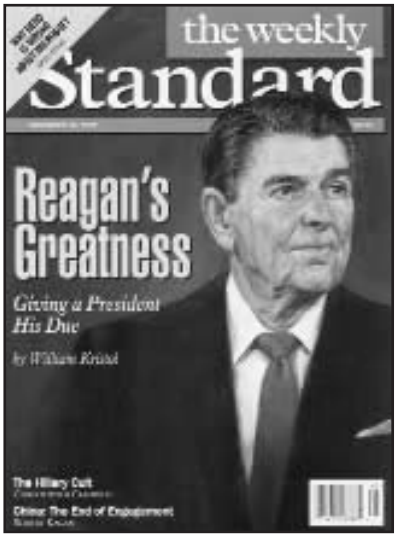
As an independent who has subscribed to The Weekly Standard from the beginning and who often agrees with William Kristol's views, I take exception to his assessment of Reagan.

That amiable person of very average intelligence had two things on his mind: damn the Commies and lower taxes. There are many people who believe that Poland's Solidarity movement was the spark leading to events that ultimately brought down the Iron Curtain. In the economic sphere, one of Reagan's first pronouncements was that he intended to crack down on those waitresses who don't declare their tips. Enough said?

Margaret F. DeChant
Boca Raton, FL

Flat-Tax Finagling

Based on the editorial "Second Thoughts on the Flat Tax" (Nov. 10), it appears that the editors fail to understand the dynamic effect that tax policy has on the economy. You fall into the standard misguided, static, zero-sum-oriented trap that many critics of the flat tax find themselves in. You buy into the argument that if you cut taxes on one person, you by definition have



to raise them on someone else in order to attain the same level of tax revenue. This is not true. The way you can raise the same level of revenue, or even more, is by unleashing economic growth.

You don't have to look very far to see evidence of this in practice. Several years ago, Congress was arguing over what to do about the budget deficit. Now it is arguing about what to do with a possible budget surplus.

Where did all this revenue come from? The answer is not from Bill Clinton's tax increases, but rather from the private sector. It came from hard-working Americans who get up for work before the sun rises and get home after it sets. It is a commitment to the principles of hard work, saving, and ultimately economic growth that the flat tax supports through simpler and lower taxation. In addition, the elimination of the double taxation on dividends and interest will spur investment and thus create wealth.

Which brings me to another problem with the editorial—your portrayal of the elimination of the double taxation on capital gains and dividends. You argue that under the Armey/Shelby flat-tax proposal, taxes would "disappear" on income and interest from property. The Armey/Shelby flat tax simply attempts to treat these sources of income equally by removing the current penalty on savings and investment. No one proposes to tax labor income both at the corporate level and again at the individual level, but doing so with income derived from capital is somehow acceptable. This is a political problem of perception resulting from years of class warfare waged by liberals. However, rather than caving in to political correctness, Republicans must explain why taxing all income once, regardless of its source, is the right thing to do.

In addition to the economics of the flat tax, you raise the issue of fairness. You intimate that when compared to the current system, the flat tax falls short. The fact that the flat tax fails to resemble the current system is its greatest virtue. The current tax-collection system is in no way, shape, or form "fair." Currently, the size of a person's tax bill has less to do with his income than his ability to hire an accountant or tax attorney.

Although there is a high level of subjectivity inherent in its usage, let's consider what most people think is "fair." The Armey/Shelby flat tax subjects every taxpayer to the same 17 percent rate.

Therefore the effect is that, when someone earns 10 times as much as someone else in income, he pays 10 times as much in taxes. In general, the public agrees with this notion and believes that this approach is "fair." The Armey/Shelby flat tax starts with this axiom, then includes an element of progressivity as well. Therefore, because we have included a generous family extension, the more a taxpayer earns, the greater the share of his income he pays in taxes.

Correspondence

But perhaps even more important than the economics or "fairness" of the flat tax is the issue of freedom. I support the flat tax because it will devolve power from Washington back to the American family. The current tax code provides the government with tremendous coercive and micromanagerial power over the American people. This must end. Congress must restore liberty, not social engineering, to the top of its priority list.

Although Republicans will continue to promote and debate the issue of tax reform, I am confident that my party will ultimately decide upon the flat tax. Whether one considers its economic virtues, the "fairness" issue, or the importance of restoring liberty to the people, the flat tax is clearly the best replacement of the current tax system.

RICHARD SHELBY
UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, DC

In an issue in which William Kristol honors Ronald Reagan, it's too bad you feel the need to appease liberals and "intellectuals" who laugh at the flat tax's (or national sales tax's) simplicity.

Reagan never apologized for, or was defensive about, his fundamental beliefs. He slashed tax rates and simplified the code, and along the way convinced most Americans that opportunity trumps class politics. Now you worry about thresholds and payroll tax deductions while ignoring the larger goals. I say we are in trouble if the Social Security payroll tax still exists in several years.

You are quite right to advise Republicans to contemplate the politics and scrutinize the details of such tax reform. Several alternatives you mention are worthy of debate. And your editorial is less disappointing in its analysis than in its anti-flat-tax tone. But implying that a flat tax is naively simplistic—and worse yet, unfair—gives liberals all the ammunition they need to perpetuate the current monster tax code.

THE WEEKLY STANDARD would do well to understand one of the themes of D'Souza's book: Simple, principled government policies are often the most intellectually and practically sound ones.

BRET T. SWANSON
ALEXANDRIA, VA

Your editorial on tax reform shows why many of my fellow Republicans cringe when hearing Steve Forbes or Dick Armey refer to the tax system in terms better suited to a bad horror movie (e.g., "Bury it, drive a stake through its heart"). Tax reform and simplification is indeed an issue upon which most Republicans will unite; where we differ is on the details.

Recently, several prominent conservatives have expressed doubts about a one-size-fits-all, take-it-or-leave-it approach to reform. The economic issues involved are highly technical and need to be discussed in the legislative setting as Congress crafts a bill to reform the current system. Sound-bites and political rhetoric do not produce meaningful legislation or acceptable public policy.

The current debate has many parallels to the ill-fated Clinton health-care-reform plan, including attempts to create an inflexible plan outside the legislative process while ignoring the concerns Americans have regarding the details.

If our party insists on rigidly proposing a set reform plan, the most profitable job in Washington will be as a Democratic media consultant. The ensuing media barrage from the Democrats will make their 1996 "Mediscare" campaign look like a lovefest.

Pointing out the pitfalls of individual tax plans is not class warfare and does not detract from reform efforts. On the contrary, being self-critical as a party will prevent us from taking a dangerous dive off the deep end, as the Democrats did with "Clinton Care."

STEVEN L. WISEMAN
BALTIMORE, MD

I consider myself an advocate of the flat tax, but I see the point you make. Because the flat-tax proposals eliminate the double taxation of corporate profits (once on corporate tax returns, once on shareholders) by taxing only at the corporate level, Democratic House and Senate candidates next year would be able to exploit the issue. A scary prospect, indeed.

Fortunately, there is an easy solution: allow a deduction at the corporate level for distributed earnings, and then tax those earnings at the individual level. The result: no rich people's tax returns with a zero tax bill.

A more substantial point in your editorial is the prospect of a net tax increase for middle-class wage-earners. Whether this would actually occur as you describe, I don't know. But there seems to be an easy solution for this, too.

Either lower the proposed standard deduction or raise the proposed flat-tax rate, and then lower the rate on the employee half of the payroll tax. The tax that hits most low- and middle-income Americans would be lightened.

A third problem with the flat tax (or any tax reform) that you did not mention is the potential to look only at taxes and not at spending. Only if federal spending is cut will tax reform wind up being meaningful. Otherwise, it's only half a loaf: better than nothing, but less than filling.

TED BABCOCK
JANESVILLE, WI

You do an admirable job of explaining the glaring weakness of the flat-tax concept, but you do a grave injustice to your readership by dismissing the national retail sales tax proposal as merely a "cousin" of the flat tax.

The government would benefit directly from a national retail-sales tax—to the tune of an estimated 15 percent. It would also benefit from the elimination of the entire IRS bureaucracy, a savings of $8 billion or so.

Why is it that most politicians are ignoring the national retail-sales tax idea? Is it because they don't want to give up the lever of exchanging tax breaks for political favors?

DAVID A. PAUL
ATLANTA, GA

THE WEEKLY STANDARD

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

Correspondence Editor
THE WEEKLY STANDARD
1150 17th St., NW
Washington, DC 20036.

You may also fax letters: (202) 293-4901.

the weekly Standard

Advise and Dissent

Remember back when Republican presidents were trying to pack the federal courts with right-wing judges? These judges were going to fashion an America, as Sen. Edward Kennedy memorably put it, in which "women would be forced into back-alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters, rogue police could break down citizens' doors in midnight raids," and so on. It didn't happen. And you know *why* it didn't happen? Because ordinary folks, the little people, simply wouldn't let it happen, that's why.

First to raise his voice was ol' Uncle Ted, of course. Then came the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and People for the American Way and Nan Aron's Alliance for Justice. And the thing just grew and grew, a grass-roots brushfire, until it even penetrated the august precincts of the *New York Times* editorial board.

"A president possesses no celestial or constitutional mandate to impose his political views on a whole branch of government for a decade or more," the *Times* thundered in those days, and "the Senate labors under no duty to accept even a capable nominee whose views it disagrees with." Quite the contrary: As provided by the Constitution, "the Senate's advice and consent is an integral part of the appointment process," and that body "needs to reflect its political values by whom it approves." Which is exactly what the Senate Judiciary Committee's Democratic majority proceeded to do, subjecting Reagan and Bush administration judicial nominees to exacting review—and rejecting those it felt were not, in then-chairman Joseph Biden's words, "philosophically appropriate for the times."

Well, the times they have a-changed. Today a Democratic president is submitting judicial nominations to a Republican Senate. Senator Kennedy is complaining that the GOP's Judiciary Committee majority is ideologically hazing these qualified judges with "unreasonable levels of needless scrutiny" and "endless questions." The *Times* has a-changed, as well (though without ever acknowledging as much). Politics is "always part of the process," the paper's editorial page now ruefully notes, but the Senate's basic responsibility is to "evaluate nominees on their professional qualifications"—alone. *Times* columnist Anthony Lewis, in a series of recent commentaries, excoriates Judiciary Committee "ultraconservatives" for conducting a Torquemada-like search for thought crimes by would-be Clinton jurists. Senate Republicans, he concludes, are irresponsible zealots who threaten the independence of the courts.

One is tempted to say: "*Tu quoque*, buddy," and leave it at that. But just for fun, let's have a look at whether the judicial inquisition charge is actually true.

On October 29, the Judiciary Committee held a confirmation hearing on no fewer than eight judges. First up was W. James Ware, a federal trial judge nominated by President Clinton for elevation to the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Before he said a word at this hearing, Judge Ware was endorsed by the Democrats. Pat Leahy of Vermont called him "well-qualified." Barbara Boxer of California called him a "great choice." And then it came time for John Kyl of Arizona—one of Anthony Lewis's principal "ultraconservative" bogeymen—to pick up the thumb screws.

Kyl wanted to know Ware's views on the legal status of affirmative action in private employment. He asked Ware this: If there is no evidence that a given company has ever discriminated against minority job applicants, and no minority group is now underrepresented in that company's workforce, may the company "use race, national origin, or gender as the basis for employment decisions" under either the Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment or Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act?

The judge thought about this for a moment. "The case that I would bring to mind," he announced, "is the *Adarand* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court," issued in 1995. *Adarand*, Ware went on to explain, "holds that in the absence of past acts of discrimination, race may not be used" as an employment criterion. Period. And as an appeals court judge, Kyl wondered, "that is the standard you would apply?" Yes, "That is the standard I would apply," Ware replied.

Senator Kyl congratulated Judge Ware for his "very sound understanding of the law." The rest of the hearing lasted less than an hour, most of it taken up with ritual introductions of the nominee's sons and

daughters. A couple of the other seven judges also got the *Adarand* quiz, and each gave a nearly verbatim version of Ware's response. And the Judiciary Committee was satisfied. "They all passed the test," Kyl said, and "I think it is unnecessary for us to continue to ask questions."

Here's the problem. Ware's *Adarand* answer was wrong. So wrong, in fact, about so basic an issue, as to betray a disqualifying ignorance of the law. *Adarand* was a Fourteenth Amendment case involving affirmative action in government contracting. The Fourteenth Amendment does not apply to private employers. Title VII, unaddressed by *Adarand*, does apply to private employers. But under the still-controlling precedent of the Supreme Court's unfortunate *Weber* and *Johnson* decisions of 1979 and 1987, respectively, Title VII does nothing to prevent those employers from using race and gender preferences in hiring whenever minority groups are "underrepresented" in the workforce.

Now, as it happens, Judge Ware will not be confirmed to the Court of Appeals. One week after his confirmation hearing ended so congenially, the Ware nomination died—of embarrassment. It seems this James Ware is not the same James Ware he has always claimed to be, brother of one Virgil Ware, a 13-year-old black child shot to death by white teenagers near his Birmingham, Alabama, home in 1963. Alerted to the judge's biographical appropriation, Virgil Ware's actual family got a little annoyed. The judge apologized. He explained that he had, from an early age, made an overpowering emotional association between the shooting victim and his stepmother's son, also named Virgil. Then it turned out there was no second Virgil. Then the judge suggested that he'd had a sister who was shot to death. And then his stepmother said there was no sister, either.

None of this fantastic mess, incidentally, was ever uncovered by Republican Senate staffers engaging in their allegedly "unreasonable levels of needless scrutiny." Nor, for that matter, so far as anyone can tell, was it unearthed by the FBI, which conducted its standard background check on Judge Ware before President Clinton forwarded his name to Capitol Hill. And in this respect, at least . . . well, in *most* respects, come to think of it, W. James Ware's experience of the judicial confirmation process is entirely typical. Because despite all the current squawking, these are excruciatingly polite and largely *pro forma* affairs. No Clinton judicial nominee has ever been formally rejected by the Senate—and well over 200 have been confirmed.

Yeah, say the administration and its interest-group allies, but Judiciary Committee chairman Orrin Hatch has, behind the scenes, maneuvered for partisan reasons to delay the confirmation-hearing schedule, creating a dangerous "vacancy crisis" in the courts. The statistics surrounding this accusation are complicated and boring, but the bottom line is, it isn't fair. Since taking office, President Clinton has dithered an average of more than 600 days before sending up a name for an unfilled bench spot. Just before this year's August congressional recess, the White House delivered a fresh bunch of nominations to the Senate. Right away in September, Hatch's committee began working through them. It has about 30 left to go. But there is an even *greater* number of federal court vacancies that the Judiciary Committee cannot hold hearings on. Because President Clinton has yet to nominate anyone for them.

There is no "vacancy crisis" to speak of, in other words, and there is no Senate Republican inquisition directed against Democratic judicial nominees. In fact, those few Republican senators who might even be inclined to mount such an inquisition have had an awfully hard time doing it. And this, too, is by Clinton administration design. The Clinton Justice Department deliberately chooses undistinguished lawyers with limited "paper trails" and then trains them not to say much of anything while their nominations are before the Senate. Judge X, do you believe the Constitution is a "living document" the meaning of which can and must be interpreted, ad hoc, by individual jurists? Oh, no, no, no, Senator, the nominee always says. And if you don't believe him—there's no reason why you should—you're forced to hang your objections on some out-of-context half-sentence he may have written in a law-review article years ago.

This kind of mud-fight is admittedly shallow and ugly. It happens only rarely. But the point is, it shouldn't have to happen at all. The solution, ironically, is for Senate Republicans to behave a little bit more the way Democrats falsely claim they're behaving already. We think the Senate should genuinely slow down the confirmation process, ignore the manufactured hysteria about vacancy statistics, and perform a truly searching philosophical analysis of pending and future judicial nominees—at least at the appeals-court level. The Senate should demand that these people, all of them up for lifetime tenure in a branch of government that now decides some of the most important and vexed issues in American public life, thoroughly explain their understanding of constitutional principle and jurisprudential practice—whether they want to or not. And any judicial nominee who refuses this invitation to public debate about the law, we think, should be rejected.

An inquisition? Yes, of a sort: a constitutional inquisition in the service of constitutional government.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Clinton, Gays, and the Truth

by William J. Bennett

Much of official Washington has been mulling over what the "Clinton legacy" will be. On the second Saturday in November, President Clinton may have provided the answer. For it was on that day that, for the first time, an American president conferred upon homosexuals the blessing of the highest office in the land.

In his November 8 speech to the Human Rights Campaign dinner, Bill Clinton made a startling claim. He equated today's homosexual movement to the struggle of blacks during the time of legal segregation. Of course, if the gay-rights movement has, in fact, the status of the civil-rights movement, there is a moral imperative to treat it similarly in every relevant regard—school curriculum, adoption, marriage, and the like. President Clinton shies away from these conclusions. But they are inescapable—*if* gay rights are the moral equivalent of civil rights.

The core assumption of Clinton's speech is that they are. Thus, the threat facing homosexuals is bigotry and discrimination. To be sure, there are instances of bigotry and discrimination against homosexuals—and when they occur, they should be condemned. But for all the talk of homosexuals-as-victims, the president is surely aware of the privileged position of homosexuals in America. They are, as a group, wealthy and well educated. They exercise enormous influence in the worlds of higher education, art and theater, literature, the news media, and entertainment. And their lifestyle is celebrated in much of the popular culture.

But the president misses the point: The real threat to homosexual Americans is not discrimination but physical devastation. The average life span of an American man is 73. The average smoker lives to 66 years of age. The best available research suggests that the average life span of male homosexuals is around 43 years of age. *Forty-three*.

Bill Clinton has repeatedly spoken out against smoking because of the early death associated with that act. Why, then, did he not speak truth to power that night? Why did he not tell that influential gathering in Washington that so much of its misery has been self-inflicted—and could easily be prevented? The television character Ellen is as accurate a representation of homosexual life as Marlboro Man advertisements are of a life of smoking. But unlike the Marlboro Man or Joe Camel, Ellen has the president (and the vice president) on her side.

By any objective measure, the gruesome plague of AIDS, as well as other sexually transmitted diseases, is far more of a threat to homosexuals than employment discrimination. If Bill Clinton has a genuine concern for the well-being of homosexuals, why doesn't he speak out against the promiscuous lifestyle that is devastating so many of them? A lack of authentic compassion is revealed by the president's lack of honesty. And by his silence.

Bill Clinton was silent on another question: whether the homosexual lifestyle is, in general, a contented and fulfilling one. In the public debate, of course, many homosexual advocates insist that it is. But this claim seems tenuous. After all, the grisly reality is that promiscuity, disease, and death shadow and stalk much of the homosexual community.

Consider, too, the rhetoric used by many homosexuals themselves. To prove that homosexuality is solely determined by genetics, homosexuals often make the point that no one would choose a lifestyle filled with so much misery. Former congressman Steve Gunderson once told Newt Gingrich that the "far Right" is wrong when it says that being gay is a choice. "You've got to know that I spent years desperately trying to change my orientation," Gunderson said. "I don't know a single person who would *choose* to go through the hell of being a gay person in a society that despises you." Gunderson would undoubtedly argue that the "hell" of being gay derives from living in a homophobic society, whereas I would argue that the unhappiness most often derives not from bigotry but from things associated with the lifestyle itself. Either way, by their own testimonies, many practicing homosexuals do not find life to be joyful.

One of the most compelling accounts of homosexual life comes from Michelangelo Signorile, a monthly columnist for *Out* magazine. Signorile is the author of *Life Outside*. In that book, he recounts his experiences as a homosexual man and surveys the scene of the so-called circuit parties: "The drug-fueled parties of the circuit, weekend-long events attended by men who make pilgrimages from places far and wide, are spiritual retreats for the most devoted. They are the evangelical or fundamentalist wing of the cult of masculinity." Although a minority of gay men attends these parties, "the highly visible and doctrinaire aspects of the circuit affect all of gay culture, and ultimately, each one of us individually."

Now, "circuit parties" are not the chosen lifestyle of most homosexuals. Many practice restraint. And there are prominent homosexuals who stress responsible, non-promiscuous lifestyles. Still, Signorile worries that this is what "the gay movement has come to:

We've been temporarily allowed to take over three chain hotels in the desert . . . to act out our anxieties over masculinity, assuage our fears about being perceived as 'fags,' and help deaden the pain and loss we're experiencing from the effects of a relentless plague. We do that by getting high, flexing our muscles, and having a lot of sex."

Gabriel Rotello, the founding editor of *Outweek Magazine*, has written an even more chilling insider's account. In *Sexual Ecology: AIDS and the Destiny of Gay Men*, Rotello reveals a world neither Ellen DeGeneres nor Bill Clinton acknowledges. Rotello, citing Centers for Disease Control data, points out that "the first several hundred gay men with the disease [AIDS] had an average of 1,100 lifetime partners." He argues that male homosexual promiscuity has not only not receded but that it is now experiencing a "Second Wave." Rotello's argument is supported by a recent CDC study charting the dramatic rise in gonorrhea among homosexual American men. "Gay men," Rotello writes, "are experiencing a form of extinction as devastating as that inflicted upon any dying species . . ."

These are words from honest homosexual men who understand the carnage wrought by lies and deception. Not surprisingly, both Rotello and Signorile are under attack by "queer theorists."

Then there is perhaps the most explosive issue of all: homosexuality and pederasty. For many parents, it is a deep concern—and it is by no means an irrational one. The concern is born out of the recognition that many of the most militant and active spokesmen for the homosexual movement seek liberation from all sexual constraints. When sexual relativism becomes the norm, there are no lines that cannot be crossed. For example, pederasty has been advocated by the *Sentinel*, a gay San Francisco publication, whose editors have said that "the love sex between men and boys is at the foundation of homosexuality." One of ACT-UP's chants is, "We're here, we're queer, and we want your children." Bruce Bawer, a prominent homosexual writer, criticizes fellow gay activists for being "more comfortable condemning the Log Cabin Republicans than . . . condemning the North American Man-Boy Love Association." Indeed, during Elizabeth Birch's introduction of the president at the Human Rights Campaign event, she approvingly quoted the president's adviser Bob Hattoy, who said, "It Takes the Village People to Raise a Child." The remark elicited loud, sustained applause.

We know that many homosexuals live in a world filled with anguish, loneliness, and much early death. Their misfortune does not merit a response of callousness, flippancy, hatred, or mistreatment. Homosexuals are entitled to compassion, as well as the rights owed all Americans as Americans. Still, the misfortune itself ought not to be denied. And we certainly should not hold up the misfortune as a model for society.

Homosexuality should not be socially validated, for reasons rooted in custom and tradition, natural law and teleology, morality and faith. Virtually no civilization accords to homosexuality the same status (moral or legal) as heterosexuality. At the heart of this debate is whether we want homosexuality to be considered normative, and treated with complete indifference. President Clinton now appears to believe the answer is yes. Many of us believe the answer is no.

William J. Bennett is the author, most recently, of **Our Sacred Honor: Words of Advice from the Founders in Stories, Letters, Poems and Speeches** ***(Simon & Schuster).***

Earley Breaks the Mold

by Fred Barnes

For 10 years as a Virginia state senator, Mark Earley rose on the anniversary of the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision legalizing abortion to talk about the lives of unborn children. No colleagues joined him. Several years ago, he spoke at a church-sponsored event called "Field of Blood," which honored the unborn by planting small crosses. Earley has two well-known constituents in his district around the city of Chesapeake: Ralph Reed and Pat Robertson. Reed, who recently stepped down as executive director of the Christian Coalition, is a close friend. And when Earley ran for attorney general of Virginia this year, he hired two veterans of Robertson's 1988 presidential bid, Anne Kincaid and Guy Rodgers, as campaign advisers. Robertson donated $35,000. Not surprisingly, Bill Dolan, Earley's Democratic foe, spent the entire campaign pillorying him as a Christian Right extremist. Yet Earley won. In fact, he led the Republican ticket, with 58 percent of the vote. No Republican has ever done better running for state office in Virginia.

How did he do it, becoming "the first bona fide member of the Christian conservative movement to achieve major state office," as the Norfolk *Virginian-*

Pilot put it? Earley, 43, is a soft-spoken, non-threatening, likable ex-missionary, but personality alone can't explain a landslide. His record and his campaign do. Though clearly a religious conservative, Earley was active in the state senate mostly on issues like welfare reform and juvenile justice, sponsoring bills on those subjects that became law.

The result: He was seen as a legitimate political player, far from one-dimensional. He also developed ties to blacks and organized labor, as well as to the business community and GOP moderates like senator John Warner and congressman Tom Davis. In the campaign, he cast himself as a mainstream conservative, not a Christian Right candidate. This was credible because he hadn't jumped into the race fresh from a church pew. And the issues he touted were related to the attorney general's job—public safety, parole, school-based anti-crime programs.

Kent Lemon

Mark Earley

Earley made an effort to get along with the press and important Virginia commentators like Larry Sabato, and it paid dividends. The *Washington Post* and *Washington Times*, one liberal, the other conservative, endorsed Earley on the same day. Kincaid, Earley's chief consultant, is obsessive about the need for conservatives "to treat the media as your friend." If politicians handle reporters with respect, she insists, "they'll respect you." Actually, Earley had courted reporters for years. Thus, he didn't encounter the hostility from the press that earlier Christian conservative candidates, Mike Farris in 1993 and Oliver North in 1994, had faced. In fact, the *Post* editorial page rushed to Earley's defense when Democrats first attacked him in June as "the hand-picked candidate of the narrow right wing of the Republican party." *Au contraire*, the *Post* wrote. Later, in its endorsement, the paper said his legislative record and "the support he enjoys among minorities, labor, teacher organizations and other groups" show he's no extremist.

Earley's biography turned out to be a big asset. He was a senior at Indian River High in Chesapeake when a nearby all-black school closed and its students came to Indian River. "I took an active role in what wasn't then but now is known as racial reconciliation," Earley says. (The school, by the way, was later attended by Alonzo Mourning, who became a basketball star with the Miami Heat.) After college, he spent two years in the Philippines as a Christian missionary for a group called Navigators. During the campaign, he got strong backing from Filipino immigrants in Virginia. As a prominent lawyer in Norfolk, Earley served as honorary chairman of the Virginia Chapter of the United Negro College Fund. He also joined the NAACP in 1982 and was endorsed for attorney general by Virginia NAACP president Paul Gillis. Since his law firm represented labor unions, Earley got to know labor leaders, and in his first state senate race he was supported by the state AFL-CIO. This year, the firefighters union endorsed him. But his labor ties had a downside: opposition by the National Right-to-Work Committee. This was partly due to Earley's co-sponsorship of a bill that would have eroded the state's right-to-work law. Earley later withdrew his name from the bill. He now says "no one should be compelled to join a union or pay union dues."

For all his non-Christian ties, Earley wouldn't have won without a political base in theologically conservative churches in Virginia. Ralph Reed, now a political consultant in Atlanta, says the conventional wisdom is wrong about candidates who publicly express their faith in God and associate with religious-conservative leaders. Their religious connections are "an asset at the polling place, not an albatross." Certainly they were for Earley in the GOP primary against three opponents, two of whom aired TV ads. Earley relied on public appearances and direct mail to mobilize Christians (and others). He won with 36 percent.

Already, Earley is the model for conservative Christian candidates around the country. Reed says he did two things right. First, he ran as a Reagan-style conservative. "He never tried to shrink from his views and values, but he didn't run a campaign of which abortion was the centerpiece," says Reed. Second, "he demonstrates that if you want to run statewide as a religious conservative candidate, you need to rack up an impressive record in another job." That's a job outside the ministry, of course. This makes it very difficult for foes and the press to typecast the candidate as, in Reed's terminology, "uni-dimensional."

Guy Rodgers, the consultant, says Earley's style

helped him avoid being pigeonholed. "I believe too many people in the pro-family movement, by their temperament, words, and actions, reinforce the liberal, flawed stereotype of us as snarling, uncompassionate dogmatists," he says. "It is that stereotype that so often prevents us from communicating our message effectively." Earley broke the mold, Rodgers says, by coming across as a man of "principled compassion, not snarling condemnation." Couple that with "smart campaign tactics, and we will win more than our fair share of elections." And not just in Virginia.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

LOOMING LARGENT

by Matthew Rees

LAST MARCH, House speaker Newt Gingrich assembled all House Republicans in a basement room of the Capitol, planning to force 11 of them to stand up and explain why they had helped defeat a routine appropriations bill. One of the renegades, Rep. Steve Largent of Oklahoma, realized he'd been in a similar situation before: As a professional football player, he'd been physically threatened by other players for refusing to join a strike. By comparison, Gingrich didn't seem so threatening. So instead of waiting for the speaker to invite him to explain himself, Largent strode from the back of the room to the microphone. In a firm voice, he told Gingrich, "I've been in smaller rooms with bigger people, and I can't be intimidated."

House Republicans still talk with awe about Largent's ensuing speech. They recall how he swung the mood of the meeting in favor of the rebels and against Gingrich. Realizing this, Gingrich shifted from confrontation to conciliation. The message was unmistakable: Steve Largent wasn't going to be pushed around by anyone.

Largent embodies the conservative combativeness of the Republicans elected to the House in the class of 1994. He's a fervent opponent of abortion, gay rights, gun control, and the National Endowment for the Arts. On economic issues, he introduced legislation to scrap the tax code, he'd like to phase out Social Security, and last year he strongly opposed raising the minimum wage. He's also devoutly religious. In a speech following his 1995 induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, he thanked "my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" and said, "Football is what He gave me the physical gifts to do for a time, but my faith really defines who I am, as a husband, a father, and a man." Ralph Reed, the Christian Coalition's former executive director, calls Largent "the genuine article."

But there are other traits that distinguish Largent from the rest of the House. Before he ran for Congress in 1994, he had never sought public office. During his athletic career, he scarcely followed politics beyond listening to radio broadcasts by Focus on the Family's James Dobson. That, and the birth of his first child in 1979, got him interested in public policy. But serving as an elected official never crossed his mind. "I didn't even know what 'GOP' stood for when I got to Washington," he says.

Political inexperience explains Largent's distaste for the wheeling and dealing that most people in Washington accept as a fact of life. When it was learned last year that Rep. John Boehner, who holds the number-four slot in the Republican leadership, had been distributing campaign contributions from tobacco companies on the House floor, Largent was appalled. He remonstrated personally with Boehner and even considered running against him in the House GOP's leadership elections.

Largent also possesses something found in few members of Congress: star quality. Since he came to Washington, *People* has twice named him one of its "Fifty Most Beautiful People in the World," and even a reporter for the *New York Times* gushed recently that Largent "looks like a male model and is so friendly he might be mistaken for a flirt."

Largent's glamour, particularly in the macho environment of the House, stems from his 14 years with the Seattle Seahawks. And he wasn't just any player: He was featured on a Wheaties box, and when he retired he had caught more passes than anyone else in pro-football history. He was selected for the Hall of Fame the first year he was eligible.

These qualities have won Largent a devoted following, particularly among conservatives, and made him popular on the fund-raising circuit. He attended about 50 events on behalf of other Republicans during his first term, and he looks out for his friends. When Gingrich canceled a fund-raiser for Rep. Mark Souder, a conservative Indiana Republican, after Souder voted in January 1996 against reopening the government, Largent called Souder the next day and said he'd come to the district for an event.

Souder, not surprisingly, is a Largent booster. So is

Rep. Mark Sanford of South Carolina, who says Largent "is one of a handful of guys I would trust my life with." His zeal for the Oklahoman is such that he wants him to run for president in 2000, though Largent has responded "coolly." "Other people's ambitions for Steve are greater than Steve's ambitions for Steve," Souder notes. Indeed, Largent told me he is "honored and humbled" people would want him to run for president, but says he doesn't think it's "realistic." "It's not an aspiration I have," he says, though he allows that "miracles do happen."

He would know. His father deserted the family when Largent was a boy, and his mother married an alcoholic who moved the family frequently. They settled in Tulsa, where Largent starred in football and baseball in high school. He went on to become a stand-out wide receiver for the University of Tulsa and was a fourth-round draft pick of the Houston Oilers in 1976. The Oilers released him, however, and he was picked up by the Seahawks.

Prior to his final season in 1989, Largent pledged there were two things he wouldn't do in retirement: coach or get into politics. He kept that promise until 1994, when the state's Republican senator, Don Nickles, called and asked him to run for a vacant House seat. Largent said he wasn't interested, but when he talked it over with his wife, she encouraged him to run. After more nudging from Nickles, he relented. In a Republican district, he prevailed with 63 percent of the vote.

Kent Lemon

Steve Largent

Largent arrived in Washington with some fanfare, and Gingrich awarded him a prized seat on the Budget Committee. During the vaunted first 100 days, when the House was passing the Contract With America, Largent was such a loyal soldier that Gingrich asked to come to Largent's Hall of Fame induction ceremony. Largent got him a front-row seat.

But their relations frayed when Gingrich started compromising in order to pass legislation. In the summer of 1995, Largent took the lead in defeating a Gingrich-backed compromise that preserved funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (though NEA funding later passed). He explained his thinking at the time to Linda Killian, author of *The Freshmen*, a forthcoming book on the House Republican class of 1994: "If we're forced to use more guerrilla tactics, we're not opposed to doing that, and we're proud we're capable of pulling it off."

The tensions have persisted. During the government shutdown, Largent was one of those counseling no compromise; he even voted against having the furloughed federal employees return to work. A few months later, when it looked like Gingrich was going to allow a vote on increasing the minimum wage, Largent introduced a resolution among House Republicans trying to get them on the record in opposition. The effort failed, but Gingrich was furious. And shortly after the 1996 election, Largent made national news when he said on *Fox News Sunday* that it would be "a good idea" for Gingrich to step aside until he sorted out his ethics troubles.

As House Republicans seemed to be marching in place earlier this year, and Gingrich's missteps were becoming more frequent, Largent started meeting with other conservatives to discuss what could be done. "We were content to watch the natural flow of things," he recalls, adding, "Had any of us been able to write the script so it would have a happy ending, it would have been that the speaker would make an announcement prior to the election of '98 that he was not going to seek another term in office." But in July, members of the leadership signaled they were prepared to dump the speaker. Largent and other conservatives were willing to go along, but the coup later collapsed.

Today, Largent characterizes his relations with Gingrich as "positive" and says, "I don't have any bitter feelings toward him." After the botched coup, he went to Gingrich to ask him for an evaluation, and the speaker told him he didn't think he was a team player. "From his perspective, I can understand why he would say that," says Largent, acknowledging, "I don't always want to go the same direction he wants to take the team."

With a safe seat and no apparent interest in becoming a career politician—he once told a reporter he wanted his House tenure to be remembered as "brilliant but brief"—Largent should find it easy to remain true to his beliefs. A clue to his mindset comes from *Braveheart*. The film is about William Wallace, the 13th-century Scottish rebel who wants the Scottish nobility to take a more aggressive stand against English oppression. In one memorable scene, Wallace explains to the nobles that winning more support from the Scottish commoners will require greater boldness. "People don't follow titles," says Wallace, "they follow courage." Largent, who has seen the movie 10 times, says it's his favorite line.

Matthew Rees is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

The Scapegoat

How the Secretary of Defense Ended the Career of an Exemplary Air Force General

By Matt Labash

Terry Schwalier was what the warrior class calls a fast burner. He had zipped through the Air Force ranks and was about to pin on his second star, making him a major general. He was praised by superiors, respected by peers, and loved by subordinates. Then on June 25, 1996, 19 airmen under his command in Saudi Arabia were killed by the largest terrorist bomb ever used against our military. It was not Schwalier's fault that the men died. But a year after the bombing, Secretary of Defense William Cohen took back Schwalier's promotion—and unjustly cut short an exemplary military career.

A former senator whose own military career consisted of one day in ROTC, Cohen announced his decision after months of stalling. He did it against the wishes of Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall. He did it against the recommendation of Air Force Chief of Staff Ronald Fogleman, who resigned in protest—the first such resignation in the history of the Air Force. He did it despite private entreaties supporting Schwalier from family members of the dead airmen.

Most appallingly, Cohen ended Schwalier's Air Force career in the face of two thorough investigations that found the general had *not* been lax in protecting his troops. Cohen's decision was so unusual that scores of interviews with general officers, military writers, military lawyers, military historians, and even a former secretary of defense failed to produce a comparable case in which two separate military disciplinary inquiries had been overruled by the Pentagon's top civilian.

Cohen was lauded in the press as courageous. But he wasn't. For six months, his office sat on reports that exonerated Schwalier, releasing them quietly only after Cohen announced his decision. Without having seen, much less read and digested, the thousands of pages in these reports, Congress and the press clamored for *someone* to be held responsible for the deaths of the airmen. As the military reeled last summer from the unrelated public-relations fiascos of sexual harassment at Aberdeen and the Kelly Flinn affair, Cohen delivered up the scapegoat, Terry Schwalier. And after a wobbly six months as secretary of defense, Cohen finally got some good reviews. Outside the Pentagon, his tough-guy bones were made as the intrepid civilian who cared more about "accountability" than a grizzled veteran like Ron Fogleman did. Inside the building, the Air Force's rival services uttered nary a peep in protest. Cohen even had the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, John Shalikashvili, standing at his side as he condemned Schwalier.

All in all, it was a fine day at the office for William Cohen. But his decision has left a devastating legacy. The Air Force has lost two of its finest generals in Schwalier and Fogleman. Field commanders have been put on notice that their political superiors are not to be trusted in a crisis. And Cohen's decision has made a mockery of the very principle of accountability that he claimed to uphold. What follows is an account of how this travesty of justice came to pass.

Welcome to Dhahran

Only a year and a half ago, after almost three decades in the Air Force, Terry Schwalier was still on his way up. The Senate had recently confirmed his promotion. Even as a 49-year-old brigadier general, he was doing what he loved best, flying F-16s. And the pilots under his command in Saudi Arabia were performing flawlessly. They had flown 27,000 successful sorties into "the box"—the U.N.'s no-fly zone in southern Iraq that keeps Saddam Hussein from spreading his picnic blanket over the world's oil supply. On June 25, 1996, the last night of his one-year tour, Schwalier had his bags packed and was at his desk writing a letter to his successor, who was already in transit. He got as far as "Dan, Welcome to Dhah . . ." before a blast reverberated throughout the base's high-rise apartment complex, known as the Khobar

Matt Labash is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

Towers. The window, frame and all, blew out of Schwalier's room. He hoarsely and vainly howled "No!" as he saw the fireball.

Two terrorists had wheeled a sewage truck into a public parking lot outside the Khobar Towers compound. After parking it, they jumped into a getaway Chevy Caprice, and about four minutes later, the equivalent of 20,000 pounds of TNT detonated. It was a huge bomb, larger than the one that collapsed the federal building in Oklahoma City, almost twice as powerful as the one that destroyed the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983. The truck was parked some 80 feet north of the closest barracks. But still the blast completely sheared the face off of Building 131, which housed a hundred or so airmen.

Rooftop sentries had spotted the truck and started an evacuation before the bomb exploded. But there was no escaping the mayhem. Glass rained in every direction, embedding itself into scalps and limbs. A security policeman who survived was blown clean out of his clothes. As Schwalier came closer to the ruins and looked up into the open-faced building, he saw a crimson stain on one of the ceilings that looked like a giant swatted fly—a fatal imprint of one of the dead airmen. "Not a day goes by I don't think about those kids," he says quietly.

Though Schwalier is a fighter jock, his disposition is less Chuck Yeagerite bravado than 1950s recruiting film. His square jaw and wiry build are standard issue. He speaks in intense clips of crisp efficiency, hopelessly garnished with acronyms. His excitable affirmations are punctuated with "you betcha," especially when he talks about the Air Force, which has enveloped his entire life. His son is an Air Force lieutenant, and his dad flew combat missions in WWII and Vietnam. As a 10-year-old, Schwalier asked his father why he'd joined the Air Force. "He said to me, 'Because it's the Big League,' . . . and that just kind of clicked. What better way to spend your life than doing something you think is important."

Schwalier resists emoting on demand, either about the bombing or about the day this summer when Secretary of Defense Cohen, with the approval of President Clinton, stood before the Pentagon press corps and took away Schwalier's second star. "He's a warrior, not a whiner," says his wife, Dianne. On the day of Cohen's announcement, Schwalier politely disagreed with Cohen's decision and announced to Air Force leaders in his first and last public statement on the deliberation process: "It is important to do what's right, to listen to your heart and conscience, and to keep to the high ground. I have and will walk away with my head held high."

Deaf to the military's up-or-out ethos, Cohen suggested that Schwalier didn't have to retire just because his promotion had been withdrawn. "He doesn't understand our culture," Schwalier tells me. It's the only direct affront to Cohen that passes Schwalier's lips during several days of interviews in Whidbey Island, Washington, where he now lives. "I could've hung on and drawn a paycheck, but I couldn't have looked in the mirror. As a young major, I remember watching senior officers start to get more selective about their assignments, for understandable reasons. But I thought, 'They're not serving anymore.' And I told myself that if I ever got to the point where I couldn't serve to my fullest—and it was obvious here that boundaries had been put on my ability to serve—it was time to get out. This wasn't a choice."

The Battle of Capitol Hill

Today, it's not clear from the voluminous investigative record that anyone's head should have rolled over Khobar, except for the heads of the terrorists and their sponsors, who managed to move 10 tons of explosives from some unknown point of origin, under the noses of the Saudi internal security forces, into the parking lot north of the Khobar Towers. But that crime has never been solved, and their identity remains unknown.

What did seem abundantly clear in the hours and days after the bombing was that somebody should be held responsible for the deaths. Khobar was a political shuttlecock even before the dead had been buried, and it would remain one until Cohen's July 31 press conference. Congressional Republicans almost immediately saw a chance to turn the bombing against the Clinton administration and then-secretary of defense William Perry. The Khobar bombing occurred on a Tuesday. The following Sunday on *Meet the Press*, Arlen Specter, then chairman of the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, said that his committee would hold hearings and suggested that if the situation looked as bleak afterward as it did that day, "I will call for [Perry's] resignation."

Reporters were also quick off the mark. In Dhahran, Schwalier, perhaps unwisely, let loose to them that the Saudis had denied American requests to move the Khobar perimeter fence further north, past where the truck bomb had been parked. This was all the ammunition needed to raise questions about who was responsible. Perry immediately appointed retired Army general Wayne Downing to assemble a task force and conduct a broad investigation on the protection of U.S. forces in the Middle East. Downing would

report back two months later. But this was just the beginning.

Before Terry Schwalier took his early retirement, there would be two congressional reports on the bombing, reports from Perry and Cohen, several congressional hearings, and two further Air Force investigations. Downing's report would be the most heavily publicized. It pointed a finger straight at Schwalier for failing to take steps that might have stemmed casualties. Every subsequent investigation would find that he had taken extensive steps to make the Khobar facilities—just one of 11 bases he commanded in the region—as secure as possible against terrorist attack. But first impressions are damaging.

In more than one way, first impressions would work against Schwalier. From the outset, there was a misperception, in the press and on Capitol Hill, that Khobar was a replay of the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks, for which no commander was ever held accountable, since President Reagan quickly took "responsibility." In fact, the two attacks had very little in common. In Lebanon, a suicide bomber actually penetrated U.S. defenses at an installation in the heart of a notoriously dangerous city. Khobar Towers, a heavily fortified compound in tightly policed Saudi Arabia, was not penetrated but bombed from outside the area controlled by U.S. forces. Nonetheless, the idea quickly took root that it would show a failure of nerve at the Pentagon if no commander were found to be at fault in the Khobar bombing.

SCAPEGOAT

SPECTER WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE DISTANCE FROM THE BOMB TO THE BUILDING: SO CONCERNED THAT HE PACED IT OFF.

Specter may have been first out of the blocks, but the Senate Armed Services Committee (which still counted William Cohen of Maine as a member) raced to hold hearings as well. Both would get underway two weeks after the bomb exploded. Hill sources say Specter was especially eager because he was already feuding with Perry over Specter's plan to shift oversight of some military intelligence from the Pentagon to the CIA. Perry had turned down an invitation to testify before Specter's committee. Specter thought it "might have been a snub." Where some saw a beleaguered defense secretary, Specter saw a sitting duck, and he continued to imply that Perry's head would be required.

Both sets of hearings focused on culpability more than on security policies or even on who might have set the bomb. The Armed Services Committee had the A-list witnesses and television coverage, with Perry, Shalikashvili, and Schwalier's regional superior, Gen. J. H. Binford Peay of the U.S. Central Command, all testifying. Peay, now retired, says, "We didn't have the facts, nobody had the facts that early." That uncertainty only provoked outrage among the senators. Joe Lieberman, for instance, seemed already to know that "the obvious fact is that they didn't do enough because 19 Americans are dead." The tone was so rancorous that an *Air Force Times* columnist called the hearings "the strongest attacks leveled against American leaders in recent memory." Perry was blistered badly enough that Clinton called afterwards to give him reassurance. Even Peay, who had more combat-command experience than any active-duty Army general at the time, was reduced to pleading with the senators: "I had my fire base run over as a captain in Vietnam. I understand force protection. I care about youngsters."

Nor was there any reprieve throughout the summer of 1996. In August, after a delegation traveled to Saudi Arabia, an evenhanded House National Security Committee assessment highlighted some organizational handicaps and found that intelligence had been inadequate to prevent the bombing. The House report pointed no fingers, however—and it disappeared immediately. Specter, too, took Intelligence Committee staffers to Dhahran. Many sources suggest that because of his plan to enlarge the CIA's role in military intelligence, Specter had a proprietary interest in proving that intelligence had been good enough to prevent casualties but was mishandled under Pentagon supervision. That's precisely what he found, though other investigators did not agree. As Schwalier says, "If the intelligence was so good, how come we still don't know who did it?"

The report from Specter's trip was idiosyncratic in other ways. It stated with certainty that the distance between the perimeter and Building 131 wasn't 80 feet but 60 feet. This would mean that Schwalier's troops were even closer to peril than generally thought. An Air Force summary report of Specter's visit, however, has the agent accompanying Specter noting his less-than-precise reporting methods: "The Senator was very concerned about the exact distance between the perimeter and the building, citing [Pentagon] reports he'd read that had the figure at 80 feet. He even stepped it off through sand and rough terrain, and was

convinced his 20 paces equated to 60 feet."

Congress put considerable pressure on Perry to find someone culpable. The Office of the Secretary of Defense did not insulate Downing from this pressure but instead relayed congressional concerns to Downing. This changed the nature of his investigation. As early as July 10, a day after the first Khobar hearings, Perry instructed Downing that, "as a result of high Congressional interest, we must expedite portions of your assessment process." Downing should include in his report, Perry said, "what U.S. official(s) were responsible for actions to improve or upgrade the fence."

Two days after this formal expansion of Downing's charter, the Senate Armed Services Committee in two separate letters (one from Strom Thurmond and Sam Nunn, the other from John Warner) pushed Perry to guarantee that Downing would determine "the presence or absence . . . of personal responsibility" and "whether . . . there was a breach of duty." Perry declined to formally alter Downing's orders again. But he carefully wrote back to Thurmond that Downing was empowered to explore "accountability," that Downing had been provided a copy of Perry's reply to Thurmond, and that Downing "fully understands what is expected of this assessment."

Downing insists that Perry never made any informal demands on the investigation. He does remember, however, that "there was a lot of effort by staff members of [the secretary's office] to insert themselves into this assessment that we did—and I resisted it. . . . Anything [Perry] wanted me to do, he was going to specifically tell me and back it up in writing. Because, the staff guys will drive you nuts. Not only that, but the staff guys don't always do things for the right reasons. They think they're protecting their boss or protecting the administration . . . so there's no telling what they're gonna tell you."

A senior Downing-task-force official lays it bare: "We thought they [the secretary of defense's staff] were a bunch of a—holes. [On] culpability, there was a lot of pressure. There were some people in the building who said 'You got to figure out who did what to who,' 'Let's build a case,' that kind of stuff. This is stuff that people were doing because they're political animals. Judy Miller [the Pentagon general counsel], Rudy DeLeon [undersecretary of the Air Force], and to some degree, John White [deputy secretary of defense] were people we really had to watch out for on the culpability issue. The sense was that in some cases they wanted enough [evidence] so that this thing could be assigned to some person. The other thing they were really trying to do is protect Perry and [Shalikashvili]." White, Miller, and DeLeon were all Clinton political appointees at the Pentagon. Judy Miller did not respond to interview requests, and Rudy DeLeon declined to be interviewed. White, who was deputy secretary of defense under both Perry and Cohen, denies there was pressure on Downing to find fault. In their letters to Perry, he says, senators "raised a good point, and as a result of that good point, we said, 'Yeah, we ought to change [the scope of Downing's investigation].'"

Downing's Indictment

If there was a single moment when events turned irretrievably against Schwalier, it was with the release of the Downing report on September 16. That was the first time that Schwalier was officially blamed. Until then, Pentagon brass from Joint Chiefs chairman Shalikashvili to deputy secretary of defense White had spent most of the summer defending the extensive protection measures that Schwalier's wing had taken. Even during the press conference releasing the report, White was still playing defense. The press wanted names named; one reporter asked White, "Who inside the Pentagon or inside the military chain of command should lose their job over this?" White noted that "Americans didn't kill these airmen, terrorists killed these airmen." Perry, choking back tears at congressional hearings two days later, said if there had been any leadership failure, the responsibility was "mine, and mine alone."

But Downing's report spread responsibility for a security failure up and down the chain of command indirectly, while taking special care in an 11-page finding to cite Schwalier by name, ruling that he "did not adequately protect his forces from a perimeter attack."

Downing's fingering of Schwalier came as a surprise to many in the Pentagon. Despite the behind-the-scenes pressure from Capitol Hill, both Downing himself and other high Pentagon officials had said explicitly during Downing's investigation that his report would not be a search for culpability, but rather a broad assessment of the circumstances at Khobar and of theater-wide inadequacies in security policies. Perry's original instructions to Downing in fact specified that if he found any officer in breach of his duty, this information would be forwarded to Gen. Peay, who would investigate further.

According to Peay and sources close to departed chief of staff Fogleman, Downing had reassured each of them during the course of his investigation that he was finding nobody culpable, including Schwalier. Downing denies that he said such a thing to either Fogleman or Peay. "I think what people may be con-

fusing is that I thought Schwalier was a good guy . . . and [said] that it was going to be very tough to find out who was responsible." Schwalier says that when the investigators came to Dhahran to interview him, Downing told him, "I'd be proud to serve with you." Downing doesn't remember this comment, but says it would have indicated merely his opinion that Schwalier was "an honorable man . . . incredibly honest and straightforward, and I admired that."

Downing, former head of U.S. Special Operations and a legendary straight-shooter, doesn't protest much when asked if he changed his mind during the course of the investigation. "I don't think that's a fair question," he says, explaining that impressions may vary as evidence is collected, and admitting that the findings on Schwalier went through 18 to 20 drafts before the report was turned in. "We really wrestled with who made mistakes, what kind of mistakes were they," he says. The tone of the report, however, was one of absolute certainty.

That there were doubts about naming Schwalier is underscored by Col. Richard Bridges, one of three Pentagon flacks I was referred to by William Cohen's office after being told that I would not be allowed to interview Cohen for this story. Bridges also served as the Downing task force's public-affairs man. He says the entire team, including Downing, agonized about the Schwalier finding. "One of the biggest changes [in the course of the investigation] was on assigning responsibility," he says. "We went from basically 'They're all guilty,' to 'Gee whiz, what could they have done?' to 'They should have done this.'"

Astonishingly, Bridges says of Cohen's fateful decision to rescind Schwalier's promotion: "There was nobody on the task force, I think, that would've recommended Schwalier's promotion be held up or basically withdrawn." In other words, Cohen's own flack doesn't even pretend that the task-force findings supported Cohen's decision.

The Record Investigation

Schwalier's reputation never recovered from the Downing report. The *New York Times* alone editorialized for Schwalier's head no fewer than seven times over the course of his ordeal. Subsequent investigations, however, would exonerate him. Perry forwarded the Downing report to Ron Fogleman and Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall, asking them to follow up. They, in turn, commissioned a more thorough investigation by James Record, a widely respected, no-nonsense Air Force lieutenant general with command experience in Saudi Arabia very similar to Schwalier's. Record was given formal disciplinary authority at the same time; he would determine whether any administrative or judicial action should be taken, ranging from reprimands to court martial.

While Downing had been given not quite two months to ensure a snappy response to Congress, Record's task force was allowed over three months. Downing's team had been spread thin because their mandate was to review regional security: They had visited 36 sites in 10 countries. As Bridges is the first to admit, "Very frankly—seven days in Saudi Arabia—we could've easily missed something." Record's inquiry focused more directly on Khobar, and he had the benefit of Downing's work product. In addition to reading transcripts from over 200 of Downing's interviews, Record's team conducted 207 of its own interviews. Schwalier also provided a 64-page point-by-point answer to Downing's findings in which he catalogued 37 incorrect statements, 61 misleading implications, and 23 contradictions.

When Record reported back to Widnall and Fogleman in early December, he concurred with many of Downing's findings on how to improve force protection. But he also concluded that Schwalier had "performed his duties in a reasonable and prudent matter." He issued a strong rebuke to the Downing findings, saying that the desire to deliver quick results had caused individuals to be "unfairly and publicly criticized as being derelict in their duties."

Record assessed other installations in the area to compare the security precautions taken by Schwalier with those implemented by the Army, the U.S. Embassy, and even an office of the Saudi National Guard—which itself had been victimized by a much smaller, 220-pound car bomb seven months before Khobar. That November 1995 bombing in the Saudi capital of Riyadh had killed five Americans and prompted increased security measures among American forces in the months leading up to the Khobar bombing. Of Schwalier's efforts, Record says "he overshadowed everybody by what I would call rather substantive leaps and bounds." This conclusion is echoed by David Winn, a former consul general in Dhahran who says Schwalier was "often the butt of mild kidding" because he was so fanatical about security. "He made an impregnable fortress of the place," says Winn, who spent 25 years of his Foreign Service career in the Middle East. "There's no comparison between the degree of security we had at the American consulate, which by the way, housed the American school with all the American children, with what Schwalier had. His was infinitely more."

By all accounts, the Air Force brass were well satis-

fied with the report Record turned in. Many of them thought the part of Downing's report that found fault with Schwalier was light on evidence. According to two senior officials, even Perry was skeptical. "Everybody was appalled by the thing," says one. That included Shalikashvili, who later stood by Cohen, but who admitted to me, "I was skeptical of the Downing conclusion. . . . It seemed to me that there was not enough in the report to substantiate it."

Squelching a Favorable Report

For the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Record report was a huge headache. The reason Record was given so much time, says a source involved in the process, was not so he could be thorough but to ensure the report came out after the election. The political appointees at the Pentagon feared Record would provide ammunition that congressional Republicans or presidential candidate Bob Dole could use against the Clinton administration. When Record dissented on the subject of Schwalier's culpability, that created a whole new problem.

The "political side" of the Pentagon, say sources, feared the media would treat Record's report as an Air Force cover-up, to exonerate one of its more popular officers. By this time, Perry had announced his retirement. "And so the spin in December," says a senior Pentagon source, "was 'let's not get this report out till Perry leaves.'" After review by Defense's general counsel, says the source, "the word comes back that it's not documented very well, so we went through this elaborate exercise of passing the report back, having Record go into all their interviews, document more footnotes. I mean, s—, it was like an English-paper exercise. But it was all stalling for time until Perry left."

And then some. The report languished in the secretary's office. Meanwhile, Schwalier sympathizers leaked the findings to a few reporters, which brought precisely the accusations Perry's staff had feared. Richard Bryan, the Democratic senator from Nevada who sat on both the Select Intelligence and Armed Services committees, said, without seeing the report, that he "thought the Air Force, in effect, had conducted a whitewash." Specter threatened more hearings, though he hadn't yet seen the report (nor has he to this day). Meanwhile, Schwalier's turn was quickly coming up to pin on his second star, which wasn't lost on Bryan.

Schwalier didn't want to wear the rank before the matter was resolved anyway. But he didn't have to face temptation. On January 10, Bryan sent a three-page letter to Widnall, telling her he found the exoneration of Schwalier surprising, though he still hadn't read the report thanks to the stalling in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He urged her not to promote Schwalier. And Bryan had company. The *New York Times* editorialized that "Mr. Cohen should overrule" the report that still hadn't been released, much less read by the editorial writer. Two days after the editorial ran, the Air Force announced it would delay Schwalier's promotion pending the results of the investigation—which had by then been sitting in deputy secretary John White's office since December 23.

The new strategy in the secretary's office, say sources familiar with the investigation, was to protect Bill Cohen from a fiery baptism by slow-rolling the report right past his swearing-in and well into the spring. On January 24, Cohen took the helm. Five days later, White ensured that his new boss could avoid the subject until summer. In a letter to Widnall, he outlined issues that hadn't been "adequately developed" by Record, whose findings had already received a much higher degree of scrutiny than Downing's ever would. A new investigation would be required. Compiling a laundry list of subjects from Defense regulations to base alarm systems that warranted additional exploration, he encouraged Widnall to "take as much time as you believe necessary." Some of the issues he requested be addressed—such as personnel transportation procedures—had nothing to do with the bombing. White took great pains, as did Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon in later press briefings, to make the turnaround of the Record report look like a joint decision of the Air Force and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He even congratulated Widnall on the "wisdom of your decision to continue the examination."

White and Bacon still say the decision was not imposed on the Air Force from above. But Widnall's office was ready to release the Record report in December. A press release was even prepared to accompany it at the time—and the nine-page draft I obtained, never released, was on Secretary of the Air Force Widnall's letterhead.

Exonerated (Quietly) Yet Again

Whatever her reservations might have been, Widnall went along with White's request to start another investigation, as did Fogleman—an action sources close to him say he came to regret as giving cover to the political machinations of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. A new charter was issued to the inspector general of the Air Force, Richard Swope,

and the judge advocate general of the Air Force, Bryan Hawley, the Air Force's top investigator and top lawyer, respectively.

Swope and Hawley were tasked with determining whether Schwalier had acted in accordance with Defense or Air Force regulations, though neither Record nor Downing had suggested Schwalier violated any regulations. No one I have talked to with experience in the top rungs of the Pentagon in recent years can recall a similar case—in which an investigation by a disciplinary authority like James Record was bounced back to the service from the secretary of defense's office, with orders, in essence, to try harder this time.

Not until April would Swope and Hawley finish combing through all the regulations. Long before then, Fogleman left the reservation. In an unrelated appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee in February, he openly agitated for a full airing of Record's report. He joined Record in siding squarely with Schwalier and predicted a chilling effect on commanders who are scapegoated because of acts of war against their troops. He declared it "criminal for us to try and hold somebody accountable or to discipline somebody . . . because the media has created a frenzy based on partial information." That hearing was the first time Schwalier knew Fogleman supported him. They had spoken briefly when Schwalier twice offered his resignation to defuse the situation, with Fogleman refusing each time because the investigations were not concluded.

Fogleman, who flew 315 combat missions in Vietnam, was not one to cover up mistakes out of misbegotten loyalty to fellow officers. A bark-peeling fireplug who was never shy about cracking senior-officer heads, Fogleman had forged a reputation as the "accountability general." He had relieved a wing commander and two other officers in connection with the Air Force crash that killed Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and his delegation. And after the accidental 1994 shootdown of two American helicopters by two of our own F-15 pilots, he had issued career-ending disciplinary letters to seven officers, including two brigadier generals.

But Fogleman's cry for full disclosure went unheeded, even when Swope and Hawley also exonerated Schwalier. Their report was perhaps the most thorough of all in its search through the thousands of rules and regulations that Schwalier might have failed to heed. Their findings, like James Record's, were not released, apparently at William Cohen's direction. According to spokesman Ken Bacon, "It was not the Air Force's job to release the report. The report was going to the Secretary of Defense. It was his decision . . . when to release it."

Pentagon staffers last December may have thought the slow release of findings that exonerated Schwalier would save them pain. If so, they calculated badly. By this spring, military-scandal season was blooming: The Aberdeen sex-abuse cases were grabbing headlines, along with the Kelly Flinn affair and the flameout of Cohen's candidate to succeed Shalikashvili at Joint Chiefs, Joseph Ralston, thanks to an ancient paramour. Schwalier's case bore zero resemblance to these other PR nightmares, except for this: Military accountability was now, more than ever, on the lips of every soft-paunched editorialist. "All this stuff comes together and conspires in a way that isn't going to give Terry Schwalier much of a shot," says a Pentagon source involved with the process throughout the investigations.

Cohen in Charge

In June and July, Cohen hunkered down for a crash course on the conflicting Khobar reports, at the end of which he would write his own. He consulted with report authors like Downing and . . . well, only with Downing, who at this time had yet to read either of the subsequent reports himself. The Downing report never held together as a brief for hanging Schwalier. Even Cohen would call some of the findings "overstated." For one thing, the report lacked any serious consideration of the constraints on commanders operating in the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where U.S. forces must pay a degree of deference to the absolute monarchy.

Technically a temporary operation, though our forces have been there since the Gulf War, the 4404th Wing that Schwalier commanded siphoned money from other service budgets instead of being funded as a permanent operation. As a result, it depended heavily on in-kind expenditures by the Saudis—who supplied everything from food to jet fuel. Maintaining good relations with the hosts, therefore, was essential to accomplishing the mission.

Downing's primary criticism of Schwalier was that he had protected the U.S. installations themselves, but hadn't guarded sufficiently against an attack from outside, like the one that took place from the parking lot. Cohen echoes this charge in his final report. Both Cohen and Downing acknowledge that there was an accepted division of labor with the host country. The Saudis ceded no control to U.S. forces outside their compound and required the Americans to seek permission for structural changes inside. Cohen and

Downing therefore criticize Schwalier for failing to persuade the Saudis to move the northern fence back even farther from the buildings. Cohen suggested that if Schwalier thought he needed intervention from a higher authority to accomplish this, he should have asked, which he didn't.

Says Schwalier: "I didn't think I needed help, based on the threat. We were making progress every day." In the seven months after the car bombing in Riyadh and before the Khobar attack, Schwalier's wing implemented some 130 different safety precautions and enacted 36 of 39 recommendations from a January '96 Air Force Office of Special Investigations vulnerability assessment. That's one new safety step every 1.3 days, a frantic pace for a unit that also averaged 74 sorties a day over Iraq. Schwalier's subordinates had asked their Saudi counterparts twice to move the fences back, not just on the northern side but to the east and west, as well. And the Saudis had agreed to a larger buffer zone everywhere except to the north—where it would have meant relinquishing to the Americans a parking lot that served not just a public park but a mosque. Of course, a Saudi "no" wasn't always a "no." It was often negotiable. But Cohen, says Winn, the former consul general, fails to appreciate "how difficult it is to work with the Saudis, and that's what Schwalier was trying to do. You sure as hell don't do it by getting some commander [up the chain of command in Washington] to do it."

SCAPEGOAT

MOVING THE FENCE BACK WOULD HAVE MEANT RELINQUISHING A PARKING LOT THAT SERVED A MOSQUE AND A PARK.

Day-to-day command decisions, says Schwalier, are a trade-off between what you hypothetically could get done and what you most immediately can do. Schwalier created patrols by rooftop sentries, had vegetation cut back, doubled and tripled perimeter barriers, increased patrols inside the fence, and kept after the Saudis to increase security (including undercover officers) to 24 hours a day outside the fence—which, after all, was their responsibility. Cohen himself admitted that "it is doubtful" the Saudis would ever have moved the fence far enough back to have protected U.S. troops from a 20,000-pound bomb. Indeed, just three years earlier, they had actually moved the northern fence in, after complaints from Saudi residents. In combing through Pentagon rule books, Swope and Hawley found that the northern perimeter not only met the suggested distance for such installations but exceeded it by 30 feet.

After the bombing, the contrite Saudis moved the fence out 400 feet. But in a tacit acknowledgment of the security difficulties any commander would face in the middle of a busy metropolis, the U.S. airmen were moved anyway. At a cost of $150 million (over five times Schwalier's annual budget), they relocated to a desert tent city.

The Downing report, which was embraced wholeheartedly by congressional overseers and to a degree by Cohen, implied that Schwalier could have guessed that an attack was on the way, though he couldn't have known where or when. The report includes, for example, a chart entitled "Chronology of Events Leading Up To June 25, 1996, Bombing." The inference is that a pattern had emerged of escalating threats that should have cued Schwalier on what was coming. The chart, however, is loaded with filler such as "1990—First use of Khobar Towers by U.S. forces." Of the 14 items that precede the bombing, none is confirmed to have had anything to do with it. Numerous items, such as the request of four additional explosive-detection dog teams, are evidence of the vigilance of Schwalier's own wing. In other words: He should have known the bombing was going to happen and have taken more precautions, because the increased precautions that he was taking indicated that the bombing was going to happen. It is logic only Joseph Heller or the Senate Armed Services Committee could love.

No wonder then that Cohen tried to distance himself from the Downing report when writing his own. But even with the benefit of the voluminous follow-up investigations, Cohen didn't do much better. His remaining hanging offenses were that Schwalier did not install a protective plastic coating on the windows, that he didn't have an expeditious alarm system, and that he didn't have practice evacuation drills.

A January 1996 Air Force vulnerability assessment had recommended installing Mylar on the compound windows to keep glass from flying. Schwalier had been given estimates of an installation cost of $4 million—about one-seventh of his yearly budget. He went ahead and budgeted it in his five-year plan anyway and in the meantime installed heavier blast curtains, which could be put in faster and cheaper. Another assessment showed that without strengthening the window frames, Mylar coatings would cause blunt-trauma death rather than cuts, as a blast could send intact win-

dows flying through the air. Swope and Hawley found that only two installations in the entire region had installed Mylar—and it wasn't clear that any had done so before the Khobar bombing. As far as Department of Defense standards for installing Mylar are concerned—well, there are none. Cohen allowed that Mylar wouldn't have prevented 18 of the 19 deaths, which were caused by the building's collapse, and said it was also unlikely it could have been installed by June. Nonetheless, he concludes, this is evidence that Schwalier did not give sufficient consideration to how to minimize injury in a bomb attack.

Cohen also hammered Schwalier for having inadequate alarm systems and evacuation methods. On the night of the bombing, rooftop sentries in fact saw the suspicious sewage truck before it exploded. They descended from the roof, knocking on doors, and partially evacuated the building floor by floor before the bomb detonated, approximately four minutes after the time of alert. It was a method the wing had already used six to eight times in suspicious-package evacuations. Building 131 itself had been evacuated as recently as a month before the bombing. Though Cohen criticized Schwalier for not running regular practice drills, Schwalier says of the real evacuations, "Gosh, I hope those count as practice."

But according to a Pentagon regulation Cohen cited, they don't. The wing was apparently required to hold actual practice evacuations, though Cohen admitted he didn't know whether it would have saved lives. (When the bomb exploded, many of the airmen were still in the stairwells, which may have been the safest place to be.) It isn't clear that any of the 14 commanders who preceded Schwalier had conducted practice evacuations, either. Cohen went on to speculate that had the airmen done practice drills, in addition to the real-life evacuations, Schwalier might have been better able to determine whether the system was too slow or inadequate. It's a rather academic discussion, though, since the authoritative Swope report, which Cohen selectively cited, concluded that the failure to practice evacuating "did not impact the wing's response on 25 June 1996."

Finally, Cohen criticized the floor-by-floor "waterfall" evacuation method as "primitive," suggesting there should have been an automated alarm system. Swope had found no defense requirement for automated alarm systems for bomb threats. The Saudi-owned buildings in Dhahran didn't come with fire alarms, since the concrete buildings wouldn't burn. Cohen speculated that fire alarms might have provided a speedier bomb-evacuation method. Ironically this would not have complied with a Pentagon regulation Swope uncovered that "explicitly cautions against any procedure that may confuse fire and other types of alarms."

In reporting this story, I spoke with several people who had worked years at the Pentagon and who said they never recalled practicing evacuations for bomb scares. So I checked to make sure that the very heart of our civilian and military leadership, which receives bomb threats regularly, is living up to the "reasonable standards" that Cohen decided Schwalier had not met. According to spokesman Bridges, "The Secretary's office might [have Mylar]; the room I'm standing in does not." I ask Bridges if they ever practice evacuations for bomb or terrorist threats. "We have indeed practiced, we had a fire drill last week," he says. But that's not a bomb evacuation drill. "This was labeled a fire drill, but the same procedures could conceivably be used." Not according to the regulation Swope found, which forbids multi-purpose fire alarms.

"There have been bomb scares in the Pentagon," Bridges volunteers, "and they seal off the area and will evacuate certain halls." But those aren't practice drills, those are real-life precautions. "But they happen often enough, so I guess we don't need drills." This was Terry Schwalier's contention.

Cohen never alleged that Schwalier was criminally culpable. But anything less than the full support of the secretary of defense is fatal to a commander's career. In the months before Cohen's press conference, Ron Fogleman, once thought to be a strong candidate to succeed Shalikashvili, stomped around the Pentagon calling the investigation "bulls— and gunsmoke." Fogleman told Cohen that if Schwalier was disciplined, he would walk. So Cohen began interviewing replacements. Already upset at being overruled in the Kelly Flinn affair, in which he pressed for a court martial, Fogleman had had enough. "I may be out of step with some of the times and some of the thinking of the establishment," he announced, and stepped down. Four days later Cohen withdrew Schwalier's promotion. "There was no guts at the end of the day," says Gen. Peay, Schwalier's commander. "These guys went for a political decision and ruined a young general's career."

The Next of Kin

If Schwalier's career was ruined for not living up to Cohen's double standard, it wasn't Cohen's oiliest move. That came in a *New Yorker* interview where the secretary of defense justified his decision to take away Schwalier's second star: "For me to have to face the parents of the 19 who died, and to say everything that

reasonably could have been done was done—I don't believe that's the case." But this was disingenuous, to say the least, on Cohen's part. He had never faced the parents. I asked Ken Bacon, the Pentagon spokesman, if Cohen had ever been in contact with the families, and Bacon said, "The answer is no."

But several of the family members I interviewed said that *they* had reached out to Cohen. And it wasn't to blame Schwalier. Of the 10 parents, wives, and other family members I interviewed, only one thought Schwalier should have been punished. Most of the others thought he had been scapegoated. Fran Heiser, who lost a 35-year-old son, thought everybody up the chain should be held accountable, and said as much in a letter to Cohen. After the decision, he promptly replied, offering his condolences and touting his report before inviting her to the Pentagon to attend a briefing on force protection that he didn't attend.

And despite Bacon's assertion, after talking to Cohen, that there had been no communication between Cohen and the families, three women had actually sent letters to Cohen before his decision, encouraging him to *support* Schwalier. Marie Campbell's 30-year-old husband was due home only three days after the bomb went off. She wrote Cohen twice, saying, "I strongly believe that General Schwalier should not be held accountable. . . . I'm praying that General Schwalier will receive his 2nd star. I would be honored to see him get it."

Campbell also enclosed an e-mail from Bridget Brooks who lost a 22-year-old son. They, along with others at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, home to 12 of the deceased airmen, had recently met Schwalier, when he visited their informal support group. "He just cried for us and hugged us," Brooks wrote. "His sadness over the loss of these young men seemed to permeate his whole person. . . . He has been going through this ordeal since day one, but he never spoke one word of complaint. . . . I would consider it an honor to be present when General Schwalier receives his second star."

All of the women wrote Cohen before July 31, hoping to influence his decision. None has received a reply. "It kind of hurts that he didn't answer me back," says Campbell.

Dawn Woody, who lost her 20-year-old husband, was also impressed by her meeting with Schwalier. "Reporters called me as early as an hour after my husband was killed. I never spoke to any of them. The only reason I'm speaking to you is because I think the world of Schwalier and I would do anything to help him. I know that my husband would not want him blamed for this. For them to punish Gen. Schwalier—my husband would be very upset about it, because that's not who did the terrorist act."

The Fallout

More than one wife told me that with the loss of Schwalier and Fogleman, the Air Force took two more Khobar casualties. When Cohen referred in his final report to Schwalier as a "fine officer," he had no idea of the magnitude of his understatement. In 20 years of Officer Performance Reviews filled out by his superiors, Schwalier received not a single "9" when a "10" was possible. He is described as "smart, loyal, tough and of the highest character," "our #1 Brigadier General on the Joint Staff," and someone "who does it all—commands, leads, cares for people."

Many of the sources who cooperated on this story did so because they believe the Pentagon's treatment of Terry Schwalier sets an impossible and dangerous standard for field commanders who already, rightly, bear the onus for making hundreds of daily decisions affecting the safety of their troops. Now they have cause to wonder whether political expedience will cause their superiors to withdraw support when something beyond their control goes wrong—even an "act of war," as Fogleman called it. This is why Terry Schwalier, who maintained a public silence throughout the ordeal and always encouraged others to do the same, is now speaking out. "I believed in the process," he says. "I believed the right thing would happen."

In July, a leaked Pentagon report warned of disgruntled pilots who expressed great "distrust of their senior leadership" and felt they were "lied to, betrayed and treated very poorly." The Air Force cannot lose too many more Terry Schwaliers. But it will if it continues to punish the failure to meet impossible standards, and does so for the sake of "checking six," pilotese for covering your rear. Combat leaders in such an environment will concern themselves with everything but the mission—and will begin thinking and making decisions . . . like political appointees.

As one senior officer forecasts: "This is something that will be on the minds of commanders—how much can they depend on their political leadership to support them when the chips are down. During a fast-moving military situation, you're more worried about covering your six than taking care of your troops and getting the job done. And I haven't seen the great reassuring statement that says in the future, we'll do better than we did by Schwalier. It didn't come out of the Joint Staff, it didn't come out of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and it sure as hell didn't come off the Hill." ♦

Wallace Stevens, Poet and Insurance Executive

The Idea of Order at Hartford, Connecticut

By Christopher Caldwell

The *Hartford Courant* noted last year that the list handed out by the city's Cedar Hill Cemetery of the famous people buried there did not include Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)—this at a time when academic consensus holds that Stevens is the greatest American poet of the twentieth century. The literary critic Harold Bloom, who only half-jokingly dismisses T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as "the Cowley and Cleveland of our day," describes our times as "the Age of Stevens." Frank Kermode, who along with Stevens biographer Joan Richardson edited the Library of America's beautiful new *Collected Poetry and Prose*, calls Stevens the author of the "greatest modern poems in English about death and old age, and possibly about anything." Harvard University's Helen Vendler, the most widely published writer on poetry in the country, shares Bloom's assessment of such better-known poems as "The Snow Man," "The Emperor of Ice Cream," "The Idea of Order at Key West," "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "Anecdote of the Jar," even while admitting that some of Stevens's work is "baffling to the ordinary reader."

The ordinary reader! Run out into the street, stop the first hundred people you see, and ask them to recite "The Motive for Metaphor." Gather your children around the fire and read to them "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction." Name me a dying man who, gasping on his deathbed, has whispered to the nurse to . . . please! . . . read to me from that well-thumbed copy of *The Man with the Blue Guitar*. If by ordinary readers, Vendler means those neither enrolled in nor employed by universities, Stevens has no ordinary readers. That's why, if you want to find Wallace Stevens's tomb in Hartford, you'll have to go with a literary critic and a good map.

Wallace Stevens
Collected Poetry and Prose
Library of America, 1,032 pp., $35

Stevens doesn't fit the traditional—or even the radical—American idea of a poet. He spent four decades as a lawyer at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Co., a specialist in one of the driest areas of that profession, and so excelled in it that his colleagues dubbed him "the dean of surety claims."

That he held such an unpoetical job is both important and unimportant. It's unimportant in that Stevens, born to precarious middle-class comfort in Reading, Pennsylvania, was not some kind of Rousseauian Rotarian suddenly mugged by the muse; he had planned to be a poet all along. He spent three years studying European literature at Harvard, where he was president of the undergraduate literary magazine, the *Advocate*. The generous selection of juvenilia gathered by Kermode and Richardson in this new collection shows that as a student he worked ambitiously in a representative 1890s vein:

> *I sang an idle song of happy youth,*
> *A simple and a hopeful roundelay*
> *That thoughtlessly ran through a sweet array*
> *Of cadences, until I cried, "Forsooth,*
> *My song, thou art unjewelled and uncouth. . . ."*

But almost as soon as he left Harvard, Stevens was stopped in his roundelay-singing tracks. In New York he worked for nine months as a journalist, until an assignment to cover the ghastly funeral of Stephen Crane, dead of consumption in his twenties, seems to have instilled in him the fear of meeting a similarly friendless and desolate end. Enrolling in New York Law School, he passed the bar in 1903, and a year later met eighteen-year-old Elsie Viola Kachel, whom he would marry in 1909. Elsie was so pretty that in the early years of their marriage she sat as the model for the Mercury dime, but she was also shrewish and unliterary, and the two were notoriously incompatible. Their first married years were hard ones. Stevens went through half a dozen legal jobs, before being named vice-president in Equitable Insurance's New York office. When the firm went bankrupt the following year, the Stevenses moved with great reluctance to Hartford. It was around this time that he began writing poems again.

The importance of Stevens's non-poetic career was logistical. When he began turning out his adult poetry, he brought to it an undergraduate

Christopher Caldwell is senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

enthusiasm and desire to shock. Yet Stevens was by then almost forty, and in some ways much older in spirit. It's from this rare combination—of hard-earned remorse over life and a naïf's faith in the ability of poetry to heal it—that Stevens drew his allure: He is the only American poet to have "burst onto the scene" in the middle of his "late period."

The most noticeable thing about the style in Stevens's first book, *Harmonium* (1923), was an outlandish vocabulary (assembled by sending office underlings to the Hartford public library for dictionary definitions) that would have been migraine-inducing were it not so artfully marshaled. R. P. Blackmur, the patient critic who launched the vogue for Stevens with several appreciative essays in the 1930s, compiled a list of some of his oddities: "fubbed, girandoles, curlicues, catarrhs, gobbet, diaphanes, clopping, minuscule, pipping, pannicles, carked, ructive, rapey, cantilene, buffo, fiscs, phylactery, princox, and funest."

In the six volumes that followed, Stevens kept adding words to Blackmur's list: jubilas, bethou, solitaria, roy, gilderlinged, finikin. And those were the least of his tricks. His onomatopoeic nonce words—

At night an Arabian in my room
With his damned hoobla-hoobla-hoobla-how,
Inscribes a primitive astronomy

or

The lacquered loges huddled there
Mumbled zay-zay and a-zay, a-zay

—create delightful euphonies, but led some readers to dismiss him as a nonsense poet. Then there is the obtrusive use of French, which Stevens in an immoderate moment called part of the same language as English, and of which "The robins are là-bas . . ." is only his most annoying example.

Stevens wrote two kinds of poems: short, sharp, lyrical ones, and long philosophical ones. In his lyric mode, he could use highly compressed grammar to dazzling effect, achieving an almost classical clarity and concision, as in "The Emperor of Ice Cream," a sixteen-line description of a wake that doubles as one of the twentieth-century's great *carpe diem* odes. Even in his longer poems, most of them in perfectly cadenced blank verse, the lyrical talent is extraordinary, as in the haunting line from the autobiographical "Comedian as the Letter C" about "hearing signboards whimper on cold nights." Or these seven doom-laden lines from "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle":

Our bloom is gone. We are the fruit thereof.
Two golden gourds distended on our vines,
We hang like warty squashes, streaked and rayed,
Into the autumn weather, splashed with frost,
Distorted by hale fatness, turned grotesque.
The laughing sky will see the two of us
Washed into rinds by rotting winter rains.

HE IS THE ONLY AMERICAN POET TO HAVE "BURST ONTO THE SCENE" IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS "LATE PERIOD."

Unfortunately for those looking for more of this kind of lyric writing, many of Stevens's poems are highly complicated and dedicated to arcane philosophical propositions. To Randall Jarrell—a biased witness, for he distrusted the philosophical poem as a genre, viewing it an unwieldy "sewing-machine that also plays the piano"—this philosophical preoccupation doomed Stevens by freighting his poems with a subject matter incompatible with his lyric talent:

> All his tunk-a-tunks, his hoo-goo-boos—those mannered, manufactured, individual, uninteresting little sound-inventions—how typical they are of the lecture style of the English philosopher, who makes grunts or odd noises, uses homely illustrations, and quotes day in day out from *Alice in Wonderland*, in order to give what he says some appearance of that raw reality it so plainly lacks. . . . Stevens is never more philosophical, abstract, rational, than when telling us to put our faith in nothing but immediate sensations, perceptions, aesthetic particulars.

To the extent that he is dismissing the Stevens credo as a hedonistic one, Jarrell is not alone. It's an easy mistake to make, given the lavish litanies of food, drink, and luxury accessories that are strewn about the longer poems as if they were so many sideboards. The central section of Stevens's great "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" begins, "We drank Meursault, ate lobster Bombay with mango chutney." At 250 pounds, Stevens was one of America's great literary fatties. He also enjoyed a martini or four—an appetite that provoked one of the few interesting literary anecdotes of his life, in which he broke his hand in a barroom fistfight picked with Ernest Hemingway in Key West.

Around the time *Harmonium* appeared, Stevens became an almost fanatical collector of rugs, books, exotic wallpaper, paintings, folk art, and flowers. He had cultivated a series of pen pals around the world, largely for the purpose of asking them to send him handicrafts from far-flung locales. He had to: His job wouldn't allow him to travel. For all his francophilia, Stevens never even got to visit Europe. So he lived through his purchases. "Happiness is an acquisition," Stevens wrote in his notebooks, and he meant it in every sense.

The same impulse may have spawned his bizarrer titles—"Anecdote of the Prince of Peacocks," "Col-

loquy with a Polish Aunt," "The Revolutionists Stop for Orangeade," "Botanist on Alp (No. 2)." Stevens was constructing a personality as one builds a collection, and it is tempting to read him as Walt Whitman asked to be read: as a poet who, by virtue of experiences absorbed and sensations felt, had made himself into "a kosmos."

Unlike Whitman, however, Stevens had little interest in his country's political yearnings. Not that he was without politics, only that the politics he had were neither wide-ranging nor particularly presentable. With his income of $25,000 a year at the height of the Depression, Stevens may be the only enemy of the graduated income tax in the American poets' corner. His level of engagement in current affairs is fairly well summarized by his infamous aside, after the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, that "the Italians have as much right to take Ethiopia from the coons as the coons had to take it from the boa-constrictors."

Stevens, however, is far more than a hedonist, and is after something far more subtle than being a national poet in the Whitman vein. He is explicitly a philosopher, and the most consistent philosophical preoccupations of his career were aesthetic ones. Certain of his poems are practical aesthetic studies that match the general modernist—and, in painting, specifically Cubist—preoccupation with multiple perspectives. In such poems as "The Man with the Blue Guitar," "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," and "Sea Surface Full of Clouds," he repaints a vignette many times to show the contingency of perception. These poems are more highly esteemed within the Stevens oeuvre than they should be, however congenial they may be to the kind of college course entitled "The Modern Temper."

Aesthetic system-building was a proper role for an artist, Stevens thought, even a necessary one. "It is easy to like Klee and Kandinsky," he wrote a friend. "What is difficult is to like the many minor figures who do not communicate any theory that validates what they do and, in consequence, impress one as being without validity." So Stevens sought to build a (largely self-justifying) system for himself, particularly in the series of essays collected as *The Necessary Angel*. Just what kind of system he thought he was building is hard to tell. First, *The Necessary Angel* draws an explicit polarity between Reality and Imagination for what seems the express purpose of allowing the two to bleed into one another and become indistinguishable. Second, Stevens on principle abjured coming to any conclusions. In an angry letter to the young poet Robert Pack, who had written that "Mr. Stevens's work does not really lead anywhere," Stevens wrote:

> That a man's work should remain indefinite is often intentional. For instance, in projecting a supreme fiction, I cannot imagine anything more fatal than to state it definitely and incautiously. . . . Say what you will. But we are dealing with poetry, not with philosophy. The last thing in the world that I should want to do would be to formulate a system.

University of California Press

Wallace Stevens: "The Dean of Surety Claims"

If Stevens distrusts philosophy, then to what are his more contemplative poems tending? Those critics who look for a larger message in Stevens have been nearly unanimous in identifying what that message is. More than any poet except Rilke, Stevens is invoked as the leading apostle of the great commonplace of modernist poetry: that the quest for beauty (or sensation) through poetry is an appropriate substitute for the religious faith that once ordered the imagination, and that no intelligent person can any longer sustain.

"Sunday Morning," in which an unidentified woman sits in her Stevensian luxury of carpets and coffee and oranges while *not* going to church, is generally read as the greatest poem ever to confront explicitly—and resolve affirmatively—the predicament that results:

> *Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,*
> *In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else*
> *In any balm or beauty of the earth,*
> *Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?*

Divinity must live within herself:
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;
All pleasures and all pains, remembering
The bough of summer and the winter branch.
These are the measures destined for her soul.

It was an idea that Stevens not only evoked in his poems but explicitly embraced in the commonplace books he referred to as his *Adagia*: "After one has abandoned a belief in god, poetry is that essence which takes its place as life's redemption."

This view of Stevens was thrown into confusion by Peter Brazeau's 1983 "oral biography," *Parts of a World*, which asserted, based on interviews with a priest and two close Catholic friends, that Stevens had been baptized a Catholic on his deathbed. Stevens's daughter Holly disputed the claim until her death in 1992, asserting that she had been with her father every day of his last hospital stay and challenging the archdiocese of Hartford to produce a certificate of baptism. (The archdiocese replied that it had not wanted to leave the impression that patients in Catholic hospitals were routinely pressured to convert.)

Kermode and Richardson, in this new Library of America volume, don't allude to the claims of Stevens's conversion. If they doubt such claims, they are in accord with most academics, for whom Stevens's baptism either didn't happen or doesn't matter. Yet there's a revealing urgency in, for example, Helen Vendler's version:

> Perhaps future biographers will tend to find Stevens's daughter the more reliable witness of her father's last days. In any case, the lifework had been brought to a close before Stevens's last days in the hospital, and any judgment on Stevens's work must find irrelevant those events occurring after it was complete.

This extraordinary piece of obscurantism brings us close to the reason everybody in the academy loves Wallace Stevens but nobody visits his grave. The idea of art as a substitute for religion is not only a great commonplace of modernism, but the bedrock on which rests the way poetry is read today.

Helen Vendler and other academics need it because it allows them to lay claim to the role of a vanguard or even a priesthood. And the scoffers at modern poetry need it too, for it provides them an easy target: an admission that for all its arrogance, modern poetry is essentially a second-best, a stand-in, a sham.

The battle over poetry-as-religion has been narrow, intolerant, and (for that very reason) reassuring. A *believing* Stevens would trouble the consensus we've all grown way too comfortable with, academics and philistines alike: that poetry belongs to people who devote their careers to it and is no business of those who don't.

Insurance men, for instance. ♦

The Secret Life of Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

A British Reporter's Conspiracy Compendium

By Michael Isikoff

In a recent *Washington Post* column, Robert Novak assured his readers that Ambrose Evans-Pritchard is a reporter of noteworthy "accuracy" and "industry" who is "no conspiracy theory lunatic." Well, let's see. On page 349 of his new book, *The Secret Life of Bill Clinton*, Evans-Pritchard recycles the following story: In the mid-1980s, Bill Clinton and Oliver North held a secret meeting at an "ammunition storage bunker" where a CIA handler chewed them out for letting the drug running at Mena, Arkansas get out of hand. This was shortly after, according to Evans-Pritchard, Medellín cartel drug pilot Barry Seal showed up in Little Rock and arranged for another secret meeting at Charlie Trie's Chinese restaurant where he plotted a "deniable" airlift of weapons to the Nicaraguan contras. Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen of Evans-Pritchard's book are devoted to Clinton's ties to the "Dixie Mafia"—a purportedly murderous and all-powerful criminal enterprise that has a "deep reach into the U.S. federal government." Chapters Eight through Fifteen make the case for the murder of Vince Foster—a crime so monstrous and devious that it "throws into doubt the durability of the republic."

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard
The Secret Life of Bill Clinton
The Unreported Stories
Regnery, 460 pp., $24.95

Does Novak actually believe this stuff? How about *Washington Times* editor-in-chief Wesley Pruden, who is quoted on the book jacket as praising Evans-Pritchard for his "scoops and disclosures"? The willingness of some conservatives to believe the most ridiculous things about President Clinton is one of the more curious political pathologies of the past few years. Whatever the explanation for it—blind hatred, boredom, the

Michael Isikoff is a correspondent in Newsweek*'s Washington bureau.*

perverse influence of Oliver Stone—there is little doubt that Evans-Pritchard has been the pied piper of the Clinton-obsessed. A Cambridge-educated journalist assigned in late 1992 to cover Washington for London's *Sunday Telegraph*, Evans-Pritchard quickly made a name for himself in right-wing circles by publishing a series of increasingly far-fetched dispatches suggesting all sorts of horrible crimes and misdemeanors by the First Family.

Never simply echoing what American investigative reporters were already writing about the Clintons, Evans-Pritchard aimed to trump them with disclosures far more stunning and consequential—and then bask in the glory bestowed upon him by radio talk-show hosts and Internet crazies. Evans-Pritchard's work, such as it is, consists of little more than wild flights of conspiratorial fancy coupled with outrageous and wholly uncorroborated allegations offered up by his "sources"—largely a collection of oddballs, drug dealers, prostitutes, and borderline psychotics.

Subtitling his book "The Unreported Stories," Evans-Pritchard depicts the mainstream media as spineless lapdogs for failing to follow up on his revelations. He ignores, of course, another possible reason that these stories have gone unreported: There is little reason to imagine that any of them are actually true.

I suspect, however, that Evans-Pritchard isn't really out to prove anything about Clinton, but to spin a colorful yarn. His book tells the saga of a courageous and dedicated journalist—himself—who risks his life and the ridicule of his colleagues to expose the truth about a corrupt and tyrannical government. To accomplish this mission, he taps into an underground network of whistleblowers and dissidents who wage guerrilla warfare by means of underground postings on the World Wide Web.

Some of Evans-Pritchard's scenes are priceless—which is another way of saying that they are beyond parody. Here he is in Little Rock for an interview with Gary Parks, a young man convinced that his father, a private detective who was supposed to have had a file on Clinton's bimbos, was the victim of a mob-style execution ordered by the president. When they meet for dinner at the Little Rock Hilton, Parks brings along an escort who "arrives first, 'sweeping' the lobby, the bar and even the bathrooms, before giving the all clear," writes Evans-Pritchard. "It was like being back in El Salvador or Guatemala, where I had worked as a correspondent during *la violencia* of the early 1980s."

Of course, the aura of menace and intrigue does more than swirl around the author in Little Rock. Back in Washington, Evans-Pritchard breaks one of his big stories: Patrick Knowlton, a construction worker who stopped to urinate at Fort Marcy Park on the afternoon of Vince Foster's death and—here's the key part—recalls seeing a mysterious "Hispanic-looking" man lingering around the parking lot. No sooner has Evans-Pritchard popped this bombshell in the *Telegraph* than, Knowlton reports, menacing-looking men in business suits begin following him and staring really hard at him: Brushing into him and circling "like hyenas," they fix him "with the look of death."

Evans-Pritchard and Knowlton

conclude this is surely the work of goons from the "political police" who are trying to "destabilize" Knowlton before he can tell his story to the federal grand jury. And only one person has the motive, means, and opportunity to dispatch these goons in business suits—that master intimidator and establishment enforcer Kenneth Starr, incensed that Knowlton is going to interfere with his plans to whitewash Vincent Foster's death. That night, reporter and source—joined by their comrade-in-arms, that intrepid Foster death investigator Christopher Ruddy—huddle over dinner, breaking out a bottle of "very expensive" wine. "It was strangely jovial," writes Evans-Pritchard. "There is always a sense of camaraderie when you find yourselves thrown together fighting on every front at once: against the White House, against the Republicans, against the FBI, against the Justice Department, against the whole power structure of the United States."

All this could probably be chalked up as harmless nonsense were it not that some respectable people treat Evans-Pritchard seriously. His reporting is so scurrilous and irresponsible that he would have been thrown out of any newsroom in this country in a flash. Consider what he writes about Clinton's days in Arkansas. There are plenty of legitimate questions about Clinton's past, but what is one to make of Evans-Pritchard's breathless account of the allegations of Sharlene Wilson, a former Little Rock bar girl, who, we are told, used to attend "toga parties" and "Babylonian orgies" where Clinton would cavort with teenage girls and "avidly" snort cocaine? Wilson is a convicted drug dealer, currently in an Arkansas prison, who makes all sorts of fantastic claims, including having transported planeloads of cocaine from Mena airport to the Dallas Cowboys' stadium. (Where? The fifty-yard line?) There isn't a single corroborating witness for any of the events involving Clinton she describes.

Elsewhere, Evans-Pritchard recounts in great detail the story of Gary Parks's father, Jerry—the aforementioned presidentially murdered private detective with the bimbo file. As it happens there is no evidence Parks's file ever existed, and Little Rock police long ago concluded that his real enough murder was most likely related to a business dispute that had nothing to do with Bill Clinton.

Still, Evans-Pritchard offers up the claims of Parks's widow who "with time and new drugs" (not to mention a Clinton-hating second husband) is now telling stories she never mentioned to the police when her husband died in 1993—among them, that her late husband carried out "sensitive assignments" under the direction of Vince Foster. (You see how it all fits together?) Just a night or two before Foster's death, it seems, the deputy White House counsel called her husband from a pay phone and demanded a "complete set" of "the files" so he could take them to Hillary. Her husband, we are assured, then shouted, "You're not going to use those files! . . . My name is all over this stuff. You can't give Hillary those files. You can't! Remember what she did, what you told me she did. She's capable of doing anything." To which Foster, in this conversation between two dead men Evans-Pritchard recreates verbatim, offered the reassurance, "We can trust Hil. Don't worry."

Oddly, the part of Evans-Pritchard's book that is getting the most attention actually has little to do with Clinton and his friends. It involves the Oklahoma City bombing and, in the seven chapters that make up the book's first 108 pages, Evans-Pritchard wallows in the waters of an entirely different conspiracy school—a group of victims' family members and freelance investigators convinced the government is

covering up the truth behind the destruction of the Murrah building. As it happens, there are grounds to wonder if convicted bomber Timothy McVeigh may have had accomplices besides Terry Nichols. There was, after all, the elusive "John Doe #2." And some two weeks before the bombing, McVeigh—a man of singularly nasty and racist views—did indeed place a phone call to Elohim City, Arkansas, site of a loony sect training for battle with America's "Zionist Occupied Government."

Beyond that, hard evidence is hard to come by. But that does not stop Evans-Pritchard: He is convinced that McVeigh was manipulated by secret government informants posing as neo-Nazi fanatics and that the bombing itself was a Clinton administration "sting" of the far Right that ran amok. He identifies as the linchpin of this botched government operation one Andreas Strassmeir, a former German army officer who apparently spent time at Elohim City. Evans-Pritchard quotes the recollections of some cocktail waitresses at a Tulsa strip club called Lady Godiva's who thought they saw McVeigh sitting in a booth with a man who looked like Strassmeir on April 8, 1995. A possible lead—only, as Evans-Pritchard is forced to concede, hotel records indicate that McVeigh was in Kingman, Arizona, on that day. The hotel records are probably fishy, he concludes. In the end, whatever Strassmeir's ties to McVeigh (if any), there is absolutely nothing to suggest either one of them was in the government's employ at the time of the bombing, much less that federal agents put them up to it or that the Clinton administration is covering it all up.

It is probably professionally hazardous to be too dismissive of the conspiracy theories offered up by the likes of Evans-Pritchard. Who knows what tornado might yet blow through Arkansas, turning up records proving that Bill Clinton is indeed a CIA-controlled cokehead mobster who executes his political enemies? But for the moment I prefer my own conspiracy theory: Evans-Pritchard doesn't believe a word he has written in *The Secret Life of Bill Clinton*. According to my new theory, Evans-Pritchard's book is all devious disinformation—part of a far more elaborate government sting, run no doubt by that master control agent James Carville, designed to discredit critics of the Clinton White House by making them look like a bunch of blithering idiots. ♦

B&A

Semper Fi?

A Few Good Men Are Hard To Find

By Mackubin Thomas Owens

The American military, writes Thomas Ricks in his extraordinary new book, *Making the Corps*, "is extremely good today." Indeed, it is "arguably the best it has ever been and probably for the first time in history the best in the world." But as good as it is, it is beset by the changing nature of its security tasks, by substantial cuts in defense spending, and, most important, by the American people's ambivalence toward their own military.

Thomas E. Ricks
Making the Corps
Scribners, 320 pp., $24

What then, asks Ricks, the Pentagon correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* and perhaps the finest military journalist writing today, should be the character of our armed services? Should military service be "just another job" carried out by an organization that mirrors American society, or should the military maintain a distinct ethos that "differs in critical respects from the society it is sworn to protect"?

The Marine Corps has always opted for difference. Indeed, "the Marines are distinct even within the separate world of the U.S. military," notes Ricks. And the distinguishing characteristic of Marines is precisely their culture: "formalistic, insular, elitist, with a deep anchor in their own history and mythology. . . . It is what holds them together."

Ricks observes that if an American soldier is asked to identify himself, he is likely to say that he is "in the Army," while a Marine usually replies, "I'm a Marine." That small difference is significant: "The first is a matter of membership or occupation; the second speaks to identity."

In *Making the Corps*, Ricks shows how this Marine identity is created, following the members of a recruit platoon through the rigors of their training at Parris Island, South Carolina and then through their first year as full-fledged Marines. With empathy for the recruits, appreciation for what is at stake in their training, and respect for their drill instructors, the author conveys the "unfailing alchemy that converts unoriented youths into proud, self-reliant, stable citizens—citizens into whose hands the nation's affairs may be safely entrusted" (as it was once described by Victor H. Krulak, a retired Marine general and father of the current corps commandant).

In Ricks's analysis, two things make the Marines what they are: their understanding of the importance of unit cohesion for victory, and

Mackubin Thomas Owens is professor of strategy and force planning at the Naval War College.

the "expeditionary" nature of the Marine Corps.

While feminists dismiss the military experience of cohesion as "male bonding," research has shown that comradeship is critical for those facing death and misery together. The Marines have traditionally recognized that a central goal of recruit training is to instill an attachment to other Marines and to the corps as an institution. It is not insignificant that Ricks chooses for his epigraph the St. Crispin's Day speech of Shakespeare's Henry V before the battle of Agincourt: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; for he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother."

Out of necessity, all the branches of the armed services have recently developed some capability to move rapidly on short notice, but this approach to national defense has always constituted the essence of the Marine Corps. "'Expeditionary' is not so much a mission as it is a mindset," observes the former commandant, General Carl Mundy. The modern image of the Marine Corps was made in large-scale amphibious assaults during World War II, but before the war the Marines had specialized in what the *Quadrennial Defense Review* now calls "small-scale contingencies." They had, in fact, literally "written the book," the *Small Wars Manual*, first issued in 1940, which summarized the lessons of Marine operations, largely in the Caribbean, between the two world wars.

Ricks notes that this manual is back in use and that it is of great help in the "imperial policing" for which the Marines have often been employed. This expeditionary, small-war approach is far more appropriate to what will most likely characterize the security environment for the foreseeable future than are the two other approaches sometimes touted as the answer to U.S. military needs: the long-range precision strike (advocated primarily by the Air Force), and the overwhelming "boots on the ground" technique (pushed primarily by the Army).

Of course, some have contended that the Marine warrior ethos so well described by Ricks has become anachronistic. Ricks disagrees, but he is disturbed by some of the tendencies he observes in today's corps, and it is when he writes provocatively about the military's relation to civilian society that his book is especially important. In pursuit of their own culture of military excellence, Ricks believes, the Marines have become increasingly alienated from civilians, moving "from thinking of themselves as a better version of American society to a kind of dissenting critique of it." And while the Marines remain distinct from the other services, they also, says Ricks, represent what the military as a whole will look like in the future as defense budgets decline and the other services become smaller and more isolated.

Several years ago, there was a spate of articles—by Richard Kohn, Edward Luttwak, Russell Weigley, and others—suggesting that relations between the military and civilians in America were decaying. Their thrust was that the military had become too politically powerful, and the villain was frequently declared to be General Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who, they claimed, was using his expanded powers under the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 to influence national policy far beyond the bounds of national security.

Making the Corps, however, argues that at the present moment the more worrisome problem is the general attitude of the military toward civilians. Ricks is struck by the fact that after boot camp, most of the newly minted Marines whose odyssey he has recorded are disdainful of the life and friends they left behind. Indeed, those who succeed in the Marines are the ones who cut their ties to their old lives, while those who fail are the ones unwilling or unable to make the transition.

While Ricks admires Marine culture and the way in which recruits imbibe that culture, he is concerned that the resulting alienation of the Marines, and ultimately of the entire military, is dangerous in the long run—especially when combined with what he believes is an unprecedented politicizing of the officer corps. For Ricks, the potential danger to America is the emergence of a large, estranged, and semiautonomous military. The United States may be "drifting into a situation in which the military is neither well understood nor well used, yet—unlike in previous eras of military estrangement—is large, politically active, and employed frequently on a large scale in executing American foreign policy."

This estrangement of the military from civilian society, together with a

military disdain for civilians, is particularly dangerous in situations where American troops are used to quell disorder on American soil. "When the military is politically active," Ricks writes, "when it believes it is uniquely aware of certain dangers, when it discusses responding to domestic threats to cherished values, then it edges toward becoming an independent actor in domestic politics."

Ricks himself admits that he might be making too much of this—that the military might merely be reverting to its pre-World War II status: "socially isolated, politically conservative, and geographically located on bases in the South and West." Although he calls this view complacent, his concern about the dangers of a semiautonomous military discounts the degree to which the military profession in this country is committed without reservation to the principle that the military is absolutely subordinate to civilian authority.

Indeed, despite Ricks's analysis, the real threat to balanced relations between the military and civilians is not increasing military insularity but the dilution of the virtues necessary for victory on the battlefield. The great value of the Marine Corps is that it is the only service that has so far resisted the crowding out of traditional military virtues by practices and values more appropriate to civilian life. Only the Marines still emphasize preparation for combat as the justification for recruit training, and only the Marines maintain single-sex basic training.

In the view, for example, of Sara E. Lister, assistant secretary of the Army and the Army's top personnel official, this is exactly the problem. "The Army is much more connected to society than the Marines," she declared in an astonishing set of remarks made at a seminar in Baltimore on October 26, 1997. "The Marines are extremists. Wherever you have extremists, you've got some risks of total disconnection with society. And that's a little dangerous." (On November 14, after news of her comments received wide reporting and Congress passed a resolution seeking her immediate ouster, Secretary Lister resigned.)

The *Los Angeles Times* recently published an article entitled "Boot Camp Kicks Its Harsh Image," describing how "the military is stripping away the sharp edges and hard knocks from this fabled test of manhood."

As an example of the "kinder, gentler" approach that now characterizes so much of today's training, the article cited the Navy's Great Lakes center. Here a trainee who needs extra motivation is "offered emotional support, instructed on deep breathing and stress reduction, and given a chance to explore his feelings by pasting cut-out magazine photos on a piece of cardboard." The mind boggles at the thought of such sailors manning a ship on fire (which happens even in peacetime) or actually under attack.

A liberal democracy faces a dilemma when it comes to having a military, for that military cannot govern itself by the liberal principles it ultimately defends. It must be governed by values that many civilians see as brutal, because the military is one of the few jobs where one may have to die or order someone else to die. If we cannot count on preparation for that eventuality, the military will fail—and if it does, the liberal society it protects may not survive. A soft, feminized military, not a military motivated by a warrior ethos, is the real threat. In *Making the Corps,* Thomas Ricks intuitively understands this, but has chosen to worry primarily about something else. ♦

A Day in the Life of John F. Kennedy, as revealed in...

	***...The Dark Side of Camelot*, by Seymour Hersh**	*...The Suck-up Side of Camelot*, by Arthur Schlesinger Jr.
8:00 a.m.	**...It can now be revealed that Kennedy spent each morning skinny-dipping in the White House pool, as two young aides, Fiddle and Faddle, frolicked naked around him. On this particular morning, the First Lady's footsteps could be heard...**	...His morning exercise regimen was arduous; Kennedy headed for the pool with two physical therapists helping him recover from wounds heroically suffered while defending freedom in World War II...
9:00	**...Kennedy was screaming into the phone, sources now reveal. He knew he had to terrorize Palm Beach socialite Durie Malcolm to prevent her from revealing their secret marriage decades before...**	...The President took it upon himself to speak forcefully with prominent Southerners, hoping to undo decades of bigotry and prejudice that had plagued the region...
10:00	**...After they were finished, Kennedy rose from bed and asked Marilyn how much it would cost in money or barbiturates to buy her silence about their affair...**	...After they were finished with their exegesis of the plays of Sheridan, the President asked Arthur Miller how much it would take in money or barbiturates to keep that wonderful poet Robert Frost alive...
12:00 p.m.	**...Kennedy's lunch with Mob boss Sam Giancana was a lusty, raucous affair. Kennedy thanked him for stealing the 1960 election...**	...The President lunched with leaders from the Italian-American community. He was keen to solicit their views on Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*...
1:00	**...Kennedy's thoughts were never far from Cuba. Little-noticed documents reveal that he spent an hour thinking up ways to assassinate Cuban dictator Fidel Castro...**	...The President's thoughts were never far from the suffering of those in the developing world. For an hour, he pondered ways to improve the curveball of Cuban pitcher Luis Tiant...
2:00	**...He made a quick detour to have sex with the First Lady's press secretary. These were fleeting episodes for Kennedy, but they made a lasting impression on the women involved...**	...The President tarried a moment with press secretary Pierre Salinger to analyze the danger surface-to-air missile technology poses to civilian airliners. A quick lecture for Kennedy, this made a lasting impression on Pierre...
3:00	**...Kennedy, in a murderous mood, sketched out assassination plans for Diem and his brother...**	...There was nothing the President enjoyed more than carefully crafting the phrases he would use in his speeches. "I would never dream of using a ghost," he mused...
4:00	**...The phone call from Khrushchev couldn't have come at a worse time. He had just managed to squeeze the Andover field hockey team into a single king-sized bed...**	...Khrushchev's call couldn't have come at a worse time. At last he had persuaded celebrated intellectual Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to describe his "cycles of history" theory...
5:00	**...In the course of the ceremony, Kennedy was introduced to a young man named Bill Clinton. The President sensed that here was a young fellow who could carry on where he would leave off...**	...In the course of the ceremony, Kennedy was introduced to a young man named Bill Clinton. The President sensed that here was a young fellow who could carry on where he would leave off...