the weekly Standard

AN APPEAL TO GOP PRO-CHOICERS
NOEMIE EMERY

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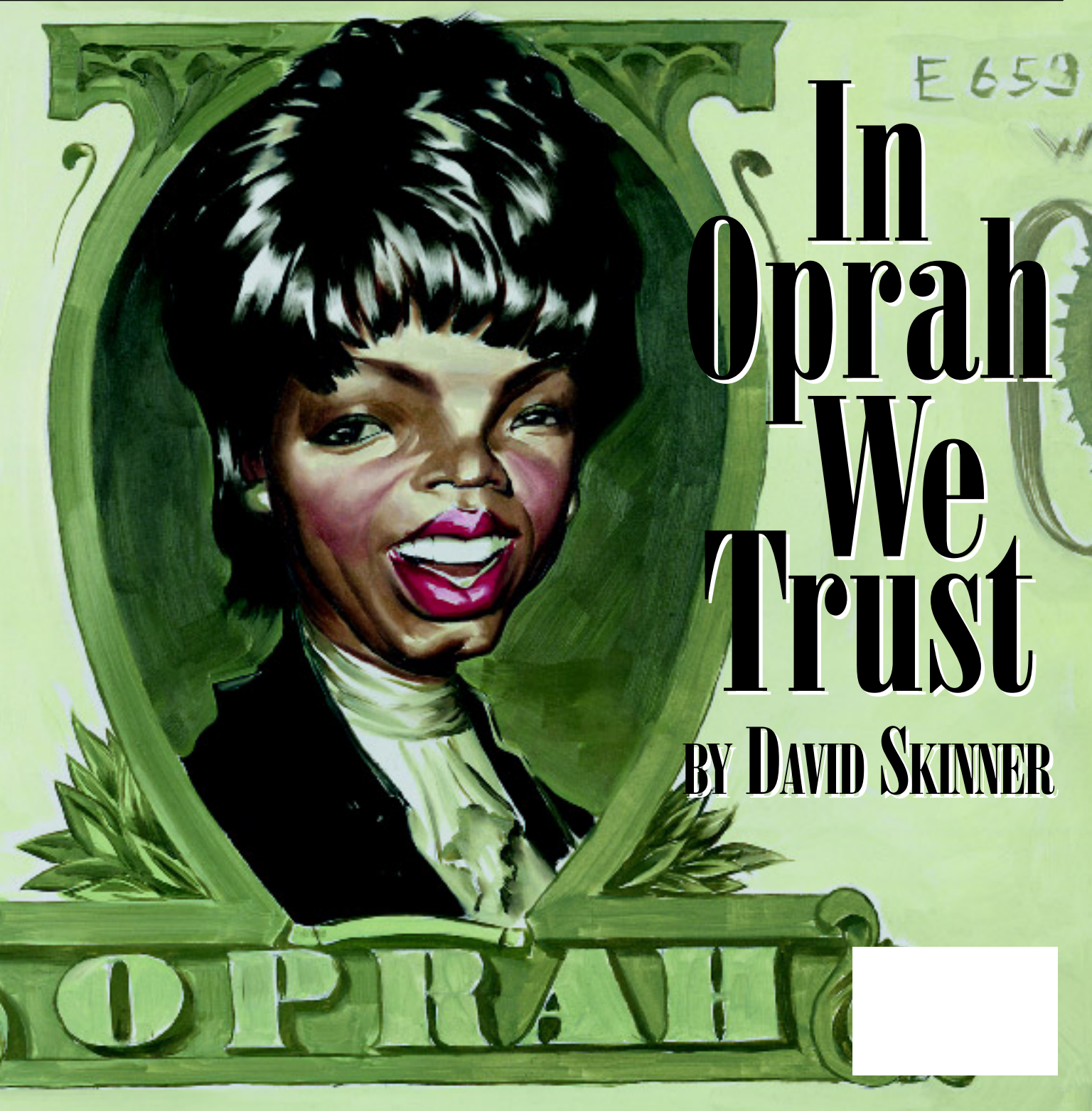

In Oprah We Trust

BY DAVID SKINNER

THIS IS A COMBINED ISSUE. THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE WEEKLY STANDARD WILL APPEAR IN TWO WEEKS.

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the weekly Standard

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The Cicero of the Senate?

THE SCRAPBOOK is no great fan of secretary of energy Bill Richardson, who probably deserves everything he got last week when he was keelhauled by the Senate Armed Services Committee. But was that outburst by Robert Byrd really necessary?

Byrd, the senior Democrat in the Senate, is famed for inserting "classical" references into his soliloquies, and was true to form. He started by railing against Richardson in a soundbite that made the evening news: "I think it's a rather sad story, that you had a bright and brilliant career that you had never—that you would never again receive the support of the Senate of the United States for any office to which you might be appointed. It's beyond—you have squandered your treasure, and I am sorry."

But Byrd was just getting warmed up, and the rest of his remarks have gone unreported. Here's how he found his opening:

> BYRD: Mr. Secretary, I find it to be a bit ironic that you found out some things on March 28, I believe. That was the date you mentioned. March 28?
>
> RICHARDSON: No, senator. March 28 is the date that the FBI believes that the disks were last reported.
>
> BYRD: It was a bit ironic that it recalled to my memory something which really has no bearing here. That on March 28 in 193 A.D., Didius Julianus purchased the throne of the Roman Empire at an auction. As I recall, he paid 62 hundred and 50 whatever your coins were called at that time to each soldier. The soldiers were conducting the auction. This was on March 28th, 193 A.D. Is it me perhaps [yes, Senator, it's you], or is there reason for thinking of that date in light of what you've said? Because Didius Julianus, one of the wealthy senators, never enjoyed being ruler of the Empire after he had bought it at an auction. He held the Empire for 66 days, from March 28 until June the 2nd, on which date he was escorted by a Roman soldier into the Roman baths and executed. Perhaps we ought to seek the penalty that one has to pay either for an act that he has done or for having failed to act.

Yes, a little learning is a dangerous thing. Perhaps Richardson should have prepared himself with that "classic" comeback: "I know now how the Philistines felt when Sampson came after them: slain by the jawbone of an ass." ♦

State of the State Department

In keeping with the Clinton administration's rigorously non-judgmental foreign policy, the State Department announced last week that it was retiring the term "rogue states" as an official designation for such behaviorally challenged nations as Iraq, Libya, and North Korea. Like, who's to say who's a rogue anymore, anyway—you know? Henceforth, said department spokesman Richard Boucher, nations that sort of have a tendency once in a while to sometimes do some things that maybe are kind of troubling to us will be known as "states of concern."

Mickey Kaus, CEO of the dot-com empire Kausfiles.com, rightly noted the limpness of the new State Department designation. Thumbing through his thesaurus, Kaus offered several alternatives: "impish states," for example, or "mischief-loving states." THE SCRAPBOOK, however, sees more promise in extending the new "states of . . ." formulation. Really poor countries, for instance, might become "states of despair." A country with crumbling infrastructure could be a "state of disrepair." Nations with strong psychoanalytic traditions—well, Austria—might be "states of mind." And disaster-prone countries? "States of emergency."

If nothing else, it would be fun to watch spokesman Boucher wrestle with these new locutions. Just last week, according to the *Washington Times*, he said the United States—a "state of grace," as we like to think of it—would respond forcefully "if we see states of concern that continue to be of concern because they are not willing to deal with some of the issues we are concerned about." ♦

Race-based Republicans

June 16 brought news, in the form of a press release from the Republican National Committee, of the "J.C. Watts Civic Achievement Scholarship Program." That would be Oklahoma's Republican congressman J.C. Watts, who is black. The scholarship, an annual affair, will pay for "our outstanding Republican campaign management and finance schools" and will be awarded to "nine civically-inspired HBCU students." Those would be students at "historically black colleges and universities."

Because these scholarships are earmarked merely for students attending particular schools, and not explicitly for students of a particular skin color, THE SCRAPBOOK supposes that they technically do not run afoul of the Civ-

il Rights Act of 1964. If the scholarships were explicitly designated for "black students," on the other hand, they would be fabulously, undeniably illegal. Which is why THE SCRAPBOOK is grimly amused to note the headline on the RNC's press release: "RNC Announces Scholarships for Black Students."

We note that the party platform still quaintly proclaims: "Because we believe rights inhere in individuals, not in groups, we will attain our nation's goal of equal rights without quotas or other forms of preferential treatment. We scorn Bill Clinton's notion that any person should be denied a job, promotion, contract or a chance at higher education because of their race or gender." Then again, "Republican campaign management and finance schools" probably don't qualify as higher education. ♦

Just Call Them AID Workers

Since time immemorial, cultures have attempted to euphemistically gussy up the profession most of us simply know as "prostitution." Castro's Cuba has its "tourism consultants"; World War II-era Japanese soldiers had their Korean "comfort women"; Ukraine has its "entertainers." And now the U.S. government has joined the fun, so to speak, with a notification from the United States Agency for International Development (AID) to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about its latest Congo policy.

AID proudly touted its AIDS-prevention "condom social marketing strategies," which were targeted at "commercial sex workers" (as opposed to nonprofit sex workers?). AID's linguistic sleight of hand was enough to have Garrett Grigsby, the committee's Republican deputy staff director, seeing scarlet. He fired off a memo to the agency, pointing out that "commercial sex worker" is "bad English . . . why use a three-word phrase when a one-word alternative would do?" Likewise, Grigsby helpfully instructed that "such silly names" make "AID a laughingstock. Do you have any idea the belly-laughs provided to us simply by reading official AID program notifications?" Finally, Grigsby pointed out that the term was a metaphor for the general failure of foreign aid: "Because AID has contributed to removing the shame associated with being a prostitute, it is more difficult to stop people from prostituting themselves."

The bad news for Grigsby is that AID doesn't seem terribly anxious to start calling a whore a whore. The good news is, we now have a handy euphemism for ill-conceived, moronic bureaucratese. Just call it an "AID program notification." ♦

E-mail THE SCRAPBOOK

THE SCRAPBOOK is now reachable 24/7. To paraphrase Alice Roosevelt Longworth, if you don't have anything nice to say, e-mail it to Scrapbook@weeklystandard.com. ♦

Casual

Foot Fop

I could be wrong about this, but I'm guessing that not many readers of this magazine know who Chad Muska is. Let me quickly break the tension by reporting that Chad Muska is a big name in skate boarding—a kid of 22, long turned professional—and, yo, I'm wearing the dude's shoes. Not his actual shoes, but the shoes he personally helped design for Circa Footwear, Inc., of San Clemente, California; I purchased these shoes this past spring for $85, plus tax, from a mild-mannered, lavishly tattooed guy in Petaluma, California, in a shop called Brotherhood of the Board. The shoes are gray and red and white, and made of leather, suede, mesh, plastic, rubber, and, for all I know, plutonium. Like all skateboard shoes, they are heavily padded, to give the feet added protection against scrapes and collisions. I call them my Chads—actually, ma Chads—and I'm entirely nuts about them.

They haven't been getting much press, ma Chads. I wear them for long walks, and mostly in the neighborhood. A stockboy with a missing tooth in a local supermarket told me he thought they were very cool. A few friends have stared at them, with a look suggesting that this time I may have gone too far and might next show up in a plumed hat. But for the most part, they go unnoticed. People nowadays are very tolerant, at least about one's clothes, though I recently received an invitation to a cocktail party that noted, Dress: Business Casual: no jeans or tennis shoes. That night ma Chads stayed home.

When R.H. Tawney (1880-1962), the great economic historian, was asked if he noted any progress in his lifetime, he replied, yes, in the deportment of dogs, who seemed better behaved than when he was a boy. My own answer to the question of notable progress in my lifetime is, yes, in the manufacture of gym shoes, as they were called when I was young and as I still think of them, though in a pretentious, slightly preppy phase I used to refer to them as sneakers. When I was a small boy, two gym-shoe manufacturers, U.S. Keds and P.F. Flyers, dominated the market; both turned out ugly pieces of business made of canvas and rubber and sold in black or brown and in white for girls.

Darren Gygi

By the time of my early adolescence, things began to look up. As a boy tennis player, with strokes more elegant than effective, I would wear only Jack Purcells, a low-cut white canvas shoe with a rounded rubber toe across which ran a blue line. As an aspiring high-school basketball player and general gym rat, I wouldn't wear anything other than white Chuck Taylor All-Stars, with red and blue trim. Even now, more than forty years later, I can recall buying my first pair, at a walk-down sporting-goods shop in Chicago at the corner of Damon and Foster near Amundsen High School. I wish I could say that they improved my game, but, Chuck Taylors and all, I never went beyond playing on the frosh-soph team.

I put in perhaps twenty years without owning any gym shoes. During this period, which I used to catch up on my reading, I entered no gyms, played no games, had need of none other than street shoes, which in my case meant various kinds of loafers. But around the time when I began playing racquetball, a sporting-goods shop roughly a block from my apartment began selling gym shoes at an annual sidewalk sale at impressively low prices. I bought a pair of Nike high-tops there for ten bucks. The following year I bought another pair, this time low-cut Converse, in purple—purple and white being nearby Northwestern University's colors—for six bucks. When the salesman asked what activity I intended to use the shoes for, I replied, "Napping."

Ma Chads are my second pair of skateboard shoes. My first were purchased at another so-called "extreme sports" shop—extreme sports, I gather, include skate boarding, wake boarding, snow boarding, surfing, and roller blading—this one called the Shred Shop in Skokie, Illinois. Every salesman in the place wore a baseball cap on backwards. None seemed close to 30 or even imaginable at 30. I tried on a pair of elegant bone-colored shoes with grey, apricot, and blue trim made by a company called Gravis. Very comfortable kickers, these. As the salesman watched me test them for fit, I told him that I thought they would work well enough for my specialty, which was jumping off buildings of fewer than six stories. For a thirtieth of a nanosecond, he may have believed me.

Which leads smoothly into the question of what sort of shoes one ought to select for one's own burial. I'm not sure whether one goes to the grave shod. If so, it would be a shame to have to live through eternity with shoes that pinch. But which shoes to choose? Loafers? Plain-toed Cordovans? Well-padded Chads? Nothing, certainly, from the shoe company called Mephisto. The answer is obvious: wing-tips, so that you get the chance to discover if those babies really fly.

Joseph Epstein

Correspondence

Return To Mayberry

Kudos to Matt Labash for his piece on the Mayberrys and their struggles with the slumlord also known as the vice president ("Sanctimonious Slumlord," June 19). One would think that with all the knowledge, wherewithal, and pluck Al Gore has shown in reinventing our entire federal government, inventing the Internet all by himself, and perfecting the ability to address a whole nation as if it consisted of hearing-impaired first graders, he would be able to harness his power to assist his fellow citizens and tenants in their time of need.

It is tempting to find a great deal of humor in this story, and relish the delicious ironies and hypocrisies exhibited by Gore and his acolytes in the Democratic party, but the Mayberrys' plight is impossible to ignore and shouldn't be dismissed so casually. Labash described their struggles with the utmost sensitivity (compassionate conservatism at work?) and decorum.

I hope the Mayberrys can find decent housing and a more attentive landlord. In the meantime, should they leave for good, their house ought to remain as it is and stand as a monument to the Clinton-Gore administration—the sewage, filth, and decay in that house provide an adequate representation of what Clinton and Gore have wrought for us during their regime. Or perhaps the Gores can move back there on January 20 and get in touch with their roots.

Matthew May
Birmingham, MI

The Ugly Side of Science

I read Claudia Winkler's article about David Reimer and Dr. John Money with a sense of horror, anger, and shame ("Boy, Interrupted," June 19). I am a physician who graduated from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 1976, and I was able to observe Dr. Money's antics at close quarters.

I felt then that Dr. Money was a man with a big dirty mouth and a small dirty mind. His human sexology course ranked somewhat below a bachelor party, both conceptually and aesthetically. It should come as no surprise that Dr. Money's primary visual aid consisted of third-rate pornography. Mediocrity, like water, seeks its own level.

I'm horrified that a defenseless child was subjected to such vile "therapy." I'm angry that Dr. Money got away with it for so long. I'm ashamed that the medical profession, my profession, bought this snake oil. Ashamed that this mendacious charlatan was still bragging of his "success" in David's case to medical students like me in 1973 and beyond. Ashamed that an institution like Johns Hopkins would lend its prestige to such a creature.

Why is this man still receiving

research grant money? Why isn't he being prosecuted?

Timothy L. Huettner
Tulsa, OK

Bob Hope Is Really Funny

Andrew Ferguson just doesn't understand Bob Hope ("Hope Springs Eternal," June 19). No matter what you think of his humor, he is a national treasure. Thousands of American GI's in numerous theaters of war were brought a little closer to home by the man who, above all, represented home to them. Frankly, there are many of us who think he made some entertaining and very funny movies—especially the "Road" pictures with Bing Crosby.

Ferguson shows how perfectly ignorant of the stage he is by painting Bob Hope as mediocre. The fact that Hope's jokes are not funny when read by the average Joe Citizen doesn't surprise anyone. Most one-liners lie flat and fairly well lifeless when read by someone other than the person for whom they were written. What a shame Ferguson didn't take enough time with his article to understand some simple truths about comedy, let alone taking enough time to understand the popularity of Bob Hope.

With most successful entertainers, especially comedians, it was never so much what they said as how they said it. Hope is and always was a master at delivering the one-liner. For what he did, and how he did it, he should be foremost among nominees for best entertainer of the 20th century.

Allen N. Griffin
Ty Ty, GA

How Low Can They Go?

Thanks for the fine piece by Jay Nordlinger on the wrist tap given Kenneth Bacon and Clifford Bernath by defense secretary Bill Cohen ("Why Didn't Bacon Get Fried?" June 12). Cohen's failure to fire Bernath and Bacon, who either knew or should have known that what they did was wrong and illegal, is a sad commentary on how low this administration has brought standards of justice and common decency.

Mary D. Brvenik
Storrs, CT

He Works the Saxophone

In "The Ivory League," Richard Kostelanetz lists many distinguished graduates of Juilliard (June 12). However he missed one very influential instrumentalist—Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan. Greenspan's instrument was (and perhaps still is) the saxophone. He at one time played in Nixon lawyer Leonard Garment's band. Perhaps after next January Greenspan will play a duet with Bill Clinton.

Mort Lurie
Raleigh, NC

the weekly Standard

Bush v. Gore and *Roe* v. *Wade*

Al Gore and George W. Bush would lead this country in different directions. The two candidates disagree about Social Security, income tax policy, environmental protection, and national missile defense, for example. Those are important issues, especially the last one, and the distinctions between the two men are genuine.

And yet there is another issue, so far barely mentioned in the campaign. Here the choice between Gore and Bush is starkest of all. Here the practical implications of that choice are unequaled in gravity. The issue is the composition of the federal judiciary. Shouldn't an explicit discussion of that issue begin sooner rather than later? And shouldn't George W. Bush be the candidate to begin it?

Right now the Supreme Court and the federal courts in general are closely divided on a host of crucial questions: abortion rights, racial preferences, religious liberties, and school choice, for instance. Judges appointed by a President Gore, like those already appointed by President Clinton, would virtually all of them move in a single direction through this theoretical docket: to the defense, and even the expansion, of the Warren Court legacy. In other words, a federal judiciary dominated by 12 or 16 years of Clinton-Gore appointees would cement modern judicial activism—legitimating and extending the *Roe* v. *Wade* abortion regime, excluding religion from the public square, and reconstitutionalizing counting by race. American constitutional law is already only tenuously related to the Constitution which purportedly forms its basis. A White House term or two for Al Gore and constitutional law will likely slip its moorings altogether and simply become an instrument of the left's social and cultural agenda.

One can be less certain about Bush's appointees than Gore's. Some would probably be men and women like Justices Kennedy and O'Connor, who at least make common cause from time to time with the court's authentic constitutionalists. Others would actually be constitutionalists of the Scalia-Thomas variety—after all, Bush has said that Scalia is the justice he most admires. And the worst mistake made by George W.'s father—David Souter—would most likely not be repeated. In sum: With a Bush administration, there is a fighting chance to roll back the worst excesses of liberal judicial activism, even a prospect of removing *Roe*, keystone of the modern imperial judiciary.

Will the courts become a big issue in the 2000 campaign? Yes, probably. For one thing, the subject's intrinsic significance will eventually become apparent. For another thing, Al Gore may not wait until that happens. If Gore remains behind in the polls—say, by the Democratic convention in mid-August—he will gamble on abortion. Bush would refashion the courts to overturn *Roe* and destroy the right of a woman to make her choice along with her doctor, Gore will say. American opinion on abortion is complicated, but when the question is framed in certain ways—in the ways Gore will frame it—the answers can be made to favor the pro-choice side. And if Bush's response is hesitant or inconsistent, Gore's gamble may prove profitable.

Imagine: Gore raises the issue of *Roe*. Bush defensively asserts that he will impose no litmus test on judicial nominees. Gore then points out that Bush has praised Scalia and condemned *Roe*. Bush comes under pressure from pro-life supporters to reiterate those views—while he is simultaneously struggling to play them down. And the issue finally explodes into a question about Bush's sincerity and his understanding of a fundamental domestic policy debate.

It doesn't take much imagination, does it?

George W. Bush doesn't much like to talk about abortion. He needs to be ready to do so just the same. And it would be sensible for him to do so first, and clearly, before he comes under heated and confusion-inducing assault. He might truthfully point out, for example, that overturning *Roe* would not mean the end of abortion in the United States; it would simply return the issue to state legislatures, from which a patchwork of abortion laws would soon emerge. Bush might go on to point out that, even post-*Roe*, a massive effort of public persuasion would be necessary to achieve the pro-life movement's full hopes. And he might go on to explain why those hopes are just, and worthwhile. Will all of this be in the form of a preemptive, well-considered presentation by Bush? Or will Bush only address the issue as damage control, in response to a slashing attack from Gore—in which case Bush could appear ashamed of his own pro-life convictions, and could suffer accordingly?

In the coming campaign, the courts, and *Roe* v. *Wade* in particular, could well matter more than anyone now supposes. The Bush campaign should strike first.

—William Kristol

Devine Intervention

It may be just what the Gore campaign needs.

BY MATTHEW REES

LATE IN THE EVENING of June 14, Tony Coelho called Al Gore at the Sheraton Towers in Manhattan and told him that owing to health problems he'd be unable to continue as chairman of Gore's campaign. The first people Gore told were his wife, Tipper, and his brother-in-law, Frank Hunger, who were with him in the room. Next, he called Tad Devine. Tad who? A veteran Democratic campaign strategist, Devine has quietly emerged as one of Gore's most influential and trusted advisers.

Don't worry if you've never heard of Devine. Outside the cloistered world of Democratic party operatives, this 45-year-old Irish Catholic who's universally described as "well organized" and a "nice guy," is virtually unknown. But those who have worked with him, and against him, believe he's among the Democratic party's top two or three general-election strategists. And Gore's recent request that Devine assume an elevated role at campaign headquarters in Nashville "sends the right signal," says Mike McCurry, the former Clinton spokesman, who toiled with Devine on senator Bob Kerrey's presidential campaign in 1992. "Democrats have been getting a little nervous, and Tad's elevation will help put them at ease."

It's natural to wonder why Devine is such an obscure figure after two presidential campaigns that turned consultants like James Carville, George Stephanopoulos, and Paul Begala into celebrities. Four reasons stand out. First, Devine completely missed out on the Clinton years for the heresy of having managed Kerrey's brief campaign in '92 (Clintonites have long memories about such things). Second, his expertise has been in mind-numbing subjects, like the rules governing how the Democratic party chooses its presidential nominees (North Korean elections almost look democratic by comparison). Third, when reporters write about Gore's consultants, they invariably set their sights on veteran pit bulls like Carter Eskew and Bob Shrum. Fourth, Devine studiously avoids the limelight, believing the candidate, not the consultant, should get the media coverage.

Eskew recruited Devine to join the campaign in a part-time role last August, when Gore was reeling and looking decidedly weak compared with Bill Bradley. His responsibilities, then and now, covered almost every aspect of the campaign; one Gore aide describes Devine as a "day-to-day *consigliere*." And it didn't take long for him to have an impact. Parting company with a number of other senior campaign advisers, he recommended Gore take on Bradley immediately. In late September, Gore began questioning Bradley's credentials as a Democrat, and he continued to pound the former basketball star all the way through the primary season.

Devine also drew on his party-rules expertise to try to stack the primary calendar in Gore's favor. Repeatedly lobbying members of the Democratic National Committee's Rules and Bylaws Committee, he argued that no primaries should be held between New Hampshire and Super Tuesday, five weeks later. This wasn't always an easy case to make, given the desire of many states to be heavyweights in the nominating process. Devine figured that with the calendar he favored, Bradley might pull an upset in New Hampshire but couldn't immediately exploit the victory. Similarly, if Bradley lost in New Hampshire, the defeat would stay with him like an albatross. This, of course, is precisely what happened.

In retrospect, Gore had little trouble sinking Bradley. But few people were predicting that outcome last year, so Devine spent much of his time reassuring groups like labor leaders and Democratic officeholders. He presented a simple, yet compelling, case for Gore's nomination being all but inevitable, citing everything from Bradley's weakness beyond New Hampshire to Gore's early success in locking up support from superdelegates, which put him 40 percent of the way to the nomination before a vote was cast.

Devine's rise through the ranks of the Gore campaign is all the more impressive in that he has no history with the vice president. Not only had they never worked together previously, Devine had worked against Gore in the 1988 Democratic primaries (this is something of a pattern among Gore's senior staffers: Donna Brazile and Bob Shrum both worked for Richard Gephardt's presidential campaign that year). Yet Devine and Gore have developed such a rapport, according to a senior campaign official, that Devine will occasionally question Gore's recommendations and tell him when he's wrong. No one else, not even Gore's longtime friend Eskew, does this. (It helps that Devine has no interest in a White House job.)

The fierce competitiveness Devine brings to the Gore campaign is nothing new, says Tom Donilon, who's known him since they were in grammar school together. Devine grew up in public housing in a predominantly black neighborhood in south Providence (his father was a sidewalk inspector for the city). To fit in, he took up basketball, and by his senior year at La Salle Academy he'd gar-

Matthew Rees is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

nered all-state honors as a 6'3" shooting guard (one of his high school teammates was Joe "Sonar" Hassett, who later became an NBA journeyman). He stayed in Providence for college, at Brown University, and a few years later enrolled at Suffolk University Law School in Boston.

In the summer of 1980, following his first year at Suffolk, Devine moved into a Washington group house with his old friend Donilon, who at the ripe age of 25 had been tapped by Jimmy Carter to run the Democratic convention in New York (one of their housemates that summer was another twentysomething named Terry McAuliffe, today the Democratic party's most productive fund-raiser). Donilon desperately needed assistance—Ted Kennedy was waging an intense fight for the nomination—and turned to Devine. Though lacking any real-world political experience, Devine was assigned to monitor the Texas and Utah delegations. In practice, this meant doing whatever the delegates asked of him, and fending off the Kennedy forces.

Donilon and others recall Devine handled the high-stakes task superbly, and the experience turned him into a political junkie. Four years later, he was laboring for Walter Mondale. By this time he'd become so well acquainted with the delegate-selection process that he was able to pull off one of the greatest (legal) coups in American presidential history. Going into the Florida primary, Devine discovered deficiencies in how Gary Hart had filed certain delegate slates, leaving Hart vulnerable. Devine ordered Mondale's campaign to devote their resources to these districts, and the strategy proved wildly successful. While Hart finished with 40 percent of the vote and Mondale 32 percent, Mondale snagged 89 percent of the Florida delegates.

Mondale's landslide defeat in the general election didn't deter Devine, though, and after working for a few years at the law firm of Winston & Strawn, he joined the Dukakis campaign in July 1987 as the director of delegate selection. With his mastery of the party's rules, he was once again instrumental in delivering the nomination to his candidate (he helped devise the "four corners" strategy, which called for Dukakis to target Maryland, Florida, Texas, and Washington). But even his tactical skills couldn't deliver a Dukakis victory over George Bush.

After the Kerrey debacle four years later, Devine concluded he needed to be more of a message guru to succeed in the consulting business, so he joined Doak, Shrum, a media production firm, in 1993. The firm broke up two years later, but Devine and Shrum and Donilon's brother, Mike, quickly established their own group. The triumvirate has run more than 50 statewide races in over 20 states, giving Devine priceless exposure to the political landscapes of vote-rich states like New Jersey, North Carolina, and California.

Al Gore

Earl Keleny

This experience has boosted Devine's stock—in no small part because he's shown a willingness to slay his opponents. "When you're playing against Tad Devine," says Bob Kerrey, "you know he's going to play fair, but you also know there's going to be some pushing and shoving, and you might even get knocked to the floor a few times." Bob Beckel, who was Devine's boss on the Mondale campaign, echoes the sentiment: "Tad's got an instinct for the jugular that is superb." (One of Devine's favorite movies is *Scarface*.)

The best example of this came in the 1998 Maryland governor's race. Devine and Shrum were brought in two months before Election Day to revive the flagging fortunes of the Democratic governor, Parris Glendening. They did so by running vicious ads against Ellen Sauerbrey, the Republican nominee. One of them said she "had a civil rights record to be ashamed of" because she'd dared to oppose a sexual-harassment bill in the state legislature that died when even Democrats wouldn't support it. *Campaigns & Elections* magazine later named the ad the "most brutally effective" of the 1998 election cycle, and Devine, who produced it, says he'd do it again: "I don't back away from that ad one inch."

Not all Devine material is slash-and-burn. Most of the ads he made for John Edwards's successful campaign to oust senator Lauch Faircloth were positive. And he says his proudest political moment came in 1995 when he aired uplifting biographical spots that helped elect, against considerable odds, one of the first black sheriffs in Florida history.

Whether Devine can deliver a Gore victory is, of course, an open question. While his influence will only grow, given the backing he has from new campaign chairman William Daley—they're buddies from the Mondale and Dukakis days—the vice president is hardly a consultant's dream candidate. Devine nonetheless says Gore will win with over 50 percent of the vote, and he speaks with some authority. At this time eight years ago, he predicted not only that Clinton would be the next president, but that he would receive 43 percent of the vote in a three-way race. Clinton won, of course. And his share of the national vote: 43 percent. ♦

Psst—Hey Buddy, Wanna Buy a Vote?

Let's privatize universal suffrage. **BY P.J. O'ROURKE**

THERE ARE a number of Americans who shouldn't vote. The number is 57 percent, to judge by the combined total of Clinton and Perot ballots in the 1996 presidential election. Or maybe the number is 65 percent, that being the ABC News poll tally of Americans who supported the forced removal of Elián González from Miami. We need a method to prevent these people from going to the polls this year. Such an idea is not, I assert, contrademocratic. At this moment our democracy is filled with enthusiasm for minority culture, minority rights, and minority political expression (anti-Castro Cubans always excepted). So who will gainsay a pronouncement that the majority sucks?

Speaking of which, there was once talk among conservatives and Republicans—back when the terms weren't mutually exclusive—about building a "New Majority." I was skeptical. Lord Acton said, "At all times sincere friends of freedom have been rare, and its triumphs have been due to minorities that have prevailed by associating themselves with auxiliaries whose objects often differed from their own; and this association, which is always dangerous, has sometimes been disastrous, such as, for instance, when the GOP gives free Confederate flag bumper stickers to all $50+ George W. Bush donors." (Although I believe Lord A. implied rather than actually stated that last part.) Also, I'm from East Yoohoo, Ohio, went to a state college, and rarely make it past the level of "Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?"

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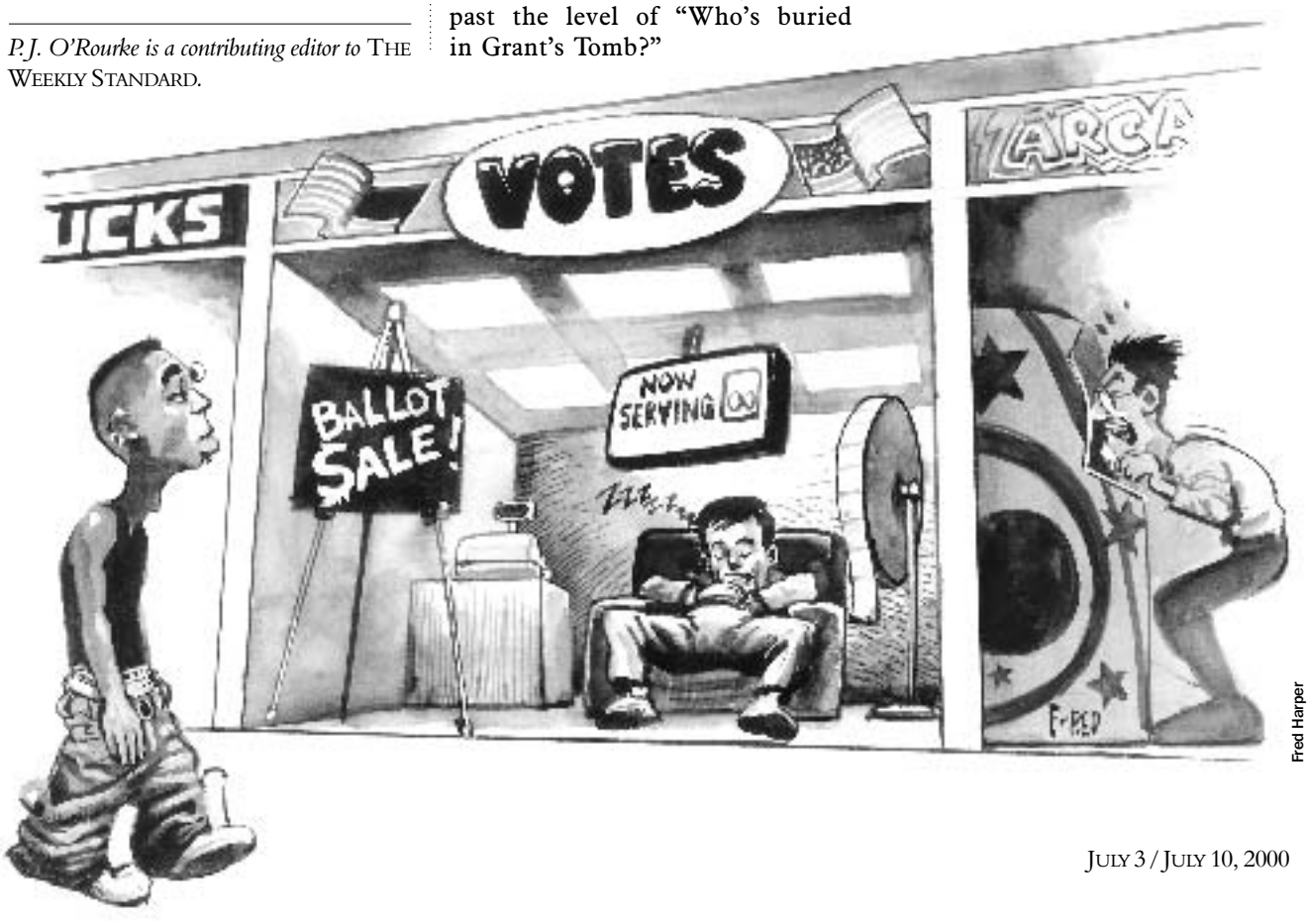
when Regis Philbin is on the air. Therefore I am closer to the national median than most of my Washington confreres and realize, better than they, that—do what we will with school vouchers, merit pay, core curricula, and killing the leaders of the teachers' unions—half of America's population will be below median intelligence. (The trick answer is Ulysses S. Grant *and* his wife Julia.)

But how to go about limiting the suffrage? Literacy tests are in bad odor because of their misuse by the white trash illiterates of the South (all of them Democrats, let it be noted). Numeracy tests would be more to the point anyway since, according to a May 14 *New York Times* story, one quarter of America thinks that buying lottery tickets is a better retirement plan than saving or investing. But the trouble with math is that people like Hillary Clinton always got the good grades in it.

Poll taxes in federal elections are banned by the Twenty-fourth Amendment. Repealing a constitutional amendment is time-consuming. It took 14 years to repeal the prohibition amend-



Fred Harper

ment, and repeal might not have happened even then except the country got a good look at Eleanor Roosevelt and everybody *really* needed a drink. Anyway, if we're going to repeal amendments, the Twenty-sixth, giving the vote to squirts, would be a better choice. The nose jewelry generation went 53 percent for Clinton in '96. However, women, at 54 percent, were even worse. Yet the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the vote is absolutely inviolable. Because I don't know how to work a computer and I'm depending on my wife to input this.

Besides, we sincere friends of freedom should be ashamed of ourselves, proposing to improve the land of freedom by constricting ditto. If a better electorate is wanted, we lovers of laissez faire should do the right thing and buy one. American votes have always been sold on a wholesale basis, from the Homestead Act of 1862 to present proposals to give free AndroGel testosterone rubs to horny Medicare geezers. Let us open the business to the retail trade.

Votes, vote options, vote futures, vote derivatives, and shares in vote mutual funds will be purchased through NASDAQ, auctioned on eBay, or purchased off the shelf at Target and Sam's Club. You may sell your vote on the street corner or—during a tight race for the Senate in a wealthy state—at Sotheby's. We'll each get one vote per political contest in our district—same as ever. But now we will be truly free to use that vote as we see fit and won't be forced to waste it with a Charlton Heston write-in for Ann Arbor city council.

The advantage to the poor is obvious. Come the second Tuesday in November, instead of Maxine Waters, they get food—or something, and anything would be easier to stomach than Maxine. The rich benefit as well. You RNC maximum contributors will receive real and actual power and not just an autographed photo of Tom DeLay shaking your hand while his eyes work the room.

When the vote is deregulated and electoral majorities can be bought and sold without bureaucratic interference, the result will be governance on the corporate shareholder model. Will this be an improvement? Let us compare Congress to the Justice Department's case against Microsoft. No one is trying to break up the House of Representatives because it's been too successful.

Of course there are potential drawbacks to an open market at the polls. "A great deal of stupid people have a great deal of stupid money," said economist Walter Bagehot even before Ted Turner was born. Rich liberals might be stupid enough to spend all their money gaining control of America. But look around. They control it already. What's the dif? And if rich liberals spend all their money, they won't be rich enough to be liberal anymore.

Vote vending will be good for the economy. Here is an enormous new business enterprise with a customer base of almost 200 million people and practically zero start-up costs. Over 130 million potential customers are already "registered"—signed up for their slice of the American dream. Referendum buying will also force American politicians to learn at least something about economics—knowledge that they have resisted acquiring for 224 years. Furthermore, plebiscite marketing gives the nation's campaign fund-raisers an incentive to enter rehabilitation programs, get well, and find an honest job.

Most important, having a wide variety of useful and attractive ballots readily available at our local mall is the best way for ordinary Middle-American voters to enter the political arena and put our two cents in—two cents being about what our votes will be worth this fall, given the current presidential candidates. ♦

Banned in Boston

Better not complain about the gay agenda for Massachusetts schools. **BY ROD DREHER**

Boston

YOU ARE BY NOW AWARE of the war gay activists are waging on radio talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger, whose opposition to homosexuality has made her Public Enemy No. 1 of the lavender lobby. Few outside of Massachusetts, however, have heard of Brian Camenker and Scott Whiteman, two suburban fathers who are enduring public vilification, potential financial ruin, and possible jail time for protesting the gay agenda in the state's public schools.

Dr. Laura's struggle to get her syndicated television show on the air is of great symbolic importance. But the situation in which Camenker and Whiteman find themselves embroiled is far more significant to average people. Countless parents, after all, could face the onslaught now directed against the Massachusetts dads if they, too, were to raise their voices against public school officials' collusion with gay activists to mainstream homosexuality in the classroom.

Camenker and Whiteman, who live in the Boston suburbs, head a Bay State grass-roots organization called the Parents' Rights Coalition. For years, the PRC has been complaining to Massachusetts officials that radical homosexuals are introducing grossly objectionable material to children and seeking to undermine parental authority over the moral instruction of their kids. Time and time again, members of the Parents' Rights Coalition took evidence backing their concerns to school and state officials, to no avail, they say.

Indeed, Paul Cellucci, the state's Republican governor, has continued to budget $1.5 million for the Governor's Commission for Gay and Lesbian Youth. The commission oversees the creation and support of "Gay/Straight Alliances"—student clubs organized around gay issues.

Furthermore, Whiteman was called a "slanderer" by a member of the Board of Education, he says. "I knew I wasn't lying. I knew I wasn't making it up. I knew I wasn't an alarmist."

Frustrated by official indifference, Whiteman secretly took his tape recorder along to the 10th annual conference of the Boston chapter of GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, at Tufts University on March 25. GLSEN (pronounced "glisten") is a national organization whose purpose is to train teachers and students and develop programs to, in the words of its Boston chapter leader, "challenge the anti-gay, hetero-centric culture that still prevails in our schools."

The state-sanctioned conference, which was open to the public but attended chiefly by students, administrators, and teachers, undercut the official GLSEN line—that their work is aimed only at making schools safer by teaching tolerance and respect.

The event, backed by the state's largest teachers' union, included such workshops as "Ask the Transsexuals," "Early Childhood Educators: How to Decide Whether to Come Out at Work or Not," "The Struggles and Triumphs of Including Homosexuality in a Middle School Curriculum" (with suggestions for including gay issues when teaching the Holocaust), "From Lesbos to Stonewall: Incorporating Sexuality into a World History Curriculum," and "Creating a Safe and Inclusive Community in Elementary Schools," in which the "Rationale for integrating glbt [gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender] issues in the early elementary years will be presented."

Whiteman sat in on a "youth only, ages 14-21" workshop called "What They Didn't Tell You About Queer Sex & Sexuality in Health Class." If "they" didn't tell you about this stuff, it's probably because "they" worried they'd be sent to jail.

The raucous session was led by Massachusetts Department of Education employees Margot Abels and Julie Netherland, and Michael Gaucher, an AIDS educator from the Massachusetts public health agency. Gaucher opened the session by asking the teens how they know whether or not they've had sex. Someone asked whether oral sex was really sex.

"If that's not sex, then the number of times I've had sex has dramatically decreased, from a mountain to a valley, baby!" squealed Gaucher. He then coaxed a reluctant young participant to talk about which orifices need to be filled for sex to have occurred: "Don't be shy, honey, you can do it."

Later, the three adults took written questions from the kids. One inquired about "fisting," a sex practice in which one inserts his hand and forearm into the rectum of his partner. The helpful and enthusiastic Gaucher demonstrated the proper hand position for this act. Abels described fisting as "an experience of letting somebody into your body that you want to be that close and intimate with," and praised it for putting one "into an exploratory mode."

Gaucher urged the teens to consult their "really hip" Gay/Straight Alliance adviser for hints on how to come on to a potential sex partner. The trio went on to explain that lesbians could indeed experience sexual bliss through rubbing their clitorises together, and Gaucher told the kids that male ejaculate is rumored to taste "sweeter if people eat celery." On and on like this the session went.

Camenker and Whiteman transcribed the tape and wrote a lengthy report for *Massachusetts News*, a conservative monthly. Then they announced that copies of the recorded

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sessions would be made available to state legislators and the local media. GLSEN threatened to sue them for violating Massachusetts' wiretap laws and invading the privacy of the minors present at one workshop.

The tapes went out anyway and became a talk radio sensation. On May 19, state education chief David Driscoll canned Abels and Netherland and terminated Gaucher's contract. But Driscoll also insisted that the controversial workshop was an aberration that shouldn't be allowed to derail the entire program. Abels fumed to the press that the education department had known perfectly well what she had been doing for years and hadn't cared until the tapes had surfaced. Camenker, ironically, agreed.

That same weekend, a day after the *Boston Globe* editorial page editorialized against Camenker and Whiteman, thousands of New England homosexual youths marched on the Massachusetts State House in a scheduled "pride" rally. David LaFontaine, chairman of the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, denounced Camenker and Whiteman: "The hatred we've heard on the radio and smeared across the TV in the last week . . . is the prejudice that simmers beneath the surface [which] has now bubbled up into the open in all of its ugliness."

Then, state Superior Court judge Allan van Gestel issued a gag order prohibiting the Parents' Rights Coalition, the news media, and the entire state legislature from disseminating or even discussing the tapes—though the conference had been in part sponsored by the state, and had been conducted by and attended by state employees. One might think lawmakers and the local media would have been outraged.

Not in Massachusetts. Nary a peep of protest issued from the legislature, and aside from a *Boston Herald* editorial denouncing the move, the news media were as silent as the grave. Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz, a gay-rights supporter who is not most people's idea of a conservative, took to the airwaves to blast the ruling and the establishment's indifference to it.

"Sometimes civil libertarians become ambivalent when the First Amendment clashes with their liberal agenda. I've been fighting that for years," Dershowitz told me. "It's a situation where the political correctness of the Boston news media has caused it to take a back seat," says Boston civil liberties lawyer Harvey Silverglate. "Of course, what will happen is, in some other case in which the news media will have more of an interest, where one of their darlings will get restrained, then suddenly they will find they've allowed a precedent to be set. It's a perfect example of the news media not rushing in and protecting [free speech] no matter whose ox is being gored."

When the Superior Court judge issued a gag order prohibiting discussion of the tapes, the news media were as silent as the grave.

Days later, van Gestel held a hearing to reconsider his gag order. Says Camenker, "The only news organization that showed up to demand their First Amendment right to play the tape was the Fox News Channel." Van Gestel relented somewhat, lifting the gag on everyone but Camenker and Whiteman.

Meanwhile, a legal aid group called Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) filed suit against the two men on behalf of the workshop students. They are still threatening to press criminal charges.

Silverglate, a gay-rights supporter who calls "a huge mistake" homosexual activists' habit of labeling "hate speech" any opinion they don't like, warns that the Bay State's liberal legal culture will make a fair trial for Camenker and Whiteman a near-impossibility.

"This is the state, remember, that brought you the St. Patrick's Day Parade case, in which all three layers of the Massachusetts court system found that the court had the power to force the Irish war veterans to allow a gay Irish group to march under their own banner."

The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately ruled 9-0 in favor of the war veterans, who were represented by conservative Boston lawyer Chester Darling, now serving as Whiteman's attorney.

"Nine to nothing—that tells you it was an easy case, but you would never know it from reading the *Boston Globe* and observing the conduct of the legal profession," Silverglate says. "This state has some serious problems."

Though Camenker and Whiteman expect to triumph, if not in Massachusetts courts then at the federal level, neither man has deep pockets. Both estimate their defense costs will meet or exceed $80,000, and money is trickling in to a legal defense fund. Whiteman, 26, is a law student whose wife just gave birth to their first child. Camenker, 47, owns his own software business, which he says is suffering.

"I could lose everything," he says. "My business could go down the tubes. And if this criminal stuff actually goes down, I could go to jail."

As their story becomes more widely known, the men find themselves doing more interviews on talk radio around the country.

"The whole idea that [gay activists] have been trying to suppress this has been helpful. Nobody listened to us beforehand," says Whiteman. "Everybody thought we were making it up. The fact that they're trying to cover it up proves that they have something to cover up. We've caught them red-handed."

But will their exposé ultimately make a difference? GLSEN/Boston boasts the most advanced programs of its kind in the nation. As goes Massachusetts, in time, so may go the rest of America. Camenker and Whiteman are on the front lines of a battle likely to spread to school districts from coast to coast, as the powerful GLSEN organization, with sponsorship money from American Airlines, Dockers

Khakis, and Kodak, presses its radical agenda under the innocent-sounding guise of "safety," "human rights," and "suicide prevention."

"That money goes down a rathole to fund gay clubs in schools, and gay rallies and conferences," fumes Camenker. "None of the people who get the money are legitimate suicide prevention groups. They're all these gay groups."

GLSEN will be holding its annual leadership training conference next month in San Francisco, to be preceded by a two-day workshop teaching students and educators how to push the gay agenda in local schools—even at the kindergarten level—as a human rights issue. Books available from the GLSEN website include *Queering Elementary Education* and *Preventing Prejudice*, a collection of elementary-school lesson plans built around themes such as "What Is a Boy/Girl?" and "Freedom to Marry."

Schools' surreptitiously introducing this material to students, says Whiteman, "puts kids at risk and puts parents completely out of the loop with the sexual identities of their children. The schools take this elitist attitude that they know best."

The point of this activist drive, warns Camenker, is to desensitize children to gay sex at a very young age and counteract moral instruction to the contrary given by their parents and religious leaders. If you protest, he warns, be prepared to be stonewalled and sneered at by school officials, smeared in the press, and denounced as a hatemonger and a bigot by gay activists.

Yet what choice is left to parents but to fight? "We're facing an incredible evil here. It chills you to the bone," says Camenker, an Orthodox Jew brought closer to his faith by this struggle. "The only way we're not going to get run over is if people wake up to what's happening to our children."

"These people are bullies," he continues. "People are afraid of them, afraid of being called homophobes. I don't enjoy this, but this is America, and I'm not going to run away." ♦

Impeachment Hasn't Hurt

House Republicans, it seems, won't be punished at the polls after all. **BY TOD LINDBERG**

IT SEEMED LIKE a pretty big deal at the time, the impeachment and acquittal of President Clinton. And so it was, as political spectacle, as a search in the U.S. Constitution for its fundamental meaning, as the climax of a long-running clash between a Republican Congress and a Democratic president. It will rank as one of the great political stories of the twentieth century. Yet now—not even 18 months later, as the first election since Clinton was acquitted fast approaches—it's all but impossible to find so much as a lingering wisp of the *Sturm und Drang* of impeachment. In the 2000 elections, impeachment is the dog that isn't barking.

For obvious reasons, it's difficult to cite evidence of the disappearance (or perhaps non-emergence?) of impeachment as an issue. You end up pointing to the presence of an absence, and then speculating about its significance. But let's start with the obvious: This is not what either the accusers or the defenders of the president expected.

The polls taken as the Monica Lewinsky drama unfolded consistently showed strong public opposition to Clinton's impeachment and then to his removal. Although his personal approval ratings declined, his job approval ratings remained high. The message from this was quite clear to Democrats and Republicans alike. Clinton was supported by public opinion, and the Republicans in Congress were defying it.

Naturally, this balance produced threats from Democrats about the reprisals Republicans would face. A reckoning was coming, scheduled specifically for November 2000. Clinton would have an obvious stake not only in seeing his chosen successor, Al Gore, reach the White House, but in returning control over Congress (lost on his watch) to the Democrats. The latter, especially, would constitute a blow to the legitimacy of the House impeachment vote. A web-based organization called MoveOn made headlines by claiming it had received $13 million, in online pledges, for targeting members of Congress who voted for impeachment.

A little more than a week before Clinton's then-certain acquittal, the *New York Times* ran a story that vented the thirst for revenge felt in some quarters of the White House. The *Times* quoted "one advisor who has discussed the matter with Clinton": "He knows the districts, he knows the candidates, and he doesn't like these people. . . . He's obviously real hot on the [House impeachment] managers. He thinks winning back the House is part of his legacy." And from "one senior Clinton strategist": "Every one of those distinguished citizens is now on record saying they not only want to shut the government down but they want to kick the president out. That vote won't go away. And if they think the American people will forget about that, they should go and ask former president Gerald Ford. They will remember that."

Nor did Republicans treat such statements as mere partisan bluster. They, too, believed the polls. Though there were, to be sure, areas of the country sufficiently unfriendly to Bill Clinton to favor his removal, and they tended for obvious reasons to

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have Republican representatives, many Republicans not blessed with safe seats believed they were courting disaster with voters. Some went so far as to issue statements explaining that their consciences had compelled them to do what their political instincts warned them against. Henry Hyde's mordant wit as chief House manager nicely encapsulated his sense that he was doing his duty as he saw it, notwithstanding popular opposition: "I know, oh, do I know, what an annoyance we are in the bosom of this great body, but we are a constitutional annoyance. And I remind you of that fact." So predominant was public opinion that many Democrats in the House and Senate cited the president's high job approval rating itself as a sufficient reason not to impeach or convict.

Majorities of Americans disapproved, in particular, of the impeachment vote; in general, of Republicans' "handling" of the matter; and generically, of Republicans. Polls asking people whether they planned to vote for a Republican or Democrat for Congress tilted sharply in favor of Democrats, reaching about a 9 percent Democratic lead in most surveys. Even proprietary GOP polling by Fabrizio, McLaughlin & Associates in early 1999 offered little comfort to Republicans. It found 36 percent of Americans saying that impeachment "will be a factor" in the 2000 congressional elections and, of them, 51 percent would be either "much less likely" or "somewhat less likely" to "vote for your representative if you knew they voted to impeach Bill Clinton." The total of "much more likely" and "somewhat more likely" was 48 percent. If, in short, Republicans were gloomy and Democrats gleeful, there was ample justification in the polls for their respective sentiments.

But that was then. Anyone looking at the answers to the same kinds of poll questions now has to be struck by how the public's feelings have changed. One may argue over what such a shift means, but the absence of any continuity from 18 months ago is indisputable. It's almost as if the United States changed electorates sometime between the impeachment votes and now.

Start with the generic congressional ballot: Republicans are now running even or ahead in most polls. That Fabrizio, McLaughlin polling question the GOP once found so worrisome shows a slight decline in the number of people who say impeachment "will be a factor" in their congressional vote, from 36 percent to 34 percent, but a huge swing among those who say it will be a factor in favor of the GOP. From 48 percent in 1999, now 67 percent say that a vote in favor of impeachment would make them "much more" or "somewhat more likely" to vote for their representative, while only 26 percent say such a vote would make them "much less" or "somewhat less likely" to do so.

By a margin of 49-44, registered voters now say the House did the "right thing" when it decided to impeach Bill Clinton.

And when voters are asked directly about impeachment, the results are nothing short of astonishing. In December 1998, Gallup asked adults whether they approved or disapproved of the House vote to impeach. Sixty-three percent disapproved and 35 percent approved. The same question a year later yielded 50 percent approval and 49 percent disapproval. An April Fox News/Opinion Dynamics poll asked registered voters whether "the decision of the U.S. House of Representatives to impeach President Clinton was the right thing to do or the wrong thing to do." They said "right thing" by a margin of 49-44. In December 1998, the same pollsters had asked, if the House voted to impeach Clinton, should the Senate then vote to convict and remove him. The response was no, 57-37. In April 2000, the response to the question of whether the Senate vote to acquit was the right thing to do or the wrong thing to do was a statistical tie, with a narrow 47-46 plurality actually saying "wrong thing."

At the anecdotal level, the promised targeting of Republicans seems to have been overblown. The initial flush of reporting identified Steve Chabot of Ohio and Bob Barr of Georgia as potential Democratic targets, but neither now appears much in danger. Most managers were (perhaps not coincidentally) from relatively safe Republican seats, and only one, Jim Rogan of California, looks like he faces serious reelection trouble. And while impeachment has generated big contributions for his opponent, Adam Schiff, it has also generated big contributions for Rogan. Given the stakes and the narrowness of the GOP majority, this highly competitive district would have been fiercely contested even without impeachment. And as far as the two campaigns are concerned, Rogan is finding it advantageous to play up his role as impeachment prosecutor and Schiff is looking for other issues. Jim Wilkinson, spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, says the key point is, "Schiff isn't talking about it"—because the impeachment issue has no salience. Eric Smith, his counterpart at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, says, by contrast, Schiff "doesn't have to bring it up"—voters are aware of Rogan's role, and it "removed the veneer of moderation" from him.

More likely, the DCCC has concluded there's no impeachment backlash for a candidate to run on. Smith says, "we don't test impeachment in our polls." But it doesn't make sense that the DCCC would let the issue go unexplored if Democrats thought they had something they could campaign on and win with. As for MoveOn, the online impeachment

avengers, the last press release posted on the organization's website is dated June 30, 1999. Moving on, indeed.

Republicans have reason to find these developments cheering. Yet it would be dangerous to read the evolution of public attitudes as an after-the-fact endorsement of the GOP. What's really on people's minds here is something about which the polling data have only so much to say.

The subject is necessarily speculative. But it's probably worth noting that Americans have a generally sunny sense of their own history, expressed in the sentiment that things usually turn out for the best. In accordance with this sentiment, while majorities may not have wanted Bill Clinton to be impeached, in retrospect the fact that he was doesn't look so bad. Second, Clinton's departure from office is drawing nearer by the day, and so it's possible people are finding it easier to bring to mind a White House without him in it.

More fundamentally, though, there is the question of how seriously engaged the electorate really was and is. Again, this is an area for speculation. Are voters willing to forgive Republicans in the House for impeachment only because the Senate acquitted him? If the Senate had voted to remove him, would the electorate now be mad as hell about it? Well, could be—but that is hard to square with current sentiment that favors the idea of his removal. At the time, voters seemed to be as firmly and consistently resolved on the question of impeachment as public opinion ever is, on any subject. Yet this firm and consistent opinion was not accompanied by any public desire to punish those politicians who defied it. So, how deep, really, was the public's conviction that impeachment was wrong? Is the electorate's current view of the impeachment more a matter of forgiveness (of Republicans) or forgetfulness (about the whole thing)?

Consider it from another angle: Suppose in the fall of 1998, the economy had turned sour and President Clinton's job approval rating simultaneously dropped sharply. Would anyone have believed that the drop was a result of the American people suddenly waking up to the seriousness of the offenses the House was then considering? In short, did Americans—apart from the relatively small minority on both sides who take politics seriously and follow it closely—ever really think those seemingly momentous events in Washington mattered much at all? Did they rally to the defense of the president—or to the defense of a status quo of unprecedented comfort, peace, and prosperity against the possibility of disruption?

When people said "move on," perhaps what they meant was *only* "move on." Not, *we must rally round the president to save the Constitution*; not, *the president is being unjustly persecuted*; not, *his actions are reprehensible but not impeachable*; not, *he is only human and he has apologized*; not, *he has suffered enough*. Just "move on."

Bill Clinton may urgently desire the return of the House to Democratic control in 2000 as a counterbalance to impeachment in history's judgment of him—an electoral repudiation of the GOP majority that tried to oust him. By now, though, the combined weight of anecdote and polling data clearly indicates that if Democrats do regain the House this year, it will have nothing to do with Clinton's impeachment. Similarly, if Republicans maintain their majority, it will not be because the country has suddenly embraced the GOP view of Bill Clinton.

If Democrats win, Clinton will try to spin it differently, of course—as a national referendum on him and his persecutors resulting in his complete vindication. But then, he has never been one to underestimate his own importance in the grand scheme of things. ♦

In Oprah We Trust

How America's most popular—and talented—talk-show host used the culture of victimization to build a billion-dollar empire.

By David Skinner

"Live Your Best Life! Start right here, right now," trumpeted the cover of the first issue of *O*, *The Oprah Magazine*. One of the purposes of life, the magazine's eponymous "founder and editorial director" wrote, is "not to be good, but to continuously get better, to constantly move forward, creating the highest, grandest vision and to be led by that vision every day." You see, *O*, whose second issue hit newsstands last week, is not a magazine that promises to keep you informed on some subject, to entertain you during idle hours, or to carry certain principles out into the world; *O* is a magazine that brings to you the inspiration that will change your life. It is the glossy bimonthly newsletter of a secular religion that boils down to a covenant between Oprah, America's striver-in-chief, and her readers: She will keep exhorting you to improve, and you will keep trying.

The magazine's lead features are lively and unusual life stories, describing the trials of women who eventually find their happy endings. In the first issue, a journalist born to a black father and a white mother related her conflicted fondness for her racist white grandmother; Camille Cosby (Bill's wife) talked about her "womanness" and the death of her son; the singer Jewel rattled on about losing her job and living in a van when she was a teenager. The second issue's testimonials are not as strong. A young novelist recounts how she learned to say no to people; Sunny von Bülow's daughter is interviewed by her sister-in-law but reveals nothing significant about the famous trial; Jane Fonda confides her intimacy issues and her failure as a mother to "show up" in the lives of her children.

Oprah has rounded up columnists as well, "life strategist" Dr. Phil McGraw, New Age thinker Gary Zukav, and the ubiquitous pro-frugality Suze Orman—professionally sunny types who flesh out Oprah's gospel. And there are incidental pick-me-ups, items teaching you to fill up your dull moments, increase your joy, sharpen your Internet skills, relieve your PMS, soothe your aching joints, look better, and recover from divorce.

No aspect of life that could possibly be improved is outside the magazine's boundaries. There is a calendar of exercises to help you "tap your personal courage," instructions on how to beautify your home and get in touch with your senses, tips for your social life, and enough inspirational sayings to choke a cynic. One gets the impression that there isn't a hair on your body, a word to be said, a sight, a smell, a moment that couldn't be further enriched if approached with an Oprah-like determination. Amid all this economic, physical, sensory, and spiritual uplift, mere muddling through would offend the god of personal progress.

Some critics have noticed that the magazine is mostly about Oprah Winfrey. Her picture appears often, her wise sayings and favorite quotations, movies, and novels pop up everywhere. But this is not a cult of personality, this is product, and Oprah is a brand, an "icon," a cultural touchstone. She is the key to creating and living out your "grandest, highest vision." Oprah is all over *O* magazine because Oprah is the reason to buy it.

People don't just love Oprah Winfrey's TV show, now in its fourteenth season; they love *her*. The Arts and Entertainment channel's popular show *Biography* had its highest ratings ever when it aired the Horatio Alger story of her life. And not only are several biographies available, including some for young readers, but the tabloids still give saturation coverage to her

David Skinner is an associate editor of The Weekly Standard.

Drew Friedman

weight, her relationship with longtime boyfriend Stedman Graham, the time she smoked cocaine, what her bathroom looks like, her sexual orientation, and whether she's having an affair with an NBA player.

Oprah Winfrey was born on January 29, 1954, in Kosciusko, Mississippi, heir to social pathologies that would transform America during her lifetime. Her mother, Vernita Lee, said her daughter was the result of "a one-day fling under an oak tree." But Vernita also told a soldier, Vernon Winfrey, that he was the father, and he did not object. Before Oprah was one, her mother moved to Milwaukee, leaving the baby with her own mother, Hattie Mae. Five years passed before Vernita took her daughter in.

For most of the next eight years, Oprah lived with her mother, a half sister, and a half brother in Milwaukee. They moved in with a boyfriend of Vernita's when Oprah was 12, and a chaotic period in Oprah's life began. She shared a bed with a 14-year-old male cousin who she says raped her. A favorite uncle took advantage of her, too. And there were "boyfriends," whom she invited over for unsupervised games. At school she showed promise, but with promiscuity came juvenile delinquency. Even her inattentive mother saw she needed a change.

At 14, Oprah was sent to Nashville to live with Vernon Winfrey, and in his strict, God-fearing household, it emerged that she was pregnant. "I did the exact same thing my mother had done," she would say later. "I hid my pregnancy until the child was born. And I named all of the people who could have been responsible." The child, however, lived only two weeks, and his death was a turning point. Vernon and his wife demanded Oprah obey the rules of the house, study hard, and act like a lady. So began the achievement-hungry years, punctuated by high grades, an innocent high-school romance, and beauty pageant victories.

Later she would bear witness to what her father did for her, but also to a coolness toward him. "He took responsibility because I could have been his," she said. "To this day there has never been any official test. . . . He took responsibility for me when he didn't have to. So my father saved my life when I needed to be saved. But we're not, like, bonded."

Then when Oprah was 17, she lucked into a part-time job reading the news on a Nashville radio station. At 19, while she was still a student at Tennessee State, she moved to the local CBS TV affiliate. Soon the ABC TV affiliate in Baltimore, scouring the country for a black woman to co-anchor a popular news program, hired Oprah.

But news wasn't her vocation. In Baltimore, the casual journalistic skills she had picked up in Nashville got her in trouble, especially with colleagues jealous of her position, and the station moved her to its morning talk show. Before long, *People are Talking* was beating *Donahue*, the undisputed leader in daytime talk, and the Oprah we

know was born. As she turned 30, Oprah Winfrey became host of the ailing *A.M. Chicago*, and within 12 weeks it was ahead of *Donahue* in Chicago. Three years later, in late 1986, the *Oprah Winfrey Show* was in national syndication, and Oprah was poised to become queen of talk.

The *Oprah Winfrey Show*, Number One in daytime TV, has won 32 Emmy awards. Its only real competition came from the *Jerry Springer* show, which dropped in the ratings after it abandoned its notorious on-air fisticuffs. In 1998, Oprah received a lifetime achievement Emmy and announced she and her show would no longer compete for the award. And why should she—what is mere industry praise to her? She is, as she often says, doing "God's work" as a leading producer of "women's culture": not just TV, but also websites, cable channels, movies, and novels made "for women." Oprah is one of the partners behind the new Internet and cable multimedia effort Oxygen Media, Inc. And these and other projects have put her in line to become America's first black billionaire.

Preaching betterment isn't a business for the stingy-hearted, and there is nothing cheap about Oprah. She uses her money and influence to build houses for the poor, send students to college, feed a township in South Africa, build shelters for battered women, and make quilts for newborns with AIDS. On "Money Mondays," her show hosts people who do good works, and they walk away with grants of $50,000. Members of the studio audience often find gifts tucked under their seats. Recently, on a show about technology, every audience member was given close to a thousand dollars' worth of high-tech gadgets and computer software to help them organize their lives, communicate with friends, and find driving directions. At such times, a spirit of beneficence washes over the show, leaving the lovely impression that possibly just anyone—even you—might be invited to the feast of goodness that is Oprah Winfrey.

Oprah is her "own best thing," to use a phrase from her favorite novelist, Toni Morrison. With all the publicity about her weight, her many physical gifts get overlooked. Her speaking voice, for one thing, is exceptional. Its naturally trusting and soulful timber can turn girlish, heart-stoppingly serious, tough, or confidential. And her face, huge like her commanding eyes, has all the animation and flexibility of a great stage actor's. Large, curvy, and soft, she moves with ease, hunching down to listen closely to a guest, turning to her audience to reel in its reaction, using her hands with just enough energy. Hers is an exceptionally wide repertoire of full-body expressions, always decisive, almost always apt. With the physique of a homebody and the informality of a warm and gossipy next-door neighbor, this woman might have just come from the kitchen with barely time to get dressed. She is not especially precise with words, but she is all the same enormously expressive.

Long ago, Oprah Winfrey identified the secret of her own success: "the ability to be myself in front of a camera, which is a gift." More recently, she has credited not her talent, but her belief in herself in the face of what she insists were great obstacles. She is rich and powerful, she says, despite the fact that she is a woman, that she is black, and that she is overweight. Yet, the truth is that these problems have been grist for her show and for her image. Women of all races make up the adoring audience that sends her 25,000 fan letters a week and contributes to her favorite charities. As for her weight, it is perhaps the most enduring theme of her show; as one of her best stunts ever, in November 1988, she walked onstage pulling a wagon carrying 67 pounds of lard, representing the weight she had lost on a liquid diet.

But it seems that not even Oprah (the second-highest-earning celebrity in 1999 after George Lucas) is content to admit that she has talent to thank for her triumphs; greedily, she wants to have overcome even greater adversity.

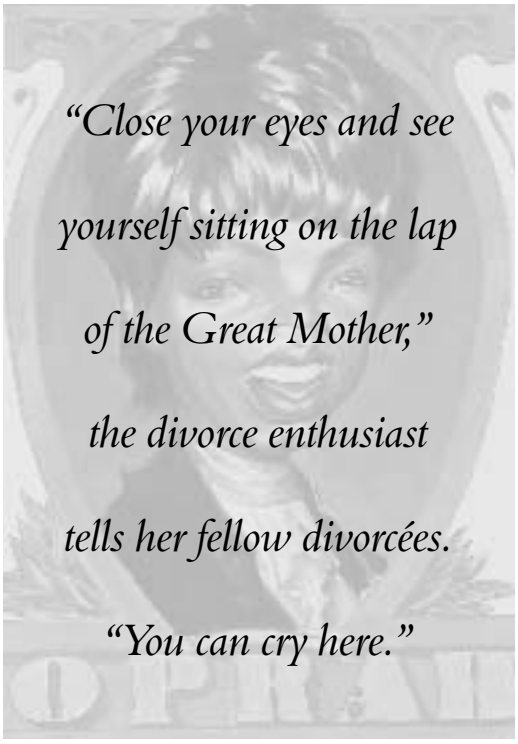
"If I had believed what they said in Mississippi in 1954," she commented on a recent show, "if I had believed what they said in Baltimore, I would not be where I am today." In reality, by the early 1970s, when Oprah entered broadcasting, being black and female was advantageous for an aspiring journalist. Television was ready for Oprah's rocketlike ascent.

The *Oprah Winfrey Show* first made its mark as a purveyor of sensationalist muck. "Courtship Violence," "Ramifications of Sexual Abuse," "Drunk Drivers Who Have Killed," "Donald and Ivana Trump," "Autoerotic Asphyxia," and "Priestly Sins" were episodes from its first six years. Oprah entertained more than her share of racists, Satanists, cross-dressers, and other exhibitionist malcontents, and it made for exciting television. But in 1994, she announced a change: "The time has come for this genre of talk shows to move on from dysfunctional whining and complaining and blaming." She led the way.

Since then, Oprah's show, the palace of her multimedia kingdom, has taken on new, though not exactly edifying, dimensions. It trades in cheap spirituality and self help, indulges in casual misandry, and beatifies women almost regardless of their decency or goodness. Its

popular once-a-month Oprah's Book Club showcases literary mediocrity. Through it all, Oprah sails, confirming her audience's self-serving notions, satisfying their voyeuristic urges, and blessing as received truths the misconceptions that befuddle our age. Yet—and it's a big yet—there is something about Oprah. To watch her is to see a performer at the height of her powers, a mesmerizing talent, a certain kind of genius, even, doing what she was meant to do.

The *Oprah Winfrey Show* has become a chautauqua, dispensing wisdom on everything from keeping house to "excavating your true self." And it has more than range, it has what the confused heart wants to hear. Some days, Oprah speaks as if there were no love superior to self-love. Other days, she sounds like a woman who asks only to serve God. On one show, she celebrates romantic bonds; on the next, the triumph of the unencumbered woman.



Embodying this philosophical potluck are the show's two most regular guest experts, the self-fulfillment guru Gary Zukav and the marriage advocate Dr. Phillip McGraw. Zukav, author of the bestselling *The Seat of the Soul*, talks like Chauncey Gardiner with a college degree. The boisterous "Dr. Phil," author of *Relationship Rescue*, also a bestseller, barks out his prescriptions with all the finesse of a football coach.

Zukav speaks with a Zen-like concentration, as if patiently unearthing some long-ago mislaid truth about the human condition. His concern is not your job or your family, but you, specifically your soul and your openness to following wherever it leads. As he told one of Oprah's guests, "You are a soul first and a personality second, and your life is constantly offering you opportunities to move into your wholeness." Of course, your obligations may occasionally get in the way—a point Zukav clears up in his 1989 book.

"All of the vows that a human being can take cannot prevent the spiritual path from exploding through and breaking those vows if the soul must move on," he writes. But worry not, for "there is no such thing as a tragedy in this life; no such thing as unfairness." Least of all are there other people to worry about. "There is no such thing as a victim," said Zukav on one show, and Oprah gushed, "I *love* that!" Your soul comes first, and becoming happy is "your life's work."

By comparison, Dr. Phil is the show's very own Dr. Laura. He's full of tough advice. He tells an errant husband who is appearing with his wife, "You have to *behave* your way to happiness," through "impulse control." A mature person's feelings follow his better instincts, Dr. Phil says. And when the adulterer admits that what he has done is eating him up inside, Oprah chimes in, asking, "Does it eat you up enough to stop seeing the other person?" She admonishes another cheatin' heart, "Love is a verb. Love is a verb."

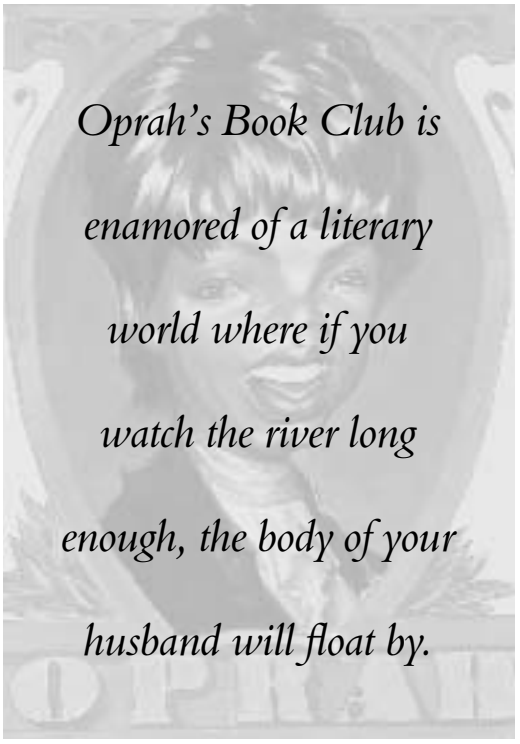
But even without Zukav and McGraw, the show would have two minds about marriage. One day, in the regular "Remembering Your Spirit" segment, the singer Kenny Loggins extols "the love affair between the husband and the wife." Another day, the never-married Oprah recommends videotaping the program for your friends: Her guest is a divorce counselor who encourages those recovering from wedlock to use self-esteem flash cards, write goodbye letters to their marriage, do breathing exercises, meditate. "Close your eyes and see yourself sitting on the lap of the Great Mother," the divorce enthusiast tells her fellow divorcées, "and this big woman is holding you. You know that you can cry here . . ."

Overall, an unsettling coyness governs the show's treatment of female guests. For the montages that introduce segments, women guests are usually videotaped at home, sometimes with their children, but seldom with any mention of whether they are married, even when this would have bearing on the show's subject. And they are treated with kid gloves.

On a recent episode, a mother who had left her newborn in a trash bin explained that the baby had interfered with her plans for finishing college. Oprah inquired what the guest was thinking when she abandoned her child, and was told: "I wanted the baby to be safe when I put her in a trash bin." To which Oprah responded—acknowledging that others might feel otherwise—"I understand it. I understand it perfectly." This forgiving

attitude seems to arise from a belief, implicit in the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, that women exist in a holy state, no matter what. Married, divorced, working, looking for a job, they stand alone, sanctified, the masters of their destinies—except when they have men in their lives who treat them horribly.

Males are seldom the beneficiaries of the trademark Oprah Winfrey empathy. Far from it. She presents them as uncaring beasts who have sex "without their brains attached." The disparagement of men, a thread that runs through all her products, is neatly on display in Oprah's selections for her book club. "The first time my husband hit me I was nineteen years old," reads the opening sentence of Anna Quindlen's *Black and Blue*. The heroine of Wally Lamb's *She's Come Undone* was 13 when she was raped, and vicious predatory men lurk throughout the book. The indictment isn't always so direct. The title character in *The Pilot's Wife* is a mother in her thirties when her husband's death in a plane wreck reveals his secret life, with a second wife and child and a job working for Irish terrorists.



Many of the novels Oprah has chosen rely on the same emotional trigger. Like the shoot-out in a spaghetti western or the engagement in a Jane Austen novel, an Oprah's Book Club selection has its violence-against-women scene. In *Where the Heart Is*, a sweet and likable character is looking for Mr. Right but always ends up with Mr. Wrongs. She dates them; she gets pregnant with their children; and they leave. When she finally seems to have met Mr. Right, who is kind to her and gentle with her children, she walks in on him sodomizing her son. A fight ensues that is so brutal her jaw has to be wired for a year, she loses her job because she cannot work, and her son may never recover from his trauma.

A more subtle female chauvinism shows in Oprah's choice of writers. Even the best-known ones—Isabel Allende, Toni Morrison—belong to that school whose works would be less praised were they written by men. Allende's *Daughter of Fortune* follows the adventures of a sensitive young lady who finds love in the arms of a socialist worker, then a Chinese medicine man. *Beloved*, which won Morrison a Pulitzer and which Oprah made into a movie, relies heavily on the violence-against-women device for its depiction of the horrors of slavery.

Alas, Oprah, the great lover of books, is no lover of great books. While her favorites, according to *O* magazine, include *To Kill a Mockingbird* and some lesser decent novels, she also lists *Reflections on the Art of Living* by Joseph Campbell of "follow your bliss" fame and *A Return to Love* by Hollywood New Age healer Marianne Williamson. One worthy novel did recently make her book club—*The Reader*, by Bernhard Schlink, a curious little love story from Germany—but it was the exception. What a pity that the influential Oprah's Book Club is enamored almost exclusively of a literary world where the women are innocent, the men are brutal, and if you watch the river long enough, the body of your husband will float by.

Maybe Oprah's audience is to blame. Her fans apparently want to be told that great truths can be found in shallow books; that it's all right to hate men, or not; to ditch your marriage, or save it; to lose weight, or wear it proudly; to conceal your age, or accept it; to have a sex change, or change back; to abandon your child, or raise your child; to cherish your family, or relish your singleness. And Oprah is nothing if not a performer who delivers for her audience. Which is why she makes a wonderful entertainer, but a two-bit oracle.

Still, as Oprah's favorite poet, Maya Angelou, might say: She's a phenomenal woman. Watching her, one realizes that Oprah is doing what, by some compelling but ineffable logic, she should be doing. She has achieved a kind of perfection, slinging truths, half-truths, and outright nonsense to flatter America with its own favorite fallacies. As she purveys Oprah-brand women's culture through her ever-popular show, her magazine, her cable channel, and across the Internet, one might wish that there weren't a talent for such things, but there is, and she has it. ♦

An Appeal to GOP Pro-Choicers

If they believe what they say they believe, they should spend more time attacking pro-abortion absolutists.

By Noemie Emery

Some time ago, I had a dream: that the pro-life wing of the Republican party would become just a little less rigid, and seek common ground with the pro-choice wing of the party. Now that seems to have happened, and I have a new dream: that GOP pro-choicers will reciprocate.

In this dream, the Tom Ridges, the Jennifer Dunns, and the Kay Bailey Hutchisons of the party would, singly or together, begin to say things like this: (1) They still dissent in some ways from their pro-life colleagues—no point in lying; (2) but they think abortion is a "right" that is wrong, that alternatives to it should be strongly promoted, and that the state ought to speak up for life; (3) and, differ as they do with some in their own party, they dissent even more from the feminist Democrats. These Republicans would then draw sharp lines between themselves and the Democrats, call them out of touch with the country and with its moral traditions, and make them defend their more radical viewpoints. How is late-term abortion *not* killing an infant? Do they really approve of a legal regime in which a 14-year-old girl can be taken out of the state for an abortion without her mother or father's permission? Do they see the "choice" between giving birth and abortion as morally neutral? Why are they hostile to adoption? Do they accord fetal life *any* value? Would they defend "choice" for any conceivable reason? Because the child may be slightly imperfect? Because it is "only" a girl?

In this dream, pro-choice Republicans would take seriously the larger issue of reverence for life. In an age when violence is showcased in music and movies, random shootings are endemic, and an esteemed scholar at an Ivy League college advances the argument that parents should be given a grace period of 28 days after birth to decide if their handicapped child should live, one need not be undissentingly pro-life to balk at a social ethic that defines life as merely one "choice" among many. Pro-choice Republicans ought to denounce this callousness as a danger to everyone. They could say that while they are not willing to ban abortion, they are delighted to be in the pro-life party, the party that stands for restraint and for conscience, the party that says *life itself* must be valued and not carelessly thrown away.

Ardent pro-lifers might dismiss this as twaddle, and, by their own lights, they would be right. Moderates on the abortion issue are inconsistent and often illogical. But the abortion debate is multi-dimensional and is fought out on several levels. One is the plane of the issue itself—its rightness, its wrongness, the number and kind of restrictions—on which the opposite sides now do battle. The other is the way that the battle is waged.

Pro-life advocates (and their pro-choice counterparts) tend to be purists, believers in absolutes that cannot be diluted or compromised. The problem for both sides are the three-fourths or more of American voters whose outlook is different. These are the situationalists, who look at each case on a one-by-one basis, who believe that these rights are *not* all-controlling, and can be, and ought to be, modified. These are the people—pro-life with exceptions; pro-choice with restrictions—who make up the broadest swath of voters. They are the ones who turn up in the polls with the mixed views that drive purists crazy: who say abortion is a form of murder they will reluctantly tolerate in some, not all, cases; who would allow it for "good," not "bad," reasons; who would grant extra leeway in cases of rape because a woman who becomes unwillingly pregnant through consensual sex has a moral and personal responsibility for what happens later that a victim of rape does not carry.

Noemie Emery, a frequent contributor, lives in Alexandria, Virginia.

Purists may despise these people (and many appear to), but they cannot afford completely to ignore them, as their votes tend to settle elections. Pro-life Republicans have difficulty talking to these people; they tend to preach at or scold them. Pro-choice Republicans can. Situationalists all, they can relate to ambiguity and use it to push people subtly in a pro-life direction. They can appeal to the squeamishness of most pro-choice moderates, and expand the growing constituency who favor restrictions. They can make such moderates uneasy with the language of liberals. Pro-choice Republicans should make this effort, and pro-lifers should thank them, for their mutual good.

This is a small enough thing for one wing of a party to do for the other, and one that will cost these Republicans nothing. Will it lose them the support of abortion-rights lobbies? No, for these back only Democrats. Will it cost them the backing of pro-choice majorities enraged at assaults on their "rights"?

The press, of course, tells us these people are out there, ready to mangle conservatives. The polls, though, say something different, which the press has chosen not to notice. They tell us that these vast pro-choice armies are largely a fiction. They tell us that most pro-choice voters are conflicted and moderate. And they tell us that the purist pro-choice view, that abortion is a basic right, essential to women's autonomy, with no restrictions accepted for timing or circumstance—the view of the Clintons, the Gores, the feminists, and the editorial page of the *New York Times*—is as extreme as the purist pro-life position, and only slightly more popular, and is held *less* by women than men.

The feminist left not only inveighs against legal restrictions, but insists that no moral stigma should ever be attached to abortion. This is a great stumbling block for most of the American people, and one Republicans could exploit.

Most of the people hewing to this hard line are Democrats or, at any rate, liberals, and they are increasingly out of step with public opinion. A 1996 CBS/*New York Times* poll found that while 61 percent of delegates to the Democratic convention held the purist pro-choice position, only 31 percent of self-described *Democrats* did so. In 1999, a feminist group astounded itself when a poll it commissioned from Princeton Survey Research showed that 53 percent of women opposed abortion for *all* reasons except rape, incest, and to save the life of the mother: up from 45 percent in 1997. A poll taken by the *New York Times* in 1998 found that almost half of Americans say it is "too easy to get an abortion," and that "public support for legal abortion plummets from 61 percent . . . in the first three months" to 15 percent after that. A Pew Research survey last year found that 34 percent thought legal abortion had been good for the country, 17 percent thought it had made no difference, and 42 percent thought it had made our lives worse.

The movement of public opinion in recent years has been consistently in the pro-life direction. All polls show a rise in support for the kinds of restrictions deplored by Al Gore and Hillary Clinton. Large majorities support total bans on abortions in the last two trimesters of pregnancy; huge majorities (80 percent) support waiting periods and parental consent; majorities even back spousal notification, a stunning endorsement of patriarchal power. Resistance to free-and-easy abortion is growing especially among young people and women, two cohorts assumed to be strongly pro-choice.

In 1998, a UCLA survey of more than 250,000 freshmen in 469 colleges found student support for keeping abortion legal at 51 percent, down from a peak of 65 percent in 1990. A poll by John Zogby in August 1999 found that "68 percent of those 18 to 24 years old side with the view of most traditional religions that abortion destroys human life." Pro-choice Republicans, in short, would have little to fear from public opinion should they choose to give aid and comfort to their pro-life colleagues; indeed, by doing so they would reflect public opinion. The public might even be glad.

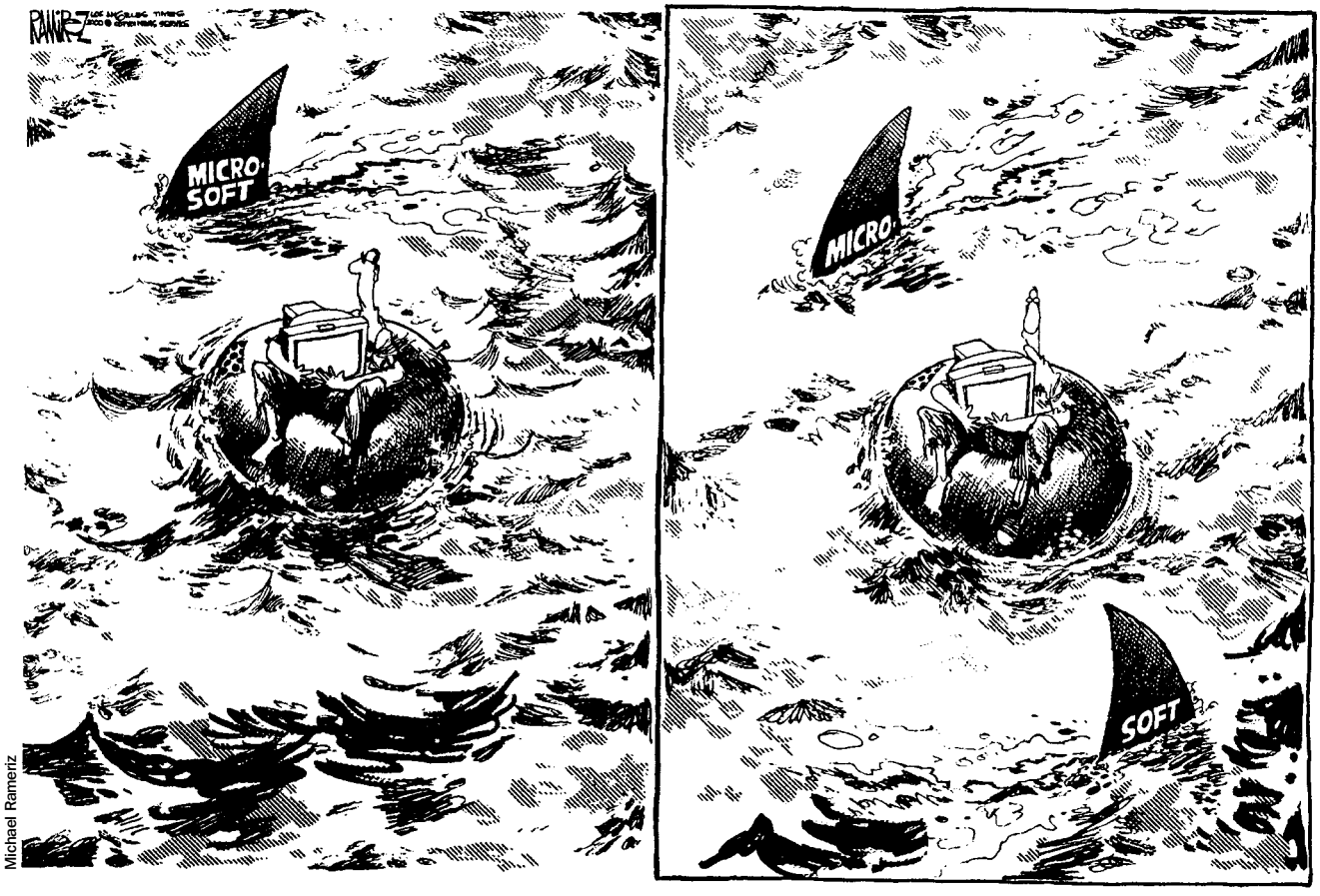
Most pro-choice Republicans are already quite moderate—against federal funding, against late-term abortion, for waiting periods, for parental consent—they just don't like to talk about it. Even the more ardently pro-choice among them—Rudy Giuliani of New York, Christie Todd Whitman of New Jersey, ex-governors William Weld and Pete Wilson—seem to be so from libertarian rather than feminist principles. They say and do many things that would be anathema to feminist liberals: They plump for adoption and abstinence and talk of abortion as something unpleasant that should be reduced and discouraged, although voluntarily. The feminist left not only inveighs against legal restrictions, but insists that no moral stigma should ever be attached

to abortion. This is a great stumbling block for most of the American people, and one Republicans could exploit.

In its story trying to explain the 1998 poll results, the *New York Times* quoted Roger Rosenblatt, author of a book on abortion politics and an opponent of legal restrictions. "Sooner or later," said Rosenblatt, "you're going to have a system where you say, 'One simply doesn't cavalierly have an abortion.' It's not against the law, but one simply doesn't do it, or, if one does, one recognizes the moral digression."

This sounds like something every Republican should be able to say. In my dream, they would all say it, every Republican of national prominence, from George W. Bush and John McCain, to Tom Ridge and Colin Powell, to Christie Whitman and Elizabeth Dole. It would give them a common platform to stand on, lessen the tension that exists in the party, lessen the reluctance of some pro-life voters to support those from the less purist wing, and attract moderate voters. Republicans, together, could then ask the Democrats to join them in an effort to discourage abortion, in the way they have stigmatized other behaviors, like smoking. They won't join such a cause; their base will not let them. But they should be publicly embarrassed for their unwillingness to do so. Pro-choice Republicans ought to go out and nail them. When license plates with the inscription "Choose Life" were recently offered in Florida, the state's National Organization for Women chapter went to court to try to prevent this. Let NOW and the Democrats' abortion activists explain to the people why the suggestion to "Choose Life" (emphasis on *Choose*) is so sinister. The explanation will not get them far.

As the *New York Times* has explained, "the question of whether women often have abortions 'cavalierly' appears to be having a powerful influence in changes in attitude." It is moving Americans—women and men—somewhat closer to the pro-life side. There should be a political price to be paid for being too careless with life. Republicans ought to make Democrats pay it. All that is needed is for the pro-choice members of the party to take the lead. The press, of course, will think otherwise, and tell them that tolerance should come from the other side only, that one can never be pro-choice enough. The polls say something else. One good turn—or part turn—is deserving of another. Tolerance is a beautiful thing. ♦



Michael Rameriz

Norman Conquest

The Man Who Illustrated America

By Catesby Leigh

Triple Self-Portrait (1960). All pictures courtesy the Corcoran Museum.

It is a familiar, *American* image, that painting of a lanky, aging painter painting himself with photographic precision. Seated with his back to us, he looks at himself in a mirror, pipe dangling from his mouth, eyeglasses comically opaque. The gilded mirror-frame is crowned by an eagle with the shield of the Republic, and a Roman helmet from the painter's collection of props is perched on his easel. Self-portraits by Dürer, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, and Picasso are pinned to a corner of his canvas. It is the portrait—or, to be exact, the triple self-portrait—of an old-fashioned, patriotic provincial with his eyes on a grander milieu.

Who but Norman Rockwell could paint such a picture? What other artist could have spoofed, so gently and so effectively, his own ambitions? What other artist of recent memory has been blessed with such a combination of light-heartedness, self-assurance, and talent? Talent indeed, because very few painters could have conceived of, let alone executed, this marvel of design and draftsmanship.

The public always loved Rockwell, while the critics consigned him to the kitsch pile. But the collapse of the modernist consensus in support of abstract expressionism has opened the way for a re-appraisal. Of kitsch, that is. Rockwell heads the list of cherished exemplars of "bad art." He has become a camp figure, a source of postmodern diversion, an amusing medium for enlightened sociological diagnosis of Middle America's delusions and dreams.

What remains in short supply is appreciation of Rockwell's artistry. Needless to say, his subject matter, which revolved largely around the cheerful portrayal of small-town life, had much to do with his success. But an ordinary painter wouldn't have gotten very far relying on the sentimental scenes and silly gags that were Rockwell's stock in trade. What makes his best pictures work is his redoubtable art.

Of course, there's not much point in comparing Rockwell to Cézanne or Picasso. He relied on long-standing conventions of pictorial communication that the Frenchman and the Spaniard made it their business to ignore. But if we want to judge him, as we should, by the standards those conventions impose, we have a welcome opportunity with the new exhibition of his work, on view at the Corcoran Museum in Washington until September 24. (The exhibition has already been seen in Atlanta and Chicago; from Washington it will travel to San Diego, Phoenix, Stockbridge, and New York.)

Born in 1894, Norman Rockwell spent the first nine or ten years of his life in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in New York City. His early years left him with a bad impression of the city, an impression that was reinforced by idyllic sojourns on farms where his family boarded on summer vacations. He entered art school as a teenager. Even though he regarded the golden age of book and magazine illustration as a thing of the past—book publishers were making less use of pictures, while magazine editors were making more use of photographs—he quickly concluded that it was in illustration his talent lay.

Catesby Leigh is an art critic living in Washington, D.C.

Saying Grace, *the Thanksgiving cover for the* Saturday Evening Post *in 1951.*

He was also intensely ambitious. At nineteen, he was named art editor of *Boys' Life*, the Boy Scout magazine; a few years later he produced the first of the 322 covers for the *Saturday Evening Post* he would paint over nearly half a century. Like the vast majority of artists across the ages, he produced work he thought his clientele—the *Post*'s readership—would like. The competition in magazine illustration was brutal: Rockwell saw his admired and successful colleague J.C. Leyendecker dumped by the *Post* and the advertising agencies, and reduced to obscurity and low-grade work in his final years. Rockwell never took his popularity or his paycheck for granted.

Nor, conventional painter that he was, did he ever dispense with the fully three-dimensional modeling of his figures, or a reliance on movement, gesture, and vivid characterization. It would be very hard, in fact, to find a contemporary artist capable of portraying the human body in motion with anything like the fluidity with which Rockwell rendered the three rascals clutching their clothes and dashing past a No Swimming sign in his famous *Post* cover picture of 1921. Color schemes were skillfully woven into his designs, and he employed the traditional technique of underpainting his figures with a layer of monochrome paint (often Mars violet) in order to endow his pictures with a unity of tone.

And yet Rockwell's work changed considerably over time. The camera, ironically enough, was the most conspicuous factor in his development. In his earlier *Post* covers—those done during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s—his figures are more stylized, his designs simpler, flatter, and more schematic, with backgrounds merely suggested rather than fleshed out in detail. *No Swimming* shows only the three boys, a dog, and the No Swimming sign; besides a hint of grass, there is nothing else in the picture. Similarly, a 1929 cover picture shows only a decidedly down-at-heel cop at a speed-trap, peering out from behind a "Welcome to Elmville" sign, whistle between his lips, stop watch, and billy club in hand. The cop and the sign are the picture. A more spatially articulated *Post* cover from 1937 shows a workman painting a road's centerline that both creates the setting for the picture (in which the man is startled by a dog chasing a cat across the freshly drawn line) and defines a tilted picture plane (which conveys a sense of spatial depth). Still, Rockwell saw no need here for an abundance of incidental detail.

With these earlier covers, reliance on photography is either non-existent or not evident. It was during the 1940s that photography became pronounced in Rockwell's work—sometimes too pronounced.

Rockwell had always needed to work from models in bringing his ideas to the canvas. Photography made it easier for him not only to compose pictures involving difficult perspectives, which appealed to editors, but it also freed Rockwell from the need to employ models striking uncomfortable poses for hours on end. (He says in his autobiography that it took him three or four days to paint a human figure from a model.) Before his conversion to the camera, he had to rely on a limited number of paid models, who recur like stock characters in his earlier work. Now he could just take a picture of someone, or something, he wanted to paint.

Photography, along with improved printing technology, also allowed Rockwell to dispense with the white backgrounds of the sort we encounter

in the *No Swimming* cover. He took to filling, even cramming, the picture frame with detail.

One of Rockwell's immensely popular pictures illustrating Franklin Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" shows a matron bearing a turkey to the table at a joyous Thanksgiving gathering. Painted in 1943, the picture is based on a Thanksgiving photograph—and if it weren't for Rockwell's color, the painting might as well be a photograph. Coleridge recognized long ago that mere duplication is not art, because it is devoid of emotional resonance. And *Freedom From Want* is strikingly inartistic.

To be sure, the photographically oriented method also accounts for some of Rockwell's most remarkable, and best loved, pictures—pictures with a narrative depth Rockwell had never previously achieved. Telling a story, after all, is what illustration is all about. *Saying Grace*, the 1951 *Saturday Evening Post* cover, shows an elderly woman and a little boy saying a prayer at a table in a diner. A couple of young men at the same table, one with a union button pinned on his cap, behold the curious spectacle. An older, world-wearier man entering the diner looks on reverentially. The praying figures are set against a broad expanse of window glass, which permits a view of a railway yard and a factory that Rockwell renders in monochrome.

The patterned fabric of the elderly woman's handbag and the alligator skin of an overnight bag not only call attention to themselves through their elaborate depiction—a familiar practice in Renaissance painting—but also tell us that the woman and her grandson are strangers to the city. The industrial scene in the background, the other figures in the picture, and even the cigarette butts scattered on the floor serve as foils to their small-town piety.

In another painting from the same period, we peer in through the window of a darkened barbershop to a brightly lit back room where we see a clarinetist, a violinist, and a cellist playing. The window has a crack, and its frame

Above: Shuffleton's Barbershop *(1950). Opposite below:* No Swimming *(1921).*

could use a paint job. In the front room we see the barbershop chair, the magazine racks, a wood stove with coals aglow, cluttered shelves, and a "Remember December 7" poster with a tattered American flag flying at half-mast hanging on the wall. A cat in the front room watches the musicians with us. The foreshortened stove pipe running into the back room and the strong contrast in light between the two rooms accentuate the sense of three-dimensional space.

As with *Saying Grace*, the profusion of precisely rendered detail betrays Rockwell's reliance on photography, but in neither case can photography account for the animated pictorial space he succeeds in creating. Painted in 1950, *Shuffleton's Barbershop* conveys an idea, or an ideal, of the juxtaposition of the ramshackle commonplace with loftier elements in the fabric of American life. It adheres too closely to natural appearances to be a great work, but in conception it is admirable.

By the early 1960s, television had cut into the *Saturday Evening Post*'s circulation and advertising revenue. Thanks to photography, moreover, the *Post* had less need of Rockwell's services, and was less interested in the sort of pictures that had made him famous. He left the magazine in 1963 for *Look*. Though Rockwell felt the need to be more topical during the final phase of his career, his best picture from this period differs from his earlier work only in terms of subject. Painted in 1964, *The Problem We All Live With* shows a black child in a white dress being escorted to school by U.S. marshals (who are shown only from the shoulder down). The figures are set in relief against a white wall scarred by tokens of racism. The simplicity of this effective narrative concept is pure Rockwell.

Norman Rockwell died in 1978, at the age of eighty-four, at his home in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Presumably the fact that the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge is one of the two institutions that organized the current Rockwell exhibition has something to do with the informative and unpatronizing character of the commentary accompanying the pictures.

Rockwell's critical reputation still suffers from the breach between illus-

The Problem We All Live With, *Rockwell's* Look *magazine cover for January 14, 1964.*

tration and fine art that grew wider as he grew older. The breach, of course, was already evident when he was a student. Impressionism had abolished narrative content and the depiction of movement and gesture as constituent elements of painting, while doing away with traditional notions of color as a factor in design.

Because they focused on the optical effects of natural light, moreover, the Impressionists had also legitimized flatter, more two-dimensional modeling, along with the flattening of pictorial space. As modernist tendencies developed and abstraction gained ground during Rockwell's career, cultivated opinion and the general public entertained increasingly divergent notions of what art is.

Rockwell's achievement—which undeniably falls short of the highest reach of artistic greatness—consists largely in employing traditional conventions so effectively that he was able to make sentimental subjects artistically viable. By the same token, the heightening and refining of the emotions associated with the great tradition in painting and sculpture revolves around a more exalted, more purely imaginative view of the world than Rockwell could ever offer. His academic naturalism is at odds with what the critic Pierce Rice calls the "idealized and generalized" representation of nature, which has shaped Western art of the greatest emotional power from the age of Phidias down to Honoré Daumier and Winslow Homer.

Daumier, the nineteenth-century French master who made his name as an illustrator, could not paint what was before him; Rockwell could paint only what was before him. Yet Rockwell's polished naturalism is perfectly compatible with his commonplace themes. In the case of *Freedom of Speech* (the best of the "Four Freedoms" series), it served his purposes wonderfully: The working man speaking up at a town meeting is one of America's democratic icons, and few pictures have made a deeper impact on the nation.

Rockwell and his colleagues J.C. Leyendecker, Maxfield Parrish, and N.C. Wyeth enriched the mainstream culture by bringing illustration and decoration of a high order to bear on books, magazines, posters, and calendars that were part of everyday life. The main reason we have no painters of Rockwell's caliber these days is that we have very little in the way of cultural infrastructure, at the educational and critical level, supporting the development of traditional artists. The dominance of photography and computer-generated design seems too secure for artistic illustration to pose any threat in the foreseeable future. But talented artists schooled in the great tradition would surely encounter plenty of market demand for their work.

People—even people with considerable disposable income—are instinctively drawn to scenographic illusionism in art. It is one of those intractable facts of human nature, part of the way people go about making themselves at home in the world. That instinct has usually been fulfilled not by artists who represent the world either in abstract terms or just as it is, but, as Norman Rockwell put it, by artists who have the talent, training, and confidence to show the world as they "would like it to be." ♦

Proles at the Polls

The Democrats' working class problem.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

The big political story of the last twenty years is the white working class's abandonment of the Democratic party, according to the demographer Ruy Teixeira and the sociologist and political activist Joel Rogers. It's not that Republicans have been innovative. It's that the Democrats have shown no interest in the people who eat Velveeta, watch Court TV, and stick decals on the back of their pickups.

America's Forgotten Majority
Why the White Working Class Still Matters
by Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers
Basic, 214 pp., $27

The working class does still exist. Granted, in this economy, 58 percent of workers hold white-collar jobs, versus only 25 percent who are blue-collar. Trade unions, despite a recent resurgence, remain relatively weak. But just because working people are doing different things (scooping Häagen-Dazs, for instance, rather than assembling car doors) and just because they live in different places (suburbs rather than cities) doesn't mean they lack common interests. And so Teixeira and Rogers, in their new volume *America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*, look at the three quarters of whites who lack a four-year college degree and ask how they've fared in the New Economy.

The answer is, they've been pummeled. Two-thirds earn between $15,000 and $75,000 a year. Between 1979 and 1997, their real hourly wages took a nosedive, while those of college grads soared. Men were particularly hard hit: Those who attended some college saw their incomes fall 12 percent, high school grads lost 17 percent, and dropouts lost 30 percent. While the authors grant that wage levels rose at the end of the 1990s, they point convincingly to real anxiety over job security, retirement security, and spiraling health care costs to show that this remains a group under pressure.

The authors are leftists, rather than liberals, and feel a need to explain why they're focusing on white people. For one thing, other Democratic constituencies are maxed out. Democrats now get roughly a third of their votes from blacks, securing majorities—93 percent in the last presidential election—that would lead us to cry electoral fraud if they happened in Cuba or Iraq. And the Democratic party is doing fine by women. But live white males, with nothing like the Civil Rights movement or feminism to cement party loyalty, feel no particular attachment to Democrats anymore. Despite what most left-wing theorists claim, it's not that white voters *resent* programs focused on gays, women, and minorities. It's just that Democrats aren't talking to them at all.

And when they do focus on white people, Democrats are much more attracted to "soccer moms," "wired workers," and other New Economy elites. This is a mistake. Elite women are becoming more and more reliably Democratic—in the polarizing election of 1994 that brought Republicans to power in both houses, white women with college degrees were the only important white sub-population to vote *more* Democratic. But such women don't cast much more than 10 percent of the votes. Downmarket whites, by contrast, make up 55 percent of the voting population, and they're true swing voters. Their allegiances shift wildly: Between 1990 and 1992, Republicans saw a 22 point drop in their white working-class support. Between 1992 and 1994, Democrats were abandoned by 20 percent of their white working-class voters.

Teixeira and Rogers's *America's Forgotten Majority* is stuffed with factoid treasures that will correct many political misperceptions. For one thing, it provides the most convincing account yet of the Perot phenomenon, showing that the two-thirds of Reform voters who came from the white working class tended to be those who had experienced particularly large wage losses over the preceding decades. In so doing, Teixeira and Rogers implicitly refute those who claim George Bush the elder would have won if Perot hadn't been in the race. Head to head, Bush might have done worse. Reform voters turn out to have been midway between Clinton and Bush on size-of-government issues, but closer to Clinton on social ones. And the book shows that the great electoral triumph of Bill Clinton was halting the hemorrhage of votes from his party's once-solid working-class base. Much has been made of Clinton's winning fewer votes in his 1992 triumph than Michael Dukakis did in his 1988 loss. But even with Perot's third-party threat, Clinton got more white male votes than Dukakis did.

Teixeira and Rogers argue convincingly that the economic decline of the last quarter century has shaken old political certitudes among the working classes. But a mystery remains: Why did economic decline, over which, after all, both parties presided, harm Democrats rather than Republicans? In an attempt to answer this question, the authors move from poll-watching to ideology, and they fall down. Their absolutely atrocious final chapter on "Mobilizing the Forgotten Majority," which outlines a program of government activism meant to win back the white working class, clashes with the brilliant electoral analysis of the rest of the book.

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Some of Teixeira and Rogers's policy prescriptions are disingenuous: *We should make whatever adjustments are necessary to keep the economy growing,* they write. But "whatever adjustments" apparently doesn't include tax cuts and deregulation.

Some are anodyne: *In today's global economy, we all have the right to a decent wage and to speak our minds and organize*.

And some play into the hands of the very yuppies who hijacked the Working Man's party in the first place: *Women who work outside the home should have access to affordable, quality child care* sounds sweet—but it adds up to a way of forcing Norma Rae Trailer, who stays at home with her five kids, to subsidize the day care of Louise Lawyer.

What's more, the authors' economic determinism leads them to fudge issues concerning values—indeed, to ignore the question of whether there's any such thing as working-class values at all, other than equal opportunity and the importance of work. They call the distinction between values and economics "artificial" and dismiss President Clinton's gays-in-the-military gaffes as merely "an exploitable distraction," made possible by the administration's bailing out on its populist economic policy. They scarcely consider the possibility that voters may have been upset about gays in the military *because they were upset about gays in the military*.

Nonetheless, this is a vital book. It establishes Ruy Teixeira as perhaps the most innovative election analyst working in Washington today. Speaking at the Brookings Institution in early June, Teixeira presented his latest findings about how the presidential nominee of the self-proclaimed "party of the little guy" is doing with those little guys. Among white working-class men, Teixeira noted, Al Gore is polling at 32 percent. The biggest question this book leaves is why two committed leftists like Teixeira and Rogers are struggling so sincerely, so desperately, to rescue the Democratic party—which their own work demonstrates has become the Rich White People's party. ♦

BCA

Love, American Style

Norman Podhoretz's commentary on his country.

BY DAVID BROOKS

When Norman Podhoretz was nineteen, he left his working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn to work as a counselor at a summer camp in Wisconsin. There's been a lot of romantic comedy, by Neil Simon and others, about the sorts of Jewish neighborhoods Podhoretz was leaving. But the Podhoretz home was no sitcom setting. His maternal grandfather was an angry, spiteful man. His great aunt committed suicide. The trip to Wisconsin was his first venture out of his narrow Yiddish subculture into the wider America.

My Love Affair with America
The Cautionary Tale of a Cheerful Conservative
by Norman Podhoretz
Free Press, 256 pp., $25

In the middle of that summer, one of the other counselors took Podhoretz to visit his parents at their vacation home fifty miles from the camp grounds. While they were hitchhiking over, it began to rain and they arrived at the large summer house soaking wet. Podhoretz was sent upstairs to one of the bedrooms to get some dry clothes. The door to the room was open, Podhoretz writes in *My Love Affair with America*:

> And when I closed it there was a click as the latch snapped firmly into place. At the sound of this click, I burst into tears. Bewildered by my strange reaction, I stood there weeping for a few seconds, and then it came to me that what had caused it was the fact that the doors in our apartment in Brooklyn, thickly encrusted as they had become from repeated painting over the years, could never be snapped shut with that marvelously satisfying click. . . . It took this trivial detail to make me realize fully for the first time in my life that I was *poor*.

Podhoretz tells this anecdote with some discomfort. He doesn't want to come off as one of those Clifford Odets characters consumed with self-pity because he grew up lower class. And he wants to assure us that the clicking door was not just a symbol of affluence. It's never been money Podhoretz was after, as you could gather from the fact that he spent the bulk of his life editing a small circulation opinion magazine.

Rather, the door-closing seemed to represent all the wonder of American life that he'd been missing: "As I stood, tears streaming down my face and my body wracked with sobs, in an opulently appointed summer home in the gorgeous north woods of Wisconsin, the revelation came to me that until now I had not yet so much as begun to know the half of what America was all about, and what it might have to offer, even for the likes of me."

Norman Podhoretz went on to become one of the most important intellectuals of his generation: the longtime editor of *Commentary*, one of the founding figures of neoconservatism, and a distinguished literary critic and provocateur. *My Love Affair with America* is a book of gratitude for all that America has meant to him and done for him. It's a warm sparkler of a book. In such previous works as *Making It*, *Breaking Ranks*, and *Ex-Friends*, Podhoretz has demonstrated an ability to describe the state of America by telling the story of his interaction with it. This book too describes the intellectual history of the past forty years through the narrative of Podhoretz's own journey.

But I do have one large quarrel with

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the book, which starts with the title and its central metaphor. Podhoretz describes his relationship with America as a love affair. Here was this kid from Brooklyn who met America and fell in love with her. The love affair started, he says, not with the bounty of America or its beauty, but with its talk and writing. As Podhoretz writes in the first sentence of this book, "It all began with language."

Podhoretz grew up in a home in which Yiddish was the dominant language. When he was five or six, his public school bumblingly assigned him to a remedial speech class. He was surrounded by kids with real speech impediments and forced to do pronunciation exercises day after day. The result, he says, was that he lost all trace of a Yiddish (or Brooklynese) accent: "I cannot help feeling that my life would have been very different if I had never been forced to speak like a classier and more cultivated person than I actually was."

Not only that, the speech class gave him, he writes, an early and acute sensitivity to the wonders of the English language. When he was old enough to read in the public library, he continues, again crediting his remedial speech class, "I was almost abnormally alive to the language of these books."

And it was his love of language that served as a ticket to the wider America. It attracted the notice of a doting schoolteacher. It won him a scholarship to Columbia College, getting him in under the Jewish quota. It enabled him to win a scholarship to Cambridge University in England, and thus go on to a career as a literary critic and editor. He concludes the book with a lyrical expression of gratitude for all that America has done for him. He was able to rise from his poor Brooklyn neighborhood and now he owns a nice apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, and, he says, a lovely summer home in East Hampton.

But somehow this love story doesn't explain Podhoretz's patriotism, or why he has consistently taken pro-American positions on most major issues. In the first place, it couldn't have really *started* with language. Many writers and intellectuals fall in love with the English language. Then, if they are like T.S. Eliot or Henry James, they go off to England to live in the land of Shakespeare, practically renouncing their American roots. Or else they retreat into rarefied aeries, as Henry Adams did, and scorn the vulgarity of America. But that isn't what Podhoretz did. In fact, he criticizes James and Adams for distancing themselves from the rough and tumble of American life.

Bettmann / CORBIS

Norman Podhoretz, then and now.

If it were merely language and ideas that moved Podhoretz, he would have been more likely to follow the course set by so many other intellectuals of his generation: He would have gone over to Europe spouting Freud and Sartre, and joined the pan-national intellectual priesthood. He would have ended up condemning America for Vietnam and a thousand and one supposed horrors. But Podhoretz could never bring himself to do this. He broke with his fellow literature lovers, at great personal cost.

One finishes the book thinking that America was not something "out there" in the land of clean Wisconsin doorlatches for Podhoretz to discover and fall in love with through the medium of language. Instead, America was something inside Podhoretz from the start—even though he was speaking Yiddish in Brooklyn—that he couldn't later renounce even when so many of his friends were doing so. Podhoretz didn't so much fall in love with America as embody it.

And what made him quintessentially American from the first was the quality he described in his first book, *Making It*. That quality was ambition. Podhoretz announced in that book that he was ambitious, and sought to rise in the world. That was a taboo in literary circles—the book caused much outrage and embarrassment—but it's perfectly normal to be ambitious in most parts of America, even a little admirable.

"Making It" is actually a perfect title for an American book. The phrase perfectly captures the dynamism of American life: the story of millions of people moving West, or tinkering in their garage in a desperate effort to make something of themselves. One suspects that even at an early age, it was this longing that connected Podhoretz to the people out in Wisconsin, or Texas, or California. It's ironic that one of Podhoretz's first famous essays was a negative review of Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*. That book opens with the sentence "I am an American—Chicago born." That sentence, if you change the birthplace, applies pretty well to Podhoretz.

Now, as a senior citizen, some of his drive is mellowing, replaced by a gentler sense of gratitude. But his writing is still brash and boisterous. Whether you are dazzled or dazed, you can't help but be fascinated by Norman Podhoretz. That is yet another quality he shares with his nation. ♦

DreamWorks

See *Chicken Run*

Nick Park's feat of clay.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Nick Park is one of the greatest filmmakers in motion-picture history—and chances are that, until this week, you'd never heard of him or his movies. Park has made five films. Four of them are short subjects—the longest of which runs thirty minutes, the briefest a mere five. Three of those shorts are comic masterpieces, comparable to the silent classics of Chaplin and Keaton. The other two Park works are merely wonderful, including his first full-length Hollywood feature, *Chicken Run*, which just opened in three thousand theaters nationwide.

Park's movies are filmed on tiny sets populated by characters made of clay. They are photographed frame by frame (it takes twenty-four frames to make one second of film) to give the illusion of movement and action. This is an almost unimaginably painstaking process. Park and his colleagues must make hundreds of adjustments to the clay figures and the sets and the lighting for each frame they shoot. *Chicken Run* has 118,000 individual shots in it. These are dense images, in which as many as twenty clay characters might be moving about in the foreground and background. *Chicken Run* took three years to make and is, by leagues, the most elaborate picture of its kind ever made.

The process of animating miniature figures through what is called "stop-motion" is almost as old as film itself. In George Méliès's 1902 *A Voyage to the Moon*—one of the first commercial movies—a spaceship crashes into the unhappy clay eye of the Man in the Moon. Ninety years after Méliès's groundbreaking work, Park took us on another clay voyage to the moon in *A Grand Day Out*, which he made entirely by himself. It took him six years to complete the twenty-three-minute film. It was worth every moment.

A Grand Day Out introduces Park's creations—a fussy middle-aged bachelor Englishman named Wallace and his trusty terrier, Gromit—who build a spaceship and fly to the moon on a bank holiday so Wallace can have a nice afternoon feasting on the lunar surface. Wallace, it is fair to say, is obsessed with cheese. But he's puzzled by the taste of the moon. "Stilton?" he suggests. Gromit takes a sniff and shakes his head.

Gromit is far more clever than Wallace. He doesn't speak, or bark, but he does knit and cook and read *The Republic* by Pluto (not Plato; Pluto, as in the Disney character). He also enjoys the *Morning Post*, and when we watch him at the breakfast table perusing a story, the headline says: "Dog Reads Paper."

They soon discover that Méliès was wrong: There's no man in the moon. But there is an object sitting somewhere near the Sea of Tranquility that looks like a stove from the 1940s. It comes to life when Wallace, thinking it's a candy dispenser, deposits a ten-pence coin in a slot on the side. The machine is annoyed by the presence of the Earthlings—it goes around gluing pieces of cheese back after Wallace has taken a slice—until it picks up a travel magazine Wallace has brought with him. It sees a photograph of a skier and has a fantasy about shussing down the Alps. The machine is determined to climb on board the spaceship and ride it back to earth so that it can take a vacation of its own.

A contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *John Podhoretz is a columnist for the* New York Post.

With *A Grand Day Out*, Park established a signature style. His movies are comedies of manners in which his clueless countrymen and women are outwitted, threatened, and saved by the animals in their care.

They're full of peculiar and ingenious contraptions that inevitably go haywire. But what really separates his movies from others using the same technique is the eye for detail in the sets, lighting, and music. Wallace lives in a somewhat shabby townhouse in a typical provincial English city, full of 1950s furniture and brightened up with cheery wallpaper and pictures: Gromit's room is covered in a blue pattern with doggie bones, while Wallace has a painting of a wedge of Swiss cheese over his bed.

National Film and Television School (UK)

Wallace and Gromit in A Grand Day Out

Park made two more Wallace and Gromit films, *A Close Shave* and *The Wrong Trousers*, both of which won Oscars (*A Grand Day Out* lost the Oscar for Best Animated Short Subject to another hilarious Park film, *Creature Comforts*, in which zoo animals issue complaints about how boring their lives are—actual words from real interviews with visitors to an English zoo). *The Wrong Trousers* involves a pair of mechanical pants, an impassively sinister penguin with a jewel-heist scheme, and a climax in which the penguin and Gromit race through Wallace's living room on two toy-train tracks. In *A Close Shave*, Gromit is framed for kidnapping sheep by a vicious bull mastiff who makes off with a contraption designed by Wallace called the Knit-O-Matic.

The new full-length feature *Chicken Run* is not equal to Park's earlier work. He co-directed it with Peter Lord, who was one of the producers on the Wallace and Gromit movies, and for the first time he is not credited with the screenplay (which is by Karey Kirkpatrick). It shows.

Chicken Run is quite wordy, while its predecessors are mostly silent except for Wallace's occasional expressions of joy at the glories of food ("Cracking toast, Gromit!" Wallace says with great appreciation at breakfast). It lacks Park's usual helium-light touch, and in its more obvious and sentimental moments shows the tetchy influence of DreamWorks co-chief Jeffrey Katzenberg, who supervised Disney's animated renaissance from *The Little Mermaid* through *Aladdin* but lost his way with DreamWorks' first cartoon feature, the deadly *Prince of Egypt*.

Still, *Chicken Run* is mostly adorable, with several amazing sequences. The setting is a poultry camp in the north of England, and before the opening title we watch as an intrepid chicken named Ginger burrows her way under a fence, digs a tunnel, and tries various other methods to break out of Tweedy's Farm. The chickens that fail to lay their quota of eggs are removed to the slaughterhouse and eaten for dinner by the henpecked owner, Mr. Tweedy, and his harridan of a wife.

Ginger is always caught by Mr. Tweedy, who punishes his wayward chicken by hurling her into a dumpster. There, she amuses herself by bouncing a ball back and forth (à la Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape*). When the bitter Mrs. Tweedy installs a gigantic new machine for making chicken pot pie—"Chickens go in," she says with miserly glee, "pies come out"—Ginger realizes that escape is truly a matter of life and death. The scene in which she takes a wild journey through the innards of the machine, gumming up the works along the way, both evokes and equals Charlie Chaplin's indelible voyage through an industrial combine in *Modern Times*.

Ginger enlists the help of a traveling rooster, a Rhode Island Red named Rocky (the voice is Mel Gibson's), who she mistakenly believes can fly. Rocky is thrilled by the adulation of the females and begins a ridiculous exercise program to teach them the principles of flight. When Ginger realizes that Rocky is a sham, she turns to a Scottish hen touched with daffy engineering genius to design a flying machine that looks like a giant chicken to get the prisoners over the fence and into safety.

Perhaps the problem with *Chicken Run* is that Park is simply too good for the job. He has advanced the stop-motion form so far that it seems almost as if the events you're watching might be taking place: The film becomes a latter-day version of *The Great Escape*—and *The Great Escape* is simply a better and more affecting film. Park's next effort is going to be a full-length Wallace and Gromit adventure. Now, that's something worth waiting for, whether the wait is three years, six years, or a hundred. ♦

Al Gore and Tipper in the late 1960s, in photos published on the front page of the June 21, 2000, *New York Times*.

WHAT HE WAS THINKING

"Nobody understands the secret torments of the Big Man on Campus. Sure, I'm athletic, rich, and smart. And God knows I'm studly. But I can't take part in the smiling frivolity of youth the way Tipper can. I see too deeply. I perceive too much. Sometimes I think Hermann Hesse novels are my only friends. Hmm. If Tipper were to keel over right now, that would make a fantastic personal growth anecdote for a convention speech someday."

"Still, I must learn to loosen up. I must try to appear as if I function at their level, for the sake of my political viability. There, I'm smiling. I think I'm smiling. I'm doing the best I can. I wish Tipper would move her head. She's obscuring my rugged jawline."

"Fortunately, the chicks dig me just the way I am. I shall graciously allow Tipper to nuzzle my neck. I hope she's not going to leave a mark—though a small mark might humanize me …
I hope I don't doze off again. She hates that."