SPECIAL PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION ISSUE

the weekly Standard

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IT'S MY PARTY!

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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No Talk of Impeachment, Please

Rep. Bob Barr of Georgia will be hanging out at the Republican national convention with no particular plans. Rep. Henry Hyde of Illinois has plans, but they consist of sitting on the convention floor as a delegate. Rep. Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas will attend the convention, too, mainly to talk up George W. Bush. Rep. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin isn't coming at all. In case everyone's forgotten, these four Republicans and nine others constitute the most popular group in the entire Republican party: the House impeachment managers.

Yet only one of them will be speaking to the convention, Rep. Bill McCollum of Florida, and that's because he's running for the Senate. Now, if all of them appeared together at the podium, as they should, they'd get such a rousing, foot-stomping, standing ovation that the Liberty Bell might sport another crack. But that won't happen. Convention managers have decided not only that it would be imprudent, but that it would be partisan. Heaven knows, you shouldn't inject anything partisan into a party convention. Plus they don't want the impeachment of Bill Clinton to look like it was partisan either, or so they say.

So while delegates are being entertained by the likes of Bo Derek and the pro wrestler known as The Rock, the heroes of impeachment, men like Hyde and Rep. Jim Rogan of California, will have to muddle along on their own. Both Hyde and Rogan have the same problem: They're too popular. Hyde's aides are worried about getting him in and out of the convention hall. They figure he'll be mobbed by adoring Republicans. Rogan? He's gotten so many requests for speeches, drop-bys, and other appearances in Philadelphia, he's having trouble sorting them out. But a request to address the full convention? Perish the thought. ♦

The Cheney Novel

Poring over Lynne Cheney's long and impressive résumé—which includes an eight-year tenure as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities—curiosity seekers may find a reference to *The Body Politic*, a comic novel that Mrs. Cheney co-wrote in 1988 with Victor Gold, one-time press secretary to vice president George Bush and full-time humorist.

The book is a knowing and very funny send-up of Washington life in general and, in particular, an extended satire on the office of vice president. Its story revolves around an empty-suit politico named Bully Vandercleve, who is elected vice president and (ahem) dies inconveniently of a heart attack (ahem) in the arms of a glamorous network news correspondent "not his wife," as they used to say. The plot that follows is a series of evasions and ruses made possible by the strangely inconsequential nature of the vice presidency itself—well captured by Gold and Cheney in such asides as this:

> For a Type A overachiever, the Vice Presidency is the worst kind of a career move. Under the Constitution the only thing the job calls for is waiting: waiting for the President to die or be impeached; waiting for the Senate to wind up in a tie vote so the Vice President can break it.
>
> That's all the Vice Presidency is about—waiting. Everything else is make-work. Like chairing the President's Special Commission on Territorial Reform (which took Bully to Guam in August). Or attending state funerals (which took him to Iceland in December). Or filling in at some political/cultural event that the President for one reason or another can't make (like the East Passaic Young Republican Pasta Festival).
>
> A year on the job, waiting, waiting, waiting, and Bully was ready to climb the Executive Office Building walls . . .
>
> Does Dick know about this? ♦

The Infanticide Lobby

States can't ban partial-birth abortions, the Supreme Court has essentially decided. But what about *after*-birth abortions? What if, in the course of an abortion (or under any other circumstances, for that matter) an infant is fully delivered from its mother's body and exhibits one or more basic signs of life: breathing, heartbeat, or voluntary muscle movement? Perhaps the infant is "viable"; perhaps it isn't. But either way, can a doctor—at the behest of the parents or on his own—legally *kill* this infant? Can he give it a lethal injection? Throw it in a dumpster? Bang it over the head with a hammer? You wouldn't think so. You'd think a human being, born alive in the United States, should have certain bedrock legal rights. And you'd think no one would dare interfere with those rights.

But you'd be wrong. The notorious Princeton University "bioethicist" Peter Singer, for example, believes that parents should enjoy a one-month window of opportunity to destroy unhealthy newborn babies. And though they would probably not put it quite that way, the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League has recently jumped on the infanticide bandwagon, too.

At issue is the "Born-Alive Infants Protection Act," a bill proposed by

Scrapbook

Florida representative Charles Canady that would accord fully delivered living babies the status of "persons" under federal law. NARAL opposes the legislation—as an "anti-choice" assault on *Roe* v. *Wade*. Canady's legislation regulates no method of abortion or medical treatment in the slightest, of course. But that's not good enough for NARAL. An unhealthy and unwanted baby is merely and always an unviable "fetus," the organization argues in a press release issued July 20. And *Roe*, NARAL further contends, prohibits any restriction on a mother's right to kill this fetus. Even after it's been born and started to breathe.

Unbelievable.

On July 26, THE SCRAPBOOK is pleased to report, the House Judiciary Committee rejected NARAL's views, and approved the Canady bill by an overwhelming vote of 22-1. Joining NARAL in lonely opposition to the measure was North Carolina's Melvin Watt. In the November presidential election, Watt will no doubt be voting for Al Gore. ♦

Gory Logic, cont.

As THE SCRAPBOOK noted last week, Al Gore recently distinguished himself on *Meet the Press* by giggling when Tim Russert asked whether he supported a 1994 prohibition on the execution of federal prisoners who are pregnant. Gore then stalled, saying he wasn't familiar with the law in question and wanted "to think about it."

All by itself, this was remarkable. THE SCRAPBOOK bets a squillion dollars that there isn't a single sane person in America who believes a pregnant woman should be strapped to the electric chair. Why would anyone need to "think about it"?

It got worse. At a July 17 press conference in Nashville, the vice president allowed that he would support sparing a pregnant prisoner temporarily should she wish her child to live. But in general, he went on, "the principle of a woman's right to choose governs in that case." Did that mean, one incredulous reporter followed up, that Gore would also support a pregnant prisoner's decision *not* to delay her execution and thereby "bury the child"? Gore said—honest to God, we're not making this up—"Yes, yes."

This is a unique contribution to American discourse. Al Gore is the only politician in recorded history who opposes the life of the mother if it's necessary to preserve the abortion. Here's proof: On July 25, in response to the vice president's astounding announcement, the House of Representatives voted 417-0 to extend to all 50 states the federal ban on executions of pregnant women. No "woman's right to choose" exception was included in the legislation. ♦

A Daily Standard!

Throughout this week, you can go to www.weeklystandard.com for daily updates from THE SCRAPBOOK and the crack reporters and editors of THE WEEKLY STANDARD at the Republican convention in Philadelphia. ♦

Casual

"What Does He Do?"

Politicians are not my dish of tea. I do not long for their company. Of the few I've met, I have admired the salesmanly quality of some among them. I directed the anti-poverty program in Little Rock in the middle 1960s, and after spending fifteen minutes with Wilbur Mills, then chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, I felt as if we had not only gone to college together (which of course we hadn't) but had been in the same fraternity and indeed might have been roommates. I've several times talked over the phone with Daniel Patrick Moynihan, easily the most intellectually talented man in the U.S. Senate in my lifetime, but our conversations have been not about politics but about Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. For the rest, most of the pols I've met have been your normal egomaniacs, more mindful of their hairdos than their utterances, and decidedly not, as the kids say, fun persons.

But on the night of February 1, 1991, the Desert Storm offensive roughly a week old, I was in Washington to attend a quarterly meeting of the council of the National Endowment for the Arts, of which I was then a member. I received a call from a friend with whom I was to have dinner, asking whether I minded if the Cheneys, Dick and Lynne, joined us, probably not for dinner but for coffee afterwards. My friend and her husband, themselves serious intellectuals, had moved to Washington a few years before and had come to know many of the more interesting political figures in the city. She had been on the council of the National Endowment for the Humanities and had told me how intelligent she thought Lynne Cheney, who was then its chairman. "Sure," I said, "I would like to meet them."

We met for dinner at the Four Seasons, my friend and her husband, I and a woman artist from New York, a sculptor of some fame, who was also a member of the NEA council. As we finished our main course, three or four men entered the restaurant, walkie-talkies aloft. "Ah," said my friend, "Dick and Lynne must have arrived." And they had, two smallish, modestly turned out people, well matched, still nuts about each other, one felt. They had just come from a movie, shown for them alone at the American Film Institute. With the bombing of Iraq underway, and Dick Cheney almost constantly on television with Colin Powell to report on the progress of the war, they could not go to the movies unprotected. I forget what movie it was they saw, but I recall asking if the American Film Institute supplied popcorn, and learned that it didn't. A pity, we all agreed.

Darren Gygi

There was a nice flow of talk, an instantly *hamish*, or old shoe, feeling to the gathering. I was sitting next to Dick Cheney, and at one point a waiter brought a note from a man seated elsewhere in the restaurant who had recognized him, asking if he could buy our table a bottle of champagne. With a smile, Cheney told the waiter to thank the man but tell him that he couldn't accept his kind offer, though he hoped he'd understand. He then turned and waved to the man, who was seated toward the back of the room. A bit later a man with an impressively full head of white hair, who turned out to be a congressman, told Cheney how proud he was of the deep competence with which he and Colin Powell were running Desert Storm. Cheney thanked him, but I sensed that he didn't require more talk about the war, and had really gone out for the evening to get his mind off it.

And in fact the talk was dominated by Lynne Cheney questioning the sculptor and me about how things were run at the arts endowment. Her questions were smart, penetrating. Anecdotes about great goofiness at both endowments abounded. There was much laughter. Dick Cheney didn't say much. After ninety minutes or so, the time had come to break up. We shook hands all round, and the Cheneys, met at the door of the restaurant by their security escort, departed.

"What a delightful woman," said the sculptor. "I guess I'm not used to someone so intelligent in government." After we had all agreed, she said, "By the way, what does her husband do?"

Twenty-second pause for astonishment and for our jaws to close. Then I said, "I believe he's secretary of defense."

Now there are two ways to read this story. One is as illustrating the amazing insularity, New York parochialism, and self-absorption of a successful artist. But I prefer it as a story about Dick Cheney's self-effacement. He didn't have to knock his wife out of the conversational box. He didn't require the limelight. Made no bids for attention. "A measured and quietly impressive man," I noted of him in my journal. He strikes me as the perfect vice president, not in any way the stooge, the hatchet man, or the power-hungry bozo waiting in the wings. He might, given the chance, impart substance to a hollow office.

Joseph Epstein

Correspondence

The Pen Is Mightier

Thank you for the first articulate explanation of the Second Amendment I have ever read outside of a textbook (Nelson Lund, "Taking the Second Amendment Seriously," July 24).

It has never ceased to amaze me that the loudest Second Amendment supporters don't understand its purpose. It wasn't included in the Bill of Rights only as a means of insuring the public's protection against criminals, but as the final check on a government with very broad powers.

Tony Benjamin
West Jordan, UT

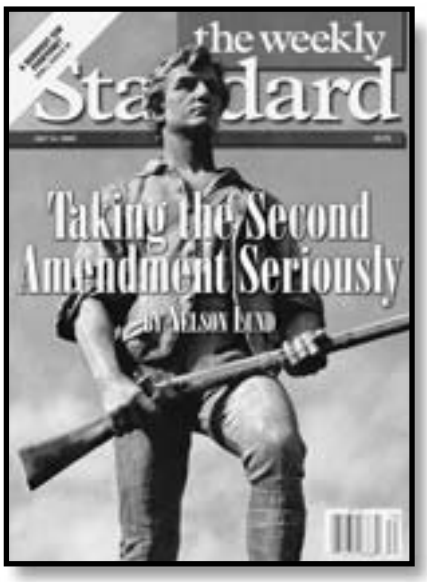
I understand that limitations of space may have prevented a full treatment of the history and use of the militia in Nelson Lund's very fine article. Lund concentrates on the military use of the militia, but the Framers were just as familiar with the law enforcement function. In the eighteenth century, the United States and England used the militia as a *posse comitatus* to aid officers of the court in executing warrants. To deprive the people of arms would have destroyed law enforcement. The first reference to the militia in the Constitution notes its primary use. Article I, Section 8 grants the Congress authority "To provide for calling forth the Militia *to execute the Laws of the Union*, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions."

Andrew Burlingame
Centreville, VA

Nelson Lund's conclusion that the Second Amendment protects "the right of the people to keep and bear arms" rather than some imagined state's right to maintain a militia is dead on. The reasoning by which he gets to this conclusion, however, is not perfect. While Lund points out that there is a difference between the militia and the army, he does not specify what these differences are, and how they are crucial to the meaning of the Second Amendment.

The army is a group of professional warriors, paid and outfitted by the federal government. Officers of the army are commissioned by act of Congress. The militia, on the other hand, is a group of non-professionals (they are not paid for their service) and is chiefly characterized by the fact that its members must supply their own firearms, ammunition, and accouterments. So the Second Amendment, by protecting the right of the people to keep and bear arms, provides for an armed populace, some of whom will be in the militia. That militia, declares the amendment, is necessary for the maintenance of a free state. The army is probably necessary for the maintenance of the state, but doesn't necessarily keep it free.

But the real attack on the Second Amendment is extra-constitutional. Virtually all gun owners concede that the rights granted under the Second Amendment are not absolute (felons and



the mentally unstable ought to have their gun rights restricted). But by torturing this concession the anti-gun people hope to effectively achieve their aims without directly addressing their constitutionality. Every federal gun law proposed or passed over the last 20 years has made it more difficult and expensive for legitimate gun owners to exercise their rights. Opponents of such measures are characterized as atavistic, "redneck," or "against the children." This is a very sophisticated attack whose ultimate purpose is to make gun owners as rare as horse owners. When that day comes, the Second Amendment will join the Tenth in the trash bin of history.

Jim Fink
Lincoln, MA

Modest Excesses

Algis Valiunas's review of *The Life of Musorgsky* by Caryl Emerson is focused largely on Modest Musorgsky's alcoholic excesses ("Immodest Ambition," July 24). The composer sounds like a failed drunk, dying at age 42 from a life of dissipation. But this picture is badly skewed. Musorgsky uniquely forged the quintessential Russian national opera, a musical mirror of the Russian psyche with an emotional depth, spiritual truth, and genuine popularity unequalled by any other.

The most popular version of *Boris Godunov* was created by three geniuses: Pushkin wrote the original play, Musorgsky crafted the extraordinary recitative melodies and fearsome harmonies, and his friend Rimsky-Korsakov did the magical orchestration. Was Musorgsky a failure? Only if Mozart, who died even younger, was a failure. Only if Beethoven, who was as passionate, was a failure. Only if Mahler, who was as neurotic and death-obsessed, was a failure.

Valiunas seems to suggest that Musorgsky should have reformed, joined AA, lived to a ripe old age, and lost the savage obsession that made him dig into his people's psyche until it lay bare and bleeding, and then turn it into unsurpassed beauty.

In the deepest sense, given his time and circumstances, Musorgsky was a master. He created something that is profoundly alive even today. In a spiritually empty world filled with bread and circuses, *Boris Godunov* continues to mirror the essential tragedy of life.

Bernard J. Baars
Lafayette, CA

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the weekly Standard

A Grand Old Party

This week's Republican convention is going to suggest, repeatedly not to say incessantly, that the GOP of 2000 is a new and different Republican party, led by a different kind of Republican. This isn't an unreasonable point, and we wish George W. Bush well in conveying it. After all, a certain amount of distancing from the Newt-led GOP of the 1990's is prudent and desirable. And the failure of Bob Dole's nostalgic acceptance speech in 1996 suggests the wisdom of looking forward rather than back, of stressing the new rather than the old.

This forward-looking disposition will probably be reinforced by the Democratic attack on Dick Cheney's congressional votes last week, which seemed to suggest that there is something disreputable in his having been a Reagan Republican in the 1980s. The Bush campaign will understandably try to change the subject rather than get bogged down in Capitol Hill minutiae of a quarter century ago.

Still, it seems an appropriate moment to note that those who voted for, supported, and worked for Republican causes and Republican administrations of the past quarter century have much to be proud of. On the big issues, they were right. Too often, too many Democrats were wrong.

When Gerald Ford tried to prevent South Vietnam and Cambodia from falling to the Communists in 1975, he was right and the Democratic Congress was wrong—tragically wrong.

When Ronald Reagan cut taxes, broke the air traffic controllers strike, and deregulated energy, he launched the economic boom of the last two decades; when George Bush took the hit and worked out the savings and loan crisis, he sustained that boom. A second Carter or a Mondale or a Dukakis administration would have left this country less prosperous, and without the supple and productive economy that is today the envy of the world.

When Ronald Reagan built up the military, insisted on deploying intermediate range missiles in Europe, announced his intention to begin a strategic defense initiative, called the Soviet empire evil, and supported freedom fighters in Nicaragua, he led us to victory in the Cold War and liberated hundreds of millions of souls from communism. It is not polite to say so, but everybody knows that if the Democrats had defeated Reagan, Soviet tyranny might well still exist.

When George Bush went to war in the Persian Gulf, he laid the groundwork for a peaceful and stable 1990's. Most Democrats in Congress opposed him.

Nor should Republicans hang their heads over their record later in the 1990s. The millennium was not ushered in by the election of 1994, but the new Republican Congress made a real contribution not just to our economic but to our social well being by insisting on balancing the budget and on welfare reform. Meanwhile, Republican governors and mayors reduced crime and improved the quality of civic life. Democrats at first objected to, then acquiesced in, and finally took credit for these Republican achievements.

When the Republican-controlled House of Representatives impeached President Clinton, it stood courageously against political pressure and for the rule of law. Democrats, with few exceptions, supported their dishonorable president.

And finally, lest we forget, Republicans for the past quarter century have defended the unborn and the traditional family despite gales of abuse from the media and the cultural elite. Here, too, the party has stood for decency and moral equality, and refused to join the Democrats in succumbing to, not to say embracing, the superficially attractive yet destructive trends of the age.

Do Republicans have nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to regret, nothing they couldn't have done much better? Of course not. Have Republicans sometimes been cocky, sometimes cowardly, sometimes disingenuous, sometimes foolish? Sure. Do Republicans need to rethink some things, to come to grips with new conditions, even to engage in some creative destruction? Absolutely.

But, compared with political parties through history, the Republican party of the past quarter century has more than a defensible record. It has an honorable one. It deserves a tip of the hat even from the new, different, and (one hopes) improved GOP that will be on display this week in Philadelphia.

—William Kristol

Prime Time Bush

His Thursday night speech is crucial—and he knows it.

BY FRED BARNES

GEORGE W. BUSH knows how to keep a secret. He got the first draft of the acceptance speech he'll deliver this week at the Republican National Convention while vacationing in early June at the Bush family retreat in Kennebunkport, Maine. He's been tinkering with it ever since. He discussed it with speechwriter Michael Gerson for the first time as they sat relaxing at the Bush summer home. Until last week, only three advisers—strategist Karl Rove, spokeswoman Karen Hughes, and Gerson—had seen the speech. Input from a few more aides—issues czar Josh Bolten, media consultant Mark McKinnon—has now been sought. But President Bush, the candidate's father, was kept out of the loop. "I don't think the old man's heard a word of it," says Rove.

The speech had better be good. It's one of the four tasks Bush must complete successfully to win the presidency on November 7. He did fine on the first, the selection of a vice presidential running mate, though Dick Cheney was initially left undefended as he took flak from Democrats and the media. The second is the speech. Bush has an advantage over Gore (and over his father in 1988): He doesn't have to relaunch himself and his campaign in the speech. He'll stick with being a "compassionate conservative" and "a different kind of Republican." The final two tasks—warding off nuclear attacks by Democrats on his Texas record and debating Gore—come later.

One adviser says the speech is supposed to be "from the heart." Bush wants it to be "passionately personal," which means more personal than any nominee's acceptance speech yet uttered.

Bush aims to achieve three things in his speech. First, he wants to show he's a strong leader. This may be better left to others, such as Colin Powell. At some point in the convention, Bush is likely to make sure the nation knows Powell will serve in his administration, if there is one. Second, he's eager to leave the impression he's different from Newt Gingrich and Tom DeLay. No problem there. He's all but said so a thousand times. And third, Bush feels he must show he knows what the job of being president is all about—in other words, the seriousness of being commander-in-chief.

That's not all there is to it, though. He's got to present some substance. So he'll offer his critique of the Clinton-Gore administration in some form other than a slashing attack. If there's anything the Bush crowd is bent on not repeating, it's the 1992 GOP convention in Houston, which featured bare-knuckle speeches by Patrick Buchanan and others. In Houston, President Bush's acceptance speech was still being written minutes before he mounted the podium, and he failed to outline a governing agenda. This week, Bush will spell out the issues he's been talking up for the past year: saving Social Security and Medicare, cutting taxes, rebuilding the military, taking the next steps in welfare reform, and improving education. Bush, says Rove, "believes in repetition of the message."

Doesn't sound like a speech that will electrify the nation, does it? The Bush plan is to overcome this not with a few memorable lines—the campaign is said to have had trouble coming up with those—and not by raising the stakes in the race, but with the force of Bush's personality. Bush has repeatedly told his aides to make the speech more direct, simple, and personal. One adviser says the speech is supposed to be "from the heart." Bush wants it to be "passionately personal," which means more personal than any presidential nominee's acceptance speech yet uttered and more personal than any speech he's ever given. He wants, according to a senior aide, "to confirm in peo-

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

ple's minds who Bush is and the best things about him." He'll have succeeded if he creates the image of a candidate whose agenda is distinct from anyone else's and of a man who is personally different from the ordinary run of politicians.

If there's to be an assault on Gore, Cheney and others will handle it. When Cheney met with Bush speechwriters, they were surprised to find how tough on the Clinton-Gore era he is. His wife, Lynne, joined that session and was even more scornful of the Clinton years than her husband was. Cheney's speech will reflect his (and maybe her) disdain. The Bush campaign was also pleased with the draft of John McCain's speech, to be delivered Tuesday night of the convention. They approved the McCain speech without alteration. McCain will campaign with Bush during the week after the convention.

Since he announced for the presidency in June 1999, Bush has given a half-dozen first-rate speeches, all written by Gerson and most of them on policy matters. For the nationally televised convention address, Gerson spent more time than usual. He left Bush campaign headquarters in Austin in late May for the solitude of an apartment in College Station, Texas, that Rove had arranged for him, and came back 10 days later with a draft. It was well received by the incrowd that saw it.

This was hardly a surprise. Bush and Gerson hit it off from the moment they met in Washington in early 1999, and Gerson has been able to capture in speeches the compassionate but morally stringent quality that Bush wants to convey. Still, it's anything but certain that Bush will deliver the convention speech well. He has struggled with a TelePrompTer before. He used one in a speech to AIPAC in Washington last spring and looked like a man watching a slow-moving tennis match. In recent weeks, he has practiced the speech repeatedly with a TelePrompTer. Sometimes practice makes perfect. We'll soon know if it has with Bush. ♦

The Well-Tempered GOP Platform

This year, the traditional pre-convention fight didn't happen. BY TUCKER CARLSON

Philadelphia

CATHIE ADAMS is one of the people who decide what the Republican party believes. Adams, who is from Dallas, is a delegate to the GOP platform committee. She has been to two previous Republican conventions, and she came to Philadelphia last week eager to meet with other members of her subcommittee and begin hashing out the details of the "conservation, agriculture and natural resources" section of the platform.

Adams arrived at the meeting Friday morning ready to work. She expected to spend all day tweaking and improving the draft platform, voting on amendments, debating ideas with fellow delegates. Instead, she and her group were informed that their deliberations were to be completed by noon.

The whole thing was a bit confusing. Like the other delegates, Adams had not received a copy of the platform until the evening before, leaving barely enough time to read it, much less consider its specifics. (Reporters, by contrast, were given copies of the platform hours earlier on the condition they not tell delegates what was in it.) Adams began to suspect that the Bush campaign wasn't very interested in hearing her opinions on conservation, agriculture, and natural resources. "Rather than recognizing the process as a reflection of the grassroots," Adams says carefully, "there is more emphasis on reflecting Gov. Bush's positions."

And the positions of some of his supporters. Toward the end of the Friday morning meeting, one of the delegates on the subcommittee, a man from Alaska, offered an amendment that would affect the plank that calls for the construction of a nationwide high-speed passenger rail service, something that, in case you didn't know, the Republican party officially supports. Suddenly, as from nowhere, Tommy Thompson appeared in the room. Thompson is the governor of Wisconsin and the man George W. Bush selected to run the platform hearings. He is also, as Adams discovered, the chairman of Amtrak, and therefore someone with a keen interest in railroad policy. Thompson walked over to the delegate from Alaska and instructed him to make certain the word "national" stayed in the platform—as in a "*national* high-speed passenger railroad system." Adams, who was sitting one seat away, says it didn't matter one way or the other to the Alaskan. "He said, 'I don't care if you want to call it 'global.'" So "national" it was.

Cathie Adams wasn't impressed by the exchange. She sounds dispirited by her experience on the platform committee generally. Some delegates come to political conventions for the parties. There are others, however, who come because they want to participate in running their party. These are the ones who are apt to like politics because of the ideas. They tend to be ideologues, true believers—in other words, troublemakers. The Bush campaign has tried hard to keep them under control.

This year's platform hearings lasted two days, rather than the traditional four. Party officials refer to

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

these and other changes as "streamlining," and say that many of them were designed to save the time and money of delegates, who must pay their own way to the convention. This may be true. It is also convenient. A shortened platform process left little time for abortion activists on both sides to make embarrassing, televised scenes over the platform language. The Republican party did hold a platform hearing in June where there was limited debate about abortion. But it was in Billings, Montana, on a Friday. Very few people came, and there was almost no news coverage of it. "There were a lot of elk there," chuckles a Bush staffer. Meanwhile, the party, under the firm and vigorous guidance of the Bush campaign, set about writing a new platform. The result is the kindest, gentlest statement of Republican dogma in memory, maybe in history. There is not a word about Monica Lewinsky or Buddhist temple fundraising, not even a single direct reference to Bill Clinton or Al Gore. Many of the policy positions are similar to earlier versions, though some of the more controversial and unlikely ones have been removed. "We don't shut down or de-fund any federal agencies," explains one Republican official proudly.

The Republican party did hold a platform hearing in June where there was limited debate about abortion. But it was in Billings, Montana, on a Friday. Very few people came.

It is the tone of the document that has changed most dramatically. The 1996 platform launched an attack on the opposition in the third line of the preamble ("The Clinton administration has proven unequal to the heritage of our past, the promise of our times, and the character of the American people") and became progressively more bellicose from there. It portrayed Bob Dole as a scarred warrior locked in mortal combat with Evil—"a man who knew battle and so loves peace, a man who lives bravely and so walks humbly with his God and his fellow citizens. We walk with him now as he joins one more battle, every bit as crucial for our country's future as was the crusade in which he served." The language was stirring, if a bit over the top. (The '96 election was as "crucial" as World War II?) It was also about as sunny as Dole himself.

The new platform is nothing like that. It opens on the perkiest possible note, and sustains it. "Our commitment to the nation's economic growth," the first paragraph declares, "is an affirmation of the real riches of our country: the works of compassion that link home to home, community to community, hand to hand." Compassion. Communities. Hands. It's all there. It could be a Bush speech.

The Bush campaign believes that this sort of rhetoric is more popular with the voting public than the old, mean kind. It probably is. But it has done nothing to calm abortion activists, who back in the "family and community" subcommittee room in Philadelphia are spending their allotted hour Friday morning arguing over whether the current platform should remain pro-life.

A couple of pro-choice delegates make their case that it should not. Why does the platform have to mention abortion at all? asks one. "Why are we afraid of being inclusive?" wonders another. Representative Henry Hyde counters with an eloquent explanation of why it should. A vote is taken. By a count of 11 to 3, the pro-life language stays.

And then the raging debate is

over. Most of the reporters in the room relocate to the hallway outside, where Ann Stone, head of Republicans for Choice, is dispensing sound bites. GOP platform hearings are what Stone lives for. Four years ago, the week before the convention in San Diego, she and Gary Bauer staged a kind of mock debate for the benefit of bored journalists. This year, Bauer is nowhere in sight. "I think he's coming here next week to do some commentary on FOX," explains Richard Lessner, a former aide. "That's his role at the convention."

Stone shows no sign of missing her sparring partner. "Outrageous, just outrageous," she barks as cameras roll. The fight over the abortion plank, she tells reporters, is far from over. Indeed, she implies, she and her allies may take their cause all the way to the floor of the convention.

Stone is almost certainly bluffing. In private, she makes it clear that she considers the Bush campaign sympathetic to many of her aims. "Bush had people appointed to the platform who are pro-choice, several of them. It was intentional." In fact, Stone says, many of the people she talks to on the Bush campaign are pro-choice. For the last week, she boasts, "I've talked to Tommy Thompson several times a day," mostly about "creativity in approaching the subject."

It's not clear exactly what Stone means by this, since she won't say. But it is clear that the Bush campaign has gone out of its way to solicit the opinions of Stone and other pro-choicers. And it is obvious that everyone involved gets along well. "There's a lot of issues that pro-choice women can feel very, very good about in this platform," Tommy Thompson told CNN the day before the hearing. "And I feel very good about it."

According to Stone, she and the Bush campaign have at least one thing in common: Both have disdain for organized pro-lifers. "We've been told time and again by the Bush people that we are much easier to deal with," Stone says with pride. ♦

Democrats Are the Bad Guys

A refresher on why it is better to be Republican.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

PERHAPS, midst the enthusiasm of the Republican convention, we stalwart GOP supporters should take a step back from our partisanship and give a moment's thought to the decent, well-meaning, intelligent people who oppose us—and how there aren't any.

Democrats stink. Consider what they believe—such as anything Yasser Arafat ever says. And when a mother sacrifices her life in a desperate attempt to free herself and her child from a totalitarian dictatorship, Democrats believe this is a great opportunity to show Fidel Castro's family values. He probably does have family values, of the Democrat type, about abortion for instance. And there is ample indication that Fidel is a big supporter of "Right to Die" legislation.

Democrats believe in killing babies and old people, and, to judge by their various plans to modify American medical care, they believe in killing everybody else, too. Except for murderers—murderers will get a "time out" and a chance to speak at the graduation ceremony of a prominent liberal arts college.

Assuming that a few of us (who haven't been lucky enough to murder somebody) make it to old age, Democrats believe we should spend those declining years (until Dr. Kevorkian has an appointment opening) in poverty. Democrats believe in the bankrupt Social Security system on the simple and forthright grounds that

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Illustration by Darren Gygi

privatizing the nation's pension fund would give people money. If people have money, what happens to poverty programs? Democrats believe in poverty programs. The more programs, the more poverty. And poor people vote for Democrats.

Being rich is no fair. Democrats believe in fairness. If you're right-handed, that's no fair either. You should chop some fingers off your right hand and sew them on your left. That way your arms will have equality. And Democrats believe in equality — except equality for minorities. Democrats believe minorities are stupid and helpless (and no fair counting Jews and Orientals as minorities). Democrats believe affirmative action programs are necessary for all minorities except minorities that have yarmulkes or chop sticks; they need quotas to keep too many of them from getting into Berkeley. Otherwise, say Democrats, we'll never have true equality in an America where everyone has the same opportunity—to be a Democrat.

But although Democrats don't believe that blacks and Hispanics are as good as a Kennedy, Democrats do believe that the rain forest is almost equal to Ted (and not just in how damp and icky it is). Democrats believe trees and rocks and animals on the endangered species list have souls. However, Democrats are not sure the developer who built your ranch house does. Anyway, that developer's kids have no business praying in school. And neither do yours. Democrats believe kids shouldn't pray in school, especially not during moments of silence because silence can lead to thinking and thinking causes people to become Republicans.

Actually, Democrats believe kids shouldn't even *be* in school, at least not in anything that could properly be called a school—where children learn to count and read and don't get shot at recess. People who can count too high don't vote for Democrats. Also, without playground gunshot injuries, there might not be sufficient public outcry in support of nationalized medicine. Thus Democrats do not believe in school vouchers.

And yet Democrats do believe in gun control, even though playground gunshot injuries are a proven vote-getter. This is because Democrats believe that gun owners want to keep their guns mostly in case they need to shoot Democrats. It happened in 1861 and it could happen again. Plus NRA PAC money is used for nothing except screwing Democrats. Democrats believe this is something that should happen only literally. Maybe sex education can overcome people's natural repugnance in this matter. Democrats believe in sex education.

But what Democrats believe in most is politics. If you recount Democrat beliefs one by one you'll get a mere random catalogue of insanity. But if you examine Democrat beliefs as a whole, you'll discover an underlying, unified, systematic world view that cannot be treated with psychopharmaceuticals, therapeutic chats, or a "long rest" at McClean's. The world still awaits a cure for politics.

Every doctrine and tenet of the Democrats entails an increase in political power and a decrease in the power of conscience, religion, tradition, civil society, the free market, mothers, and (if there are any left around—in many Democrat strongholds, e.g. Beverly Hills, there aren't) fathers.

Why? Why would anyone want a society organized around appearing on *Hardball* in preference to a society organized around raising kids, working hard, making money, going to the V.F.W. Hall on Saturday night, going to Mass on Sunday morning, and obeying the Scout Oath? It's important to remember that Democrats aren't just crazy, they're evil. Democrats suspect—with considerable evidence to support them—that they aren't very good at those latter things. Democrats need a field of endeavor where they can yak and blabber their way to the top without displaying any virtues. (And apparently, in light of President Clinton's remarkable sexual incompetence with Ms. Lewinsky, Democrats don't even need to master vices.)

But America has a representative form of government. Is it so wrong to seek political power in free and fair elections? Yes, if you're a Democrat. I say this with confidence because of an article which appeared in the house organ of the Democratic party, the *Washington Post*, on June 5, 2000. The text of the piece concerned, allegedly, an obscure type of great ape called the "bonobo." But the subtext was not hard to decode. It tells us everything about the America we will have if we elect a Democratic president, Democratic House of Representatives, Democratic Senate, and, in particular, if New York state elects Hillary Rodham Clinton:

> The animals live in extremely peaceful, egalitarian, close-knit communities "that are held together not by male domination but by female bonds," according to Congolese scientist Inogwabini Bila Isia.
>
> They work out most conflicts through elaborate social interaction rather than fighting, and they distribute food evenly throughout the group. They are very sexual, engaging in constant genital rubbing and other sexual behaviors with the same and opposite sex. The primary role of sex is usually social rather than reproductive. . . .
>
> "They show us what we could be. They make us ask, why do we have to have a violent, male-dominated society?" said Gay Reinartz, a bonobo researcher and conservation coordinator at the Zoological Society of Milwaukee.

The noble bonobos have just one minor problem. And you guessed it correctly. They're about to become extinct. ♦

It's Miller Time

For Georgia Democrats, it's time to relax.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

GEORGIA'S EIGHT Republican congressmen huddled for two solid days last week to determine whether any of them was crazy enough to risk his seat to challenge Zell Miller, newly named to the Senate seat of Paul Coverdell, who died of a brain hemorrhage on July 18. What two weeks ago looked like winning back one of the safest of Republican seats now looks like a suicide mission.

Miller, a four-term lieutenant-governor and two-term governor, is the most popular Georgia politician of modern times. He's had his ups and downs and backs and forths—his opponents still call him Zigzag Zell. But that zigging and zagging comes from a political savvy that is Clintonesque in its sophistication. Miller, 68, who had been teaching college in his hometown of Young Harris, claimed he was taking the Senate seat "with a heavy heart." He reportedly ignored "repeated pleas" from governor Roy Barnes and was ultimately swayed only by a phone call from Bill Clinton at the high point of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Believe that and you'll believe anything. Miller is a born politician. Within 48 hours of his appointment he had not just scheduled but *held* his first fundraiser, and brought in Atlanta lawyer Keith Mason to run his campaign.

If the vagaries of southern politics are your thing, the career of Zell Miller will teach you more than a semester locked up in a library reading V.O. Key. Fresh out of the Marines, Miller began in the early 1960s as executive secretary to segregationist governor Lester Maddox, and took a hard line against spending money to implement federal civil rights acts. He thrived during Jimmy Carter's governorship as executive director of Georgia's Democratic party and made a name for himself two decades later with a campaign (unsuccessful) to get the Confederate Stars-and-Bars removed from Georgia's state flag.

As governor after 1990, Miller proved himself the Newest of New Democrats. He invented the HOPE scholarship, an idea that Bill Clinton borrowed for his presidential campaign (it's a tribute not to the president's hometown but to Miller's skill at devising acronyms—in this case, Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally). He established boot camp programs for first-time drug offenders, and the nation's only two- (not, mind you, three) strikes-and-you're-out program for violent felons.

How could Miller pay for all this without appearing a tax-and-spend liberal? He was an early proponent of that most palatable tax-and-spend trick: marrying a state lottery to education. Leaving aside the moral issue of lotteries, voters in the South love them. Just look at what happened in the governor's races in two neighboring states in 1998. Democrats Don Siegelman of Alabama and Jim Hodges of South Carolina both used leftish gambling-for-education programs to win blowouts in what are arguably the two most right-wing states in the country.

As Ed Kilgore, chief policy analyst for the Democratic Leadership Council, remarks: "Miller has never given Republicans any chance to take an initiative." Georgia is the only state that has not elected a Republican governor since Reconstruction. It's 28 percent black, and is districted so that its congressional delegation consists of three black Democrats and eight white Republicans. Here as elsewhere in the South, blacks vote almost unanimously for Democrats, and the trick for liberals is to find issues on which to appeal to a third of whites. There's a kind of cornpone cowboy-boot publicity-hound aspect to Zell Miller—ostentatiously, self-aggrandizingly hokey—that brings to mind James Carville (who ran his 1990 campaign). He first got elected governor, in 1990, by marrying the black vote to a white base that consisted of his fellow rural North Georgians. He got the expected black landslide *and* the endorsement of the NRA.

But early in his first term, he changed horses, pushing to get the Confederate colors removed from the Georgia flag, and putting all his eggs into the basket of education. Once Miller survived the disastrous Democratic year of 1994, he was home free. Today, a third of college students in Georgia matriculate without paying tuition, thanks to Miller-administration laws (and financial incentives to grade-inflation, claim Republican foes, since all high school students who keep a B average qualify). Miller's political base is now squarely in Atlanta's growing suburbs. But big business loves him, too. While Democrats bristle at the comparison, Miller, like Sam Nunn, is a master of the particular backroom politics that Tom Wolfe describes in his Atlanta novel *A Man in Full*, where Black Power and high finance meet.

The more fractious Georgia GOP has never been able to form stable statewide coalitions. Paul Coverdell, conservative but pro-choice, was the only Republican who was able to unite backwoods right-wingers and Atlanta suburbanites. None of Georgia's congressmen thinks himself able to pull this off in a race against Miller. Charlie Norwood, Mac Collins, John Linder, and Nathan Deal ruled themselves out immediately. Once Miller was appointed, Johnny Isakson, the suburban moderate who now holds Newt Gingrich's seat (and who lost to Miller in the 1990 governor's race) bowed out. Saxby Chambliss heeded House speaker Dennis Hastert's

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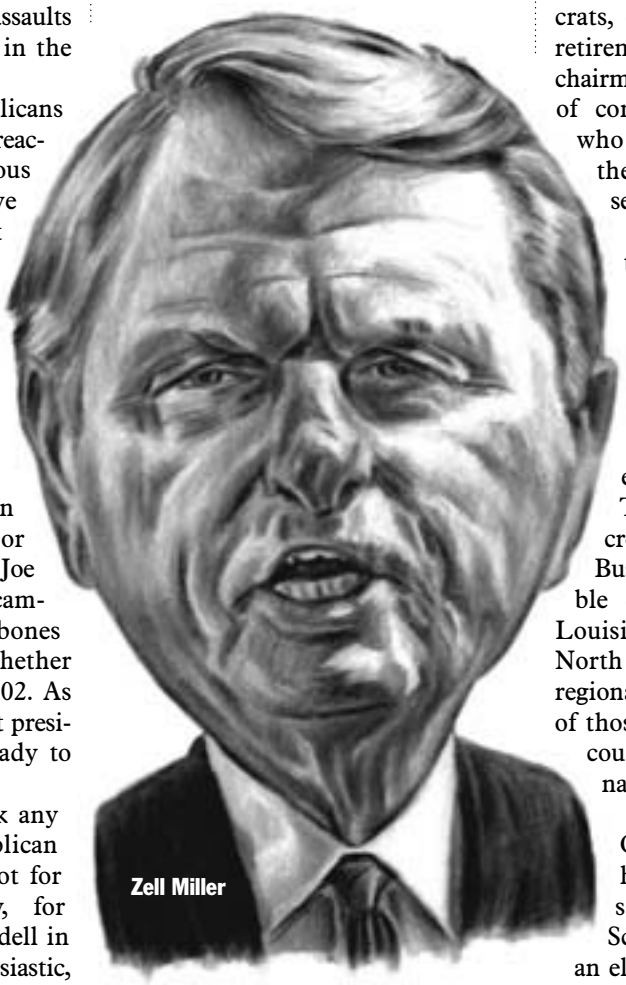
worry that Republicans would lose his seat to the well-funded Democratic mayor of Macon if he ran. Jack Kingston was next to pull out, perhaps reckoning that his Savannah base was too isolated for a statewide run. That left Bob Barr, who, thanks to his role in impeachment, has a $1.2 million war chest. But Barr has always polled low statewide, and his assaults on Clinton would doom him in the suburbs.

The silver lining for Republicans is that they've avoided a chain reaction whereby several ambitious congressmen, seeking to move up, lose their own seats. But they remain without a candidate. Vulnerable Republican senators would be happy with a first-do-no-harm strategy that would keep the national GOP from blowing money fruitlessly in Georgia. Such a strategy would entail finding a rich Republican—the Days Inn magnate Clint Day, perhaps, or the Waffle House chain owner Joe Rogers—to finance his own campaign, and thereby make his bones for a second statewide run, whether for governor or senator, in 2002. As last week ended, former Valujet president Louis Jordan looked ready to step up to the plate in this role.

That didn't make last week any less humiliating. Republican activists were scouring the pot for has-beens. Mack Mattingly, for instance, who preceded Coverdell in the Senate, was less than enthusiastic, and even older than Miller. Businessman Guy Millner had frustrated Republican activists by losing three extremely well-financed campaigns (including the governor's race against Miller in 1994). Ex-attorney general Mike Bowers crashed and burned in the 1998 gubernatorial primary after an adultery scandal. Someone threw Ralph Reed's name into the ring. No Georgia politician of either party took seriously the early rumor that Newt Gingrich might run. But one Republican Senate staffer joked, "If you want to get a call-back from [George W. Bush's campaign in] Austin, leave a message that you've heard a rumor Newt Gingrich is running for Senate on the slogan 'Gingrich and Bush: A Common Vision for America.'"

Does Miller's appointment mean Democrats could now compete for the Senate? With some glaring Republican vulnerabilities (Spencer Abraham in Michigan, Rod Grams in Minnesota, William Roth in Delaware), Democrats think so. The optimistic Democratic view has always been that, if things broke right—that is, barring any economic downturn and without Gore inflicting a base-deadening boredom on the electorate—they would pick up 4 to 5 seats. Senate minority leader Tom Daschle is a convert to this view. Last week he begged Al Gore not to choose as his vice-presidential nominee any Democratic senator from a state with a Republican governor. (That would eliminate such hopefuls as Illinois's Dick Durbin, Florida's Bob Graham, and John Kerry of Massachusetts.)



Zell Miller

Illustration by Jay Lincoln

Even cautious observers like *Roll Call*'s Stuart Rothenberg see a Democratic pickup of 2 to 4 seats as likely. And that's only the beginning of the GOP's Senate problems. The 2002 elections, when 20 Republican seats come open, versus only 13 for Democrats, could see further losses. The retirement of Republican conference chairman Connie Mack and the death of conference secretary Coverdell, who was to replace him, deprives the GOP of both leadership and seniority.

Coverdell was Senate liaison to the George W. Bush campaign, and some wonder whether his death could put Georgia into play for the presidential elections. Bush's father, after all, lost the state in 1992. Gore now trails virtually everywhere in the South except Tennessee, but believes he can credibly compete in states where Bush's lead is in single or low double digits: Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina. Since Atlanta is a regional media market that hits a lot of those states, the Miller campaign could prove a rallying point for national Democratic fund-raisers.

By late last week, only one Georgia Republican was gung-ho to take on Miller: state school superintendent Linda Schrenko. While her position is an elected one, showing she's capable of running statewide, Schrenko has a big problem: She's probably the Georgia Republican who's been the most over-the-moon in praising Miller's education reforms. Another big problem for Schrenko is an inarticulateness bordering on illiteracy. If Coverdell's seat were just abandoned to Democrats, said Schrenko last week, "I think Paul would literally roll over in his grave."

But that can't be true. If Coverdell were capable of *literally* "rolling over in his grave," the Republicans wouldn't be in this mess in the first place. ♦

Unreliable Sources

Does the *New York Times* deceive its readers—on purpose? **BY DAVID TELL**

HERE'S HOW NEWS is often put together. Reporters hear things from people. Some of these people, in return for their disclosures, demand and receive a measure of anonymity—so in the reporter's finished story, their identities are disguised. Not *entirely* disguised. Newspapers generally demand a generic but accurate description of the people the reporter has talked to—a "senior White House official," a "congressional leadership aide"—so that readers can judge the credibility of the information they're consuming.

Of course, if it turns out the "senior White House official" isn't actually a senior White House official at all, this entire enterprise of credibility comes crashing down. But that kind of witting inaccuracy would never be perpetrated by a reputable newspaper like the *New York Times*. Or would it?

Consider a *New York Times* story of January 31, 1999, by Don Van Natta Jr., a reporter in the paper's Washington bureau. That story is central to a current federal contempt of court proceeding against Charles Bakaly, former spokesman for Kenneth Starr's independent counsel operation.

Van Natta's front-pager revealed that Starr was considering a near-term indictment of President Clinton. The story was sourced, over and over, to "associates of Mr. Starr," which made it appear that the independent counsel's office had leaked like a sieve. And the story was published right in the middle of Clinton's Senate trial, so it was widely noticed.

Clinton's lawyers noticed it, anyway. They immediately claimed that Van Natta's scoop represented a prima facie violation of grand jury secrecy rules by Starr and his men, and demanded an investigation. In response, Starr filed with U.S. district judge Norma Holloway Johnson a signed declaration by Bakaly that he had not discussed privileged information with Van Natta. But Starr subsequently came to doubt Bakaly's explanations of his contacts with the *Times*, accepted his spokesman's resignation, and withdrew the declaration. For alleged false statements in that document, Bakaly is now being prosecuted.

As a legal matter, the Bakaly case is odd. The man is charged with lying to Johnson about whether he illegally disclosed grand jury secrets to the *New York Times*. But a federal circuit court has already ruled, some time ago, that there were no such secrets in Van Natta's story. In other words, Charles Bakaly now stands accused of falsely denying participation in a crime that the law has already concluded *didn't* occur. Chances are that Bakaly will eventually be exonerated.

But Don Van Natta's story may not deserve such a happy verdict. And it can only raise suspicions about how the nation's paper of record handles its anonymous sources. Does the *New York Times*, at least occasionally, deliberately and flagrantly mislead its readers about those sources?

In the trial briefs he's submitted, Charles Bakaly has acknowledged that he was indeed the unspecified "associate" of Kenneth Starr to whom Don Van Natta's story attributed a couple of innocuous quotations. Bakaly has further acknowledged having provided Van Natta with a redacted copy of an internal independent counsel's office memorandum: a piece of historical research that summarized arguments considered by Watergate prosecutors in 1974—about whether to indict President Nixon. Bakaly has no apparent reason to lie about either deed; neither admission is particularly helpful to his case.

Both admissions cast a cloud over the *Times*, however. Bakaly swears, on penalty of perjury, that he consented to talk about a theoretical indictment of the president with Van Natta in January 1999—provided the reporter make it seem Starr's spokesman had actually stayed mum. As it happens, Van Natta's story did include such a disclaimer: "Charles G. Bakaly 3d, the spokesman for Mr. Starr, declined to discuss the matter." If Bakaly is now telling the truth, Van Natta reported something he knew to be false.

And what about the memorandum Bakaly delivered to Van Natta? It's relevant to conversations the *Times* story claimed the reporter had had with "associates of Mr. Starr." The following sentence in Van Natta's piece, for example: "Another argument in favor [of indicting Clinton] is that 'prosecutors should pay no heed to considerations of national interest,' an associate of Mr. Starr said."

Trouble is, no "associate of Mr. Starr" ever said that to the *New York Times*. Those words, and several other sets of words quite like them, which Van Natta made sound as though they had recently been uttered to him over the phone, were in fact lifted verbatim from the memorandum Bakaly had given him. In each such case, the quoted words described ideas advanced by lawyers working for Leon Jaworski a quarter century ago. None came from the mouth of a Starr "associate."

Is Don Van Natta's scoop a piece of journalism consistent with *New York Times* standards? In a July 20 interview with the Internet edition of *Brill's Content*, Michael Oreskes, Washington bureau chief of the *Times*, insisted that it is "absolutely" against his paper's policy to "say anything untrue or misleading" in a news article. But Oreskes—and Van Natta—declined to answer questions from *Brill's* about the sourcing of any specific story. Last week, Oreskes was unavailable for comment. ♦

David Tell is opinion editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Confessions of a Dot-Com Delegate

Will the Internet complete the trivialization of the American political convention?

By Andrew Ferguson

The hell with journalistic objectivity—I'm a dot-com delegate to the 2000 Republican National Convention and proud of it. I think you should be too, by the way, but I'll get to that in a moment. Being a dot-com delegate is like being a real delegate but much better. You don't have to spend any time in Philadelphia, for one thing. You just stay at home where the beer's cheaper and the food's better. You don't even have to leave your chair, so long as your chair is near your computer.

I became a dot-com delegate almost by accident. According to nearly everybody, the Internet is utterly transforming the political conventions this summer. They will be "defining moments" in the history of the Web, says the *New York Times*, which never misses a chance to use the phrase. More than 55 Internet news organizations have been given credentials to cover the conventions; their reporters will swarm the meeting rooms and the hotel lobbies for news and file updates minute by minute, with the amazing immediacy the Internet alone makes possible. The parties themselves have built the capacities of the Internet into the very structure of their conventions. To quote the Republicans, the Republicans will put on the "most interactive and broadly participatory political convention in history," while the Democrats, to quote the Democrats, will put on "the most open and accessible and interactive convention in the history of politics." Leave aside for the moment whose convention will be more interactive—this is the kind of partisan bickering the American people are tired of—and consider instead the fruits of our new era.

I signed on as a dot-com delegate last week. I was nosing around the official GOP convention website (duh: *gopconvention.com*) and the offer was irresistible. "Register now," I read, "and you will immediately receive: Your own virtual credential and screensaver; special behind-the-podium pass; your very own convention photo album." I think the credential and the podium pass were decisive for me. I've never had a podium pass. And of course the whole thing is interactive: I was invited to donate money to the party, for example, and I had the chance to send a personal message to Governor George Bush himself, or to his wife Laura, or to both of them together. There were several messages to choose from, each punctuated with an exclamation point to convey enthusiasm. I clicked on "*Congratulations, Governor Bush, on becoming the party's presumptive nominee!*" and sent it off into cyberspace. And I meant it. I still haven't heard back from him.

Now Jan Larimer, who identifies herself as Director of Dot-Com Volunteer Operations, has started sending me e-mail. As if being a dot-com delegate wasn't enough, she is urging me to become "one of the first ever Virtual Precinct Workers on the Web." This entails telling everyone I know about the "adventure" of being a dot-com delegate, which of course I have just done. But be warned: The adventure can be frustrating. For example, I still haven't got my credential or my podium pass. Every time I go to the site and sign in, I click on the button that says "Your Credential." This takes me to a sign-up page again. I sign in again and click on the credential button again. Then I'm taken back to the sign-up page again. It goes round and round, like a nightmare in a Hitchcock movie. I haven't complained yet, but I want that credential.

It is possible the Republicans have figured out that I'm not completely sincere in my commitment. The truth is, even as I've labored as a dot-com delegate to the GOP convention, I have been writing the Democratic Party Platform—not by myself, of course. (If I'm going to blow my journalistic objectivity, I'm going to blow it in a bipartisan way.) In collaboration with something called

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Dear andy:

Thank you for contributing your time and your ideas toward making the 2000 Democratic Platform truly reflective of Democratic ideals and America's values. Your input is very important. . . . Together we can construct a platform that reflects the principles of America's working families!

Sincerely,
Al Gore.

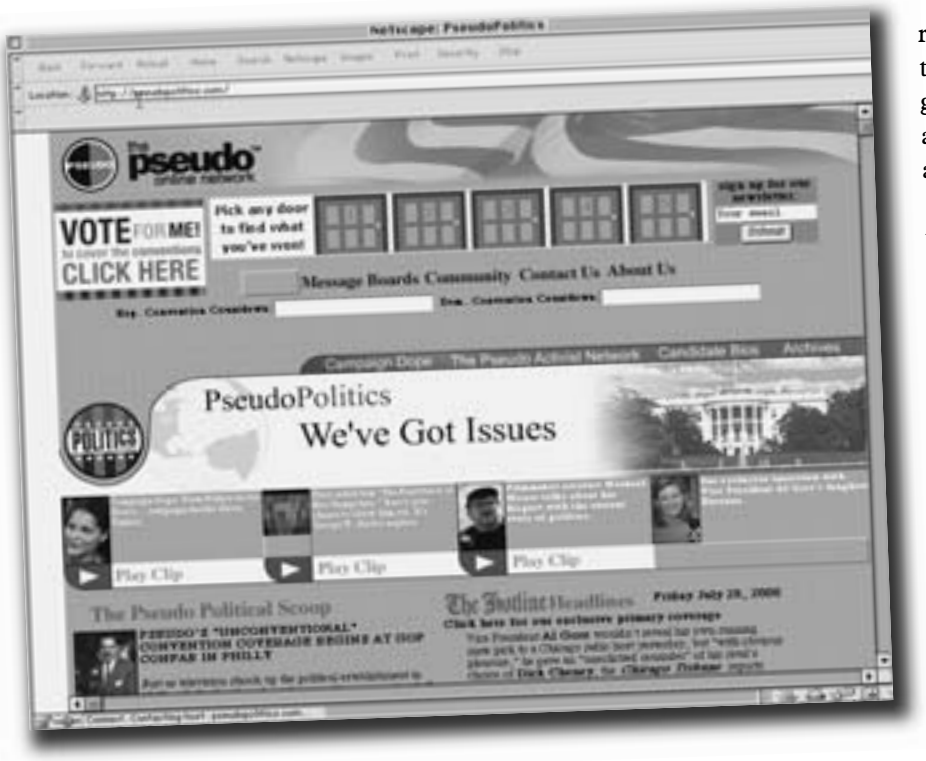
That would be *Vice President* Al Gore—as in *presumptive nominee* Al Gore. Never before have I felt so participatory, so interactive (and he hadn't mentioned a word about Mrs. Broaddrick). Doubtless throughout the country Republicans and Democrats by the score, tapping their keyboards and clicking their mouses, must be feeling the same. But will they together, surfing boldly round the Web, from political site to political site, be enough to turn conventions away from the road to certain oblivion?

SpeakOut.com, the Democratic National Committee is inviting "netizens" (this is the cyber-unctuous term used for people who visit political websites) to comb through the party's 1996 platform. The '96 document appears on your screen, then you add, delete, or rewrite as you wish. Then you submit it via e-mail. Joe Andrew, the DNC chairman, writes in an opening letter: "Don't be surprised if the ideas you and other Democrats have shared are included in the Platform adopted this summer at our Convention."

Actually, I would be surprised. I spent several minutes writing the Democrats' platform for them, and for the most part I played it straight, with a heavy reliance on the phrases Democrats thrill to: I wrote stirringly (I thought) of Opportunity and Challenges and the Future and so on. I mentioned children more often than Captain Kangaroo. But that tone is difficult to sustain. When the section on "Ending Domestic Violence" popped up, I wrote a kind of hymn to Juanita Broaddrick, and under "Strengthening Our Military" I demanded mandatory diaper-changing tables in basic-training barracks in a manner that may have been too obviously cheeky, and at the end, by the time I got to the final platform plank, "Community," I was typing in long quotes from Ayn Rand, whom I despise. When I had finished my platform I clicked the button anyway, and off it went, to wherever the DNC platform committee works in cyberspace, and suddenly, instantaneously, my screen filled with typescript. It was a letter.

The tragic arc of the modern political convention is easily traced; it is the story of a double-cross at the hands of television. TV discovered conventions when they were still messy, raucous affairs. The first network gavel-to-gavel coverage aired in 1952, and, like the saturation Internet coverage this year, the moment was boomed as the medium's coming of age. Eighty percent of television-owning households—65 million viewers—tuned in for an average of 10 to 13 hours that week. Total broadcast time for each convention stretched to 60 hours. Ratings dipped slightly for the subsequent conventions in 1956, however, and by 1960, network executives were complaining that the conventions should conform more closely to the demands of good TV. In a fascinating monograph, *The Rise and Fall of the Televised Political Convention*, the historian Zachary Karabell quotes Sig Mickelson of CBS News. "We believe in live coverage where live coverage is warranted," Mickelson declared in the late 1950s. "But we will not waste the viewer's time with hour after hour of deliberations in which the significant developments are only a small part of the proceedings." In other words: Don't bore us.

Convention planners went to work: Speeches were shortened, fewer deliberations were held, schedules were trimmed. Every element, from the colors on the podium to the line-up of speakers, was assessed according to its



telegenic potential. The PR disasters (from the politicians' point of view) of the Chicago riots in 1968 and of the Miami Democratic convention in 1972, when George McGovern delivered his acceptance speech at 3 A.M., only intensified the desire to script the conventions more tightly. And so it transpired that by 1980 the networks were complaining that the conventions were . . . too tightly scripted. Television had demanded a TV show, and then rejected the conventions on the grounds that they were too much like a TV show; "infomercial" is the current favored cliché. Coverage shrank and so did viewership. In 1996 the broadcast audience averaged 10 percent of viewing households in prime time—smaller even than McGovern's early-morning audience in 1972.

The alphabet-soup cable channels, of course, have stepped in to fill the vacancy left by the networks. CNN, FOX, MSNBC, and the others offer gavel to gavel coverage and more—pre-gavel coverage, post-gavel coverage—in stubborn resistance to the fact that in the age of television the conventions have been squeezed dry of anything worth covering. And it is precisely at this unhappy moment in the evolution of American politics that the Internet and its well-heeled enthusiasts arrive, armed with laptops and webcams and cellphones, ready to offer saturation coverage of their own. They are late, very late, for the party, but they are not discouraged.

"There's no point in trying to duplicate what television and newspapers do," says Robert Vanasse of *Voter.com*, a political news website that will have 40 technicians, reporters, and editors at the convention. "Our goal is to use the technology's unique ability to provide a virtual experience of what it's like to actually be at a convention."

Virtual experience—the phrase trips as lightly off the netizen tongue as *interactivity* and *empowerment*. "If we do what TV does, we fail," David Bohrman, of *PseudoPolitics.com*, told the *New York Times*. "We have to do something completely different. We have to almost deconstruct the process, give users the feel of the convention." I don't know what "deconstruct the process" means—neither does David Bohrman, I'll bet—but I am familiar with the feel of political conventions. Think soul-crushing boredom, mind-numbing ennui, stupefaction plunging toward catalepsy. Think severe insults to the cranium, radical head trauma resulting in paralytic aphasia. Spend two days at a political convention and you'll be lucky to "feel" anything at all.

But Internet enthusiasts are irrepressible: The premise of their saturation coverage is that this really quite unique sensation should be more widely shared—indeed that it should be universally on offer, since so many people will *want* to share it. At least half a dozen Web organizations, for example, will be providing "streaming video" from Philadelphia's First Union Center and from Los Angeles's Staples Center. "Streaming" is Internet video: color images shrunk to the size of a baseball card on your computer screen, moving herky jerky to a muffled, asynchronous soundtrack. The pictures remind you of those gimmick books where you flip the pages to create a moving image—and even then, streaming works only if you have a sophisticated computer with a fast Internet hook-up. (That PowerMac from two Christmases ago probably won't cut it.)

Why then, when we can just turn on C-SPAN, should we watch this video stuttering and wobbling over the Web, given the high probability that staring at it for prolonged periods will induce a stroke? Well, because many of these organizations' Web cameras will be doing something even C-SPAN wouldn't dare. America Online, for example, will be sending out live images round the clock—24/7, as we're supposed to say—even though the conventions will recess every night at 11. If you've got a hankering to "participate in the process" at, say, 2 o'clock in the morning, your urge can now be satisfied. All you have to do is crawl out of bed,

switch on your computer, wait for it to boot up, load your AOL program, remove your phone line from the phone, push the phone line into the modem, type in your password, establish a connection, click past the opening display ad, wait for the main menu to pop up, click through the menu to find the political coverage, click several times to get past the chat rooms and the columnists and the wire stories from Reuters, find the button for the streaming video, click on the button, wait for the video buffer to load up, and—presto! just like that!—you can watch a charwoman sweeping up the confetti in the dim light of the First Union Center or a drunken delegate from Oregon who missed his ride back to the hotel vomiting into a waste can. What could be more empowering?

But of course it doesn't stop there. In Los Angeles, the DNC will have functionaries carrying cameras throughout its convention hall. In a video statement streamed on the DNC website, convention chairman Terry McAuliffe said that cameras would be positioned everywhere—"You can go behind the scenes," he said, "you can go to the makeup rooms"—to satisfy the craving of those computer owners who have always hoped to see someone apply eyeliner to Jerry Nadler. *PseudoPolitics.com* boasts that its camera on the podium will provide 360 degree views, somehow controllable at home by mouse click, so that when the netizen gets tired of watching nothing happening from behind the podium, he can click over to watch nothing happening from, say, the vantage point of the Missouri delegation, or, if he's adventurous, even from the Papa John's concession out on the concourse.

"Breaking convention news" will be displayed on many sites throughout cyberspace, of course, and within the convention halls themselves. *Congressional Quarterly*, for example, plans to offer "frequent alerts on breaking convention news" to its website and on hand-held Internet devices that it will provide to 500 journalists. "Alerts" is the term they're actually using. It is hard to imagine what these "alerts" will consist of—"BULLETINBULLETINBULLETIN: Man falling asleep in AZ delegation. MOREMOREMORE: Water fountain malfunctioning on mezzanine level, section BB14. Plumber has been called"—but here as elsewhere in cyberspace "interactivity" is crucial. The netizen himself is assumed to be an active participant; he is not, as in the days of Gutenberg, the passive puppet of hierarchical forces beyond his control. "Watching the political conventions is no longer a one-way street," according to

MSNBC and *SpeakOut.com*, who will offer "Ntercept Instant Response Technology" on its website. The technology apparently allows the user to "tell MSNBC what you like, and what you don't, on a second-by-second basis. From now on, you will have a voice alongside the 'experts pundits.'"

What MSNBC, the Republicans, *SpeakOut.com*, or anybody else is supposed to do with all these expressed opinions is unclear. But it is not hard to predict their tone and temper. The expression of ill-considered and ignorant opinions is as essential to politics on the Web as it is to *TalkBack Live* or *Hannity & Colmes*—even more so, if you can imagine. "Chat" echoes everywhere, unceasingly, in cyberspace; it underlies all of the medium's populist conceits. Close your eyes and click randomly through the Internet and before long you will come upon chat. Here's a typical exchange, plucked at random from *Grassroots. com* last week:

Popuppunk: who cares how thw media interprates whats going with yourth these days. Hell, the media is controlled by coroporations, the media glorifies to entertain the media can kiss my ass.

Bells34: You obviously don't care that much about what happens in this country.

Ahdmanout: The youth are in your homes, schools, gyms, neighborhood, or even in the streets. The question isn't where are the youth, the quesiton should be what happened to role models.

Freedom Fighter: let me just say this: the youth of America doesn't give a damn.

The Internet accelerates the process whereby public affairs, once a cement of the common culture, becomes a fascination of hobbyists.

Now picture such comments scrolling endlessly down your computer screen, next to the streaming video of Kay Bailey Hutchison mincing on the podium. You begin to sense that the enthusiasts are at least partly right: Interactivity changes coverage in ways previous generations of electronic journalists could never have foreseen. We are a long way from the old anchor booth, where Eric Sevareid shook his portentous jowls at the grimly determined Walter Cronkite. Whoever could have dreamed that they would be missed?

There was a moment in the evolution of the Web, not so long ago, when a few enthusiasts hoped it might deepen political coverage—offering to the masses a vast virtual newsstand overflowing with the *New Republic* and the *Public Interest* and the *New York Review of Books*. And of course those stuffy old magazines are there on the Web, serving a devoted and minuscule audience. But cyberpolitics is increasingly a function of the for-profit political sites like *Voter.com* and *speakout.com*, heavily funded by delusional venture capitalists who believe someday they will see a profit. Such sites don't emulate the *New Republic*, they emulate TV—and not the TV of Eric Sevareid, either, but the TV of Chris Matthews and Bill O'Reilly: brief, up-to-the-minute newsbreaks and tasty morsels of background information, presented in colorful formats, with frothy, clueless commentary from pundits you've seen, of course, on TV.

And tarted up always with populist flattery, in the form of constant solicitation: "Make your voice heard!" urges *Grassroots.com*. "Should the government require trigger locks on all firearms sold?" asked *Voter.com* last Friday. "Yes? No?" *SpeakOut.com* wanted our opinions on "Will the government be able to control music online? Yes/No. Vote!" *VOTE.com*: "Should the Republican Party Include an Anti-Abortion Plank in its Party Platform? Yes! No! We'll send YOUR vote to the Republican National Committee!"

In these for-profit sites, as in the partisan sites offered by the political parties, the Internet shows itself indeed to be a perfect extension of democratic capitalism—a radically non-hierarchical, individualistic, anti-bureaucratic means for exploiting stupid people. The consolation is that so far there are fewer such people than the politicos and the venture capitalists had hoped. While use of the Internet increases rapidly, it still lags far, far behind television as a source of news. According to a study this spring from The Pew Research Center For The People & The Press, more than half of Americans watch some broadcast news every day. Fewer than one-third of Americans fetch news from the Internet *every week*. On a typical day, moreover, only one in five Internet users will use it to read the news—news broadly defined to include sports, politics, entertainment, and the weather. And of these news readers—we are whittling down the numbers pretty thin—fewer than 40 percent will look for news devoted to politics.

The Internet thus accelerates the process whereby public affairs, once a cement of the common culture, becomes a specialty taste, a peculiar fascination of hobbyists—like quilt-making or collecting eighteenth-century pewter spoons. The process has long been in train, and the political convention is one of its casualties. Is it possible, then, that the Internet will finish the job—that it will transform conventions as radically as television did? Television turned them into TV shows. The Internet might make them thoroughly virtual—which is to say that, in the real world, they will cease altogether to exist. ♦

The (Real) Philadelphia Story

What the Chamber of Commerce won't tell you about the site of the Republican Convention.

By Matthew Rees

With the Republican party holding its national convention in Philadelphia this week, civic boosters have been serving up endless testimonials to the city's glorious past and glimmering future. But conveniently absent from these testimonials has been any recognition of Philadelphia's rich political tradition. "Enriching" might be the better word. Few cities in America can claim a political class more consistently crooked, and colorful, than Philadelphia's.

A century ago, journalist Lincoln Steffens went to Philadelphia for a book he was writing on major American cities. He found that while "all our municipal governments are more or less bad . . . Philadelphia is simply the most corrupt and the most contented." Steffens based his conclusion on Philadelphia's 19th-century politics, and the city's 20th-century shenanigans more than validated it. Consider:

¶ So many local politicians have been sentenced to Allenwood Federal Prison that it's known as Philadelphia's "70th ward."

¶ In 1926, the leader of Philadelphia's Republican machine, William Vare, was elected to the U.S. Senate, but one of his opponents challenged the outcome. The Senate found Vare guilty of "appalling" vote fraud and, in 1929, denied him the seat.

¶ In 1985, Philadelphia's Democratic mayor, Wilson Goode, ordered city police to bomb a group of black radicals who were holed up in a West Philadelphia row house, killing 11 people—five of them children—and destroying 61 homes.

¶ In 1985, the FBI began surveillance of a roofers' union in Philadelphia, and picked up conversations indicating union officials were paying off local judges. By the time the investigation ended, 15 judges had resigned or been convicted.

¶ In 1994, Philadelphia mayor Ed Rendell, during an interview with a local journalist, described how he thought she'd perform in bed and said she should find his appraisal "flattering." He eventually apologized for his bawdy talk, but later would concede only one mistake: "I should have said right at the beginning, everything is off the record."

¶ For many years, fistfights were such a regular feature of city council meetings that Fodor's guide to Philadelphia listed the meetings under "Local Entertainment." In one incident, a young black councilman marched around the chamber complaining of racism while brandishing a large metal object, threw ice water on his colleagues, and then exchanged punches with one of them until security guards intervened.

That councilman, John Street, is now the mayor of Philadelphia. As the following vignettes show, Street will need more than an occasional scrum if he's going to become a first-tier member of Philadelphia's political Hall of Shame.

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"The Quaker city of Philadelphia has suffered from the virus of virtuous materialism for about three centuries, and its best men on the whole have seldom sought public office."

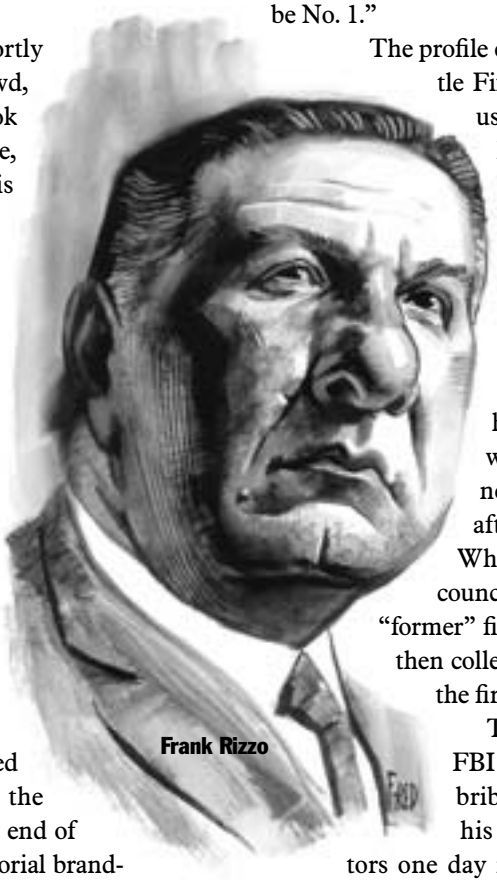
—E. Digby Baltzell, Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia *(1979)*

In 1973, Philadelphia's Democratic chairman, Peter Camiel, accused first-term mayor Frank Rizzo, a Democrat, of offering him a bribe in a hotel bathroom. Rizzo vehemently denied the charge, and the *Philadelphia Daily News* suggested both men take a lie-detector test. Camiel went first, and passed. Rizzo followed, declaring that "if this machine says a man lied, he lied." He, of course, failed, and later fessed up: "What's the big deal about lying in a bathroom?"

Such candor explains why Rizzo remains Philadelphia's most celebrated politician of the 20th century. He

was the voice of the city's white ethnics, a culturally conservative bloc bearing racial resentments straight out of the Deep South. Before being elected mayor, he gained fame as a tough-as-nails police chief from central casting (six-feet two, 250 pounds, with a 20-inch collar and, as one reporter put it, "fingers the size of frankfurters"). In August 1970, his men raided a local office of the Black Panthers, paraded 14 of them outside to the street, and stripped them naked.

Rizzo was a reporter's dream. Shortly before becoming mayor, he told a crowd, "I'm going to make Attila the Hun look like a faggot." As for meting out justice, he said "the way to treat criminals is *spaco il cappo*," which translates as "break the head." Fearing protests at the city's July 4, 1976, bicentennial celebration, he requested 15,000 federal troops from Washington (the request was denied and thousands of potential tourists stayed away). Eight years earlier, he had forestalled violence following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. by sending black police officers disguised as clergymen into black neighborhoods.



Frank Rizzo

Last year, Rizzo was rated by a group of academics as the fifth worst big-city mayor between 1820 and 1999. Philadelphia's population declined by 13 percent during his tenure, and the city lost 140,000 factory jobs. Near the end of his second term, a *Washington Post* editorial branded him a "national embarrassment."

Perhaps, but one that many Philadelphians treasured. When he died in July 1991, he was coming off an upset victory in the mayoral primary—this time as a Republican—and thousands lined the 10-mile route traveled by his 169-vehicle procession. In its grandeur, the event was more befitting a head of state. His supporters waved signs reading "Rizzo Forever."

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"I know a man who is making a history of the corrupt construction of the Philadelphia City Hall in three volumes, and he grieves that he lacks space."

–Lincoln Steffens, Shame of the Cities *(1904)*

When James J. Tayoun, a Democrat, was running for reelection to Philadelphia's city council in 1987, he made the kind of statement seldom heard anywhere but Philly: "There's never been another like me. There never will be."

During his 25-year political career, Tayoun jumped back and forth between the city council and the state House (he was defeated in two bids for Congress), and in both jobs his constituent service was legendary. "In a city bursting with talented neighborhood pols," wrote the *Philadelphia Daily News* in 1991, "the tireless Tayoun may be No. 1."

The profile called Tayoun the master of "the Little Fix," which the paper defined as "the use of political influence and inside knowledge to get things done that a citizen is entitled to anyway." Indeed, one of his opponents dubbed him "the Monte Hall of City Hall."

While temporarily out of government in the mid-80s, Tayoun opened a lobbying operation where he could put his Little Fix skills to work. The only problem was that he never quite divorced himself from it after he returned to the city council. When lobbyists approached him as a councilman, he'd often route them to his "former" firm, James J. Tayoun Associates, and then collect a portion of the fees they paid for the firm's services.

This led to a two-year probe by the FBI and the IRS, which found he'd paid bribes, accepted bribes, and cheated on his taxes. When he met with prosecutors one day in April 1991, they presented him with audio tapes of his incriminating conversations, and the gig was up. "That's it," said Tayoun. "I'm guilty. You found the smoking gun. . . . You got me."

Tayoun was sentenced to 40 months in prison—the judge said "lying, cheating and scheming were a way of life for him"—but the one-time journalist found he could turn the experience to his benefit. While locked up, he wrote a book entitled *Going to Prison?*, which was designed as a do's and don'ts for white-collar criminals unsure of what to expect in the big house (it's in its fourth printing).

In a recent profile, Tayoun asked, "What do you do with a guy who's 70 and has a prison record?" Become a newspaperman, naturally. Last September, Tayoun launched a free weekly called *The Philadelphia Public Record* that serves his old South Philly constituency. The paper covers politicians, but Tayoun admits it's not exactly a vehicle for muckraking. "I don't write anything bad

Illustration by Fred Harper

because there's nothing bad to write about them. . . . They're all doing their jobs."

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"There's a culture that's grown up in this city, a culture of corruption, and it comes from both sides. People seem to feel that to get anything from this government, you need to give a tip or a bribe."

—Leon Wigrizer, Philadelphia's first inspector general, 1992

When federal anti-fraud investigators launched their Abscam probe in 1978, they wanted to discover one thing: How difficult would it be for Arab businessmen to bribe elected officials to do legislative favors for them? If the officials were Philadelphia Democrats, the answer was "not very." Five were convicted, and the Justice Department sued a number of them following their convictions because they refused to return the bribe money.

A black eye for Philadelphia, right? Not quite. Four of the five continued as Democratic party ward leaders. One, a congressman named Raymond F. Lederer, was reelected even after being indicted for accepting a $50,000 bribe from undercover FBI agents. He resigned from the House only after the Ethics Committee recommended he be expelled.

No less ham-handed was another Philadelphia congressman ensnared by Abscam, Michael "Ozzie" Myers. Like Lederer, he accepted a $50,000 bribe from undercover FBI agents. But he insisted, "I didn't do anything wrong and didn't intend to do anything wrong and didn't break any laws." This after he'd complained to the agents that he was "entitled" to an additional $35,000 because he'd shared that much of the original with other officials.

Myers maintained this defiant pose even after his conviction. He forced the House to vote on his expulsion—they approved it overwhelmingly—and he became the first congressman since the Civil War to be banished from the House. He nonetheless kept campaigning for reelection and lost by a mere three percentage points. "If I hadda had money," said Myers, "I would've won this thing hands down."

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"W.C. Fields said 'All in all, I'd rather be in Philadelphia.' On Election Day, it seems so would a lot of people who don't live there and may not even exist."

—Deborah Phillips, The Voter Integrity Project, an Arlington, Virginia, election watchdog group, July 2000

The stakes couldn't have been higher in a November 1993 special election to fill a Pennsylvania state Senate seat. A win for the Democrat, William Stinson, would keep Democrats in control of the Senate. And that meant generous appropriations for Philadelphia from the $15 billion state budget.

The Senate district was in the northeastern part of the city, and Democrats outnumbered Republicans there two-to-one. But Stinson was a laggard campaigner. When the ballots were counted, he'd lost to the Republican, Bruce Marks, by 564 votes. But then the absentee ballots started pouring in—1,757 in all—and Stinson had won 79 percent of them, swinging the election in his favor.

Republicans were suspicious about the high number of absentee ballots, as was the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. It launched a massive investigation, and found widespread violations of election law. In the weeks before Election Day, Stinson's campaign had deployed workers throughout the district, though primarily in black and Hispanic neighborhoods. The workers employed a variety of deceptive tactics to persuade voters to fill out absentee ballots on the spot. Some of the people didn't even know they were voting, while others said the workers completed the ballots for them.

Hundreds of absentee ballots were opened by poll workers before the voting booths had closed for the day. One of those who admitted tampering with the voting machines and helping count the votes was none other than Stinson, the Democratic candidate (in true Philadelphia fashion, his son also helped count votes, and his mother was an election judge).

Marks and the Republicans challenged the election's outcome. It didn't take a district court judge long to conclude that Stinson's campaign had "conducted a widespread and deliberate scheme through the Latino and African American areas . . . to illegally obtain absentee ballot votes." More important, he ordered that Marks replace Stinson in the state Senate.

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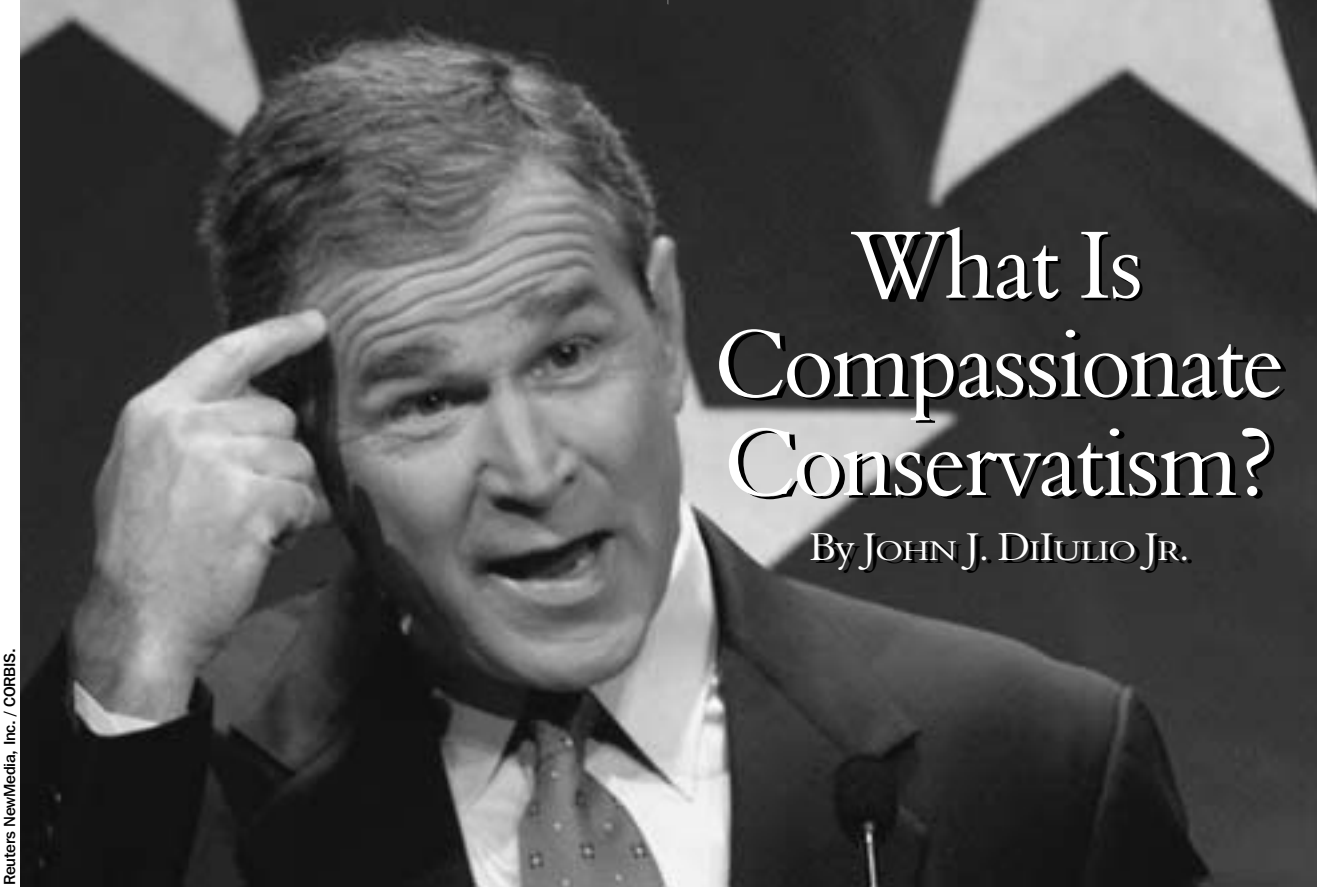
A local journalist, James Smart, once observed that "only outsiders think Philadelphia has an inferiority complex. Most Philadelphians believe it really is inferior." A century ago, the man who controlled Philadelphia's thoroughly corrupt Republican machine, Israel Durham, was asked how he got away with his graft year after year. "If we did any of these things alone," he said, "the papers and the public could concentrate on it, get the facts, and fight." But by corrupting every part of the government, Durham explained, the machine made such a fight hopeless. "We know that public despair is possible," he said, in another one of those only-in-Philly comments, "and that that is good politics." ♦



Reuters NewMedia, Inc. / CORBIS.

What Is Compassionate Conservatism?

By John J. DiIulio Jr.

Marvin Olasky, a professor of journalism at the University of Texas and editor of the evangelical Christian magazine *World*, was Newt Gingrich's premier social policy guru. Gingrich made Olasky's 1992 book *The Tragedy of American Compassion* required reading for the Republican revolutionaries of the 104th Congress. After Gingrich's political demise, Olasky slipped from view—though he has been in the news lately for penning remarks about "the religion of Zeus" that were taken as anti-Semitic, opining in an interview about biblical reasons to prefer men to women as leaders, and allowing *World* to run articles with an anti-Catholic tinge.

Now, in the foreword to Olasky's latest volume, *Compassionate Conservatism*, no less a Republican than George W. Bush picks up where Gingrich left off, baptizing Olasky as "compassionate conservatism's leading thinker." In the book's opening pages, Olasky reprises his previous argument: The "literal dictionary definition" of "compassion" is "suffering with"; to combat poverty, get people off drugs, mend broken families, and resurrect blighted communities, nothing beats a compassion that is "personal, spiritual, and challenging." Indeed, "a century ago, before the federal government ever became involved, thousands of local, faith-based charitable agencies and churches around the country waged a war on poverty much more successful than our own. . . The historical record suggested that what worked a century ago to bring people out of poverty would still work."

Compassionate Conservatism
What It Is, What It Does, and How It Can Transform America
by Marvin Olasky
Free Press, 272 pp., $24

Yes, Olasky is right, one wants to say: Compassion that can be reliably delivered up close and from the heart is always best. But it is wrong to contend—as Olasky does again—that "a century ago," before the big bad feds got involved, home-grown, street-level help that stirred souls and filled stomachs was as common as horse manure. It is also wrong to pretend that—warts, perverse consequences, and all—the federal government's health insurance, housing, and other social welfare programs have failed to rescue millions of Americans from destitution, disease, and early death. The "historical record" of my own family, and of countless American families with similar stories to tell, teaches as much.

After my Italian immigrant maternal grandmother died in 1986, the family reluctantly sold the South Philadelphia row home where she had lived for sixty-eight years and raised seven children. Located in what had long since become a poor, predominantly black neighborhood, it fetched only about $15,000, part of which was used to pay off the federal lien incurred when the family went on "relief" during the Great Depression.

Going on the New Deal dole was no *disgrazia*, but it was a last resort. Both my grandmother and my grandfather worked in sweatshops, as did my school-age mother and her older siblings. But when, one by one, they lost their jobs, the family occasionally went hungry. Their neighbors were in the same boat. They prayed together. They shared meals and money. When they got sick, community hospitals and the corner drugstore helped, but their basic health care needs went largely unmet.

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Chicago children in church, 1942. CORBIS.

The cathedral-like Catholic Church across the street helped, too, but there were families that needed its aid even more than ours did. Help from city hall was scarce, and the state capital of Harrisburg might as well have been in Germany.

So my family accepted help from the faceless fellow citizens whom my grandmother affectionately called "the Americans," by which I always surmised she meant something like all decent non-Italians who lived farther away from us than South Jersey. She was so grateful for their help that for the next four decades she went to church every day and lit three candles: two for the sons she had lost during the war and one for "Mr. Roosevelt."

Paleoconservatives still deride Mr. Roosevelt's help as "creeping socialism," but most neoconservatives have made peace with families like mine by favoring limited federal programs that, consistent with the Catholic social teaching known as "subsidiarity," would help the needy without, however, denying personal responsibility, supplanting community institutions, or turning local governments into mere administrative arms of the national government.

A welfare state modeled on subsidiarity might have worked, but one never materialized. Instead, with the Great Society, the country's entire anti-poverty regime became progressively Washington-centric. After 1965, the national government stepped in with food, money, medicine, housing, college loans, you name it—without much regard for whether individuals, families, churches, or local governments should help first or could help best.

The appetite for federal handouts grew with the eating, and everybody ate. Middle-class entitlements multiplied even faster than underclass benefits. My grandmother was about as likely to demand "welfare rights" as she was to eat canned macaroni, but among her inner-city neighbors, such demands became a social norm, just as, among her own suburban middle-class progeny, having the national government assume primary responsibility for old folks' income and health care needs became a social norm.

So, is it too late to recast the American welfare state in a subsidiarity mold? Is it too late for responsible political leaders in both parties to fashion public policies that strengthen both underclass and middle-class families and other civil institutions by relying first and foremost on them to be and to do what they should? Is it too late for faith-friendly laws that constitutionally reintroduce religion into the public square on behalf of the poor?

I join Olasky and the compassionate conservatives—let's call them the "com-cons," for short—in thinking that it is not too late. In his July 22, 1999 speech "The Duty of Hope" (in which I had a bit of a hand, and which is reprinted as an appendix to Olasky's book), Bush outlined his overarching com-con vision. Start, Bush advised, by abandoning the "destructive" idea that "if government would only get out of the way, all our problems would be solved." Next, look "first to faith-based organizations, charities, and community groups that have shown their ability to save and change lives"—but be willing to admit that the challenges faced by such groups "are often greater than their resources." "There are some things that government *should* be doing—like Medicaid for poor children. Government cannot be replaced by charities—but it can welcome them as partners, not resent them as rivals."

But how? Even if Bush wins big, spends political capital to govern accordingly, and attracts experts like Olasky to his administration, it will not be easy. The devil is in the boring administrative details. What, for example, can be salvaged from the wreck of a hundred-plus federal "youth and family" programs spread across several cabinet agencies, administered under hundreds of contradictory laws and court orders, and funded without any real regard for whether they have a positive impact on the life prospects of those whom they ostensibly exist to serve? How to identify and get the right "faith-based organizations, charities, and community groups" into the vast national network of nonprofit organizations that already run so many of these programs? How to determine which faith-based drug treatment, welfare-to-work, or other programs actually work, and how best to monitor their performance over time? Is there any practical way for a presidential administration to link community-based health care ministries to big city hospitals that are struggling to

improve (and pay for) services to millions of low-income children on Medicaid?

Given such questions, the subtitle of Olasky's *Compassionate Conservatism* is tantalizing: *What It Is, What It Does, and How It Can Transform America*. A dust jacket blurb by former Indianapolis mayor Stephen Goldsmith gushes that Olasky's "new book shines a bright light on the appropriate role of government, community, and faith, and will help all those looking for answers." The book's best chapter summarizes how Goldsmith, now Bush's chief social policy adviser, supported public and private partnerships to help his city's poor help themselves and give back to others.

The book is punctuated throughout by colorful and heartwarming anecdotes spun from Olasky's brief visits, made with his son Daniel, to community-serving ministry groups in Philadelphia and other cities. Olasky brilliantly profiles those who are working daily miracles of social transformation. In too many cases, however, the profiles leave the impression that compassionate conservatism is what Governor Bush rejected as "leave-us-alone" libertarianism, albeit in religious drag.

In a typical six-page passage, Olasky praises "social entrepreneur" Kathy Dudley, depicting her as an in-your-face Texas evangelical Christian. "Evangelism is central to everything we do," she is quoted as saying. She has been able, reports Olasky, "to mobilize a thousand volunteers each year from rich and poor neighborhoods to rebuild and paint" run-down West Dallas homes, "clean up and landscape streets and yards, and paint over graffiti." Government, however, "scares her." Told by an official that she could not hire a Christian program director and fire him if she ever discovered that he had "sex outside of marriage," she "spurned" a $170,000 grant. "Dudley's concern about government action," writes Olasky, "is convincing, particularly because she is not a multigenerational conservative opposed to seeing government folks as helpers." One must wonder instead whether tax money should have been offered to her proselytizing program in the first place.

In another characteristic passage, Olasky sketches Children of Mine, an inner-city D.C.-based after-school program run by Hannah Hawkins, a sixty-year-old retired school secretary who made a "covenant with God" to serve the needy.

> For fourteen years Hawkins, with a budget of whatever is left in the cash box at the end of the day, has been turning mostly abandoned kids, up to 75 at a time, into children of her own. She makes sure they do their homework. She finds ways to give a hot meal. Volunteers help, but they come and go. . . . Hawkins would not think of accepting taxpayer money: "Couldn't have prayer. And when they finish with you, it's not your program, it's theirs."

Conservatives should preach responsibility—not only to the urban poor, but also to the middle-class suburbanites.

Actually, she could have prayer, either under the little-used but on-the-books charitable choice provision of the 1996 federal welfare reform law, or, as witnessed by Olasky's own account of the prayerful youth and community outreach programs run by Philadelphia pastor and former pro football star Herb Lusk. In partnership with Prison Fellowship, Lusk's church is now central to a promising pilot program that ministers to prisoners' children. Lusk, like Philadelphia's legendary pastor Benjamin "Pops" Smith (about whose ministry Olasky also writes) has inspired many Christians, including local cradle Catholics like me, to rededicate themselves to their faith and get involved with outreach work to the city's most disadvantaged children, youth, and families. (Olasky, however, goes overboard when he writes that Smith got me to take my "first steps toward Christ.")

Olasky calls Gingrich "the bold leader of 1995 who made serious mistakes but pushed for real change that would benefit the poor." Olasky now harbors high hopes for Bush, who, of "all the candidates running at the end of 1999," best understood "that those with messed up lives can change," provided that they are not "treated as either pets or worthless losers in the struggle for survival."

Whether Bush wins or not, conservatives of every species should preach personal responsibility and teach subsidiarity, not only with respect to the urban minority poor, but also in regard to the middle-class white suburbanites who ignore unmet inner-city needs while hoping for Medicare to pay for their own parents' prescription drugs. Conservatives should also question the notion that government guts volunteerism and charitable giving.

America probably has at least fifteen million kids who could use a responsible, caring non-parental adult presence in their lives, but Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America has only 160,000 "active matches" on any given day and is begging for adult volunteers. How is Uncle Sam—or the tax code or the welfare system—to blame for that?

Olasky's grass-roots inner city heroes and heroines, and scores more I could name besides, are struggling to get volunteers and make ends meet. The culprit is less big government than "big religion."

National evangelical Christian church groups take in billions of dollars each year, but little of it ever goes to help their urban minority brothers and sisters in Christ. In Philadelphia and other cities, Catholic bishops have closed parishes and abandoned schools to build suburban churches and erect suburban schools.

Olasky wisely concludes that he was "most impressed . . . by gritty inner-city residents who refused to give in. But tenacity will take the have-nots only so far. They need allies—volunteers from the world of the haves." Amen, and light a candle for "the Americans," their religious leaders, and their next president, too. ♦

William F. Buckley, c. 1965. Bettmann / CORBIS.

Speaking Right

Bill Buckley and half a century of American conservatism. BY CHARLES R. KESLER

William F. Buckley announced recently that he is giving up public speaking, but he has softened the blow by publishing *Let Us Talk of Many Things*, a collection of his best speeches from a half century's lectures, debates, testimonials, and eulogies.

There can hardly be a conservative who hasn't heard Buckley speak, in person or on television, and who hasn't cheered (and playfully imitated) Buckley's distinctive, ah, cadences. For decades, he crisscrossed America, speaking seventy or more times a year on behalf of conservatism, while in his spare time hammering out a thrice-weekly column, hosting the weekly television series *Firing Line*, editing *National Review*, and writing about a book a year, many of them bestsellers. He is the most indefatigable and probably the most famous American lecturer since Mark Twain.

His achievement is all the more stunning because this is not an age friendly to forensic excellence. Wagner's music, Twain quipped, is better than it sounds. Most modern speeches are the opposite. They are much worse than they sound. But Buckley's speeches are superbly readable. Full of argument, wit, and occasionally drama, they provide lessons for aspiring orators and speechwriters. Although not political speeches in the narrow sense (and many of the most charming are not about politics at all), they provide a trenchant history of American politics, the Cold War, and the conservative movement over the last half of the twentieth century.

Let Us Talk of Many Things
The Collected Speeches
by William F. Buckley Jr.
Prima, 544 pp., $30

Readers of Buckley's spy novels and newspaper columns expect his kind of moral commentary, and they will not be disappointed with *Let Us Talk of Many Things*. What is surprising, however, is how personally revealing these speeches are. Framed by their newly written introductions, they are scenes from the autobiography that Buckley has never written. Though he has afforded us, before, several book-length glimpses of a week in his busy life, he has never before shown us that life in long profile. David Brooks, in his foreword to the volume, argues that "for all Buckley's contributions to conservative ideas, his most striking contribution is to the conservative personality. He made being conservative attractive and even glamorous." But this book exhibits, too, Buckley's lifelong love for ideas; it shows how, to a remarkable degree, he devoted his personality to the service of his principles.

As a boy, Buckley imbibed deeply from the aristocratic anti-statism of Albert Jay Nock, the editor and essayist who was a friend of Buckley's father. Before reporting to college, Buckley spent two years in the army at the end of World War II. Like many veterans, he was more impressed by the absurdities of army life than by its spirited solidarity. When he arrived at Yale in 1946, he was a young man in a hurry, grateful to be dwelling amid a community of scholars and away from "those noisy martinets" at boot camp, yet keenly aware of the fragility of freedom and of the life of reason in a world imperiled first by the Nazis and now the Communists.

At Yale he encountered not only leftist economics and irreligion—which he later excoriated in his first book, *God and Man at Yale*—but also Willmoore Kendall, the young political scientist who became his mentor. Kendall was Nock's opposite in almost every respect: He was a kind of democrat, a student of Rousseau and of majoritarianism, who taught that every society is by necessity a closed society, defined by a consensus of opinion on right and wrong, noble and base, us and them. Even the most open society, averred Kendall, is in fact closed, because it has effectively made up its mind that openness is good. If it hasn't, then it won't remain an open society very long.

Every society had an orthodoxy, according to Kendall, and societies could be judged by the quality or soundness of their ruling opinions. The standard by which to rank different societies was not abstract freedom but some civilized combination of virtue, utility, and tradition (concerning which Kendall was a little vague). Nonetheless, he was clear that democratic societies ultimately depended for their survival on virtuous majorities, prepared to defend their way of life. Not every majority in every land was sufficiently competent, of course, which was why democracy was a rare plant. Institutional safeguards, proce-

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dural guarantees, and rights talk might palliate but could not cure the problems of democracy. Liberals who believed otherwise were naive.

When Buckley burst upon the public scene in the early 1950s, he put these theories to work. Influenced further by Ortega y Gasset, Richard Weaver, and Russell Kirk, Buckley stood foursquare against American liberalism's "mania" for method—its belief in progressive education, which de-emphasized the content of learning; liberalism's faith in "the democratic process," easily reducible to majority rule and suitable for quick export; and its infinite enthusiasm for due process of law, regardless of imminent threats to the republic.

Buckley's criticisms of Yale and his defense of senator Joseph McCarthy were thus of a piece. In each case, Buckley responded to a threat to American orthodoxy: creeping relativism and socialism in the classroom, indifference to Communist infiltration in Washington and Hollywood. But what was most insidious about these threats, in his view, was the disguise of principle that they wore.

Buckley grappled, even in the 1950s, with the characteristic conservative tensions between individual freedom and social order, and his reasoning as well as his conclusions remain important. In modifying his early anti-statism, he understood himself to be appealing from one part of the American tradition to another. "How might we reconcile the American heritage of opposition to distorted growth in the state," he asked, "with the august, aspirant movement in which the Founding Fathers plighted their trust?" How to combine, in other words, the Founders' distrust of state power with their own exercise of it on behalf of republican, constitutional government?

It was clear to Buckley that Nock's "impulse to categorical renunciation" of politics ran up against America's "sovereign historical responsibility" in the postwar years to defend itself, and freedom, against Communist tyranny. That defense required, among other things, the use of counterintelligence and espionage, which Buckley upheld (he had himself served briefly in the CIA) as a "moral art." He deplored those, such as the ultra-libertarian Murray Rothbard, who were "so much the captive of anti-statist obsession" that they "loudly professed" that they couldn't distinguish "between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the leaders of the United States." Buckley cooly replied: "The man who pushes an old lady into the path of an oncoming truck, and the man who pushes an old lady out of the path of an oncoming truck, are not to be denounced evenhandedly as men who push old ladies around."

Bettmann / CORBIS

William F. Buckley poses with his first book, God and Man at Yale*, in 1951.*

Buckley's larger point was that politics is a moral art, the prudent use of dangerous powers for the sake of civilized ends and the good society. The "proper challenge of conservatives is to tame the state," he advised, to habituate and limit it to its proper ends, not to abolish it. In effect, he resorted to the Founders' statecraft as a model of the political art, as a whole within which anti-statism would be a part; and only a part. But he leaves this an implication and, at least in these speeches, has little to say about the political handiwork by which the Founders sought actually to tame the state, namely, the Constitution.

Buckley has surprisingly few political heroes. Although he discourses at length on Winston Churchill, and adverts to Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson, and others, he doesn't view politics principally as the cockpit of statesmanship, nor does he feel the need always to view events from the standpoint of the great-souled man. Perhaps his good friend Ronald Reagan comes closest to being Buckley's political hero, but Buckley is in no danger of confusing him with Pericles. As a survivor and critic of the twentieth century, Buckley remains more impressed by the evil that government can do than by the good. His heroes are the thinkers who make civilization and, incidentally, conservatism possible—among his contemporaries, men such as James Burnham, Milton Friedman, and Whittaker Chambers.

Always, with Buckley, it comes down to the question of ends. He began his career by assailing the "pragmatism, positivism, and materialism" of the educational establishment. At every turn, he rejected the "epistemological despair" of liberal relativism. "If we cannot hold up the Bill of Rights over against the Communist Manifesto and declare the one a benchmark of civilization, the other of modern atavism," he explained once, "then learning is really of little use." Conservatives, he wrote in 1959, "do not deny the existence of undiscovered truths, but they make a critical assumption, which is that those truths that have already been apprehended are more important to cultivate than those undisclosed ones close to the liberal grasp only in the sense that the fruit was close to Tantalus."

Far from being anti-intellectual, conservatives credit the human mind "with having arrived at certain great

conclusions," Buckley notes. But what are these certitudes, these great truths? Buckley invokes them more often than he defines them, perhaps because American conservatives dispute them more than he lets on. Nonetheless, he confirms that "all men are equal and born to be free," a truth traceable to Bethlehem, he says. As Whittaker Chambers (whose profound influence runs throughout these addresses) once put it, "liberal democracy was a political reading of the Bible."

This doesn't mean that America is "the secular reflection of the Incarnation," Buckley cautions. Such a "frenzy of moral vanity" would bedevil the spirit of the French Revolution, not the American, because the Americans had no illusions about "human frailty." Of course, the awareness of our own imperfection has philosophical consequences. In fact, Buckley describes another path up to truth that doesn't depend on scripture or special revelation, a path leading through reflection and self-knowledge. In "Who Cares If Homer Nodded?" a commencement address at St. John's College, Annapolis, he ruminates on the connections between our "individual fallibility" and the need for limited government, on the one hand, and our "hunger after infallibility, which surely gives rise to the religious instinct," on the other.

Still, by calling the Declaration of Independence "the lodestar of constitutional assumptions" and by identifying "our governing assumption" as the fact "that human beings are equal," Buckley parts company with the dogmas of his old teacher, Willmoore Kendall, who had tried to wring all talk of individual human equality out of the American political tradition. By tracing equality and liberty to the Bible—to the "Creator" who endowed all men with "natural rights"—Buckley dignifies American democracy while at the same time harnessing it, in principle, to permanent limits and purposes.

Although he grew up on Nock's talk of "the Remnant," the scattered few who could keep the possibility of civilization alive during dark times, Buckley never felt that conservatism was fated to remain a Remnant. As a young man he broached the idea of publishing *National Review* to Whittaker Chambers, who responded, "with the dark historicism for which he had become renowned: 'Don't you see?' he said. 'The West is doomed, so that any effort to save it is correspondingly doomed.'"

Buckley replied that even if it were doomed, the republic deserved a journal that would argue why "we ought to have survived." By the late 1960s, the republic's survival seemed threatened as much by internal disorder as by external compulsion. In the face of urban and campus riots and the New Left's nihilistic challenge, Buckley announced that conservatives needed to make "gut affirmations respecting America's way of doing things." We live "in an age when what matters most is the survival of basic distinctions," he explained in 1984. Blackford Oakes, the hero of Buckley's spy novels, understands this—incarnates it, in fact. Blackford's "basic assumption," his creator revealed that year,

> is that the survival of everything we cherish depends on the survival of the culture of liberty; and that this hangs on our willingness to defend this extraordinary country of ours, so awfully mixed up, so much of the time; so schizophrenic in its understanding of itself and its purposes; so crazily indulgent of its legion of wildly ungovernable miscreants—to defend it at all costs. With it all, this idealistic republic is the finest bloom of nationhood in all recorded time, and save only that God may decide that the land of the free and the home of the brave has outrun its license on history, we Americans must contend, struggle, and if necessary fight for America's survival.

This fight Bill Buckley has waged, and waged magnificently, for the better part of a century. ♦

On Being Republican

Peter Robinson makes the case for his party

BY FRED BARNES

Most every Republican gathered in Philadelphia this week for the GOP convention wouldn't admit it, but they've all probably experienced a moment at one time or another when they asked themselves two questions: Why in the world am I a Republican? And why would anybody else want to be a member of the Republican party?

It's My Party
A Republican's Messy Love Affair with the GOP
by Peter Robinson
Warner Books, 249 pp., $24.95

It can be a painful question—because the GOP is like the Boston Red Sox: so full of potential, but with so little to show for it. Or as former White House speechwriter Peter Robinson (he wrote President Reagan's Berlin "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" speech) says in *It's My Party*, his relationship with the GOP is like a love affair. "Sometimes I find myself thinking about the Republican party in the middle of the day," he writes. "Other times, I find myself feeling so irritated with the GOP I want to break off our relationship. But somehow I never do, bearing the double burden of feeling irritated at feeling irritated."

It's My Party is an attempt by Robinson to see if his allegiance to the Republican party is worth the trouble. Of course the title gives away the answer: He winds up pretty much where he started, a committed conservative

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Republican. But that doesn't matter. The book is neither a scientific experiment nor an effort to prove that Republican political theories work in practice. It's really a travelogue, a trip around the country to interview Republicans, ask why they persist in the frustrating practice of being Republicans, and why others wouldn't vote Republican if their lives depended on it. Robinson's touch is light, his style conversational and highly readable. And in the end, the book makes about as good a case for the GOP as you'll get these days.

Robinson concedes it's "easy to find the Republican party absurd. The GOP calls to mind bland WASPs in New England, television evangelists down South, and feckless members of the House of Representatives in Washington." It's also easy to view the party as "pigheaded," at least for its failure to appeal to single women, blacks, and Latinos. And, he adds, there's "so much in the Republican party of which I disapproved." But for all that, Robinson is hooked. "The GOP has led me on, like an old mistress, proving more fascinating the better I've gotten to know it, without ever losing its capacity to annoy, gall, infuriate, and exasperate me."

Robinson finds converts to the GOP especially encouraging, including Michael Medved, the movie critic, author, and talk radio host. An orthodox Jew, Medved was attracted by the Republican party's support for traditional morality. As he got to know evangelical Christians who are among the party's most ardent followers, he lost his fear of anti-Semitism. "People of faith understand people of faith," he told Robinson. After his house was robbed and the thief got a light sentence from a liberal judge, Medved "found himself looking at the GOP's tough stance on crime with new eyes." During the Middle East war in 1973, he realized Republicans were better friends—and defenders—of Israel than Democrats were. *Voilà!* Medved was a Republican.

New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, raised a Democrat, joined the GOP for three reasons. The first was the expanding welfare state, which alarmed him. "The whole concept of entitlement was very, very, very destructive," he told Robinson. The second was foreign policy: Democrats didn't appreciate that American military strength was needed to preserve freedom and democracy. The third was his perception that the lack of political competition was killing cities like New York: Democrats won, and cities declined. Giuliani has been a Republican since voting for Gerald Ford for president in 1976.

Stanford political scientist Dave Brady moved from the far left to the Republican party. He was a Marxist, active in the anti-Vietnam war movement in the 1960s. But he became leery when he saw how Marxist societies worked. He read Milton Friedman and began to see how government regulation distorts the market. By the late 1970s, he was a conservative. "I became a conservative first. Turning into a Republican came second."

Brady, by the way, has an explanation for why Republicans don't feel as at home in the House of Representatives as Democrats do. Democrats like process. Republicans are bored by it. And it costs Republicans more to be in Congress. For many Democrats—former teachers, ex-social workers, one-time Unitarian pastors—being a House member is the best paying job they've ever had.

Robinson confronts the puzzling question of why Republicans outside Washington appear so successful and happy. For one thing, they don't have the national press corps to deal with. In Washington, the media are unrelentingly hostile to Republicans and delight in portraying GOP leaders as both evil and inept. Robinson thinks the bias is based on the need of reporters to be adversarial, their hatred of Republican publishers, and the fact that Republicans are bad copy.

There's a better reason: Most reporters are liberals who favor advocacy journalism, and thus push for whatever Republicans are against. Portraying Beltway Republicans in an unfavorable light comes naturally. Successful GOP governors and mayors outside Washington, the national press simply ignores. This is important because the country tends to see only one face of the Republican party: the beaten-down Beltway types.

What helps Robinson come to terms with the Republican party is something called "the Finkelstein Box," named after GOP political consultant Arthur Finkelstein. It's a lopsided box that covers all of America except the Northeast, Rust Belt, and West Coast. Inside, Republicans fare remarkably well. Why? Robinson went to Fresno, California, to find out. There, the people and the lifestyle were just like his hometown in upstate New York (which is outside the box but still a Republican stronghold).

Folks in his hometown, in Fresno, and almost everywhere else inside the box have a similar set of characteristics. They live in towns and medium-sized cities. They're mostly white and Protestant. They attend church regularly, drive American cars, and listen to country music.

Why do all these go with voting Republican? "I don't know," says Finkelstein. "They just do." He insists party affiliation is "one more element in the constellation of characteristics with which a person expresses his culture."

From all this, Robinson concludes there truly is a GOP set of principles that Republicans "from Fresno to Jersey City" hold dear. They believe in individual responsibility. They figure "any government that absorbs a full one-fifth of the goods and services its citizens produce is too big and too intrusive." They want America to be militarily unassailable. They believe the free market has a big role to play in solving social problems. Republicans divide on some social issues. "Yet the main body of the party—the GOP that lies inside the Finkelstein Box—is pro-life, opposes special rights for gays, and supports the institution of heterosexual marriage," Robinson says.

"The Grand Old Party proved bigger and older—grander—than I had thought," he concludes. But still as frustrating as ever. ♦

Al Gore, July 24, 2000. AFP / CORBIS.

The Gore Disconnect

Debra Saunders's devastating portrait of our vice president and his world. **BY NOEMIE EMERY**

The world, as Al Gore sees it, is a fairly strange place: a logic-free zone, where irreconcilables are described as identical, the past is subject to revision, and reality barely exists.

Admittedly, this place—which San Francisco newspaper columnist Debra Saunders, in *The World According to Gore*, calls "Goredom"—is different from Clintonville, which is a place of evasions, illusions, half-truths, and subtleties. In Goredom, nothing is subtle; all has the finesse and indirection of a hammer blow. Pieties are ponderous, humor is leaden, machine guns are used to dispatch insects, and lies are more than bald-faced. It is ruled throughout by the famous "Gore Disconnect"—the gap between fact and image, between Gore's own views on various issues, between what Gore claims and what others remember, and between the prescriptions Gore lays out for others and the things he does for himself. For years, it has been conventional wisdom that Gore is the "good" Clinton, a "moderate" clone, only honest and stable. On the basis of Saunders's book—and prior ones by Bill Turque and Bob Zelnick—that needs revision. Gore's flaws are no fewer than Clinton's; they merely are different. And in some ways, they are worse.

The World According to Gore
by Debra J. Saunders
Encounter Books, 225 pp., $15.95

Saunders begins *The World According to Gore* with Gore's appearance at the 1996 Democratic convention, where he made his tear-jerking speech about his sister's death from lung cancer, and invoked the vow he claimed to have made at her bedside, to fight the tobacco industry from that day on. His sister died in 1984. That year, he helped the tobacco industry remove the words "death" and "addiction" from a proposed warning label. In 1988, he ran for president bragging about his experiences growing and selling tobacco. He was still taking money from tobacco six years after his sister had died.

Saunders ends with the story in the *New York Times* on March 12, 2000, when Gore announced his intention to run as a campaign-finance reformer, despite his flouting of existing laws. Between these, Saunders relates numerous stories that expose the Gore Disconnect and explode the "sensible centrist" of myth. There are the well-known Walter Mitty-like fictions about his life, for instance: that as a newspaperman he sent corrupt politicians to prison, that he was the model for the novel *Love Story*, that he made pollution at Love Canal a political issue, that he faced fire while in Vietnam, that he invented the Internet, and more besides.

Even on environmental issues, his signature concern, Gore's words and deeds are at odds. On paper, at least, he appears a fanatic: scourging his fellows for rapacious consumption, urging a simple—even primitive—life. "Gore seems to be afflicted with what Freud might have called deprivation envy," observes Saunders, when he writes "yearningly . . . of the simpler days before supermarkets and plumbing," leaving "the strong implication that the era when man was ignorant, often half-starving, . . . unprotected from the elements and at the mercy of blind fortune was in reality a golden age." Jerry Brown used to talk like this when he was governor of California, but at least he had the grace to refuse to live in the governor's mansion and to have himself and other state officers driven about in small cars. Gore has made no discernible efforts to cut back on his motorcades, to move his family from the vice president's mansion into simpler lodgings, or to use buses instead of Air Force Two. And he did not protest when a river was flooded in drought-stricken New Hampshire to provide him with a fetching photo-op.

For all his hysterics, Gore's environmental record in Congress was wan. The League of Conservation Voters gave him a 64 percent rating (as opposed to 84 percent for Bill Bradley), for Gore had a way of making exceptions for those who could help his campaigns. In his book *Earth in the Balance*, he inveighed against the sugar industry for destroying the Everglades. But in Congress and as vice president, he received large contributions from the industry, while helping reward it with "federal corporate welfare . . . in the form of price supports, import quotas, and federally guaranteed loans." Run-

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ning for president in the primaries in the southern states in 1988, he suddenly reversed his efforts to get the EPA to clamp down on pollutants drained into Tennessee's Pigeon River by mills in North Carolina—for needed interests in North Carolina to help his campaign.

Gore also claims to be a centrist and moderate, but somehow always ends up favoring a bloated, diffuse, and ever-expanding state that is constantly adding new federal mandates on top of old ones that don't work. He has an inflated "livability" program, geared to help the comfortable cope with life's minor crises, through major infusions of federal power. He wants the state to build sidewalks in the suburbs, to give commuters a national traffic-jam number, and to require airlines to "double the compensation for passengers bumped from oversold flights."

With regard to some real issues, Gore seems to be the kind of old-fashioned liberal who believes that to name a problem, and pass a bill against it, is to consider that problem solved. Thus he believes that passage of a federal hate crimes law would have prevented the grisly murders of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming and James Byrd in Texas. If hate crimes acts work, why didn't existing ones prevent these atrocities? And what makes Gore think that a scolding about the evils of prejudice will impress people already willing to torture another human soul to death?

Gore has a weakness for utopian projects that fail to live up to their titles or promise, constantly urging new education initiatives whether or not they might work. But whether or not things work is unimportant in Goredom. As Saunders says, "There already are federal programs for reading, including federal programs to teach would-be teachers how to teach reading, and programs to teach college students how to teach reading. And if those programs don't work, then Gore's government will come up with other programs—like a program to push corporations to teach their workers how to volunteer." In the aftermath of the Columbine massacre, Gore was on the spot with a new list of programs to fix the unfixable—a sort of

Bettmann / CORBIS

Gore and his father in the Fairfax Hotel, 1954.

Evil Containment Agenda to use psychobabble against the dark forces and to fill up the void in our souls.

There have been disconnects between Gore's words and his actions; between what his programs promise, and what they deliver; and, above all, between Gore in the past and Gore in the present. The one constant in Gore's political life has been his extreme willingness to see to the needs of the moment, no matter how this contradicts what is on the record, or what he has said or has done in the past. Thus, as needs change—from pleasing the rural voters of a border state in the 1970s and 1980s as a congressman and a senator, to pleasing the New Democrats in 1988 as a would-be centrist national candidate, to pleasing, today, the base of a party that takes its cues from the rights groups and Hillary Clinton—Gore has not just shifted on some matters, but leapt from one extreme to another.

Tobacco is the main and most glaring example of the Gore Disconnect in full flower. But Gore has done the same thing on three other issues, on which the views and interests of Tennessee voters diverge from the national base. He began his career as an ardent pro-lifer, rated by activists on both sides of the issues as having voted either to restrict or to outlaw abortion between 80 and 84 percent of the time. In 1977, he backed a bill to deny federal funding for abortion procedures, even in cases of rape and incest. In 1980, he voted to prohibit coverage for abortion in health insurance plans for federal workers. "I don't believe a woman's freedom to live her own life, in all cases, outweighs the fetus's right to life," he said to the *Nashville Banner*. In 1984, he backed the Siljander amendment, which defined "unborn children from the moment of conception" as legal persons, with all of the attendant civil rights. In 1988, as a moderate, he opposed abortion funding in all cases except when a woman's life was in danger. It was when his political life was in danger—as Clinton's running mate, on a sturdy abortion-rights platform—that his position changed. He is now the administration's ambassador to all NARAL dinners, an ardent defender of late-term abortions, thundering against even minor restrictions on a woman's sacred right to "choose."

On guns, another hot button issue, Gore has accomplished another neat pivot, beginning his political life (in a state filled with hunters) as an ardent backer of the NRA. In 1985, he opposed the imposition of a fourteen-day waiting period to purchase guns. He voted to remove a ban on interstate gun sales and to exempt gun collectors from the Gun Control Act of 1988. Now, of course, he is neatly tucked into the liberals' corner, a conspicuous hero to the Million Mom March, ready to sound the alarm at all shootings, and call at these times for still new restrictions, on top of all the older restrictions, which the administration doesn't bother to enforce.

As with guns and abortion, so too with race. Gore was once the model of a Democratic moderate who rejected the idea of identity politics. Opposed to quotas, he urged Clinton to drop his nomination of Lani Guinier. Running as a centrist in the primaries in 1988, he criticized Michael Dukakis for pandering to Jesse Jackson. Now, far from dar-

ing to criticize Jackson, Gore has taken to sounding just like him, in both substance and style: speaking in overdone revivalist rhythms and accusing his critics of fostering "hate."

Politicians, of course, change their views sometimes, and seldom in ways that diminish their prospects. But few do it so often, so blatantly, so operatically, and to such great extremes. Gore doesn't merely change sides. He bounds from extreme to extreme—and then denounces, as villains and demons, those with the views he once held. People he once agreed with are now callous and cold-blooded killers. Most politicians who "evolve" do so with more nuance, can explain themselves better, and seem less eager to flail their old allies. But the Gore Disconnect is a complete dislocation, as odd as Ivana Trump's face lift. Gore now seems to be a whole other person. And this person consistently lies.

Many politicians shade their remarks to the tastes of their audience. But they usually recognize that this is an age of taping and video, that people keep records, that what you said before can be thrown back in your face. Gore, however, seems above these considerations, or beneath them, or simply beyond them. He lies, lies, and lies over again, in the face and the teeth of the evidence. He often insists that things never happened, though the proof is on tape, or in writing, or embedded firmly in other people's minds.

From 1992 until early this summer, for example, he vigorously denied that he had ever voted pro-life. Then he said he had changed his mind only about federal funding. Then he admitted he had changed his mind, period, on the basis of what women had told him about circumstances that might arise.

"That did not happen," he said definitively, when told during the New Hampshire primary that some of his backers had mocked and splashed mud on Bob Kerrey, and that his spokesman had defended them. But of course it did. In a televised public debate with Bill Bradley, Gore said he would impose a litmus test of gay rights on his military appointments. Then he denied it. Then he said he was sorry for the way his comments had been heard. He did the same thing when a chief aide, Donna Brazile, defamed Colin Powell. The fault lay with the listeners, and their impaired understanding. He regretted what the general had "heard."

AP / Wide World Photos

Mr. and Mrs. Gore dance at the Tennessee Ball in 1997.

Oddest of all, Gore's reaction the day after his speech to the Democratic convention in 1996 when reporters confronted him with the script to the ode to tobacco he had delivered four years after his sister had died. He had actually felt everything he described in his speech, he explained, but he had been so stunned by the death of his sister that he had been unable to act on his feelings for nearly six years. "I felt the numbness that prevented me from integrating into all aspects of my life the implications of what that tragedy really meant." Thus, it was second nature for Gore to proclaim four years later that he would run on the issue of campaign finance reform, though he had been the poster boy for bad behavior in that regard. "All he had to do was keep repeating that he had strong convictions on this issue," writes Saunders. "He would keep repeating this mantra and soon his guilty past would fall away."

But would it? Gore has endured a great deal of ridicule, as each nutty claim is exposed. So why does he do it? Why does he lie, over and over, when the evidence is so close to hand? Does he think if he lies often and loudly enough, he can alter reality? That people will start to distrust their own senses? That we will all start to go mad, like the young wife in *Gaslight*? Young Al, said his mother, was a compliant child, eager to be what was wanted. Perhaps he thinks people would think he was better if he had been a war hero, a romantic novel hero, a discoverer of Love Canal, a Bob Woodward-like journalist. Perhaps he thinks NARAL would like him better if he had never voted against it. Perhaps he thinks voters would like him better if he never had out-of-line aides. And so he attempts to remake the past.

Is this something we want in a president? Let us hope that George W. Bush shows up at the presidential debates with detailed lists of Gore's varying views, and that Bush's staff is preparing new versions of the whirligig ads about various flip-flops Gore used against Dick Gephardt in the 1988 campaign. Gore was shocked—shocked!—that Gephardt had "evolved" on some issues. But that was before Gore started "evolving" himself. Since then, Saunders relates, he has redesigned himself wholly, while denying he ever changed anything. If he is merely being cynical, it is disturbing enough. If he isn't, then it is much worse. ♦

Former president George Bush makes a call to Dick Cheney's cardiologist as part of his vice-presidential selection process. *—News item*

From the Office of George Herbert Walker Bush

July 30, 2000

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

To: Georgie (POTUS jr.)
From: Poppy (POTUS sr.)

I'm almost done typing out my edits on your convention speech. I'm using a really big font so you'll be able to read them up there on the podium. I must say, it really brings me back. Remember when me and mom used to help you with your homework when you were at Yale? Those were good times.

You'll be glad to know the convention preparations are almost done. Mom will be in to turn down your bed the afternoon of the big speech. A nap really helps. And I think we'll go with the red and gold tie. I'll lay it out just before. And I sharpened your fingernail clipper; you don't want to get one of those cuticle cuts on the special day. (I never thought I'd get all those balloons done—boy are my lips chapped.)

Son, I realize I promised I wouldn't interfere too much with your campaign (But hey, I was right about Cheney wasn't I?). So I limited my editing to a few sections of the speech.

***Opening section:** No, no, no! People don't want to hear about all the wonderful Americans you met on the trail. They want to know your background. What kind of family did you come from? Your parents' values. See how I worked in a mention of the Americans with Disabilities Act? Masterful.

***Page 2:** Compassionate Conservative section. Too elliptical. Tell them how you feel. Try this: "Message: I Care." Big applause line.

***Page 3:** Reagan, Reagan, Reagan. That's all we ever hear. What about some of the other GOP greats? What about Bob Michel? Ford? Yours truly?

***Page 4:** "Best parents a boy could have" section. Great stuff here. Don't rush through this part. Pause. Look at your watch. Let it sink in. The Silver Fox will take an ovation. It's too bad I have to be under the stage working the prompter.

***Page 6:** Social Security section. Cut this part. Wouldn't be prudent. Talk to Nick Brady about this. He's brilliant. (Another stint at Treasury?)

***Page 7:** Don't think the Harry Potter joke quite works. Try this: "Broccoli! I hate broccoli!" Crowd goes wild. Also, see the graph I added, which ends: "...and when I brought a Japanese kid home from school, my dad puked on his lap!" Don't be afraid to work the nostalgia angle!

***Page 9:** McCain section. A little fulsome. I worked in a bit how it's not that scary getting shot down into a little pond. Let him try getting shot down into an ocean!

***Page 11:** Don't think "Prosperity With a Purpose" works as a slogan. How 'bout "A Chip Off the Old Block"?

EYES ONLY!!