the weekly
Standard

TEA FOR 250,000
MARY KATHARINE HAM

APRIL 27, 2009 $4.95

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STEPHEN F. HAYES hits the road with the wounded warriors

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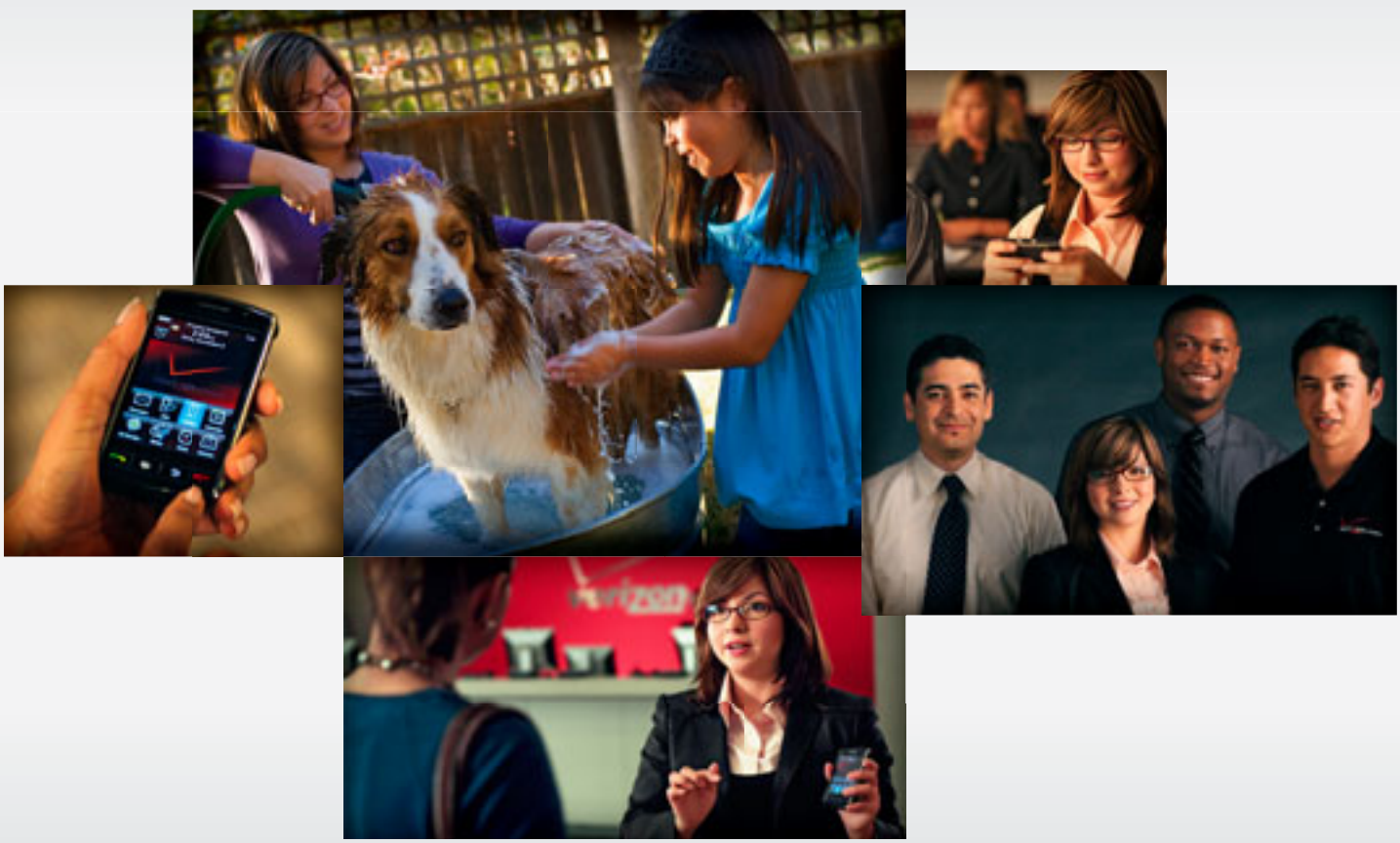

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the weekly Standard

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

The Many-Splendored Couric

With perilous conditions at most daily newspapers, THE SCRAPBOOK finds itself lying awake at night, haunted by an ominous thought: If they run out of newspapers, what will become of the Pulitzer Prizes?

To be sure, the Pulitzers are usually a case of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* rewarding each other on an annual basis—prizes for Bob Herbert and David Ignatius can't be far off—but with the *Times* more or less selling apples on the street corner, and the *Post* relentlessly "streamlining" and "reorganizing" its shrinking product, the Pulitzer people might be reduced to recognizing newspapers in flyover country.

THE SCRAPBOOK thought of this the other day when our attention was drawn to some unexpected news: Katie Couric had won the Walter Cronkite Award for special achievement in journalism, fast on the heels of her Edward R. Murrow Award for Best Newscast!

In a ceremony at the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Southern California, Katie received her Walter Cronkite Award from Annenberg dean (and veteran journalism pontificator) Geneva Overholser, for her "critically acclaimed coverage of the historic 2008 presidential election." (Translation: For her hostile interview with Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin.) Of course, it is fair to speculate whether the Walter Cronkite Award would have gone to Katie if that interview had not damaged Palin's candidacy, but THE SCRAPBOOK prefers not to think cynical thoughts.

Instead, we're delighted by these back-to-back Murrow/Cronkite kudos, and happy for Katie! But we're also a little concerned as well. For even as daily newspapers are sinking below the waterline, the audience for network news is steadily shrinking.

You could argue that a significant percentage of Americans tuned into Edward R. Murrow or Walter Cronkite in their day; you can make no such argument for Katie Couric, whose ratings have diminished steadily since her rise to anchorhood. As everybody knows, with the invention of the Internet, and the proliferation of websites, blogs, cable TV, and New Media generally, fewer and fewer Americans rely on such programs as the *CBS Evening News* or *NBC Nightly News* for news or information.

And yet, as we see this week, just as the Big Three networks have begun to fade, the eponymous prizes that journalists award each other seem to proliferate—almost in proportion to the decline of the mainstream media. That's how somebody like Katie Couric wins both the Walter Cronkite and the Edward R. Murrow awards at a moment when the vast majority of Americans are tuning out Katie Couric.

If this trend continues, with luck, THE SCRAPBOOK will soon be reading about Bryant Gumbel winning the Bill Moyers Award, Bill Moyers winning the Bryant Gumbel Award, Brian Williams receiving the prize for lifetime achievement in network news (the John Cameron Swayze Award?) from the hands of Charlie Gibson, and Charlie Gibson and Brian Williams tying for next year's Katie Couric Award.

See you at the Annenberg School! ♦

There Can Only Be One

When the president speaks, he demands your undivided attention. There mustn't be any visual distractions, such as glaring billboards or other improper messaging. So when Barack Obama gave a talk on the economy last week at Georgetown University—the nation's oldest Catholic institution of higher learning—his advisers told campus officials to please cover up the cross and the letters "IHS," etched into a pediment center-stage, just above where the president would speak. In case you are wondering, the letters represent the name of Jesus Christ. Writes Julia Duin in her *Washington Times* Belief Blog:

Obama at Georgetown, 2009; Tony Blair, same venue, 2006

Julie Bataille from the university's press office e-mailed me that the White House had asked that all university signage and symbols behind the stage in Gaston Hall be covered. "The White House wanted a simple backdrop of flags and pipe and drape for the speech, consistent with what they've done for other policy speeches," she wrote. "Frankly, the pipe and drape wasn't high enough by itself to fully cover the IHS and cross above the GU seal and it seemed most respectful to have them covered

so as not to be seen out of context."

Of course, university officials happily complied, covering the letters up with what seems to be blackened plywood. And we're pretty sure if Obama asked them to dismantle the crosses atop the buildings before his arrival, they would have broken out the ladders for that too.

But concerning the question of context, was the administration really worried people would wonder why the letters representing Christ were adorning the wall of a Catholic school? Or was the worry about people confusing the one with The One? (Keep in mind, Obama skillfully managed to deliver a speech mentioning the Sermon on the Mount without mentioning the name of the person who first delivered it.) ♦

Perish the Thought Dept.

'But in a larger sense, if it weren't for *Spinal Tap*, there would not only be no *Anvil!* documentary, there also might be no *Borat*, *The Colbert Report*, *The Office* or *Behind the Music*" (*Newsweek*, April 20). ♦

Financial Crisis Swamps Academia: Women and Minorities Hardest Hit

Last week Mark Wrighton, the chancellor of Washington University in St. Louis, sent a letter to the university community. Wrighton was warning about the effects of the current recession: "[T]he speed and depth of the downturn is an unprecedented experience for most of us," he wrote. "I remain confident about Washington University's long-term financial well-being. However, we will most likely face significant financial problems in the next several years."

Fortunately for Wash U, Wrighton and a steering committee have completed a study called the "Plan for Excellence" to help the university navigate these rocky shoals. The Board of Trustees met last month to "discuss the objectives stemming from the Plan," Wrighton explains. And here Wrighton gets to the truly good news: "The Board embraced five broad priorities for the next 10 years."

And would you like to know what Washington University's very first priority is to deal with an economic meltdown that has wiped out a quarter of the school's endowment? "(1) Strengthen diversity and improve gender balance and inclusiveness in all segments of the University community."

Don't worry about Wash U. They're in good hands. ♦

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Casual

Such, Such Were the Joys

Everyone knows the old joke about New Jersey—"What exit?" I grew up just off Exit 4 of the Turnpike, and the entire premise of the gag is ridiculous. People in New Jersey don't calculate the geographic and social differences among them by highway off ramps. We use malls.

Growing up in Jersey, you were marked by your mall in roughly the same way a man was marked by his accent in Victorian England. The Deptford Mall was for blue-collar Catholics in Gloucester County. Bridgewater Commons was for the rich north-central Jersey kids whose parents commuted to Manhattan. The Hamilton Mall was for the townies on the southern shore coast, who were part of Philadelphia's sphere of influence. A little further north at the Monmouth Mall people saw themselves as exurban New Yorkers.

I can track my own family's social progress through the malls. When I was a child, we frequented the Deptford Mall. But as the family did better, we graduated up; by the time I hit adolescence I was an Echelon Mall man. Echelon was white-collar middle class, but not quite as upscale as the nearby Cherry Hill. Like most of my contemporaries, I spent about 15 hours a week at the mall. I'd get dropped off at lunch time on the weekends and would kick around the mall with friends until dinner. On a typical Saturday, we'd order a cookie cake from the Great American Cookie Company in the food court, see a movie, hang around the arcade, buy a couple of CDs, and spend an hour devouring the 20" by 24" chocolate-chip cookie once it was ready for pick-up. Then we'd go back the next day and do it all again.

Some of you cosmopolitans are probably horrified, but the mall is a New Jersey child's birthright, like horses for kids in Wyoming and cornfields in Iowa. Sure, the first enclosed mall in America was technically in Minnesota—the Southdale Center in Edina opened in 1956. But New Jersey has led the way since. The Bergen Mall in North Jersey opened less than a year later. Both Southdale and Bergen were climate-controlled spaces, but they were also tiny. The first large-scale, modern mall was opened in Cherry Hill in 1961. Today there are more than 50 malls in the state, each the home of a distinct tribe.

DARREN GYGI

So the mall is in our blood. Twenty years later, I seek out malls wherever I go; I've been to malls in Iceland, Ireland, and Idaho. On my honeymoon in Kauai, the second thing my wife and I did was visit the island's lone mall. She's from New Jersey, too, a Rockaway Mall girl, if you know what I mean. At the Republican convention last fall I went to Minneapolis's colossal Mall of America every day, taking in its splendor. When it was built in 1992, the MOA—locals call it the Mall of Gomorrah—was the biggest in the country. It's soon to be eclipsed by the Meadowlands Xanadu in Secaucus, New Jersey, with its 4.5 million square feet of space. In addition to shopping, the Xanadu will have a Ferris Wheel, an 18-screen movie theater, a bowling alley, a baseball stadium, and an indoor ski slope. I'll be there when it opens.

But all is not well in the world of malls. In the last two years, 400 of the nation's 2,000 largest malls have closed. When it finally comes online, Xanadu will be the first new mall to open in America since 2006. Retail sales are crunched everywhere by the recession, but the financial underpinnings of the big anchor chains—Macy's, Sears, and the like—have been crumbling for years.

My own Echelon Mall fell on hard times during the late '90s. I tracked its decline on the tragic, but engrossing, website deadmalls.com. JCPenney and Sears left Echelon, as did the General Cinema theater when the chain went bankrupt. Wal-Mart wanted to set up shop in one of the anchor positions, but residents and politicians kept them out. By 2005, nearly 75 percent of Echelon's 1.1 million square feet were vacant.

In desperation, the owners demolished much of the complex—the preferred euphemism is "right-sized"—and cut the once-glorious mall down to a piddling 750,000 square feet. Echelon has been renamed the "Voorhees Town Center," and there are plans to build residential units and an ersatz Main Street where the rest of the mall once stood.

I'd like to think that New Jersey's malls will survive the troubles mostly intact. Old standbys such as Linens-n-Things and KB Toys have already vanished forever, and the great shakeout has only just begun. What happened to Echelon could happen in Cherry Hill.

If the mall culture dies, you and I might make do with Amazon and strip centers. But what about the children?

Jonathan V. Last

the weekly Standard

Defeat Obamacare

As isolated as Republicans appear to be in Washington, they often find allies in the struggle to keep the federal government from becoming the command-and-control center of American life. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups have stymied organized labor's drive for legislation ("card check") to unionize workers without a secret ballot election. Moderate Democrats in Congress have joined the opposition to the perilous plan ("cap and trade") to limit carbon emissions at the expense of a growing economy.

But there's one issue on which Republicans are alone and President Obama and Democrats have the upper hand: health care. Indeed, the prospects have never been better for expanding Washington's role in even the smallest decisions made by doctors and patients. Thwarting this won't make Republicans more popular. Their efforts might be in vain. But at least they'll be heroes in the cause of defending private health care and preserving individual freedom. They'll vindicate their existence as Republicans.

Obama's liberal reforms would probably be irreversible. Most ominous is creation of a government health insurance program open to everyone. The respected Lewin Group estimates such a program would soon cover 130 million Americans, most of them refugees from private insurance. It would only be a short step to a Canadian-style, single payer system run by bureaucrats in Washington.

It's worth noting how Canadian health care failed to save the life of actress Natasha Richardson after a recent ski accident. The nearby hospital had no scanning equipment or neurosurgeon, and there was no helicopter to fly her to a trauma center. By the time she arrived at one, she was brain dead. Why wasn't proper treatment and equipment at hand? Government had decided not to pay for them.

In taking up health care legislation, this isn't 1994. Back then, Republicans, conservatives, and queasy Democrats worked with doctors, pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, HMOs, and insurers to defeat the scheme cooked up by Hillary Clinton. It failed without being reported out by any committee in a Democratic Senate or House.

Times have changed. Fifteen years of one-sided discussion of soaring costs, the plight of the uninsured, and the heartlessness of insurance companies have increased demand for more and cheaper health care. And Obama has learned from the Clintons' mistakes.

The Clinton proposal was developed at the White House with little contribution from congressional Democrats, the folks who would have to approve it. In addition, the Clinton team was unwilling to accommodate either allies or critics who wanted to reach a compromise on health care. Hillary Clinton stood her ground, until it crumbled beneath her.

Obama, in contrast, has assigned Democrats in Congress the task of drafting the health care bill. This is both smart and politically safe. They're in sync with Obama on a mandate that every American have health insurance with generous minimum benefits, that businesses offer it to employees or pay a stiff fine, and that people have the option of switching to government health insurance.

That's not all. Obama and other Democrats now talk about health care in a more appealing fashion. "They've co-opted Republican rhetoric on health care," a leading Washington lobbyist says. They've learned this from extensive polling. Would voters like the option of choosing between employer-based health insurance and a government insurance program? Of course they would, particularly when the word "public" is substituted for "government."

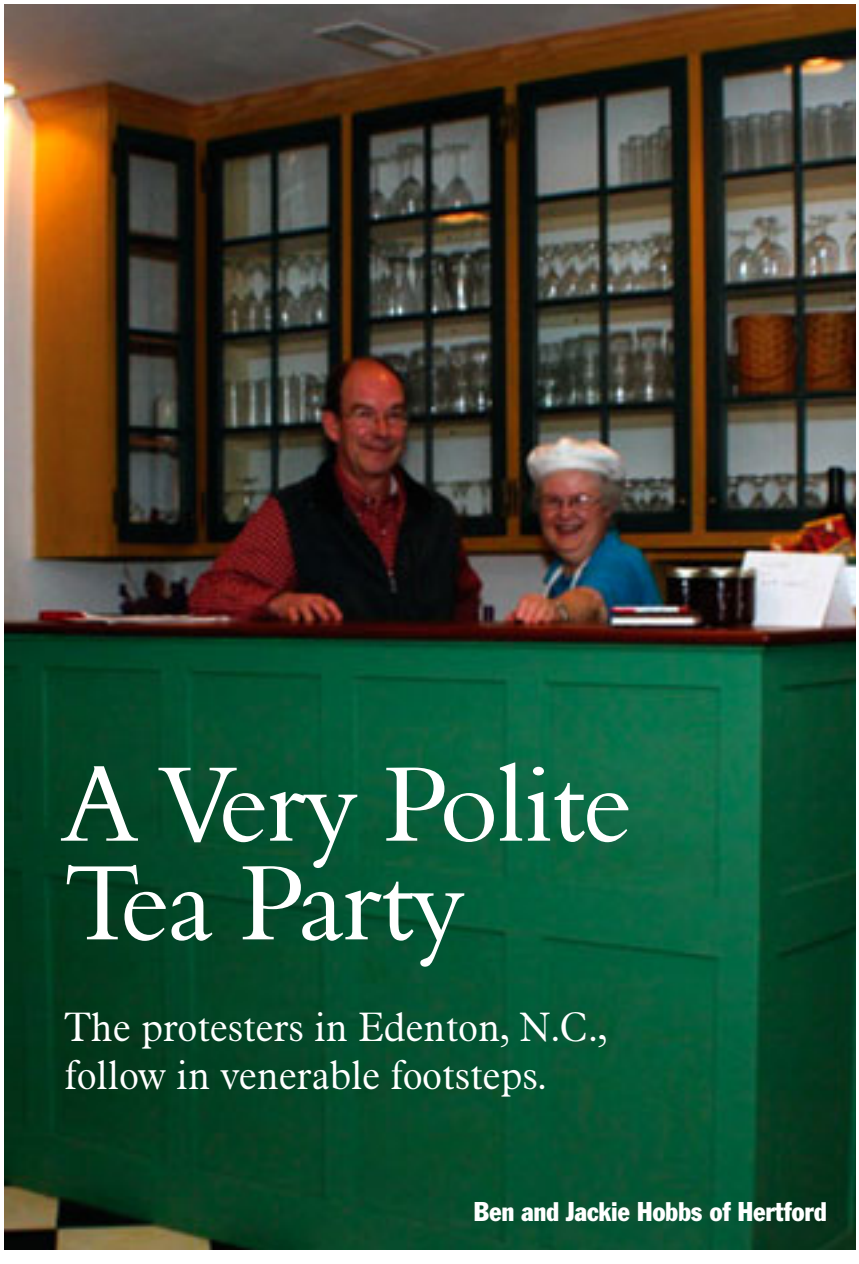
And rather than replace employer-purchased insurance, the "public" plan would merely "compete" with it. The competition might not last long, as we discovered in 1965 when Medicare drove private insurers out of business and quickly became the only plan for seniors. That's exactly the effect a government health insurance option would have now. By offering cut-rate fees and drug prices—it wouldn't need to make a profit—it would soon clear the field of competitors.

Obama and company have one more big advantage. For the first time since the 1960s, liberal Democrats control Washington. Their freedom to do what they please has been enhanced by the economic downturn. On top of that, Obama argues that health care reform is a precondition for economic recovery, though he must know it really isn't.

For now, the natural opponents of Obamacare are divided and fearful. Doctors are not engaged. Hospitals are concerned with the narrow issue of fees paid by the government. Insurance companies and the pharmaceutical industry are terrified of crossing Obama. The conservative movement hasn't set its sights on stopping the president on health care.

Tea parties won't suffice. It's up to Republicans to rally a well-financed army of relentless opposition—not for the good of the party, but for the good of the country. And who knows? Obamacare might suffer the fate of HillaryCare. Stranger things have happened in Washington.

—Fred Barnes



A Very Polite Tea Party

The protesters in Edenton, N.C., follow in venerable footsteps.

Ben and Jackie Hobbs of Hertford

BY MARY KATHARINE HAM

Edenton, North Carolina

Every day, Jackie and Ben Hobbs go about their modern lives inside walls hewn by hand before the In dustrial Revolution. The sounds of their TV and telephone mingle with the quiet creaks of wide slat floorboards laboring under 200 years of foot traffic, as the couple runs a small country bed-and-breakfast and restaurant outside Hertford, county seat of Perquimans County, North Carolina.

Ben, a math teacher turned entrepreneur and local elected official, is the kind of man who invariably has to take off his work glove to shake hands. He was digging trenches for irrigation lines when I arrived. But for the small back-hoe he was using, it might have been a scene from the 1700s, as he strode over to greet me against the backdrop of the inn's modest early-American cabins, collected from across the state and restored by Ben himself, furnished with reproduction period furniture he makes onsite.

Jackie, also a public school teacher in the area before the Hobbses started the Beechtree Inn, showed me around their comfortable and slightly incongruous world of pencil-post beds and central air, where rooms feature both wainscoting and web access.

But this small business was not the only echo of colonial life in northeastern North Carolina last week. In nearby Edenton, a historic town of about 5,000, residents gathered for a "Tax Day Tea Party"—one of about 800 grassroots protests against expanding government held across the nation on April 15. The demonstrations drew more than 250,000 supporters and some openly hostile news coverage, as reporters painted the gatherings as rage-fests filled with antigovernment crackpots.

Ben, who laid aside his tools to head to the tea party, was unsurprised by the tone of the coverage. After all, he said, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano had just labeled small-government entrepreneurs like him potential terrorist threats. He was referring to the Department of Homeland Security's report on the danger of "right-wing extremism," which was fodder for many jokes at the Edenton Tea Party, as church ladies, veterans, and young moms chuckled about their allegedly subversive activities.

The demonstration, held on the town square facing the waters of the Albemarle Sound, attracted about 500 protesters. As was the case at many of the nation's tea parties, their complaints were disparate—objections to the stimulus package, the growing deficit, a cigarette tax hike, a proposed reduction in charitable tax deductions, and just-plain-big government.

An elderly couple sat at the edge of the crowd, American flags and protest signs affixed to the baskets of their Hoverround motorized scooters. A red-headed high-school student stood with his father holding a sign

Photos by Joy Marinelli

Mary Katharine Ham is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

that pinpointed the crowd's disappointment with the president: "Keep the change. We need the cash."

Several teenaged girls stood in the front row of the crowd with their mothers, a denim-clad, modern-day echo of the first organized protest by women in the American colonies, which took place in this very town on October 25, 1774, and went down in history as the Edenton Tea Party. Though the women of Edenton didn't dump tea into the bay that day, as their revolutionary brethren in Boston had done the year before, they drafted a letter of solidarity, promising to forsake "British tea and cloth."

Edenton was already a hotbed of political activity when Penelope Barker, the wife of the state treasurer, organized what guests thought was a routine tea party for about 50 Edenton women. When her guests arrived, she convinced them to sign a letter, which was later published in London newspapers:

> The Provincial Deputies of North Carolina having resolved not to drink any more tea, nor wear any more British cloth, &c. many ladies of this Province have determined to give a memorable proof of their patriotism, and have accordingly entered into the following honourable and spirited association. I send it to you, to shew your fair countrywomen, how zealously and faithfully American ladies follow the laudable example of their husbands, and what opposition your Ministers may expect to receive from a people thus firmly united against them:
>
> As we cannot be indifferent on any occasion that appears nearly to affect the peace and happiness of our country, and as it has been thought necessary, for the public good, to enter into several particular resolves by a meeting of Members deputed from the whole Province, it is a duty which we owe, not only to our near and dear connections who have concurred in them, but to ourselves who are essentially interested in their welfare, to do every thing as far as lies in our power to testify our sincere adherence to the same; and we do therefore accordingly subscribe this paper, as a witness of our fixed intention and solemn determination to do so.

The women of Edenton were mocked in British editorial cartoons depicting the horrors of females' meddling in politics. One mezzotint parody featured a helpless baby abandoned under a table with the pet dog while a bevy of women cavort with men, brandish gavels, and draft proclamations.

Frank and Anna Lathrop at the Edenton Tea Party

At last week's tea party, the words of the 18th-century ladies of Edenton were read out and greeted with choruses of "That's right" and "Amen." It was not an overheated declaration that the oppression of today's taxpayers is on par with what the colonists faced, as some commentators on the left have asserted. Instead, it was an affirmation of an American system born of resistance to burdensome government, and designed to make protesting it and changing it possible.

Far from the media's portrayal of the protests as outside the mainstream and angry, the Edenton Tea Party was almost eerily polite. Held at 5 P.M. so people could attend after work, it betrayed some inexperience with traditional protesting, as participants were overly reliant on lawn chairs and speakers hesitant to start any chant but "U-S-A."

I went primed to report rude signage, Muslim-conspiracy theorizing, and speculation about Obama's birth certificate if I saw them, but there were none to be found. Not one bumper sticker, not one T-shirt, not one errant word. Don Harris, retired Army special operations, was characteristic. He stood near the back of the crowd, sans sign, chatting with friends and quietly listening to speakers, who included representatives of groups like the state chapters of the Federation of Republican Women and Americans for Prosperity.

For many in the crowd, the onerous nature of overzealous government is not merely theoretical. These demonstrators were no Ayn Rand enthusiasts reciting John Galt's 60-page speech from memory, just in from "ultra-libertarian survivalist compounds in rural West Virginia," as David Corn described tea-party goers in his *CQ* blog.

A veteran of the local volunteer fire department, Ben Hobbs served eight years on the school board before being elected to the county commission. He is now in his tenth year as a commissioner and planning to leave office in 2010 (he term-limited himself). He has struggled to keep Perquimans County (population 11,000) fiscally responsible while himself being held accountable at every covered-dish dinner. When his fellow commissioners passed a 6 percent tax on rental and hospitality income, Ben was voting on his own livelihood. His stand as described in county records: "He

opposes the tax because he does not like to enact new taxes."

For Frank Lathrop, a retiree sporting a homemade sweatshirt that read "Pay your own taxes," the April 15 protest was for future generations. He was in Vietnam during the '60s, he said, grimacing slightly at the memory of the protests in the New Left's heyday.

"I'm no protester. We've never protested, but we have eight grandchildren," Lathrop said. "All of this [money for stimulus, bailouts, and deficits] is being taken from them."

His wife, Anna, whose matching iron-on political message read "Stop stealing our kids' future," jumped in: "I'm not even a Republican! And, to say that this is a party or a race thing is just ridiculous," she said, alluding to news coverage. "The idea that they're stealing from our children and grandchildren to remove tattoos in California? That's not worth my grandchildren's future. It's not."

The surrounding counties have been controlled by Democrats since Reconstruction. Ben Hobbs was the first Republican elected to the county commission since 1868, drawing strength from name recognition in a county where his parents (both descended from early Plymouth Colony settlers) farmed and raised their family and where he and Jackie raised their three boys. Though John McCain pulled off a narrow win in the area, Democratic registration outnumbers Republican significantly, which gives the lie to the media portrayal of the tea parties as solely Republican and anti-Obama.

After the protest, the Hobbses had a group of community leaders back to their Beechtree Restaurant for dinner, where Jackie mans the kitchen, cranking out three-course meals for guests. In another real-life run-in with burdensome government, Jackie had to install a giant, commercial kitchen for what she intended to be a tiny operation, because the inn's potential capacity for guests is over a certain limit. "I think I ended up with seven sinks before I met all the regulations!" she said with a laugh.

The tea party movement was characterized by liberal commentators as "AstroTurf"—fake grass roots—"manufactured by the usual suspects"

A tea party 'extremist'

simply because several national conservative advocacy organizations jumped on the bandwagon, collecting email addresses and alerting their memberships. In fact, there's great uncertainty as to where the movement goes from here, precisely because it is not centrally organized.

Some communities are touting plans for July 4 tea parties, and at least one organization is trying to galvanize the diffuse protesters at *www.aftertheteaparty.com*. Ben hopes the events will be a wake-up call to those who have steered clear of both local and national politics.

"They were telling people today to get involved. I've been involved my whole life," he said, sighing at the memory of arguing sometimes futilely for restraint and responsibility on countless local committees and boards.

If nothing else, for this right-leaning dinner party, the protests signal the promise of a new way forward, new recruits, and someday, new policy victories, all made possible by—dare they say it?—a little bit of *community organizing*.

"When I'm done with the commission," Ben said with a sly smile, "I might become a little conservative ACORN. I don't want to be just like them. We can do it politely, but we've got to do more." ♦

The GOP Isn't Dog Food

So can we please stop talking about the 'Republican brand'? **BY LEE BOCKHORN**

The state of the "Republican brand" has become a ubiquitous discussion topic among Washington wonks, journalists, and politicians over the past year. Last May, then-congressman Tom Davis of Virginia sent a memo to his House GOP colleagues arguing that "the Republican brand is in the trash can. . . . If we were dog food, they would take us off the shelf."

That same month, in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, Senator Tom Coburn moaned that Tom DeLay's K Street Project and "compassionate conservatism" had "decimated our brand as the party of reform and limited government." Newt Gingrich chimed in on the website of *Human Events*, "The Republican brand has been . . . badly

Lee Bockhorn is a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush and NEH chairman Bruce Cole.

damaged." In classic Newt fashion, he listed "Nine Acts of Real Change That Could Restore the GOP Brand."

After November's election debacle, Republican politicians continued to employ this relatively novel wonk-speak. From South Carolina governor Mark Sanford to Mississippi governor and former Republican chairman Haley Barbour, they deplored the failure to uphold the GOP brand.

Lifted from the world of advertising and marketing, "brand" talk isn't limited to political parties: Individual candidates and officeholders can possess their own "personal brand" (a concept popularized by business gurus like Tom Peters). The health of John McCain's maverick "brand," for instance, was much analyzed during last year's campaign. In October, *New York* magazine's John Heilemann sought to explain "How McCain Lost His Brand: From Maverick to Crank in an Instant." By running negative ads and curtailing McCain's free-wheeling bull-sessions with reporters, Heilemann claimed, McCain's handlers had tarnished "the candidate's gold-plated brand."

One might ask why the old-fashioned word "reputation" no longer suffices to describe the esteem in which the public holds a political party or an individual politician. One reason is that "brand," like any jargon word, helps certify its user's membership in a class of people—in this case, people who spend their waking hours thinking and talking and writing about the marketing of politicians.

Then, too, sloppy language usually reveals sloppy thinking, and the eager embrace of "brand" talk among Republican leaders suggests that many of them haven't bothered to confront the true nature of the GOP's predicament.

While a "reputation" can be maintained, improved, or ruined primarily through one's actions, "brand" belongs more to the sphere of aesthetics and surfaces. Some Republicans and conservatives take comfort in the belief that they can stage a comeback using the same old issues and policy ideas, just "rebranded" with a little fresh packaging—whether focus-group-approved phrases or new political figures with their own "gold-plated brands."

This temptation is acute among those still stunned by the spectacle of a once-in-a-generation political talent like Barack Obama managing to put a hip new sheen (for now) on a whole host of once-discredited left-liberal approaches to domestic and foreign policy. You almost can't blame Republicans for thinking they need only "rebrand" themselves, rather than critically reexamine their ideas and policies.

Thus we hear new RNC chairman Michael Steele saying that Republicans "need to uptick our image" by applying the party's principles in, for example, "urban-suburban hip-hop settings." Rush Limbaugh, meanwhile, in his much-discussed speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference, declares that conservatives and Republicans "can take this country back. All we need is to nominate the right candidate. It's no more complicated than that."

Actually, it is more complicated. The challenge facing Republicans and conservatives goes deeper than cosmetics or personalities. It demands that we revisit our core principles and apply them to formulate compelling solutions to a host of challenges to American prosperity and leadership—such as mounting health care costs, middle-class wage stagnation and rising income inequality, the collapse of authority, and the increasing dysfunction of fundamental institutions, ranging from our financial system and the federal government to our public schools. These problems cannot be addressed convincingly by merely dusting off the 1980 GOP platform.

Certainly fresh faces and fresh communications techniques can help, but only as the vehicles for fresh ideas. Successful politics cannot be reduced to mere marketing. (As President Obama is beginning to discover, even a wildly popular "personal brand" doesn't make governing easy.) New conservative statesmen and a newly vibrant Republican party will not emerge if we consider them akin to dog food or soap, whose market share can be increased with clever ads and a snazzy new label.

In a *Washington Times* op-ed last month, Governor Sanford wrote: "In many ways, a political party is little more than a brand." What a cramped, unlovely view of the role of parties in our democracy.

Political parties are often messy things—but at their best, they draw their strength and their reason for being from the real needs and hopes of millions of citizens. They serve the public by structuring choice: by formulating alternative ways to address public needs and advancing candidates who will carry those solutions forward. Republicans and conservatives can hasten their return to relevance by talking less about their "brand" and working harder to address the needs and aspirations of the people whose votes they seek to win. ♦

Motherhood Is Powerful

Cathy McMorris Rodgers is a rarity: a pro-life female member of the House. BY KEVIN VANCE

Cathy McMorris Rodgers with son Cole

Third-term representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers doesn't fit the mold of the female member of Congress. Unlike at least three-quarters of them, she's a Republican. And unlike about seven-eighths of them, she's staunchly pro-life.

After serving 10 years in the Washington state legislature, Cathy McMorris was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2004 from the Fifth District, which includes Spokane. At the end of her first term, she married Brian Rodgers, a retired Navy pilot, who now plays "Mr. Mom" for the couple's 23-month-old son, Cole.

Cole has Down syndrome, and McMorris Rodgers's experience with him inspired her to launch the congressional Down Syndrome Caucus last spring. In particular, she was worried about institutional barriers that stand in the way of people with Down syndrome.

When Cole was born, the Rodgerses were advised not to put any assets in his name in order to increase his odds of qualifying for Medicaid. "I think there's something wrong with the system that is driving a person into poverty rather than really focusing on, 'Okay, how do we make this person self-sufficient and able to reach his full potential?'" McMorris Rodgers told me.

The Down Syndrome Caucus is bipartisan, and its co-chairs include D.C. delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and Rhode Island congressman Patrick Kennedy, two liberal Democrats. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the caucus has refrained from tackling directly the issue of the 80-to- 90 percent abortion rates for fetuses that are diagnosed prenatally with Down syndrome. McMorris Rodgers noted, however, that last year both houses of Congress passed by unanimous votes, and President Bush signed, a bill requiring health care providers to give mothers up-to-date information about care and support networks when there is a prenatal or postnatal diagnosis of Down syndrome.

The high abortion rate associated with it has put Down syndrome in the forefront of the debate over prenatal testing. The congresswoman pointed out the conflicted feelings of many in the disability advocacy community. "They don't want to be seen as pro-life, and yet they think it is wrong that just because a baby has a diagnosis that so many are aborted."

"I see my son as such a special gift," she went on, "and he is such a joy. People are drawn to Cole; he just has such a special way about him, and it makes me more passionate to want to fight for Cole as well as others, whether it's Down syndrome or any other disability, and fight for the value and the tremendous impact that they can have in a positive way on our lives and this world."

Sarah Palin's comment in her speech accepting the Republican nomination for vice president last summer—that "children with special needs inspire a special love"—struck a chord with McMorris Rodgers. "Any family that's been touched with someone who has disabilities can relate to that," she said.

Douglas Johnson, the legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee, underscored McMorris Rodgers's 100 percent pro-life voting record, noting, "She has been one who has not just voted pro-life but has sponsored pro-life bills, quite a number of them."

McMorris Rodgers's Republican colleagues already recognize her as a leader, especially on energy issues.

AP Photo / Jill Strait

Kevin Vance is an editorial assistant and Collegiate Network fellow at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

(She supports an "all-of-the above" approach and has won bipartisan support for her work on hydropower.) This year, she was elected vice chair of the Republican conference, making her the 4th-highest-ranking member in the minority and the highest-ranking woman in the Republican caucus.

Indiana congressman and House Republican Conference chair Mike Pence said McMorris Rodgers has demonstrated "almost a Thatcheresque quality," combining her pleasant, energetic demeanor with firmly held conservative principles. Pence credits her with bringing members of the Republican conference into the new media age. These qualities, as well as her willingness to work across the aisle, make her an appealing figure in a party seeking to attract young voters and women.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, which supports pro-life women running for office, told me she thinks women like Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Sarah Palin are transforming the idea of what it means to be a woman in politics, giving young women role models different from the traditional liberal female politician. Dannenfelser's organization has supported McMorris Rodgers since her first run for Congress.

Dannenfelser thinks McMorris Rodgers possesses a special authority when she talks about issues relating to the innate worth of human beings. "The facts are the facts. Somehow, the presenter of the facts in certain debates sometimes matters more than the facts themselves," she said. "For her to say human beings aren't all about utility, she speaks with authority, because she's living it."

As for McMorris Rodgers, her strategy going forward is to focus on reminding people of the value that every person has. "I've long thought that we need to reach people's hearts on this issue," she said, pointing to the effect ultrasound technology has had on parents, who now can see their children before they're born. "I think that's having an impact on society and that people are asking themselves the question, when does life begin?" ♦

This Is No Time to Go Wobbly

After 29 years, Senate ratification of the CEDAW treaty is still a terrible idea. BY AUSTIN RUSE

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women once told Libya to reinterpret the Koran so as to fall within committee guidelines. It instructed Belarus that a national celebration of Mother's Day violated women's rights by perpetuating a negative cultural stereotype.

It appears that the Obama administration and Senate Democrats want the United States to sit in the dock before this same committee, as must every country that ratifies the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, pronounced See-Daw). The CEDAW treaty has bounced around the Senate for 29 years, ever since President Jimmy Carter signed it in 1980. It has twice been voted favorably out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee but has never received the necessary concurrence of two-thirds of the senators present, no matter which party has been in power. Now, however, with staunch backers like Hillary Clinton and John Kerry in key positions in the executive and legislative branches, CEDAW's moment may finally have come.

Let us hope not. The first big reason for rejecting the CEDAW treaty is wholly practical: It is unneeded. American women enjoy civil and human rights that are the envy of the world. Take the word of one of America's leading feminist activists and theoreticians, Janet Benshoof. She writes on RH Reality Check, a website funded by Ted Turner's UN Foundation, "No one questions that American women enjoy a higher standard of rights and freedoms than do most people in the world." American women do not need CEDAW to guarantee them their rights.

The second big reason not to ratify is the language of the treaty itself. Note that it calls for the elimination of "all forms" of discrimination against women. And its backers are not kidding. The treaty is explicit that this refers not just to public but also to private behavior. Two years ago the committee instructed both Greece and Indonesia to root out sex differences in housework; another signatory, Norway, actually legislated sex parity on private corporate boards, then testified before the committee that the law was proving difficult to enforce.

The treaty may be bad, but the committee that is charged with monitoring compliance is worse and is the third big reason to resist CEDAW. All U.N. human rights treaties establish compliance committees before which governments must report every few years. At least on paper, the committees have the power only to "offer observations." But they go further, and much of what they say is purely ideological. The CEDAW committee directed China to legalize prostitution even though the treaty condemns prostitution. It criticized Ireland for allowing the Catholic Church too great a voice in public policy. It took Slovenia to task because only 30 percent of children

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were in state-sponsored day care.

Some will look at these pronouncements and conclude the committee could not possibly have any real power. They would be wrong. Many legal advocates and national courts around the world take the committee seriously. It should be noted that any power the committee has is given to it by leftist lawyers and activist judges. Still, it is actual power.

The high court of Colombia recently overturned the country's laws on abortion. In doing so, it cited the CEDAW committee, which had told Colombia it was treaty-bound to change its laws. The Mexican high court recently upheld the liberal abortion laws of Mexico City, and at least two of the judges mentioned supposed CEDAW obligations.

Keep in mind that the CEDAW treaty is silent on abortion, something Senator Barbara Boxer and the Congressional Research Service underscore in deflecting this objection to it. What they don't say is that the committee's General Recommendation 24 has reinterpreted the treaty to make abortion a part of its health mandate. According to Human Rights Watch, the CEDAW committee has directed 93 countries to liberalize their abortion laws.

Who sits on this committee that reinterprets the hard-fought political decisions of sovereign states? Twenty-two academics and left-wing NGO advocates for women's rights from countries like Bangladesh, Cuba, Algeria, Thailand, and Ghana (to cite just the countries of the first five members listed). At present all but one of the members are female. As for their eminence, it's a safe bet that long-time CEDAW supporter Vice President Joseph Biden couldn't name a single one of them. Nevertheless, once nominated and elected by signatory nations, the members of the committee are accountable only to themselves. And this is the group the Obama administration would invite to judge the United States.

Which brings us to the final big reason for refusing to ratify the CEDAW treaty. Like every kangaroo court, it undermines the rule of law, and in this case it also sullies the international system. If the treaty obligations of sovereign states can be reinterpreted by this committee and then accepted by national courts, the concept of sovereignty has been drained of meaning. For that matter, the whole notion of human rights is up for grabs if left-wing nonstate actors are allowed to create and impose new human rights at will.

It is tempting to assume that neither the CEDAW treaty nor the committee could affect a big, strong country like the United States. But remember, the Supreme Court decision in *Roper* v. *Simmons* overturning the juvenile death penalty cited the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, a treaty the United States has never ratified. The Court also cited the death penalty provision of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a provision the Senate formally rejected when approving the covenant. Far from deterred, the left-wing legal class in this country is primed and ready to advance litigation citing CEDAW, and high officials toeing the feminist line are eager to give them that chance.

Still, sensible politicians of both parties have found good reason to resist this troublesome treaty for a generation. May they once more carry the day. ♦

Fuel for Thought

Cheap electricity is the 'green energy' we really need. **BY HALBERT FISCHEL**

Imagine a world in which virtually all private and public transportation is powered by computer-optimized electric motors except for the largest diesel engines and aircraft. With the prospect of some promising near-term improvements in battery storage technology, it's time to assess what obstacles to such an idyllic future remain to be surmounted.

Every other aspect of electric motorized transportation is well within the reach of current technology. If the electrical power required for charging the batteries were not merely generated by burning hydrocarbon fuels at a location other than the automobile, the most significant remaining emitters of greenhouse gases would be people and cows. The mountains of money sent to the despots and dictators that now profit from America's dependence on oil could then help our own economy. Food could be grown for eating instead of burning. All that remains is to figure out where so much electricity might come from.

Now imagine that you are in the market for an electric motor to replace the gas-guzzling internal combustion engine that powers your car. Before you make the switch, you're certain to ask: How much electricity will have to be purchased from the power company to take an otherwise identical car as far down the road as it used to go on a gallon of gasoline? Call it the gasoline equivalent electricity. An optimistic estimate—based on the fuel mileage and engine power of our existing fleet of compacts and sub-compacts, and taking into account such factors as the ability of electric motors to recapture some of the energy of motion, as well as the inefficiencies of batteries—would be 40 KWh (kilowatt-hours) of electricity per gallon of gas.

Halbert Fischel is a retired physicist and inventor living in Santa Barbara, California.

Now, the cost of a KWh varies considerably with the amount used. Indeed, electricity is the only commodity I know of whose retail price increases the more you use it. My own electricity provider, Southern California Edison, charges a minimum of $0.30 for every KWh used beyond a baseline amount, after adding all the taxes and surcharges. So, the net conclusion of this exercise is that to replace a gallon of gasoline for cars that average around 30 mpg, drivers will have to pay the electric company $12 per equivalent gallon. This number goes up rather rapidly for larger or multiple cars. Clearly, this is unacceptable even with gasoline over $4 per gallon. We have technology for electric transportation. What is needed is technology for much cheaper electricity.

We have the technology for electric cars, we just need much cheaper electricity.

Newscom

In an opinion piece recently published in the *New York Times*, Thomas L. Friedman, without any reference to the rudimentary calculations provided above, suggests that the idyllic world of electric transportation is nearly upon us. Citing the perils of climate change, the Obama administration has made alternative "green" energy and motor vehicle fuel efficiency a priority for infrastructure and research spending. Without offering an opinion on the scientific basis of global warming theory, an intelligent effort in that direction would at least attempt to free us from an economically damaging dependence on the petroleum industry and foreign cartels. Because 50 percent of petroleum consumption goes to private vehicles and another 20 percent to heavier trucks, trains, buses, and machinery that can potentially be converted to electrical power (with the remaining 30 percent going to aircraft and industrial uses that cannot), there is at least a theoretical possibility that the United States could provide all its future petroleum needs from much cheaper domestic sources.

Unfortunately, President Obama and most commentators on the subject only mention solar or wind power or so-called "clean coal" as new sources of electricity. And in the media, a veritable mythology of cheap, abundant "alternative," "green," and "renewable" energy has arisen. But these stories never ask the fundamental question: What would it cost to generate enough electricity to replace gasoline in the bulk of the transportation system?

According to the most recent government statistics, U.S. consumption of gasoline in cars and light trucks has been approximately 400 million gallons per day to go a distance of about 6 billion miles at an average of 15 miles per gallon. The average driver might travel 40 miles each day in a compact car of the future optimistically yielding 30 miles per electrical gallon. That would require about 1,600 KWh of additional electricity per month. Suppose, though, that instead of paying an additional $500 per month to the electric company, one elects to install a solar panel dedicated to charging an automobile.

Data offered by salespeople in sunny southern California working for actual suppliers of such systems promise an annualized average monthly production of 30 KWh/month per 14 square feet of solar panel installed. This estimate translates into about 750 square feet of solar panel per compact car. That's a panel roughly 25 feet wide by 30 feet long at an installation cost, leaving aside maintenance issues, at least comparable to the cost of the car. For sections of the country with less daily sunshine, the size of the solar installation might have to double or triple.

To replace petrol with electricity just for private vehicles would require generating 16 billion KWh/day. Using the annually averaged solar power generation for the Sunbelt of 1 KWh/day per 14 square feet of panel it would take 8,000 square miles of solar panel to produce that much electricity. Add another 3,200 square miles of panel for diesel trucks and buses and you would need over 300 billion square feet. Current installation costs in the southwest are about $40 per square foot with an expected lifetime of 10 years not counting maintenance. Let's assume that further R&D doubles both the solar power conversion factor and the transportation fleet mileage efficiency, and that increased investment and volume produces a 60 percent discount on solar panel pricing. This would reduce the cost of installation by 90 percent—yet even then, it would still take $1.2 trillion every 10 years to

convert solar power into the required energy. Once you add maintenance and transmission costs from the southwest to the rest of the nation, it's clear that solar panels will never be competitive with other sources of energy for powering electric vehicles.

Hydropower has always been competitively priced and could benefit from upgrading existing facilities, but we seem to have run out of rivers to exploit. The Geysers geothermal field in northern California produces 800 megawatts or about the equivalent of one nuclear reactor. But this, too, is a limited resource. As for wind, with the exception of hurricanes and tornadoes, it is the least concentrated form of renewable energy and, therefore, requires an even greater commitment of real estate and hardware than solar panels. Indeed, taken together, solar and wind are not likely to ever provide more than the current 1 to 2 percent of U.S. electrical power consumption. Simply put, the reason we still use hydrocarbon fuels is that they provide a more concentrated and, therefore, a more easily extracted form of energy.

While we do have an abundant supply of coal for generating power, the environmental limitations on its use impose severe competitive cost burdens on electricity production, soon to be exacerbated by the Obama administration's proposed carbon tax. So-called "clean coal" requires more than improved burning efficiency and filtering of sulfur and particulates. Actual sequestering of the greenhouse gases emitted from the burning of coal requires that power plants divert a substantial amount of the power generated to the conversion of CO_2 gas to other forms. Among all of the above options, only hydropower, with its all-too-limited availability, enjoys the efficiency and economy of scale to compete with fossil fuels.

So is there an equally or more concentrated energy source not prone to belch carbon into the atmosphere and less monopolized by unfriendly purveyors? There is one—nuclear power.

In the United States there are 104 remodeled conventional nuclear power generating plants. These have been profitably operating with perfect safety records for the last 25 years in private hands, at about twice the efficiency of the original reactors. On average they produce more than a gigawatt (a billion watts) each or about 22 percent of total U.S. electrical consumption, without sending a single drop of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. At the risk of some cross-border envy, Canada's Bruce Power Co. operates an eight-reactor plant on the shores of Lake Huron that produces 6.4 gigawatts. By upgrading our own 100-plus plants to that level, we could produce enough cheap electricity to competitively replace gasoline and charge the batteries of every potentially electrified car and light truck in the United States. An additional 40 such plants would be sufficient to power all our buses, heavy trucks, and trains. With 200 plants, augmented by existing and upgraded hydropower, we could replace all hydrocarbon-based power-generating plants and virtually eliminate the U.S. carbon footprint. If this seems too big a task, one need only look at France which gets 80 percent of its electrical power from nuclear plants.

The Obama administration proposes to make electricity even more expensive through cap and trade taxation, and to spend the revenue on the least productive alternatives. That is no way to influence consumer behavior in the direction of energy independence and conversion to electric transportation.

The obstacles to rational power generation in this country are political, not scientific or technical. Unfortunately, the word nuclear entered the language as a pejorative term and was not much ameliorated by Chernobyl (a typical Russian disaster) or Three Mile Island, where no one was even injured. Historically, when the federal government invested capital in the railroads, the highway system, and hydroelectric power, there was great economic benefit to the nation as a whole because this sort of infrastructure fostered and supported unprecedented free enterprise. Leverage on the government's investment made up for the typical inefficiency with which it conducts most of its economic business. Durable tax receipts on new enterprises return a substantial multiple of the public investment when the latter is prudently made.

Instead, the new administration proposes to make electricity even more expensive through cap and trade taxation, and to spend the revenue on the least productive alternatives. That is diametrically opposed to influencing consumer behavior in the direction of energy independence and conversion to electric transportation. Given that taxation is the government's tool of choice, raising the price of gasoline for private consumption to the European level of $7 or $8 through taxation and then spending the revenue on subsidizing electricity costs to the consumer would have the desired effect. And if that revenue were used to help build privately operated nuclear plants for the most cost effective "green" electricity instead of impractical alternatives, even the government, i.e., taxpayer, could profit. Imagine what a Manhattan Project or moon-landing-style effort could accomplish in the hands of competent scientists if it were aimed at revamping our entire nuclear industry for the production of copious cheap electricity.

If only our leaders could embrace a real vision of genuine energy independence, we could achieve a paradigm shift in the basic economy and potentially climb out of the morass they threaten to perpetuate. ♦

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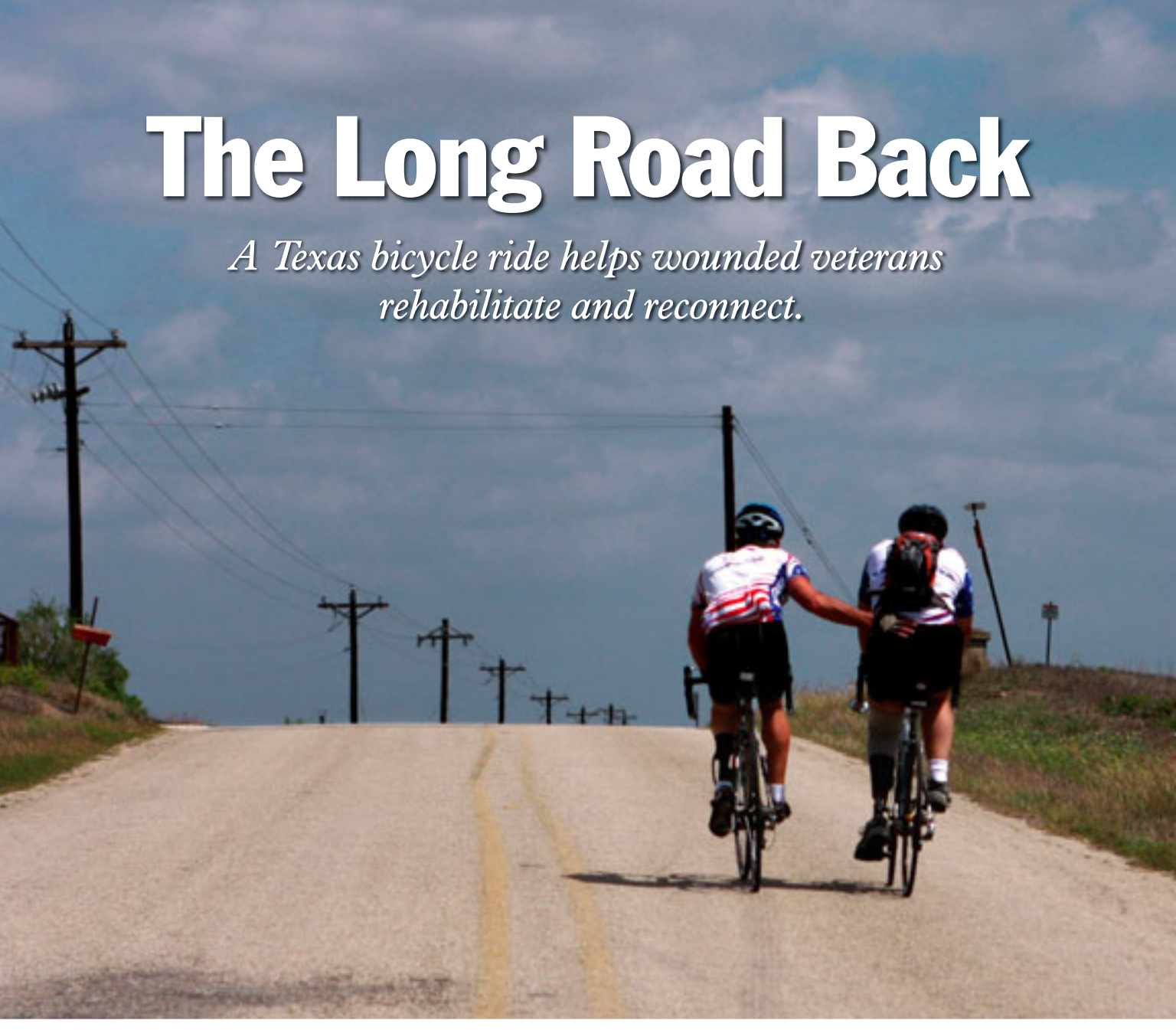

By Stephen F. Hayes

San Antonio, Texas

In late July 2008, as Chad Fleming sat on a stool during a crowded happy hour at Bobby Van's steakhouse in downtown Washington, D.C., he felt an intense itch on his left foot and did what just about anyone would do in a similar situation. He scratched.

Or he tried to.

Fleming, a decorated Special Forces soldier, doesn't have a left foot. It had been removed, along with the rest of his leg just below the knee, ten days earlier. So when he reached to scratch it, he missed and "took a nosedive off the barstool." Fleming was embarrassed, and the glares from the other patrons told him that they thought he was just drunk. Then they noticed his crutches and his missing limb.

"It was great," he says, in his distinctive Alabama accent. "We didn't pay for anything. The next day my buddies picked another restaurant and told me I had to repeat the performance."

Fleming still gets the sensation that he has feeling in his missing lower leg—"phantom pains," they're called. To him, they're very real. They must be if Fleming is willing to complain about them, even momentarily, because he doesn't complain much about anything. "It's

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JASON BROCK, RUSS BROCK, AND RICK GLASBY

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Vietnam veteran Jim Penseyres encourages Iraq veteran Ryan Clark during Ride 2 Recovery.

debilitating. Sometimes you just have to sit down and wait 'til they're gone. You're just sitting and looking at nothing and wondering why it hurts." Doctors and physical therapists tell him that such sensations are normal, nothing more than attempts by the nerves that remain in his stump to send pulses to the ones that are no longer there.

The medics don't actually call it a "stump" anymore, and Fleming was told he shouldn't either. A therapist told him to call it his "residual limb," shortly before handing him a tight wrap to control swelling in his leg when he sleeps. The packaging identified the pantyhose-like item as a "stump shrinker."

"It's my damn leg," he says, laughing. "I'll call it what I want."

So he does. It's Jethro.

"Now, I go in and they say how is your residual limb. I tell them Jethro's doing great."

I met Fleming (and Jethro) in late March at the Center for the Intrepid, a state-of-the-art facility for wounded warriors at the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. We were there to participate in the Texas Challenge, a six-day, 350-mile bike ride from San Antonio to suburban Dallas, sponsored by Ride 2 Recovery, a nonprofit group that uses cycling to help wounded warriors with their rehabilitation.

Fleming had been planning to make the journey on a hand-cycle, a vehicle that looks like the product of a one-night stand between a recumbent bike—the kind favored by fat, bearded men who like to tinker with things that come in kits—and the Green Machine big wheel that was popular in the 1970s. A hand-cycle has three wheels—two in back and one in front—and it is propelled forward when the cyclist repeatedly moves "pedals" in front of his chest in a circular motion, much as a traditional bicyclist does with his legs.

But three days before the ride was to begin, Fleming met John Wordin, the accomplished former professional cyclist who runs the group that organizes Ride 2 Recovery (R2R). Wordin looked at Fleming, who wears a size 50 jacket and has a 33-inch waist, and asked why he wasn't going to ride a traditional bike. Fleming told Wordin that he didn't have one, and Wordin promised to get him one.

Wordin was having lunch with Dallas Cowboys legend Roger Staubach later that day and made his pitch. "I kind of put him on the spot," Wordin concedes. Staubach, who had met Fleming briefly, volunteered to buy him a bike. So Wordin went immediately to a local bike shop and bought Fleming a $1,500 all-carbon Scattante bike. Staubach autographed it, and Wordin presented it to Fleming moments before the ride began.

Fleming was stunned: "They said to me: 'Here is a bike. Now ride it to Dallas.'"

The first day of riding was meant to be easy—just 51 miles—from San Antonio to the town of San Marcos. In matching red-white-and-blue R2R jerseys, we set out from the Center for the Intrepid (CFI), home to 22 of the participants. As they would each of the following five days, the seven hand-cyclists—three with severe spinal cord injuries, two double-leg amputees, and two single-leg amputees—led the way.

Forty-nine of us on upright road bicycles—they were called ten-speeds when I was younger—followed directly behind at a pace that was leisurely for us, fast for hand-cyclists. Our group included two-dozen sol-

diers with injuries sustained in the war on terror, some physical therapists and doctors, two Vietnam war amputees, an 11-time U.S. national cycling champion (Wayne Stetina), the co-star of NBC's *Chuck* (Adam Baldwin), and a retired Texas businessman (and Vietnam vet) who paid for the privilege. The USO, which buys bikes for wounded warriors, sent along a canteen truck and two cheerful staffers. Other support staff, including two highly capable mechanics, followed in vans.

After several miles, the pack began to splinter—with small groups and individuals forming a line that stretched several miles along the winding country roads north of San Antonio. Although most of us were filled with the energy that comes with the first day of a long-awaited event, no one was in much of a hurry.

The get-to-know-you conversations in a group like this are different than in others. I was naturally curious about the injuries of these soldiers and Marines, but too nervous to ask about them. But these are questions that wounded warriors are not afraid to ask one another, so time after time as we rode in those first few hours I listened in on detailed discussions that started with some version of the most obvious question to ask.

What happened?

That question was at the front of my mind as I approached Duane Wagner on a back road that twisted between the cattle ranches of south central Texas. Wagner, one of the Vietnam vets, is missing both legs below the knees. His prosthetic legs are black cylinders, decorated with American flags. They are perhaps half the diameter of the shaved, muscular thighs that rest on them, and no one else on the ride wore anything that resembles them at all.

Wordin had introduced Wagner at the briefing we'd had that morning before we left San Antonio. The ovation he'd gotten from the group suggested that he was respected, even revered by those on the ride.

I was slightly out of breath when I pulled even with him. Wagner was pedaling methodically, his legs pumping without much effort. We pedaled together for a bit, and I tried to make polite conversation. *Beautiful day. Ride much? Texas is pretty.* I thought I'd throw him some lingo to demonstrate that I was down with wounded warrior jargon. *That Bam-cee sure is an impressive facility*, I said, referring to the Brooke Army Medical Center.

The conversation was one-sided. Wagner told me that he'd done a previous ride in California but otherwise kept his answers short. He wasn't being impolite, just not particularly friendly.

After several periods of silence, Wagner asked me what I was doing on the ride. "I'm just hoping to finish," I said in the annoying, sing-songy tone I unconsciously reserve for people with disabilities.

For the first time, Wagner looked up from the road ahead and turned his head to me.

"You f—ing pussy," he said, more in disappointment than anger.

I looked in vain for a smile.

"*Hoping*?" he said, his voice full of disdain.

I tried to explain.

I haven't been on a road bike in more than 25 years. I've had six surgeries on my knees. I've been riding my mountain bike, but the weather in D.C. hasn't allowed me to be out as much as I'd like. And I've had some real stiffness in my back.

I recognized that I sounded like the feline in his accusation, but for reasons unclear to me, I kept going.

I've been working a lot lately and although I get to the gym regularly, I've found that it's really hard to get in good shape on an elliptical.

Wagner waited until I was done.

"I'm 62 years old and a double-amputee who broke his back six months ago," he said. "And I'm going to finish. If you don't finish, I'm going to find your local newspaper and tell them to write a story about what a pussy you are."

"I'm writing about the ride for my magazine, so it'll be even worse. If I don't finish, I'll have to write that story myself."

That comment elicited a smile, finally, but it was gone as quickly as it appeared. "Oh s—, you're the journalist?"

I had been introduced to the group before we left. But Wagner hadn't made the connection—perhaps because I was now stuffed into tight biking lycra like a sausage, a sight that would make even the toughest warrior avert his eyes.

The conversation began to flow, and we chatted easily for several minutes. Then, without warning, he turned serious.

"If you write about me can you please mention my wife, Pia?" I wondered if she was sick.

"Her real name is Cheryl," he said, "but she's a real pain-in-the-ass. I call her Pia."

I got the joke. "All caps then?"

"Yeah, P-I-A. Pia."

As Wagner tried to convince me that real cyclists use salted butter—not the ever-popular Chamois Butt'r—to lube their man parts, Adam Baldwin joined us. At 6'4" and 240 pounds, Baldwin could easily be mistaken for an NFL linebacker. He also looks much younger than his 47 years. The riders in this group know him chiefly as Animal Mother, the psychotic and nihilistic Marine in Stanley Kubrick's 1987 Vietnam war film, *Full Metal Jacket*. Baldwin, a Chicago native, has an easygoing manner and seems indifferent to his celebrity.

Our little group does not stay together long. Wagner takes off when we come to the beginning of a long, steep

Iraq vet Chad Felming and Vietnam vet Duane Wagner riding on two generations of lower-leg prosthetics

hill on the four-lane highway that we've been riding on for several miles. He is out of sight by the time Baldwin and I are halfway up the hill and when we crest the top, he has disappeared around a corner about a quarter-mile down the road.

At a brief rest stop in Converse, at a Chevron station across the street from a high school football stadium that is bigger than any high school stadium I've ever seen, a driver for Oak Valley Dairy stops to ask about the ride. "Alex" is stitched onto his uniform. He tells me that his brother did two tours in Iraq and that his best friend—"my boy," he calls him—was killed in Nasiriya on March 23, 2003, just four days into the war, when a group of Iraqis pretended to surrender and then opened fire on their would-be American captors. Before we leave the gas station, Alex waves me over to his delivery truck. "Do you guys need any water?" he asks. My sense is that we've got enough water to flood a desert, but he wanted to help and I wanted to let him. So I grabbed four gallons of spring water and put them into one of the support vans.

Tuesday's ride took us to Austin. As we arrived, John Wordin had the first group wait to allow the slower riders and the hand-cyclists to catch up. We then rode as one group to the O. Henry Middle School, where hundreds of students, many of them waving American flags, lined the streets and applauded wildly for the wounded warriors. Many had handmade signs. "Thank You!" "You Are Heroes." "Troops Are Tough."

After dinner, nearly everyone gathered in the parking lot of the Extended Stay Deluxe in north Austin. The photographers, who captured images from the ride and processed them in an RV they termed the "ScanVan," had put together a slide show of the day's activities. Most of the riders had a beer in hand to watch.

I joined a conversation between Allan Annaert and Ryan Clark, two soldiers who were in rehabilitation at the CFI. Clark is chubby and his ruddy cheeks are almost always stretched into a wide smile. His clean-shaven face and wire-rimmed glasses give him the look of a young professor. He lost his left leg in Iraq.

Annaert, a St. Louis native and a diehard Cardinals

fan, married a local girl he met while stationed in Germany. He wears a tight stocking on his right leg, which was seriously damaged by shrapnel. He has also had surgeries to improve his hearing, which was damaged during the blast that injured his leg.

Clark was trying to convince a skeptical Annaert to try clipless pedals on his bike when Duane Wagner walked up. He was wearing shorts and a royal blue Hard Rock Café T-shirt from Hanoi. Although his carbon fiber prosthetic legs are just over a year old, they show considerable wear and tear. The right one, in particular, looks like it has been dragged behind a car for hundreds of miles—with large gashes and chunks missing.

Annaert told Wagner that he liked the shirt, but for several minutes the conversation remained focused on the virtues of toe clips. When there was a pause, Wagner used it to change the subject.

"I got this shirt when I went back to Vietnam in 1998," he said, describing a 16-day bike ride he took across the country with other veterans of that war. Clark commented, somewhat idly, that he'd be interested in going back to Iraq in 30 or 40 years to visit Baghdad or see the ruins at Babylon. Annaert said that he, too, would like to return to Iraq one day.

Lucas Goedert, whose spine was broken in an IED attack in Iraq

It's fine to return to the country, Wagner told them, but do not return to the site of your injury. He paused for a moment—as if to make sure that he wanted to do what he was about to do—and then began to tell us about his trip. Wagner explained that his unit was stationed in the Quang Tri province north of a village named Cam Lo when the North Vietnamese overran their position. He grew quieter as he spoke, his voice was almost a whisper. There were only five survivors, he explained, and one of them, one of his best friends, had lived in Austin and had hosted a reunion of the survivors a few years earlier. But that friend had since died, and Wagner told us that he worried about coming back to Austin because of the memories of his friend and their reunion.

In halting tones, Wagner described how some in his unit strung up dead Vietcong in their village to serve as a warning to would-be attackers. Pause. The young soldiers looked at him intently. "That trip opened the gates of hell for me. It opened the gates of hell."

"Thirty-eight men died that night," he said, choking back tears. He opened his mouth to go on but nothing came out. So he paused again. None of us said a word. The laughter from the conversations around was loud and, though there was no reason for anyone outside of our little group to respect the silence, the laughter made me furious.

Wagner walked off. He turned as he reached the side door of the hotel and for a moment looked like he was going to come back to finish the story. But then he waved and shook his head.

"Sorry."

The beds at the Extended Stay Deluxe were not exactly deluxe. So in addition to the expected fatigue of muscles that had been underused for years, I woke with a stiff back. But I was still better off than Adam Baldwin, my roommate for the night. Our assigned room had just one bed and a short, beat-up sleeper sofa. Baldwin volunteered to sleep on the floor atop the sofa mattress. He found a used syringe under the sofa and tossed it aside with barely a comment—not your typical celebrity.

Baldwin and I had decided we'd spend the day at the back of the ride with the hand-cyclists, allowing us to spend some time with those guys and, importantly, to ride at a more leisurely pace.

Baldwin struck up a conversation with Lucas Goedert, a soldier who had suffered severe spinal cord injuries when his Bradley Fighting Vehicle rode over an IED in Iraq. The top was closed so when Goedert was sent skyward with greater force than the vehicle, his head hit the

top of the vehicle and his spine collapsed like an accordion. After numerous surgeries, he walks now with a cane and, occasionally, loses his balance as he tries to stand up. Still, it's far better than his initial prognosis would have suggested. He rides on a steady diet of Percocet, Marlboro Reds, and five-hour energy drinks.

Goedert and Baldwin chatted about Chicago—Baldwin is from the northern suburbs, Goedert from the west side; Goedert is a White Sox fan, Baldwin likes the Cubbies. Then Goedert asked Baldwin about his career. He seemed not to know what Baldwin had done since *Full Metal Jacket*, so Baldwin talked to him a bit about *Chuck* and explained in some detail about the less glamorous aspects of working in Hollywood.

Goedert was impressed that Baldwin was doing the ride.

"I don't think too many of those guys in Hollywood would do this," he said. "I don't know if they're too stuck up or what."

"Well, I apologize on my colleagues' behalf," Baldwin replied.

"Oh, don't apologize. They're the ones missing out."

We took a short break—long enough for Goedert to take off his shirt. We were joined by General David Blackledge, the highest-ranking officer wounded in combat in the war on terror. I'd met Blackledge in Umm Qasr, Iraq, a week into the Iraq war. He is thin and looks more like a banker than a general. In February 2004, he was in the middle Humvee of a three-vehicle convoy when it was ambushed in Iskandariya. Blackledge saw his interpreter take a bullet through his head, and he suffered severe back and neck injuries when his vehicle rolled. His rehabilitation lasted 11 months, and he was redeployed shortly after it was done. In November 2005, he narrowly escaped injury in an al Qaeda attack on three hotels in Amman, Jordan. When Blackledge was introduced on the first day of the ride, he told the soldiers, many of whom are still on active duty, to call him Dave.

Goedert show his intricate skull tattoo

As we started to ride once more, Blackledge asked Goedert about the elaborate dragon-themed tattoo that covered the top half of his back. It was two interwoven dragons, their heads just below his shoulders, one of them black-and-red and the other black-and-light blue. He got them, he explained to us, because a dragon is a fierce fighter that shows no fear—sort of like he had been before his injury. A buddy suggested he add the colors—red representing his fiery temper and blue indicating he's cool.

On his chest, on his right pectoral muscle, Goedert has a tattoo of a baby's face—an image that looks like it was taken from a photograph. And on his two forearms, he has an intricate tattoo of skulls that form one single image when he holds them together in front of his body. It took six hours to get that one—Goedert fell asleep.

At about mile 35, we turned from the shoulder of a paved four-lane highway onto a small gravelly road. Goedert grimaced as his arms continued to turn the wheel in front of his chest. The difference in the surface made our ride slightly bumpy. It was the kind of change I probably wouldn't have thought about if I hadn't seen his expression. The road jostled his bike and shot searing flashes up his back.

Goedert talked about the pain and how he manages it.

"I don't know if you're a doctor, but don't judge me, man," he said to Blackledge, after admitting that he sometimes takes one more Percocet than prescribed by his physician.

"I won't judge you."

After we came to the top of a slight hill, Goedert stopped and put his head down on his wheel. He apologized to us. "Sorry for holding you guys up, man. This s— hurts." His triceps had black streaks where the wheels had rubbed him as he pedaled. "I don't cry," he said. "But if I did, I'd be crying like a bitch right now." Two members of the ride's support staff tried to convince him to jump into the support van for the last five miles until our lunch stop.

"Are you f—ing kidding?" he said, and pushed off down the hill.

Jim Penseyres and Kenny Butler high-fiving kids along the route

We stayed Wednesday night in Killeen and departed to a rousing send off the next morning at Fort Hood.

I rode much of Thursday morning with Chad Fleming, who was happily riding the bike Roger Staubach bought him. By midweek, it had become comfortable for me to talk to these soldiers and Marines about their injuries, and I asked Fleming what happened.

Fleming was in command of a small special ops group. In October 2005, on the day they were scheduled to leave Iraq—they had already formally handed off to their replacements and it was just 18 hours till their departure—Fleming's commanding officer came to him with one last mission. He was told that a high-value target had presented himself, and his guys were going to go after him.

Fleming and his men went out on a daytime patrol, and when they ran low on fuel decided to stage underneath a bridge viaduct. Almost immediately, they began taking small arms fire. Moments later, the enemy began dropping grenades on their vehicles. One grenade detonated two feet behind Fleming and blew him forward just as another detonated in front of him. Halon bottles—designed to suck the oxygen out of a vehicle that's been hit to prevent fires—went off. Fleming remembers intermittent smoke and darkness. He tried to open the ramp on the back of the vehicle to get out only to discover that the hydraulic lines had been severed in the attack. He had no choice but to climb onto the roof. In a matter of moments he was struck in the thigh and knocked off his vehicle. He continued shooting as he hit the ground and shortly thereafter passed out. (It was the second time Fleming had been shot in three weeks. On September 18, he had been hit in the chest. He returned to duty two days later.)

Fleming was taken to the Cash—Combat Support Hospital—where he underwent the first of more than 20 surgeries to save his leg.

"I tried to do limb salvage for 26 months," he says. During that time, he was redeployed to Iraq twice. On his first trip back, in the summer of 2006, he served as a detachment officer-in-charge for a special ops and sniper unit. None of his toes worked. He had several rods in his foot to give it the shape of a normal foot. He was missing a four-inch section of his fibula and a four-inch piece of shrapnel was embedded in his tibia. His Achilles tendon did not function.

Fleming would wake early for physical therapy and by midmorning he would be planning missions. And initially, he even accompanied his men on patrols and raids after tap-

ing up his foot. "It was like walking on a 2x4." After time, he worried that his inability to function normally could jeopardize his soldiers.

"I asked myself: Are my guys going to get injured because they're taking care of me? So, I stopped. If I didn't it would have been selfish. If one of them gets killed, how are you going to live with yourself?"

His second deployment came in the spring of 2007—against the recommendations of his doctor. Fleming served as a special ops liaison officer. "After getting over there, I'll be honest with you, it kind of sucked," he says. "I'm doing PT and you hear a mortar land right outside."

In early July 2008, Fleming made what he calls "the hardest damn decision of my life." Shortly after his injury, his surgeon told him to do everything he could before exercising "the permanent option." Fleming felt that he had and chose to have his lower left leg amputated.

"You can't put it back."

It turns out to have been a good decision. "Since that day, everything has been great. I've got absolutely no regrets since my amputation. I'm back to the old Fleming that I used to be. Now the only thing that I'm limited by is my mind. I have no bad days. I shouldn't be sitting here. I shouldn't be talking to you. I should be dead. Every day is a good day."

By that reasoning, Thursday was a good day. By any other standard, it sucked. Although we rode the first 29 miles with a slight wind at our backs, the afternoon was miserable. The wind, which had been coming from the south, simply switched directions, and we rode the final 36 miles into a 40-mph headwind.

There was virtually no conversation among the riders—suffering is a solitary activity. My longest exchange came when I rode past Duane Wagner.

Each time we had passed one another since our first encounter, he had mocked me. "I'm just *hoping* to finish," he'd say.

In this wind, my original goal seemed a lot less pathetic. "Still just *hoping* to finish," I said to him.

Friday was actually a great day. Fleming and I went out again with the first group—the hand-cyclists and the slower cyclists. Not long after we started, we had formed a three-man group with Mike McNaughton, a veteran of the Louisiana National Guard. McNaughton had become something of a celebrity after he challenged George W. Bush to invite him to the White House for a run.

McNaughton had been trained to defuse land mines. He was clearing a field 30 miles outside of Kabul on January 9, 2003, when he stepped on an antipersonnel land mine. McNaughton says he remembers being thrown up in the air with his eyes closed and hitting the ground hard. He knew exactly what had happened to him.

McNaughton first met Bush on one of the former president's many unpublicized trips to Walter Reed. McNaughton had woken from yet another surgery to be told that the president might be dropping by. He was skeptical. But Bush showed up. When they met, McNaughton, still under heavy doses of morphine, told the president that one day they should run together at the White House. It was a leap of faith—McNaughton had just had his right leg amputated and he had not yet been fitted for a prosthetic.

Before their first visit ended, Bush told McNaughton that he would, indeed, invite him to run at the White House, and once again McNaughton was skeptical. But not long after the visit, the Guardsman received a phone call from the White House asking about the progress he had made with his rehabilitation. Those calls became a regular occurrence. And on April 14, 2004, McNaughton ran with Bush on the White House jogging track.

On this day, I settled in with McNaughton and Fleming and we rode together for the first hour.

After a brief lunch stop, we set out again, this time with the fast group, which was larger than usual. This larger group maintained a steady, brisk pace, and several riders struggled to keep up. The fatigue—from a grueling ride on Wednesday into 40 mph headwinds and the long ride today—was evident on the faces of even the most experienced riders.

At about mile 65, we began to slow down so that the entire group could come together for a visit to Cleburne Middle School. We chatted at the top of the hill as we waited for stragglers, just around the corner from the school.

Suddenly, we heard what sounded at first like barking come from the back of the group. Everyone turned. McNaughton came charging up the hill, fueled by anger.

He dismounted from his bike, threw it to the side and ran to the front of the group. "F— you guys," he shouted. "This isn't a f—ing race!"

McNaughton had been riding with the fast group for most of the last leg. At some point, however, he had been left behind.

"Nobody looked back! You guys with two legs—I'd trade places with you in a f—ing minute. So f— you guys."

Several of the experienced riders in the group tried to calm him down. McNaughton was defiant. "F— you!" he said as he made his way back to his bike. "Once more: F— you!"

John Wordin and several other riders walked over to talk to McNaughton. The rest of us stood in stunned silence trying to make sense of what had just happened.

I was standing directly in front of McNaughton as he exploded. Were his comments directed at me? We had ridden together that morning and had a great conversation. Did I breach some unwritten rule when the two groups combined? Should I have waited? Where is the line between support and pity?

By dinner, raw feelings had given way to jokes. As we climbed off the vans that took us to that night's dinner, John Wordin shouted: "Is McNaughton here? Can't leave him behind again." And by dinner the next night, when McNaughton presented Wordin with a gift from the riders, he was happily making fun of himself.

After dinner, many of the riders gathered for beers in the parking lot of our hotel—the Comfort Inn, Cleburne. The next day's trip would start a little earlier than usual—because George W. Bush was coming to address the riders and because we needed to arrive in Arlington early enough to attend a Texas Rangers exhibition game—but at 41 miles it was the shortest of the six days. The sense that the hard part of the ride was behind us was obvious in the number of riders in the parking lot and the number of Bud Light tallboys consumed.

I had just cracked my second when one soldier I hadn't spent much time with sought me out. We had been assigned to room together earlier in the week, but after dropping off his bike in the room (and learning that I was to be his roommate) he opted instead to crash with some others. During the Friday ride, we chatted a bit—mostly about politics and news—and discovered that we had similar tastes.

When he approached, I assumed that we would simply pick up that conversation. He had other ideas and asked to speak with me in private. We'll call him John. I'm not using his name or the details of his service because, for reasons that will soon be clear, I've never been more sympathetic to a request for anonymity. Also, he said: "If you use my name when you write about this, I will hunt you down and kill you."

No problem, I told him.

"This ride saved my life," he began.

For 30 minutes, I listened.

John had served in the Gulf war and in Somalia. He thought of himself as a badass—a professional warrior. Military service was all he had known and it was all he wanted.

In Iraq the second time around, John sustained a traumatic brain injury that triggered a downward spiral in which his physical injuries exacerbated the psychological damage he had suffered and his psychological damage led to further physical deterioration.

An extended stay in the hospital with little physical activity led him to gain lots of weight. If his injuries had been external and obvious, they might have actually contributed to his image as a war fighter. Instead, the extra pounds changed his body and he no longer looked like the warrior that had become his identity. He was embarrassed to see his friends, his fellow soldiers, even his wife and children.

"I didn't even feel like a man," he told me.

After his release from the hospital, he spent most of his time alone. He knew that he still loved his family and couldn't understand why he found solitude comforting. Most nights after dinner, he retired to his garage, worked on his car and had a drink.

"It wasn't a good drink."

At his lowest moments, he thought seriously about taking his own life.

When he first heard about Ride 2 Recovery, he dismissed any thoughts of participating. He was too out of shape. But as he fought off the demons of war, his mind repeatedly returned to the challenge of a ride. And finally, with the encouragement of his doctor, he signed up. As John began to train for the ride, he could sense some return to normalcy—not a complete recovery, but something.

On the ride itself, he struggled. He often required a push in the small of his back from one of the experienced riders as he tried to fight his way uphill. At other times, he had to get off his bike entirely and take a break.

It wasn't pretty, but he finished. "That's why we do this ride," says R2R founder John Wordin. "For guys like that."

I started the ride Saturday with Jim Penseyres, a Vietnam veteran and single-leg amputee. Penseyres is an accomplished cyclist. He has completed the Race Across America—a 3,000-mile ride across the country—seven times. He is thin and a bushy gray mustache covers much of his weathered face. Penseyres is soft-spoken and smiles easily. He is the amateur philosopher of the group.

When we had a moment alone, I told Penseyres about my conversation from the previous night. He responded with a parable.

> Two guys are walking along the beach at low tide, one of the guys starts picking up the sand dollars that are all over the entire beach and begins throwing them back into the sea. After a few minutes his friend watching him says: "Do you really think you're making a difference? Look down the beach, there must be a million sand dollars on the beach." The other fellow just stands there for a moment in silence, bends down and picks up another sand dollar and shows it to his friend and says, "Well it makes a difference to this one." ♦

Putting the Toothpaste Back into the Tube

Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke needs to spell out how he plans to head off hyperinflation.

By Andy Kessler

So how is Fed chairman Ben Bernanke going to get all that toothpaste back into the tube? The Fed has been cranking money out like water over Niagara Falls. The monetary base has increased by a trillion dollars in just the last six months. And he's not done, furiously printing dollars (bank credits, really) and buying Treasuries in an attempt to flood the economy with dollars. When will it end? $3 trillion? $4 trillion? And then what? A functioning economy doesn't need all that cash sloshing around. Is runaway inflation our next crisis?

Let's go back to fundamentals for a second. Money is a placeholder of value—the price of a cold Heineken or the value of work already done, a hole dug, a piece of software written, whatever. When things work just right, prices seek the right level and we get a match between that cold beer and the sweat from working for it.

Money supply is how much money is floating around the economy to handle all the transactions. No one quite knows how much money is needed. The classic formula is the output of the economy equals the amount of money times the velocity of money, or how many times the same dollar is spent during the year. You buy the beer, the bartender buys beer nuts, the nut farmer buys a Ford pickup truck, the auto worker buys a cell phone, which you the programmer just finished writing the location-based service code for, so you are out celebrating buying a beer and on and on. Of course, no one really knows what the velocity of money is. If times are tough, you may hold off buying that Heineken for a few months, and when times are good you may party every night.

I like to think of the economy as a giant bucket filled with money (money supply) sloshing around the bucket (velocity). We all hope the bucket is filled to the rim. But, in normal times, the economy grows every year. Population increases, too, so the size of the bucket has to grow to handle the transactions of more people who like to eat and drink. So more money needs to be created to fill the bigger bucket. That's pretty straightforward.

But now the hard part. Someone is out there inventing something useful, refrigeration, steamships, ATM machines—something productive that increases the output per worker hour. Productivity increases the size and wealth of the economy above and beyond population growth. How much? Who knows? Still, more money needs to be created to fill the bigger bucket/economy. And to make matters worse, since no one knows what the velocity of money is, no one really knows how much money supply is needed so the economy will work just right. It's virtually impossible to fill the bucket up just to the rim. The Fed has to guess.

As we have all been taught, too much money chasing too few goods creates inflation, the price level goes up above and beyond what it should. That's bad, because you get less stuff for the same unit of work. On the flip side, with too little money chasing too many goods you get deflation, the price level goes down below what it normally would. Hey, you actually get more for your dollar. Woohoo! Except eventually someone is either going to cut your salary or you'll lose your job, because the price is dropping and the economy is smaller. That's bad, too.

Okay, there are lots more moving parts than just a simple bucket, including the size of government, regulations, and not least the taxing of the citizens/serfs. And I don't just mean income tax, state tax, sales tax, gas tax, property tax. One of the easiest ways to "tax" is to debase the currency, just print more and more of it and spend it on chariots and crowns and castles and the Department of Labor. This is why for many, many moons, gold and silver *were* the money supply. It's the only thing people would trust. They are rare earth elements, which means there is only so much of them.

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Hence stable money supply. Gold, even today, increases by about 1 percent every year from new discoveries. With a gold standard, money supply would grow 1 percent, which everyone used to think was just right.

But there are a couple of problems with that whole 1 percent business. The new wealth from more gold goes to the miner who found it, and then it starts circulating in the economy so others can use it. Doesn't seem quite fair. Plus, the 1 percent yearly increase in gold and therefore money supply basically covers population growth and completely ignores productivity and innovation, which get stifled because there's not enough money to increase output, even with new tools and inventions. So a gold standard implies a static world. No thanks.

Periods of rapid economic growth would often follow huge gold discoveries. The Spanish "found" Inca gold in the 1500s, which the British and French eventually stole or traded for, which funded the Industrial Revolution. The Gold Rush of 1849 funded the post-Civil War expansion. More gold, more money supply, more room for innovation.

Even without more gold, goldsmiths and money changers learned long ago to hold gold for their clients, maybe even paying them a small interest rate for the privilege of holding their gold, and then turn around and lend out money (often creating their own currencies) backed by that gold. And not $1 for each $1 in gold held. No, no, no. They might as well lend out ten times as much money as the gold they held, figuring not all the "depositors" would want their gold back at the same time. Money from nothing (and your checks for free). Sort of, anyway. This sleight of hand, called fractional reserve banking, was an easy way to increase money supply to again, make room for productivity and wealth creation. But increase by how much? No one knew, which is why there were occasionally bank runs and panics and depressions that followed easy credit, one of the hazards of this flimsy system. Sixteen of them since 1812. As American as apple pie!

But banking did increase the money supply beyond the amount of gold that could be extracted. In fact, since Adam and Eve, 160,000 tons of gold have been panned and mined from Mother Earth. At $35 per ounce under the gold standard, that came to $180 billion in value, not nearly enough to support all the value created by entrepreneurs; heck, Google is worth almost that much.

In the long run, the economy grew faster than population, ushering in railroads and interstate highways and even Carrot Top performing at the Luxor in Las Vegas. Now that's wealth. So something eventually went right. One something was the Federal Reserve, created in 1913 to control how much money is in circulation. The Fed would create a monetary base, originally backed by the gold in Fort Knox, that private banks would then lend against.

One of the tasks of the Federal Reserve is to serve as the lender of last resort, which they unfortunately learned *after* the stock market crash of 1929 and the bank runs that followed. Roughly 40 percent of banks failed, wiping out $2 billion in deposits. Some 30 percent of the money supply disappeared. So did a similar percentage of GDP, and unemployment hit 25 percent. You can see that lost money supply is not a good thing.

The other big something happened in 1933. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp, the FDIC, was set up to insure depositors' money, relieving people of the need to line up to get their money out at the first sign of a bank's weakness. No more bank runs. Not many, anyway. (We can argue if the FDIC is really an insurance policy, as it undercharges banks for the privilege of insuring against bank runs, and you and I, the taxpayers, make up the difference. Still, it's a decent bargain—a backstop to panics, ordinary bank-run panics anyway!)

Twin bargains. Twin safety nets for fractional reserve banking, so we don't have to go back to the stifling days of gold. But that still means the Federal Reserve has to figure out how much money to create to fill the bucket—an almost impossible task.

The Fed has few levers. Interest rates are set in order to try to create just the right amount of money, with the Fed looking at prices, consumer prices and producer prices, as a surrogate for the price level. Prices are everything. Even though lower costs of computers and cell phones and LCD TVs are a positive for the economy and a wealth creator, as the productive use of technology always creates wealth, it is often interpreted as deflationary or at least dis-inflationary, and even as our technotoys get cheaper, interest rates may still be cut to "stimulate" the economy.

Sometimes, when too much money is created, it doesn't show up in consumer or producer prices, but flows into the stock market, or housing, and it appears to everyone as new wealth. Sometimes it is—Apple going from $15 to $100 was wealth creation based on the iPod and the iPhone, although the move of the stock to $175 was probably excess money creation.

But the run-up in house prices was worse. Incomes go up from real wealth, and some of that money goes into housing. But housing is often a false signal: Too much money, especially leveraged, can increase housing beyond what wealth created.

A shadow banking system—Lehman, Bear Stearns, Merrill Lynch—was borrowing short-term in money markets at, say 2 percent, and instead of the classic 10:1 leverage of banks, they were levering up 30:1, sometimes 50:1,

creating money out of thin air well beyond the intention of the Federal Reserve. It didn't show up in prices, mainly because of a huge and productive tech sector as well as the waves of cheap Chinese laborers who were providing cheap shoes and toys and furniture to Wal-Mart, "hiding" the over-creation of money. But it did create a shadow economy of home builders, linoleum layers, decorators, Home Depot Expo salesfolks, and on and on.

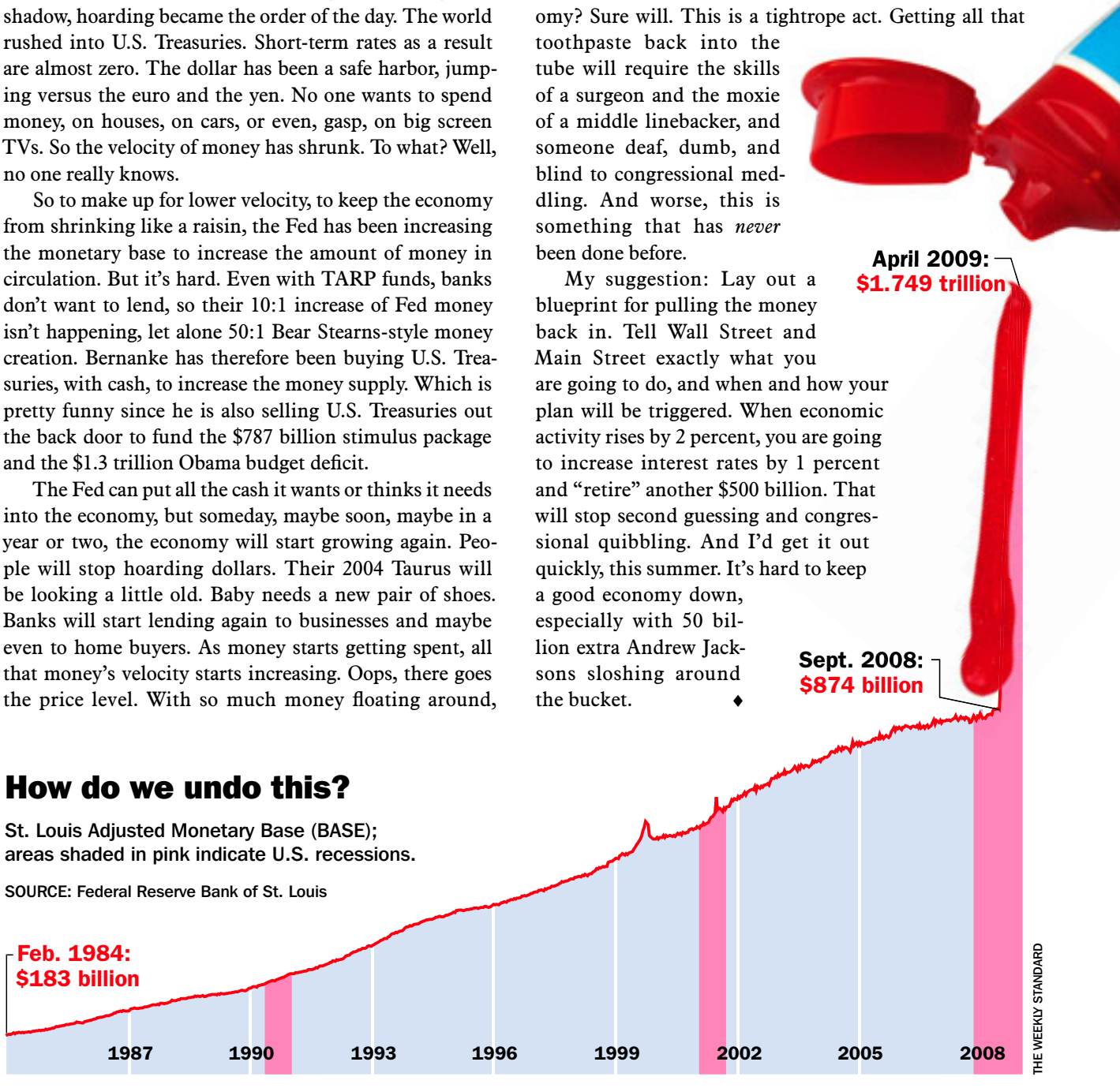
And that was shadow wealth. The only real wealth is wealth that is productively created. The rest is just paper. After the collapse of the banking system, sunny and shadow, hoarding became the order of the day. The world rushed into U.S. Treasuries. Short-term rates as a result are almost zero. The dollar has been a safe harbor, jumping versus the euro and the yen. No one wants to spend money, on houses, on cars, or even, gasp, on big screen TVs. So the velocity of money has shrunk. To what? Well, no one really knows.

So to make up for lower velocity, to keep the economy from shrinking like a raisin, the Fed has been increasing the monetary base to increase the amount of money in circulation. But it's hard. Even with TARP funds, banks don't want to lend, so their 10:1 increase of Fed money isn't happening, let alone 50:1 Bear Stearns-style money creation. Bernanke has therefore been buying U.S. Treasuries, with cash, to increase the money supply. Which is pretty funny since he is also selling U.S. Treasuries out the back door to fund the $787 billion stimulus package and the $1.3 trillion Obama budget deficit.

The Fed can put all the cash it wants or thinks it needs into the economy, but someday, maybe soon, maybe in a year or two, the economy will start growing again. People will stop hoarding dollars. Their 2004 Taurus will be looking a little old. Baby needs a new pair of shoes. Banks will start lending again to businesses and maybe even to home buyers. As money starts getting spent, all that money's velocity starts increasing. Oops, there goes the price level. With so much money floating around, chasing too few goods, inflation is a-comin'. The Fed will have to start pulling all that extra money off the street and back into its vaults. And in just the right amount.

But how? Doing the opposite of what it is doing now. By raising interest rates. By sopping up dollars by not only selling Treasuries, but also selling all those mortgage-backed securities and other toxic stuff bought from Bear Stearns, AIG, Fannie and Freddie, and everyone else. By removing all the backstops it put in for the commercial paper and other markets to keep them functioning. But won't that have the effect of slowing the economy? Sure will. This is a tightrope act. Getting all that toothpaste back into the tube will require the skills of a surgeon and the moxie of a middle linebacker, and someone deaf, dumb, and blind to congressional meddling. And worse, this is something that has *never* been done before.

My suggestion: Lay out a blueprint for pulling the money back in. Tell Wall Street and Main Street exactly what you are going to do, and when and how your plan will be triggered. When economic activity rises by 2 percent, you are going to increase interest rates by 1 percent and "retire" another $500 billion. That will stop second guessing and congressional quibbling. And I'd get it out quickly, this summer. It's hard to keep a good economy down, especially with 50 billion extra Andrew Jacksons sloshing around the bucket. ♦



How do we undo this?

St. Louis Adjusted Monetary Base (BASE); areas shaded in pink indicate U.S. recessions.

SOURCE: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Melita Norwood reads a statement to the press, 1999.

Little Old Traitor

Another spy goes unpunished. BY HARVEY KLEHR

When the former KGB archivist Vasili Mitrokhin defected to Great Britain in the 1990s, the treasure trove of material he brought with him identified scores of Soviet spies and details of hundreds, if not thousands, of KGB operations directed against Western governments, Soviet dissidents, and developing countries around the globe. Mitrokhin's collaboration with Christopher Andrew, the leading British scholar of Soviet espionage, resulted in two informative books.

The Spy Who Came in from the Co-Op
Melita Norwood and the Ending of Cold War Espionage
by David Burke
Boydell, 232 pp., $34.95

No revelation got as much publicity as the news that Melita Norwood, an 87-year-old British housewife, had been a Soviet spy for 40 years, betraying a variety of secrets. Norwood did her greatest damage during World War II, when she served as a secretary at the British Non-Ferrous Metals Research Association, which, despite its bland-sounding name, had played a crucial role in atomic bomb research. The unrepentant Norwood, still a devoted communist in 1999, was entirely unapologetic about her decision to spy; only the government's conclusion that she was too old to prosecute saved her from a trial.

David Burke, a British historian, had already been interviewing Norwood for two years about her father, Alexander Sirnis, for his research on the Russian émigré community in Britain during the 20th century, when she was exposed. Sirnis, born in Latvia, had been a disciple of Tolstoy,

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Harvey Klehr, the Andrew W. Mellon professor of politics and history at Emory, is the coauthor (with John Haynes and Alexander Vassiliev) of the forthcoming Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America.

and had been active in the hothouse of émigré politics from the turn of the century through the 1920s. Intrigued by the connections between her family and several people later exposed as Soviet spies, Burke was nevertheless stunned one day, while on the way to speak with her, to read headlines outing her as a major spy.

Although Norwood continued to cooperate with Burke, gave him access to her papers, and discussed some parts of her espionage career with him, her memory was failing, and she clearly was reluctant to be totally honest. But Burke has been able to piece together a fascinating, if incomplete, picture of her espionage career, primarily by using British government documents made public in the last several years. The result is a book that tells us more about the culture of British communism and the ineptitude of British counterintelligence than the inner life of Melita Norwood.

Not surprisingly, Burke's knowledge of Russian exiles enables him to provide a thorough and fascinating account of the fervid political and social world from which Norwood emerged. Her English mother, an avid suffragette from a professional family, met Alexander Sirnis at Tuckton House, a center for Russian émigrés run by Tolstoy's literary executor, among whose guests and inhabitants at times were the famed anarchist Prince Kropotkin and Jacob Peters, a future leader of the Cheka. Theodore Rothstein, later Lenin's first secret agent in Britain, whose son Andrew, a major figure in the British Communist party, recruited Melita for Soviet intelligence in 1934, was also a habitué of the circle.

By the time Melita was born in 1912, her father was a member of both Lenin's organization and the British Labour movement. As one of Lenin's earliest supporters in Britain, Alexander translated one of his antiwar pamphlets in 1918 amid efforts by the British government to ban its publication. Suffering from tuberculosis, he died in November 1918. His wife and daughters remained committed left-wing activists. Melita joined the Communist party of Great Britain in 1935; at the time she was working as a secretary at the Non-Ferrous Metals Research Association. Her proclivities were hardly a secret. As an active militant in a left-wing secretarial union, Norwood had authored a resolution urging its members to make public information they obtained in the course of their employment.

That so open a communist was able to avoid exposure for so long naturally raises questions about whether it was the incompetence of British counterintelligence or a protector in a high position that enabled her to survive undetected.

She leaped at the opportunity to put her beliefs into practice. In 1934 she had met Andrew Rothstein, son of her father's old friend, at a meeting of the Friends of the Soviet Union, and, inspired by his speech, offered to give him useful material from her new job. By 1937, vetted by Soviet intelligence, she was a full-fledged spy. And MI5 had intercepted Rothstein's communications and was aware that he was seeking to obtain scientific information.

That so open a communist was able to avoid exposure for so long—she continued her espionage career until 1972—naturally raises questions about whether it was the incompetence of British counterintelligence or a protector in a high position that enabled her to survive undetected. Burke drops occasional hints suggesting that he believes Roger Hollis, later head of MI5, may have derailed leads and suppressed information that would have identified Norwood. Others have accused Hollis of having been the most important Soviet mole in Britain, but Burke's suggestions seem more like afterthoughts and are not supported by any hard evidence.

The argument for incompetence is much stronger, although its scale is so large that one's thoughts inevitably return to treachery.

There were at least two rings of Soviet spies active in Britain in the mid-1930s, and Melita Norwood had connections to both. Both of them also came to the attention of the counterintelligence service. One ring was deeply interwoven with the British Communist party. Composed of communist workers employed at the Woolwich Arsenal, it was busily engaged in stealing defense secrets. Its leader, Percy Glading, was a major figure in the British Communist party, who had been recruited by Soviet intelligence while studying at the Lenin School in Moscow. Glading supervised a group of engineers and technicians who smuggled blueprints and data on British weaponry out of the arsenal.

MI5 had successfully planted a double agent, Olga Gray, inside the Communist party, and she worked for Glading. In 1938 he was arrested while receiving blueprints from a source, tried and convicted, and his ring of spies was broken up. Glading's diary contained Melita Sirnis's name and address (she had married Hilary Norwood in 1935), and British counterintelligence was aware that she had a peripheral connection to his network. (She had, in fact, been running a safe house for him.) But somehow, she escaped unscathed.

The other spy ring was largely composed of refugees from Germany and Austria and was centered at the Lawn Road apartments in Hampstead, where a four-story development modeled on the work of Le Corbusier attracted an eclectic group

of intellectuals and expatriates over the years, including Agatha Christie, Henry Moore, and Walter Gropius. It also housed a remarkable number of Soviet spies. The most prominent was Arnold Deutsch, a sexologist and NKVD "illegal" who recruited his fellow Austrian Edith Tudor Hart, a photographer who lived down the street. Deutsch also enlisted Hart's childhood friend Litzi Friedman, and her young British husband Kim Philby, later adding Guy Burgess and other Cambridge communists to his spy stable.

Melita Norwood's mother and sister had connections to the Lawn Road apartments. They had helped a German refugee family, the Kuczynskis, to settle there. Three of the family's children were Soviet spies. Jurgen directed the German communist underground in Britain and cooperated with both the KGB and the GRU. One of his sisters, Ursula, codenamed Sonya, had worked for Soviet intelligence in China and Switzerland before arriving in Britain, after World War II began, as the wife of a British veteran of the International Brigades. The Kuczynskis were under MI5 surveillance from 1933 when the paterfamilias, Robert, had arrived in Britain. Several of the NKVD agents who lived at Lawn Road were also under surveillance, as was Edith Hart. And yet, during World War II, Ursula served as a courier for both Klaus Fuchs and Melita Norwood herself.

Despite knowing of her ties to the Rothstein family, being aware that Andrew was interested in collecting scientific information for the Russians, first connecting her to Soviet intelligence in 1938 and having indications that her left-wing family was intimate with several spies, British intelligence allowed Melita Norwood to work as the secretary to the head of one of its most secret agencies for years, even providing her with several security clearances. As a result she was able to pass along vital information on the behavior of uranium at high temperatures, issues of corrosion in aluminum casings, and other research being done by British scientists. After she went on maternity leave in 1943, her boss persuaded her to return part-time and allowed her to work at home.

Even a series of revelations about Soviet espionage beginning in 1945 failed to excite suspicion. The arrest of Alan Nunn May in 1945 brought Edith Tudor Hart under investigation. In 1946, Venona decryptions indicating that a spy code-named "Tina" (later identified as Norwood) had passed along atomic secrets did not yield her name. Ursula Kuczynski was questioned in 1947 about her espionage activities abroad, but no effort was made to check on her contacts in Britain. Late in 1946, prior to his return to Germany, her brother Jurgen visited Melita's mother, who entrusted him with her late husband's papers.

Melita Norwood continued to spy for the Russians even after the Non-Ferrous Metals Association lost its government contracts. She was supervised in the late 1950s by another Soviet illegal, Gordon Lonsdale, who was arrested in 1961 and convicted, along with two other members of his ring, Morris and Lona Cohen, Americans who had been involved in industrial and atomic espionage in the United States before disappearing. (Oddly, Burke never mentions their names.) But still, she avoided detection.

Not until 1965 did MI5 launch a major investigation of Melita Norwood, concluding that she had been a spy in the 1940s but that it lacked any usable legal evidence against her. It also worried that her exposure might further damage intelligence cooperation with the United States, already threatened by a series of revelations of lax British security, culminating in the defection to Moscow of Kim Philby in 1963. It decided not even to interview her. Incredibly, she continued her work for the Soviets, recruiting a civil servant codenamed "Hunt" who proved to be a valuable source. After retiring as a spy in 1972 she made her first visit to the Soviet Union in 1979, received the Order of the Red Banner, and began receiving a regular stipend.

Her luck continued even after she was identified in Mitrokhin's material. MI5 decided to ignore her in 1992 because of her age, and in the burst of publicity that attended her "outing" in 1999, she was more an object of bemusement—the "granny" spy—than seen as a danger. She died in 2005 at the age of 93.

Burke's account of her role is decidedly sober and nonsensational, but it sometimes suffers from glossing over gaps in the evidence. For example, it remains a mystery why Ursula Kuczynski, who worked for Soviet military intelligence, would have supervised Norwood, who worked for the NKVD. Burke is not always entirely clear about when Norwood did come under serious MI5 scrutiny. While Soviet spies with connections to Communist parties stole government and scientific secrets in both the United Kingdom and the United States during World War II, a vigorous loyalty/security program in America rooted most communist sympathizers out of sensitive positions. Often criticized for its supposed violations of civil liberties, the American effort disrupted and fatally weakened Soviet spy rings, even as Melita Norwood and several of her comrades continued their activities.

Perhaps most disturbing, while Burke forthrightly condemns her slavish Stalinism, he concludes that by helping the Soviet Union, Melita Norwood helped usher in détente and prevented the deaths of millions of Russians, presumably ending America's nuclear monopoly. It would be more accurate to say that by enabling the Soviet Union to obtain nuclear weapons years earlier than it otherwise would have, Melita Norwood, along with other atomic spies, helped precipitate the Korean war, which claimed the lives of more than 50,000 Americans and millions of Koreans and Chinese.

Like such American spies as Theodore Hall, Harry Dexter White, and Judith Coplon, Melita Norwood betrayed her country, endangering her fellow citizens. And she got away with it. ♦

Harm's Way

The roads in Britain are paved with good intentions.

BY JAMES BOWMAN

The British sociologist Frank Furedi has hailed the victory of Barack Obama last November as meaning "the disintegration of silent-majority populism" in America. In other words, Richard Nixon's "silent majority" is now not only a minority but more silent than ever.

I have my doubts about the truth of this diagnosis of American politics, but it is much more true of Britain since the watershed victory of New Labour in the 1997 election—with what results you may discover in the writings of Theodore Dalrymple. That is the pen name of Anthony Daniels, a recently retired prison doctor who, for more than 30 years, has spoken up for the ever more silent minority of Britons opposed to the liberal-progressive and multicultural consensus—and is one of the few such voices still able to make itself heard as he warns of a moral and social breakdown in Britain that the rest of the media and the government collude in hiding from general view.

His new book, when compared with such hard-hitting earlier works as *Life at the Bottom* and *Our Culture, What's Left of It* is a more relaxed and reflective collection of essays on literature, history, and culture as well as politics—a demonstration of his considerable range of reference as well as a polemic. He is also a sort of anthologist, like all the best essayists and men of letters, with a wide store of reading to draw on. This book includes essays on Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson, Ibsen, Arthur Koestler, J.G. Ballard, and Anthony Burgess, but he often applies his literary insights to the social problems that are always intersecting with the cultural ones, just as they do in real life.

Not with a Bang but a Whimper
The Politics and Culture of Decline
by Theodore Dalrymple
Ivan R. Dee, 246 pp., $26

One of the best things here is its takedown of Steven Pinker on the assumption that "grammatical latitudinarianism is the natural ideological ally of moral and cultural relativism." He calls upon his long experience as a prison doctor to document the ways in which social problems and poor language skills go together.

But there is plenty here, too, to make the blood of Americans run cold when they reflect on the similarities between the Obamaniacs of today and the Blairites of 1997. The many hypocrisies and deceptions on which the New Labour coalition was built are typified by the system of criminal justice with which, in his prison job, Daniels had an intimate acquaintance. Citing the work of a whistle-blowing policeman named David Fraser, he compares the British police to

> a nearly defeated occupying colonial force that, while mayhem reigns everywhere else, has retreated to safe enclaves, there to shuffle paper and produce bogus information to propitiate its political masters. Their first line of defense is to refuse to record half the crime that comes to their attention, which itself is less than half the crime committed. Then they refuse to investigate recorded crime, or to arrest the culprits even when it is easy to do so and the evidence against them is overwhelming, because the prosecuting authorities will either decline to prosecute, or else the resultant sentence will be so trivial as to make the whole procedure (at least nineteen forms to fill in after a single arrest) pointless.

The real question is, why isn't this clearly appalling state of affairs a scandal in Britain? I think the answer is that the media consensus there—and to a large extent here—includes certain core principles, such as that crime is caused by something other than criminals and that imprisonment is society's shame, rather than that of the incarcerated, which can only be protected by maintaining these hypocrisies and deceptions, and with them, the illusion that nothing can be done about most crime. Therefore, the media are complicit in pretending that these problems don't exist—because they *shouldn't* exist.

That is also the point, I think, of the doctor's quotation from T.S. Eliot to the

CORBIS / ADAM WOOLFITT

effect that "half the harm that is done in the world is due to people who want to feel important. They don't want to do harm—but the harm does not interest them . . . or they do not see it . . . because they are absorbed in the endless struggle to think well of themselves."

As a psychiatrist, the doctor is particularly scathing about the mendacity, corruption, and hypocrisy which surrounds the treatment of the insane in Britain, many of whom wander the

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streets until they assault someone—under the impression, usually, that they have been offended in some way—whereupon they are taken into custody until they can be brought before a magistrate. There, though quite obviously insane, they are said to be sane by doctors who must otherwise obtain for them an unobtainable hospital bed. They may then be released back onto the streets to assault someone else, or held in custody without charge in the hope that a bed can be found.

In prison, however, the doctor cannot find a hospital bed for his mad patient; the psychiatrists outside the prison consider that the patient is now in a place of safety (the prison) where he will not be deprived of medical attention, and he is therefore of lower priority for a hospital bed than a lunatic still at large in the community. He is thus kept, often for months, in the prison on remand. (At one point Dalrymple suggests, only half in jest, that the prison should charge admission to the public for coming to see the madmen, just as they did at Bedlam in the 18th century.)

I think he is a little too hard on Tony Blair in his essay on Blair's resignation, "Delusions of Honesty."

> In a confessional mood, Blair admitted that he had sometimes fallen short of what was expected of him. He did not give specifics, but we were expected to admire his candor and humility in making such an admission. It is no coincidence, however, that Blair reached maturity at the time of the publication of the famous book *Psychobabble*, which dissects the modern tendency to indulge in self-obsession without self-examination. Here was a *mea culpa* without the *culpa*. Bless me, people (Blair appeared to be saying), for I have sinned: but please don't ask me to say how.

I suppose this is fair as far as it goes, but it also has to be recognized that politicians should not be treated quite like ordinary people in such a situation. Those who demand public confessions of private sins from our public men are at least as much to blame as those who condescend to offer such confessions—or something that will pass for one in a dim light. It is, itself, a form of psychobabble to go in search of such "honesty," as well as an impertinence of the highest order. What it amounts to is the media's saying that they have a right to use not only a politician's words and acts but even the private thoughts of his heart against him. Blair should, of course, not have said anything, but his refusing to give specifics to the reptiles of the press so that they could use them to tear him down was at least preferable to a list of sins, which would have been sure to be a fake anyway.

At his most candidly confessional, for instance, he would not have dreamed of acknowledging the corruption of official statistics, particularly to do with crime, education, and unemployment (which has been medicalized as the numbers on disability benefit have soared). This corruption has led to the treatment of shoplifting, among other things, as no longer a crime: "Police now deal with it the way they do with parking violations: shoplifters get on-the-spot fines worth half, on average, of the value of the goods they have stolen."

This is the opposite of the "broken windows" approach that had such success in reducing crime rates in the United States, and it has, not surprisingly, produced the opposite effect. That it is possible, with the help of a compliant media, to spin this straw of moral and social failure into the gold of political success is something that we in America may be on the point of learning for ourselves. ♦

BCA

Just Desserts?

The sweet science of a master pastry chef.

BY VICTORINO MATUS

This past January a pastry chef named Gaston Lenôtre died in France at the age of 88. He never had a cooking show on the Food Network. His first foray in this country was a pastry shop that opened its doors in 1974 in New York and closed a year later. Chances are, most Americans have never heard of Lenôtre. (His cookbooks, particularly in English, are outdated and hard to find.) And yet, when it comes to desserts that lack heaviness and are made with the freshest ingredients, and pastries that more and more resemble works of art, we have him to thank.

Aside from his hundred-million-dollar pastry shop and catering empire, his presiding over fine restaurants like Le Pré Catalan, and his school for aspiring *pâtissiers*, Gaston Lenôtre also trained some of the world's finest chefs, such as David Bouley, Alain Ducasse, and Michel Richard. They, in turn, are now passing down what they have learned to future generations. So what was it, exactly, about his pastries that made them so remarkable? Edward Schneider, writing on Mark Bittman's food blog, describes a Lenôtre croissant as "salty enough . . . buttery without being greasy . . . baked all the way through, a simple thing that is too often neglected (think of all the otherwise nice croissants you've had with half-baked dough in the middle)."

All of which is true. But there is something else: The croissant is awfully small—about the length of the palm of your hand. Sitting in the kitchen of Citronelle, the multistar French restaurant in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, I sample a Lenôtre croissant, offered to me by Michel Richard. I devour it in three bites. (If I weren't so polite, it would have been two.)

Victorino Matus is the assistant managing editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

"See? It's a small croissant," says Richard. "We eat one croissant a week—not every day!"

But when it comes to excess, nothing seems to irk Richard more than the hit Food Network series *Ace of Cakes*. "They don't make cakes," insists the James Beard Award winner. "They build shortening and sponge cakes. I don't call that being a pastry chef. I call that kids playing with sponge cake. Did you put strawberries inside? Did you make it good? They never talk about the cake. They just make a sponge. [*Ace of Cakes* star Duff Goldman] is good, he's fun, but he's not a pastry chef."

Goldman did, however, study at the Culinary Institute of America in Napa Valley and worked as a *stagiaire* under pastry chef Steven Durfee at the French Laundry in Yountville, California.

Adds Richard: "I think the problem is for a lot of chefs in this country, they are working very hard on special-looking desserts. I don't think they have any interest in the taste of it." On a recent episode of *Ace of Cakes* Goldman and his fellow Charm City bakers built a cake modeled impressively after the Millennium Falcon.

For the esteemed chef of Citronelle, the quality of the ingredients is as important as the appearance—a tenet he has kept sacred since he first worked for Gaston Lenôtre in 1970. Although he had been an apprentice chef since the age of 14, and cooked during his stint in the army, Richard was not happy and came close to switching professions.

"We were making croissants without butter [in the army]," he says. He would ask his superior, "*Monsieur, le patron*, how come there is no butter in the croissant?" To which he would get this reply: "What are you, stupid?"

Says Richard, "I was tired of it." But then Richard, 19, attended a friend's birthday party in Paris and discovered his first Lenôtre dessert.

"You opened the box—the cake was so gorgeous," he says. "Very, very simple." The next day he paid a visit to Lenôtre's shop on 44 Rue d'Auteuil. "I was amazed at the beauty and the quality. It was so modern. I didn't expect that because, in France, most of the desserts and most of the pastry shops had this old style. They used butter cream. And Lenôtre was very fresh."

And when he interviewed for a job with the master *pâtissier*, Richard remembers being struck by his deep-blue eyes and his charm. After half an hour, Lenôtre asked when the eager apprentice could start: "'Tell me when. You want me to start tomorrow?' He said yes and the next day I was working for him. It was a most fabulous experience."

Despite toiling 15 hours a day "like a slave," Richard calls his time under Lenôtre an honor: "He was giving you the best ingredients. . . . He had the best butter. . . . With M. Lenôtre, it was a new kind of dessert. We were using a gelatin to make the mousse, less sugar; instead of sugar, we're using honey."

Richard reminds me that this was happening simultaneously with the rise of nouvelle cuisine—the movement that invoked a lighter, simpler approach to cooking with the freshest ingredients. "[Lenôtre] tried to re-create what Paul Bocuse, Roger Vergé, and others were creating with nouvelle cuisine. But Gaston was the only one who created a *nouvelle pâtisserie*."

But just because a dessert was lighter and simpler did not mean it was any easier. Looking back, Richard considers Lenôtre's signature Opéra cake to be one of the most complex: An almond bread layered with chocolate and coffee cream, no higher than an inch or two. (The fillings had a tendency to leak, prompting Richard to add gelatin. Lenôtre scolded him for making it too dry.) It is also his favorite of Lenôtre's creations, along with Charlotte au Chocolat, ladyfingers with Bavarian cream and vanilla and chocolate mousse.

NEWSCOM

Gaston Lenôtre and friends, 1977

It was Richard whom Lenôtre sent to America to open his first store in 1974. "It was the dream of my life, going to New York City," recalls the chef. "He asked me when I was 23 but by the time they found a location [on 59th Street] and we moved in, I was 26. The idea was to open more pastry shops in this country. We were thinking about New York, Chicago, San Francisco. And we open in New York and that was it—it was not successful."

Richard sees a combination of factors causing its failure, including the price and the smallness of the pastries. He remembers sampling an

American cake at the time: "It was made with shortening. And I had some shortening in my hands and it took me a long time with hot water to remove that because it was so greasy. Why do we need to use shortening so much? Everything looked so rustic and oversized."

There were also too many colors, a problem he sees in France today. "We do the same thing with the macaroon. We have a ton of colors. We have green and red and very strange colors in the macaroons. I think we have to stop that."

Despite the failure of his New York pastry shop, Lenôtre went on to make millions. He was the first chef to build a commissary in which the desserts were created before being sent by truck to his different shops. He was also one of the first pastry chefs to become a successful restaurateur—no small feat considering the commonly held view that pastry chefs are not the equals of chefs.

Richard asks:

> You know Michel Guérard? He was a pastry chef. And then he opened a restaurant. He had three stars. For many, many chefs, for many, many years, he was a pastry chef who cooked. In this country they don't care. Has somebody ever told you, "Oh, Michel Richard, he's a pastry chef?" Have you ever heard that? In France, we heard that all the time. When you're a pastry chef for three days, you're a pastry chef for the rest of your life.

That was then. "Lenôtre, he changed my life," says Richard. "Before I met [him], I used to be embarrassed to say I was a pastry chef. And then after that I used to say I'm a pastry chef for M. Lenôtre. It was like having a Ph.D."

Now, with Lenôtre gone, where does Richard see desserts heading?

> In France, for a while, [desserts] were kind of soft. Now we're going to have a lot of crunchy desserts, smaller, very fresh. . . . And a mixture—not only one dessert. You're going to have some kind of mousse, something crunchy, something ice cream, a montage. And we do that at the last second instead of making the dessert that we stick in the fridge for three or four days. . . . We're going to try to stay away from very rich desserts. My customers don't want to eat fatty foods.

As for Richard's annoyance at our current obsession with building cake cars and cake spaceships, he should take heart that such culinary constructions have a long history, dating back at least to 17th-century France. Ian Kelly, author of *Cooking for Kings: The Life of Antonin Carême, the First Celebrity Chef*, recalls "the christening cake for the grandson of Louis XIV in 1682. Given by the governor of Guyenne, it was fashioned out of almond paste, pastry, and clockwork, and both depicted and animated the labour pains of La Dauphine and the baby Duke of Angoulême's entry into the world via a marzipan vagina." ♦

BOOKS & ARTS

Jefferson Revised

Was the architect of liberty our first limousine liberal?

BY NOEMIE EMERY

Thomas Jefferson in public and in office is a formidable figure: delegate to the Virginia legislature, governor of Virginia, ambassador to France, first secretary of state, second vice president, third president, and the inspiration and principal author of the Declaration of Independence, one of those rare documents that remake and unsettle the world.

But Jefferson in love and retirement is a whole other story, as these two books by Virginia historians, now in paperback, contrive to set out in detail. In these, the Sage of Monticello is depicted as a racist, a sexist, a deadbeat, a sexual predator *à la* Bob Packwood, a bad grandfather, a terrible paterfamilias, a bad farmer, an even worse businessman, and a most unreliable friend. Most of the loves in his life were the women: his daughters, Maria and Martha, and his wife, Martha Wayles Skelton, who loved him; Maria Cosway, Rebecca Burwell, and Elizabeth Walker, who rejected him; and Sally Hemings, his wife's slave and half-sister, who could, and did, not.

Mr. Jefferson's Women
by Jon Kukla
Vintage, 304 pp., $14.95

Twilight at Monticello
The Final Years of Thomas Jefferson
by Alan Pell Crawford
Random House, 352 pp., $15

The other great love was his house, Monticello, which had always been more an ideal than a building; a demanding mistress that absorbed much of his time and attention, and drained him of large sums of cash. Jefferson began building it in 1767 at age 24, shortly before laying siege to Elizabeth Walker, and brought his wife to it as a bride five years later; saw his wife, three infants, and his daughter Maria die there; and retired to it—and Martha and Sally—in 1809, after serving his two terms as president.

"I long to be among you," he wrote to Martha three months before he retired, "where I know nothing but love and delight." But love and delight would prove hard to come by, as would most of his hopes for domestic tranquility. And his last 17 years at his home—with two of those women—would prove very trying indeed.

Like his hopes for retirement Jefferson's hopes for romance often fell short of reality, and began doing so at a young stage in his life. He was 19 in

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1762 when he fell in love with Rebecca Burwell, then 16 and the sister of one of his schoolmates, and spent two years nursing elaborate fantasies, which he never shared with the lady herself.

On October 6, 1763, he proposed; but in the event he was stricken by panic, expressing himself in "a few broken sentences, uttered in great disorder, and interrupted with pauses of uncommon length." Not surprisingly, he was rejected, and when he heard months later of her engagement to Jacquelin Ambler, the news "triggered a violent head ache" that lasted three days.

What happened next would be even more troubling: Asked in 1768 by John Walker, his close friend and neighbor, to look after his wife and small daughter while Walker was on a four-month trip away from Virginia, the 25-year-old bachelor began a campaign of seduction that went on through the summer, continued even after Walker returned in November, continued after Jefferson himself was married, and went on for 11 years. Apparently feeling that if her husband knew, he and his old friend would come to blows (or worse, a duel), Elizabeth Walker kept silent until 1784 after Jefferson left for his tenure in Paris, only telling her husband repeatedly she had no idea why Walker continued to trust him, and urging him to remove Jefferson as executor of Walker's will.

According to a paper Walker wrote later, between July 1768 and October 1779, the future president continued to press his attentions, slipping a note in praise of adultery into the cuff of Elizabeth's sleeve during a visit to Shadwell paid by the Walkers, slipping into her room while she was undressing in the course of a visit both couples paid to a neighbor, and trying to "seize her on her way from her Chamber" on a visit that Jefferson (along with his wife) paid to the Walkers at their mansion, Belvoir.

In Walker's account, which was never refuted by Jefferson, these assaults on his wife overlapped with the first seven years of Jefferson's marriage, casting a cloud on a time and union which Jefferson described as one of "unchequered happiness." Nonetheless, when Martha Jefferson died on September 6, 1782, five months after the birth of their sixth and last child, Jefferson's grief was extreme. Minutes before, he "was led from the room almost in a state of insensibility by his sister . . . who, with great difficulty, got him into his library where he fainted, and remained so long insensible that they feared he would never revive."

'View of the West Front of Monticello,' ca. 1827
by Jane Pitford Braddick Peticolas

He spent three weeks in his room, pacing incessantly, then emerged to go on long, aimless rambles on horseback, followed by Martha, his 10-year-old daughter, who wrote nearly 50 years later, "In these melancholy rambles I was his constant companion, a solitary witness to many a violent (out)burst of grief." Jefferson would later attest to "that stupor of mind which had rendered me as dead to the world as was she whose loss had occasioned it," and complain that "a single event wiped away all my plans, and left me a blank which I had not the spirits to fill up."

He did, in fact, not do so until four years later when he met Maria Cosway in Paris, the unhappy wife of a talented artist, and a talented artist herself. There were two idyllic weeks in Paris before Jefferson's luck turned again: He fractured his wrist (which would never heal properly) and, soon after, the Cosways were gone.

Maria returned, alone, a year later. But when she did, her interest had tempered: She spent her time with Italian and Polish nobility, and saw Jefferson at large dinners and balls. "Already an emotional catastrophe for Jefferson, Maria Cosway's visit ended early in December on a particularly sour note," Jon Kukla tells us, as Maria arranged a breakfast the day of her scheduled departure, and then stood him up: "The emotional details are reminiscent of Humphrey Bogart waiting for Ingrid Bergman at the train station in Casablanca."

They corresponded intermittently for several decades, but never again saw one another. "The blunt fact remained," Kukla writes, "that three of the four women to whom Jefferson had offered his Heart had rejected it, and the fourth would be taken from him by death."

Two months before Maria's second visit to Paris, Sally Hemings had arrived in the city, having accompanied Jefferson's daughter Maria, then six. A house slave who had come to Monticello in Martha Jefferson's dowry, Sally was also his late wife's half-sister, one of six children born to John Wayles by his slave, Betty Hemings, after Wayles's two wives had died. Then 14, she was later described as "light-colored, and decidedly good-looking . . . very handsome . . . [and] mighty near white."

What was not said, but also seems likely, was that she may have looked a great deal like Jefferson's wife, who was also described as "slender and pretty," though with auburn hair and dark hazel eyes. What happened next will be never made certain, but sometime between 1789, when she was 16, and 1795, when she was 22 and bore her first child, Sally Hemings and Jefferson had established

a strong and informal relationship which lasted the rest of his life.

Aside from the rumors, which circulated widely through Jefferson's lifetime, these two books rest their case on three things:

First, that Jefferson's bedroom after he came back from Paris was on the first floor of the house and far away from those of other family members; the windows of his room were shielded by louvered verandas that made it hard to see into it, while hidden staircases led from the room to the slave quarters beneath it, and a circular staircase led from Jefferson's library to Sally Hemings' room underneath.

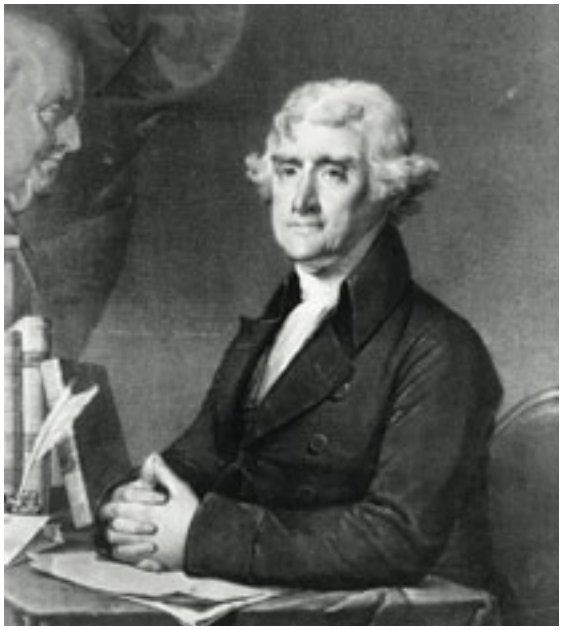
Second, that in the later years of Jefferson's retirement, when Sally's children were older, visitors to Monticello remarked on the resemblance of some of the younger slaves to their master, and in the words of a grandson, one dinner guest "looked so startled as he raised his eyes from [Jefferson] to the servant behind him, that his discovery of the resemblance was . . . perfectly obvious to all."

Third, Sally and her children were given privileges above all the other house slaves and servants, "permitted to stay in the great house, and required to do such light work as going on errands," as one of her children wrote later. "We were always permitted to be with our mother, who was well used."

All of Sally Hemings's children were freed, either before Jefferson's death, when they were permitted to "walk off" the plantation, or shortly after, under the terms of his will. So was Sally herself, "who lived out her life as a virtually free woman" in the care of her two younger sons.

Sally Hemings and Martha Jefferson (long married to her cousin, Thomas Mann Randolph) and children of both were at Monticello to greet Jefferson when he came home for the last time, after having retired the presidency in March 1809. In today's world Jefferson would have written his memoirs, joined corporate boards, made speeches, and settled into life as a millionaire supercelebrity. In the world of 1809 he went back to farms that had suffered as a result of his absence, inside a larger plantation economy that was entering a period of economic decline.

It was a bad situation that he made even worse. A rich man's son, he had always spent lavishly, and refused to adjust to conditions, or even acknowledge them. Money continued to flow, on fine wine, thoroughbred horses, books, clothing, silk dresses, and musical instruments for his army of grandchildren, and of course, constant improvements made to his house. Aware of the debts he already shouldered, he began building a new house on his property, in spite of the fact it would double his debts. Periodically, he made sporadic attempts in questionable taste to pay off his burdens: He sold lands belonging to his friend Philip Mazzei and never sent him the money; he sold his books to the Library of Congress; near the end, he was trying to float the idea of a state-sponsored lottery, by which the citizens of Virginia (presumably in gratitude) would band together to pay off his debts.



Nothing helped. In 1815 visitors to Monticello found the beloved house in the process of falling to pieces, with slaves busily boarding up broken windows and the chairs in the drawing room "completely worn through." Ten years later the family's plight had become the talk of the county, with friends and family members suggesting such remedies as closing off half the great house and renting the farms. As a last resort Jefferson pulled his grandson and heir—Martha's oldest son, Thomas Jefferson Randolph—away from his studies to come home and work as a general overseer, ending the boy's hopes for a professional or political career. Caught in a spiral of downward mobility, other grandchildren talked about taking in boarders. One granddaughter "wished she could support herself . . . instead of . . . keeping house here, but I suppose not until we sink entirely will it do for the granddaughters of Thomas Jefferson to take in work or keep up a school."

The financial woes intensified all of the strains in the family, which were trying enough on their own. Daughter Martha, who had married in haste and spent the rest of her life repenting at leisure, was a permanent houseguest with most of her children, fleeing the stresses of life with her husband, an unstable man of erratic temperament whose resentment of the emotional ties between his wife and his lionized father-in-law had made him a difficult mate. Eventually, it would be found that Randolph had run up on his own a debt of between $20,000 and $30,000, to add to that already carried by Jefferson, leaving some of his children to sue him to avoid being carried down in his wake.

His grandson's role as the family member chosen to shoulder the burdens not borne by his father and grandfather continued to rankle: "Jefferson Randolph's life during his years as his grandfather's tenant farmer was not what he had imagined for himself," Alan Pell Crawford tells us, with some understatement. "Almost overnight [he] had 'gone from being a student . . . to being a glorified farm hand. Compelled to throw

my books aside and devote myself, mind and body . . . to the care of my grandfather and his affairs.'" In his memoir Jeff Randolph would write of years spent rising before dawn and coming home after nightfall, traveling 30 miles or more to inspect far-flung holdings, returning home after dark in inclement weather, swimming his horse across rain-swollen streams.

In 1819 he was attacked by a brother-in-law, who stabbed him repeatedly, nearly killing him, and almost cost him the use of one arm. As his reward Jefferson would one day hang his grandson's portrait in the second tier of his gallery at Monticello, telling him he was not fit to hang with his heroes—Benjamin Franklin and the Marquis de Lafayette among them—because he had not finished school.

The deterioration in Jefferson's approaches to finances and family carried over to public affairs. When the Missouri Compromise was announced in 1820, he was alarmed, largely by the declaration that the states north of the 36-30 border would always be slavery-free. Jefferson, Crawford says, "now found himself favoring the spread of slavery into the territories . . . [and] also hoping for the creation of new slave states if only to counter the growing power of the north." So morally obtuse was he at this point that he considered the north's antislavery protests to be a "mere party trick," a stalking horse for the Federalists he had fought in Washington to further their plans for a strong central government. He left no doubt he would favor secession to further submission to northern and federal power, as further attempts to regulate slavery would "render separation preferable to further discord."

Jefferson may have reflected the views of the majority of planters in his state and region, but among the Founders he had always been the exception, far more comfortable with the "peculiar institution" of slavery than George Washington, George Mason, or James Madison, not to mention northerners such as Alexander Hamilton, Robert Morris, and John Jay. There is no doubt that, had he lived decades later, Jefferson would have been in the forefront of those defying Abraham Lincoln. The most progressive of the Founders in 1776 had become the most reactionary 40 years later, clinging hard to an unlovely past.

Kukla, who writes from the viewpoint of an ardent NOW booster, makes a case, based on Jefferson's dislike of Marie Antoinette, certain French socialites, and Elizabeth Merry (wife of the British ambassador during Jefferson's tenure in the White House),

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that Jefferson was afraid of and hostile to intelligent women, and took care to suppress their political aspirations.

The first part of this claim is complicated by his fondness for Abigail Adams and Angelica Church, among others, and by Crawford's statement that, at Monticello,

> The "accomplished" women spoke as freely as the half-educated men. . . . Martha and her daughters spoke their minds, even on matters that on other plantations were reserved for men only. At Monticello, women were encouraged to enter into serious conversation by Jefferson himself. . . . Throughout his retirement years, Jefferson's closest and most trusted advisor was clearly Martha, whose judgment he esteemed above that of most men.

As for the second, too much is made of the moves of the widowed president in eliminating the twice-weekly soirees held by first ladies Martha Washington and Abigail Adams in favor of working dinners restricted to male politicians, as there were no female officeholders in Washington in the 1800s and there was no first lady or hostess at hand.

What would Jefferson do in 2009, faced with a Hillary Clinton or a Condoleezza Rice? We don't know. Nor can we know his emotions when engaged in his most problematic affairs. Was Jefferson a predator who took advantage of a woman he owned, as did many slave owners? Or was he a lonely man, badly bruised by loss and rejection, who struck a bargain with an attractive young woman, whose conditions he honored, and kept? Was he indifferent to the pain and strain he was causing Elizabeth Walker? Or was he ashamed and caught in an obsession he had tried, and failed, to control?

What we *can* know is how Jefferson behaved in retirement, and on that score the verdict is clear. He was, in effect, our first limousine liberal, a child of privilege who fancied himself the voice of the people, laid out ideals that he failed to live up to, and imagined a life far more high-minded than the one that he managed to live.

He was a man of the future who impoverished his children; a prophet of freedom who opposed its extension; and one of the architects of a great and powerful union who admitted, years later, that he would not take it badly if it were to be broken apart. Old age did not become Thomas Jefferson, who was in the end a bad friend, a bad patriarch, and a bad friend to union and liberty.

It is not enough to blot out the many great things that he did for his country, but it is sufficient to make one think twice when one looks at his lovely memorial. Or thinks of the writing therein. ♦

Stop the Presses!

A thriller torn from the pages of the 'Daily Bugle.'

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

It must be difficult, crafting a political conspiracy thriller these days, what with all the conspiracies to choose from. One almost has to feel sorry for the team of screenwriters responsible for the new Washington thriller *State of Play* when they get all tangled up in theirs. Ben Affleck, playing a congressman who seems to be a Republican, calls a hearing in which he upbraids the head of a firm clearly based on Blackwater. First he accuses the firm's ex-military employees of being "mercenaries" who commit "atrocities" in Iraq and Afghanistan, and then a minute later he says the Blackwater-like firm is getting its noble ex-military employees killed.

State of Play
Directed by Kevin Macdonald

Well, whatever. It's a corporation, and it's bad, and Iraq is bad, and Afghanistan is bad. Another congressman who complains when someone takes the Lord's name in vain is bad, and he's in it with the bad corporation, which is attempting to privatize homeland security, which is bad—I mean the privatization is bad, not homeland security, although that's almost certainly bad too, only the part of the movie in which it's explained why it's bad was probably cut and will be on the DVD.

It's unfortunate the economic crisis hit after filmmaking was completed, because maybe Affleck could have blamed that on Blackwater too. Indeed, in its focus on Iraq and Afghanistan, *State of Play* seems instantly dated, like the moment in the first *Austin Powers* movie when Dr. Evil, who's been in the deep freeze since the 1960s, says he wants to blackmail the world for $1 million. And the event that gets the plot moving, the death of a congressional staffer, evokes the murder of Chandra Levy in the spring of 2001, a moment in time that, in some strange way, seems longer ago than the 1960s.

A few months ago, I wrote about a movie—*Rachel Getting Married*—with a great screenplay by Jenny Lumet that was almost ruined by its hamfisted director, Jonathan Demme. *State of Play* is almost exactly the opposite. It's a movie with a dreadful screenplay (in this case, by a team of screenwriters adapting a popular 2003 British miniseries) that is almost saved by the stunningly capable direction of Kevin Macdonald. He gives *State of Play* a sensationally visceral, off-kilter quality that helps sustain the viewer's interest long after we should all have been guffawing out loud and making plans for an early exit.

State of Play has the feel of one of those terrific mid-1970s conspiracy thrillers, like *Three Days of the Condor* or *The Parallax View*, in which no one can find a safe haven and where a city's streets are full of an inexplicable and nerve-jangling menace. That is entirely due to Macdonald, with a strong assist to Russell Crowe, the greatest motion-picture actor of our day, in one of his most enjoyably understated turns. Macdonald and his team did a brilliant job picking strange and out-of-the-way Washington locations that heighten the sense of oddity and confusion experienced by the characters.

A successful thriller has to ground its action in something very real and tangible; a little realism is necessary to anchor the preposterous storyline in the world we know. This is why mystery and thriller novelists work so hard to get the details right when it comes to the mundane settings and trappings of their work; we may not know how a forensics lab actually works, but we all have built-in bull detectors that do let us know when things are off.

That realism is what is missing from *State of Play*, and not just in the inconsistent idiocy spouted by Ben Affleck's character. *State of Play* follows the exploits of a Washington, D.C., newspaper reporter (Crowe) who behaves in ways no newspaper reporter has ever behaved in the employ of a newspaper that functions as no newspaper has ever functioned since the dawn of time. (On this paper, for example, reporters push a button and start the presses while their editors look on admiringly, not actually having read through the article the reporter has written.)

Crowe's character covers the police beat, but somehow ends up as the lead reporter on a complex story involving a national politician, a corporation, and the Defense Department—and conveniently has sources everywhere he turns. This wouldn't happen, to put it mildly. And it double-time wouldn't happen if the subject of the investigation (Affleck) were his college roommate, whom he had cuckolded by having a tumble with his gorgeous and neglected wife (Robin Wright Penn). By the time Affleck is beating up on one of Crowe's confidential sources (Jason Bateman, in a fantastic little performance) in an Arlington motel room, the movie has achieved a level of credibility about the business of newspapering matched only by the depiction of the *Daily Bugle* in *Spider-Man*.

The movie does have a good twist up its sleeve at the end, though it almost bollixes it through the ludicrous introduction of a monologue delivered by the left's favorite new character, the deranged Iraq war vet. Only this one is—wait for it—a deranged Iraq war vet . . . from 1991! ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

Bo's Burden

Can a dog pierce the Obama reserve? Of course he can.

BY RACHEL ABRAMS

The arrival of six-month-old Portuguese Water Dog Bo at the White House—and especially the first photograph that was making the rounds of the Obama family, which has never had a dog, greeting him in a rather strained-looking pose—has put me in mind of my own checkered history with dogs, and that of many other Jews.

My husband grew up with one. This is notable because his mother was the child of Eastern European immigrants—Jews who, like most of their cohort, had come here to escape dogs (among other things) and generally took a very, very dim view of them: They were filthy, they carried disease, they were a pogrom. Later they became Nazi sympathizers. (Cats? Don't even ask.) My mother-in-law shared this view of dogs until the moment she acquired one.

As an adult with two children of her own—middle-class American boys, devotees of Rin Tin Tin and Lassie—she was blackmailed into taking a dog off her next-door neighbors' hands when they threatened to have him "put to sleep" if she refused. At first it was down to the basement with Frisky. (Yes, that really was his name, a genuine '50s moniker.) She was terrified of him. But her natural sympathy, and guilt, and probably his wild joy every time she appeared, sent her down there to visit him a hundred times a day. And slowly he grew on her.

She wasn't one for self-analysis, didn't waste time on absurd questions about how she felt about the dog, or why. Frisky got under her skin, and that was that. He slept on my husband to-be's feet at night, was chauffeured to the local McDonald's drive-through for lunch, lived a happy life, and, at 14, was nursed by my mother-in-law to his last breath. Even my husband's grandmother relented somewhat, though to her he always remained that "fershtinkeneh hindt."

My own grandmother, another immigrant, held a similarly uncompromising position on dogs: evil. To illustrate, she would tell the story of the dog who tried to kill my cousin Ira (not his real name) in his baby carriage: "A dog, big-like, came right up to the perambulator, and looked Ira in the eye! Ooy, ooy, ooy! And what should I tell you? Ira let out such a *schrei*, you could hear it for miles. And then he went catatonic. For a year!"

Did he? Who knows? There was no arguing with my grandmother about it, nor any gainsaying her claim that only his mother's screams and her own—heard through all of Brooklyn—had kept little Ira from being shredded like so much catatonic cabbage.

So my father, like my mother-in-law, inherited the Jewish dog aversion, and did his best to pass it on to his children. Thus, my childhood experience with dogs consisted of (a) two *huge* German Shepherds who lived upstairs and, for years, terrorized me on the elevator, barking and lunging rabidly at me while their owner struggled to hold them back and I cowered in the corner, praying the elevator would crash so I could die; and (b) the time a friend's dog vomited on my feet at the beginning of a long, hot, miserable car ride.

Later on, if I noticed dogs at all, it was because they were relieving themselves on my lawn or trying to hump my leg. I was unmoved by the importuning of my three children, who loved dogs and, like Sasha and Malia Obama with their parents, took turns trying to talk me into one. I was impervious to the charms of my sister's puppy and insisted that my kids wash their hands after playing with her. The thought of dog hairs near food killed my appetite.

Until one day I woke up and needed to have a puppy, and just like that, became a wild, passionate, crazy lover of dogs. Not just my own dog, though she is my *favorite* dog (she's a music lover and dancer—comes bounding as soon as Martha and the Vandellas start to sing, and jumps and jives with me until I stop), but all dogs: huge slobbering Newfoundlands, tiny neurotic Chihuahuas, hideous Chinese Hairless dogs, Mastiffs, Cairns, Pointers, Boxers, Beagles, Bichons, Great Danes, Pit Bulls—I'm mad for them all.

I love the way they smell, the way they drool when food's nearby, the way they run in their sleep, the way you can feel their heartbeats just by touching their flanks, the way they lick your face, the way they never forget a scent, the way they suddenly come to alertness, and just as suddenly fall asleep, their jaunty gaits, their wagging tails.

In short, I love the utter *dogness* of them, and the sense of living in harmony with another of God's creatures makes me happy. If I got on the elevator with those two German Shepherds now, I'd be down on the floor with them, delighting in their nearness.

What would my grandmother make of the fact that, today, five of her six grandchildren are dog owners? That we live in a sea of dog hairs, and that if you find one in your soup, I will shrug and say "Never mind, you'll live." What would my husband's grandmother say if she knew that our very large dog sleeps between us every night? Is there a sociologist out there measuring the Americanization of Jews by counting dogs in their households—and on their beds?

Will the Obamas, too, succumb to the siren song of Bo? It's hard to think not. We've already seen the follow-on pics of them beginning to frolic with him. I'm imagining the next photograph: a family splayed out in the garden, getting covered with his kisses. ♦

Rachel Abrams is a writer in Virginia.

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Inside the Pirate Rescue

White House Sources Reveal the Sequence of Events Behind the Administration's Daring Plot

By Jack Sparrow
Washington Post Staff Writer

Nearly a week after the standoff in the Indian Ocean, sources in the White House are now talking about President Barack Obama's gutsy decision to have Navy SEAL snipers rescue American Richard Phillips from a band of Somali pirates. And what may have appeared publicly to be some initial reticence on the part of the president was in fact an instance of Obama's "nuanced judgment" put into practice.

"Right from the beginning, the president understood that you have to separate pirate myths from reality," a source close to the National Security Council explained. "It's well understood that with ordinary terrorists, if you kill one of them, you create 10 more. But that's not the case with pirates. With pirates, the danger is that during a full moon some of them turn into unkillable skeletons with flaming swords."

Obama and his military advisers, especially Vice Admiral Victor Stagnetti, were reluctant to use force against the pirates during the first four days of the standoff because of the lunar cycle. But even as the moon entered its waning gibbous phase on Easter Sunday, they were cognizant of new threats from the pirates, who were seen communicating with an unidentified figure.

John Reinhart, CEO of Maersk Line, the company which owned the captured ship, told reporters that the new player had a beard made of tentacles and may or may not have been Davy Jones, who reportedly has the power to summon "kraken," or giant, tentacled monsters from the deep. Once the kraken were in play, the president gave the SEAL team the go ahead.

Three of the pirates holding Phillips were killed and a fourth was taken into custody. Asked about the continued threat posed by the captured pirate, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs scoffed, "This guy is the worst pirate that I've ever

See OBAMA'S REVENGE, *A10, Col.1*

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