the weekly Standard

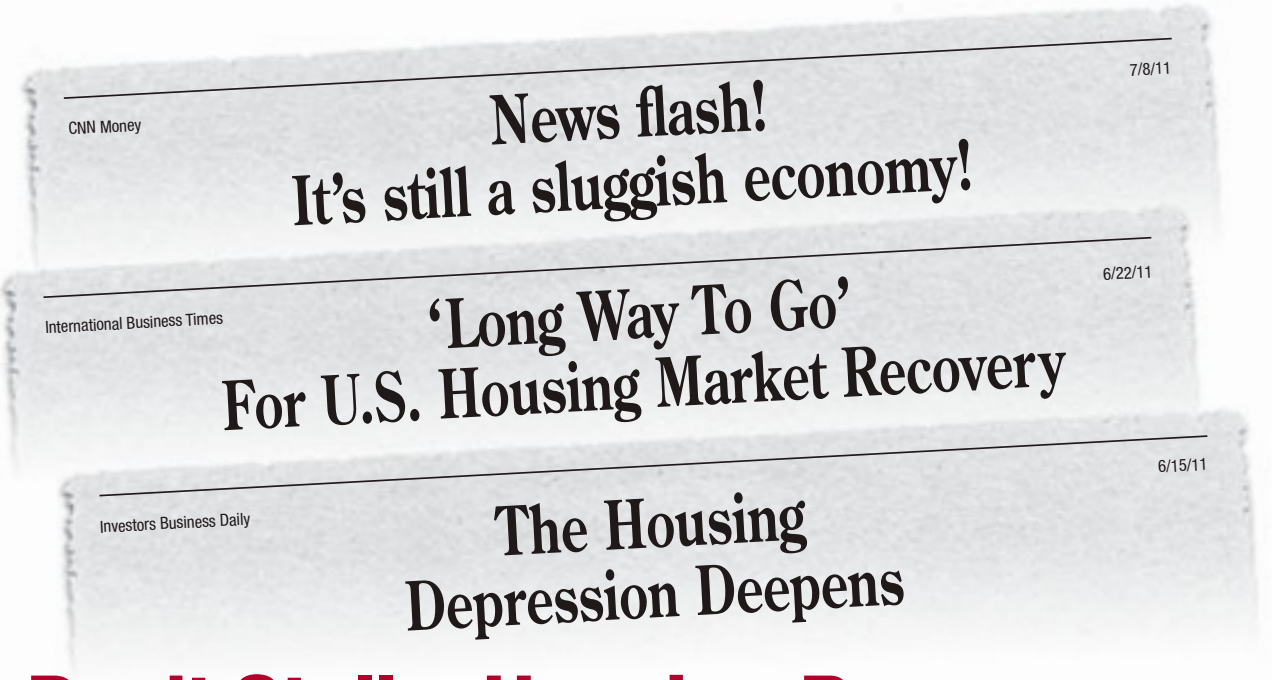
AUGUST 8, 2011 • $4.95

THE OLD BALL GAME
JOSEPH EPSTEIN

CIVILITY, OBAMA STYLE

ANDREW FERGUSON on the portentous pronouncements of the Humanities czar

NEH chairman Jim Leach



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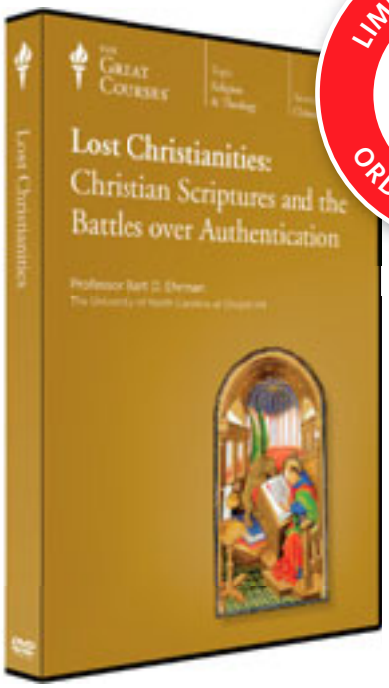

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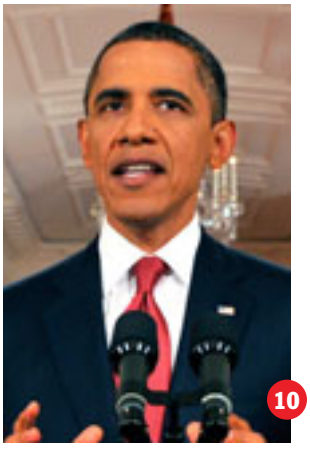

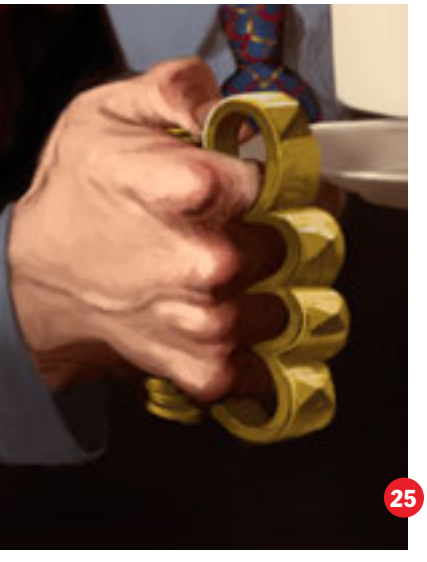

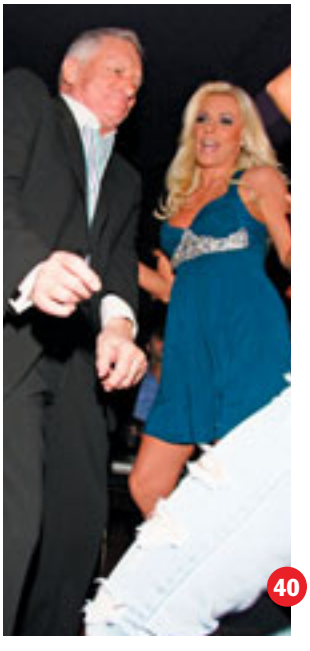

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Not So Swift Boater

Those of us masochistic enough to have watched the 2004 Democratic convention might faintly recall the name Captain Wade Sanders. Sanders was one of Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry's fellow Swift Boat veterans, and Sanders was the man who introduced Kerry at the convention, whereupon the candidate saluted the crowd and uttered the immortal words, "I'm John Kerry, and I'm reporting for duty."

Sanders's role in the Kerry campaign was small but significant. Kerry was publicly being attacked by dozens of Swift Boat veterans who served with him in Vietnam. And Sanders was one of the few—perhaps only—fellow Swift Boat vets to defend Kerry's questionable war record publicly. While Sanders's record as a Democratic hack suggested he might have political reasons for supporting Kerry, Sanders also had a stellar military record, having been awarded a Silver Star in 1992, and his credibility wasn't much in question.

Wade Sanders, in happier days

That's why The Scrapbook feels compelled to point out the ignominious denouement of the Wade Sanders career. Yes, it's true that Sanders is currently doing time in a federal penitentiary after admitting to being in possession of child pornography. As bad as that is, it's not nearly as remarkable as what just happened to Sanders.

On July 18, *Navy Times* reported that Navy Secretary Ray Mabus had revoked Sanders's Silver Star, the nation's third highest award for combat valor—apparently for reasons having nothing to do with his recent criminal conduct.

"Had the subsequently determined facts and evidence surrounding both the incident for which the award was made and the processing of the award itself been known to the secretary of the Navy in 1992, those facts would have prevented the award of the Silver Star," Captain Pamela Kunze told *Navy Times* regarding the Navy Department Board of Medals and Decorations' decision.

Suffice to say, in 2004 Kerry was indignant that his fellow veterans would question the awarding of his own Silver Star—and yet, just about the only Swift Boat vet defending Kerry apparently didn't earn his. Sanders's offense must have been egregious; the few instances of a Navy commendation being revoked all predate World War I.

Yet, for reasons that The Scrapbook will never fully understand, the normal scrutiny of a presidential candidate's résumé was deemed in Kerry's case to be somehow beneath contempt, and the term "Swift Boat" was turned into a verb and a pejorative one at that.

Recall that the Kerry campaign was forced to admit Kerry had inaccurately claimed he crossed into Cambodia around Christmas of 1968. The basic fact that Kerry spent less than four months in Vietnam and emerged with three Purple Hearts without missing a single day of active duty due to injury should be sufficient to question his veracity.

But most telling is Kerry's own penchant for recklessly criticizing the combat record of his fellow soldiers, starting with his "winter soldier" testimony before Congress in 1971, when he accused fellow vets of wanton atrocities without proof. Then in the campaign bio authored by Douglas Brinkley, *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War*, Kerry said that the distinguished admiral Roy Hoffman, the officer in charge of the Swift-Boat mission, had "a genuine taste for the more unsavory aspects of warfare" and sought "splashy victories in the Mekong Delta" to get promoted. It was an understandably incensed Hoffman who organized the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, not the Bush campaign.

The scrutiny of Kerry's war record was not only warranted but richly deserved comeuppance. If you still refuse to believe Adm. Roy Hoffman and the rest of the honorable Swift Boat veterans that Kerry didn't tell the truth about his war record, go ahead and take Captain Wade Sanders's word for it. ♦

Holding Hands with the Iranians

What do Harvard's Stephen Walt and the Iranian parliament have in common? Both are obsessed with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a bipartisan think tank in Washington that we're proud to call our neighbor. Walt and the Iranians, on the other hand, both see FDD as a pillar of—you guessed it—the "Israel lobby."

"The Most Important Think Tanks of the United States on the Security of Iran" is a pamphlet published last month by the research center of the Iranian parliament, or

GREG SKIDMORE

majlis, that identified a number of U.S. think tanks that it deemed central to formulating Washington's official Iran policy. Not surprisingly, the venerable Brookings Institution was named, as were the Council on Foreign Relations and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, but pride of place was reserved for what the Iranians perceive to be right-wing institutions, like FDD, which the pamphlet ranks as most influential.

The *majlis* research center is presumably something like our Congressional Research Service, except the latter does genuine research whereas the former seems to reprint whatever it's downloaded from the Internet—photos, too. The publication features a headshot of FDD fellow and Weekly Standard contributing editor Reuel Marc Gerecht, as well as Scrapbook boss William Kristol, an FDD board member—both of them smiling, presumably with the sinister knowledge that has placed them in the bosom of what the pamphlet labels "the Israel Lobby think tank."

It's worth noting that, in the Iranians' assessment, none of the self-described progressive think tanks make the cut. The Iranians apparently believe that no one in Obama-era Washington is listening to the left, not even to the New America Foundation's Flynt Leverett, who has agitated harder than almost anyone in Washington on behalf of the regime in Tehran. The Iranians, of course, have a twisted worldview. They believe the United States is led on a leash by Israel, which, the Iranians assume, is determined to bomb Iran to smithereens.

Well, it's one thing for Iranian officials to think like members of an obscurantist clerical regime, but it's something else again when a Harvard professor holds hands with them, analytically speaking. In a recent post at FP.com, *Foreign Policy* magazine's blog, Stephen Walt claims that FDD "has been in the vanguard of the campaign for war with Iran, reflexively supportive of the Israeli right. . . . It will therefore surprise no one that its primary financial backers are also hard-core Zionists, and that the democracy it seems most committed to defending is located far from Washington, D.C."

One might be forgiven for assuming that Walt is doing his best impersonation of an Iranian research institution, but the fact is that his information here comes from the Center for American Progress, a self-identifying progressive think tank run by former Clinton White House chief of staff John Podesta.

Blogging on CAP's Think Progress website, Eli Clifton tries to paint FDD as a reactionary leviathan ("in line with the Bush administration's militant 'war on terror' and policies espoused by Israel's right wing Likud party")—but he's undercut by his own evidence. It turns out that a number of the donors presumably driving FDD's ideological crusade are usually to be found on the Walt/Podesta side of the aisle. Among other contributors, there's Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, a former Democratic party political consultant, Charles and Edgar Bronfman, typically associated with left-wing causes, and Haim Saban, a major Democratic fundraiser.

In other words, the disposition of the Islamic Republic of Iran—its nuclear weapons program, its regional campaign against U.S. allies, including Israel but also Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon—is a concern shared by Americans across the political spectrum. Walt and

his like-minded colleagues at places like the Center for American Progress give the impression of men marching to the beat of a Persian drummer. ♦

Foie Gras Verboten

Tensions are mounting along the Franco-German border—the likes of which haven't been seen since the Allies crossed the Rhine. Ministers are balking, diplomats are scurrying, threats are being issued. And all because of goose liver. And duck liver, too—the kind that is fattened to ten times its normal size through force-feeding, sold as golden-hued lobes at an exorbitant price, and magically transformed into delicate terrines and pâtés. In short, a battle has erupted over French foie gras.

Cooked goose

It all came about when the organizers of this year's Anuga FoodTec fair in Cologne decided not to allow foie gras during the event, which, as Anuga FoodTec's website boasts, "will be the world's most important trade fair for the food and drink industry." It is also "a valuable marketplace for all those who want to present their solutions and products to a global audience of trade visitors." But since the production of foie gras is banned in Germany, why should the fair support the sale of such gluttonous fare?

The *Telegraph* reports that the French minister of external trade, Pierre Lellouche, "summoned Germany's ambassador to Paris and called on his government to 'exercise the strongest authority over the (fair) organisers and get them to respect European law' (on free movement and nondiscrimination of goods)" but that the German minister for food, agriculture, and consumer protection, Ilse Aigner, insists "it was up to the organisers to decide on the issue."

Others in the French government are speaking out. The *Telegraph* quotes a Socialist member of the senate as saying, "It's unbelievable. It's like banning German sausages in France." Meanwhile, animal-rights activists, including actress Brigitte Bardot, are hoping the Germans don't cave. And French agriculture minister Bruno le Maire is threatening a boycott of the fair's opening ceremony. *Mon dieu!*

In all seriousness, you can't blame the French for being outraged. For while Germany has banned foie gras production on its own soil because of animal-cruelty concerns, its citizens continue to buy rich and succulent foie gras from their French neighbors—and a lot of it. The *Telegraph* reports that Germans devour 170 tons of pâté each year. ♦

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Ivan's Island

A cruise ship sank in the Volga River in heavy weather a few weeks back, with more than 100 lives lost. On the radio I heard President Medvedev vow to banish the antiquated boats that ply Russia's waterways. A commentator called them "rust buckets," and a shiver went down my spine.

Eight years ago I went out on the Volga in just such a rust bucket. Looking back, I realize that our excursion to the historic island of Sviyazhsk was memorable not just for the sights we saw but also for the nagging unease I felt about that rickety boat.

On the surface, we were an enthusiastic group—several score Americans and Tatars out for a picnic lunch, followed by Frisbee and volleyball or, for the less energetic, a walking tour of the sparsely populated island. The outing was part of a Tatar-American festival organized by some Americans teaching English in Kazan, capital of Tatarstan, one of the Muslim republics of the Russian Federation.

The festival was intended as a meeting of two cultures. We Americans stayed with Tatar families, and we were each assigned an English-speaking student as our personal interpreter. Our hosts and interpreters joined in some of the festival activities—performances of country music and Tatar folk dancing, a banquet and fashion show, a visit to an English-immersion school, a tour of Old Kazan, and the day trip to Sviyazhsk.

As soon as we boarded, I noticed the absence of the emergency-preparedness overkill that's standard at home. Most of the Tatars I spoke with had never been out on the river before. But we got caught up in conversations. I remember telling one young man about learning to play the "Song of the Volga Boatmen" on the piano as a kid. He was shortly to leave for Indiana University, and he had clearly done some homework. He asked me whether Indiana was one of the 33 states with Indian reservations.

By the time we docked at the island and climbed a grassy hill, we were hungry. Barbecue, happily, is something the two cultures share, and the local *shashlik* didn't disappoint. After lunch I opted for the tour.

The guide explained that Sviyazhsk was settled by Ivan the Terrible in 1551. He arrived with his army and assembled a prefab town made of wooden components as the headquarters from which to prepare his third and successful assault on Kazan. To mark this victory, along with his capture of Astrakhan, Ivan built one of Moscow's most famous churches: the extravagantly colorful St. Basil's, now observing its 450th anniversary.

Sviyazhsk, 2001

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We went into churches with onion domes in various states of disrepair. In one, we saw marks on the inlaid floor made by farm machinery when the building was used as a storage shed in officially atheist Soviet days.

Toward the far end of the island, we rounded a bend and almost bumped into a tall young priest swanning along in full ankle-length black cassock—Alyosha Karamazov come to life. The Assumption Monastery, founded in 1555, was returned to the Orthodox church only in 1997 after a bitter interlude. The guide told us the Bolsheviks used it as a prison. Just now, to check my memory, I looked at a Kazan city website and found this:

> Repressions in Sviyazhsk began after 1917. Since 1920s Sviyazhsk became the place of isolation of the prisoners, branch of GULAG. The town became desolated, church relics, historical and cultural monuments were destroyed. Mental hospital was established in the monastery on the island. Only in 1960 Sviyazhsk was named historical and cultural monument of Russia.

Alyosha was the only sign of life near the overgrown monastery, but hardly the prize curiosity of the day. That came in the monastery church, whose brilliant 16th-century frescoes survive. The guide singled out one as "extremely rare in Christian art." I'll say: a life-sized robed figure with the head of a dog.

After we trudged back and rejoined the group at the pier, a chance to relax on the boat seemed positively inviting. The return trip left two vivid memories. We'll pass quickly over the unspeakable condition of the only available restroom aboard and pause rather in the bar, where a spontaneous jam session was going on. In my mind, it's a golden blur, with a suggestion of smoke in the air and laughter and warm camaraderie. In sharp focus, a dark-haired beauty from South Carolina sits, one leg in a cast propped up on a chair, belting out an earthy "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue."

We steamed back to Kazan without incident; my jitters were for naught—and my web browsing suggests all such may soon be a thing of the past. A causeway now connects Sviyazhsk to the riverbank, and massive renovations are under way at the monastery and churches, designed to make the island a major tourist attraction. Who knows, maybe President Medvedev, moved by those deaths on the Volga, will spur this work, and the rust buckets in turn will pass into history.

Claudia Anderson

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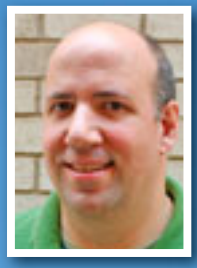

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Six Circumstances in Search of a Candidate

Circumstance #1: Obama is a weak candidate for reelection.

Obama's approval rating, which has been drifting down for a while, began to accelerate downward last week, as voters noticed his utter failure of leadership in dealing with the debt ceiling and the debt itself. His July 25 primetime address to the nation could well go down as his "malaise" speech—the moment when the country lost confidence the president knew what to do or even what he was doing. Still, it will take a credible opponent at the head of an acceptable party to beat him next year.

Circumstance #2: The Republican House isn't much of an advertisement for Republican governance.

The near self-immolation of Republicans in the House late last week confirmed that the best that can be expected over the next year on the Hill is . . . not much. We can hope that the self-destructive element of the GOP caucus doesn't do much harm, and that John Boehner and Mitch McConnell can minimize the damage to the Republican image and cause.

Circumstance #3: The gulf between the Christine O'Donnell element of the Tea Party and the GOP establishment is enormous.

Before Boehner had to modify his debt ceiling legislation last Friday, he still had the support of almost 90 percent of the House GOP conference, and about 80 percent of the conservative Republican Study Committee members. So it would be misleading to call the rebellion against Boehner a broad-based movement on the right. Still, it happened, and it did its damage. Now large numbers of Republican primary voters, and even more independent general election voters, will be wary of supporting a Republican candidate in 2012 if the party looks as if it's in the grip of an infantile form of conservatism. On the other hand, a conventional establishment candidate will have trouble uniting the conservative coalition.

Circumstance #4: The GOP presidential field is weak.

As things now stand, the September 7 Republican presidential debate at the Ronald Reagan library will feature, in alphabetical order, Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, Ron Paul, Tim Pawlenty (if he's still in the race), Rick Perry, Mitt Romney, Sarah Palin (if she gets in the race), and Rick Santorum (if he's still in the race). Almost all would be better than Obama, and one or two might surprise on the upside. Still: Picture yourself turning on your TV that evening. Feel enthusiastic about 2012?

NEWSCOM

Circumstance #5: In a moment of crisis, the GOP presidential candidates headed for the hills.

Apart from those who took silly positions (Michele Bachmann, who opposed all versions of a debt ceiling increase, even as she equivocates on Medicare reform) and those whose support is confined to the liberal media (Jon Huntsman, who supported Boehner), the Republican presi-

dential candidates were basically nowhere to be found during the debt ceiling debate, or confined themselves to coy and cryptic comments. Not exactly profiles in leadership.

Circumstance #6: The GOP needs a winner in 2012.

Paul Ryan can't accomplish much over the next year in the House. He should run as a candidate who's shown leadership (the Ryan budget), who has successfully taken on Obama (at the House Republican retreat, the health care summit, and in the White House about two months ago), and who has the best chance of uniting the establishment and Tea Party wings of the GOP. If not Ryan, how about Chris Christie, Marco Rubio, Scott Walker, or someone else who is young, sane, and unafraid?

It's one thing for House Republicans to go through an awkward patch. It would be another thing entirely to fumble away the 2012 presidential election.

—William Kristol

It's Obama's Economy

According to the Commerce Department numbers released Friday, the U.S. economy is growing at just 1.3 percent. Maybe. First quarter growth, initially reported as a disappointing 1.9 percent, was revised drastically down to just 0.4 percent. Those numbers are depressing enough. The downward revision of first quarter growth suggests that even the woeful second quarter number may be optimistic. And it comes after five consecutive quarters of a slowing economy—with growth of just 3.9 percent, 3.8 percent, 2.5 percent, and 2.3 percent before the economy stalled out at 0.4 percent in the first three months of this year.

That's not all. Unemployment has risen for three consecutive months. It's now 9.2 percent. Nearly half of the unemployed have been seeking work for longer than six months—the highest long-term unemployment rate since the Great Depression. And the GDP numbers out Friday suggest that many more American workers will be added to the unemployment rolls in the coming months.

By virtually every available metric, the U.S. economy is heading in the wrong direction.

Remember this over the next 15 months: The economy has been slowing for reasons that had nothing at all to do with the debate over the debt ceiling that preoccupied Washington for four weeks in July 2011. Nothing.

The White House and its most reliable allies will spend much of the time between now and November 2012 trying to convince you that the opposite is true. In some ways, the president's reelection depends on it. They want you to think that the Obama Recovery was humming along until Republicans, answering to "special interests," brought it grinding to a halt by manufacturing a crisis on the debt ceiling.

Bill Burton, former White House spokesman who is now running Obama's SuperPac, has sent out a stream of tweets in recent weeks seeking to blame Republicans for the economy. One day he points to George W. Bush. The next it's John Boehner, then generic Republicans. "Each day Republicans obstruct progress it seems more and more as if they believe they benefit politically if they hurt America economically."

In explaining the poor June unemployment numbers, Obama himself suggested that the debt ceiling debate was partly to blame. "The sooner we get this done . . . the sooner we give our businesses the certainty that they need . . . to grow and hire."

Time magazine columnist Joe Klein amplified the White House talking points in a column last week. "The uncertainty caused by the Republican anarchy has already damaged the economy, businesses are waiting to see what the interest rates will be and therefore delaying plans to expand," he writes. "That uncertainty, added to the higher oil prices caused by the Arab Spring, the European debt crisis, and the Japanese earthquake, could well bring us a double-dip recession." His conclusion, with characteristic reserve: "Osama bin Laden, if he were still alive, could not have come up with a more clever strategy for strangling our nation."

Got that? The economic slowdown that started in January 2010 came as a result of a debate in Congress 19 months later.

A long line for a job fair during a heat wave in midtown New York last summer.

NEWSCOM

These are the arguments you make when reality is unhelpful. Obama campaigned on a promise to fix the economy. He made his case at nearly every campaign stop. But he did so most emphatically during a high-profile speech in Ohio shortly before the election. In that speech, he declared that remaking the economy "is why I'm running for presi-

dent." Exit polls showed that a majority of Americans chose him for that reason, too.

He had two years to run the country with a Democratic Congress. Almost immediately, he signed an $800 billion stimulus package to jump-start growth and lower unemployment. His economic team famously predicted that if it passed, unemployment would remain under 8 percent. They were wrong.

The same crowd now claiming to be so concerned about the effects of "uncertainty" on businesses spent much of the first two years of the Obama administration concocting a new entitlement that is generating literally tens of thousands of new health care regulations. And rather than boosting the economy by "bending the cost curve down" on health care spending, as the White House promised, a report last week from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services projects U.S. health care spending will rise significantly—by 8.3 percent in 2014, the first year under a fully implemented Obamacare. By 2020 it will have doubled.

It could have been worse. Remember, if Obama had gotten his way last year, taxes on top earners would have been raised at the beginning of 2011—just as the current slowdown intensified. Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner argued last August that raising those taxes in January 2011 would have been "good policy" because the recovering economy was strong enough to absorb them. "The economy can withstand that," he assured us two months after the Obama administration kicked off "Recovery Summer," a season announced in an official White House press release.

This is what policy failure looks like. And no matter how hard the White House and its allies try to convince us otherwise in the coming months, there is no escaping the central fact of the 2012 election. It's Barack Obama's economy.

—Stephen F. Hayes

The Great Dissuader

The talks were going nowhere. It was July 13, the fifth straight day of negotiations between President Obama and congressional leaders over an agreement to increase the debt ceiling. The hour was late when House majority leader Eric Cantor repeated

the Republican preference for a short-term increase. But the president wasn't having it. "Eric, don't call my bluff," Obama said. "I'm going to the American people on this."

Well, bluff called. Nine days later, negotiations between Obama and Speaker of the House John Boehner finally broke down. On July 25, the president delivered a 15-minute address on primetime television. And the American people responded by supporting the president in droves, demanding that Republicans abandon their commitment to low taxes and accede to a "balanced approach" to deficit reduction, and the president's approval rating began to soar, and . . .

Sorry, got carried away. Obama did speak to the country, and the day after his speech, the Capitol Hill switchboard was busier than normal. But that's it. Obama's approval rating continued to fall. Congress kept working on the debt ceiling issue on its own. The president's message had no practical effect. And no one should be surprised.

Barack Obama has a communications problem. His reputation for eloquence and argument is highly exaggerated—at best. Speech after speech, appearance after appearance, the president has failed to persuade the undecided that his views are correct, much less win over opponents. You can blame partisan polarization, the institu-

tional limitations of the presidency, the diversity of new media, whatever. The truth is, the more Obama talks, the worse he performs.

Consider the president's economic message. The administration's failure to reduce unemployment significantly has left Obama struggling to convince the country that, as bad as things are, they could be worse. "A lot of the problems we face right now, like slow job growth and stagnant wages, these were problems that were there even before the recession hit," he told the National Conference of La Raza last week. "These challenges weren't caused overnight; they're not going to be solved overnight."

Talk about a downer. The president's excuses, though, have made no difference to the 57 percent of Americans who disapprove of his handling of the economy in the July ABC News/*Washington Post* poll. Or the 67 percent that say the country is on the wrong track in the July NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* survey. Obama can't change their minds.

The classic example of the president's failure to sway public opinion remains health care. The *Washington Post* reports that Obama has delivered 58 speeches on the topic since he became president. An obvious case of diminishing returns: According to the RealClearPolitics average of polls, Americans oppose the president's health care overhaul 51 percent to 38 percent.

Meanwhile, the Eastern seaboard is littered with the failed careers of Democratic pols whom Obama tried to help. In 2009, Obama campaigned alongside Governor Jon Corzine of New Jersey and gubernatorial candidate Creigh Deeds of Virginia. Chris Christie defeated Corzine, 49 percent to 45 percent. And Bob McDonnell walloped Deeds, 59 percent to 41 percent. In January 2010, in the middle of the political blizzard over health care reform, he traveled to Massachusetts to campaign for Martha Coakley in the special election to replace Senator Edward M. Kennedy. The president spent most of his time mocking Republican challenger Scott Brown's pickup truck. Brown won, 52 percent to 47 percent.

During the general election, the president campaigned hard for embattled Democratic congressman Tom Perriello of Virginia, who voted to support Obamacare. The campaign, wrote liberal columnist E. J. Dionne, was a test case of "whether a progressive who fashions an intelligent populism can survive in deeply conservative territory." Obama and Perriello failed the test.

Let's not completely shortchange the president's oratory. He delivers one type of address extremely well: the call for unity in trying times. This was the theme of the speech to the 2004 Democratic convention that launched his career. His Inaugural Address, the high point of his presidency, struck a similar note. So did his remarks earlier this year at the memorial service for the victims of the Tucson psychopath. When the president speaks in the language of national consensus, people respond favorably.

More often, though, Obama uses his speeches to divide the country along lines of party, ideology, and class. His speeches lack humor and rely on the same focus-grouped platitudes—perhaps he knows that people aren't buying what he's selling. What specific budget policy was Obama advocating for in his televised address? He didn't want to say.

Obama likes to think of himself as a liberal Reagan who can bypass Congress and speak directly to the American people. But there's a big difference between the two: More often than not, the public was on Reagan's side. The Gipper's humor, optimism, and plain speech earned him a reputation as the Great Persuader. Obama? He's the Great Dissuader.

—Matthew Continetti

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The Boehner Recovery

The House speaker survives a near-death experience.

BY FRED BARNES

For House speaker John Boehner, Tea Party Republicans weren't the problem as he sought support for a package of spending cuts attached to an increase in the debt limit. The biggest impediment to a House majority was Republicans fearful a primary opponent would use a vote to boost the debt limit against them.

House Republicans with Tea Party connections were divided, most siding with Boehner. Still, Boehner was left as many as 10 votes short of the 216 needed to win passage of his debt ceiling bill. None of the Republicans opposed to the measure would budge. Boehner had hit a wall.

And so we come to the series of events that led to last week's approval of the final Boehner plan. It was a victory that vindicated Boehner's mild-mannered leadership, kept House Republicans from fracturing bitterly, and gave Boehner and Majority Leader Eric Cantor a major role in shaping the outcome of the struggle over the debt limit.

Faced with certain defeat last Thursday night, Boehner was forced to postpone a vote—an embarrassing retreat. In a last-ditch effort to pick up votes, Cantor and Republican whip Kevin McCarthy had collected a roomful of "no" voters in McCarthy's office on the ground floor of the Capitol. This included the five South Carolina members who had been the focus of their coaxing. The thinking was that if these members flipped and backed Boehner, more switchers would follow.

Democrats, liberals, the media, rent-seeking corporate heads, an untold number of interest groups, and the permanent Washington establishment loathe the budget amendment. But it's extraordinarily popular with the public. And that was important for Boehner's purpose.

The group was asked if putting a balanced budget amendment in the bill would make them consider changing their votes. Many hands went up, but none from the South Carolina bloc. This offered hope, but Boehner decided against calling for a late night floor vote. They'd get back to the issue Friday morning.

By then, Boehner and his aides had revised the legislation. It would now require a balanced budget amendment to be passed and sent to the states for ratification before the second increase in the debt limit could be approved in early 2012.

Democrats, liberals, the media, rent-seeking corporate heads, an untold number of interest groups, and the permanent Washington establishment loathe the budget amendment. But it's extraordinarily popular with the public. And that was important for Boehner's purpose. It was a tranquilizer for jittery Republicans. They could boast of

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insisting it be in the bill, thus offsetting their vote for raising the debt limit. It was a clever tradeoff and it worked. Boehner got the last 10 votes he needed.

Among those who finally decided to back the speaker were Rick Berg of North Dakota, Todd Akin of Missouri, and Jeff Flake of Arizona, all three of whom are running for the Senate next year. Absent the amendment, they were ready to vote against Boehner.

The South Carolina Five didn't buckle. Why? One can only guess, but I suspect South Carolina senator Jim DeMint had a lot to do with it. He's become a powerful conservative force who routinely intervenes in primaries across the country to endorse and raise money for Republican challengers, often the most conservative candidate in the race. Those he backs admire his political courage.

DeMint strongly opposes any hike in the debt limit, and he reaffirmed his opposition after the Boehner bill passed. For a Republican in South Carolina, crossing DeMint on an issue of this magnitude would be risky.

Boehner's reputation is the opposite of DeMint's. Yet conservative reformers like Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, chairman of the House Budget Committee, regard the veteran Ohio Republican as an ally. Boehner unflinchingly backed Ryan's budget that slashes spending and modernizes Medicare and Medicaid.

Boehner set the tone for this debt limit drive with a speech to the Economic Club of New York on May 9. "Without significant spending cuts and reforms to reduce our debt, there will be no debt limit increase," he said. "And the cuts should be greater than the accompanying increase in debt authority the president is given."

Democrats were appalled, the media surprised, and Republicans worried Boehner wouldn't be able to achieve this goal. Not only has he succeeded, but President Obama and Senate majority leader Harry Reid have accepted Boehner's terms. Boehner has created a precedent for debt ceiling increases: They must be balanced by the same amount in spending cuts.

Boehner has probably spent more time with Obama than any other Republican on Capitol Hill. But it's gotten him in trouble only once. And all his disagreements with the president have turned out well.

The mistake was joining Obama in pursuit of a "grand bargain" to cut deficits over the next decade by $4 trillion. This got Boehner into the sensitive area of tax hikes. Obama bailed him out, however, by his greediness in demanding an extra $400 billion in taxes. That prompted Boehner to leave the talks, a bold action that flustered Obama.

Days later, they clashed in televised speeches. The president delivered a string of tired platitudes from his campaign speeches. Boehner's remarks were folksy but substantive: "The president has often said we need a 'balanced' approach, which in Washington means: We spend more, you pay more."

The White House, the Senate, and the press weren't Boehner's only foes. There was an enemy within, the Republican Study Committee. It has existed for years, putting out conservative issue statements and studies. But in the debt limit fight, it deployed a whip team to round up Republicans against Boehner's plan, even recruiting conservative groups to lobby them.

Boehner batted them down more gently than his colleagues in the GOP leadership would have. He wanted to prevent a deep and lingering split. After voting against Boehner, RSC chairman Jim Jordan, a fellow Ohioan, praised him for his "tireless work to achieve real spending cuts without tax increases."

One measure of a political leader is his ability to rebound from defeat, or near-defeat in Boehner's case. He proved to be resilient and resourceful. Republicans feared he'd gotten in over his head in his one-on-one negotiations with the president. My guess is Obama doesn't think so. ♦

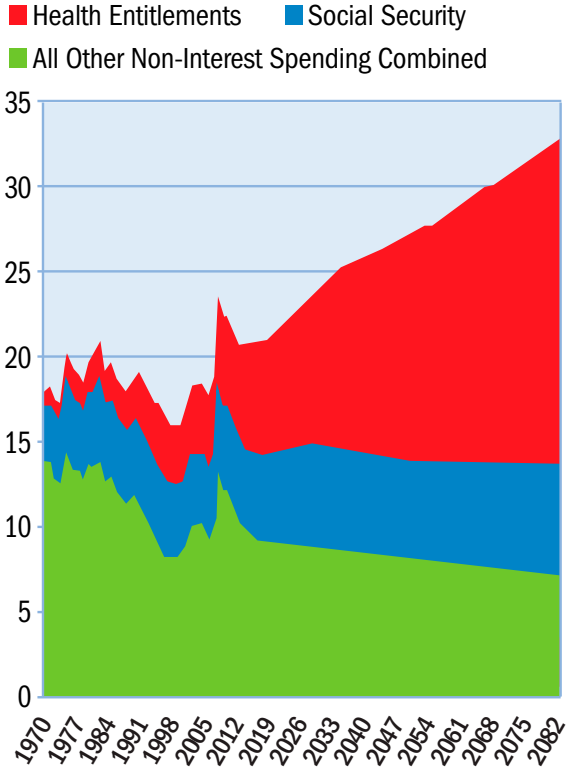
Unhealthy Debt

Real health care reform is the only way out of our budget woes. BY JAMES C. CAPRETTA & YUVAL LEVIN

From beginning to end, the debt crisis talks have come down to a struggle between advocates of tax increases and champions of domestic discretionary spending cuts. This important dispute has been at the heart of our politics for decades, and without question our out-of-control discretionary budget has a lot to do with the size of today's deficit and debt. But it has little to do with tomorrow's deficits and debt—that is, with the unprecedented oncoming explosion of federal spending and borrowing that terrifies our creditors and gravely threatens our future prosperity. Democrats were able to keep that approaching disaster entirely off the table in the debt ceiling fight. In the next round, Republicans must make sure to put it front and center.

Simply put, our coming debt crisis is a health care cost crisis. In 1971, the government spent 1 percent of GDP on Medicare and Medicaid. Four decades later, spending on these two programs has more than quintupled to 5.6 percent of GDP last year. In its latest long-term outlook document, published in June, the Congressional Budget Office projected that spending on these programs, and on the new entitlements created by Obamacare, will reach 10.4 percent of GDP by 2035 and 13 percent by 2050. In the meantime, all other government spending combined (including Social Security, defense, domestic discretionary spending, and everything other than interest on the debt) will actually *decline*, from 17 percent of GDP today to 14.6 percent in 2035 and 14 percent in 2050.

Components of Federal Spending as a Percentage of GDP



SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office data

CBO projects that annual budget deficits will soar over this period to more than 15 percent of GDP each year by 2035 and 25 percent by 2050, and the national debt will be more than twice the size of the economy and growing. So even if the agency's (likely too rosy) projections of economic growth come true and non-health spending falls as a share of the economy, health-entitlement spending would still grow fast enough to push the country off a fiscal cliff. Fixing our health care entitlements is the essential deficit and debt reform.

The president and congressional Democrats insisted on keeping meaningful health reforms off the table in the debt ceiling talks—criticizing Republicans for rejecting tax increases while they themselves rejected the only possible path to real debt reduction. Instead, they sought to lock in place their health care legislation (which vastly expands Medicaid spending and creates a costly new health entitlement through its state-exchange subsidies) and only tinker around the edges of Medicare and Medicaid.

In a study released on July 28, as the debt ceiling deadline approached, the actuaries of the Obama administration's own Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services found that Obamacare will increase, not reduce, national health expenditures—bending the cost curve not down but up, and exacerbating an already critical problem. But even when a "grand bargain" on the debt ceiling still seemed like an option, the president refused to consider any changes to Obamacare as part of the deal, and was open to only the paltriest changes to our older health care entitlements.

He proposed to double down on the price controls that have done so much to cause the health-cost crisis. He proposed to raise the Medicare eligibility age to 67, which the CBO says would save very little, since Medicare's soaring costs are heavily weighted toward older seniors. He endorsed modest cost-sharing increases for certain Medicare services and shifting more Medicaid costs onto the states.

Such cuts might produce marginal

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savings for a time, but they would not come close to addressing the heart of the problem. They would lock in place the immensely inefficient open-ended payment structure of Medicare (which is the chief driver of health care cost inflation) and the new health care law's architecture, with the federal government calling the shots in the health sector. Under such circumstances, cost cutting can only be achieved at the expense of quality care—and even so it rarely happens. Worse yet, such trivial steps would make real reforms less likely, by letting our leaders persuade themselves they have dealt with entitlements when in fact they would have only bought a little time.

To fix health care and the federal budget, reformers must set their sights on a much more fundamental shift, away from central planning and toward a genuine marketplace in health care—with cost-conscious consumers subjecting insurers and providers to competitive pressures. They must repeal Obamacare and convert today's open-ended health care entitlements into defined-contribution programs, with predictable government budgets and sound incentives for efficiency and quality. Public support would be focused on those who need it most, and everyone would have strong incentives to sign up for high-value, low-cost plans to cut their premiums.

In April, the House passed a budget that moves Medicare and Medicaid decisively in this direction. Such a step, and a similar approach for the individual market and small employers, is essential for our health care system, and for the nation's fiscal future. If there ever is to be a grand bargain with the Democrats, Republicans must make reforms like these their absolute bottom-line demands—because our badly broken health entitlement system is at the heart of the government debt problem.

During the recent negotiations, Democrats closed off the path to real health reforms. Their top priority was tax increases. But as the president himself put it in early July, "if you look at the numbers, then Medicare in particular will run out of money and we will not be able to sustain that program no matter how much taxes go up."

For Republicans, spending cuts have been the top priority, and rightly so. But the real problem is spending on health-entitlement programs. If that category of spending is not brought under the discipline of an effective marketplace, then American health care, and our economy as a whole, will be on the road to ruin.

Genuine health care reform therefore needs to be at the core of the Republican case for fiscal sanity—a case that in turn must be front and center in the 2012 election. That election may well be the only real chance we have left to avoid a genuine debt crisis and set America back on the path to enduring prosperity and strength. ♦

Death of a Patriot

Nguyen Cao Ky, 1930-2011

BY DAVID DEVOSS

"When we moved to California, I got a new Cadillac Seville," Nguyen Cao Ky told me back in 1990. "One day I was driving around, dressed in some old shorts and a T-shirt, when a motorcycle policeman pulled me over because I needed a registration sticker. I looked suspicious and couldn't even remember the name of the street I was living on.

"'You working now?' he asked.

"'No,' I replied.

"'Well, you ever done any kind of work?'

"I told him I was once the prime minister of Vietnam."

Simple. Direct. Self-effacing. They were qualities Ky often exhibited over the 36 years he lived in the United States as a refugee. Indeed, when Ky died on July 23 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, of respiratory complications, few Americans under the age of 40 even knew who he was. But back in June 1965, when the flamboyant 34-year-old fighter pilot and air vice marshal became the country's youngest premier in history, Ky's resilience and dynamism were the traits that most impressed the 75,000 newly arrived American troops.

I first met Nguyen Cao Ky in 1972, when I arrived in Saigon as a 24-year-old war correspondent for *Time* magazine. After Ky moved to the United States following South Vietnam's collapse in 1975, we continued to meet for political discussions over *café filtre* at Vietnamese coffee houses in Orange County's Little Saigon. The conversations always were about the future of Vietnam, the country Ky continued to love with the passion of a patriot.

Back in the early days of America's involvement in Vietnam, the sleek, mustachioed Ky cut a dashing figure in black flying suits set off by lavender ascots. A Northerner trained by the French as a pilot, he packed a pearl-handled pistol, zipped around Saigon on a motor scooter, and recited love poems at dinner parties.

As the nation's ace fighter pilot, Ky had continued to fly combat missions even after winning a second general's star. Reports of his derring-do were rivaled only by those of his capacity for Scotch and attractive women, whose homes he liked to buzz in his A-1 Skyraider. Thus, when he ordered his entire squadron to treetop the neighborhood of Dang Tuyet Mai, a willowy Air Vietnam stewardess, friends knew he'd fallen hard.

Though a political novice, Ky was savvy enough to share power with his military superior, Maj. Gen.

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Nguyen Van Thieu. That didn't satisfy U.S. diplomats, who predicted Ky wouldn't last 100 days. If Ky had doubts about his abilities, he kept them to himself. "We've got to go fast, very fast," he told *Life* magazine days after he was sworn in.

By the end of his first 10 days in office, Ky had declared a state of war, severed diplomatic relations with France (informed of the move, French president Charles de Gaulle haughtily inquired, "*Qui est Ky?*"), announced impending price controls on rice and other overpriced staples, and threatened profiteers with execution. Indolent Saigon bureaucrats were shocked when he cut their salaries in half. Soldiers were delighted when he announced that the money thus saved would go to their salaries. "In his supersonic first week," *Time* magazine effused, "fighter pilot Ky (rhymes with whee!) got more done than any other Vietnamese leader has accomplished in the 20 months since Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated."

For all his protestations of political naïveté, Ky deftly walked a tightrope between reliance on, and independence from, the Americans. "You can talk [Americans] into almost anything," he confided to *Life*. "All you have to do is sit with them for half [an] hour over a bottle of whisky and be a nice guy."

But by the end of 1966, relations between Ky and America had turned glacial. U.S. officials, embarrassed when he authorized the execution of several public employees and merchants found guilty of corruption, began to refer to him as "the Butcher." U.S. military commander Gen. William Westmoreland found naïve Ky's proposal to revitalize South Vietnam's army by retiring all officers above the grade of colonel. The CIA despaired over Ky's repeated calls to carry the war to the North. Lieut Col. John Paul Vann, a top U.S. adviser and the subject of journalist Neil Sheehan's Pulitzer Prize-winning study of the war, *A Bright Shining Lie* (1989), wrote to a friend: "The little bastard, General Ky, made a speech today demanding that we invade the North and liberate North Vietnam—the goddamn little fool can't even drive a mile outside Saigon without an armed convoy and he wants to liberate the North! How damned ridiculous can you get?"

In 1971, Ky briefly talked about challenging Thieu for the presidency. Initially, his candidacy gained momentum, but he eventually dropped out of the race, suspecting that Thieu had rigged the election. Though he continued to receive his air marshal's salary, Ky left Saigon to start the biggest, most modern 2,000-acre farm in Vietnam. He was there, reading American farm magazines and learning to grow corn and soybeans, when the North Vietnamese launched their final drive to victory in March 1975.

Nguyen Cao Ky, 1965

Following North Vietnam's invasion, Ky returned to Saigon and saw Thieu resign the presidency and flee to Taiwan. With no official standing, Ky tried to rally the South with rhetoric. But his plan to assume control fizzled, and on April 29, the day prior to Saigon's official collapse, Ky and 15 fellow air force officers helicoptered to the U.S.S. *Midway*.

If Ky came away from Vietnam with huge amounts of cash, he never exhibited any evidence of it. Settling first in suburban Washington, D.C., he took a $70,000 advance to write his memoirs, *Twenty Years and Twenty Days* (1976), and began giving speeches. When his fees plummeted along with America's interest in Vietnam, he moved his family to Huntington Beach, California. After considering a car wash, Ky borrowed $200,000 to buy a liquor store. When *New Times* magazine caught up with him in 1977, his wife Mai was learning the liquor business while her husband suffered bouts of depression. "How can I end up in Orange County selling liquor to Americans?" he asked. "If you must know, I view my life as a tragedy."

Life wasn't nearly as bad as Ky made it seem. Huntington Beach had a large population of expatriate Vietnamese. Hispanics in the neighborhood called him "El Presidente." Vietnam veterans often stopped by for beer. One day a local SWAT team arrived wearing the helmets they'd worn in Vietnam. On several occasions buses full of German tourists pulled up in front of the store. "I went outside and everybody took pictures," Ky later confided when I interviewed him for the *Los Angeles Times*. "They told me I was one of the stops on their Disneyland tour."

Ky inevitably became an unelected spokesman for exiled Vietnamese, not all of whom liked what he had to say. In 2002, Ky, then an active 73, told me prior to a golf tournament that he planned to return home the following year to see if his former adversaries would allow him to help rebuild Vietnam. "If this next generation wants a prosperous Vietnam it will need outside help, especially from young overseas Vietnamese," he said. "For the past 30 years, our people have acquired a lot of knowledge in the outside world. The only way to make Vietnam a dragon is to combine this knowledge. The return of my generation and, more important, the return of young overseas Vietnamese will signal a new chapter."

Ky's comments, appearing in a story I wrote for *Asia, Inc*. magazine, sparked a firestorm of protest from California Vietnamese. Vilified in the vernacular press, Ky received several death threats and postponed his journey until 2004. "I tell people to forget the war and think about reconciliation," Ky said to me the last time we met. "The only thing most Vietnamese Americans want is a prosperous, democratic Vietnam."

Ky's former wife and daughter, both of whom operate businesses in the southern part of their now-unified nation, will honor his request to be buried in Vietnam. ♦

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With the Sabratha Brigade in Libya

Paper targets, Lacoste shirts, and homemade explosives. BY ANN MARLOWE

Qasr el-Haj, Jafara Valley, Libya

Colonel Bashir sits on a mat in the shade of a concrete block building, part of a group cutting out small white circles from copy paper. The men, who are half his fortysomething years and wearing a mixture of American sportswear (Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, and Lacoste shirts) and dun-colored camouflage, glue the little circles onto paper spray-painted with big black circles. These are targets. Bashir, a compact, self-contained former colonel in Muammar Qaddafi's army, is giving sniper training to Urwah Company of the Sabratha Brigade here at their base, a sun-baked Jafara Valley gravel company donated by its owner.

Colonel Bashir made a daring escape into Tunisia and back into free Libya at the Dehiba crossing in June to join this group. He now goes back and forth through free-Libyan held areas regularly. This valley lies below the 1,800-foot-high tablelands known as the Western Mountains, about 50 miles from the most important town in the area, Gharyan, still held by Qaddafi's forces. We are at the eastern terminus of free Libyan territory here, about 60 miles from Dehiba.

The 40 to 50 men in Urwah Company are part of a couple of hundred in the Brigade of the Revolutionaries of Sabratha. Like Bashir, they're from Sabratha, a coastal city of 100,000 famous for its magnificent Roman ruins, a far cry from this hazy, parched no man's land. Because Sabratha was retaken by Qaddafi's forces after an initial uprising in February, many men fled 60 miles south to continue the fight. Their furthest outposts are three or four miles from areas patrolled by Qaddafi troops. The Sabratha fighters there can hear their enemy over the walkie-talkies both sides use for field communication. Some of the men have tried to convince Qaddafi's soldiers to surrender, but haven't gotten far.

'Zintan: love it or leave it,' quips the youthful-looking, 43-year-old Dr. Ibrahim, part of the group brought in from Djerba. He's a Sabratha-born, British-educated specialist in neuromuscular disease, who came here from Britain on his summer vacation.

The nearest town, Zintan, is a 15-minute drive up hairpin turns through a mesa that looks a lot like parts of the American west. But it's an insular, conservative place very different from Libya's coastal cities. In two days walking and driving around Zintan, I see only two women on the street, both with faces covered.

"Zintan: love it or leave it," quips the youthful-looking, 43-year-old Dr. Ibrahim, part of the group brought in from Djerba by Colonel Bashir. He's a Sabratha-born, British-educated specialist in neuromuscular disease, who came here from Britain on his summer vacation with aid for the front-line fighters. Unfortunately, the high-quality British running shoes he hoped to donate were confiscated by Tunisian customs as "commercial merchandise." But his group has succeeded in bringing a third British ambulance here for the fighters.

While in Benghazi and smaller eastern coastal cities like Bayda and Derna, Libyans are exploring larger social changes, in Zintan, life feels more static. Yet here, too, shopkeepers press food on me for free, and there's a spirit of generosity to foreigners, along with some quasi-Appalachian suspicion.

At the gravel pit, the men of Urwah Company are grateful for electricity and running water and the three simple meals a day prepared by one of their group. They know many other fighters have it worse. Lunch on the day I visited was macaroni with chunks of lamb, followed by green melon and tea. But they are impatient to get on with retaking their home town of Sabratha before the fasting month of Ramadan begins in just a few days. During Ramadan, the company won't be eating or even drinking water between sunrise and sunset (only front-line fighters are allowed to break their fast).

Baha, 23, tells me that they are getting desperate to do something, so much so that they don't care if they live or die, "which isn't good." Lanky, with stringy hair and a wispy beard, he's one of a fair number of English speakers at the camp. ("I'm sorry Qaddafi did not give me the chance to become educated and learn English," another man tells me in Arabic Baha translates; Libya's public schools stopped teaching foreign languages at one point, with private courses available only to the middle and upper classes.)

Baha, born in England, has a degree in financial computing from the United Kingdom and for the last two years worked with the Libyan Investment Authority in Tripoli. He tried to flee to Tunisia in June. The border police confiscated his Libyan passport, and his family drove him south to the desert instead, where he was met by fighters from Urwah Company on June 19. The company's

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namesake Urwah, a 41-year-old Sabratha man killed in Brega near the start of the revolution, was a cousin of his, and his father recently visited him here from London. An uncle, a fighter stationed at the Tunisian border, told Baha not to participate in the most recent action Urwah Company undertook, in Gwalish, because he was too green.

Sabratha is so close that fighters based here used to make their way at night to its outskirts. But a few weeks ago, Qaddafi's forces tightened security within and around the town. They've also arrested an increasing number of citizens, whether on suspicion of trying to flee to Tunisia, as many western Libyans have done, or of helping the freedom fighters. Even taking a phone call from someone at the front is enough for imprisonment. Libya has two phone networks, and one is still under Qaddafi's control. The other, Libyana, was hacked by the revolutionaries and is free for calls within the network, though it can't dial out of network.

Almost every man I meet from Sabratha reels off a list of jailed relatives; Bashir's brother is among them. The owner of the gravel company was promptly arrested when he returned to Sabratha from setting it up for the fighters. Most detainees have been sent to prison in Tripoli. Mohamed al-Fitory, a dignified 56-year-old retired high school English teacher who taught some of the men fighting here, says there are 50,000 prisoners in Tripoli, including his eldest son and four of his nephews. In fluent English, he matter of factly states he expects some of the prisoners will be shot by Qaddafi's men in the last days of the regime.

When I express surprise that a man of his age, father of eight and grandfather of seven, is fighting alongside men of 19, he says, "Qaddafi makes no difference between the people who fight and those who do not. It is imposed upon us." He does daily weapons practice from 7 to 11 A.M.

While Colonel Bashir adjusts the positions of three men who shoot at the homemade targets, a fighter who is a fisherman in civilian life tries to make explosives using machine gun rounds and tin foil. We watch as he sets the packet on fire—but it burns rather than explodes. "I guess it needs more work, a lot more work!" Baha jokes. The improvised missile bases welded here are more impressive, U.S.-made 2.75-inch rockets triggered by car batteries. The men here received weapons training from Qatari soldiers and Tunisians, but they don't have enough ammunition to practice as often as they need to.

Qaddafi supporters rally in Sabratha's Roman ruins.

REUTERS / CHRIS HELGREN

The Sabratha Brigade men are urbanites, most with at least some college, and they are sophisticated enough to be aware of the possibilities for self-dramatization in their situation. "I'd never held a gun in my life" and "I never expected to be a fighter" are common refrains. Quite apart from Qaddafi's success at making sure only his guys owned guns, Libyan culture is far less oriented to physical training than American culture. Some of the men don't even have running shoes, much less army boots; hence Dr. Ibrahim's donation. Their barracks are filled with black-wheeled suitcases, not backpacks.

Yet they've adapted to this new life, with impressive self-discipline and morale. Rotating crews keep the bathrooms and kitchens cleaner than I've seen in many small American bases in Afghanistan, and the idea of sneaking in drugs or alcohol is unheard of. (Most of the men pray five times a day.) They do have a satellite TV, but I don't see anyone watching it on my visit. They drink water from cut-off plastic water bottles.

The Sabrathans have the advantage of being from a small country and a face-to-face society. Even those educated overseas, like Canadian-born Hammam, a 20-year-old student, soon fit seamlessly into the group. Though the men are from every walk of life—I met a fireman, a mechanic, a taxi driver, a cook, a pharmacy student, and a couple of engineers—most knew each other from Sabratha and many are related. This is reminiscent of American militias in our Revolution, and even the Civil War.

But also like those militias, each of the handful of brigades here seems to make decisions on its own, with only loose coordination with the others or with the titular commanders in Benghazi.

My trip with Colonel Bashir was arranged under the auspices of Benghazi-based Mustafa Sagezli, the American-educated deputy commander of the Martyrs of the 17th of February Brigade. While the term "brigade" in the Western Mountains often refers to a mere couple of hundred men, the Martyrs of the 17th of February actually has the numbers of an American Army brigade, around 3,000, scattered around Libya. But few people in the Sabratha Brigade or in Zintan seem to know who Sagezli is. Decisions are apparently made by the local military council in Zintan, then referred upward to Benghazi.

A young friend who fought around Nalut with the Tripoli Brigade, trained by Sagezli's men in Benghazi, estimates that all the units in the Western Mountains operate autonomously and don't add up to 1,000 men altogether.

The good news here is on the ground level: These men from Sabratha are, like the Libyans I met in Benghazi, smart, fairly well-educated, motivated, and self-disciplined. But though there's vague talk of an upcoming offensive, there's little discussion of strategy. The plan seems to be to move forward to cut Tripoli off from its coastal link to Tunisia. But no one could explain how 1,000 men could surround a city of two million. Several men asked me to tell the world that they need heavy weapons and four-by-four vehicles that can cross the desert; with these, they explain that they could sneak up on Qaddafi's forces. This may be true, but even a thousand men with heavy weapons wouldn't end the war.

Meanwhile, the men here report that conditions in the Qaddafi-held western Libyan coast continue to deteriorate. In Tripoli, men sleep in their cars in miles-long lines for gas, tossing their trash out the window. Garbage trucks work once every week or two, and electricity, says Hammam, is "on and off, mostly off." In Sabratha, they hear, some food prices have shot up by 300 percent. This Ramadan looks to be a grim one in western Libya. ♦

Slandering the Progress Party

Norway's opposition isn't extremist.

BY JAMES KIRCHICK

A march in memory of the massacre victims, outside Oslo City Hall, July 25

AP / EMILIO MORENATTI

In 1986, five-year-old Mazyar Keshvari and his family fled their native Tehran for Oslo. His parents were opponents of the Khomeini regime that took power following Iran's 1979 revolution, and there came a point when "it was not possible to be in Iran without risking being killed or tortured and imprisoned," he told me. Raised in a "politically active" family, he was expected to follow the path of civic engagement in his adopted country. "We have experience, on our own body and life, how political decisions make a difference in people's life," he says. "So when we came to Norway, it was very natural for me to go to a liberal party that worked for individual liberty."

For Keshvari, that party was Norway's Progress party, whose youth wing he joined in 1999 and which he today represents on the Oslo City Council. Founded in 1973 primarily to advocate for a lower tax burden, the party was concerned mainly with economics. Calling for the legalization of private medical insurance, income tax cuts, and the privatization of government-owned monopolies, the Progress party became the third-largest party in the 1989 parliamentary election. As Muslim immigration has become a major issue in Norway (as it has across Europe), the party has taken a (relatively) hard line, calling not only for a decrease in the number of immigrants allowed into the country, but for more exacting assimilation policies as well.

Those policies, and the party's

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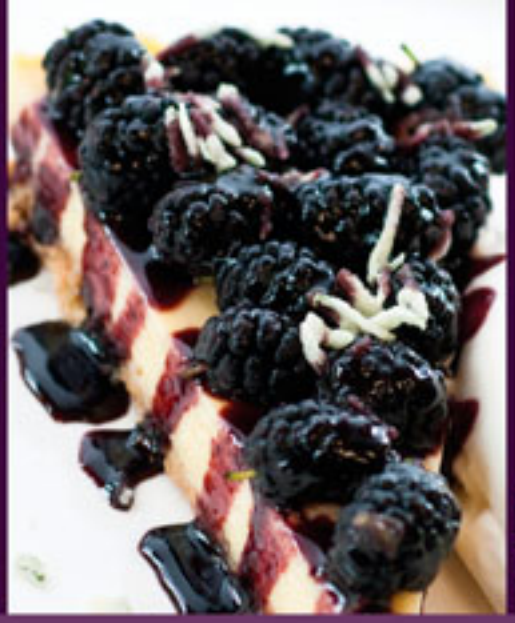


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rhetoric in defending them, have come under attack in the wake of last week's massacre, in which anti-Muslim extremist Anders Behring Breivik murdered 76 Norwegians as part of a plan to "save Europe from Islamification." Breivik, who was a member of the party's youth movement from 1997 to 2007, claims to have attacked young members of the ruling Labor party because of its allegedly lax view on Muslim immigration. While the Progress party has long been a target of the country's left-wing media and cultural elite, most Norwegians have desisted from scoring political points off of last week's horror. Instead, the party has come under attack from foreign media.

The *New York Times* refers to it as "stridently anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim." The *Sydney Morning Herald* calls it "far right," as does the *Irish Times*. In the *New Republic*, Karen J. Greenberg complains that the party's "political pushback against Muslim populations" is "deceptively urbane" and "largely acceptable in polite company." As early as 2002, the *Guardian* was warning about "Norway's dark secret," namely, the increasing popularity of the "far-right Progress party," which rendered Norway "home to Europe's most successful far-right movement."

Others have gone so far as to lay the blame for the murders on the doorstep of the party itself. In an article for the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* entitled "To You who Nourished the Killer," former Norwegian television personality Petter Nome specifically addressed Siv Jensen, the party's leader. While writing that "Ms. Jensen is not a supporter of violence," and that "neither are most of her colleagues in populist and right wing parties in Europe," Nome argued, "They carry profound responsibility for actively creating a climate where hate and violence appear as options for their most impatient followers." (Nome has since apologized for his remarks.)

All of this is astonishing to Keshvari. "I think it's sad that people who don't have knowledge about our party can say something like that, because the Progress party's ideology is classical liberalism." Indeed, the party's stance on immigration is doctrinaire libertarian, in that it believes in the "freest possible movement of labor," provided "that people who take up residence in Norway do not automatically receive welfare rights, which burden the Norwegian taxpayer." One might find this policy uncompassionate. But it's not racist or "anti-Muslim." As an Iranian immigrant, Keshvari says that, if anything, it is left-wing Norwegians who are obsessed with his immigrant background, attacking him for belonging to a center-right party. He likens his situation to "the problems that you have in your country with black Republicans."

"There are too many immigrants coming here, so we have to stop that because we have to take care of those who are already here," Farida Amin, a Norwegian of Pakistani descent who immigrated with her family in 1975, told me. She now works for the Progress party and has been a member for eight years. Its emphasis on assimilation, and its concern for the harsh treatment that many Muslim women in Norway receive at the hands of their male relatives, is what attracted her. "Many women from non-Western countries are prevented from employment and active citizenship by their husbands, so we are working for that."

In 2009, a representative of the sexual violence division of the Oslo police reported that, in the past 3 years, every single one of the city's 41 reported aggravated sexual assaults had been committed by immigrants who come from countries "with a very different view of women than we have in Norway." As to accusations that the party is "anti-Muslim," Amin says, "No one has ever discriminated against me because of my religion."

Among immigrant Norwegians, Amin is hardly alone in her allegiance. A poll conducted in 2009, at the time of the country's last national elections, found that while the Labor party was "by far" the most popular with immigrants, the Progress party came second. "The Progress party is gaining more members who believe in Allah," claimed the Norwegian *Dagbladet* newspaper at the time. Adnan Madesko, a self-described "liberal Muslim" from Bosnia, is cognizant of the dangers of anti-Muslim prejudice. He and his family fled the former Yugoslavia for Norway, "because of the racism we experienced towards Bosnians," he told the paper. "The Serbs tried to exterminate us as the Germans tried to exterminate the Jews. Therefore, I am sad and angry when people call me a racist. I know what racism is." For what it's worth, the party's shadow foreign minister, Morton Hoglund, is married to a Muslim woman.

It's true that anti-immigration sentiment is on the rise in Europe, and the Progress party has certainly been able to harness that concern for electoral advantage. But unlike other Scandinavian political parties that have gained support in recent years, like the Sweden Democrats or Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, the Progress party does not endorse ending immigration or asylum. "All parties agree on one thing," Siv Jensen told me, "and that is that we do have immigration to Norway and we will have immigration to Norway in the future as well. So you won't find any elected party in Norway opposing immigration or opposing Norway's [taking] our share of the responsibility for people running for their lives."

Moreover, the attempt to tar the party with Breivik's erstwhile membership is weakened by the fact that it was, well, erstwhile. Breivik may have initially been attracted to the Progress party by its policy on immigration, but he eventually quit because it did not conform to his own, murderously paranoid views. In a 2002 entry to his manifesto, Breivik wrote, "I am going to discontinue my involvement in the Norwegian Progress party as I have lost faith in the democratic struggle to save Europe from Islamification." Breivik complained that the party is "systematically ridiculed and isolated by all other political parties and a united media sector. This, even despite the fact that they have taken measures and gotten rid of all true nationalists ending up with only opportunistic career cynisists [sic]

unwilling to take any political risks."

One of the reasons why the attack came as such a shock is that, unlike in other European countries, Norway has no appreciable, organized far-right movement. Therefore, in order to fit a convenient media narrative, the party's critics have simply asserted that it is the Norwegian offshoot of a continent-wide phenomenon. Even the *Daily Telegraph*, hardly a bastion of elite left-wing opinion, called the Progress party a "fringe group" (an odd way to describe the country's second-largest party), though it qualified the characterization by reporting that it "denies holding neo-Nazi views," a variation of the old "when did you stop beating your wife" chestnut.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, many commentators were quick to allege that the perpetrators were Muslim. While such a scenario was certainly plausible, it was nonetheless false. The error of that hasty assumption, however, hasn't prevented others from making a host of assertions about the Progress party that are equally unfounded. "Journalists, who have an important job to do," says Jensen, the party leader, "need to face facts before they write and jump to conclusions."

Towards the end of his manifesto, Breivik wrote,

> I anticipate that the Norwegian media will persecute and undermine the Progress Party for my earlier involvement in the organisation. This is not a negative thing as an increasing amount of Norwegians will then have their "illusions of democratic change" crushed (if the Progress Party is annihilated by the multiculturalist media) and rather resorts to armed resistance. From a tactical and pragmatical viewpoint; the PC Media's defeat of the Progress Party will benefit the armed National Resistance Movement in Norway. The more moderate alternatives are persecuted the more likely it is that the average nationalist's illusions of peaceful reform will be crushed, which will lead to him seeking "other means."

By painting the Progress party as something it is emphatically not, the media is playing right into the hands of this mass-murdering sociopath. ♦

Time to Stockpile Lucky Charms?

The Obama administration targets food marketed to children. BY KATE HAVARD

The Obama administration is after your Lucky Charms, or at least your children's. The public comment period closed on July 14 for a set of "voluntary" guidelines for the marketing of food to children. If adopted, these rules will transform the advertising of breakfast cereals.

Put forward by an interagency working group, the guidelines will establish nutritional standards that most cereals flunk—and not just those of the "Chocolate Frosted Sugar Bombs" variety. Corn Flakes will not be advertisable to children, along with Raisin Bran, Special K, Rice Krispies, and Wheaties. Plain Cheerios squeak by the proposed 2016 rules but fall foul of the "ultimate goal" for sodium effective in 2021.

So long, Cap'n

While cereals are the most obvious targets of the guidelines, all foods marketed to children will have to meet the proposed nutritional standards. Many don't. Peanut butter (both smooth and crunchy) has too much saturated fat. Jelly has too much sugar. Forget about apple-cinnamon instant oatmeal and Mott's apple sauce.

These foods may still appear in grocery stores, but not in brightly colored packages adorned with cartoon characters. Toucan Sam, Cap'n Crunch, and Tony the Tiger will have to retire.

The definition of "marketing to children" is broad. A television show is deemed "targeted to children" if 20 percent of the audience is 18 or under. Any child-oriented theme, like education or parenting or T-ball, cannot be mentioned in the advertising of foods that don't meet the standards. Frosted Flakes will no longer be allowed to sponsor Little League baseball. The Coca Cola Company will have to give up its Coca Cola Scholars Foundation (which provides $3.4 million a year in scholarships) or perhaps rename it after one of the company's bottled waters. General Mills's "Box Tops for Education" program will be barred from kid-friendly cereals. The slogan "Choosy moms choose Jif" will be forbidden as too "targeted."

Martin Redish, a law professor at Northwestern University, isn't buying this. He argues that if adopted, the regulations will improperly restrict constitutionally protected speech.

The agencies defend the guidelines, he says, by calling them merely a tool for "self-regulation." But Redish says they will be anything but voluntary. If you don't "self-regulate" you'll attract the ire of the working group's member agencies: the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Agriculture, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

Flouting the guidelines may bring anything from public shaming by the White House to investigations and class action lawsuits. What food company wants to get on the FDA's bad side?

More important, Redish foresees an inevitable move toward compulsory regulation. He points to a 2010 White House report on childhood obesity which states, "If voluntary

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efforts to limit the marketing of less healthy foods . . . to children do not yield substantial results, the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] could consider . . . modernizing rules" for limiting ads.

Redish also quotes a high-ranking FTC official as saying that without "greater strides" under the "voluntary" guidelines, Congress is likely to "decide for all of us what additional steps are required."

Maybe, but a group called the Sensible Food Policy Coalition is pushing back. Former Obama White House communications director Anita Dunn has teamed up with 17 companies, including Kellogg, General Mills, and PepsiCo, to counter the proposed rules.

"I don't want to use the term 'overreach,'" Dunn told me, pausing for effect, "but the broad nature of the proposed regulations, both in terms of who they apply to, this gigantic universe of people, what they consider 'children's programming,' the unworkable, impracticable standards they use in their nutritional values—that's the issue."

When asked if her work with the coalition was at odds with her former roles on the Obama team, she said the regulation of children's food advertising had nothing to do with Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign.

It's not a First Lady thing, Dunn said, "It's a Tom Harkin thing," adding that she's known the senator, an Iowa Democrat, since 1984, and "he's become an unbelievable ideologue."

Dunn's coalition put forward their own guidelines on July 14, just in time for inclusion in the official comments, which the working group is now reviewing. The counter-guidelines were received warmly by the FTC chairman, who called them "exactly the type of initiative the commission had in mind."

"I think everybody is looking for ways to address the significant childhood obesity problem in this country," Dunn said.

Washington seems to be addressing this the way it addresses so many things: poorly, and with a mess of top-down regulations. ♦

Political Grit

Meet Tom Cotton, from Yell County, Arkansas, near Dardanelle. BY KENNETH Y. TOMLINSON

Why did Arkansas Democrat Mike Ross suddenly announce last week he is not running for reelection for the Fourth Congressional District seat he has held with ease for six terms?

Many linked his decision to his desire to run for governor in 2014, but insiders also recognize that next fall Ross was about to be confronted with the strongest challenger of his congressional career, in the person of Republican Tom Cotton of Yell County near Dardanelle.

That's the same place that was made a household name in *True Grit*, as in "My name is Mattie Ross of near Dardanelle in Yell County." But the story of Tom Cotton which is about to unfold in his congressional campaign is strictly nonfiction.

After Ranger school, Cotton arrived in Iraq a second lieutenant in the 101st Airborne, where he led soldiers in combat in southern Baghdad.

A rural Arkansas farm boy, Cotton made his way to Harvard and Harvard Law, where he graduated with distinction, with a stop to study at the Claremont Graduate University in between.

Cotton was walking out of a law school class when he learned terrorists had struck the World Trade Center. A world of legal wealth and prestige lay before him, but inside he sensed he soon would be going to war.

Those who know Cotton well are struck by his systematic demeanor, which leads him to lay plans before acting. He had obligations to fulfill before he could volunteer for Army service. He had committed to clerk for a federal appellate judge. Then he went into private practice to pay off his student loans. An Army friend wrote him from Iraq not to worry. "I'm afraid the war will still be on by the time you can get here."

It was.

The Army recruiter examined his record and began explaining that Cotton, given his credentials, would qualify for a nice job with the rank of captain in the Judge Advocate General Corps.

Cotton politely interrupted. "I don't think you understand. I'm here to volunteer for the infantry."

After Ranger school, he arrived in Iraq a second lieutenant in the 101st Airborne, where he led soldiers in combat in southern Baghdad. Then he spent a year leading an Old Guard platoon burying soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. ("There is no greater responsibility than what we did for those families who never again will see their loved ones," he says.)

Then he volunteered for a tour in Afghanistan in Taliban-infested Laghman Province just north of the Tora Bora mountains.

In late 2009, as he prepared to leave the Army, there was talk of a draft for the Republican nomination for a U.S. Senate seat from Arkansas. The effort was led by an Arkansas legislator named Michael Lamoureux who became a close friend of Cotton competing against him as they played for rival high school basketball teams. (They have remained close since; Lamoureux boasts that he is the only person who ever blocked the lanky Cotton from achieving a goal.)

The draft was reported in a

AP / DANNY JOHNSTON

Kenneth Y. Tomlinson is a former editor-in-chief of Reader's Digest.

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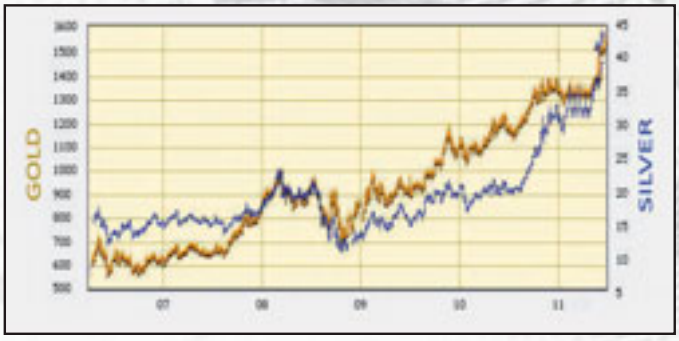

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leading Arkansas political blog, which prompted an online comment from Army sergeant Stephen Anthony: "I have had the great pleasure of working for a year [in Iraq] with Thomas Cotton. He is . . . one of the rare officers who actually showed a genuine concern for his Soldiers. . . . If he were to devote even an ounce of time and energy in a Senate seat as he did as my Platoon Leader, the Republican Party would be a far better place for it."

Ever the practical planner, Cotton decided against a rush into the Senate campaign, electing instead to become a management consultant with McKinsey & Company.

But his old pal Lamoureux, now a state senator, was determined to get Cotton into a race for public office. In congressional redistricting following the 2010 Census, Yell County was moved into the Fourth Congressional District, and while Ross had won reelection with ease since defeating a Republican incumbent in 2000, those new district lines and the rapidly rising post-Obama fortunes of the GOP in Arkansas were sufficient to convince Cotton to challenge Ross.

The geographically vast district spreads across the southern half of the state, but redistricting removed some Democratic strongholds along the southern tip of the Mississippi and added territory from the state's more

Getting out while the getting's good: retiring congressman Mike Ross

Republican northwest. The district includes such spots as Hot Springs, Pine Bluff, El Dorado, and the border town of Texarkana.

In the presidential race John McCain carried even the old district with 58 percent of the vote. Meanwhile, Karl Rove's American Crossroads began targeting Ross with critical television advertising. Cotton believed this was a race he could win—and that was before Ross bailed.

The Fourth District is not the only thing about Arkansas politics that has changed. In 2008, though McCain was about to sweep to victory in the state, Arkansas Republicans failed to field an opponent against a single Democrat up for reelection in the Senate or the House.

Last November changed all that. The GOP captured a Senate seat and two House seats and made record gains down-ballot. Today Democrats hold only Ross's district in the House, and in the Senate, Mark Pryor's seat looks vulnerable in 2014.

As soon as Ross announced he would not run again, a host of Democrats began jockeying for the nomination. Cotton supporters are confident he can secure the GOP nomination. Beth Anne Rankin, a former Miss Arkansas and Huckabee administration appointee, is another potential candidate, but she managed to get only 40 percent of the vote against Ross last year.

The list of well-known conservatives preparing to support Cotton reads like a Who's Who of the movement. His former professors at Claremont are as much in awe at the prospects of Cotton in Congress as his old sergeant in Iraq. "You have to remember that this young man interrupted a fast-track life to study the Federalist Papers," explains Charles Kesler, now editor of the *Claremont Review of Books*. "And that was before he interrupted his life to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Cotton, meanwhile, is as comfortable talking about domestic policy and the need to restrict the growth of government as he is in assessing American strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan. There is an ease about his manner that masks his intellectual prowess and the courage that marked his service.

Arkansas novelist Charles Portis managed to get a lot of life out of his classic tale of *True Grit*. But as Tom Cotton begins his campaign for Congress, many are left with a sense that in the years ahead the country could hear a lot more about another extraordinary figure from Yell County near Dardanelle. ♦

Civility, Obama Style

The portentous pronouncements of the humanities czar

By Andrew Ferguson

Among the many surprises of Barack Obama's presidency, perhaps the most unexpected have been his appointments to the federal government's egghead agencies—the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Even his ardent admirers might admit that the current president's selections were sub-Bushian.

It was an article of faith with Obama's snootier acolytes that George W. Bush was a philistine and a moron. ("Somewhere in Texas a village is missing its idiot" was stripped across the bumper of many a Prius puttering around the reality-based community back in the day.) In fact Bush's appointments showed he took the cultural agencies seriously. If not a man of high culture himself, he knew one when he saw one. To the NEH he brought a world-class historian of Renaissance painting, Bruce Cole. He selected Dana Gioia, one of the country's most admired poets and literary critics, to lead the NEA.

Jim Leach

Although unusually accomplished, these men were in line with the appointments of previous presidents, who generally picked their chairmen from the country's large reserve of artists, scholars, and arts administrators. Even Bill Clinton had the inspired idea to pick the celebrated actress Jane Alexander to run his NEA. And he's from Arkansas.

But Barack Obama? Memoirist, prose stylist of distinction, resident of Hyde Park, prowler of used bookstores, professor of constitutional law? The man whom Michael Beschloss (Distinguished Professor of History, Charlie Rose Tech) called "probably the smartest guy ever to become president"? Surely he would use the opportunity to look beyond the things that divide us as Americans and, drawing on our core common values that we all share as Americans, appoint chairmen who could lift us up and speak to the heart of the American narrative about who we are as Americans. Some artist or scholar—a well-known pottery maker, even. A macramé artist. Pete Seeger. I don't know.

No, though. Instead Obama has used the agency chairmanships as spoils of political hackery. To run the NEA, he appointed a Broadway producer ("Big River") named Rocco Landesman, whose chief qualification for the job was to share a business office with one of Obama's most fertile fundraising "bundlers," another Broadway producer ("Hairspray") called Margo Lion, whose generosity earned her a place atop Obama's "arts policy committee."

Not a brainiac, Landesman first broke into public consciousness with a speech declaring that Obama is "the most powerful writer since Caesar." The claim wasn't as ludicrous as it first sounds—Landesman meant that the president was the most politically powerful person since Caesar who could also be thought of as a writer—but it was still pretty ludicrous.

"This is the first president that actually writes his own books since Teddy Roosevelt," Landesman said, "and arguably the first to write them really well since Lincoln." Good thing he inserted that indispensable fudge word "arguably." Obama is indeed the first president to have written his own books since Teddy Roosevelt, but only if you don't count Woodrow Wilson, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and, arguably, Bill Clinton. And Obama couldn't be the first president to write his books really well since Lincoln because he, Lincoln, didn't write any.

Obama made an even odder choice to run the NEH. Jim Leach is a former Republican congressman from Iowa whose only credential in the humanities seems to be his cofounding of the Congressional Humanities Caucus in 2004, after he had been in Congress for 27 years. His other qualifications must have struck the president as more decisive. Leach was perhaps the earliest prominent Republican to endorse Obama for president, an endorsement he throatily reiterated in a full-dress speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2008.

Leach's Obamaphilia didn't come as a complete surprise. In his 30 years in Congress, he earned a reputation among the mainstream press as a "Reasonable Republican"

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who could be counted on to rise above petty partisanship. In ordinary language, this meant he was a liberal Republican who voted with Democrats on crucial issues like abortion rights, campaign finance, and environmental regulation. His annual rating from Americans for Democratic Action was sometimes double his rating from the American Conservative Union.

Unlike some other Reasonable Republicans I could name, Leach deserved much of the admiration his admirers felt for him. He was earnest, soft-spoken, impeccably honest, accessible, and hardworking, and he cleaved to his own kind of integrity, refusing, for instance, to accept campaign contributions over $500. But some admirable qualities are not required to achieve the status of Reasonable Republican in Washington: wide learning, deep intellect, or even managerial skill. Unfortunately, these are the qualities you'd hope to find in a federal advocate for the humanities and the arts.

Obama's choice of a brassy Broadway financier and a retired professional politician to be his intellectual ambassadors reveals in the president a sensibility that is neither lowbrow nor highbrow, but no brow—a consuming political calculator working outside any consideration of the arts or the humanities at all.

How far outside? Lucky for us, the NEH has assembled Leach's speeches in a handy archive on the agency's website. Together they open a window into the intellectual life of the administration of the smartest guy ever to become president.

For the theme of his tenure Leach has chosen "civility," or, as I have come to think of it after thrashing my way through his archive, the New Civility, to distinguish it from the old, easy-to-understand civility that most of us are familiar with.

"Civilization requires civility," Leach likes to say, and the chairman has ensured that civilization will trickle down through his agency and, he hopes, into the country at large. Each year the NEH hands out about $140 million in grants to roughly a thousand hat-in-hand humanists. Program directors who receive an NEH grant are now expected to agree to the agency's published "Principles of Civility," an Obama-era version of the old loyalty oaths. Under the agency's auspices public seminars have been held in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, teaching the locals the value of the New Civility and its Principles. Most ambitious of all, Leach undertook his own "civility tour" across the country. He began the tour in late 2009 and finished it in May of this year.

Even with the end of the tour, Chairman Leach is still talking about civility. After appearing in 80 cities and towns in 50 states over the course of 19 months, he probably couldn't stop if he wanted to. And it's not clear that anyone other than his wife would notice if he did. Leach's civility tour was not a public relations bonanza. It drew little comment in the national press. One notable exception is the irreplaceable Scott Johnson of the blog Powerline, who tracked the tour with a pitiless, though civil, eye. Another is the columnist E.J. Dionne. In a column to mark the launch of the tour, Dionne wished Leach good luck and wrote, "My hunch is that this very civil man may have to put up with a lot of incivility along the way."

Dionne was, of course, wrong. In declaring his hunch the columnist was merely observing the first rule of the New Civility: Whenever an admirer of the president issues a call for civility, which happens often, we are to pretend that he's doing something courageous, even outré, standing bravely against the irresistible current of the culture at large, which in revenge will try to make him its victim. We all like to puff ourselves up this way. But Republicans have been struck by an odd coincidence, that civility in the public debate became a national concern right about the time they began resisting the president and his policies.

"Evidence of growing social fissures is real," Leach said near the beginning of the tour, in the spring of 2010, when the premonitory rumblings of that fall's Republican landslide were first being felt. Leach mentioned the "comments several months back on the House floor" during the health care debate. "Citizens are becoming less open minded and more disrespectful of their leaders, other faith systems, and each other."

He had one particular leader in mind. "Many citizens have over the course of the last year charged our current President with advancing policies that were either 'communist,' or 'fascist,' or both. . . . Several in public life have even toyed with history-blind radicalism—the notion of secession."

Words like these, Leach went on, while "protected by free speech," are "a vocabulary of hate, jeopardizing social cohesion and even public safety."

How so? "Hate groups, some armed," he continued, "are on the rise." He didn't produce any evidence for this claim—Leach is not a detail guy—but still: "Vastly more rancorous, socially divisive acts and assertions are being made across the land."

He told audiences about the recent murder of a young Ecuadorean immigrant in a small town in New York, where a gang of thugs called the local Hispanics "beaners." The uncivil name-calling escalated into organized harassment—"beaner hopping"—until one day the thugs stabbed the Ecuadorean boy to death.

"For those who might question what is so awful about a simple expression of personal bigotry," Leach said, "it must be understood that there are few greater threats to civilization than intolerance."

And there's more where that murder came from. In asking his audiences to practice the New Civility, Leach looked back on the horrors of the last century and mentioned the First World War, the Holocaust, the genocides in Rwanda and Cambodia, and the "prejudice driven murders of Emmett Till" and Matthew Shepard. His conclusion: "Fear of the different is a weakness of the human condition."

Reading this I could imagine an audience searching for the appropriate response to the chairman's speech. His line of reasoning is not entirely clear. He seems to be saying that not only do "intolerance" and a "fear of the different" lead to murder and genocide, they also lead to a sickening lack of civility. Perhaps in a perfect world—in the "hate-free nation that must be our common goal"—the gang of thugs stabbing the young man from Ecuador would suddenly stop themselves and hang their heads in shame: "How could we be so *impolite*?"

As I read further into the archive, however, I saw that I might have been misunderstanding Leach's point. This is not my fault. As a prose stylist, Leach is no Obama. His sentences come in odd shapes and sizes, and he tends to back into them, verb first, keeping his reader off balance. For example: "Little is more important for the world's leading democracy . . . " And: "Seldom is there only one proper path determinable by one individual, one country, or one political party."

I don't know where he got that "determinable." With a little jiggering the sentence could easily have lived without it. But it's a good example of his method of choosing words—the bigger the better. Earlier I said that civility was the chairman's theme; Leach prefers to say his policies have a *thematic*. You've already seen that religions are really *faith systems*. "Argumentation is a social good," he writes, tossing aside the commoner word *argument* as not fancy enough for a humanities guy. Cultures don't differ; they have *cultural differentiations*.

The helium often spreads throughout the entire sentence. On its way from brain to teleprompter to voice box, a simple idea like "nobody's perfect" expands into "Imperfect judgment characterizes the human condition." Sometimes sentences swell to proportions so large and bumpy you can scarcely see from end to end:

> Indifferent to the most unpardonable ramifications of human prejudice, many of the seemingly best and brightest in civilization's most advanced cultures manipulated with little compunction manifestly oppressive circumstances in furtherance of self-interest.

Even the shorter effusions can be puzzling, thanks to the

chairman's preference for the abstract word over the concrete. "Certain frameworks of thought define rival ideas," he said often on the civility tour. "Other frameworks describe enemies." I think the phrase "framework of thought" is what stumped me. Isn't a "framework" a "thought" too? So thoughts about thoughts describe enemies? And ideas—they're thoughts too, right? So thoughts about thoughts define other thoughts? I am sure they do, but after reading 27 speeches I'm not sure that this is what he means. My current guess is that he hoped to say: *You can choose to take disagreements personally or you can choose to judge them on the merits.* If anyone has a better translation I'm open to suggestions.

Another recurring sentence, or one of its variants, often serves as the opening line of his civility speeches. It is not what the speechwriting trade calls a "lapel-grabber."

"Perspective is always difficult to apply to events and circumstances of the day."

Now, in my reading, Leach floats off with that very first word, *perspective*. Does the sentence mean it's difficult to see current events in light of history or philosophy? Surely he couldn't believe that. Does he mean it's hard to remain disinterested when thinking about today's controversies? If so, he's got a point, though a trivial one. Does he mean that we should consider the long-term effects of our current disputes? We should, we should!

But maybe that's not what he means. He likes to say the NEH is in the "perspective dissemination business," which is no help at all.

Perhaps the context makes plain the meaning of such Leachian puzzles? Not in my experience, no. But Leach seems to think so. *Context* is his favorite word; "in this context" and "in the context of" are his favorite phrases. The context could be anything. "In the context of a newly challenged America," he will say. "In the context of Jefferson's love for this university . . . " "In the context of American history . . . of growing demographic burdens . . . of the challenges in higher education today . . . of philosophy . . . of jurisprudence . . . of life experience . . . "

"In this context" and its siblings are among the most unnecessary phrases in the language—as a general rule, any sentence would profit from its removal. As I read through the archive I began to dread its next appearance, which was never far off. Just say "in a newly challenged America" and get on with it. For crying out loud.

It was only later that I realized why the chairman likes to use this particular crutch to prop up his sentences. Yes, "in this context" sounds vaguely academic, like something an egghead would say, but, more important, it makes his theme—his thematic, I mean—appear much grander than it truly is, once all the helium has been released and the abstract nouns shooed away. By putting events in the context of his choosing, he can make connections that aren't there. Thus a harsh debate over health care, "in the context of history, philosophy, and life experiences," can be understood as merely a milder form of the murder of an Ecuadorean in small-town New York, which in turn is but a small-scale iteration of the Holocaust.

Context provides a rebuke to those who would consider the New Civility trivial or silly: You shouldn't roll your eyes at something that, properly understood, could stifle the urge to slaughter entire peoples. Yet Leach never gets around to defining what, precisely, the New Civility is. He first tries the *via negativa*, as the humanists used to call it, defining civility by explaining what it is not.

"Civility is not principally about manners," he says. "The concept of civility implies politeness, but civil discourse is more than good etiquette." This is the point at which the New Civility detaches itself from regular old civility, which is principally—indeed, solely—about manners. The old civility is social, a matter of behaving the right way: speaking softly, listening quietly, keeping your temper in check. The New Civility is psychological, a matter of thinking the right thoughts: thinking, as it happens, like Jim Leach and his boss.

"What is required is a greater willingness to consider—respectfully—diverse views, recognizing that we are all connected and rely on each other." Listening quietly is no longer enough—that's just run-of-the-mill politeness. The New Civility requires us to "consider respectfully," to "place other views in the context of history, philosophy, and life experiences." Under the old civility we could be satisfied if people listened quietly because polite silence was all we could reasonably expect; whether you were considering other views respectfully or recognizing that we are all connected was your own business.

Now it's the chairman's business and he has ways of finding out: Do your statements show that you've found the proper context? Leach of course is happy to provide it. Our present situation, in his view, is binary: Leaders can either "opt for unifying statesmanship or opportunistic partisanship." Voters can choose between "those who seek unity by respecting diversity, or those who press debilitating cultural wars or extreme ideological agendas."

We can be certain—it's plain from the context—which side Jim Leach and President Obama are on. The problem is, they can't be certain about the rest of us. Their New Civility is premised on the idea that the country's heated debates are caused by the opportunistic partisanship and extreme agendas of their adversaries. It assumes that the people on the other side are dealing in bad faith. It assumes, in other words, the very worst of their political opponents.

That's why Leach had to invent the New Civility: Under the old civility it would be considered uncivil—and recognized as political hackery, prettied up. ♦

Vermont Stands Alone

Hi ho, the derry-o: the obsessions of a single-party state

By Geoffrey Norman

Dorset, Vermont

The country may have turned right in the 2010 election, but Vermont, manifestly, did not. The state is small, with a population of slightly more than 625,000 souls and a landmass that could be swallowed up by, say, Wyoming. But Vermont is feisty. If it were a dog, it would be a Jack Russell terrier. Vermont was the first state in the union to legalize same-sex marriage by a vote of the legislature as opposed to judicial fiat, and it routinely sends a socialist, Bernie Sanders, to Congress. In fact, Senator Sanders gave a long, filibuster-like speech in opposition to the tax bill passed during the 2010 lame duck session that was hundred-proof class warfare, potent enough to inspire a Sanders-for-President website and to be published in book form so that people who can't get enough of progressive rhetoric can go to the bookshelf at any time and thrill to Lincolnesque passages like this:

The Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant

> [W]e can put people to work improving our water systems, our wastewater plants. It is a very expensive proposition to develop a good wastewater plant. … It is an expensive proposition for roads, bridges. Furthermore, I do not have to tell anybody here, our rail system, which used to be the greatest rail system in the world, is now falling way behind every other major country on Earth.

The same impulse that sends Sanders to the Senate elected Peter Shumlin governor of Vermont in November 2010. The office had been held for the previous eight years by Jim Douglas, a moderate Republican who somehow managed to transcend that awkward fact in the minds of an electorate who, for the last of his two-year terms, nevertheless took the precaution of burdening him with a veto-proof legislature. The Vermont Republican party went into decline while Douglas was governor, and by the time he announced that he would not run for reelection, it was on life support.

So in November 2010, while the rest of the nation was voting its remorse for what it had done in 2008, Vermont went the other way, reaffirming the faith it had demonstrated when it gave more than 67 percent of its vote to Barack Obama. Now the state once again has a Democratic governor. Both houses of the legislature have veto-proof Democratic majorities. There is even a robust Progressive party presence in the state house. And, of course, there are the state's three representatives in Washington: in the Senate, Sanders and Patrick Leahy, a partisan warhorse first elected in the Watergate backdraft of 1974 who just won a seventh term, and in the House, Vermont's lone member, Peter Welch, a bland and reliably liberal Democrat.

The Republican party's senior officeholder is the lieutenant governor, Phil Scott, who is colorful and energetic—he drives race cars and does symbolic, one-day turns at various forms of labor, like dishwashing, to better understand the lives of voters—but also believes in consensus and considers himself a "partner" in the Shumlin administration.

In Vermont, then, the left is on a roll, with no serious opposition and nothing to keep it from achieving its goals except, perhaps, its own overreach.

Many of those goals, as it happens, had already been achieved even before the last election. In 2000, the state recognized "civil unions" under a law signed behind closed doors by Governor Howard Dean. In 2009, both houses of the legislature passed a bill making same-sex marriage legal. Douglas vetoed the bill and was overridden.

By 2010, then, not much was left to do when it came to the social issues, except to legalize marijuana, which

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Geoffrey Norman edits the website VermontTiger.com.

doesn't seem to excite the passions it once did, perhaps because hardly anyone ever gets busted these days for smoking the stuff. In other areas, however, there remained an unfinished agenda, and one of its most important items was the killing off of nuclear power.

The story of Vermont and nuclear power resembles the long, acrimonious breakup of a bad marriage. Mutual suspicions, angry recriminations, conflicts over money—nukes and Vermont were probably never compatible.

A nuclear plant has been producing electricity in Vermont since 1972, and even before it went on line, some citizens were determined to shut it down. They proved to be in for the long haul. For them, nuclear power was a defilement of the natural world. In their view, it not only caused cancer; it *was* cancer. The salvation of the human race depended on the eradication of all things nuclear, starting with the Vermont Yankee plant on the Connecticut River in the southeast corner of the state.

By 2010, not much was left to do when it came to the social issues, except to legalize marijuana, which doesn't seem to excite the passions it once did, perhaps because hardly anyone ever gets busted these days for smoking the stuff.

The plant was originally owned by a consortium of New England utilities. In 2002, it was bought by Entergy, a Louisiana-based energy conglomerate that was expanding its holdings in nuclear power and had purchased the much larger Indian Point plants in New York two years before. The Vermont Yankee deal—brokered by Howard Dean's administration—included an understanding that Entergy would increase the output of the plant by some 20 percent and apply to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a license extension so as to continue operating for another 20 years after the original license was due to expire in March 2012.

"In your dreams," swore the antinuclear forces. They understood that if they had a chance of shutting down a nuclear plant anywhere, Vermont was that place. Vermont, where the commune movement took root and flourished in the 1960s and '70s and where commune-reared children were now voters. Vermont, where at town meetings in 1981, once business like the amount of road salt to lay in for winter was dispensed with, 14 towns voted for a freeze on the production of nuclear weapons. Vermont was the place; Yankee was the plant.

The first years of Entergy's ownership were relatively calm. Protesters would occasionally picket the company's state headquarters or the plant and sometimes get themselves arrested for trespassing. They would pack information hearings and town meetings to shout down speakers. They would send letters to the editor, describing how they lived in fear of a Chernobyl on the Connecticut, and the state's newspapers routinely published them.

Not long after Entergy acquired Vermont Yankee, it faced a crisis not of its own making. The plant was running out of space in the pool where it stored spent fuel. With a proposed federal storage facility in Nevada on hold, Vermont Yankee adopted a plan to encase its spent fuel in cylinders of steel and concrete called "dry casks" and store them above ground, on a concrete pad. The antinuke forces were of course opposed, and in 2004 they pressured the legislature in Montpelier into ruling that before there could be storage in dry casks Entergy must agree to make regular payments into a fund to subsidize renewable energy projects. Those payments have, at this time, amounted to some $20 million. Peter Welch was the leader of the Vermont senate at the time and instrumental in brokering this "deal." People at Entergy had another word for it.

Meanwhile, they continued to improve and upgrade the plant as part of their plan to increase output by 20 percent. There had never been any secret about this, but the antis were opposed on the ground that it would stress the "aging" plant and lead to an accident.

Still, after many protests and dire warnings of catastrophe, the plant increased its power output and continued to supply about one-third of Vermont's baseload electricity at a rate that was the lowest in New England. At this point, just about everyone assumed the antis had been marginalized and Yankee would be given permission by the federal and state authorities to operate for another 20 years. Until one day in the summer of 2007 when a cooling tower collapsed.

The cooling towers at Vermont Yankee are not those hourglass shaped affairs whose silhouette has become the unofficial logo of nuclear power. In fact, at Yankee they are not "towers" at all. More like sheds. By some accounts, the shed design was adopted because, in Vermont, it might be better if a nuclear plant looked like something else.

At any rate, one of the sheds collapsed, spilling several thousand gallons of warm water on the ground. No radiation was released. The accident was the equivalent of

a broken water pump or radiator in a car, not a cracked block. The plant continued to operate at 50 percent capacity briefly and was back at full production in a few weeks.

But the photographs were dramatic, and the headlines were scary, and the opponents of nuclear power used them to maximum effect. This was the beginning of the turning of the tide of opinion about Vermont Yankee.

Other misfortunes followed. Tritium was found leaking from the plant, though in quantities that could not be detected in the Connecticut River. At hearings into the leak, an Entergy vice president answered a question in a fashion that some claimed was intentionally misleading. The attorney general launched a criminal investigation that lasted more than a year and at the end of which, on July 6, he announced that no charges would be filed. This being Vermont, he could not resist taking a shot at Entergy in a statement that accused its executives of having "repeatedly failed to meet a minimally acceptable standard of credibility and trustworthiness."

Activists celebrate an anti-nuclear vote by the state senate.

But his office lacked (and you could almost hear the sigh of disappointment here) "the smoking gun necessary to prove the crime, and it would be unethical and irresponsible for us to press criminal charges when we do not have the evidence to meet our heavy burden of proof."

Throughout this period, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission found Vermont Yankee safe, and the plant stayed online for two "breaker to breaker" runs—without interruptions of service between normal shutdowns for refueling—of more than 500 days each. The plant was safe according to the regulators and reliable by the most obvious indicator—its performance.

It was also hated and despised by a serious, sizable, and active segment of the Vermont population whose belief system is full of contradictions but who are moved less by reason than by faith. Most of these people are convinced of the global warming hypothesis and believe that tiny Vermont not only is part of the problem but also has the potential to be part of the solution. It can show "leadership." The same people who believe this also want the Yankee plant shut down in spite of the fact that, by providing one-third of the state's baseload power, it helped make Vermont the lowest emitter of carbon per capita of all the states.

The antis don't care. They prefer renewables—wind and solar. Never mind that the wind does not always blow and the sun does not always shine, meaning that the state's utilities would need backup power from the grid and that power would most likely be generated by plants that burned fossil fuels, producing carbon. In addition, there is the problem in Vermont of the regulatory minefield that must be negotiated before anything as ambitious as a wind farm can be built. Many have tried. At this point, two have succeeded—and one of them is still a little short of being a done deal. Furthermore, even if wind farms were built in all the prime locations, the power they produced would be insufficient to replace that now provided by the nuclear plant.

But wind is renewable, so even though wind farms will blight the ridgelines of the Green Mountains, creating an eyesore visible for miles around, they are beautiful in the eyes of the believers and they must be built. To drive this point home, the legislature passed a law requiring the state's utilities to purchase a fixed amount of power generated by renewables at a price several times higher than what they were paying Yankee. In Vermont, not all megawatts are equal.

In their campaign to close down Yankee, the anti-nuclear forces routinely disparaged Entergy as a "big, out-of-state corporation." Vermont's largest private-sector employer, IBM, is also large and from out of state. The state's iconic business enterprise, Ben & Jerry's, is owned by Unilever, a British-Dutch conglomerate. One of the major Vermont utilities, which supplies Vermonters with electricity generated by Yankee, is owned by Gaz Metro based in Quebec. (Gaz Metro is attempting to buy the state's largest utility and merge it with the one it already owns.)

Louisiana, though, is hostile territory. Entergy contributed to its own woes by conducting its business with state officials in a highhanded way. At one point, even

AP / TOBY TALBOT

Governor Douglas, an exceedingly careful politician whose base would be inclined to support Entergy, said he had lost confidence in the company.

The fight went increasingly against Yankee, and in 2010 the state senate took a vote on relicensing the plant. (This requirement is unique to Vermont, where in 2006 the legislature passed a bill, pushed by Peter Welch, that barred the state's Public Service Board from issuing a permit for the continued operation of Yankee without legislative approval.) The senate voted "no." It was the first and last vote on the matter, even though the 2006 law specifically calls for a vote of the "General Assembly," which comprises the house of representatives as well as the senate.

Entergy, meanwhile, had applied to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a federal license extension that would allow the plant to operate until 2032. That application was approved. But no state license was forthcoming, in spite of a lavish PR campaign whipped up by Entergy and its supporters. Peter Shumlin made distrust of Entergy and opposition to relicensing a signature issue in his campaign for governor. After he won, there was a forlorn attempt to find a buyer for the plant. It failed, unsurprisingly, since the fundamental issue wasn't the owner but the fact that the property was a nuclear plant, so with a federal license to operate but none from the state, Entergy went to court.

Federal law does not permit states to rule on issues of safety at nuclear plants. The NRC has sole jurisdiction in these questions. So in the case that is now in the courts, Vermont is obliged to argue that its concerns about Yankee have nothing to do with safety but only "reliability." This is a tough one, given the record of "breaker to breaker" functioning.

In its war against Entergy, Vermont showed just how far it would go when the legislature passed a bill requiring the company to pay the state's legal bills in the court case regardless of who won. One suspects this will hold up under judicial review about as well as the last two cases involving the state attorney general that went before the Supreme Court. Vermont lost both.

Still, requiring Entergy to pay the state's legal bills was mild when compared with the remedy suggested by one Vermont legislator. His bill would have designated Vermont Yankee and Entergy a criminal conspiracy.

In May, with the legislature nearing adjournment, no possibility of relicensing on the horizon, and their long-term contract with Vermont Yankee coming to an end, the state's major utilities needed to find replacement power. One of them, Green Mountain Power, announced with some fanfare that it had signed a new, multiyear deal to purchase power generated in New Hampshire by . . . the Seabrook nuclear plant. Vermont, then, will not be free of nuclear sin for some 23 years. But the nuclear-generated power consumed in Vermont will be generated in someone else's backyard.

For now, the legal battle continues. Entergy filed to enjoin the state from imposing a shutdown in March 2012 so that the company could continue to operate while it argued its case in court. A federal judge heard the arguments and ruled against Entergy saying, in essence, "Let's move along and get this thing settled in court."

Cheryl Hanna, a professor at the Vermont Law School, believes that the judge indicated, in his ruling, that Entergy has a strong case and could be in the clear before March 2012. For a week or so, considerable suspense surrounded the question of whether or not Entergy would pay some $65 million to purchase new fuel for the plant, which is scheduled for a refueling shutdown in October. Perhaps, some said, Entergy would decide to fold its cards rather than take the risk on refueling.

For one long weekend, rumors flew. The plant was shutting down. No, the fuel had definitely been ordered. Then, on July 25, the company announced it would proceed with the scheduled refueling.

So, the fight will go on, in court, beginning in September. Both sides are confident. Vermont's attorney general has vowed to take his argument all the way to the Supreme Court. A gesture of confidence or, perhaps, a bluff, given his record there.

It is, of course, entirely possible that the case could go against Entergy and that it would be compelled to shut down the Yankee plant in March of next year. If the plant is shut down, for whatever reason and on whatever date, it will most likely be put into a status known as Safe Store. This is a bit like "mothballing" a ship. The plant simply sits, unused, while it cools down, and money that has been put into a decommissioning fund compounds. Eventually—perhaps decades later—the plant is disassembled and scrapped. The opponents of nuclear power, of course, insist that when (not "if") the plant is closed, Entergy must immediately decommission it and return the site to "green field" status. Most likely they will have to make that case, too, in court.

On the other hand, if Yankee gets wins the case that opens in September, the plant will continue to operate and sell power . . . possibly even to Vermont's utilities.

But the plant will be a sullen presence on the banks of the Connecticut, and the recriminations are bound to continue. The antinukes will claim victory, but the divorce will be anything but clean or amicable. These two will not truly be rid of each other for a long time to come. ♦

Wake Up America – Can't We See What's Happening to Us?

We are Selling Out and No Longer Own or Control Our Own Country

America is now under foreign control through their purchase and control of our strategic industries. (**Numbers from 2002**)

- Sound Recording Industries: 97%
- Cement Industry: 81%
- Commodity Contracts Dealing and Brokerage: 79%
- Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries: 75%
- Metal Ore Mining: 65%
- Motion Pictures and Video Industries: 64%
- Book Publishers: 63%

Soon we will not be able to protect or support ourselves. From 1978 to 2008 we've sold 16,613 of our best companies to foreign interests.

The U.S. economy is no longer competitive. We cannot compete with Mexican nor Chinese wage rates. We cannot compete with Japan or Germany's technology. Companies that cannot compete will soon go out of business. Many of our major businesses are now non-competitive and are forced to outsource their manufacturing - close up or sell out.

We have become uncompetitive through the effects of ill-conceived policies, disastrous "free trade" agreements, escalating trade deficits, crumbling infrastructure and the sale of our most valuable companies.

We no longer produce enough for ourselves and are increasingly compelled to live on imports, debt, and the sale of our best companies.

Just look at our Balance of Trade Deficit (the means through which foreign competitors accumulate our money to buy us out):

- **2000** - $446.2 = $848,997 per minute
- **2001** - $421.9 = $802,854 per minute
- **2002** - $475.3 = $904,385 per minute
- **2003** - $541.5 = $1,030,335 per minute
- **2004** - $665.6 = $1,266,421 per minute
- **2005** - $783.8 = $1,491,250 per minute
- **2006** - $839.4 = $1,597,139 per minute
- **2007** - $823.1 = $1,566,195 per minute
- **2008** - $834.6 = $1,587,998 per minute
- **2009** - $506.9 = $964,505 per minute

This is $6.3 trillion lost in a decade! It comes back not to buy our mercandice but to buy our land and comapnies.

These are funds accumulating in foreign hands by selling us more than we can sell them. Foreign companies and governments use this money to buy any American company they want. Most of our companies are for sale on the open stock market. With the sale of these companies go our future production, profits, technologies, taxes and the means through which we became a super power.

As more of these companies fall into foreign ownership and control we have fewer American owned companies remaining that can produce and generate wealth. We can therefor never reverse our slide into bankruptcy or colonial status.

Our lifestyles may revert back to conditions similar to those when we were subjugated to live under colonial rule, when England controlled America, as we will no longer have the ability to make our own decisions.

Through their foreign trade surpluses, countries have accumulated trillions of convertible currency reserves. China has over $3 trillion and Japan has over $1 trillion. These funds are economic bullets poised to strike and take out most of our companies listed on our public stock exchange.

Many countries manage their political and economic matters like they are conducting a war – to protect themselves and destroy competitors. America has already lost the all-important economic war. We lost it because we didn't know we were in it. We had no offense to create conditions that would allow our manufacturers to profit without outsourcing jobs.

We have been totally misled and blinded to reality.

In the age of globalization, an advantage for one country often results in a disadvantage for others. America can't compete with Chinese or Mexican wage rates. We can't compete with Japanese or German technology.

America is temporally supported through the graces of our creditors. The federal government is increasing the debt ceiling just to borrow money to pay back foreign loans. What happens when foreign governments decide to stop lending?

What is the matter with us? Don't we realize that we can't continue like this, living on imports and debt?

To learn more about our economy and how it affects you, log onto *EconomyInCrisis.org*:

- See the names of companies sold to foreign interests since 1978
- See the American industries now controlled by foreign companies
- View the amount of debt we owe to foreign nations
- See the list of products we use made primarily by foreign workers
- Learn about disastrous "free trade" agreements like the WTO and NAFTA. These agreements place us in a most disadvantageous position and prevent us from competing on an equal playing field globally
- Log onto our "Problems and Solutions" page.
- Learn how to disengage from our dependent colonial status.

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Chicago Cubs, 1945: Swish Nicholson, Andy Pafko, Phil Cavarretta, Peanuts Lowrey, Don Johnson, Stan Hack

The Old Ball Game

The mystic chords of the National Pastime.

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

When Marilyn Monroe divorced Joe DiMaggio, Oscar Levant remarked that it only went to show that no man can be expected to excel at two national pastimes. Time can do terrible things, even to wit, and this superior *mot* now has a slight flaw, which is that it is no longer clear that baseball is America's other pastime. In the 1940s and early '50s, the national pastime it indubitably was, a game that captured the country's attention and enraptured the imagination of young boys and most men, who had earlier played it as boys. Just how it did and why it did and with what consequences is the subject of the intellectual historian Lee Congdon's *Baseball and Memory*, a book about the game but also about much more.

Baseball and Memory
Winning, Losing, and the Remembrance of Things Past
by Lee Congdon
St. Augustine's Press, 192 pp., $25

The 1940s and '50s, the years at the center of Congdon's book, are those of his boyhood, and, as it happens, also of mine. The sports menu during those years was much shorter than it is now. Professional basketball hadn't yet arrived in a serious way; professional football had a short season, and not many teams had franchises west of the Mississippi; hockey was still felt to be essentially a Canadian sport; golf and tennis were thought, for the most part correctly, to be country-club or rich people's games. Baseball was the main, the primo, the supreme American sport.

If baseball had a serious rival as a spectator sport, it was boxing, for a heavyweight title fight riveted American attention like no other sporting event. But such fights were intermittent, and baseball was played daily for six months, eight if one includes spring training. Besides, one had to be a brute

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Joseph Epstein, a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard*, is the author of the forthcoming* Gossip, The Untrivial Pursuit.

to box, while baseball was a game available to every boy of normal size and decent coordination.

A Little League World Series was staged as early as 1947, but baseball for young boys remained largely unorganized through Lee Congdon's and my boyhoods, a playground game unimpeded by otiose intervention from adults. Summer days one ambled over to the schoolyard, and got into a pickup game with other kids who had the same end in mind. If there weren't 18 boys up for a game, the positions of right field, second base, and first base were eliminated, and one played something called pitcher's hands out.

As a boy, one styled one's play on one or another of the major league ballplayers one had heard about on the radio, or read about in the sports pages or in *Sport* magazine, or had seen at the local ballpark, if one lived in a city with a major league team. I played shortstop on the gravel field of Daniel Boone School with a trapper's mitt bought from Montgomery Ward, doing my best impression of the St. Louis Cardinals' great shortstop Marty Marion.

The ranks of boyhood baseball players thinned out in high school, where baseball wasn't one of the glory sports. Large crowds didn't attend high school baseball games the way they did football and basketball games; and there weren't any girls watching from the stands before whom—hope against hope—one might look heroic. I left playing baseball in high school for a perfectly mediocre career in tennis and basketball. High school baseball was a game for the true hard cases: boys who loved the game in and for itself.

In those days high school baseball could be a dangerous sport. Batting helmets were not yet devised, and 16- and 17-year-old opposing pitchers threw heat, as fastballs were even then called, with uncertain control, leaving open the real possibility of being smashed in the head or face. Getting spiked while tagging a runner out was another hazard. Then there were line drives—"screaming liners," "frozen ropes," in the standard clichés—smashed back at the pitcher or third or first baseman. However pastoral some writers make baseball seem, the possibility of serious injury was part of the game.

Even if one stopped playing it once out of grammar school, baseball remained in the bones of most American males. Boys grew up knowing the rosters of the then-16 major league teams, traded baseball cards—now, some of them, worth obscene sums of money—passionately argued the merits of various players. I probably learned more arithmetic attempting to understand batting averages and other key statistical categories in baseball than I did in the classroom. Sidney Hook once told me that, during his days as a high school teacher in Brooklyn, he used the location of major league baseball teams to teach otherwise bored and unruly boys geography. The last two words of the National Anthem, an old joke had it, were "play ball."

Baseball was American, a part of the culture. During World War II a way of identifying oneself to fellow American troops when returning from behind enemy lines was through one's baseball knowledge.

> "Who goes there?"
> "Staff Sergeant, Bob Mahoney, Fifth Armored Division, Headquarters Company."
> "Who is Ted Williams?"
> "Boston Red Sox, leftfielder."
> "Okay. Come forward."

Not knowing who Ted Williams was might have got one shot.

Sports generally, but baseball most of all, was the lingua franca of American men in a democratic country. Baseball could nicely slice through social class and educational lines. Through their common interest in baseball, a philologist could sustain a good conversation with a garage mechanic, a butcher with a biochemist.

Baseball and Memory begins with Bobby Thomson's home run in the old Polo Grounds, hyperbolically known in the press as "the shot heard 'round the world," in the final playoff game that won the pennant for the New York Giants over the Brooklyn Dodgers on October 3, 1951. For decades afterward men marked the event, as others marked Pearl Harbor or the Kennedy assassination, by remembering where they were when Thomson hit his homer. The home run was hit at 3:58 Eastern Standard Time, Congdon notes, a fact that reminded me that I had just come out of my last class for the day at Nicholas Senn High School in Chicago, headed for the smoke-filled purlieus of Harry's School Store, where it was of course topic number one.

Along with Thomson's home run, Congdon recalls Don Larsen's perfect game against the still-in-Brooklyn Dodgers in the World Series of 1956. (I watched the game on a blurry television set while sitting on a couch with the stuffing coming out of it in a broken-down fraternity house at the University of Chicago.) He retells Pittsburgh Pirate Bill Mazeroski's walk-off homer against Ralph Terry to defeat the Yankees in the 1960 World Series. He sifts the evidence about Babe Ruth's supposedly calling and aiming a home run at Wrigley Field in 1932 (accuracy on the question has yet to be solidly established).

Lee Congdon has spent—I hesitate to say wasted—his youth and much of his manhood as a Chicago Cubs fan. (So, too, did I, until a few years ago, when I proclaimed myself the baseball equivalent of a bisexual and began also rooting for the White Sox which is, to put it very gently, not *de rigueur* in Chicago, where ardent fans of either team loathe fans of the other.) As is well known, the Cubs have had an uncanny knack for letting their fans down—hard. The team has not appeared in a World Series since 1945 and not won a World Series since 1908. But then, any team, as a sad local quip has it, can have a bad century.

The pages of *Baseball and Memory* are replete with Cubs pitchers with high earned-run averages and poor career won-lost records, sluggers who could be counted upon not to come through in the clutch, egregious trades of brilliant ballplayers—Lou Brock, Rafael Palmeiro, most notable among them—for now properly forgotten ones. In 1969, with, for once, a solid roster of players (five of them on that year's National League All-Star team), the Cubs, though 9 1/2 games ahead of the Mets in August, went 8-17 in September and blew what

looked like a sure trip to the World Series, proving that even when they were good they weren't good enough.

The Cubs got to the playoffs in 1984 and looked to be going on to the World Series when, in the late innings of the deciding playoff game against the San Diego Padres, the team's first baseman, a man named Leon Durham, let a fairly easy grounder go through his legs. The next day, at my neighborhood grocery market, the manager asked me if I had heard about Durham's attempted suicide: "He deliberately stepped out in front of a speeding bus," he reported, "but it went through his legs."

"Long-suffering" is as natural an adjective for Cubs fans as "wily" was for the late Ho Chi Minh. I have a cousin named Stuart Rudy who, as a young man, had incipient ulcers and was implored by his physician not to subject himself to the anguish of listening to Cubs games on the radio. A man named Jerry Pritikin, now in his seventies, sits in cut-off jeans in the bleachers during games at Wrigley Field, sometimes bringing along encouraging handmade signs, behaving generally in a way that reminds one that the word "fan" derives from fanatic. I once heard him, in an interview, remark that next to his father, his own zeal is as naught: "My father's deathbed words," he said, "were 'trade Kingman.'"

Congdon shows no signs of regret for his long years as a Cubs fan, however little punctuated by glory or triumph they have been. He does, though, have deep regrets about what has happened to the game of baseball that he was brought up on and still loves. Sports have politics: Fans line up along a liberal to conservative spectrum, and not infrequently people who are liberal in their politics are archconservative in their views on sports, and vice versa.

On this sports spectrum, Lee Congdon is a veritable wingnut. He feels that baseball has been diluted by the increase in the number of teams from 16 in his youth to 30 today, with a corresponding thinning-out of talent. He prefers the older vintage ballplayer, whose natural talent was reinforced by toughness and dedication and, often, amusing eccentricity. He quotes the Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher Preacher Roe saying that the best advice about pitching to the Cardinals great Stan Musial was "throw four wide ones and try to pick him off first base." He cites the competitiveness of the take-no-prisoners pitcher Early Wynn who, when asked if he would deliberately throw a ball at his own mother, replied: "I would if she were crowding the plate."

A purist in his baseball values, Congdon does not like extending playoffs to wild card teams, has no taste for interleague play, despises the designated hitter instituted by the American League in 1973—"an obscenity," he calls it—and not yet adopted by the National League. The newer baseball stadiums put him off; only Wrigley Field in Chicago and Fenway Park in Boston pass his muster. He doesn't approve the rule against pitchers deliberately brushing back hitters crowding the plate. He is opposed to better—perhaps the more precise word is fancier—food being served in some ballparks; he mentions the truffle fries and martinis served at the Mohegan Sun Sports Bar at the new Yankee Stadium.

Sammy Sosa, 2007

These are extreme views, highly unprogressive, and doubtless deserve to be argued against—though not by me, who happens to share every one of them.

About the use of steroids among baseball players, Congdon is an even harder-liner. He believes that no player found to have used steroids should be allowed in the Hall of Fame, and that all of them ought to have their records wiped off the books, *tout court*—into the dustbin of history with all these audodidact pharmacists. To illustrate how widespread the use of steroids was, he brings up the almost commonplaceness of ballplayers in the steroid era hitting 50 or more home runs in a season—a feat never accomplished by such chemical-free ballplayers as Hank Aaron, Frank Robinson, Reggie Jackson, Mike Schmidt, Ted Williams, Ernie Banks, and Eddie Matthews. His paragraphs on steroids are infused with anger.

Congdon recapitulates the year, 1998, of the great (ultimately fake) home run derby between Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa. For a portion of that summer I was housesitting for a friend in the village of Laconnex, near Geneva, and each morning upon arising I eagerly booted up his computer to see if McGwire or Sosa had hit any homers the day before. Both players, we now know, were jacked up on steroids. Turns out that I, along with millions of others, as the old Brooklyn Dodger fans used to say, was robbed, or at least had, and it's not a good feeling.

Growing up, as (again) did I, on the splendid boys' sports novels of John R. Tunis—*The Kid From Tomkinsville*, *Highpockets*, *The Kid Comes Back*, *Rookie of the Year*, *All-American*, *Iron Duke*, and others—Lee Congdon brings a moral mindset to his love of baseball. While telling gripping sports yarns, Tunis's novels inculcated the tenets of the old liberalism at its finest: teamwork, courage under pressure, fair play, hatred of prejudice. All but the last-named virtue has little today to do with sports; in fact, athletes and their coaches and managers spend a good deal of time seeking out the niggling small advantage that will defeat or otherwise discourage the opponent. Sportsmanship has less and less to do with contemporary sport.

One of the results is that ballplayers have come to reflect, as Congdon contends, "our baser rather than our nobler selves." With a few notable exceptions in the contemporary era—Cal Ripken Jr., Rick Sutcliffe, Orel Hershiser, Andre Dawson, Carlton Fisk, possibly Derek Jeter—athletes tend to be disappointing human beings. Perhaps this comes

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of their being men who, even as boys, owing to their much-prized physical talent, nobody ever turned down for anything. In the current era, where money from enormous television revenues and posh endorsement contracts arrive for them in wheelbarrowish quantities, the emergence of character in an athlete is even more difficult than when all he had to deal with was adulation.

For those of us frivolous enough to have put in a vast number of hours watching men and women chase or smash balls of various sizes, furiously crash their bodies against one another, and commit other remarkable physical acts, the notion of being a fan has become a more and more dubious proposition. The proposition, baldly put, is this: Why are we more loyal to, and ardent on behalf of, teams than are the men who play for them?

This is one of a series of questions that all, alas, have the same answer. Why do athletes use steroids? Why do they seem more prone to injury—or is it that they are more protective of themselves?—than athletes of an earlier era? Why are they largely devoid of loyalty? Why has an afternoon at a major league baseball game for a family of four become a $200 or $300 extravagance? A sports journalist once stopped the television sports producer Don Ohlmeyer because he had a question for him. "If your question is about sports," Ohlmeyer replied, "the answer is money."

As a historian, Lee Congdon could not have been expected to resist making parallels between the game of baseball of his boyhood and the game today. Nor was he likely to have avoided going on from there to measure the decades when the game of baseball seemed golden against those rather more tarnished—by drugs, staggering contracts, feckless behavior, ugly, electronic-scoreboard-distracting ballparks—decades of recent times.

Not merely baseball but life generally was better in the 1950s, Congdon maintains, and he makes his argument in a balanced way, taking on the worst cases. Even though racial segregation was still prevalent in the '50s, for example, he notes that black life may have been qualitatively better, with lower crime and unwed birth rates. "With far more reason to be bitter," he adds, there was less in the way of self-defeating grievance-collecting among blacks then than now. In the 1950s, families, black and white, seemed stronger, life safer, growing up less wracked by the foolish notions of psychology and sociology for too long now in vogue. Whatever its gains in personal freedom, the 1960s, Congdon writes, "has left mountains of human wreckage in its wake."

Congdon's larger argument is that baseball, when it was part of the culture, provided an important storehouse of memories, which, under current cultural conditions, soon figure to disappear. These memories, he holds, are all the more important as a stay against the thought that life is pure progress, ever onward and upward. "Fascination with the older game," he writes, "cannot be divorced from a growing recognition on the part of at least some Americans that history does not move in an ever-ascending direction."

The young, we are told, are bored with baseball, finding more immediate—baseball fans would argue, also much less subtle—excitement in basketball and football, and even in so-called extreme sports. The number of American black athletes, who until recently comprised a third of major league players, has diminished, while the number of Central and Latin American and Asian players has risen. The day may not be far away when major league baseball is no longer a game played preponderantly by Americans.

The United States could once claim to be a national culture, with the majority of its population knowing and singing the same songs, viewing the same television shows, playing and watching and passionate about the same games. This national culture has been eroding over the past half-century, splintering off into many cultures: youth culture, black culture, Hispanic culture, and more. The result is that one can no longer confidently say that a game, an art, a phenomenon, is essentially American.

What can confidently be said is that a major trade has taken place over the decades since the 1950s: that of stability for widened tolerance, of moral equanimity for less restricting moral relativism, of a unified culture for a polycultured society. Perhaps, in this trade, there are players to be named later of whom we haven't yet been informed. If there are not, if this is all there is to the deal, then it has to be judged a trade that not even Lee Congdon's boneheaded Chicago Cubs front office would have made. ♦

B&A

Who Said That?

Why certain combinations of words live in memory.

BY AMELIA ATLAS

The Words of Others
From Quotations to Culture
by Gary Saul Morson
Yale, 352 pp., $30

Sooner or later, all good dinner table debates reduce themselves to semantics. Yes, John Stuart Mill argued that your freedom only extends to the point where you do harm unto others, but what *is* harm? Sure, you can say that the Beatles were the best rock band of all time, but what do you actually *mean* by best? This kind of futile parsing is the *raison d'être* of Gary Saul Morson's new book, a work devoted

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to the arcane matter of what is and isn't a quotation.

At its heart, *The Words of Others* is a case for the quotation as a literary form: a self-enclosed unit of thought that identifies itself, as such, independent of context. If I may quote: "A quotation repeats the words (or actions or other defining features) of another *as* the words of another." It must also have the ineffable virtue of "quotability:"

> One reason that quotations must be quotable is that they function as complete, if brief, literary works and so, like all literary works, must be capable of standing on their own.

The fact of quotability, in turn, endows a quotation with *literariness*—"the ability to be understood and appreciated outside the context of its origin."

By this logic, none of what I have quoted here from *The Words of Others* is actually a quotation; they are extracts. They fail Morson's essential test: These snippets hold no value stripped from the work of which they are a part. That John F. Kennedy may have borrowed his hallowed "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" from Justice Holmes is beside the point: He spoke the *quotation*. The fact of JFK's having said these words is essential to the quotation's inherited meaning and its circulation within American cultural memory. It doesn't matter that Marie Antoinette never said "Let them eat cake!" It's hers.

With these rules in place, Morson gives us a tour of the use and abuse of quotation throughout the ages. His particular grievance is with the quotation police, the anthologists devoted to debunking the received wisdom of who said what when. The king of this apparently robust genre is one Ralph Keyes, author of (among other titles) *Nice Guys Finish Seventh*. Here Morson brings the snark: "Apparently," he deadpans, "we are all victims of constant and colossal verbal swindles."

His disdain notwithstanding, Morson's efforts to debunk the debunkers draws forth some of his book's more original lines of argument. What Keyes and his cohort fail to understand is that "authorship may be intrinsic to a quotation." The very value of a quotation derives from the force of the personality who issues it. It's irrelevant, then, that the phrase "iron curtain" can be traced to the Russian writer Vasily Rozanov in the 1920s: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.—Winston Churchill." That dash constitutes an integral part of its legacy.

This kind of patient close reading redeems what occasionally feels like a thankless exercise. Morson is a Slavic scholar by training and *The Words of Others* becomes most interesting when he allows himself to indulge his more scholarly impulses. Having quoted a long selection (but not quotation) from *Anna Karenina*, he gives a thoughtful analysis of the ways in which the realist novel uses layered, indirect quotation to reveal how much individual consciousness relies upon borrowed language. Here is an extract of the selection:

> And for all that, at the same point in her memories, the feeling of shame was intensified, as though some inner voice, just at the point when she thought of Vronsky, were saying to her "Warm, very warm, hot." "Well, what is it?" she said to herself resolutely.

The liberties Tolstoy takes in intertwining his commentary with Anna's own thoughts, which in turn borrow language ("Warm, very warm") from a childhood game, show the extent to which the very fabric of thought is a function of quotation.

"Passages like these . . . depend on the fact that quotationality comes in degrees, and so the author can choose how much to use at any given point. They also depend on the possibility of quoting from more than one voice at the same time," Morson writes.

A similarly illuminating moment arises in Morson's discussion of translated quotation. Turning to the famous line of Sigmund Freud, "Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious," Morson takes aim at the pedants who would argue for the "correct" version—that is, the English version taken from the widely read James Strachey translation: "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to the unconscious activities of the mind." It's hard to argue that there is such a thing as a correct version when the most commonplace translation already takes substantial liberties with the German, and when Freud himself supplied the Latin for "royal road" (*Via Regia*). Which one is right? In this case, to insist on fidelity to the original is to miss what the quotation has to offer.

Morson's dalliances with the academic are far more satisfying than his efforts to theorize the obvious. Compare these detours into the literary canon with Morson on the editorial voice of quotation anthologies:

> [W]e can discern a continuum from minimal to maximal personal imprint of any quoter. Reference works seek to minimize this imprint. They do so by employing multiple consultants, by instructing each editor to build on predecessors, or by choosing arbitrary principles of organization that render the search for the editor's voice difficult.

Lest the point be unclear, Morson reminds us that since passing on, Bartlett has had little to do with *Bartlett's*. He might as well have clarified that Google is an algorithm.

There is only so much one can say about quotation, and so Morson can't help but stray into generalities and repetitions (Kennedy's inaugural speech crops up twice by page 15). By the time he gets to "processual" quotations—those that are definitionally incomplete, or works in progress—one can feel him hitting the limits of his subject. In the words of Virginia Woolf, "One has to secrete a jelly in which to slip quotations down people's throats—and one always secretes too much jelly." ♦

B&A

Things Not Seen

How faith was received in the Era of Good Feelings.

BY EDWARD SHORT

Washington, ca. 1825

In *The Making of the English Working Class*, E.P. Thompson famously claimed that he wrote his history to rescue his subjects "from the enormous condescension of posterity." This did not stop him from saddling his weavers, tailors, croppers, and artisans with aspirations that they would hardly have recognized and bundling away any of their prejudices that did not tally with his Marxist theses, particularly with respect to religion, empire, monarchy, and the aristocracy, with whom the working classes had so much in common. Yet Thompson was certainly right to insist that the historian should take up his subjects on their own terms, even though he proved incapable of following this good advice himself.

Here, Professor Nancy Schultz of Salem State University revisits a forgotten miracle in early 19th-century Washington to attempt to shed new light on early American social and religious history, but in the process exemplifies precisely the sort of condescension that good historians should eschew.

Mrs. Mattingly's Miracle
The Prince, the Widow, and the Cure that Shocked Washington City
by Nancy Lusignan Schultz
Yale, 288 pp., $30

In March 1824 Ann Mattingly, the widowed sister of Mayor Thomas Carbery, had been bedridden for seven years with breast cancer, which left her ulcerated body on the brink of death. Then, three of her local Roman Catholic priests wrote a controversial German faith healer, Prince Alexander Leopold Hohenlohe, asking him to pray for her. Having arranged for a novena, one of the priests visited Mrs. Mattingly at her home on 17th and C Streets NW and gave her communion—after which, several deponents testified, her ulcers disappeared and she rose from her sickbed entirely healed.

In describing the aftermath of the cure, Professor Schultz writes of a divided Catholic Church, one camp pressing for broadcasting the miracle and the other downplaying it; a nativist Protestant mainstream suspicious of what it perceived to be the superstitious, foreign character of Catholicism; a divided Mattingly family intent on closeting its skeletons; and a new republic struggling with questions of religion and society.

This is promising fodder for micro-history, which Schultz might have fashioned into an engaging study. Instead, she devotes most of her energies to pointing morals: taking the Catholic Church to task for what she considers its tribal separatism; upbraiding 19th-century Americans for getting "gender" wrong; and remonstrating with the Mattingly family for their unenlightened views on race in the slave-owning capital.

Here is that "enormous condescension of posterity" against which Thompson inveighed. Rather than presenting her readers with the surprise of history, Schultz simply serves up lashes of political correctness. In one passage she quotes something from a colleague that epitomizes her own enlightened view of her subject:

> For women who came of age in the antebellum era, a devotional ethic that promoted passive resignation as the appropriate Christian response to pain resonated with prevailing gender norms that associated true womanhood with self-sacrifice and submission.

Throughout *Mrs. Mattingly's Miracle*, Schultz rubber-stamps this radically false view, not only of women but of religion. She also repeatedly misrepresents the separation of church and state in America, which the Founders put in place to prevent established religion, not to remove religion *per se* from the public square. In this case, as in so many others, the author's prejudices prevent her from grasping the true character of her material.

Such prejudices notwithstanding, Schultz is a diligent researcher. As she notes in her introduction, she spent 10 years uncovering the details of her heroine's cure. When she restricts herself to sharing this copious research, she can be usefully informative. For example, she unearths a number of amusing facts about the Jesuits and their slaves, and

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Edward Short is the author of Newman and his Contemporaries.

she is good on the part that Georgetown College played in the aftermath of Mrs. Mattingly's cure.

But she is also given to bloviating. In summing up her history, for example, she writes thus:

> Mrs. Mattingly's diseased body became a central object at the junction of mind and spirit during a period when a social order for the nation was being built. For ultimately, the process of answering the body's needs and desires is what creates a nation's language, culture, social institutions, and laws.

Reading this, you wonder whether undergraduates at Salem State are regularly treated to such pronouncements, sound judgment not being one of the author's strong suits. This is most evident in her conclusion, where she claims that "unlike the broader culture of the United States, which was in the throes of inventing the mythology of assimilation, the Catholic Church actively nurtured ethnic separation by founding parishes for various ethnic groups."

These are untenable assertions. First, parishes were established as geographical, not ethnic, units. Second, there is no evidence to suggest that parishes separated American Catholics from their non-Catholic fellows. On the contrary, they continue to foster a sense of citizenship in the Catholic faithful. The projects that the state created to replace parishes may promote dependency, crime, isolation, and despair, but they do not inspire citizenship. And last, the claim that assimilation was something for which it was necessary to invent a "mythology" is typical of her theoretical approach to the subject. Imagine trying to convince George M. Cohan of such a notion—or better yet, James Cagney, who gave such life to Cohan in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

Schultz begins with an epigraph from W.E.H. Lecky, the 19th-century historian of rationalism, who argued "that the progress of civilization produces invariably a certain tone and habit of thought which make men recoil from miraculous narratives with an instinctive and immediate repugnance." She ends with a quote from Nathaniel Hawthorne's daughter, Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, a convert to Catholicism who devoted herself to caring for the cancerous poor: "Mrs. Mattingly," wrote Lathrop, "was destined to become and to remain . . . a living instance, to every one, of the doctrine and mystery of the Holy Eucharist, at the moment when she was restored to health, after receiving the real yet glorified body of our Lord in the consecrated wafer."

Schultz cites these epigraphs to suggest that there has always been a divide in America between the mystery of Catholicism and a modern civilization contemptuous of the miraculous. But this is unpersuasive: America has never been as antagonistic to Catholicism as Schultz imagines—or as rationalistic. That Catholicism provoked nativist resentment was a tribute to its power, not evidence of its unpopularity.

Indeed, to grasp the import of Mrs. Mattingly and her miracle we must go not to Lecky but to David Hume, who wrote (in his essay "On Miracles") of how "the Christian Religion, not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity. And whoever is moved by Faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person."

This is the sort of faith to which Americans have customarily been drawn, and an essential element in the history of Mrs. Mattingly and her miracle. Hume was convinced that such faith "subverts all the principles of . . . understanding" and is "most contrary to custom and experience." But he wrote this in 1772, and could not have known that the faith of America is perfectly consonant with the custom and experience of the American people. ♦

B&A

Requiem for a Dream

The international man of mystery ain't what he used to be. **BY JOE QUEENAN**

When the pitiful octogenarian Hugh Hefner got ditched by his scheming fiancée a few weeks back, it was a pitiful reminder that the only living "playboy" who can still be considered suave, debonair, sexually irresistible, and, well, *cool*, is the middle-aged man in the *Dos Equis* commercials.

With the primavera suicide of *über*-playboy Gunter Sachs, the passing of director Blake Edwards (whose films helped create "Gstaad Chic"), the dismal reception accorded the feeble Russell Brand remake of *Arthur*, Hefner's ignominious repudiation by his runaway bride, and the low profiles kept by geriatric roués like Warren Beatty, Robert Evans, and George Hamilton, it seems that the age of the playboy—stretching all the way back into antiquity—has run its course.

The Most Interesting Man in the World is no longer Lord Byron or Beau Brummel or Porfirio Rubirosa. And it is certainly not Taki. It is an actor in a beer commercial. A Mexican beer commercial. Women will probably not mourn the passing of this golden age. But men will. Most men.

God, you ask yourself, what happened?

The term "playboy" traditionally refers to well-heeled predators who do not have to work for a living, whose primary concern is the pursuit of pleasure, and who are obsessed with beautiful women. If the women are

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not technically beautiful in the purest sense of the word, being rich will do. The classic, archetypal playboy has mysterious economic underpinnings, a preternaturally radiant tan, resplendent incisors, and fabulous hair—though sometimes veering a bit too far on the Waffen SS side.

Typical of the species is the first-century B.C. sybarite Mark Antony, who turned his back on a brilliant career as a tyrant in Imperial Rome so that he could frolic in the perfumed sheets of the roving slut Cleopatra, until recently his best friend's girlfriend. Cleopatra—sultry, insanely wealthy, homicidal—was the prototypical playboy inamorata in that she was not especially good looking but had terrific bone structure, owned an entire country, and knew how to show a guy from out of town a good time. She also had a great asp.

When I was growing up in the 1960s, the young male American psyche was being shaped by the suave James Bond, and everyone I knew wanted to be a playboy. (Possibly not one boy named Aloysius.) We all wanted to drive a Lamborghini around the Arc de Triomphe in a Formula One competition hosted by the Aly Khan, toss back a few cocktails in Saint-Tropez with Rubirosa, spend the morning in bed in Monte Carlo with Brigitte Bardot and the afternoon in bed in Saint-Tropez with Claudia Cardinale. We might even slip in a quickie with Jeanne Moreau at lunch.

If we weren't all tuckered out by sunset, we might fly one of our eight private jets to (pre-Castro) Havana to have a nightcap with charismatic gangsters and then seduce Rita Hayworth or bed down with a woman whose grandfather surrendered to the Soviets at Stalingrad. Or we might ask Warren Beatty to fly the plane while we dallied with someone named Bambou or Zsa Zsa or Miou-Miou or *van der* something in the cargo hold. It was a full, demanding day, but an awful lot of us were willing to give it a rip.

It is probably sexist to admit that young men used to entertain such fantasies, but at least it's nice to know that there was a time in the not-too-distant past when men were more interested in women than they were in going public. The playboy's three favorite letters were S-E-X, not I-P-O. Those days are gone; few young men entertain such fantasies now. It's not just that playboys are a thing of the past—so are wannabe playboys and playboys *manqués*.

Everyone today is so … generic. Young men used to idolize sybaritic, muscular fashion plates who burned through their money, not spindly little men who hoarded it. Businessmen, by and large, were considered dull, unromantic, pathetic. In today's world, where youth's cultural icons are dweebs like Mark Zuckerberg or slobs like Mark Cuban, there is no place for the playboy of yore, the type who shoots rhinos, parachutes into the Alps, consumes champagne by the barrel, and never worries about what all the tobacco, alcohol, and barbiturates are doing to his health. The closest we get to a sun god like Marcello Mastroianni today is Russell Brand in *Get Him to the Greek*. Or Donald Trump. Or Puff Daddy. Or the guy in the beer commercial. Take a gander at the 50th anniversary rerelease of *La Dolce Vita* and see if Russell or Donald or Diddy is in the same league as Marcello.

Porfirio Rubirosa, ca. 1960

DALMAS / SIPA / NEWSCOM

It is true that playboys often mistreated women, and worked in the employ of murderous dictators, and abandoned their kingdoms so they could cavort with daft floozies from Crabcake Corners, and inherited their fortunes from unprincipled oligarchs, and never did an honest day's work in their lives. This is why so many of us wanted to be like them—especially if, like me, you were growing up in a housing project.

Playboys had glamour, class, *brio*. They seized life by the throat and grabbed for all the gusto. They took hours to get dressed, scant seconds to get undressed. They cut a fine figure and they did things with *panach*e. My deepest personal regret is that I have never done anything with *panach*e. I've never shot a lion or driven a Porsche to Dakar or run a line of credit in a brothel in Dar es Salaam. Just once in my life it would have been nice to do something with *panache*. Anything. Preferably in the company of Sophia Loren.

Playboys, though predators, are not necessarily pigs. Wilt Chamberlain, who claimed to have bedded 10,000 women, was a playboy; Charlie Sheen is a pig. The world is full of men who take advantage of women, dawdle away years and years of time yachting, flying, carousing, and contributing nothing worthwhile to society. The difference is: Playboys contributed nothing worthwhile to mankind *with style*. They were a lot more fun than the guys who run the Blackstone Group, or the nerds who took Google public, or Bono.

Playboys allowed men the world around to vicariously experience their thrilling, glamorous lives, much the way the elegant Cary Grant's exploits in a fistful of classy films helped pull the Great Unwashed through the Great Depression. You could vicariously participate in the exciting life of someone named Porfirio Rubirosa

or Beau Brummel or Lord Byron. You can't vicariously participate in the glamorous life of a Bill Gates or a Steve Jobs or a Mark Zuckerberg. There isn't any glamour. As for *panache* and *brio*? Forget it.

The age of the playboy began to slip away in the 1960s when everyone started dressing as if they were affiliated with Three Dog Night, and people felt it imperative to contribute something worthwhile to society. That just wrecked everything. Things got worse when the entire planet started exercising, watching their weight, ditching nicotine, wearing belted shorts, reading books by Thomas L. Friedman. It has reached unimaginably hideous new depths in the age of the gated community, the speed dater, the Charlie Sheen victory tour, and the virtual dink.

Rubirosa would not care that the Droid has 200,000 fewer apps than the iPhone. He just wouldn't. Rubirosa would not play *Final Fantasy XI*. He would have never gotten past *Final Fantasy I*, the one with Elizabeth Taylor. Rubirosa would not be seen dead texting or playing World of Warcraft or sucking on a Power Drink. And Rubirosa would never tweet.

It is often thought that playboys *only* drink and race speedboats and garrote jaguars and bed gorgeous women and contribute *absolutely nothing* of value to society. But this is not true. Casanova bequeathed the world his memoirs. The Marquis de Sade is still regarded as a brilliant writer, though mostly in France. Franz Liszt, who taught Mick Jagger and David Bowie and Keith Richards the ropes about stardom, screwed everything that moved as a young man; yet he was a brilliant, influential composer and the greatest pianist ever. (Warren Beatty made *Bonnie and Clyde*. But that was about it.)

Playboys are famous for making dramatic exits. Thomas Becket, playboy *emeritus*, got hacked to pieces in Canterbury Cathedral on December 29, 1170, by King Henry II's freelance henchmen. Lord Byron died fighting Turks, always a nice way to go. The Emperor Commodus—the one in *Gladiator*—got strangled by a wrestler. Freddie ("Suicide Freddy") McEvoy drowned while trying to save his wife from drowning. Errol Flynn had a heart attack while taking a five-minute break during an impromptu party in Vancouver. Gunter Sachs blew his brains out. These guys knew how to make a grand exit. Again: *panache*.

The classic way for a playboy to check out is in an automotive disaster. Three playboys—Rubirosa, Dodi Fayed, and the Aly Khan—went up in flames in car crashes in France. Porfirio actually wrapped his car around a tree in the Bois de Boulogne. *That is so cool.* It is, in fact, the way most men of my generation would like to die: wrapping a sports car around a tree, preferably in the Bois de Boulogne. Or if that Bois were not available, then the Bois de Vincennes.

Hugh Hefner on the dance floor

This drives home the point that all men who are not dorks or twerps or bloggers or Michael Moore at some point in their lives harbor a secret desire to both live and die like playboys. There is a part of the male psyche that wants to believe that were there world enough and time and money, each of us would be a *gourmand*, a globetrotter, a babe magnet, and perhaps even a falconer. It is important that young women know this: A man who does not secretly want to wrap his sports car around a tree in the Bois de Boulogne is a dork, a liar, or the kind of guy who trades vintage Pete Seeger LPs on eBay. (On a personal note: I really would have liked to shoot a rhino at some point in my life. Maybe even a white one. Wouldn't have to be at point-blank range, either. In a pinch, a decrepit hyena would do.)

Feminists despise playboys, as do men who purport to be in league with feminists; yet it is a curious fact that the greatest American novel, *The Great Gatsby*, lionizes a mysterious playboy. Jay Gatsby, of course, makes today's *faux* playboys seem like hopeless amateurs. The Middle East is filled with spoiled scions of wealthy sheikhdoms who hang out on the Riviera. No one thinks of them as playboys. To be a playboy you have to wear clothes well and cut a fine figure. Sons of sheikhs rarely cut a fine figure. And then there is the case of Newt Gingrich, wannabe playboy, who honestly believed that opening a charge account at Tiffany's would put him in the same weight class as Marcello Mastroianni and Charles II and Serge Gainsbourg and Gatsby. Ugh.

My own experience with jet-setting international playboys is relatively limited. Basically just a few daydreams about having lunch with Dominique Sanda or Anita Ekberg. But a few years ago I was having coffee with Mort Sahl in a Beverly Hills Starbucks when he pointed out that George Hamilton was sitting directly across from us. George Hamilton made a lot of movies, none of them memorable, but he was revered in American society during the *Tonight Show* era as a genial, carefree layabout playboy with fantastic hair and an amazing tan and a million girlfriends.

When Sahl pointed him out, I turned and looked, but refused to believe that it was George Hamilton. George Hamilton, in my mind, would forever be sunning himself on his yacht, working on his tan, a stiff breeze blowing through his fabulous hair. Either that or he would be getting the Lamborghini ready for a fast spin around the Bois de Boulogne.

If we had reached the point where George Hamilton was having coffee in Starbucks, the age of the classic playboy was over, and my own dreams were dead. ♦

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B&A

Crazy Little Thing

How far do men go for love in this confused comedy? Too far. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

There's a lot to enjoy in the new movie *Crazy, Stupid, Love*, and you should see it because it's got funny scenes and good lines and some terrific performances and a surprising third-act plot twist I didn't see coming—and I almost always see plot twists coming. It begins with a couple at a restaurant; the body language suggests both long intimacy and great distance. He says he wants coffee. She says she wants a divorce. He is Steve Carell, who may be the most likable movie star alive. She is Julianne Moore, who is incapable of striking a false note as an actress. When she tells him of her affair, he leaps out of the car; injured, he climbs back in, and they end up back at their house, their life blasted apart—but still, someone has to drive the teenage babysitter home.

We have here the beginnings of a classic, but *Crazy, Stupid, Love* doesn't end up a classic because it fails a crucial storytelling test. It can't decide whether it's a comedy, which is to say, a movie about real people living in the real world who misbehave and get in trouble because of their misbehavior, or whether it's a farce, in which the characters are fundamentally flat and are moved around a complex plot like pieces on a gameboard. So it tries to split the difference, and in doing so, it never finds a consistent tone or a consistent spirit.

Some of *Crazy, Stupid, Love* takes place in the properly well-heeled upper echelons of Los Angeles—but in an effort to make Steve Carell's character more "relatable," we see him working as a middle-management grunt who couldn't possibly afford the multimillion-dollar house he shares with his wife. He also doesn't seem to work very much during the day, a trait that makes sense if you are a screenwriter or a movie director but not if you're not in the entertainment industry, which Carell's character isn't.

Crazy, Stupid, Love
Directed by Glenn Ficarra & John Requa

Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling

The primary setting of the movie is a "singles bar" that seems to have been teleported through time from the 1970s in every way save the lighting scheme. The bar comes complete with a house Lothario who ought to be a laughingstock but is, instead, like catnip to the gorgeous twentysomethings populating the bar the way drunks populate the Blarney Stone. And rather than this Lothario being a sleazy loser living in his mother's basement, as would likely be the case, he's an enormously rich fellow with his own Neutra house in the Hills.

Fortunately for us and for the movie, the Lothario is played by Ryan Gosling. This 30-year-old actor is capable of going very, very wrong with a part, as he did playing a man in love with a blow-up doll in *Lars and the Real Girl*. He is also capable of finding shades and depths and beauty in the most unlikely places, as he did in his breakout role as the romantic poor boy in *The Notebook*.

What he pulls off with his impossible character here is nothing short of a miracle—he achieves a kind of amused distance from his own behavior in the course of his appalling conduct that makes him as irresistible as the movie needs him to be for its plot to work. This is the kind of performance that could turn Gosling from an actor's actor into the Robert Redford of the third millennium—the guy men want to be and women want to be with.

Gosling takes Carell under his wing and teaches him how to be a player, even as Carell pines for Julianne Moore. Meanwhile, Carell's son is in love with his babysitter, who is in love with Carell. And the one woman at the bar who won't give Gosling the time of day reenters the picture, which brings unexpected changes to Gosling's life. The convergence of all these strains brings us to the movie's elaborate and beautifully staged climax—which is, unfortunately, followed by a supposedly heartwarming scene that is one of the falsest and most embarrassing displays I can remember.

The contrast between the climax and the denouement is exactly what's wrong with the movie. The screenplay by Dan Fogelman and the direction by Glenn Ficarra and John Requa mix and match believable human conduct and unimaginably stupid behavior, sometimes in the same scene. *Crazy, Stupid, Love* takes characters who seem very much like real people and makes them do absurd and embarrassing things real people never would do, and only because the farce demands it of them.

So it's not bad, but it's not better, and that's too bad, because it could have been. ♦

BEN GLASS / WARNER BROS. PICTURES

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

"A question that keeps popping up in the drama over the debt limit is whether the Obama administration has a plan of its own."
—Los Angeles Times, *July 26, 2011*

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, August 1, 2011
James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

(continued)

has always been a fan of Amy Winehouse. In fact, I'm pretty sure she's on one of his playlists for when he works out. So I guess when he's benching 200 pounds and one of her songs comes on, there'll be sweat *and* tears.

Q: That's great. But my question was about the debt ceiling and whether or not the president has a plan of his own?

MR. CARNEY: And it's been a particularly tough few weeks because of the tragic events in Norway and not only the death of Amy Winehouse but also former chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Shalikashvili. And then the president proclaimed July 27 to be National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day.

Q: I understand. But does the president actually have a plan?

MR. CARNEY: For what?

Q: For raising the debt ceiling and gaining congressional approval.

MR. CARNEY: The president went on television and spoke directly to the American people. And he laid out a very straightforward plan—Congress must come to an agreement, which the president can then sign, assuming it is popular with the American people, especially those Americans living in Ohio, Michigan, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

Q: That's the plan?

MR. CARNEY: No, that's only part of the plan. If you recall, President Obama urged Americans to call their elected officials. But he also thinks email works. And if that doesn't work, simply show up at your representative's office and say, "Hey, I'd like to make my voice heard. Is my congressperson in?" And tell them the president sent you. Tell them, "I agree with President Obama. Please compromise for the sake of our children and grandchildren." And make sure to get directions to the nearest cafeteria. It's a maze down there.

Q: You're not saying the president's plan is being driven by reelection factors?

MR. CARNEY: Reelection? Already? It's not for another, like, 464 days. No, not at all.