the weekly Standard

ON, WISCONSIN!
STEPHEN F. HAYES • WILLIAM KRISTOL

JUNE 4, 2012 • $4.95

ATTACK OF THE MEMES

MATT LABASH

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

YOUR COMMITMENT KNOWS NO BOUNDS...

The men and women of the
their military units, families

Whether serving our country or

EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF
THE GUARD AND RESERVE

NEITHER SHOULD OURS

Guard and Reserve depend on
and employers for support.

supporting those who do... We All Serve.

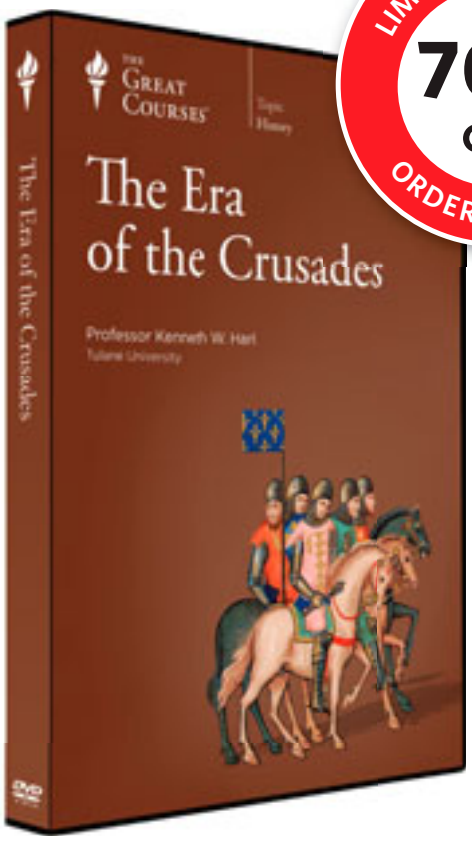
ESGR DEVELOPS AND PROMOTES A CULTURE IN
WHICH ALL AMERICAN EMPLOYERS

SUPPORT AND VALUE

THE MILITARY SERVICE OF THEIR EMPLOYEES.

WWW.ESGR.MIL 1-800-336-4590

THE GREAT COURSES®



What Happened the First Time the West Invaded the Middle East?

The Crusades have been hailed as the driving force that brought Western Europe out of the Middle Ages—and condemned as the beginning of European imperialism in the Muslim Near East.

What were the forces that led to one of history's most protracted and legendary periods of conflict? How did they affect—and how were they perceived by those living in—the three civilizations that participated in them? And, ultimately, why did they end and what did they accomplish?

In **The Era of the Crusades**, award-winning Professor Kenneth W. Harl looks at the leaders, purposes, key battles, and degrees of success or failure surrounding these often-monumental expeditions.

Offer expires 06/14/12

1-800-832-2412

WWW.THEGREATCOURSES.COM/8WKS

The Era of the Crusades

Professor Kenneth W. Harl
Tulane University

LECTURE TITLES

1. The Heirs of Rome
2. Byzantine Orthodox Civilization
3. Byzantine Zenith in the Macedonian Age
4. The Failure of the Heirs of Basil II
5. Abbasid Baghdad and Fatimid Egypt
6. The Coming of the Seljuk Turks
7. The Recovery of Western Europe
8. Kings and Princes of Western Europe
9. Warfare in Western Europe
10. The Papacy and Religious Reform
11. Piety and Pilgrimage
12. Christian Offensives in Spain and Sicily
13. Alexius I and the First Crusade
14. From Clermont to Jerusalem
15. Conquest and Defense of Outremer
16. Frankish Settlement of Outremer
17. Comnenian Emperors and Crusader Princes
18. The Second Crusade
19. The Empire at Bay
20. The Rise of Saladin
21. Byzantine Recovery under the Comnenians
22. A Renaissance of Byzantine Letters and Arts
23. Trade and Currency in the Mediterranean
24. Cultural Exchange in Gothic Europe
25. The Horns of Hattin
26. The Third Crusade
27. From Jerusalem to Constantinople
28. The Sack of Constantinople
29. The World of Frankish Greece
30. Splinter Empires and Orthodox Princes
31. Ayyubid Egypt and Seljuk Anatolia
32. Crusader Cyprus and the Levant
33. Venice and Genoa
34. The Mongols and the Legend of Prester John
35. The Royal Crusaders
36. The Passing of the Crusades

The Era of the Crusades
Course no. 390 | 36 lectures (30 minutes/lecture)

SAVE UP TO $275

DVD ~~$374.95~~ **NOW $99.95**
+$15 Shipping, Processing, and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee

CD ~~$269.95~~ **NOW $69.95**
+$10 Shipping, Processing, and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee

Priority Code: 65396

Designed to meet the demand for lifelong learning, The Great Courses is a highly popular series of audio and video lectures led by top professors and experts. Each of our more than 400 courses is an intellectually engaging experience that will change how you think about the world. Since 1990, over 10 million courses have been sold.





The retreat of choice for a discerning few.

For more than half a century, leaders from the Washington DC and New York areas have appreciated the Tides Inn's secluded tranquility...on a very private peninsula. Treat yourself to a relaxing getaway at the Chesapeake hideaway *Travel + Leisure* called "Virginia's #1 resort." Savor waterfront views, play golf, and unwind with marine-inspired spa treatments. Enjoy a sailing lesson, tour the regional Wine Trail, and let the children play & explore with Crab Net Kids.

the Tides
Inn • Golf • Spa • Marina

480 King Carter Drive | Irvington, VA 22480 | 804.438.5000 | 800.843.3746 | tidesinn.com

LEADING HOTELS®

There's so much to do, take a third night free to enjoy it all.

Use your extra time for golf, spa, dining and whatever you like with a two-night minimum stay.

Subject to limited availability through Sept. 30, 2012. Not combinable with other offers; not available for groups.

BRADLEY PRIZES

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2012 BRADLEY PRIZE RECIPIENTS

NICHOLAS EBERSTADT

- Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research
- Senior Advisor, National Bureau of Asian Research

EDWIN J. FEULNER

- President, The Heritage Foundation
- Recipient, Presidential Citizens Medal

EDWIN MEESE III

- Ronald Reagan Distinguished Fellow in Public Policy, Chairman of the Center for Legal and Judicial Studies, The Heritage Foundation
- Distinguished Visiting Fellow, The Hoover Institution

WILLIAM H. MELLOR

- President and General Counsel, Institute For Justice
- Founder, IJ Center for Judicial Engagement and IJ Clinic on Entrepreneurship

The Bradley Prizes will be presented on Thursday, June 7 at The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC.

The Bradley Prizes recognize outstanding achievements that are consistent with the Foundation's mission statement. Founded in 1985, The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation is devoted to strengthening American democratic capitalism and the institutions, principles and values that sustain and nurture it. Its programs support limited, competent government; a dynamic marketplace for economic, cultural activity; and a vigorous defense, at home and abroad, of American ideas and institutions. Learn more at **www.bradleyfdn.org.**

Contents

June 4, 2012 • Volume 17, Number 36

Articles

Features

Books & Arts

COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

And That's the Way It Was

The Scrapbook likes to think of itself as sophisticated, although we realize that we're probably not as sophisticated as we like to think. Having just read a book review by Howard Kurtz in the *Daily Beast*, however, we're feeling especially urbane, all-knowing, well-schooled, and, well, sophisticated.

Kurtz, of course, was for many years the media critic for the *Washington Post*—and a pretty good one, as media critics go—before he jumped ship to Tina Brown's dubious enterprise. But last week he took up Douglas Brinkley's new biography of Walter Cronkite ("sweeping and masterful"), and the scales seem to have fallen from his eyes.

"In the early 1970s," writes Kurtz, "the most trusted man in America did a very untrustworthy thing."

It turns out that, while serving as chief news reader for the *CBS Evening News*, Walter Cronkite made a private deal with Pan Am to fly him and members of his family to a series of vacation destinations around the world. In Kurtz's words, "Together with a handful of friends, they roamed from the South Pacific to Haiti, with Cronkite snorkeling, swimming, and drinking, thanks to a friend at the airline."

The president of the CBS news division, Richard Salant, correctly regarded this conduct as a conflict of interest, but (according to Kurtz) "took no action against his star anchor." Cronkite, after all, was the most trusted man in America, and, apparently, the elementary rules of ethics in the news business seem not to have applied to him.

From The Scrapbook's perspective, however, the problem is not the revelation that Walter Cronkite was a greedy anchorman with a taste for the high life and a well-developed sense of entitlement. The problem is that people like Howard Kurtz (and presumably, Douglas Brinkley) seem to believe the mythology that Cronkite was anything other than a television announcer, with a mustache and stentorian voice, who parlayed his job reading other people's words in front of a camera into the status of "journalist," and whose employer propagated the dubious notion that their favorite news reader was the Most Trusted Man in America.

Indeed, it would be more accurate to say that Walter Cronkite was a standard left-wing ideologue who happened to have a job that enabled him to spread the word on network TV in the guise of an objective newsman. Kurtz pays the ritual obeisance to the Cronkite fable—Brinkley's biography "recounts the remarkable career for which he is

What They Were Thinking

Bill Clinton in Monaco with adult movie starlets Tasha Reign (left) and Brooklyn Lee.

justly revered"—but proceeds to demonstrate that, for years on end, "he was far more liberal than the public believed, and he let it show in unacceptable ways." Cronkite consistently shaded, twisted, misrepresented, and misled, as Kurtz relates; among other things, he personally lobbied Bobby Kennedy to run for president against Lyndon Johnson.

What surprises The Scrapbook is that all this appears to be a revelation to Howard Kurtz. Is that possible? In Cronkite's heyday, you didn't have to be all that discerning—all that sophisticated, if you will—to detect the fact that the most trusted man in America had his prejudices and let them show every weekday evening on his television franchise. Is The Scrapbook more naturally skeptical, more perceptive, more journalistic than the onetime media critic for the *Washington Post*?

We'll give Howie the last word: "That [Cronkite] endured and prospered, essentially unscathed, until his death in 2009 reminded me of how impervious the monopoly media were in those days, largely shielded from the scrutiny they inflicted on everyone else." ♦

Romney's Three Rs

People of good will (and ill will, too, for that matter) will disagree over the education reform plan Mitt Romney released last week.

On the one hand, Romney's approach does nothing to extricate the federal government from the tarpit of America's public schools, where it has done little good and much harm through both Republican and Democratic administrations. On the other hand, he promises to use the federal government's massive power to advance admirable reforms—notably school choice. It's hard not to like an education reform that the National Education Association insists will "hurt students and schools" (translation: "will imperil the sclerotic education bureaucracy that the NEA depends on").

There's much less to quibble about when Romney turns to the subject of higher education, which is emerging as a second-tier issue in this campaign, owing to parental anxiety about rising tuition (and unemployment rates for recent grads) and President Obama's shameless pandering to the college students whose enthusiastic support he will require this fall. One hugely expensive pander was the vast expansion of the Pell Grant program, so that it now constitutes another unaffordable middle-class entitlement.

"Flooding colleges with federal dollars"—a nice summary of Obama's approach to making college affordable—"only serves to drive tuition higher," Romney said. And he makes a surprising connection between rising college tuition and Obamacare: By forcing states to pay for health reform's expansion of Medicaid, Obama guarantees that state legislatures will cut aid to public universities, which will require tuition increases, which will increase demand for student aid, which will enable still higher tuition, requiring more student aid . . .

To end this vicious spiral, Romney proposes to consolidate redundant student loan programs and

bring private lenders back into the process, which Obama's feds took over in 2010. He aims to tighten eligibility requirements for Pell Grants, reserving them for "the students that need them most." Perhaps most important, he promises to end the administration's assault on for-profit schools—an increasingly competitive part of the higher ed landscape—by repealing some of its most onerous regulations and opening a path to online courses of study.

These are real proposals rather than a pander, which is why Romney might lose a debate with Obama on a college campus. Pandering is a contest in which Romney can never beat his rival. But pandering caused the crisis in higher education, and Romney deserves credit for trying to stop it. ♦

Who Will Guard the *Guardian*?

Last week, the *Guardian*'s website published a column by Emer O'Toole decrying Anglo-European "cultural imperialism." Reading such pronouncements in the left-wing British daily is like finding sand on the beach, so O'Toole went to some lengths to ensure she got noticed. The more literate among you might guess the target of her ire:

> Recently I went to the theatre, as I am wont to do. The acting was impeccable, the direction insightful, the costumes fun, the music accomplished and the set damn sexy. Only the writing lacked salt. Here's a summary: the long lost twin of a local gent shows up in town. The identical brothers run around being mistaken for each other for a few hours. Hilarity is supposed to ensue, but doesn't. In the end, everyone lives happy ever after.

There have been many critical complaints about productions of *The Comedy of Errors* over the centuries, but rarely is Shakespeare's script fingered as the problem. And O'Toole's antipathy goes much deeper than her aversion to this particular play. "Though grateful to the World Shakespeare Festival for bringing such talented companies to the UK, I'd rather they performed something else," she writes. She's actually lamenting that they perform Shakespeare at a Shakespeare festival, because well, he's a dead white male:

> Shakespeare is full of classism, sexism, racism and defunct social mores. *The Taming of the Shrew* (aka The Shaming of the Vagina-Bearer) is about as universally relevant as the chastity belt. I'm sick of directors tying themselves up in conceptual knots, trying to frame poor Katherina as some kind of feminist heroine. The *Merchant of Venice* (Or The Evil Jew) is about as universal as the Nuremberg laws. . . . Today, while the doctrine of European cultural superiority is disavowed by all but the crazies, the myth of Shakespeare's universality hangs tough. There's something uncomfortably colonial about this.

The Scrapbook hates to be a killjoy, but far from disavowed, the "doctrine of European cultural superiority" is alive and well, as demonstrated by everything from military might to infant mortality rates. Not that we expect O'Toole to recognize that Western civilization in general, and Shakespeare in particular, are worth defending. The title of her previous contribution to the *Guardian* is "Ladies: why you should stop shaving," and her bio informs us she's a "doctoral student at Royal Holloway, University of London" and writes for a publication called *Vagenda*. Cultural imperialism would appear to come in many flavors. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'So Warren's claim to be 'part Indian' is correct in mythical terms. Every old-school white Oklahoman is in this regard even if this is nominally not true. But it is not a lie to want to be Indian . . . " ("Elizabeth Warren's true American lineage," Bernie Quigley, *The Hill*, May 21). ♦

the weekly Standard
www.weeklystandard.com

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

An Unmoveable Feast

When I learned recently that I'd be moving back to the East Coast for a job after several years out west, my girlfriend asked a question she knew would be on my mind: "How soon will you be able to make it to Providence for New York System?"

Of all the things that Rhode Island, where I grew up, is famous for—endemic corruption, *Family Guy*, that accent—the state's signature food is perhaps the most underrated. The New York System wiener is a small, thin frankfurter made of veal and pork, which, when ordered "all the way," is topped with meat sauce, celery salt and other spices, mustard, and onions. I've been known to throw back four at a sitting. There's an art to its preparation. Like the chef at a blue-collar Benihana, the wiener-master lines a row of buns up one arm, while with his free hand he adds the franks and condiments at lightning speed. This elegant technique is known as "up the arm."

MARY BETH MEEHAN

Oddly enough, New York System is seemingly unheard of in the Empire State. Jack Chiaro, who teaches cooking at Johnson & Wales culinary school in Providence, says the term dates from the early 1900s, when hot dogs from New York started reaching the Rhode Island market. The name was considered a mark of authenticity, though the cooks who originally served them were immigrants from Greece. Adding to the confusion, "wiener" is sometimes spelled "weiner" to this day, and New York System wieners are also known as hot wieners, weenies, gaggers (*gaggas* in the vernacular), and belly busters.

I think of them primarily as delicious. When I was growing up in Providence, my mother and I had a Saturday ritual of visiting our favorite greasy spoon to split "six all the way," along with French fries doused in vinegar. Wieners are often washed down with coffee milk—another Rhode Island concoction, consisting of milk and "coffee syrup," which I admit I've never developed a taste for. Despite its following among people like my schoolteacher mother and me, New York System is a working man's delicacy. Restaurants that make it their specialty tend to be crowded with police officers and plumbers.

As I've learned the hard way, there are pitfalls associated with having a favorite food whose range is so geographically limited. Once, while living in Asia, I took a packet of wiener seasonings across the Pacific with me after a trip home for Christmas—only to discover that the right-sized frankfurters and buns were unavailable in Seoul. During my seven years in Oregon, many a Saturday my mind would drift longingly to New York System. Even growing up in a neighborhood without a go-to gagger spot, I sometimes bicycled three miles along a four-lane highway to satisfy my craving. And I'm not the only member of the Rhode Island diaspora who has pined for New York System from afar. While he was stationed in Iraq in 2006, a serviceman who is native to Rhode Island wrote to a Providence wiener restaurant requesting a shipment of gaggers. The restaurant sent over all the necessary components—save the franks themselves, on account of their decidedly non-Halal nature. ("We didn't want to start another war," the restaurateur explained to the *Boston Globe*.)

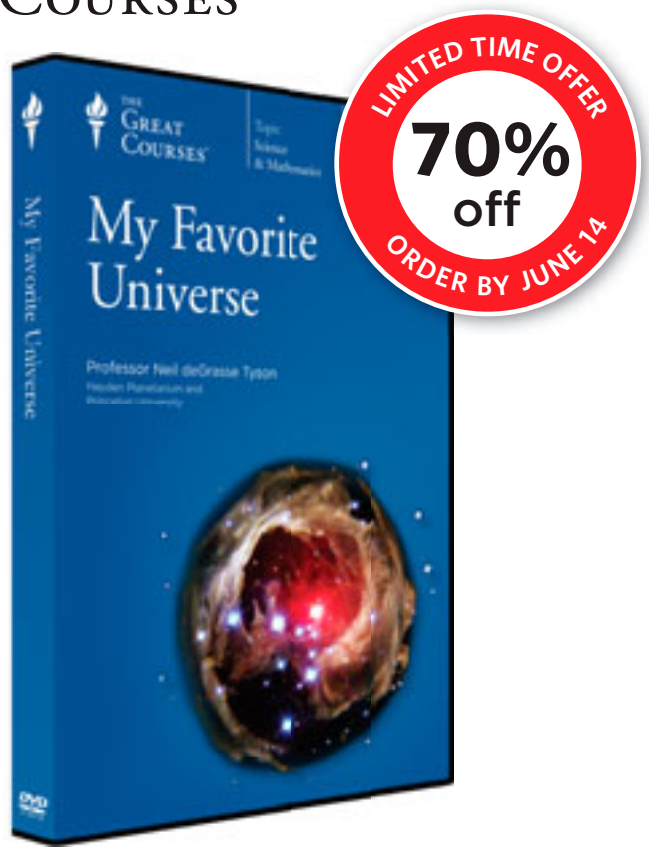
Rhode Islanders being an intensely territorial (read: provincial) people, the fights over whose wieners are best are legendary. Some claim that Olneyville New York System, in a gritty neighborhood west of downtown Providence, serves up the state's finest. Others swear by Wein-O-Rama in Cranston, Ferrucci's Original New York System in West Warwick, and Sam's New York System in North Providence. Some years ago, *Rhode Island Monthly* was forced to suspend its "Best Weiner in Rhode Island" award after the barrage of hate mail became too much to take.

Inherently subjective questions of preference aside, others abound. Why is one of the best iterations of the quintessential Rhode Island food found in a diner in, alas, Massachusetts? (That's Eats, in Seekonk, just across the border from East Providence.) When the spelling is "weiner," shouldn't the word be pronounced more like "whiner"? What exactly *is* New York System meat sauce made of?

There are other pretenders to the title of Rhode Island's trademark fare. Stuffies, frozen lemonade, and coffee cabinets all have their partisans. But as for me, come Memorial Day (and Independence Day, and Labor Day, and Veterans Day . . .), I'll be heading for Little Rhody, in a New York System state of mind.

Ethan Epstein

THE GREAT COURSES®



Understand the Forces of the Universe

What forces molded the universe? Are those forces still at work, removing, changing, or adding heavenly bodies even as we gaze upward? Will humanity, and Earth itself, one day be gone? Are we alone?

In an era when science journalism is perhaps more thorough and ambitious than ever before, fascinating explorations of questions like these seem available to us almost every day—provided we have a working understanding of the scientific theories on which they're based.

In this lecture series, Professor Neil deGrasse Tyson, the astrophysicist who directs the nation's most famous planetarium, makes that understanding available to anyone. **My Favorite Universe** is a spirited and intellectually engaging journey through the cosmos and its history, from before the big bang to the likely ways in which Earth, and perhaps the entire universe, might end.

Offer expires 06/14/12

1-800-832-2412

WWW.THEGREATCOURSES.COM/2WKS

My Favorite Universe

Taught by Professor Neil deGrasse Tyson
HAYDEN PLANETARIUM

LECTURE TITLES

1. On Being Round
2. On Being Rarefied
3. On Being Dense
4. Death by Black Hole
5. Ends of the World
6. Coming Attractions
7. Onward to the Edge
8. In Defense of the Big Bang
9. The Greatest Story Ever Told
10. Forged in the Stars
11. The Search for Planets
12. The Search for Life in the Universe

My Favorite Universe
Course no. 158 | 12 lectures (30 minutes/lecture)

SAVE $160

DVD ~~$199.95~~ NOW $39.95
+$5 Shipping, Processing, and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee
Priority Code: 67499

Designed to meet the demand for lifelong learning, The Great Courses is a highly popular series of audio and video lectures led by top professors and experts. Each of our more than 400 courses is an intellectually engaging experience that will change how you think about the world. Since 1990, over 10 million courses have been sold.

the weekly Standard

On, Wisconsin!

"This is what democracy looks like." That was the boast of protesters occupying the Wisconsin state capitol 16 months ago as they blocked Republican lawmakers from entering the legislature and celebrated Democratic state senators who had fled the state to avoid a vote on Governor Scott Walker's budget reforms. So in some respects it's fitting that a process launched in the intellectual incoherence of those early days will end with an election to recall an official whose offense is doing as governor the things he promised as a candidate he'd do. This is not, of course, what democracy looks like—at least not what it ought to look like.

The Wisconsin recall is a farce—a childish, union-sponsored tantrum that will cost the state's taxpayers an estimated $18 million. Perhaps the greatest irony is that Democrats rarely discuss its ostensible cause: collective bargaining. Tom Barrett, the mayor of Milwaukee who is seeking to replace Walker, did not use the phrase in the speech he gave celebrating his victory in the Democratic primary earlier this month. Graeme Zielinski, spokesman for the Wisconsin Democratic party, told *Mother Jones*: "Collective bargaining is not moving people." A recent poll of Wisconsin Democrats found that just 12 percent of those surveyed said "restoring collective bargaining rights of public employees" was the most important reason to remove Walker, well behind three other choices.

There's a reason the governor's reforms have gone from being the center of the anti-Walker movement to a talking point to be avoided. They've worked. Walker took office with a projected deficit of $3.6 billion, and in two years he's erased it. The Wisconsin Department of Revenue projected last month that the state will have a budget surplus of $154 million by the summer of 2013.

Restricting public sector collective bargaining freed the state and local governments from the de facto veto unions could exercise over their budgets and allowed taxpayers to ask public employees to contribute more—in some cases to begin contributing *something*—to their own health care and pension benefits. Before the reforms, most public employee union members paid less than 1 percent of their salary toward their pensions and contributed 6 percent of the cost of their health care premiums. And in fact, Wisconsin public employees still have a good deal—with most contributing 5.8 percent of their salary toward their pension and up to 12.6 percent of their health care premium, well below the averages for the private sector.

In addition, the reforms brought an end to forced union membership. This means that public employees can opt out of the union and stop paying its dues. A teacher in, say, the suburbs of Madison who opts out will bring home an additional $1,100 a year.

So public employee unions now have to persuade—not compel—people to join their ranks. That argument becomes especially difficult without collective bargaining. If the union no longer has the power to win gold-plated pension and health benefits, why would the average teacher choose to spend a chunk of his or her earnings to become a member? Without that misbegotten money, public employee unions lose their power. There's a reason public sector unions are fighting as if their existence depends on this. It might.

One sign that Wisconsin governor Scott Walker is likely to win the election on June 5 is the sudden disappearance of national media attention to the race. The networks and newspapers that gave wall-to-wall coverage to protests in the streets of Madison in the spring of 2011 and excitedly reported on the drive to collect signatures to force a recall have gone relatively quiet as a succession of polls show Walker leading by 5 points or more. State Democrats are complaining that national Democrats aren't devoting the time and resources necessary to defeat Walker; national Democrats are whispering to reporters that they'd warned their Wisconsin counterparts against a costly recall effort. David Axelrod has made comments in recent days downplaying the significance of the recall beyond Wisconsin. Obama himself, who once promised to walk the picket lines with his union backers when their interests were threatened, seems to want no part of the recall—or at least not a high-profile part.

Scott Walker understood that if he were going to accomplish big things, he'd need to start early. He learned that lesson from watching two of his good friends—governors Mitch Daniels and Chris Christie—fight to bring much-needed reform to their states. The changes were often unpopular at first. Daniels was elected governor of Indiana in 2004 with 53 percent of the vote, but two years later, after he began implementing an aggressive reform agenda, his support had dropped to 37 percent. Yet he won reelection handily in 2008, and in recent months, as the effectiveness of his continuing reforms has become obvious, his approval rating has risen as high as 70 percent. Christie followed the same model in New Jersey, and his approval ratings have traced a similar trajectory—though without the dramatic highs and lows of Daniels.

Walker hopes to follow that path. He defeated Barrett by 52 to 47 percent in 2010, and he says he thinks the results on June 5 will show that "voters are willing to stand with people who make tough choices." A win would say that—and a 2010-level margin over Barrett would shout it. On, Wisconsin!

—Stephen F. Hayes

After Wisconsin

Last week, *Morning Joe*'s eponymous host, Joe Scarborough, called the effort to recall Wisconsin governor Scott Walker "a political Pickett's Charge" by the Democrats and the unions: "They ran up the hill when they didn't have to." If we were to extend the somewhat fanciful historical comparison, we could, I suppose, liken Walker's supporters to the 6th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment—part of the famed Iron Brigade—whose successful charge on July 1 near Chambersburg Pike contributed to the Union victory at Gettysburg. (Perhaps Walker, in order to inspire his supporters before the vote, could repeat the famous order of Lieutenant Colonel Rufus Dawes, delivered amidst battlefield confusion and carnage: "Forward! Forward! Charge! Align on the Colors! Align on the Colors!")

Needless to say, comparing Pickett's troops to today's union organizers and left-wing activists is unjust to the memory of the Confederate soldiers, whose courage and resolve compelled admiration, if not awe, from observers both North and South. And Scott Walker would be the first to gainsay any comparison of his efforts to the bravery and fortitude of the Iron Brigade, whose 1,900 soldiers took more than 1,100 casualties that day.

The Wisconsin recall election isn't a modern-day battle of Gettysburg. But let's hope the comparison holds at least in this respect—that the recall effort, like Pickett's Charge, fails, and that the just cause prevails. And then, in the event of a victory for Walker on June 5, the task of today's Republicans will be similar to the challenge facing the Union forces after Gettysburg: to turn a defensive success—halting the South's advance into Pennsylvania, preventing Scott Walker from being removed from office halfway through his term—into a strategic victory in the broader conflict.

This the North, much to President Lincoln's chagrin, failed to do. On July 7, Lincoln commented, "If Gen. Meade can complete his work so gloriously prosecuted thus far, by the literal or substantial destruction of Lee's army, the rebellion will be over." But despite Lincoln's entreaties, Meade allowed Lee's army to retreat and then cross back over the Potomac to safety in the South. As Lincoln said, "Our army held the war in the hollow of their hand and they would not close it!"

Can the forces of political reform today do a better job of closing their victorious hand? Here is one simple thing the Romney campaign can do: Associate Mitt Romney with Governor Walker's success—and the successes of other governors—in making the case for a national agenda of conservative reform of a bloated and bankrupt welfare state.

One problem for any challenger is to show that his untested policies will work when he's in office. Another problem for a Republican running for president in 2012 is to unshackle himself from the perceived failures of the last Republican president. Both problems can be dealt with by having Romney become the tribune and representative of the successful Republican governors.

Campaigns tend to focus on making the case for their uniquely qualified candidate. But the case for Romney as president is immeasurably strengthened if it's not just about Mitt Romney. His case is reinforced by the successes of governors like Mitch Daniels and Bobby Jindal and Chris Christie and Bob McDonnell and Scott Walker and Susana Martinez. These governors have had real successes dealing with the fiscal and financial challenges their states have faced. And this during the same period in which President Obama (and to some degree President Bush before him) failed to grapple with comparable problems at the national level—and at the same time that Democratic governors and legislators in states like Illinois and California have conspicuously failed.

If Team Romney can become Team Romney-Walker-Daniels-Christie-et al., Romney's campaign will take on a sharper focus. His chances of prevailing this fall will increase. It's true that he might win anyway in a long and difficult slog. But a Walker victory in Wisconsin on the first Tuesday in June could provide a defining moment for the Romney campaign—and for the forces of responsible Republican reform against reactionary Democratic opposition.

It's up to the Romney campaign to seize that moment and spend the months after June 5 explaining that a Republican president is needed to complete at the national level the "work so gloriously prosecuted so far" by Republican governors.

—William Kristol

American Zero

The Cold War is an increasingly distant memory in American military minds, except in the minds of the arms control community, and in particular those who seek the elimination of nuclear weapons. Alas, our president is a member in good standing of this community—indeed, an organizer.

So, too, it appears, is Obama's "favorite general," James "Hoss" Cartwright, a Marine who recently retired as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He led a panel for the no-nuke Global Zero advocacy group that has recommended

a radical reduction in, and restructuring of, our already-shrunken and aging U.S. nuclear deterrent. Other panel members included many establishment "formers": Republican senator Chuck Hagel, arms control negotiator Richard Burt, ambassador Thomas Pickering, and NATO commander General Jack Sheehan. In other words, Cartwright was the young, fresh-faced former.

Naturally, the panel produced a report, and just as naturally, the report's recommendations pointed toward "an urgent and transformational change in U.S. nuclear force structure, strategy, and posture." That means cutting warhead levels to about 900 (already headed down to about 1,500 under Obama's "New START" pact from the Cold War peak of 25,000), eliminating land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, and cutting the Trident submarine fleet by a third. The bomber fleet would consist of 18 B-2s (the stealth bomber that's celebrating its 15th anniversary of active service); no word about a successor airplane. This represents a pretty good approximation of where the Obama administration would like to go in its second term.

But whereas every forward-thinking strategist—not only in the United States but around the globe—is trying to puzzle out the emerging great-power balance of the 21st century, Cartwright and his posse are still locked in the bottle with the Soviet scorpion. The principal justification for the reductions they recommend is that current arsenals exceed what is needed to assure the minimum of deterrence between Moscow and Washington. Further, the "existing threats to our two countries cannot be resolved using nuclear arsenals." Since the Hoss panel doesn't have much time for other great-power developments, its members see the rest of the problem as limited to "threats posed by rogue states, failed states, proliferation, regional conflicts, terrorism, cyber warfare, organized crime, drug trafficking, conflict-driven mass migration of refugees, epidemics, or climate change." I can't believe they didn't mention the national security implications of obesity and bullying, but you get the idea: They're hip to the "new security" agenda, "as underscored by last year's survey of several hundred experts by the Council on Foreign Relations."

Apparently, none of the experts surveyed works in the national security bureaucracies of the nations who are building more and more modern nukes. These are, notably, China, India, Pakistan (which might soon have the world's third-largest nuclear force), and the Rogue Regimes—Iran, in particular—which have learned the lesson of North Korea: Even a handful of nukes deranges the Americans and their allies; the missile doesn't even have to work. In sum, we are on the cusp of a much more "multipolar" and "balanced" global nuclear equation, but therefore one that is more complex and inherently less stable; if nothing else, the opportunities for miscalculation are much multiplied.

The reductions proposed by the Hoss panel report (primarily written, no doubt, by Bruce Blair, the driving force behind Global Zero) would exacerbate these structural and other dangers. That's certainly true if the numbers of warheads go down, but it will also be true if the diversity of the nuclear force—the traditional triad of ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers—is diminished, and if the already-at-risk efforts to modernize America's deterrent come to a complete stop.

Indeed, the force posture that the study proposes—900 total warheads and 450 "deployed," carried by 10 Trident boats and a minuscule B-2 fleet—is an extremely tempting target for a preemptive strike much smaller than a Soviet-style barrage. The B-2s all live at Whiteman Air Force Base. If the Navy had just ten Tridents, as the study acknowledges, two of those would be in long-term overhaul at any time. Of the eight left, traditional Navy "at-sea" measures call for 70 percent of the fleet to be ready to rapidly deploy ("at-sea" does not mean actually at sea). A more realistic assessment of the number of submarines actually on patrol might be as low as two, one in the Atlantic and one in the Pacific. In other words, much of the fleet would be in port, an obvious and soft target. Nor do subs that are on patrol carry a full magazine of nukes.

Even under current plans, there's reason to worry. There are just three ICBM bases left, but those facilities are extremely hardened; the targets may be known, but they are not at all soft. Preserving—even increasing—the utility of the land-based leg of the triad is actually becoming more, not less, important.

Any serious assessment of the nuclear world of the future argues for keeping the triad and modernizing it rapidly. In a world with fewer nuclear weapon systems but more people and threats to deter, we need more survivability and less firepower: The "diversity premium" is rising. It's not only the big and aging delivery systems that need fixing—the bomber, the D-5 sub-launched missile, and a Trident replacement with fewer launch tubes and more boats—but the big and aging warheads. Smaller warheads would be a more credible deterrent—or, in the latest neologism, "compellent"—particularly to the rogue nuclear powers. Over the next decade, we are bound to repeat some of the early Cold War debates about nuclear use, particularly in light of the continued reductions in U.S. conventional forces and the proliferation of technologies that threaten to erode our conventional edge.

Arms control mavens could actually play a useful role in this environment. The Hoss report points out a "basic deficiency in the framework of ongoing nuclear arms talks: the exclusion of everyone except for Americans and Russians." The relaxation in U.S.-Russia nuclear tensions ought rightly to be viewed as an opportunity to try to "globalize" arms control treaties—arguably the single most stabilizing thing that could happen in East Asia would be to limit Chinese intermediate-range missiles. Alas, it's clear that our commander in chief and his favorite general would rather start with "American Zero" than go global.

—Thomas Donnelly

Small Potatoes

Obama's overblown tax breaks for business.

BY FRED BARNES

In his State of the Union speech in 2011, President Obama referred to "small business" five times and alluded to it seven more. Progress in America is measured, he said, "by the prospects of a small business owner who dreams of turning a good idea into a thriving enterprise." In this year's address, the mentions were down to three.

But Obama hasn't abandoned the subject. He routinely boasts of having gotten 17 small business tax cuts enacted. And last week being National Small Business Week, the president said he has come up with an array of fresh tax cuts for struggling small business owners.

There are three big problems here. The first is that his 17 tax cuts have had little if any impact on small businesses or the economy. Basically, they failed. Second, his new cuts are much like the earlier ones. They're temporary, narrow, and not what small business owners are asking for, which are fewer regulations and a permanent cut in the personal income tax rate or at least no hike in that rate. Third, they have no chance of being enacted in 2012.

That his 17 tax cuts didn't deliver doesn't deter Obama from bragging about them. A good example is what he calls the "New Hire Tax Credit for Small Businesses." It would "jumpstart new hiring," Obama insists, by offering small firms a 10 percent income tax credit for "hiring new employees or raising the wages and salaries of their existing employees."

Sounds promising, doesn't it? But the credit would be good only in 2012. It resembles the HIRE Act, the acronym for the Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act, which offered a payroll tax exemption and a business tax cut of up to $1,000. It, too, was good for one year. The result: It had practically no effect and expired at the end of 2010 with scarcely a whimper of complaint by anyone in Congress or the small business lobby.

Why did it fail? Business owners prefer to take on workers who'll stay around for a while. That means long after Obama's tax breaks expire. And the earlier HIRE Act required them to hire first, start paying wages, and get the tax savings later, assuming they'd be willing to fight their way through a maze of paperwork to qualify. Few were.

What appeal it had was particularly to those who were already hiring. For them, the tax relief was a windfall. By the way, President Carter tried a tax scheme to boost small business hiring in the 1970s. It didn't work either.

Nevertheless, the president told a gathering of small business owners in mid-May the new legislation would provide an incentive for business owners to say, "Maybe we hire an extra two people. Maybe we hire an extra three people. Maybe we hire an extra 10 people." Sorry, but given the fate of prior efforts, they're more likely to say, "Hire someone? Perish the thought."

Of Obama's 17 earlier tax cuts, several were more valuable to larger businesses than the very small. The five-year carryback of "net operating losses" and "general business credits" fall into that category. Plus, there were three separate measures for "bonus depreciation," which weren't terribly helpful to most small businesses but were a useful tax write-off for larger companies. Even for them, the bonuses were gone after a year.

GARY LOCKE

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

Not to get in the weeds, but the 17 included tax relief limited to a fraction of the six million small businesses in America. In this category was "Limitations on Penalties for Errors in Tax Reporting That Disproportionately Affect Small Business." Not a huge job creator, that one.

The most highly touted item was the health insurance tax credit for small businesses, passed in 2010 as part of Obamacare. It would aid firms with fewer than 25 employees and average wages of less than $50,000 by paying 35 percent of their cost of premiums now and 50 percent starting in 2014.

A political purpose was involved. When Obamacare was being debated, the tax relief was used as an argument to persuade small business owners to support the bill. Speaking to a group of them in 2009, the president said, "It's being written with the interests of Americans like you and your employees in mind."

But of the four million small businesses that White House economists estimated to be eligible, only 170,300 have signed up. In studying the impact of the tax cut, the Government Accountability Office said "most very small employers" who don't provide health benefits found it "was not large enough to incentivize employers to begin offering insurance." Also, "complex rules limited claims," and "the time needed to calculate the credit deterred claims." No surprise there. That's the way government works.

Bureaucratic rulemaking and delay don't dampen Obama's enthusiasm for government. When he talked to small business owners in May, he spoke glowingly about the Small Business Administration. "Sometimes private financing isn't willing to take a chance on a couple of young guys who have an idea about starting a great hoagie shop," he said.

True, but Obama doesn't seem to recognize that companies in need of SBA loans have a common trait: They aren't a good bet to succeed. "When you've got a great service or a great product and people are willing to work really hard, then action by government and the SBA can help . . . get them started," he said.

Yes, it can. But it's not needed when a business has a "great service or a great product." Those firms are likely to attract private investment.

Targeted and *temporary* are catchwords for Obama's tax cuts. *Across-the-board* and *permanent* are those for the cuts small businesses want and need. One kind doesn't work, the other does. Obama may not know the difference. ♦

Too Big for Comfort

Why we need to break up the banks.

BY JAMES PETHOKOUKIS

America needs to break up its biggest banks, but not for reasons likely to give a tingle to Occupy Wall Street's remnant rabble (or its Great Everywhere Spirit, Senate candidate Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts). This isn't about some political exercise in election-year demonization. Bankers, as a class, aren't villains. They're not "banksters" grifting money from middle-income pockets. And they're certainly not vampire squids on the collective face of humanity, as *Rolling Stone* writer Matt Taibbi has infamously described Goldman Sachs. And while it might be rhetorical overkill to say they're "doing God's work," as Goldman boss Lloyd Blankfein has put it, bankers do fulfill a critical economic function. Bankers, not bureaucrats, are supposed to be the efficient allocators of capital in America's market-based economy. They connect people who have spare dough to those who need a bit of spare dough, such as entrepreneurs looking to start a business or companies looking to grow one. We need lots of successful banks, and we need smart folks to run them.

But America doesn't need 20 banks with combined assets equal to nearly 90 percent of the U.S. economy, or five mega-banks—JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup, Wells Fargo, and Goldman Sachs—with combined assets equal to almost 60 percent of national output, three times what they were in the 1990s. That amount of complexity and financial concentration—which has grown worse since the passage of Dodd-Frank—is a current and continuing threat to the health of the U.S. economy. Now don't blame market failure or unintended results of deregulation. Banks that big and complex and interconnected are both the unsurprising outcome of Washington's 30-year expansion of the federal safety net and the cause of its ongoing existence. When you combine a "too big to fail" guarantee from Uncle Sam with the natural human tendency toward irrational exuberance, you have the key elements in place for another unaffordable financial crisis.

Bubbles are nothing new. And the root cause of the financial crisis of 2008-2009 may have been no different than what drove manias for Dutch tulips in 17th-century Holland, shares of the South Sea Company in 18th-century England, or dot-com stocks in 1990s America. This time around, the vehicle for the market's mania was an outbreak of cockeyed optimism about housing prices—among both lenders and borrowers—and their inability to ever decline. A new study from the Federal Reserve banks of Atlanta and

James Pethokoukis is a columnist and blogger at the American Enterprise Institute and a contributor to CNBC.

Boston, "Why Did So Many People Make So Many *Ex Post* Bad Decisions: The Causes of the Foreclosure Crisis," explains it this way: "Bubbles do not need securitization, government involvement or nontraditional lending products to get started. . . . If the problem was some collective, self-fulfilling mania, [a new round of regulations] will not work."

The supporters of the Dodd-Frank financial reform law, the study suggests, diagnosed and treated the financial crisis like it was an outbreak of malaria, a preventable disaster caused by a disease whose pathologies are well understood. Change this or that incentive via this or that financial regulation and the problem is far less likely to repeat.

But that approach is as much a case of mass delusion as the one that afflicted all those owners in 2007 of sure-thing mortgage-backed securities or mini-mansions in reclaimed Nevada desert. MIT economist Andrew Lo reviewed 21 books about the financial crisis and concluded that "like the characters in *Rashomon*, we may never settle on a single narrative that explains all the facts; such a 'super-narrative' may not even exist."

Lo finds the empirical evidence for many so-called facts that influenced Dodd-Frank to be unclear at best. We all know, of course, that Wall Street compensation was too focused on making a quick buck from short-term trading profits. Yet Lo inconveniently points out that big bank CEOs' aggregate stock and option holdings were more than eight times the value of their annual compensation, making it "improbable that a rational CEO knew in advance of an impending financial crash, or knowingly engaged in excessively risky behavior."

And a rational CEO of a key Wall Street player also knew that if he did make some cataclysmic mistake, Uncle Sam was there to cushion the landing. Indeed, the bigger the firm and the more enmeshed it was in the financial system, the more likely the government backstop would be there. The riskier banks were, paradoxically, the safer they were—at least for bondholders. So why wouldn't "rational CEOs" try to increase their return on equity by lowering capital levels, increasing leverage, and finding new, profitable lines of business? They might be violating their duty to bank shareholders if they didn't. "The consequence of expanding the safety net to an ever-increasing range of activities is to invite a repeat of our most recent crisis," said Thomas Hoenig, vice chairman of FDIC and former president of the Kansas City Fed, in a speech last year.

But treating the financial crisis like a malaria outbreak uses the wrong model. Better, say the authors of that Fed bank study, to view the meltdown as a different sort of noneconomic catastrophe: "Science has a theory of why earthquakes occur, but quakes strike without warning, and there is nothing we can do to prevent them. Even so, policymakers can mitigate their consequences." Or as Hayek might have put it, not only is government unable to predict the future, the world is too complicated for it to really have much useful understanding of what's going on right now. Regulators are always a day late and a dollar short. Indeed, despite Dodd-Frank, the biggest banks still have a sizable funding edge over their smaller rivals. Markets still perceive them as too big to fail.

So how do you (a) make the financial system more shockproof when the next economic earthquake hits, (b) reduce the likelihood of expensive taxpayer bailouts, and (c) ensure the banks themselves don't cause the next crisis? Hoenig, for one, would only allow banks to engage in traditional activities that are well understood and are based on long-term customer relationships so borrowers and lenders are on the same page: commercial banking, underwriting securities, and asset management services. Banks would be barred from broker-dealer activities, making markets in derivatives or securities, trading securities or derivatives for their own accounts or for customers, and sponsoring hedge funds or private equity funds. The result would be banks that are smaller, simpler, safer. Not only would they be less

likely to spark financial crisis because management would know government might let them fail, the cost of failure to taxpayers would be less.

Of course, some will argue that we need large, complex financial institutions and that their very existence is proof of that. Who are the know-it-all breaker-uppers to say we don't? But that size and complexity is itself more a result of crony capitalism than of market forces. It's little wonder, then, that the preponderance of the evidence is that all the supposed benefits from supersized banks and their economies of scale are outweighed by the risks of disaster they generate. Take this 2011 study from the University of Minnesota: "Our calculations indicate that the cost to the economy as a whole due to increased systemic risk is of an order of magnitude larger than the potential benefits due to any economies of scale when banks are allowed to be large. . . . This suggests that the link between TBTF banks and financial crises needs to be broken. One way to achieve that is to break the largest banks into much smaller pieces."

There are other options, of course. We could just put a hard cap on bank size. But there's no clear evidence what that size limit should be. Besides, while the failure of a big bank creates a big economic impact, it's not necessarily size that makes a bank potentially dangerous as much as what a bank does. Others want to treat systemic risk as an externality like pollution and tax it. Nothing wrong with that in theory. Former presidential candidate Jon Huntsman proposed just such a plan and would have used the revenue to cut corporate taxes. The riskier the activities the bank engages in, the higher the tax. But this again requires too much knowledge on the part of regulators to precisely gauge the riskiness of activities or assets and levy an appropriate tax. Again, Hayek. A risk tax also creates new opportunities for Wall Street lobbying.

What about just getting Washington out of the banking business entirely? No deposit insurance for investors. No Federal Reserve as a lender of last resort. Lenders would be more vigilant, bank execs more scared, moral hazard eliminated. But explaining to the American public the need to do away with these two longtime features of both the American economy and advanced economies globally would take time, time we may not have. And if a crisis should occur, politicians would still be strongly tempted to start cutting checks. And America cannot afford another economy-crushing financial crisis, not now and probably not for years. In 2007, publicly held federal debt as a share of national economic output was 36 percent. In 2012, it will be roughly double that level, 73 percent, and likely heading even higher. And once you add what Uncle Sam owes in social insurance entitlements, total U.S. debt is bigger than the entire economy, 103 percent of GDP. That amount of indebtedness is well past the 90 percent level identified by economists Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff as a serious drag on long-term growth. And like the debt, unemployment is also already at an intolerable level and likely to remain historically high for years to come given the slow pace of recovery.

Also unlike those ideas on libertarian wish lists, breaking up the banks has some actual legislative momentum thanks to JPMorgan's huge trading losses on its botched hedging strategy. Banking analyst Jaret Seiberg of Guggenheim Securities' Washington Research Group calls a bipartisan bank breakup movement along the lines Hoenig outlines both a "serious threat" and the top issue facing the sector for the rest of the year. "The Republican response to Dodd-Frank's overkill is to break up the banks. The far left also wants to break up the big banks. The issue with the JPMorgan hedging mess is that it empowers the far left and the far right to pursue their agendas while the silent majority in the middle ducks for political cover." In fact, what banking analysts call a "serious threat" should strike those outside the management of big banks—left, right, and center—as a "serious opportunity."

Breaking up the biggest banks would allow markets to work better, by cutting down on crony capitalist rent-seeking by big money from big government. It would also reduce the moral hazard created by Washington's too big to fail policy. Ending too big to fail isn't a policy conservatives should shy away from—even if some on the left support it too. ♦

The assets of five mega-banks now equal almost 60 percent of national output.

AP / MARK LENNIHAN

A Defense Posture We Can Afford

Strategy should drive procurement.

BY STUART KOEHL

A Chinese missile destroyer during a Russia-China joint exercise, April 2012

Strategist Edward Luttwak noted that the United States does not have a strategy, it has a procurement system. It takes so long to develop a new weapon, the strategic rationale has often vanished before it is fielded. Because so much time, money, and reputation are invested in the system, it cannot be canceled, so it is shoehorned into the new strategic situation, whatever that might be. Our strategy debates are driven from the bottom up, by budgetary and procurement issues, rather than top-down, with grand strategy determining theater strategy driving operational methods determining force structure, tactics, and, ultimately the acquisition of new weapons.

Given the military's outstanding array of weapons, it's clear that our helter-skelter, bottom-up approach has generally served us well, albeit at a greatly inflated cost. It's also clear that it is no longer affordable. With large budget cuts looming, the debate over military strategy cannot degenerate into another "salami slicing exercise," with each armed service (and its congressional supporters) attempting to protect its share of the budget—its "key programs," in particular. This approach leads to buying "all the defense we can afford," instead of the defense we need.

What would our procurement decisions look like if instead we conducted a rigorous strategic analysis, and allowed the results to flow downward into force structure, operational method, and tactics? A cursory assessment of the threats we face over the next two decades reveals two salient facts. First, only one "peer competitor" is likely to emerge to challenge the United States in high-intensity regional conflict—China. Second, the vast majority of threats we face are going to be low-intensity conflicts similar to those we fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. Because of U.S. preeminence in conventional warfare, only China has both the economic wherewithal and the political will to challenge us at this level; other potential adversaries have chosen to employ asymmetrical responses (such as insurgency and terrorism). The United States must be prepared for two very different kinds of war, with different operational, tactical, and technical requirements.

The Obama administration has recognized at least part of this problem with its "pivot on the Pacific": China now looms large in the consciousness of all three armed services, but in the process hard lessons learned about "small wars" are in danger of being lost through the change in focus and the reemergence of military parochialism. Maintaining U.S. preeminence across the spectrum of conflict, from counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, all the way up to high-intensity regional war, won't be easy. An exclusive focus on either end of this spectrum could leave us vulnerable on the other, while attempts to split the difference (as with the present budget) will leave us weakened at both ends.

What we need is a restructuring of the military to bring our force structures and capabilities into line with the full range of threats we face. If this is done, it may be possible to craft a robust defense posture at or even slightly below current defense baseline budget levels (about $550 billion). The following proposal is necessarily simplistic, but provides a general outline of that posture.

Consider China. The main pillar

NEWSCOM

Stuart Koehl is a research fellow at the Johns Hopkins Center for Transatlantic Relations and an independent defense analyst who has worked for the Department of Defense, the intelligence community, and the aerospace-defense industry.

of U.S. strategy must be deterring or defeating Chinese aggression. Geography has placed China in a strategic cul-de-sac: It cannot conquer or intimidate the resource-rich areas it covets by overland attack; it can only reach them by sea and air. Conversely, the United States is unable to project and sustain a large ground force on the Asian mainland. Thus, any future conflict with China would be fought on the sea and in the air. China recognizes this. The bulk of Beijing's force modernization has focused on naval and air forces, in pursuit of an "access denial" strategy to keep the United States at bay until China achieves its strategic objectives. China is also developing a nuclear missile force directed not so much at the U.S. mainland as at China's regional neighbors, in order to deter them from either assisting U.S. policies or opposing Chinese ones.

To counter China, U.S. air and naval forces need serious reinforcements. At just 285 major warships, Washington would be hardpressed to maintain naval supremacy in the Western Pacific while meeting its necessary commitments elsewhere (e.g., in the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean), because, at any given time, only one third of all ships are deployed on station. Moreover, most of our ships were built during the Reagan-Bush era and are now reaching the end of their useful lives. Old ships have not been replaced at parity, so the fleet is shrinking at the very time it needs to expand.

But naval shipbuilding programs are in disarray. The Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) and DDG-1000 (a new class of destroyer) are over budget and behind schedule, and are not well matched to the Chinese threat. It would be wiser to continue production of the current DDG-51 class of guided-missile destroyer, while investing in service life extensions for Ticonderoga-class AEGIS cruisers. Plans to reduce the number of aircraft carriers are particularly shortsighted in light of China's plans to create its own carrier battle groups. In addition, carrier-based aircraft are rapidly aging, while the F-35C Joint Strike Fighter will not enter service (in very small numbers) until 2015.

China has also invested heavily in fourth and fifth generation fighter aircraft, which are equal or superior to all existing U.S. aircraft except the F-22 Raptor, production of which ended with 187 built. The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, intended to replace most of our existing Navy and Air Force fighters, is behind schedule and over budget. Initially intended as a low-cost complement to the F-22, the JSF now costs as much or more than the F-22, but is less capable. It might be prudent to reopen F-22 production and develop both a carrier and strike variant to replace the F/A-18 and F-15E; technology from the F-35 could be integrated into new Raptors.

Now consider low-intensity conflict. Air and naval forces can play only a supporting role here; the main requirement is lots of high-quality light infantry. A small portion of the Air Force and Navy budgets could be devoted to fairly simple unmanned aircraft such as the Predator and light frigates and patrol craft, which are more suitable for counterinsurgency or counterpiracy missions and cost a fraction of manned fighters or the LCS. The burden of low-intensity conflict will thus fall on the Army, but the Army is not properly configured for what will be its primary mission. To rectify the situation, the following steps should be taken.

First, transfer most armored/mechanized units to the reserve components, retaining only enough to hedge against limited armored threats in Korea and the Middle East. Reconfigure the active forces as light and medium infantry units, which generate far more infantrymen than heavy units, allowing the Army to field more light infantry within its personnel limits. Light forces also have a smaller logistic footprint, which will allow the conversion of support personnel to infantrymen. Moreover, converting the reserves into a heavy force will make them a true "strategic reserve," mobilized only for emergencies of limited duration, and not as a substitute for active forces in long-term operations.

Second, reorient Army procurement to meet its mission. Low-intensity conflict does not need much in the way of tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, or artillery. The M1 Abrams, the M2/3 Bradley, and the M109 are sufficient to meet foreseeable threats, and with upgrades can continue to serve for decades. That means the Army has no pressing need for its Ground Combat Vehicle program or new artillery. It does need the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle as a replacement for the Humvee, as well as a guided mortar projectile, tactical unmanned aerial vehicles, and better radios—but all of these are relatively cheap.

To further enhance the Army's combat power, we should reverse the recent policy of the Obama administration, and maximize the use of contractors for noncombat functions. Every job that does not require a man in uniform pulling a trigger can be performed by a fully competent civilian. The manpower released from administrative chores can be converted into infantry.

Finally, a word on strategic nuclear forces and missile defense. To date, China has not attempted to match the United States in long-range nuclear missiles, because the cost of matching the U.S. arsenal is prohibitive. If the number of U.S. nuclear warheads drops substantially, though, China could be tempted to seek nuclear parity. Maintaining nuclear forces at current levels would prevent this, as would the development of a more robust national missile defense system. Deployment of effective theater missile defenses in Japan, South Korea, and aboard U.S. naval vessels would serve to protect our forces from surprise attack, as well as preclude China from decoupling our Asian allies. Again, though, both nuclear forces and missile defense are relatively cheap. ♦

Trade Goes Both Ways

The Obama administration needs to learn the meaning of 'partner.'

BY REUBEN F. JOHNSON

Rio de Janeiro

When it comes to recognizing both the traditional position and strengths of Brazil and its status as an emerging global player, the Obama administration seems to be tone deaf. Nothing illustrates this better than how the United States is conducting its defense industrial relations in this country.

This spring Brazil passed a milestone that many of its citizens and political leaders could have hardly imagined a few years ago. Its booming economy became the sixth-largest in the world, displacing that of the United Kingdom. This growth was abundantly visible last month when Brazil hosted another of its large trade shows, the 2012 Latin American Aero and Defense (LAAD) security expo, at the sprawling Riocentro exhibition center near the Barra de Tijuca district of Rio de Janeiro.

Barra epitomizes the booming Brazilian economy with its countless high-profile construction projects, malls flooded with Brazilians spending their newfound wealth, constant traffic jams, and the erection of several modern amphitheaters and other Olympic venues.

A showcase of all that is modern in Rio, Barra is where many of the 2016 Olympic events will take place, and the area will also feature prominently when Brazil hosts the 2014 World Cup. But not surprisingly, given the speed of its growth and the lack of planning for traffic (and because it *is* Brazil after all), Barra is a bit of a security and crowd control nightmare.

So part of the function of the LAAD security expo was to attract foreign defense companies capable of addressing the military and internal security challenges posed by these two major international sporting events—technology requirements that Brazilian experts state cannot be completely satisfied by Brazil's indigenous industry and which will have to be sourced from abroad.

One of the programs to bring in foreign technology and expertise is the F-X2 fighter aircraft competition for the Brazilian Air Force (FAB). The F-X2 has been a long-running, on-and-off competition that started with six different fighter aircraft from the United States, Europe, and Russia and has been winnowed down to three finalists: the Saab Aerospace JAS-39E/F next-generation Gripen from Sweden, France's Dassault Rafale, and the Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet that is flown by the U.S. Navy.

A decision on a purchase of an initial batch of 36 aircraft is expected sometime this summer, before municipal elections in October. Whichever firm wins, it will be a pivotal moment in the history of military aviation here. The requirements of the tender call for a substantial level of technology transfer—and for almost all of the fighters to be assembled on a production line in Brazil, making it one of the few nations in the world that manufacture advanced combat aircraft. Moreover, these initial 36 fighters are just the beginning. The FAB are expected to eventually build 100 or more of whatever aircraft they end up selecting, creating the largest and most modern air force in all of Latin America.

Two weeks after the LAAD security expo, in late April, the Obama administration tried to put its finger on the scale and sent Defense Secretary Leon Panetta to Rio to speak to an audience at Brazil's Superior War College, partly to lobby for the FAB to buy the F/A-18E/F over the two European aircraft in the competition.

"The United States seeks to increase high-tech defense trade, flowing in both directions," said Panetta. "Perhaps the most prominent example of our willingness to partner with Brazil on advanced defense technology is the United States government's offer to provide our Super Hornet fighter aircraft to the Brazilian Air Force."

But "Brazilian officials are asking just what Panetta and others mean by 'high-tech defense trade—flowing in both directions,'" said a representative from one of the European firms bidding in the tender. "It sounds nice, but recent behavior suggests that this trade only flows one way—from the U.S. to the south—and that it means the U.S. is actually *not* willing to purchase any Brazilian defense products."

These comments reference the decision in late February by the U.S. Air Force to cancel a $380 million contract to purchase 20 AT-29 Super Tucano turboprop counterinsurgency combat aircraft. The Super Tucanos are made by Embraer in Brazil and would have been supplied to the Afghan Air Force, but the sale was canceled after the competing U.S. firm, Hawker Beechcraft, filed a legal challenge to the procurement decision.

The day before Panetta spoke in Rio, the Brazilian defense minister, Celso Amorim, who is also the former foreign minister, told reporters in the capital, Brasília, that he was "sad" that the Super Tucanos, "which were certainly the best," were not purchased by the United States.

Brazilian industry officials are a bit less diplomatic over the issue. "The current U.S. administration evidently uses the word 'partner' in a different

Reuben F. Johnson is a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard *and a correspondent for* Jane's Defence Weekly.

URGENT: Diamond Ring Recall

Experts warn that millions of rings may be "romantically defective" when compared to the spectacular 4-Carat* Diamond*Aura*® *Avalon.

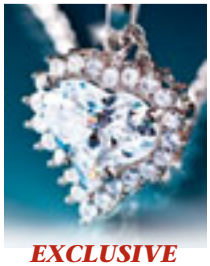
She loves natural diamonds. She loves you even more. But when even the skimpiest 1 carat solitaire sells for as much as $16,000, it's time to reconsider your relationship...with diamonds. Have you recently overpaid only to be underwhelmed? Send it back. You can do bolder. You can do brighter. You can own the Stauer 4-Carat Diamond*Aura*® Avalon Ring for under $100.

When "cute" is a four-letter word. If you want to make a romantic impression, go big. Cute doesn't cut it. Your love deserves to be wowed. If you're a billionaire with money to burn, turn the page. Everyone else? What you read next just might change your love life. There's only one way to find out...

We rewrote the rules of romance. Only Stauer's exclusive lab-created Diamond*Aura* gives you the luxury look of large-carat diamonds for a fraction of the price. The ingenious Diamond*Aura* process involves the use of rare minerals heated to incredibly high temperatures of nearly 5000°F. After cutting and polishing, scientists create a faultless marvel that's optically brighter and clearer with even more color and fire than a "D" flawless diamond.

Our exclusive Diamond*Aura* jewelry features all of the classic specifications, including color, clarity, cut and carat weight and is hard enough to cut glass. You get the look of natural stones, without the \outrageous cost.

Experience the luxury of money in the bank. We "built" our own mined diamond version of this ring online at a popular jewelry site and the grand total was $77,767! Today you can wear this 3 ¾ carat lab-created Diamond*Aura* solitaire, accented with 32 gleaming Diamond*Aura* rounds in fine .925 sterling silver for only $99!



EXCLUSIVE BONUS OFFER!
Order today to get this 4 ½-ctw DiamondAura® sterling silver pendant
PLUS
*$300 in Stauer Gift Coupons!**

That's good, but you deserve better. Order now and we'll include the matching 4 ½ Carat Diamond*Aura* Heart Pendant and $300 in Stauer Gift Coupons... absolutely FREE. That's right, 8½ total carats of Diamond*Aura* in sterling silver for under $100. Plus, one dozen $25 coupons that you can use at Stauer every month for a full year. Talk about money in the bank!

Your satisfaction is guaranteed. If for any reason you don't absolutely adore your Diamond*Aura* Avalon Ring, return it within 30 days for a full refund of your purchase price. But we promise that once you get a look at the Avalon up close, you'll see love in a whole new light.

Diamond*Aura*® Avalon Ring (4 ctw)~~—$295~~
$99 + S&P *Specify ring whole size 5-10 when ordering.*

Receive FREE heart pendant with purchase of the Avalon Diamond*Aura*® Ring ****PLUS* *get $300 in Stauer Gift Coupons per order FREE—$25 to use every month for 12 months, with NO MINIMUM PURCHASE REQUIRED.*

Call now to take advantage of this extremely limited offer.

Promotional Code AVR328-04
Please mention this code when you call.

Stauer has a **Better Business Bureau Rating** of **A+**

For fastest service, call toll-free 24 hours a day

1-800-721-0357

Stauer® 14101 Southcross Drive W., Dept. AVR328-04
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 www.stauer.com

context than we do in Portuguese," said one Brazilian industry representative. "We are not some banana republic that you can curry favor with by selling us fighters like they are some shiny toys that are only to be flown on national day parades. Besides, just what is the motivation for 'buying American'—having someone try and force-feed us the F/A-18E/F after having been given an 'up yours' by the Pentagon on the Super Tucano sale? It's insulting."

Brazil's Embraer is the third-largest aerospace firm in the world, he explained, "and they are looking for real technology transfer. U.S. government restrictions on technology transfer are far too restrictive compared with the Europeans, so with an F/A-18E/F purchase, instead of our improving our industrial base, we will receive mostly contracts to build pieces of the [Boeing] 787 Dreamliner—like some Happy Meal prize—that have no real impact on our industry."

If the Obama administration has a less than clear comprehension of what a defense partnership with Brazil should entail, it understands even less about the implications of canceling the Super Tucano order for Afghanistan.

President Obama made a surprise May Day visit to Afghanistan—the anniversary of the bin Laden raid—to give the widest possible publicity to his plan for a phased withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. Well, good luck with that. Rebidding the contract previously awarded to the Super Tucano will mean that thousands of U.S. and NATO forces that carry out air support missions will have to stay on longer—at least 15 months longer—until the competition can be rerun, the winning aircraft can be delivered in theater, and Afghan pilots trained to fly them.

In Brazilian aerospace and defense circles this looks simply like the gringos—once again—trying to have it both ways. On balance, not the best set of decisions ever made by the people in the five-sided building, and an overall policy towards Brazil that shows an appalling lack of understanding of how much this country has changed in the last decade. ♦

Survival Matters

The Cold War is over. Let's defend the population.

BY KEITH B. PAYNE

The most visible dispute in U.S.-Russian relations now pits the American desire for protection from prospective Iranian and North Korean nuclear missile threats against the Russian desire for the United States to remain fully vulnerable to Russia's offensive nuclear capabilities. Russian officials are demanding that the United States sign a legal document guaranteeing that the United States will, as a matter of policy, intentionally remain exposed to Russian nuclear weapons. This may seem extraordinary, even by Russian standards. But this demand harks back to the Cold War, when the United States ultimately made just this commitment in deference to the requirements of a supposedly "stable" balance of terror.

Russia's officials place great emphasis on this Cold War-vintage commitment to American vulnerability. Indeed, despite the fact that the words "stable" and "stability" are devoid of any agreed meaning in the post-Cold War era, Russia's favorite line now is to demand continued U.S. exposure for the sake of stability. Russian officials insisted on inserting language to this effect into the New START treaty and constantly appeal to "stability" as code for the perpetuation of a U.S. policy of vulnerability. These appeals are well received by many in the United States who are comfortable with the benign-sounding terms of the Cold War balance of terror, including the absence of U.S. defenses, and favor its continuation. In President Obama's recent unguarded, "open mike" moment, he reassured former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev that he would have "more flexibility" regarding U.S. defenses after the forthcoming presidential election.

The historical baggage associated with the question of whether to defend the U.S. population is enormous. In the 1960s and 1970s, successive presidents decided not to pursue serious defenses against Soviet strategic nuclear attack because of the belief that meaningful protection could not be sustained given possible Soviet offensive countermoves, and because they believed that U.S. defenses would "destabilize" the balance of terror.

The public was largely unaware that its government had essentially agreed as a matter of policy to forgo defense against nuclear attack; surveys consistently revealed that Americans wrongly believed they were defended. The contemporary Russian demand for a continued U.S. commitment to vulnerability raises yet again the question of if and how to defend U.S. society.

Those who favor protracting U.S. vulnerability to Russian, and now Chinese, attack claim that this is unavoidable—not a policy choice. The implication is why resist the inevitable? This is nonsense. U.S. exposure to nuclear and other forms of attack by weapons of mass destruction is indeed a reality, but that reality is not unalterable. The public's vulnerability to various forms of attack may be higher or lower, depending on the decision of the U.S. government to protect Americans or not. The difference could be thousands or even millions of American lives saved or lost.

Keith B. Payne is head of the graduate department of defense and strategic studies, Missouri State University, and a former deputy assistant secretary of defense.

Outback Opportunity:
Affordable Solid Silver

Why has the Australian Koala Silver Dollar soared 414% in just 4 years?

Australia's 2012 Koala Silver Dollar is the one of the world's most popular silver buys. *Why?* Because it's three coins in one:

#1: One full ounce of pure silver

Silver's allure is timeless. But today, the voracious appetite for silver from collectors, investors, banks, and governments has made this precious metal hotter than ever! Over the last 5 years, silver prices have risen dramatically, as demand has surpassed global supplies. Many experts are predicting silver could go higher. We can't predict the future, of course, but we've secured a supply of these one ounce Koala Silver Dollars—and this is our FIRST 2012 RELEASE.

#2: Legal tender Silver Dollar

Legal tender Silver Dollars are among the world's most popular coins. Americans love Silver Dollars, and so do millions around the world. Buying Silver Dollars allows you to own pure silver with the security of government-guaranteed purity, weight, and authenticity.

#3: One of the world's most limited Silver Dollars explodes in value

MILLIONS fewer Silver Koalas are struck annually than many other silver coins.* This extremely limited supply can create tremendous demand when past year issues appear on the market. For example, the 2008 Silver Koala is currently being offered for as much as $102.99. And the 2007 first-year Silver Koala originally sold for $29.95. It currently commands up to $124. That's a 414% increase!

Buy RISK FREE to avoid disappointment

Of course, there's no guarantee you'll hit a home run with this 2012 Koala. In fact, smart collectors are in for the long haul. They're building a family legacy in pure silver. Here's your chance to join them. You can get this coveted, limited-edition legal tender 2012 Koala Silver Dollar—***a coin that collectors around the world are scrambling to get their hands on***—at our FIRST EVER 2012 release price as low as $54.00 each!

Best of all, you can own your 2012 Silver Koalas risk-free. If you're not satisfied, return your coins within 30 days for a full refund (less s/h). But you will be thrilled, because this is what REAL MONEY looks like!

Buy More and SAVE More!
One 2012 Koala Silver Dollar coin for only $55.95 plus s/h
Five for $55.45 each plus s/h
Ten for $54.95 each plus s/h
SAVE $10
Twenty for **$54.00** each plus s/h
SAVE $39!

One of the world's most limited silver coins **for under $56!**

Toll Free 24 hours a day
1-888-201-7070

Offer Code KSD148
Please mention this code when you call

GovMint.com
YOUR ONE BEST SOURCE FOR COINS WORLDWIDE
14101 Southcross Drive W., Dept. KSD148,
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337
www.GovMint.com

It is important to note with regard to the Cold War legacy of vulnerability that U.S. officials at the time defined meaningful defense as effective protection for more than 80 percent of the population against a large-scale Soviet nuclear attack. Anything less was deemed meaningless and not worth the effort. The effect of this type of thinking was profound.

For example, in 1964, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara called for the withdrawal of 22 U.S. squadrons of air defense interceptor aircraft because Defense Department analyses showed that they might only save up to five million American lives. That did not reach the threshold for meaningful defense, according to McNamara, and thus the squadrons were judged not worth maintaining.

This definition of what could constitute meaningful, sustainable protection and the related acceptance of virtually unmitigated vulnerability led the United States to forgo most forms of direct protection for decades. This is the Cold War policy orientation to which Russian officials still appeal with their blustery demands about stability and U.S. legal guarantees of continued vulnerability.

It is important to understand that the Cold War rejection of defenses in many cases makes no sense today. This was demonstrated on 9/11, when the United States could not muster serious air defenses in a timely way. The government's longstanding acceptance of virtually unlimited societal vulnerability had left the country with trivial capabilities for self-defense against any strategic attack.

Perpetuation of such a condition would be folly. Today there are many possible sources and types of strategic threat to the United States, including terrorist attack and limited intentional or unauthorized state-based nuclear attack (the latter nearly happened during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis). In these cases, some levels of protection for society, including what is now called "consequence management," is feasible and may be very meaningful—indeed it would become the highest national priority if an attack occurred.

As even McNamara concluded in the 1960s, relatively simple and inexpensive civil defense measures alone could go a long way toward providing significant levels of protection for the U.S. population against nuclear attack, saving between 40 million and 90 million lives in most cases. And the combination of civil defenses and other forms of defense, including missile defense, could provide even greater protection against many limited threat scenarios.

The key issue now is not deciding if we should try to defend against thousands of nuclear warheads—that was the Cold War question. The question now is one of weighing the potential costs and benefits of societal defenses across a wide spectrum of threats, and deciding how much protection is worth the effort given the emerging threats, the prospective value of the defense, and the various costs involved.

There appears to be an emerging political consensus that defensive steps certainly should be taken against some obvious contingencies, such as terrorist nuclear or biological attack, limited rogue-state nuclear missile attack, and any unauthorized or accidental attack. But those steps cannot be taken in a vacuum. They would likely provide some concomitant protection against a Russian or Chinese strategic attack, and that concomitant protection could increase if the United States got more and more serious about protection against increasing terrorist and rogue-state threats, to include WMD.

Many of the same defensive measures that could provide some protection against a terrorist, Iranian, or North Korean strategic attack could also help protect society against a limited Russian or Chinese strategic attack. Do we forgo the former to avoid the latter? Of course not. These defenses could be very meaningful, and differentiating our readiness to defend according to the nationality of the attacker would be an absurd game of semantics. We should not forgo or limit potentially critical and affordable defenses against terrorists and rogues because they could also provide some protection against Russia or China, despite Russia's demands and crude threats on the subject.

In addition, today's strategic threats are not just nuclear. According to public reports, Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran may have biological weapons programs. And it appears that some terrorist organizations also seek biological weapons. We know that a biological attack could cause catastrophic losses comparable to a nuclear attack. Do we now forgo providing sensible measures of protection against biological attack because those same preparations could also limit U.S. vulnerability to Russian or Chinese strategic attack? Once again, of course not.

The reasonable policy question is how much of which defensive capabilities would be meaningful, feasible, and affordable against the emerging spectrum of strategic threats. Russians will continue to complain that U.S. defenses against terrorists and rogue states violate the supposed demands of stability—even while the Russian chief of the General Staff, General Nikolai Makarov, states that Russia will deploy an "impenetrable" missile defense shield by 2020.

But the downside of the unmitigated U.S. vulnerability preferred by Russia would be the absence of defensive measures that could save many American lives in the event of terrorist or rogue-state nuclear or biological attack, or any accidental or unauthorized attack.

Should we pursue feasible defensive measures against a spectrum of emerging threats, or essentially accept unmitigated vulnerability to WMD attacks by Russia or others? The American answer to that question will be apparent in our stated policies and forthcoming programs. Fortunately, the answer should not be difficult. The Cold War is over, and U.S. officials need not accept its legacy of uncontested vulnerability. The price of continuing adherence to that old, dubious tenet of the balance of terror is now too high. ♦

Special Market Opportunity

First Federal

Your Expert Guide to the World's Finest Coins

Nicholas J. Bruyer, Chairman & Founder, First Federal Coin
ANA Life Member Since 1974

$5,340 for an Ounce of Silver Bullion? Impossible!

10 years ago I'd have called you crazy to make such a prediction. Yet today it's a fact. Now our deal with a $4 billion precious metals wholesaler nets you a great deal for America's hottest ounce of silver!

It wasn't more than ten years ago that we met with former U.S. Mint Director Donna Pope. She spoke with pride about what she considered to be her greatest achievement as Director under President Reagan: Creation of the American Eagle silver and gold bullion coin programs, the first of their kind in our nation's history.

The purpose of these coins was to give people the opportunity to own physical silver and gold in a form certified for weight and purity by the U.S. Mint. While the bullion coin program was a signal success, nobody took into account the profound effect it would have on the collector market.

Silver Eagles = Today's Morgan Dollars

In the 1800s and early 1900s, the U.S. Morgan Silver Dollar was struck year upon year at various mints and circulated at face value. Their core value was in their precious metal content. However, in top grades, Morgan Silver Dollars can sell today for tens and even hundreds of thousands of dollars each!

For the same reason, many collectors today see the Silver Eagle series as a literal "ground floor" opportunity to acquire the top-grade coins as they are released. They started submitting Silver Eagles to the leading independent coin grading services, such as Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC), praying that the coins would come back with the highest possible grade: MS70 (all Uncirculated coins are graded on a point system from a low of 60 to a high of 70, with 70 representing flawless perfection). Of all the Silver Eagles produced by the U.S. Mint in 2011, less than one out of every 788 earned the NGC MS70 grade!

MS70 = $$$$$!

In the rarified atmosphere of MS70, Silver Eagles have soared to market prices that I can only characterize as surreal. Consider this: MS70 Silver Eagles have been selling for truly stratospheric prices. Here are just a few eye-popping examples:

1996 MS70 Silver Eagle	$5,340
1988 MS70 Silver Eagle	$2,660
1991 MS70 Silver Eagle	$3,910
1994 MS70 Silver Eagle	$1,660

It Just Keeps Getting Better

I was thrilled to lock up a guaranteed supply of Perfect Gem MS70 2012 Silver Eagles from a primary distributor. Moreover, every coin is certified and encapsulated by NGC, one of the top two firms for grading coins. But better yet, because these coins were among the very first released, they all have the value-enhancing "First Releases" designation.

What Does "First Releases" Mean?

NGC designates only those coins it certifies as having been released during the first 30 days of issue as First Releases. Collectors place a premium on these coins because they are struck from freshly made dies, which is thought to impart superior quality. Only a miniscule number ofthe mintage gets the First Releases pedigree - so it can turbo charge the value of an already valuable MS70 coin.

Actual size is 40.6 mm

BUY RISK FREE—AND SAVE $30 OVER LAST YEAR'S COIN

Because of our industry-leading status, you can take advantage of our "bolt of lightning" deal on these Perfect Gem MS70 2012 Silver Eagles at an incredible price *$30 lower* than the 2011s: just $99 each (plus s&h)

To avoid disappointment I urge you to call immediately.

Hurry! This is a first-come-first-served offer.
Call 1-888-201-7057 to find our how to qualify for free shipping.
Mention offer code: SEM198-01

Call First Federal Toll-FREE today

1-888-201-7057

to Reserve Your 2012 Silver Eagle MS70 First Release!

Offer Code SEM198-01
Please mention this code when you call.

***Past performance is not an indicator of future performance. Prices subject to change without notice**. Note: First Federal Coin is a private distributor of government and private coin and medallic issues and is not affiliated with the United States government and the U.S. Mint. Facts and figures were deemed accurate as of January 2012. ©First Federal Coin, 2012.*

ACCREDITED BUSINESS BBB

American Numismatic Association
Nicholas Bruyer
Life Member 4489

1-888-201-7057
14101 Southcross Drive W., Burnsville, Minnesota 55337

VISA MasterCard DISCOVER

The Meme Generation

Hide your kids, hide your wife, hide your husband. The end is nigh.

By Matt Labash

Cambridge, Mass.

It's been two decades since I graduated from college, and I'm glad to be back, walking the halls of MIT. Not that I went to MIT—I couldn't have been admitted on a bribe. But college generally. At the accelerated pace of change these days, I expect today's students to be wearing futuristic jumpsuits and commuting to class by jetpack.

However, it's still consistent with my early '90s experience. Yes, everybody now looks at their smartphones as they walk, the real world holding less appeal than the virtual one. But there are the old profs, shuffling their dowager's humps down the hall in tatty corduroy. There are the science labs with science-y gas burbling in science-y tanks (sorry, I was a journalism major, with a minor in film studies). There are all the familiar bulletin-board flyers advertising the Chorallaries a cappella group, the Queer People of Color Brunch, and the Gender Fluidity Meeting.

And there's a guy pretending he's '80s singer Rick Astley, blasting "Never Gonna Give You Up" from a boombox, standing next to a man dressed up in an electric leotard and hockey helmet as a character from *Tron*.

Wait, what?

This must be the right place. For I did not come to MIT to further my education. Or rather, I did. Just not in the traditional sense. I have come to meet the future, as embodied by the 850 or so cutting-edge types here for two days in May. They are the stars of YouTube videos that went viral and others who've become online "memes," mover'n'shaker execs from the likes of Reddit and Google and Imgur, commerce seekers and ad mavens and television producers looking to cash in on the memefication of America, along with all the geeks and academics who celebrate and study them.

This is the third biennial ROFL conference. And for those sad few of you remaining who still prefer standard English to the web jargon that is fast supplanting it, ROFL means "rolling on the floor laughing." ROFL is not to be confused with the several hundred other permutations of online mirth such as lol, lulz, lulwut, ROFLcopter, and trollololol, the distinctions of which I'll skip explaining to you in the interest of keeping us both awake.

First held in 2008, ROFLcon is the brainchild of 25-year-old cofounder Tim Hwang, a Harvard grad who's now a Berkeley law student, and who has to skip the first day of his own conference. "I have an exam on Monday," he apologizes. Affable and industrious, Hwang, like many of the young geniuses here, has about six plates spinning at once. He works with the Awesome Foundation, which "forwards the interest of awesome in the universe," one $1,000 microgrant at a time. He's a cofounder of the Web Ecology Project, and the "chief scientist" of the Pacific Social Architecting Corporation. He's a partner at Robot, Robot & Hwang, which is seeking ways "to replace [lawyers] with machines," an advance even we Luddites can get behind.

Hwang's been so busy, he tells me that he hasn't even had time to tend to his blog, brosephstalin.com. I tell him not to worry. Increasingly, we communicate with instantly digestible memes—a captioned cat picture here, a viral video shot by the father of a drugged-up child who just visited the dentist there. Whereas blogs sometimes communicate complex thoughts and ideas—which is so 2006. Blogs feature strings of words and sometimes even sentences and paragraphs. And paragraphs are so . . . wordy, I guess you could call them, for lack of a better word. The fewer of them, the better.

"That's a little harsh," says a good-natured Hwang of my facetious blog pronouncements. I hope I haven't given

Matt Labash is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

offense, since I will doubtless be working for him someday on a meme-generation assembly line.

As its very name suggests, ROFLcon is not a conference that takes itself too seriously. Which it is to be congratulated for. Not that it would hear you if you offered congratulations. Because the attendees here are the worker bees, Internet-famous celebrities, and leading intellectual lights of the universe known as Web 2.0, which is forever, reverentially, and loudly in the business of congratulating itself.

If I sound like I'm implying that a New Dumbness has dawned, an era in which disposable Internet culture is subsuming all other culture as we know it at light speed—I'm implying no such thing. Rather, I'm stating it outright.

The New Dumbness, however, is by no means a slag of its curators' intelligence. Far from it. These are some of the brightest, most articulate people you'll ever meet. On balance, their IQ scores will smoke yours, or at least mine. But rarely in history have so many truly smart people applied their intelligence to something as dumb as aggregating and propagating LOLcats (cute online kitty pictures featuring captions of cats speaking in misspelled babytalk—"I can has cheezburger?" being the ur-example).

Am I implying that a New Dumbness has dawned, an era in which Internet culture is subsuming all other culture as we know it at light speed? I'm implying no such thing. Rather, I'm stating it outright.

It's enough to make bad reality-show producers look like MIT professors, and vice versa. And one could hardly be faulted for confusing the two. But can we really be surprised that enterprising academics consider online memes worthy of study? Academics often feel compelled to go where the action is. Now that a good chunk of the country is Tweeting, Facebooking, and Tumblring itself—an exhibit that never closes—people are now spending more time online than watching TV. Academics are just aping the rest of us, figuring as long as you have a high-speed connection, why leave the house and get smudged by the sticky stuff of the corporeal world?

On its candy-coated surface, ROFLcon is all fun and games. In the concession area, an attractive woman with a creamy British accent stands in a lab coat, offering passersby Pop Rocks and Coke. Her name is Holly Clarke, and she's the head of social media science for Unruly Media, a company that tries to cause the ads of its clients—everyone from Old Spice to T-Mobile—to go viral. Or as the company's website puts it in the language designed to reap big consulting fees: "to identify the brand & content advocates that start conversations . . . to deliver the desired brand engagement." As a child of the seventies who is well-versed in the urban legend of the lethal combination of Pop Rocks and Coke, I ask Holly if it's safe. "Don't worry," she says. "If not, you'll just explode, we'll film you, and put it on YouTube."

Registrants receive complimentary fanny packs, jammed with all sorts of hipster goodies, from old-school Viewmasters to ROFLcondoms. The program is an elaborate 95-page Choose Your Own Adventure paperback. (Remember paperbacks? They're so retro.) Choked with in-crowd cultural references, it contains everything from philosophical web-centric questions about the early years ("whatever happened to the Ate My Balls guy?") to de rigueur *Star Trek* implorations like "set phasers for awesome." (Always a pleaser with such a geeked-out crowd, "geek" being a term of self-description and never a pejorative.)

The program contains narratives and metanarratives, in-jokes and meta-in-jokes. One panel is even called "Metameme." *Meta* is perhaps the most overused word at the conference, second only to *meme*. Which in meta-fashion is acknowledged in the program. In the introduction to the "Supercuts" panel, the ROFLcon program even holds out hope that the panelists will "strip every use of the word meme from the conference video stream (current count: a bajillion)." Supercuts are one of the favorite subgenres of the memesphere in which the supercutter might edit together in rapid succession every instance of the F-bomb getting dropped in *The Big Lebowski*, or every time some skeezer says "I'm not here to make friends" in a reality show.

Supercuts, you see, are meta-commentaries on our clichéd culture. Never mind that meme culture itself, which is still greatly dependent on remixing or remaking non-Internet-generated material from old-school media dinosaurs, when not copycatting its own memes, is probably the worst cliché of all. Take an ultra-popular meme like Nyan Cat (a viral video containing an animated cat with a Pop-Tart body running to an annoying Japanese song whose sole lyric is "Nyanyanyanyanyanyan" droned endlessly). This gives birth to "Nyan Cat 10 Hours" (the same punishing 3-minute video looped for 10 hours). Which begets "Nyan Cat Smooth Jazz" (the same Pop-Tart cat, now in shades, running to a smooth jazz soundtrack for 14 minutes). This is not a brave new world of blinding innovation and artistic enlightenment. Rather, you're looking at a mirror of a Xerox of a parrot inside an echo chamber.

Virtual reality pioneer Jaron Lanier put it beautifully in his excellent and courageous book, *You Are Not a Gadget* (I say courageous because he is a Microsoft consultant who has

spent his entire adult life in tech world, and the first rule of Web 2.0 is never question Web 2.0). Lanier bemoans online culture, which he says has "entered into a nostalgic malaise . . . dominated by trivial mashups of the culture that existed before the onset of mashups, and by fandom responding to the dwindling outposts of centralized mass media. It is a culture of reaction without action." Lanier adds, "People will accept ideas presented in technological form that would be abhorrent in any other form."

But ROFLcon isn't just littered with YouTube celebrities like Double Rainbow Guy (more on him later) and Supercuts auteurs. Beneath the candy coating is a chewy center. Plenty of sponsors and speakers come with blue-chip academic pedigrees, from places such as the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, which, in addition to its vital work helping launch Lady Gaga's nonprofit, harvests vast archives of research titles such as "Salience vs. Commitment: Dynamics of Political Hashtags in Russian Twitter."

ROFLcon isn't just littered with YouTube celebrities. Beneath the candy coating is a chewy center. Plenty of sponsors and speakers come with blue-chip academic pedigrees, from places such as Harvard and MIT.

Or there's Kate Miltner, who, as the ROFLcon blog put it, "got a masters in LOLcats" from the London School of Economics. She is one of two academic speakers on the "Acamemia" panel specializing in LOLcats, the other being a linguist from Louisiana State University whose master's thesis is titled: "I Can Has Thesis? A Linguistic Analysis of LOLspeak." And ROFLcon itself is coproduced by MIT Comparative Media Studies, a department that calls for a "new expertise" from the kinds of people who "think critically about media and their potential for circulating information and dispersing intellectual capital." The department leads by example, generating graduate theses on the social dynamics of Dwarf Fortress (a computer game), as well as by throwing "sandbox summits" with titles such as "iPlay, YouPlay, WiiPlay—How Play Is Changing Media and Media Is Changing Play."

Don't let that last title fool you. When it comes to the memeverse, the academy isn't playing. This is serious business. They're not just pulling scholarship out of their rear ends—not that there's anything wrong with that. In fact, some scholar somewhere, as we speak, is probably ginning up a doctoral dissertation on Goatse (a pioneer of Internet meme culture who is famous for planting his own two hands in the deep recesses of his derrière).

We are now 2,000 words into this piece—an admission that, in keeping with the ROFLcon spirit, is rather meta—and a good many of you are probably asking yourselves: *What the hell is a meme?* Good question. Memes proliferate like viruses of the brain-eating variety, not unlike Ebola. Which is why there are now entire websites like Know Your Meme, the Wikipedia of memes, that do nothing but keep track of the things.

I have always detested the word *meme*, and not just because it was coined by Richard Dawkins, though that certainly helps. The concept was originated by Dawkins in his 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene*, back when the Internet was still a glint in young Al Gore's eye. Borrowing from the Greek word *mimema* (something imitated), Dawkins was on the hunt for a monosyllable that rhymed with "gene," hence meme. Loosely speaking—and there's no other way to speak of memes—it is "an idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture" (the dictionary definition). Internet memes entail everything from video clips to animated Pop-Tart cats to "Advice Animal" image macros (like, say, a picture of a dog giving bad advice—essentially, a glorified caption contest) to intentionally misspelled words to whatever people can think of that spreads rapidly, if "thinking" isn't too strong a word.

In olden days, that was called "word of mouth"—too easy for Dawkins. As followers of the world's loudest and most insistent atheist know, he never hesitates to lend his scientific authority to that which goes beyond ethology and evolutionary biology, his fields of expertise. In the case of memes, Dawkins took this very generic concept and spit-polished it to a high scientific shine, insisting memes are discrete units that contain our cultural DNA and that seek to replicate themselves, like genes. It's a theory that had the scientific rigor of a Goatse video.

Dawkins's throwaway metaphor rapidly became an entire field of soft science. So soft, in fact, that the science's peer-reviewed journal, the *Journal of Memetics*, has folded. Critics have scoffed, as critics will, accusing Dawkins and acolytes of quackery, pseudoscience, and worse. In his highly amusing essay "Why Memes Are Stupid: The Short Version," Cornell professor William M. Briggs stipulates that the notion of memes reproducing for their own benefit is unlikely, since "it is impossible for one copy of a meme to *benefit* from other copies." Briggs equates this to saying that "a chair on sale at Walmart benefits by there being copies of itself for sale at other Walmarts." Philosopher Mary Midgley, who's frequently boxed Dawkins's ears over the years, dismisses meme theory as "a pretentious way of stating the obvious."

Such common sense hasn't stopped eager-beaver

memeticists from writing books, and good lord, are there plenty of them. They have proliferated like, well, memes. I collected several, intending to read them for research's sake. They have titles like *Virus of the Mind* and *The Meme Machine* and *The Electric Meme*. But after a test run through this indescribable turgidity, I could feel my brain dying, so I just took the Cliff's Notes course with *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Memes* (not a deliberate redundancy, but part of the Idiot's Guide series).

As for the whole what-is-a-meme debate, watching academics shoot each other for fun is a perfectly pleasant way to pass an afternoon. But it is, quite literally, an academic argument. Nobody else cares. Meme is now a catch-all for wildly popular Internet content, especially jokes. Some healthy skeptics don't find it so amusing. *Cracked.com* recently complained, "Instead of going to all the trouble of humor, everyone just agrees on what's funny and repeats it. It's like a vast inside joke, except everyone knows it so it's not 'inside,' and it's not funny so it's not a 'joke.'"

Meme evangelists wheel out some pretty heavy artillery to defend stupid cat pictures. Just a few weeks before ROFLcon, I was listening to a favorite public radio show, *On Point with Tom Ashbrook*, which, coincidentally, was on memes. One of Ashbrook's guests, Christina Xu, is a cofounder of ROFLcon and works at the MIT Center for Civic Media. Xu chewed over the question: "Is this building up our culture, or is this just a funny picture?" Her answer: "I would really argue there's no distinction between the two. If you look back in history, how many of Shakespeare's plays involved just, like, jokes about flushing the toilet essentially, right?"

Yes, host Ashbrook replied, "But they were that and more."

"They were that and more," agreed Xu. "And I would argue that Internet memes are that and more. There are a good number that are just not very meaningful and ways to pass the time. But there's also some that I think will go down in history and I think are a way for people to express themselves about what's happening at the moment in a very powerful way." She cited the "Texts from Hillary" meme (fake texts from Hillary Clinton) as an example. Sample: Colin Powell texts to Hillary: "you aren't coming to my party? it's my birthday. . ." Hillary interrupts: "yo, colin. i'm really happy 4 u. imma let u finish, but i am 1 of the best secretaries of state of all time." The Shakespeare of our day.

Xu was joined by Douglas Rushkoff, a Princeton-educated media theorist (nice work if you can find it) who coined the term "viral media," and who never tires of making tech triumphalist pronouncements like, "In the emerging highly programmed landscape ahead, you will either create the software or you will be the software." Rushkoff seconded Xu, saying we are "living in a much more fluid memescape," where not only will the strong memes survive (bless Dawkins's Darwinian heart), but where "I think more and more people will be able to recombine these ideas— . . . memes having sex with each other—than you would [see] in a more controlled media space."

It's pretty heady stuff, living in this world of Web 2.0 ideas.

The 'Texts from Hillary' meme

While I've been admittedly hard on the memeverse, one of the enjoyable aspects of attending ROFLcon is meeting the "talent," the viral video stars who populate the panels and man the bars at the afterparties, these curiosities who put the "me" in meme. Most of them seem naïve and slightly disoriented, accidental tourists on the fame train who for whatever reason—the hive mind deciding to spontaneously promote or ridicule them on sites like Reddit, good timing, dumb luck—have gone from anonymous to universally known overnight. They may have racked up 100 million YouTube views, but like so many in today's digital culture, they often haven't a clue how to monetize it.

I hang out with Tron Guy, aka Jay Maynard, from Fairmont, Minnesota. Maynard became Internet-famous for wearing an electroluminescent leotard modeled after the suit worn in the 1982 sci-fi film *Tron*. After photos were posted in an online forum that he "expected about 500 people to see," he shot up the media food chain, pictures of his costume proliferating on sites like Slashdot. This resulted in juicier pop-culture plums, like making appearances on *Jimmy Kimmel* and being parodied on *South Park*.

Maynard has the same model of hockey helmet used in the original film. The rest of the costume, which lights up like a futuristic Christmas tree, he had custom-made at Renaissance Dancewear, a retailer where he used to buy tights for his Renaissance Fair costumes. He painted Kmart boat shoes to match. A swatch of Lycra on his chest is frayed where he errantly cut it. But he's proud that eight years later, it still fits. "My weight's been pretty constant," he says. "But

it stretches. As long as I don't gain 30 pounds, I don't think it makes any difference."

It was difficult being famous at first. As anyone who spends time on the Internet knows, it's an ugly, ruthless place, a snakepit where anonymity absolves people of responsibility, not to mention human decency. It's a place that can bring out the inner troll even in your kindly, genteel grandmother. True, as the tech triumphalists often crow, everyone now has a voice. It's become an article of faith that this is an advance we should all be grateful for. Yet about 50 percent of those voices, at any given moment, seem to want to say nothing more than, "You suck."

At first, Maynard says, all his attention was troll-fueled: "It was, 'Look at that guy in spandex!' It wasn't any fun." But with the Kimmel appearances, he achieved a modicum of respect, even if he only ever made scale, moneywise. "They gave me the chance to talk about who I am."

Who he is these days is an old meme, no easy fate to swallow. The folks at ROFLcon still love him like you love your eccentric uncle, but he doesn't even rate a speaking slot. If you think regular fame is fleeting, Internet fame can move much faster, as the culture thrives on disposability, our overstimulated appetites for novelty now as boundless as our attention spans are short.

Above, Jay Maynard, aka Tron Guy; below, Charlie Schmidt's Keyboard Cat

Maynard's had a bad run lately. His computer consulting business dried up in the Great Recession. The Kimmel spots disappeared too, causing his agent to ditch him. An amateur pilot, Maynard had to give up his single-engine plane, and he's teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. Disney wanted nothing to do with him, promotions-wise, when *Tron: Legacy* premiered in 2010. And the capper: Maynard was banned from seeing the sequel at his local theater in costume, for fear the Tron suit's lights would distract patrons.

He's philosophical about what's happened. When his visage first hit meme-spreading websites like Slashdot and Fark, "I learned a lesson from Star Wars Kid," says Maynard. Star Wars Kid may be the most famous of all viral videos. A plus-size kid made a video of himself in a very intense light saber fight with an imaginary opponent, which unkind classmates uploaded without his consent, scarring him for life. The video is hilarious, of course. But imagine the most embarrassing thing you ever did as a 15-year-old. Now imagine a video of it getting 25,522,542 YouTube views, which is what Star Wars Kid's video garnered. "There's no getting rid of it," Maynard continues. "You're not going to be able to clean it off the Internet. So I'm sitting on a tiger. I have two choices. I can either jump off and hope he doesn't turn around and eat me. Or I can grab his ears and enjoy the ride."

But after riding the tiger, there's a problem with his Internet fame, Maynard says: "What do I do with it? I've never really come up with a good answer to that. I really understand why movie stars get hooked on drugs. While you're big, everybody wants to tell you how wonderful you are. Then all of a sudden, nobody wants to talk to you." A young conference volunteer asks us to move. We're blocking the registration line. I tell her to show some respect. This isn't just any schmuck she's dealing with. This is Tron Guy.

Since ROFLcon is crawling with memes, I decide to try passing myself off as one, just for sport. I think of the most asinine meme title I can come up with on short notice, then make the acquaintance of Charlie Schmidt. He's the originator of Keyboard Cat, which is a video of Charlie's cat playing keyboard in a blue T-shirt. Charlie shot the video in the mid '80s. Uploaded to YouTube in 2007, it made him and his late cat Fatso, who left us in 1987, Internet-famous. (YouTube views: 23,989,789 and counting.)

I introduce myself to Charlie, asking, "Keyboard Cat?" Yes, he responds eagerly. Then pointing to myself while announcing my fake meme, I say, "Good to meet you. I'm 'Shorty, I Farted.'" Keyboard Cat man looks at me slightly confused. "You don't recognize me?" I say, hurt. Yes, he does, Charlie says, now coming to. We're big fans of each other's work. Though I worry this false intimacy has just made us fake, showbiz friends.

A former advertising designer, Charlie has fared better than Tron Guy. Since his dead cat hit the big time, he's flown all over the world. He's licensed the footage for television

TRON GUY: NEWSCOM

and films. His new cat, Bento, whom he insists is Fatso reincarnated, plays keyboards in Wonderful Pistachios commercials. Charlie says he massages his cats in a certain way that makes them play. "Above the waist," he hastens to add. He might spend his life making his cats play keyboard. But he's not some kind of weirdo.

Charlie differentiates himself from the other viral video stars. (Most of the other stars do the same. They all like to believe they're special, that their fame is a reflection of their creativity and individuality. That it's not just the accidental result of bored Reddit nerds deciding they're the next cog in the meme machine.) Charlie is a craftsman. Of cat videos, but still. "Many of these guys are insurance salesmen, and their kid falls in a bucket of poop, and the camera was running. It's different for me." But he admits that going viral can spoil you. "It's like when guys go to the moon," Charlie explains. "They can't come back and sell insurance. Most go nuts and drink. Going back and trying to do something on purpose doesn't feel as promising as it used to."

Still, I need to know, meme to meme: What does all of this add up to? What does it mean that a grown man can pull down a six-figure annual income making piano-playing-cat videos in America in the middle of the worst recession in decades?

"It means that people are nuts," shrugs Charlie. "People are just nuts. They are."

What does it mean that a grown man can pull down a six-figure income making piano-playing-cat videos in America in the middle of the worst recession in decades? 'It means that people are nuts,' shrugs Charlie.

There is a low buzz of excitement with all the virtual celebrities present at ROFLcon. Hipster geeks tend to love live-action memes even more than they do ironic tattoos, hummus, taking yearlong sabbaticals, and Moleskine notebooks. (All of these I stole from Christian Lander's excellent *Stuff White People Like* franchise. And though I wouldn't put Lander in the same company with the majority of these memes, because he has something many of them lack—namely, talent—he is a moderator of one of the panels, making this paragraph very meta, meta being something white people like.)

The low buzz, however, becomes an electric jolt when Antoine Dodson shows up in a do-rag, mesh bicycle glove, and white skinny jeans. As most people who have Internet access know, Dodson set the web on fire two years ago in one of the most curious paths to Internet fame ever traveled.

In 2010, the Huntsville, Alabama, native was interviewed on the local news after a stranger broke into his house in the projects and crawled into bed with his sister. She screamed, Dodson ran to her room, a brief struggle ensued, and the stranger escaped out a window. A very exercised Dodson took to the airwaves, waggling a bus schedule in front of the camera and warning, "We have a rapist in Lincoln Park. He's climbin' in your windows, he's snatchin' your people up, tryin' to rape 'em. So y'all need to hide your kids, hide your wife, and hide your husband cause they're rapin' everybody out here."

Not long after this very compelling rant started making the rounds, it was converted into an even more hilarious song by the Gregory Brothers of Autotune the News. "Bed Intruder Song" (YouTube views: 101,883,932) lodged in the Billboard 100 and hit number one in Sweden. Dodson was a bona fide celebrity. And all the celebrity spoils have ensued: reaping profits from a Bed Intruder Halloween costume, endorsing a "Sex Offender Tracker" iPhone app, working on a rap album, getting busted for pot possession.

At ROFLcon, he vamps it up for well-wishers who throng him, even singing along with the boombox guy when the latter gives Rick Astley a rest and puts on Antoine's song, which is not really Antoine's song, but rather Antoine speak-singing something he never knew would become a song. At a Q&A, Dodson, contemplating the weird life-turn that has brought him to MIT, seems bashful and ghetto fabulous all at once. He's reluctant to put himself all the way out there (though *everyone* at this conference stresses the importance of embracing your meme—you don't want to be like Star Wars Kid), while obligatorily playing the sassy black sitcom character that white hipsters so clearly enjoy. It's hard to tell if they're laughing with him or at him when they ask questions like, "Do you not have a wife, or are you just hiding her?" (Dodson is openly and flamboyantly gay, hence the joke.)

I ask a straightforward question: What was it like when he saw himself autotuned because his sister had nearly been raped? As the words leave my mouth, I can feel the room turn slightly against me. Someone nearby tsks. How dare I pop the irony bubble? Allowing real-world concerns to intrude on the memesphere is considered bad form.

Dodson gamely responds, "I was upset, you know what I'm saying, due to the fact that [it] happened to my sister. But when they kept showing me the video, I just kept laughing." Sometimes in the memesphere, if you don't laugh, you'll cry. Or worse, get talked about disapprovingly by the hive, like Star Wars Kid.

Not every meme buys all the way in, though, like the "Huh?" guy, for instance. "Huh?" guy's real name is Nate

Dern. I encounter him on the "Micro-Fame to Nano-Fame" panel. He leans toward the latter. His big moment came when he uttered one word—"Huh?"—in an AT&T commercial. The part-time actor, finding it funny that he'd been auditioning for three years and that his first commercial consisted of saying one word (which he improvised), posted it to Reddit. From there, as Know Your Meme reports, it hit the front page, and gained 500,000 views in its first 72 hours on YouTube. "Huh?" guy was on his way to memehood.

Dern proves to be thoughtful, as well as amusing. In addition to being an actor and comic, he studies sociology at NYU. He still reads books (books!), and actually recommends a few to me, such as my new bible, the aforementioned *You Are Not a Gadget*. It's a book that I should've caught when it made a splash two years ago, as someone who writes semi-regular screeds pointing out that the Tech Triumphalists Have No Clothes (in the hope that computers can't replace me when the time comes, as they won't be able to replicate my cynicism). But I'd missed it. Probably because I was busy watching "Bed Intruder" on YouTube. Nobody's pure.

Antoine Dodson of 'Bed Intruder' fame

"Huh?" guy seems bemused that so many people here and elsewhere are trying to figure out how to go viral, since most often, people go viral precisely because they weren't trying. (See Antoine Dodson.) "I don't think we're quite at the end of the world," says Dern. "You can find quotations from people who said the same when novels were coming out. But that being said, it is worrisome that there are so many structures in place that reward cheapness."

Though Dern's lament is utterly valid, it's not one I hear often at ROFLcon. More frequent are complaints, such as those of Matt Harding of "Where the Hell Is Matt?" fame (in which Harding dances like an idiot in locations throughout the world—YouTube views: 42,740,939), that the Internet is losing its quirky individuality, that it's getting corporatized, and that the suits are moving in and taking over.

It's the eternal complaint of hipster subcultures everywhere: "It was great as long as it was just us, then *they* ruined it." But *they* are definitely moving in. And not just the meme aggregators—the *Huffington Posts* of the memesphere like the Cheezburger Network (a cosponsor of ROFLcon). Even old-school television types are now smelling where the action is. The guys from Eyeboogie, Inc., are here on behalf of their new YouTube channel, PopSpot.

YouTube has plunked millions into creating channels for content producers on their site, trying to further bleed viewers away from ailing television networks and film studios. While it's hard for novices to compete with the Madonna channel and Tony Hawk channel, the gentlemen from PopSpot, who brought us the *Pop Up Video* show on VH-1 in the '90s, are now going to be captioning viral videos with behind-the-scenes facts and interesting asides. It's an ingenious way of vacuuming up the traffic of those who've already created viral brand awareness.

They've popped Antoine Dodson's video, and are in fact responsible for bringing him here. As Eyeboogie strategist/CFO Chris Frisina nakedly admits, "We want to be the Hall of Fame of memes. What VH-1 did for rock stars, we want to do for YouTube stars." In a back room at MIT, Frisina and Eyeboogie president Woody Thompson are shooting slo-mo promos with all the talent. They invite me to join them as the Vegan Black Metal Chef—a viral video star known for wearing lots of black and chainmail and speaking in a Satanic voice while giving recipes for pad Thai—hacks a lettuce head in mid-air with some sort of medieval blade.

Frisina makes everyone get behind a camera barrier, in case the chef loses control, and the blade goes flying. "That would be a giggle death," I offer, as it would be hard for the minister to keep a straight face at the funeral of someone who gets accidentally butchered by the Vegan Black Metal Chef. "It would be a meme for sure," says Frisina, already thinking like an old pro.

But it's not all filthy commerce. If there's one meme who seems to be on a spiritual journey, it is, unsurprisingly, Double Rainbow Guy, aka Bear Vasquez. Unless you're Amish, you've probably seen his video. (YouTube hits: 33,866,753.) If you haven't, "Double Rainbow" is simple enough. Bear, who lives in a trailer on a mountain just outside Yosemite, where he raises fruit trees, chickens, and marijuana (legally, for a medical ailment), spotted a double rainbow, and started filming. While his face never appears, he talks to himself in a series of oohs and ahhs and exclamations: "Oh my God! . . . Oh my God! . . . Double rainbow!!!!" There is squealing. There is crying. Not since the time of Noah has a man been so happy to see a rainbow. Though Noah never got autotuned. (Autotuned Double Rainbow's YouTube hits: 2,927,475.)

Bear, coincidentally, is a bear of a man. He wears a rainbow shirt, and has rainbow bands throughout his long hair and beard. He is the star of his panel—the same panel

THE WEEKLY STANDARD / MATT LABASH

featuring "Huh?" guy. He makes the crowd laugh when he insists he wasn't high when spotting the double rainbow, though he was during an earlier video effort—Single Rainbow. Bear is not only being watched by the crowd. A habitual YouTube uploader, he is watching them with two cameras of his own as he speaks—one handheld, one on a short tripod. The meme is filming the crowd watching him be a meme, while the whole thing is being filmed by PopSpot. Mega-meta.

After his panel, Bear and I adjourn for dinner at a nearby pub. He tells me of the weird richness that is his life. "It's trippy," he repeatedly says. He relates how he escaped the violent East L.A. of his youth. He speaks of his different vocational iterations: as a firefighter, EMT, and security officer in Yosemite. He tells me how as a truck driver, he ended up putting on so much weight, he clocked in at over 400 pounds. To lose weight, he became an amateur ultimate fighter until getting injured.

Where the Hell is Matt? Dancing in Papua New Guinea, apparently.

He tells me how Jimmy Kimmel discovered his video, which got all the madness rolling. He speaks of the spoils of viral videohood. How Eastern European women come to visit him and pick fruit on his small farm as he films them. (It's not porn, though maybe it should be.) He relates how a high school in Iceland flew him over, put on a play for him, let him sit on a throne as he watched it, and smothered him in affection as though he were a minor deity. "The principal made me the protector of the student body!" Bear says, both astonished and confused.

The next day, his Icelandic hosts took him to swim in a hot emerald lake. "Dude, it's trippy," he says. He didn't know if it was appropriate to go swimming with these students. "I'm this old fat man, right?" But sure enough, everyone was okay with the protector of the student body swimming with their daughters. "All the girls under a hot waterfall. I'm holding them in my arms. They're all surrounding me, putting this cream on me. It was mind-boggling. I was, like, wow!"

I tell Bear he leads a weird life.

"No s—!" he agrees. "And everything is all backed up on video. . . . Go to my [YouTube] channel. . . . It's all there, dude. That's why I make videos, because no one would believe it."

Bear believes God has smiled on him. In fact, he believes the double rainbow that left him so genuinely awestruck is the eye of God. Perhaps winking at him, and the tent at the bottom of the frame, which was filled, he admits, with his medical marijuana plants. God, according to Bear, is pro-pot.

Bear says that's what the video is about. Not pot. But the sights and sounds of being in God's presence. "God was using my mouth to say s—," says Bear. And with his newfound celebrity, he has a message to relay, which he covers in three bullet points:

- Love your fellow man.
- Walk gently on Mother Earth.
- Connect to spirit.

Not bad talking points for a meme, I admit. "I'm only a vessel," he says modestly.

Bear is a man who has lived frugally on $6,000 a year. He doesn't need much money, but it tries to find him now and then. He gladly did a commercial for Microsoft's editing software, coveting the equipment, since he didn't know how to edit beforehand. ("That's why there's no edits in Double Rainbow. . . . If it happened now, it'd be totally different.") Chevy bought a $50,000 option just for the audio of Double Rainbow, for a commercial they never made. And he did make an ad with Jennifer Aniston, for Smart Water. "She's amazing," Bear beams. "I asked her if I could look into her eyes—they're purple."

The one thing he won't do is allow YouTube ads to be superimposed on his video. "That's sacred. You can't put an ad on God," he says. Wait, I stop him. "Didn't you tell me you sold the rights to Chevy?" "That's the audio," Bear corrects. "God told me I could use the audio, not the video."

It's all been pretty fantastic, he says. He always knew he'd be famous, and now he is. He continues to post videos, hoping he might catch viral lightning in a bottle again, like so many of the other memes. But there is one downside. A pretty big one, actually. He didn't see it coming, and it's hit him kind of hard. It is this: Bear was a man who didn't spend much time in the memeverse before he became one. He has everything he needs right in his own backyard. He lives on the side of a mountain. He swims underwater with big rainbow trout. He is surrounded by natural wonder.

But when he makes a video now, "It's totally changed. I'm not alone anymore." He no longer experiences things

in order to experience them. He experiences them thinking about how other people are going to see him experience them. "When I shot Double Rainbow, I was completely by myself and didn't have any expectation of anyone seeing it. Now, that thought is gone. It's good that there are people who follow me and love me. But that ability to capture the perfect moment is gone. The perfect moment is not there anymore, because I'm not by myself. Everyone is watching."

Despite the copycat nature of the memeverse, you meet all kinds at ROFLcon. Including the copycatter-in-chief, Ben Huh (no relation to "Huh?" guy), who I run into at his open-bar afterparty. He's easy to spot, as he's wearing his trademark zany Warholian glasses. Huh's Cheezburger Network not only owns icanhascheezeburger.com, which serves as LOLcat HQ on the Internet, but 60 other sites (from Fail Blog to Know Your Meme). He is loathed by anticommercialism types for putting his watermark on other people's original content and generally considered by hardcore geeks to be the locus of aggregating evil. To which he essentially pleads guilty.

Double Rainbow Guy, aka Bear Vasquez, poses with Tron Guy.

"In the age of crowdsourcing, aggregation and filtering provide more value sometimes than original content," Huh peppily explains. "There's too much information. . . . A piece of content may have merit, but there's millions of others that potentially have the same value." This is the rub of Web 2.0 disposability—everyone has a voice, but all voices tend to sound alike. As Huh will later say in a fiery Q&A (which hecklers interrupt, accusing him of "raping the Internet," before they're ejected): "We can talk meritocratically about what is quality. Quality is the enjoyment people have. Whether it's misspelled captions on cats, or . . . videos where [people] get kicked in the nuts. . . . That's not what quality content seems like to a lot of people. . . . Yet that's what we as a society are starting to believe is quality content." Huh, for all his entrepreneurial acumen, seems blissfully unaware that just because something is happening doesn't mean it should happen.

One guy who still does put a premium on the individual is Ben Lashes, the world's only meme manager, who represents the creators of Keyboard Cat and Nyan Cat (if you have a cat meme, Ben's your man), along with a recently hatched meme named Scumbag Steve. I run into Lashes outside Huh's party.

Previously a music industry guy who had a hand in Rebecca Black's "Friday"—a so-bad-it's-good music video that's closing in on 32 million YouTube views—Lashes is naturally defensive of memes. A former garage rocker himself who roots for underdogs, he says that everyone wants to make money from memes, and "a lot of these guys don't know what to do." That's where he comes in, by, say, helping the Keyboard Cat guy get hooked up with Wonderful Pistachios, who also hired Snooki from MTV's *Jersey Shore*. "We blew her out of the water," says Lashes. "We got three times the video views she does. Keyboard Cat is definitely cooler than a reality star. There's something that gets in the fabric of people's souls with memes." These aren't just Internet-fame's lottery winners, says Lashes. "The memes are art. This is the kind of s— Warhol prophesied."

Far be it from me, a guy who's squandered countless hours watching brain-addling reality television, to lecture a meme manager or Andy Warhol or Ben Huh about what constitutes art. Still, Lashes's utterance did put me in mind of a smart art-world novel, *An Object of Beauty*, by the actor and comedian Steve Martin.

In it, Martin ruminates over how Warhol and his silkscreens of soup cans could come to be valued, both critically and monetarily, as though he were on par with the great masters. That couldn't happen, he writes, "if you were older and believed in the philosophy of art as rapture, and didn't expect the next great development in art to be a retreat from beauty and an exploration of ordinariness." However, if you had no stake in the past, or appreciation for the difficulty of paint versus the ease of silkscreen, "You saw the images unencumbered, as bright and funny, but most of all ironic. This new art started with the implied tag, 'This is ironic, so I'm just kidding,' but shortly the tag changed to, 'This is ironic, and I'm not kidding.'"

If there is one panel at ROFLcon even more meta than the "Metameme" panel, it is when three staffers from Know Your Meme take the stage with Blake Boston (his real name). Boston had arrived with his posse—his mom, his meme manager Ben Lashes, and open-shirted Naked

IMAGES: THE WEEKLY STANDARD / MATT LABASH

Dave, a childhood friend whom Boston's mom tells to "button your shirt, I can see your pubes."

Boston comes out to loud entrance music with handcuffs dangling from one wrist as though he escaped from prison. "I'm what you call a meme, whatever the hell that is," announces Boston. Boston's meme is known as "Scumbag Steve," which he had nothing to do with. Though he has now so fully come to embrace the meme that he appears to have turned into some sort of human/meme hybrid. More than any other meme at ROFLcon, Boston's/Scumbag's is a curious tale.

When Boston was a teenager (he's now 21), his mother loved to experiment with photography. Boston wanted to be a rapper, and even helmed his own crew, Beantown Mafia. Partly as a goof, his mother bought him a New Era Red Sox hat, told him to put on his gangster rapper rig, and she took some unfortunate photos of him, which she posted onto MySpace. "MySpace!" says Boston, to titters from the crowd, as though that were another lifetime ago, since who would use such a hick site now?

Blake 'Scumbag Steve' Boston, left, at a panel discussion with Know Your Meme's Brad Kim

In 2011, years later, his photo was randomly found, lifted, and posted, unwittingly making him one of the Internet's most famous memes, as the hive set about captioning away. The Scumbag Steve character is regarded as a mooch, a poseur, and an all-around dirtbag. So that the caption formula over his picture goes like "Pukes On Something . . . Disappears" or "Don't Worry, Bro, I'll Pay You . . . Next Week." Not terribly exciting. Except the hive thinks otherwise. As Know Your Meme reports, Meme Generator alone (which provides macros so you can easily put your own captions on images) has had more than 150,000 Scumbag Steve submissions.

Boston is received like visiting royalty. He kicks off his tale with, "So I'm this little s— running around thinking I'm all gangsta, 'Yeah bro, like let's go to the pahhhty.'" He plays his character to the hilt, a suburban wannabe with a Southie accent. He has clockwork timing, with just enough edge to keep everyone alert, but not so much that he isn't likeable. When moderator and Know Your Meme editor Brad Kim has trouble locating the questions, Boston lapses into Scumbag meme narration: "Scumbag Panel Shows Up . . . Doesn't Bring the Questions." He gets a huge laugh, one of many. "I'm here all day, ladies and gentleman," he says.

Boston seems like he was born to be a faux gangster rapper, instead of what he was before his meme hit—a chef, who was studying criminal justice and who wanted to work with troubled youth. Those days are over, his mom tells me, now that Boston's embraced the meme. He was angry at first. His mother was upset her son had become a stand-in for all scumbags. His father wanted to track down who did this and get them to take it down, as if you can eradicate a mind virus once it's spread. His relatives would call, telling his parents how they had to get this removed. They don't even know what memes are.

Finally, Boston just decided to roll with it. "You can't fight the Internet," he says. "It's pretty much like going against Mike Tyson or Muhammad Ali. So what you gotta do is ignore it or embrace it. You can't get rid of it once it's there. It's there forever." The audience loves him for accepting his fate. They boo when a Pepsi ad is shown that ripped off the Scumbag Steve character with no mention of the real deal. They go crazy when Boston's new rap video, "The Scumbag Steve Overture," is shown. It looks and sounds like it was shot for a public access station in 1985. But 24 hours after hitting YouTube, it gets more than 1.2 million views.

Not everyone accepts their fate, though. Some people foolishly fight back. Know Your Meme's Kim walks us through a cautionary tale, of "I Can Count to Potato" girl. A ubiquitous Internet phrase that for years has been used to mock people as though they have learning disabilities, it actually did come to mock a girl with Down syndrome, when the phrase was slapped over her photo, which was lifted from a support group site for parents whose kids have been diagnosed with Down.

The photo was taken years ago. However, her mother recently found it on a Facebook page that was making fun of learning-disabled kids. Unable to get the pictures taken down, the incensed and distressed mother went to the British media to complain. The entire room at ROFLcon seems to collectively roll their eyes. Everyone knows not to do this. Memes want to be free. And such culture-deaf

behavior is a strict violation of what Kim says is known as the Streisand Effect (Barbra Streisand once tried to sue to get aerial photos of her house removed from a website, thus ensuring the photos spread everywhere).

Ever conscientious—he's not defending the meme—Kim says he's put his head together with colleagues, and thinks it might be advisable to start a "Know Your Meme guidelines or a manual to Internet fame," since it's "safe to assume" that unlike with Boston/Scumbag, "parents don't know how, like, the Internet culture and trolls even work."

I feel like I need to go to the school nurse and get my ears checked. Could I have heard that right? To recap: A mother, whose daughter with Down syndrome is turned into a ubiquitous Internet joke, gets upset, tries to get the photo taken down, goes to the media when she can't, and it's her fault?

I feel like I'm alone in my moral outrage, until I hear a voice from the back of the room, which starts putting the wood to Kim: "I think it puts you in a weird position to say how the parent should react when you've got ads next to her Down syndrome kid. . . . So who else should they go to, if they can't go to the media? Who are you to say they shouldn't be pissed off about it when you're making money from an ad there?" The voice belongs to Ben Lashes, Scumbag's meme manager. I don't share similar philosophies with Lashes on most things meme-related, but right about now, I want to hug him.

Is it alive? Nope! It's just Chuck Testa.

"Crickets, crickets, crickets," says Boston/Scumbag during the deafening silence.

"That's an interesting question," says a taken-aback Kim, momentarily stunned that someone would challenge rules of the game that have already been ratified. Ads aren't his department. "We literally just stare at monitors 12 hours a day and do these things."

Boston jumps in, saying that maybe Potato girl's mom could learn from his example, so that she doesn't feel so alone. As if it's an option for Potato girl to cut a dopey rap video and open a Tumblr blog embracing her meme.

Lashes isn't having it, and goes to war against his own client. That'd be fine, Lashes says, "if she could stick up for herself, but she can't, so that's the difference here. We all know what's wrong with the girl, unfortunately. So why should we expect her to know what a meme is? And for her mom to even go through the trouble to get our culture, when we're the ones who went into her house and took a picture of her daughter and are putting jokes on it."

I jump in and help Lashes go to work on Kim. (Me: "You're saying, 'Here is a guide of how to act properly if you are violated,' correct?" Kim, after awkward pause: "Right.")

After the panel, I meet up with Lashes to commiserate. He is still fuming: "You notice when they show the Pepsi commercial, everyone boos, because that's Scumbag Steve getting ripped off, and because it's Pepsi and the guy sitting there we all love. But when it's the girl with the disability, and it's their website making money off it, then [the girl's mom] is the bad guy for taking it the wrong way. She's ruining the party, and their ad money that they use to stare at computers all day."

If my fake meme, "Shorty, I Farted," ever takes off, I'm hiring this guy.

After ROFLcon concludes, a rollicking afterparty is held at the Middlesex Lounge. Most of the memes take the stage to debut rap songs or to please the crowd by singing along to autotunes of Antoine's hysterical lament about his sister nearly getting raped. There's Dodson, and Double Rainbow Guy, Scumbag Steve and his sidekick, Naked Dave—the usual MIT crowd.

I offer to buy Chuck Testa a drink. Testa is a California taxidermist whose local ad went viral, turning him into a beloved meme. In the spot, he parades lifelike dead animals around. A girl wakes up, terrified, "Oh no! There's a bear in my bed!" Chuck pops his head up over the stuffed bear, and says, "Nope! Chuck Testa." It launched an Internet catchphrase ("Nope!") and has put Testa on the meme circuit, where I've just finished watching him backup dance behind Boston during the "Scumbag Steve Overture."

Testa is about the most unlikely backup dancer you can imagine. I ask him what his taxidermist buddies and clients back home would think of what I just witnessed. He looks at me with slightly embarrassed resignation. "Nope!" he says, on cue. His life has changed a bit, due to his memefication. "I'm not just me anymore," he says. "I'm a . . . yeah, I'm a brand!"

As I'm about to leave, thoracic-cavity-thumping booty music starts pulsating over the system. Rapper Nicki Minaj, delicate flower that she is, croons *Kiss my ass and my anus / Cause it's finally famous*. When I used to think of Nicki Minaj . . . wait, who are we kidding? I never think of Nicki Minaj. But after ROFLcon, I'm starting to think that maybe I should.

Emily Dickinson, she ain't. But she might be the poet laureate of our time. ♦

Indian Spring

Another Massachusetts miracle for Scott Brown?

By Geoffrey Norman

Newton, Mass.

The event was called "Hoops for Our Troops," and it was held on Armed Forces Day (May 19) in a high school gym here in Newton. The mayor, Setti Warren, came up with the idea. He is an Iraq war veteran himself and passionate about helping vets. The event brought veterans together with potential employers as well as representatives from job training programs, health care providers, counseling services, and others. Spice for the event came in the form of two basketball games. In one, the players were disabled veterans in wheelchairs. The other game, which was the draw, was between teams that were a mix of vets and local celebrities, mostly from broadcasting and sports, among them Kevin Faulk of the New England Patriots. Mayor Warren also suited up to play.

This was a made-to-order opportunity, then, for any capable, hustling politician looking to connect with constituents, early in a tough campaign. So Senator Scott Brown, who is an officer in the National Guard with some brief service in Afghanistan, arrived a little before halftime in the second game and worked the room. He goofed a little with the players. Shook a lot of hands. Did not make a speech and, in general, kept things low-key and casual. He was either enjoying himself and happy to be there, or very gifted at pretending to be. Which, in his line of work, probably amounts to the same thing.

It is fortunate for Brown that he is good at this sort of thing because if he intends to win in the league where he has chosen to compete, then he is going to have to play large. He is, first of all, a Republican, and no matter how hard you try, you can only go so far in ameliorating that liability in Massachusetts, which is among the bluest of the blue states. So blue, in fact, that Mitt Romney, who once managed to get himself elected governor of Massachusetts, is certain to concede the state as a lock for President Obama.

The Senate seat which Scott Brown now occupies was held for 46 years by Ted Kennedy. It is still considered by many to be "the Kennedy seat," though Brown got some traction in the 2010 special election to fill the two years remaining in Kennedy's term after his death by insisting that it is "the people's seat." Nice point, but then most of "the people" are Democrats.

Brown was expected to lose that election, and he might have, except that it was the time of the Tea Party ascendant, and opposition to Obamacare was running high. Voters knew that Brown might represent the needed 40th vote to keep a filibuster alive in the Senate.

He also had the good fortune to run against a political stiff who established her empathetic detachment from the voters of her state when she said that Curt Schilling, the warrior pitcher for the Red Sox, was "a Yankees fan." This was a tectonic political gaffe that played straight to Brown's personal appeal. He was, after all, an athlete himself, a good-looking guy with a glamorous wife (a TV newswoman), attractive daughters, and a pickup truck. Not a regular guy, exactly, but definitely the kind of guy that regular guys around Boston would *like* to be and could imagine themselves being, if things had only gone a little differently.

Brown was the nearly ideal anti-elitist candidate, in other words. And he won. Democrats were horrified and angry. A Republican man had defeated a Democratic woman in a contest for "the Kennedy seat." This was sacrilege or worse.

Brown, of course, had only two years to build a record of votes and constituent service—and to create a media-shaped personality—before he would be obliged to run again. And this time, the Democrats would not be caught by surprise or take him lightly.

In Washington, Senate Democrats used a parliamentary maneuver that made it impossible to stop Obamacare by filibuster. Brown was not able to play Horatio at that particular bridge. But he became the potential 60th vote to break a filibuster of the Dodd-Frank financial reform bill. Brown conducted extended negotiations with Rep. Barney Frank. Except for the fact that both are from Massachusetts, these two could not be more unalike—in temperament, appearance, and politics. Still, they managed to reach some kind of agreement, and Brown did cast that 60th vote. The Dodd-Frank bill became law, and it would not have happened except for Brown's vote. He may have hoped that this would buy him some love back home, but his opposition in Massachusetts seems determined not to let what Barney Frank considers Brown's good deed go unpunished.

Geoffrey Norman, a writer in Vermont, is a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard.

From the moment it became clear that Scott Brown would win "the Kennedy seat," Massachusetts Democrats began thinking of a rematch. And this time, Brown would not have the luxury of running against some political pug. They would send out a real candidate and raise plenty of money for that candidate's campaign.

The Democrats' handpicked champion appears to be Elizabeth Warren. There is still the party convention on June 2, which looks a little less like the mere formality it was a few weeks ago, back when Warren seemed the perfect candidate and an odds-on favorite to restore the proper political order in the state of Massachusetts. But the long odds are still for a Brown-Warren race.

Elizabeth Warren was one of the Obama administration's more compelling figures in its early days. A law professor who had achieved prominence for her work on consumer issues—especially bankruptcy—she served as chair of a panel overseeing the TARP financial bailout and was later an assistant to the president and special adviser to the secretary of the Treasury. She pushed for the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and was thought to be in line to be its head.

Warren had credibility as an expert whose big issue could not have been better aligned with the times. She had written books about the economic storms that were, increasingly, swamping the middle class. While she was a professor of law at Harvard, her Oklahoma roots are blue collar. Her empathy for the middle class and its economic struggles is plainly genuine and passionate. Her books on the subject are compelling enough that Christopher Caldwell wrote of them (and her) in these pages: "Her understanding of the financial crisis is best described as populist, conservative, even right-wing. It arises from what has happened to the American middle class in the past four decades."

A Harvard law professor who empathized with average Americans and a woman, Warren seemed cut out to run against Brown, and once she announced, the money began rolling in. In the first quarter of 2012, she raised almost $7 million. Brown raised less than half that.

And, of course, Warren's nascent campaign was covered lavishly (if not slavishly) by the media. This included a firm, schoolmarmish, fingerpointing lecture which she delivered on the matter of class warfare:

> You built a factory out there? Good for you. But I want to be clear: You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for; you hired workers the rest of us paid to educate; you were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for. You didn't have to worry that marauding bands would come and seize everything at your factory, and hire someone to protect against this, because of the work the rest of us did.

One almost expected her to conclude by saying, "So sit up straight, keep quiet, and pay your taxes." This peroration was a kind of war cry for the left and established Warren as a candidate of tough ideas, a fresh face, and some kind of inevitable political force. The phrase *Warren for President* began to appear on the Internet. She reacted the way most people would and began, evidently, to believe the extravagant things that were written and said about her. When the Occupy Wall Street movement burst onto the scene, she did not merely endorse it but went so far as to claim that she had "created much of the intellectual foundation for what they do."

By the spring of 2012, Warren had emerged as a political heavyweight, and Democrats were counting on her to take back their Senate seat in Massachusetts, one they badly needed. Still, it would be a tough, expensive race. Brown would run as a centrist, work-across-the-aisle kind of guy, while he painted her as an elitist Harvard leftist. Warren, meanwhile, would accuse Brown of being . . . well, a Republican. One who took campaign contributions from Wall Street, among other sins.

Her line of attack seemed, on the face of it, cleaner and more likely to draw blood. Brown, after all, *is* a Republican and he does take contributions from Wall Street. That Elizabeth Warren is an elitist seems a slightly harder case to make. There are those Oklahoma roots and the undeniable (and appealing) efforts on behalf of the middle class, which Caldwell wrote about. She might be teaching at Harvard, but she got there, it seemed, through hard work and not by virtue of birth.

And, then, in April came the story that one blogging wit captured perfectly with the headline: "Funny, She Doesn't Look Siouxish."

As just about everyone knows by now, Elizabeth Warren has claimed to be a "native American." (Cherokee, to be precise, but where's the pun in that?) This isn't so unusual among people from Oklahoma, but Warren's claim was more than just anecdotal bar talk. From 1986 through 1995 she listed herself as a minority in a professional directory of the Association of American Law Schools. First the University of Pennsylvania and then Harvard identified her as one of their "minority" faculty. It is not possible to know if this was a consideration in her hiring, since the schools have not released her employment records. But in the world of elite universities, where diversity is celebrated and quotas are the clandestine order of the day, it worked out nicely for all.

However, Warren could not back up her claim of being 1/32 Cherokee. (She has blonde hair, blue eyes, and decidedly white skin.) This, in spite of the fact that the Cherokee Heritage Center maintains a genealogical research operation at its headquarters in Park Hill, Oklahoma, that can trace such claims back to the Dawes Rolls of the early 20th century and does so routinely. The *Boston Globe* did publish a story that seemed to endorse Warren's claim on the basis of

an 1894 application for a marriage license, but then printed a retraction, leaving the claim unsupported by any documentary evidence. Things seem likely to remain that way after the *Atlantic*'s Garance Franke-Ruta's exhaustive reporting, which explored all the official possibilities. But while Warren may be unable to prove she is a Native American, Franke-Ruta writes, neither is there credible evidence that she gained any professional preference from the claims.

She did, however, contribute some recipes to a cookbook called *Pow Wow Chow*, edited by her cousin and published by the Five Civilized Tribes Museum of Muskogee. Warren's byline identified her as "Elizabeth Warren, Cherokee." Worse, the recipes may not have been original but cribbed from the French chef and *New York Times* columnist Pierre Franey, whose crab dish was the specialty of a New York restaurant and a favorite of that famous Indian chief, the Duke of Windsor.

The entire matter has been great fodder for local talk radio, blogs, and the *Boston Herald*. Warren has not backed down, contending that she is going by family lore, that she is proud of her Native-American heritage, and that the entire matter is a distraction. When Ed Schultz asked about the matter, she answered, "Scott Brown and the Republicans would rather talk about anything other than real issues." Among them, the influence of Wall Street and the banks to which Brown supposedly caved in his negotiations with Barney Frank when, Warren contends, he traded his vote for a weakening of the Dodd-Frank legislation.

If the Cherokee business is, indeed, a distraction, then it is a good one in that it turned the attentions of voters onto the loathsome diversity hustle that they are otherwise not permitted to talk about. And, of only slightly less importance, it has made a politician who was excessively adored by the media look foolish and human. This is always a good thing.

Warren will still run, then, as the friend of the middle class and enemy of big-money institutions (though, in the minds of some people in Massachusetts, she is employed by one). And she will continue to be supported by the usual suspects, including Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, who did a recent fundraiser for her campaign.

While the glow has been dulled a little, one suspects that by November voters will no longer be focusing on the Indian stuff and the election will be what it started out being: a contest between two pretty attractive personalities, both of them with baggage. In Warren's case, Harvard. In Brown's, the Republican party.

After all, this is still Massachusetts. ♦

Snake in Fur

The lies and loves of Lillian Hellman.

BY HARVEY KLEHR

COURTESY THE ADVERTISING AGENCY

Few American cultural figures have suffered as steep a decline in reputation as Lillian Hellman.

Lionized in the media, Hollywood, and popular culture during the 1970s as a woman of valor and rare courage who had lived an independent, sexually liberated life long before American taboos on sexual freedom had been broken down, she was also lauded for bravely standing up for intellectual freedom and constitutional rights during the darkest days of McCarthyism. By the end of the decade, however, in the words of her newest biographer, Alice Kessler-Harris, she had been reduced to "the archetype of hypocrisy, the quintessential liar, the embodiment of ugliness."

Kessler-Harris, a distinguished professor at Columbia and well-known feminist historian, justifies her decision to write yet another biography of Hellman (she identifies two others as offering excellent accounts of Hellman's everyday life and unfairly stigmatizes another for relying too heavily on her enemies) on the grounds that her fall from grace illuminates the world in which Hellman lived and how its changing ideological landscape led to widely varying assessments of her life. She was a "Rorschach test for a generation." Kessler-Harris also chafes at how Hellman's principled moral choices have been discredited or derided not only by her ideological enemies, but by her political allies.

A Difficult Woman
The Challenging Life and Times of Lillian Hellman
by Alice Kessler-Harris
Bloomsbury, 448 pp., $30

Born to an assimilated German-Jewish family in New Orleans, Lillian Hellman emerged in the early 1930s as a playwright with several Broadway successes. Her decades-long liaison with Dashiell Hammett, the bestselling author of hard-boiled detective stories, was tempestuous, marked by hard drinking, frequent fights, and numerous infidelities on both sides. Stints as a Hollywood screenwriter brought in hefty paychecks. Attracted to the Communist party by its opposition to fascism and devoted to the cause of the Spanish Republic, she, along with Hammett, joined numerous front groups after 1935, thus aligning herself (in Kessler-Harris's odd characterization) "with the Stalinist wing of the Communist party." Although Hellman frequently denied ever joining the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), she signed up in 1938 after returning from a trip to Russia and Spain.

According to Kessler-Harris, Hellman and Hammett were aware "of the

Harvey Klehr, the Andrew W. Mellon professor of politics and history at Emory, is the coauthor, most recently, of Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America.

thousands of people who had starved" [actually millions] as a result of Stalin's policies and the "thousands more [actually hundreds of thousands] subject to arrest and murder," but concluded that solidarity with the Soviet Union in the interests of antifascism was more important. Despite signing statements supporting the purge trials, defending the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and refusing to permit a benefit performance of her hit play *The Little Foxes* for Finland (then under attack by the Soviets), Kessler-Harris insists that she never "allowed herself to turn into a mindless follower" of the party line.

To buttress her claim that Hellman was "never a party liner" or a true Stalinist, Kessler-Harris points to *Watch on the Rhine*, her anti-Nazi play that opened on Broadway shortly before the German invasion of the Soviet Union and was criticized in the party press because its antifascism was out of Communist fashion. Oddly, she never mentions the aftermath: an infamous article Albert Maltz wrote in *New Masses* in 1946. Maltz took his fellow Communists to task for judging works of art and literature on purely political grounds. One of his prize exhibits was Hellman's play, denounced when it appeared because of conflicts with the party line—and praised when it appeared as a movie during World War II. The CPUSA launched an assault on Maltz. His friends rushed to denounce him and he ultimately recanted. Tellingly, Lillian Hellman remained silent.

In 1948, Hellman interviewed Tito in Yugoslavia. Kessler-Harris triumphantly notes that she "took Tito's side" in his dispute with the Soviet Union. But in fact, while she admired Tito's independence, she took no position on the political issues involved, and refrained from criticizing Stalin, comparing the quarrel to a spat between "a proud son" and "strong father."

When she finally got around to criticizing Soviet treatment of writers in the 1960s, Hellman still managed to eviscerate dissidents like Alexander Solzhenitsyn—she called him insane—and nastily denounced one exile for waiting until he left the country to attack the hacks and commissars to whom he had been forced to kowtow. Even when she wrote a foreword to a memoir by the dissident husband of her onetime Moscow translator, she tossed in an aside that she hadn't bothered to read his book.

Kessler-Harris is dismayed that Hellman's critics have not acknowledged that she did, in fact, admit to having made "mistakes" in her judgments about Stalin and the Soviet Union. But such admissions were pro forma, lacked specifics, and provided scant evidence of any serious reflection about the poisonous and vile language and behavior through which she had supported one of the worst tyrannies in history. She reserved her venom for those who had long pointed out the evils of communism.

Lillian Hellman, 1946

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

At times, Kessler-Harris suggests that Hellman was not very ideological at all, adopting political positions as a form of moral posturing. After examining her diary entries about her trip to Moscow in 1944, for example, Kessler-Harris speculates that Hellman judged Russia "in terms of how well it observed her comfort and how tenderly she was cared for." Hellman's obsession with creature comforts belied her socialist values and hostility to "free-market democracy." A notorious penny-pincher, she owned expensive homes and estates even during the days when she insisted that her politics had so impaired her ability to make ends meet that she had been forced to work briefly as a saleslady at Macy's—another one of her lies. She maneuvered to obtain the rights to all of Dashiell Hammett's literary properties, turned them into a money machine, and ignored the wishes in his will that Hammett's daughters receive half the proceeds, doling out small amounts to them and keeping the lion's share for herself during her lifetime. Kessler-Harris admits that Hellman filed so many insurance claims, many for small amounts and others for questionable losses, that she had difficulty getting coverage. Her greed "did not produce the best of behavior."

It was Hellman's appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1952, during which she issued her famous statement that she could not "cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions," that made her a heroine of the left. Recounting the experience in her 1976 memoir, *Scoundrel Time*, she characteristically distorted the facts and denounced as cowards the liberals who she claimed had not raised a finger to oppose Joseph McCarthy. Kessler-Harris glides over just how dishonest Hellman's later account was: Unlike others who *did* defy HUAC and risked jail for contempt, Hellman wound up pleading the Fifth Amendment. Moreover, the questions that she did answer strongly suggest that her private claim to have left the Communist party at the end of 1940 was also a lie. She may well have still been a member as late as 1949.

The final and most audacious of Hellman's lies was her claim in *Pentimento* that she had served as a courier taking money to an anti-Nazi activist friend working in the Austrian underground in the late 1930s. The movie based on this incident, *Julia*, won three Academy Awards in 1978, including one for Vanessa Redgrave in the title role. Jane Fonda portrayed Lillian, and Hellman herself was the star of the Oscars ceremony, receiving a prolonged standing ovation for her heroism, from Nazi Germany to the hearing rooms of Washington. Except that she made it all up. She had appropriated the life of the real Julia, a woman named Muriel Gardiner, whom she had never met. Kessler-Harris strains to excuse her identity theft, lamely insisting that Hellman's

memoir was not a memoir but another one of her plays that was intended to illustrate a larger truth not based on mere facts.

Kessler-Harris does not entirely excuse Hellman. She castigates her for her willingness to overlook or apologize for Soviet tyranny. She harshly notes that, "to her everlasting shame," Hellman ignored Soviet anti-Semitism. She catalogues her temper tantrums, personal nastiness, and self-righteousness. Despite all that, Kessler-Harris cannot bring herself to acknowledge that she was more than "a difficult woman." The conundrum for Kessler-Harris is that she cannot abide anti-communism but is unwilling to defend communism: The positions Hellman took in support of the Soviet Union are not defensible in the light of history, but "by the dim light of the 1930s," her actions are "understandable."

The simplest way to explain what happened to Hellman's reputation is to admit that she was a hypocrite and liar. And Kessler-Harris is forced to do so over and over: "She brought her troubles on herself. . . . [She was] overbearing, arrogant, and just plain rude." She was vain about herself, but despised vanity in other women. And one "cannot take at face value anything she says about herself." ♦

B&A

Genes Don't Fit

Deciphering the code of DNA and identity.

BY TEMMA EHRENFELD

Bryan Sykes, professor of human genetics at Oxford, confesses that when he began this book he was influenced by *Easy Rider*, which he had seen again for the first time in years, and was drawn to the aimless wandering of its three male characters. Sykes, too, wanders about a huge terrain: nothing less than "a genetic portrait of America." In the last third of *DNA USA*, he tells the story of a train trip from Boston to San Francisco and back, with side excursions by car, complete with Tocqueville–like observations on Yankee oddities such as slow trains, political advertising, and guns openly on sale.

DNA USA
A Genetic Portrait of America
by Bryan Sykes
Liveright, 384 pp., $27.95

Sykes, who owns the firm Oxford Ancestors and has much to say about the commercial side of genetic testing, carries little kits that allow him to take samples quickly. The size and diversity of the population of the United States rule out a systematic survey. Instead, he discusses samples taken from volunteers: at a meeting of the New England Historical Genealogy Society in Boston, for example, or in chance encounters in a San Francisco hotel lobby. He nearly wangles a sample from the father of Ray McDonald, the San Francisco 49er in town for a home game, as he was curious to know if they were related to the Scottish clan.

The serendipity belies the fact that Sykes is one of the world's most eminent geneticists. In the 1980s, he and an Oxford colleague, Robert E. Hedges, developed methods for extracting DNA from fossilized bones, and Sykes's 2001 bestseller, *The Seven Daughters of Eve*, zeroed in on seven women by tracking the DNA of mitochondria, which is passed down through mothers virtually unaltered except for a harmless mutation every few thousand years, and which becomes a telltale sign of genetic relationship. In *Adam's Curse: A Future Without Men* (2004), he described the deterioration of the Y chromosome as "a graveyard of rotting genes."

This road trip begins—and ends—with the idea that the genes of Africa, Asia, and Europe converge in America. Sykes doesn't offer a grand concept this time; but for patient readers, a multitude of ironies and surprises make the important point that genes rarely back up our assumptions about race or ethnic identity. Current genetic evidence (as Sykes describes it) seems far too unpredictable to serve a eugenicist agenda. What, for example, defines a black man as black? Sykes meets with an African-American Stanford psychiatrist who turns out to have a Y chromosome typical of Ashkenazi Jews, as well as other white genes that he suspects came from a long-ago rape. Sykes reports that a third of the dark-skinned male customers of an American gene-testing company turn out to carry a European Y chromosome. About half of these men are so angry they demand their money back.

They know the history—that white men had sex with black slaves and servants—but "they look black and they certainly feel black." Sykes doesn't say so, but many must think that white genes would show up in people with lighter skin. In fact, people who have very little DNA from African ancestors may be dark-skinned if that DNA happens to include the pigment genes. (On the other hand, people with fair skin may have almost entirely African DNA.) Typically, the company repeats the test and the results are the same. By then, the customers have "quieted down. Maybe they have asked their grandmother on their father's side, and she may have said that there was talk of a white ancestor in the family long ago. Always ask a woman about these things," Sykes observes. "Women always know more than the men."

Sometimes not only pride, but money, is at stake. After tribal coffers filled with profits from casinos and reparations for historic land seizures, applications for Indian tribal membership mushroomed. Native-American nations make their own rules as to who qualifies: In 2000, the Seminole expelled its existing 2,000 "black" members, descen-

Temma Ehrenfeld is a writer in New York.

dants of freed slaves who often married the children of their former masters. When 95 descendants of freedmen were tested, signs of Native-American ancestry ranging from zero to 30 percent, with an average of 6 percent, were found. To a hushed audience of freedmen, it was announced that these results matched the average of African Americans from Baltimore or New York. Many of the enrolled Seminoles, Sykes comments, may have even less genetic evidence of Native-American ancestry.

Indian tribes distrust genetic testing, in any case. They tell origin stories that begin on this continent, although scientists inform us that genetic and archaeological evidence indicates that the first Americans arrived from Asia. (As Sykes explains, every Native American tested has had some genetic code associated with the Chinese and Japanese.) Sykes concludes that mammoth hunters from Siberia arrived in Alaska by land or sea, and that another group of Asians traveled by boat to Central and South America. More recent genes come from Chinese immigrant railroad workers.

Such theories have made Native Americans deeply suspicious of white men who come wanting cheek swabs. When, after much debate, the Seaconke Wampanoag of Rhode Island did volunteer for genetic testing, the results astonished even Sykes. The tribe is famous for sharing Thanksgiving dinner in 1621 with the Mayflower settlers. But the tests showed that, at least on the maternal side, there was no evidence of Native American genes at all. Sykes leaves us with the mystery: "No race or ethnic group can ever be accurately defined by the genes they carry," he states unambiguously, and the odd results with the Seaconke are a vivid illustration of that point.

Jews, who have their own 16-page chapter here, had every reason to fear eugenics, but in America they embraced genetic testing in order to fight Tay-Sachs disease, now virtually eliminated in this country. Sykes comments that while Native Americans have been on the "receiving end of gung-ho and invasive academic projects run by other people, Jewish-Americans have looked into their genetics themselves." Such empathy is characteristic of Sykes's style, and feeds his lyrical passages. Describing the train ride to Massachusetts, he writes:

> Our driver was now applying the whistle with increasing vigor. At the approach to every crossing, no matter how small the road, the same melancholy blast rippled through the sleeping woods. Occasional homes interrupted the monotony of the trees, gray-slatted timber in plots with the abandoned swings of children long gone that parents didn't have the heart to dismantle. On one lawn an old rusting jalopy had collapsed at its final resting place, the grass carefully mowed around it as if it were a grave. These were most definitely homes, with all the paraphernalia of the living, not the pristine empty house-tombs of Cape Cod.

The pace speeds and slows. We're treated to textbook-style dashes into ancient history, details about the technology of genetic testing, personal snapshots of sea lions and General Custer's tombstone, and technical explanations that seem written in genetic code. In its meandering and scattered way, *DNA USA* reflects its subject. Genetic code is messy indeed, but not too messy to teach, as we make our way in a "world that mocks the artificial divisions we have created for ourselves." ♦

B&A

Albert the Good

Victoria's consort was as admirable as she thought.

BY DAVID AIKMAN

It is not so much a truism as a cliché that the Victorian era has been the target of popular denigration ever since Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918) demolished a few of its icons of moral excellence: Florence Nightingale and General Gordon of Khartoum, among others. Strachey was a sort of Christopher Hitchens of his time, ensuring that the very word "Victorian" would henceforth carry connotations of mustiness, and a certain prudish sanctimony. That, of course, ignores the obvious: Under the queen-empress (she was given the title "empress of India" in 1877 by the government of Benjamin Disraeli), Great Britain reached the apogee of its global power, became a firmly constitutional monarchy, and was an exemplar of many of the good things brought into the world by European civilization in the modern age.

Albert
A Life
by Jules Stewart
I.B. Tauris, 304 pp., $28

The image of Victoria as a dowdy, strait-laced widow has come down to us from her wearing the black of mourning between Albert's death in 1861 and her own death in 1901. As Jules Stewart makes clear in this finely written biography of Victoria's husband, Victoria as a young woman (and then queen) was anything but dowdy in her tastes and personality. In fact, it may come as a surprise to some to learn that Victoria was passionately and physically in love with her husband almost from their first meeting, that the passion was mutual, and that much of the good in Queen Victoria's reign sprang from Prince Albert's perceptive, insightful mind, and his ability to cope with the sometimes petulant bouts of anger or melancholy of his wife. The grief that Victoria expressed after Albert's death in 1861 at the age of 42 was genuine and unrelieved until her own death. In a sense, it was a tribute to

David Aikman is the author, most recently, of The Mirage of Peace: Understanding the Never-Ending Conflict in the Middle East.

her sense of loss not only of a beloved husband, but also of a wise counselor to the monarch.

By comparison with today's preferred custom to marry late—or to not even bother to get married at all—Albert and Victoria's marriage in 1840 took place when both were merely 20. They were first cousins, but Albert faced a challenge in his initial years as the queen's consort from crusty British aristocratic anti-German prejudice. It did not help that the duchy of Saxe-Coburg, Albert's princely place of origin in what is now Bavaria, was actually smaller than some English counties. Parliament at first reflected this prejudice in reducing the royal allowance it authorized for the prince. Albert, and even Victoria, were the target of a vicious press campaign in the mid-1850s that portrayed him as meddling in British politics and plotting damage to the country through conspiracies with foreign powers. Only after two authoritative members of the House of Lords publicly condemned the press campaign did it come to an end.

Victoria, Albert, and their children by Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1846)

Albert's real contribution to the success of Victoria's reign, as Stewart makes clear, derived largely from his quiet, yet persistent pursuit of educational and philanthropic goals that he probably acquired from his exposure as a young man to the teachings of Lutheran pietism. England had formally abolished the slave trade in 1807 (and slavery itself in 1833), but Albert was the patron of a national campaign to abolish slavery everywhere. In the face of extensive opposition, he was elected chancellor of Cambridge in 1847, and soon set about attempting to modernize the university's then-obsolete (and generally antiscience) curriculum. He even required, heaven forbid, the vice-chancellor to list all the subjects that the university planned to teach during the following academic year. It alarmed Albert, and baffled many observers of the British educational system, that Cambridge, at the time, lacked any professors of physics, economics, or modern languages. His enthusiasm for science even led him to propose a knighthood for Charles Darwin, an idea only scotched by opposition from bishops of the Church of England.

Albert's most significant achievement in a lifetime of encouraging science and modernity probably lay in his energetic championship of the Great Exhibition of 1851, a brilliant effort to display the achievements of science and commerce from all over the world in a giant glass hall in Hyde Park. The exhibition in the Crystal Palace (as the building was immediately dubbed) was both a popular and a financial success, even though editorials in the *Times* of London had darkly thundered before the exhibition opened about the dangers of foreigners infecting the British either with malevolent physical plagues or the scourge of revolutionary politics.

Albert, to use a term that was certainly not in use in his day, was very much the compassionate conservative—a man who felt that the privileged classes of society should do far more than they were doing to improve the living and working conditions of the laboring masses. A sense that the working class had responded with uncynical enthusiasm to Albert's championship of economic and social reform helped finally to overcome the earlier legacy of suspicion of the imported foreigner. When Albert died, despite his clearly expressed view that no "monuments" should be erected in his memory, city streets, squares, and even lakes, from Africa to Canada and Australia, were named after him.

Albert was a sensible and sensitive father to his and Victoria's nine children, even maintaining good relations with Bertie, the future Edward VII, after it was widely gossiped that he had been having an affair with an Irish actress whom fellow army officers had introduced at night into his tent. In many ways, Albert's basic decency and his idealism for making conditions better for everyone finally triumphed over the unhappiness that some Britons had felt over their monarch's marriage to a minor German prince. Albert's reforming instincts led to major overhaul of the British Army and a long tussle with the interventionist-minded prime minister Lord Palmerston over the wisdom of British meddling in Europe's convoluted, and sometimes revolutionary, politics.

Ultimately, however, Albert's greatest contribution to his adoptive country may have been, according to the author, "to make of Victoria an admirable and successful monarch." This was by no means an inevitable achievement. Stewart notes that Victoria, as a young woman and monarch, was "an egotistical, hot-tempered and somewhat bewildered woman." Albert's steady hand, quiet philanthropy, and educational diligence at her side helped render her not only the longest-serving British monarch ever, but also, at the time of her diamond jubilee in 1897, the most beloved. ♦

B&A

Spirits of '76

First in war, first in peace, and last to refuse a shot of whiskey. BY KEVIN R. KOSAR

The George Washington Temperance Society was started in a Baltimore bar in 1840. Its six founders—William K. Mitchell, John F. Hoss, David Anderson, George Steers, Archibald Campbell, and James McCurley—were not raging evangelicals; nor were they dissolute gutter-loungers. They were middle-aged men who had done well in business and five of whom had families. But as John Troy, a future member, wrote,

> they found themselves in the power of a monster, bound hand and foot in chains, the slaves of their own appetites. And now they frequented the public taverns; and oft at night, or during the day, and even on the Sabbath, instead of being at their business, or with their families, or at church, they were to be found at the Hotel or Grogshop.

So there and then, the sodden six drew up the society's constitution, and pledged "not to drink any spirituous or malt liquors, wine or cider." The society saw in George Washington a model of sobriety. Its members wore ribbons bearing Washington's image and the slogan "We bear a patriot's honored name, our country's welfare is our aim." Washington had freed Americans from British oppression; the Washington Temperance Society would liberate them from the tyranny of booze. The society's membership grew rapidly, but it was short-lived; within a decade, many of its chapters dissolved.

Which is probably for the better, because there was a problem with the society's choice of mascot: George Washington was an unabashed drinker and distiller. Indeed, as Dennis Pogue's comprehensive volume illustrates, alcohol was very much a part of Washington's life. He enjoyed alcoholic beverages in moderation, and he took them regularly. Washington consumed a variety of distilled spirits and wines, and he was especially fond of Madeira (a fortified wine). Thus, although George Washington was exceptional in many particulars, he was also much like his countrymen: He drank.

Early Americans' thirst for alcoholic beverages, as Pogue points out, "was boosted by the general unavailability of trustworthy drinking water." Indeed, some colonists viewed water as positively perilous. A 1767 household guide warned against drinking cold water when one was hot:

> [It] produces quinseys, inflammations of the breast, cholicks, inflammations of the liver and all parts of the belly, with prodigious swellings, vomitings, suppression of urine, and inexpressible anguish.

The belief that alcoholic beverages were both safe and salubrious was commonplace. A 1764 *Virginia Almanack* advised taking a teacup of rum steeped with huckleberries "night and morning" to cure dropsy. Brandy was gulped to settle the nerves and to tamp down dyspepsia and fevers. Washington himself directed a friend suffering "ague" to take three or four cups of wine at midday and one in the evening.

Politics was a wet vocation; so, too, was war. Washington provided plenty of stiff drink to voters when he ran for the Virginia House in 1758: 47 gallons of beer, 70 gallons of rum punch, 34 gallons of wine, along with hard cider and brandy. All told, each of the 310 men who voted for Washington received about one-half gallon of drink. As a general, Washington implored Congress to supply booze to his troops: "The benefits arising from the moderate use of strong Liquor have been experienced in all armies, and are not to be disputed," he wrote. He thought that government distilleries should be erected around the country. When Washington bade farewell to his officers in the Continental Army in 1783, he did so at a tavern with a glass of wine in hand.

George Washington has long had

Founding Spirits
George Washington and the Beginnings of the American Whiskey Industry
by Dennis J. Pogue
Harbour, 304 pp., $24.95

Kevin R. Kosar is the author of Whiskey: A Global History.

MOLLY RILEY / CORBIS

a reputation as being remote and aloof; Pogue shows the truth was otherwise. Though reserved among strangers, Washington entertained guests relentlessly at Mount Vernon. He stocked eye-popping quantities of alcoholic beverages. In 1787, he bought 491 gallons of rum. Two years later, he acquired 312 bottles of Champagne and claret. Washington also had drink accoutrements custom-made, such as a 16-bottle mahogany liquor chest and wheeled coasters on which wine bottles could be shunted about the dinner table. Fellow Virginia statesman Richard Henry Lee found Washington garrulous and "quite merry" after a few glasses.

Alcoholic beverages were integral to the operation of Washington's sprawling estate. Laborers, artisans, and local merchants often were paid with homebrew or other dizzying beverages. Sick slaves and those giving birth were dosed with rum. The contract of Philip Bater, Washington's gardener, stipulated that he would receive "four Dollars at Christmas, with which he may be drunk 4 days and 4 nights." Bater's agreement also promised two dollars for a two-day Easter bender. Even one of Washington's prized mules had its sore joints rubbed with brandy.

All this was not without its costs. Washington's miller developed a drinking problem and became "an intolerable sot" who behaved like "a madman" when drunk. Washington despaired of alcoholism, but did not blame drink itself. He saw intemperance as a character flaw, a weakness that led one to take too much of a good thing. So he had no problem considering the proposal put to him by James Anderson in January 1797 to build a whiskey distillery. Through his correspondence with other leading men of the day, Washington had come to the opinion that the young nation had a great, unmet thirst for good whiskey. Anderson, a Scotsman who had recently arrived as a manager at Mount Vernon, provided the necessary nudge. Washington acceded to a test run, and two stills were placed in his estate's cooperage.

Washington completed his presidency in March 1797, and, upon returning to Mount Vernon, he liked what he saw: His corn and rye whiskey was selling. In October, he began the construction of "a pretty considerable distillery," which was actually one of the largest in America. Completed in just five months, its main building was 75 feet long by 30 feet wide, with five stills inside. The distillery was sited a few miles from Washington's home, among a complex of buildings that served related purposes. There was a malt house where grain was prepared for distilling, a cooperage where barrels were fashioned, and animal sheds housing hogs and cows that fed upon the grain-mush discarded by the distillery. Anderson's son John directed operations, and Washington hired a friend's nephew to serve as an assistant.

Washington spent big money to start his distillery, and was greatly relieved by its immediate success. It produced 4,400 gallons of spirits in its first year, mostly rye whiskey, along with smaller amounts of apple, peach, and persimmon brandies. Production jumped to 10,500 gallons in 1799. Washington's whiskey was so much in demand that he had to buy grain from other farmers to keep up production. Ever upright, he paid his excise taxes promptly.

Unfortunately, Washington had little time to enjoy his spirits or to share them with his many visitors: He died in December 1799. Appropriately, Pogue notes, "29 gallons of whiskey were delivered from his distillery to provide some solace for the grieving funeral party." Washington's distillery operated for another decade and then burnt to the ground, remaining largely forgotten for the better part of two centuries. The distillery was rebuilt in 2007 with financial support from the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, and the first batch of rye whiskey was produced two years later. It sold out immediately. ♦

B&A

Quite Contrary

A reintroduction to Mary McCarthy in her centennial year. **BY JONATHAN LEAF**

The centenary of Mary McCarthy's birth falls on this year's summer solstice, and August is the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of her most famous novel, *The Group*, which sold more than five million copies by the time of McCarthy's death in 1989, and continues to sell.

Yet it is rarely assigned—or even well regarded—in colleges; and while highly entertaining, *The Group* is not generally recognized as a classic, is not romantic, and is not a potboiler. Nor does McCarthy have a partisan cheering section any longer, if she ever had one. Although a lifelong leftist, she is adjudged (if she is thought of by *bien-pensant* intellectuals at all) as a conceited, viperish figure who took delight in attacking such patron saints as Lillian Hellman.

Still, there have been at least three full-length biographies of McCarthy, plus a son's reminiscences, and a Broadway play about her contretemps with Hellman. And there will surely be more accounts of her life both in print and, no doubt, on the screen. So who is right? Her faithful readers or the university intellectuals she so mocked and derided in her essays and novels, and who have belatedly returned the (dis)favor?

Her appeal for biographers derives partly from her beauty and glamour. In this, she is singular. If she could write off her looks by saying that she was merely invariably the prettiest girl at benefits for sharecroppers, let us admit

Jonathan Leaf, a playwright in New York, is the author of The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Sixties.

that few admired women writers were ever comely enough to make men stare, or sufficiently informed about fashion that female friends sought their advice on wardrobe and jewelry.

A worthier motive lies in her witty, highly wrought writing. While it's been a common jest that she left her lover Philip Rahv for her second husband, Edmund Wilson, because Wilson offered better prose, neither one's came close to hers. Indeed, it may be that no American since Scott Fitzgerald has written so felicitously.

The uncommon union of bitchy cleverness and apposite word choice which characterizes her work caused some of it to be overvalued in her lifetime. An indication of how extreme this could be was evidenced at her death, when the ever-fatuous Gore Vidal asserted that she was America's preeminent critic. Ponder this remark in light of the fact that (as one writer previously noted) when Mary McCarthy worked as a drama critic, she reviewed the opening of *A Streetcar Named Desire* at length without mentioning Marlon Brando, and *Street Scene* without noting its composer, Kurt Weill. Her criticism is fascinatingly subtle but reflective of her character, which was unstable, and her personality, which was brittle and often unsparing.

Moreover, if she was not emotionally invested in her subject, the result was like a recipe made from the best ingredients but then boiled to death. Thus, her later novels, like *Birds of America* (1971) and *Cannibals and Missionaries* (1979), are utterly uninvolving when not noticeably factitious. Further, her programmatic anti-Americanism led her towards shameful and dishonest political tracts like her uncritically laudatory account of her visit to North Vietnam, *Hanoi* (1968).

But conversely, the singularity and originality of some of McCarthy's early autobiographical fiction and nonfiction have left them much underappreciated. Somerset Maugham once said that the final test of a novelist was his sales after death. Here is testament that *The Group* stands up far better than the more lauded titles of, say, James Baldwin or Norman Mailer. And for all the admiration given to *Lolita*, to read it after reading McCarthy's debut novel, *The Company She Keeps* (1942), is a bit like eating a pastry puff after consuming a 14-ounce sirloin. Hers is more substantial stuff.

Mary McCarthy

KATHERINE EASTLAND

Both the sublimity and the inadequacy of her work reflect her tortuous upbringing. Few childhoods have been stranger: mixed with heaping portions of Dickensian privation, upper-class WASP refinement, Roman Catholic catechism, and Jewish maternal devotion. It is as if someone had a rearing combining Oliver Twist and the Main Line—and this given to a girl with a supremely swift mind, a convent school education, and the libido of a male member of the Kennedy clan.

Born in 1912 as the eldest of four children, Mary McCarthy was orphaned at age 6 when her handsome, wastrel father and affectionate-but-neurotic mother died in the influenza epidemic. She and her three brothers were subsequently sent to live with a vindictive and stupendously cheap aunt and uncle in Minnesota. Devout Irish Catholics fond of beating the children with a strop and refusing them food as punishment, this couple had no definite idea what to do with the rebellious and fiercely independent oldest child: Making her a ward of the state and sending her to foster care seems to have been one notion they seriously entertained.

Consequently, when McCarthy's maternal grandparents turned up in 1923 and offered to take Mary back to their large home in Seattle, the couple was more than happy to consent—so long as it was agreed that she would receive a strict Catholic education. This promise was believed to be necessary because her grandfather, Harold Preston, was a religiously indifferent Protestant lawyer, and her grandmother, Augusta Morgenstern, was a Jew with a practicing sister who regularly stopped by the house. In this manner, McCarthy was separated from her younger siblings, among them the actor Kevin McCarthy. Yet because her grandfather was a partner of the prominent law firm Preston Gates & Ellis, McCarthy's new adoptive parents could afford to send her to Seattle's most expensive Catholic girls' school. There, she learned Latin and became the center of every class discussion, sometimes over and above the instructors.

McCarthy lost her faith when she discovered some persuasive agnostic authors, and she lost her virginity when she discovered college boys. Her rampant promiscuity—which eventually included dozens, if not hundreds, of lovers—raises the question, previously unasked by biographers, of whether she suffered from some bipolar or borderline personality disorder. Her youthful obsession with killing herself, her violent mood swings, her lack of any clear sense of identity in the face of success as a writer, and her longtime combination of nymphomania with a fear of intimacy

suggest that she may have been in the grip of either, or both.

In her writing, it's apparent that she could be passionately attracted to men at one moment and ironically observant while making love to them the next. Certainly the ups and downs of her life will provide fodder for future screenwriters: four marriages, numerous abortions, at least one miscarriage, brief institutionalization, a bout of hepatitis, and, through her affairs with wedded lovers, the wrecking of several other marriages.

The frequent alternation between a breathing emotionalism and detachment was essential, of course, to her artistry. Through this union she was able first to understand and then to report. Lacking was a breadth of feeling for others. In consequence, she could not be a novelist like Tolstoy or George Eliot (two of her favorites), writers who provided a view of men and women from a range of classes. She could write sympathetically only about what she had lived herself.

McCarthy's most honest book, and the one that is freest of attitudinizing, is her first, *The Company She Keeps*. A collection of six short stories, it reveals, somewhat in passing, the unhappiness of a troubled young woman who moves from man to man, never finding satisfaction. Barely fictionalized, it is often amusing and ultimately heartrending—no matter that we see that its protagonist is (as she admits) incapable of love, even self-love. It is *Portnoy's Complaint* told from a woman's point of view, ending poignantly and written in a far superior style.

Neither *The Group* nor her *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (1957) offers such consistently astringent truthfulness. But their power cannot be denied. The reasons why *The Group* has never been properly acknowledged are several: her many enemies, especially among her former friends on the left, the book's originality, and its subject. To the critics of the time, a novel about the mundane concerns of overeducated spinsters and housewives couldn't be important, and its humor was lost on them. Norman Mailer wrote it off as "the best novel the editors of the women's magazines ever conceived in *their* secret ambition," missing McCarthy's intent to create

> a kind of compendious history of the faith in progress of the nineteen-thirties. . . . Through these eight points of view, all feminine, all consciously enlightened, are refracted . . . the novel ideas of the period concerning sex, politics, economics, architecture, city-planning, house-keeping, child-bearing, interior decoration, and art. It is a crazy quilt of *clichés*, platitudes and *idées reçues*.

This was not *Jane Eyre*. Nor was it *The Lower Depths*. Rather, McCarthy presented the reader with something new: a sardonic but realistic and affecting panel portrait of bourgeois women in their daily roles as rivals, betrayed and inconstant lovers, nursing mothers, underpaid office workers, and self-regarding intellectuals.

The first two-thirds of *The Group* renders this world more effectively than any account before or since. (The last third is more frequently just good storytelling that closes the tale.) And while the novel had limited appeal to men of Norman Mailer's generation, it is equally distasteful to many current feminists, as its view of woman is not one in which she is an innocent victim or strong sister but, rather, crafty and scheming, if sometimes easily duped. In writing *The Group*, McCarthy said that she had earned other women's enmity by "giv[ing] away trade secrets." What's more, she depicts motherhood as natural, central, and rewarding—if occasionally stultifying. The lesbian among the book's eight central characters, while alluring, is predatory and corrupting. *The Group*'s design, which permits the goal of limning a generation, has been copied by other women writers but has never been approached for insight, wit, style, entertainment value, or completeness.

Even so, McCarthy's most memorable book may be her *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*. It is also the one in which she expresses her greatest love for another person and where—more than in the depiction of the ironically named heroine of *The Group*, Kay Strong, or in her damning self-portrait in *A Charmed Life* (1955)—McCarthy gives us her most tragic figure. This was her maternal grandmother. The victim of a routine facelift that went awry, Augusta Morgenstern spent much of her adult life wearing a veil to hide her disfigured looks and lost beauty. All but a few visitors were kept from her house.

Why is this apolitical book little regarded? Hostility towards McCarthy was evident in the academy from very early on in her career—even before her scabrous and somewhat heartless satire of self-infatuated left-wing English professors in *The Groves of Academe* (1952). A decade earlier, McCarthy had gained the animosity of the Communist party and its fellow travelers through her work for the Trotskyite *Partisan Review*, and she amplified this mutual antipathy with essays such as "Settling the Colonel's Hash," in which she lampooned the preoccupation among literary scholars with symbolism. Here and elsewhere, she advanced the provocative notion that fiction should be judged principally in terms of its merit as storytelling, and read primarily to find out what happens to the hero or heroine.

Another cause for resentment was her effective demolition of Simone de Beauvoir in "Mlle. Gulliver en Amérique." Reviewing a Beauvoir volume unavailable in English, McCarthy pointed out its innumerable idiocies: a stated admiration for James "Algee" (Agee), Eugene "O'Neil" (O'Neill), and "Max" Twain; her delight in living in "Greeniwich Village"; and her belief that the shops along New York's Fifth Avenue were "reserved for the capitalist international."

In recent years, Mary McCarthy has been best remembered among the cognoscenti for her remark on an episode of Dick Cavett's talk show that every word Lillian Hellman wrote was "a lie, including 'and' and 'the,'" and for the libel suit that ensued. This episode ultimately destroyed Hellman's reputation, as it proved her mythomania and crookedness. But commendable as this literary defenestration was, it was a small act—and at the hundredth anniversary of her birth, it is time to say that Mary McCarthy's importance was not realized on the TV screen but on the printed page. ♦

B&A

Killer Angel

A mesmerizing tale starring the nice people of Carthage, Texas. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

It used to be relatively rare to hear a real-life story that proved the adage "truth is stranger than fiction" because there were so many details in scandalous true stories that couldn't be shared in polite society. Now, of course, all we hear are true stories filled with scandalous details—ones involving Charlie Sheen or John Edwards or Herman Cain or whoever will pop up between the time I finish writing this piece and you begin reading it. "Truth is stranger than fiction" is like "dog bites man." It's so true it's boring.

Bernie
Directed by Richard Linklater

And that is what makes *Bernie* so miraculous. The best American movie of the year so far, *Bernie* restores the strangeness to a true story that really does seem stranger than truth ought to be. In a small East Texas town in 1996, a 38-year-old mortician named Bernie Tiede shot and killed his 81-year-old employer, Marjorie Nugent. He then stashed her body in a freezer in her garage. And there it remained for nine months, while he spent more than $1 million of her money.

As it turns out, the movie really isn't about Bernie and Marjorie, but rather about the people who live with and around them in the friendly town of Carthage, Texas. They are perfectly decent, well-meaning, churchgoing folk who wouldn't hurt a fly. And they don't care about the murder. They dislike the victim, they love the killer, and they don't want him to be punished for his crime. What proves stranger than fiction in *Bernie* isn't Bernie, but Carthage.

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

The movie is based on a terrific piece of journalism published in *Texas Monthly* in 1998 by Skip Hollandsworth. He cowrote *Bernie* with Richard Linklater, the director whose previous Texas-based films include the brilliant *Slacker* (1991) and the even more brilliant *Dazed and Confused* (1993).

The movie they've made together is an innovative hybrid reminiscent of *American Splendor*, the extraordinary 2003 film about the real-life cartoonist Harvey Pekar, who narrates *American Splendor* and appears in it every now and then as himself, but is played by Paul Giamatti. In this case, Bernie is played by Jack Black in a revelatory performance. Marjorie is played by an amazingly unvain Shirley MacLaine, and the other major roles are essayed by actors as well. But the townspeople of Carthage are all played by the real-life people of Carthage; they appear onscreen as narrators, Greek chorus members, and commenters as the story unfolds.

What we learn is that Bernie was the kind of pseudo-eccentric who can really make a home for himself in a small town, despite the fact that he was odd, effeminate, and prone to impulsive spending. "Was Bernie gay?" a title card asks at one point. Hollandsworth's article leaves little doubt—Bernie had a stash of homosexual porn in his house when he was arrested—but the film handles the question discreetly.

The point is that, despite his former boss at the mortuary saying "Bernie was a little light in the loafers," he was not mocked or scorned or beaten. Rather, his undeniable kindnesses to elderly widows, his efforts to enhance and beautify the town, his solicitude toward others, and his beautiful singing voice which he used at funerals and in church all made him beloved.

So beloved, in fact, that when his crime was discovered, the town prosecutor was besieged by neighbors demanding he let Bernie loose, and by the minister of the local church asking everyone to pray for Bernie—none of them wasting a second's sympathy on the victim. Unlike Bernie, Marjorie was unpleasant, rude, rich, and she made people feel bad about themselves. Surely Bernie had a reason for doing what he did!

As was true with *Dazed and Confused*, Linklater understands the complicated social dynamic of this community and offers a full-blooded portrait of it. Somehow, he manages to make the Carthaginians amusing without being condescending or making them appear to be grotesque hicks. They just have too much Texas saltiness to them, too much sparkle and life. And yet they all excused a great crime that had taken place in their midst. This is the mystery at the heart of *Bernie*, and it is one of the glories of this altogether splendid film that it doesn't attempt to offer a neat sociological explanation.

In one sense, *Bernie* is *not* stranger than fiction because the story was anticipated by a work of fiction. That would be John Millington Synge's great and strange 1907 play, *The Playboy of the Western World*, in which a youth who arrives in a small town claiming to have killed his own father becomes, first, a figure of curiosity to the excited and scandalized townsfolk and, eventually, a full-fledged rock star. Then the townsfolk discover he *didn't* actually kill the old man, and it is only at this point that they shun and condemn him as a coward and a crook.

The Playboy of the Western World provoked bloody riots when it was first performed because it seemed to mock both a vicious criminal act and the Irish people. A work of art provoking wide-scale violence? Today, such a thing wouldn't be stranger than fiction; it would be science fiction. The problem with *Bernie* is not that it will cause anyone to riot. The problem is whether the producers can get anybody to go out and see it. You should. ♦

"Obama team tries to quell Cory Booker controversy"
—CBSNews.com headline, May 22, 2012

PARODY

$1.00 | **TUESDAY, MAY 29, 2012**

NJ.CO

THAT'S NO PIZZAIOLA!

SUBWAY MASSACRES A CLASSIC

BOOKER COMMENTS BLAMED ON DELIRIUM

Newark mayor ate 'nauseating' breakfast

By David Giambusso
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Following a three-hour meeting between President Barack Obama and Newark mayor Cory Booker, it was decided that the mayor's comments in a recent 'Meet the Press' interview were uttered while Booker was suffering a bout of food poisoning. "Cory had breakfast with Governor Christie that morning," Obama explained, "and let's just say it was the corned beef hash and eggs that were nauseating." The president said Booker's mind was preoccupied with the possibility of getting sick on the air, which led him to use the word "nauseating" twice during the interview.

"He was obviously worried about his health," said the president, "and that word just popped in his head, rather nonsensically, I might add. For who would be nauseated by my questioning the corporate depredations at Bain while Mitt Romney was there?" When asked whether the attacks on Bain were hypocritical considering the amount of money the president has received from private equity, Obama replied, "Now that is a nauseating question! But seriously, private equity is a good thing—except when it's not. Remember, people lost their jobs while Romney was the boss. We need to hold him accountable."

Some are doubting the president's version of events. There have been no other reports of food poisoning stemming from the restaurant where Booker and Christie dined. And Golden Bell Diner owner Melvin Sharples insisted his food is up to code. "I didn't poison no one!" he exclaimed. "We had seven orders for the hash that morning and no complaints. Certainly Governor Christie enjoyed his order. All six of them."

Mayor Booker had little to say during the joint press conference, mostly because he was in the midst of resuscitating a bystander who had fainted. Remarkably, the mayor noticed the man had difficulty breathing despite his standing 100 feet away behind a concrete wall. "I have a knack for seeing through problems," Booker joked, although he did confide that the only substance he cannot see through is lead. Booker also admitted he is highly allergic to a green-colored meteorite known as

SEE **KAL-EL**, PAGE 6