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Greetings from
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BRUNDAGE
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Contents

September 3, 2012 • Volume 17, Number 47

2 The Scrapbook — *Sympathy for the plagiarist, one man's trash & more*

5 Casual — *Andrew Ferguson, reluctant Romneyite*

7 Editorials

What If Everyone's Wrong? — BY WILLIAM KRISTOL

The GOP's '76ers — BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Articles

10 The State of the Race — BY JAY COST
Obama is ahead, barely

13 Dirty Harry — BY FRED BARNES
Why are Republicans giving Reid a pass?

14 Citizen Koch Goes to Tampa — BY MICHAEL BARONE
Meet the left's public enemy number one

17 Generation Ryan — BY BYRON YORK
The first post-boomer nominee

18 Reince Rules — BY STEPHEN F. HAYES
It's a high-stakes election for the GOP chairman

21 Who's the Extremist? — BY JOHN MCCORMACK
Obama's radical position on social issues

22 Where Does It End? — BY NOEMIE EMERY
The illogic of Obama's attack on Romney

25 If Sweden Can Do It . . . — BY ROLAND POIRIER MARTINSSON
The United States can reform entitlements, too

26 Sound Money Gains a Champion — BY JUDY SHELTON
Paul Ryan, good as gold

Feature

29 Numbering the Days — BY JOSEPH BOTTUM & ALAN DAVISON
Memories of Strat-O-Matic baseball

Books & Arts

34 A Celebrated Editor — BY JUDY BACHRACH
The curious case of Benjamin Bradlee

37 Healthy Trend — BY WILLIAM ANDERSON
First, do no harm—and then repeal Obamacare

38 Smart Writing — BY BARTON SWAIM
It's good to be published, and better to be understood

39 One-China Syndrome — BY CHARLES HORNER
The self-deception that believes the lies about Taiwan

41 Washington on Fire — BY RYAN COLE
Why the War of 1812 is our second war of independence

43 A Fan's Notes — BY JOHN PODHORETZ
This movie masterpiece comes in printed form

44 Parody — *Rambo V: The President Takes No Prisoners*

COVER BY SCOTT BRUNDAGE

Fact Checking the Fact Checkers (cont.)

Writing in these pages some months ago, Mark Hemingway made the case for being skeptical of media "fact checking" operations ("Lies, Damned Lies, and 'Fact Checking,'" December 19, 2011). They routinely get the most basic facts wrong; they laughably claim that Republicans lie more than Democrats at a rate of three-to-one; and they niggle over obviously rhetorical statements—but only when Republicans utter them. Hemingway ended his piece by warning that media fact checking organizations were about to launch a blitzkrieg in an attempt to leverage their undeserved status as impartial arbiters to reelect Barack Obama.

Indeed, with the election drawing near, the disingenuous deluge from fact checkers has been something to behold. Since Paul Ryan was nominated, there have been scores of misleading and outright false "fact checks" relating to his Medicare reform plan. An Associated Press "fact check" actually upbraided Ryan for quoting Obama's "You didn't build that" comment. Supposedly, Ryan didn't understand the rhetorical context. What that has to do with facts went unexplained.

Then on August 17, a nonpartisan watchdog, Media Trackers, revealed that PolitiFact Ohio writer Tom Feran had a Twitter feed where he referred to conservatives as "wingnuts" and "yahoos," and sent out links to blog postings on such topics as "the Cancer of Conservatism." On the other hand, Feran is an enthusiastic Obama supporter—"Go-bama!"—and supporter of Occupy Wall Street. Over the summer, Feran wrote three PolitiFact articles slapping Ohio GOP Senate candidate Josh Mandel with the organization's "pants on fire" label, and capped it off by writing an article in the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* headlined "Campaign attacks give Josh Mandel Pants on Fire crown."

Meanwhile, fact checking organizations have rarely mentioned Obama campaign ads and fundraising emails claiming that Mitt Romney opposes abortion in cases of rape and incest, a flat-out lie. And in the last week, there have been repeated and dishonest Democratic claims in the media that Paul Ryan tried to "redefine rape" by supporting legislation limiting federal funding of abortions. Like the Hyde amendment before it, the legislation distinguished between abortions owing to "forcible rape" and "statutory rape" (only those in the former category have been paid for by Medicaid since 1993). As you might have guessed, the "fact checkers" have not rushed in to clarify things.

But don't worry, fact checking organizations are always finding new and creative ways to remind fair-minded readers they have zero credibility. The Scrapbook now submits to you the following email from PolitiFact as evidence of the group's seriousness of purpose (or rather, lack thereof):

> This week, we're releasing *Settle It!*, a free app to help you resolve dinner-table arguments and test your knowledge of PolitiFact rulings. The app, available in the iTunes, Google Play and Amazon stores, is known as "PolitiFact's Argument Ender" because it allows you to enter names and keywords and instantly find relevant Truth-O-Meter ratings. It includes the PolitiFact Challenge, an addictive game that shows factual claims we have checked. You have to choose whether each one was rated True, False or Pants on Fire. You earn points and can work your way up through five levels, from "Intern" to "Aide," "Lobbyist," "Pundit" and then "Wonk."

When it comes to PolitiFact's credibility, we think that does in fact (sorry) settle it. ♦

Sympathy for the Plagiarist

The Scrapbook is not in the habit of quoting itself, even disapprovingly; but sometimes it cannot be helped. For example, last week, discussing the case of celebrity-plagiarist Fareed Zakaria, we noted that his professional punishment (one week's suspension from *Time*, CNN, and the *Washington Post*) seemed astonishingly lenient, and predicted that he would "no doubt proceed from strength to strength, a sadder but wiser pundit."

Well, no sooner had The Scrapbook's language been rendered into print than the *New York Times*, as if on cue, produced a full-page, deeply therapeutic profile of the malefactor with this headline: "A Media Personality, Suffering a Blow to His Image, Ponders a Lesson." And there was a fetching, four-column portrait of Zakaria, looking fit and rested in jacket and dress shirt (no tie), smiling gamely for the camera, his hands positioned slightly awkwardly on his jean legs.

Note the carefully worded cause and effect: Zakaria did not commit plagiarism; he suffered "a blow to his image," from which he has learned a lesson. And of course, there is no sense whatsoever that Zakaria had resorted to the lowest means by which any writer can cultivate renown: stealing the words of another, the *New Yorker*'s Jill Lepore, and touting them as his own. Instead, we are treated to excuses from friends: Zakaria is so gosh-darned busy ("I wish I had one-tenth of the energy and productivity he has") and profound ("He's one of the premier global intellectuals") and always thinking at laser speed ("a phenomenally fast and lucid writer") that, of course, he inadvertently "confused" his own prose with "notes" taken from two separate sources on the subject.

Adds the *Times*, helpfully: "He often writes his research in longhand."

None of which is the least bit persuasive. But that doesn't stop the *Times* from trying. The reader is treated

to the spectacle of an Aspen symposium on the Iraq war, hosted by a Beverly Hills power couple and featuring George Soros, Queen Noor of Jordan, Sen. Dianne Feinstein—and Fareed Zakaria ("I am just so thrilled he exists," declares his hostess). Then we are informed, as we might have suspected, that his tenure as editor of *Newsweek International* had more to do with career management than journalistic enterprise ("Former colleagues . . . said he was involved in choosing covers and generating ideas but did little line editing and was more the public face of the magazine").

And finally, we learn the lesson: Our hero is such a treasure, such a force of nature, such a boundless resource for the beautiful people from Manhattan to Aspen to Beverly Hills, that he must slacken his pace, take personal stock, and preserve the Fareed Zakaria brand. Accordingly, he has announced that he "plans to cut back work with groups like the Council on Foreign Relations, the Little Shakespeare Company, and the Yale University governing board"—translation: drop the commitments that don't promote wealth/celebrity.

Well, all of this proves two things, from The Scrapbook's perspective. First, in the media stratosphere, the stars will protect themselves, no matter what, and protect one another. And second, celebrity confers immunity: This self-protective, self-sustaining, self-perpetuating state of mind will persist, ad infinitum, in the media—even when one of their number is exposed as a thief.

A rare dissenter, Steven Brill, makes the point memorably in a column for Reuters:

> Suppose I steal my neighbor Jill's flat-screen television and install it in my living room. Jill or one of her friends who knows about Jill's missing television comes over to my house a few days later, notices the television and asks, "Hey, isn't that Jill's television?"
>
> I immediately confess. "Yes, it is," I say. "I'm really sorry. It was a mistake." Jill or any interested observer or even the police might ask, "What do you mean by 'mistake'? Did you mistakenly break into her house and mistakenly haul her huge flat-screen into your living room and set it up on the wall?"
>
> Well, so far, most of the press seems content to let a colleague—Fareed Zakaria . . . get off with exactly that explanation. ♦

Verily not Cosmo

The passing of the, it turns out, *not* immortal Helen Gurley Brown this month at the age of 90 seems a fitting occasion to welcome a newcomer to the ranks of women's magazines. Gurley Brown built *Cosmopolitan* into the hugely successful bible of "fun fearless females," whom it encouraged to dress sexy, strive at work, be careful with money, and slough off like last year's fashion fad any vestigial scruples about sleeping with married men.

Verily magazine aims to occupy another niche. Its founders are smart young women, some married, most single, who found they didn't recognize themselves in the pages of *Cosmo*, or the more recherché *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, or any women's magazine in between. What real woman does, after all, when models look like heroin addicts, clothes suggest a millionaire's budget and exhibitionist's soul, and advice is geared to people

whose only relationships appear to be ill-defined, neurotic entanglements with losers? *Verily*'s founders want their magazine, in the words of editor in chief Kara Eschbach, a veteran of New York's financial district, to "start new conversations" and help readers "discover the beauty in everyday life." They mean to tell women's stories that are "empowering, affirming, and true."

Take a look at the teaser issue, available free on the web. It has lovely fashion spreads, elegant design, and thought-provoking articles, like "The Women of 'Downton Abbey,'" "Love and Living Green," and "Between Two Worlds," by a Sudanese-American who rejected an arranged marriage. Join The Scrapbook in wishing this venture a success even Helen Gurley Brown—always a champion of hard-working women—would have applauded. And buy a couple of subscriptions for your favorite young friends. ♦

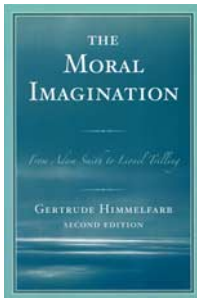
One Man's Trash . . .

There is a scene in the 1983 movie *Local Hero* where an over-pampered American executive visiting rural Scotland appalls an innkeeper by asking him: "Would you have an [electrical] adapter? I have to charge my briefcase." He would feel at home on the streets of several Democrat-run American cities today. Since the administration began funneling money to green energy projects in the 2009 stimulus, there has been a proliferation of solar-powered trash cans. That is good news for the Massachusetts-based BigBelly Solar company, which sells the units for $4,000 apiece. Philadelphia has more than a thousand of them. Chicago has hundreds. Boston has hundreds, too, and ordered 400 more in July. Boston's units must be special, because the price tag on them has reportedly risen to $6,000.

Regular urban trash cans only run about a hundred bucks. But to listen to BigBelly's executives and urban planners, cities just can't afford not to buy the things. They don't only hold the trash, they compact it, leading to . . . em . . . well, denser trash! "Philadelphia will reduce its collections from 17 to 5 times per week," ran one early promotional video, "cut its greenhouse gas emissions from collections by 80% . . . and save $13 million over the next 10 years." Oddly, The Scrapbook has seen no press releases announcing the layoffs of now-redundant garbage collectors, or the lowering of municipal tax rates in Philadelphia. ♦

Must Reading

The Scrapbook is a big fan of the distinguished historian Gertrude Himmelfarb. (Really, who isn't?) So we were very pleased to learn that Rowman & Littlefield has just published a new, expanded edition of her superb collection of essays *The Moral Imagination*. The subtitle of the 2006 edition was "From Edmund Burke to Lionel Trilling." The new subtitle is "From Adam Smith to Lionel Trilling," reflecting the fact that the new volume features three additional essays, on Smith, Lord Acton, and Alfred Marshall.



So now you get 15 dazzling studies of men ranging from John Stuart Mill to Michael Oakeshott, Charles Dickens to John Buchan, and Walter Bagehot to Winston Churchill. And, The Scrapbook hastens to add only partly for fear of being accused of complicity in the famed war on women, not just men—the essays on Jane Austen and George Eliot are two of our favorites. Buy the book and send copies to your friends—you'll thank us for the recommendation, and they'll thank you (and Himmelfarb) for the reading enjoyment, the historical education, and the intellectual stimulation. ♦

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BPA WORLDWIDE

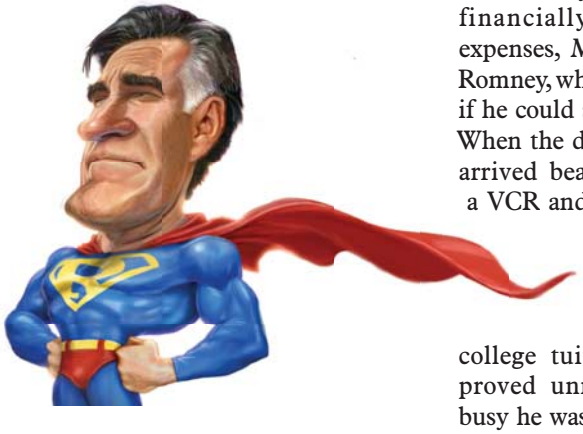
Learning to Like Mitt

Now that he's officially the Republican nominee for president and has an excellent chance of becoming the most powerful man in the world, I feel free to admit, in the full knowledge that nobody cares, that I never liked Mitt Romney. My distaste for him isn't merely personal or political but also petty and superficial. There's the breathless, Eddie Attaboy delivery, that half-smile of pitying condescension in debates or interviews when someone disagrees with him, the Ken doll mannerisms, his wanton use of the word "gosh"—the whole Romney package has been nails on a blackboard to me.

Evidently not many of my fellow Republicans agreed. I assumed I was missing something and resolved to dive into the Romney literature, which I soon discovered should post a disclaimer, like a motel pool: NO DIVING. By my count the literature includes one good book, *The Real Romney*, by two reporters from the *Boston Globe*. That's the same *Globe* with the leftward tilt to its axis and a legendary anti-Romney animus—which lends authority to their largely favorable portrait. The flattering details of Romney's life were so numerous and unavoidable that the authors, dammit, had no choice but to include them.

Romney once famously called himself "severely" conservative. Other adverbs fit better: culturally, personally, instinctively. He seems to have missed out on The Sixties altogether, and wanted to. As a freshman at Stanford he protested the protesters, appearing in the quad carrying signs of his own: SPEAK OUT, DON'T SIT IN! In 1968 the May riots stranded him in Paris. "The disorder appalled him," the authors write. He left Stanford for BYU, where long hair, rock bands, and peace symbols were banned. As a young go-getter he liked to give friends copies of *Think and Grow Rich*, by Napoleon Hill—a Stephen Covey for the Coolidge era, sodden with moral uplift. (Even his anachronisms are anachronistic.) "There was nothing jaded about him," a school friend tells the authors, "nothing skeptical, nothing ironic."

At his wedding, he declined when the photographer asked him to kiss the bride: "Not for cameras," he said. Since that day, Ann says, they haven't had an argument; friends believe her. And their kids—we've all seen their kids. The authors tick off a typical week for the young family. Sunday: "church, reflection, volunteer work, family dinners." Monday: "family night," when the family gathered for Bible stories and skits about animals. Tuesday was for family basketball games and cookouts. Friday was date night for Mitt and Ann. Saturday was for doing chores, and so on, in a pinwheel of wholesomeness that a post-60s ironist can only gape at, disbelieving. The Romneys present a picture of an American family that popular culture has been trying to undo since—well, since *An American Family*, the 1973 PBS documentary that exposed the typical household as a cauldron of resentment and infidelity.



GARY LOCKE

And now, here, 40 years later, it's as though it all never happened: a happy American family, led by a baby boomer with no sense of irony! Romney is the sophisticate's nightmare.

Almost every personal detail about Romney I found endearing. But my slowly softening opinion went instantly to goo when *The Real Romney* unfolded an account of his endless kindnesses—unbidden, unsung, and utterly gratuitous. "It seems that everyone who has known him has a tale of his altruism," the authors write. I was struck by the story of a Mormon family called (unfortunately) Nixon. In the 1990s a car wreck rendered two of their boys quadriplegics. Drained financially from extraordinary expenses, Mr. Nixon got a call from Romney, whom he barely knew, asking if he could stop by on Christmas Eve. When the day came, all the Romneys arrived bearing presents, including a VCR and a new sound system the Romney boys set up. Later Romney told Nixon that he could take care of the children's college tuition, which in the end proved unnecessary. "I knew how busy he was," Nixon told the authors. "He was actually teaching his boys, saying, 'This is what we do. We do this as a family.'"

Romney's oldest son Tagg once made the same point to the radio host Hugh Hewitt. "He was constantly doing things like that and never telling anyone about them," Tagg said. "He doesn't want to tell people about them, but he wanted us to see him. He would let the kids see it because he wanted it to rub off on us."

To this touching kindness and fatherly wisdom, *The Real Romney* adds other traits that will continue to grate—he's a know-it-all and likely to remain so, and his relationship to political principle has always been tenuous. Which makes him a, uh, politician. But now I suspect he's also something else, a creature rarely found in the highest reaches of American politics: a good guy.

Andrew Ferguson

the weekly Standard

What If Everyone's Wrong?

What if what everyone knows about presidential elections is wrong?

Everyone knows vice presidential candidates don't matter. Except that on August 11, the day Paul Ryan was announced, Mitt Romney trailed by almost 5 percentage points in the RealClearPolitics average of polls. Two weeks later Romney had pulled to within 1 point—his strongest rally of the general election season.

Everyone knows that when a president is running for reelection, the race is a judgment on the incumbent—and that if the country isn't in great shape, it's very much in the challenger's interest to keep the focus on the incumbent. Make it a referendum on the president. Don't let the incumbent make it a choice.

SCOTT BRUNDAGE

Except that with the Ryan pick, the race became much more of a choice and less of a referendum—and Romney has been doing better (see item one). Perhaps the marginal utility of repeating to voters for the 999th time that Obamanomics isn't working so well is low, while the marginal gain of convincing voters you do have a plan to solve the problems afflicting us can be considerable. The American public has twice in the past 80 years chosen to replace presidents running for reelection—in 1980 and 1992. The challengers, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, were unembarrassed to make their own positive, forward-looking case for election. Perhaps the American people recall that the Constitution makes no mention of a referendum. It specifies rather that the "President of the United States of America . . . shall, together with the Vice-President chosen for the same term, be elected as follows." We have an *election* for president that's a *choice* between alternatives. This reflects our commitment to governing ourselves by "reflection and choice" (*Federalist* No. 1), not by reaction and referendum.

Everyone knows "it's the economy, stupid." Except it's not simply the economy. The economic situation hasn't changed in Missouri during the past week, nor have the economic agendas of the two senatorial candidates. But it turns out the public cares about the character and intelligence of those presenting themselves for election. The public also cares about what those candidates say, and what they would do, about a lot of noneconomic issues. The public cares about our troops fighting in Afghanistan, and whether their sacrifices will be in vain or not. The public cares whether Iran gets nuclear weapons. The public cares about marriage and morals, and about freedom and opportunity. Voters are, especially in hard times, certainly concerned about their pocketbooks—but they're also concerned about the lessons they draw from their prayer books and their social studies books.

Everyone knows that the American people can't understand a debate about abstractions like the national debt, entitlements, Obamacare, and sound money. Except that 2010 was the biggest Republican victory in decades, and came as Tea Party-inspired GOP candidates focused on these issues even as most voters still blamed a Republican, George W. Bush, for the weak economy.

Everyone knows that social issues are death for Republicans. Except that traditional marriage wins in states where Republican presidential candidates lose, and except that surveys show that Americans would prefer that abortions be rare and not performed on children partially born or almost ready to be born, and except that Americans care that religious liberty be protected and not curbed.

Finally, everyone knows that what a campaign is about is finding a path to victory, and that means taking polls and focus groups and microtargeting *very* seriously.

Except that all of this planning and strategizing—while necessary—can easily become a fatal conceit on the part of campaign pros, which in turn produces a demoralizing civic spectacle even for their own potential supporters. What if a campaign focused first and foremost on laying out a serious governing agenda, on making clear what's at stake in the choice before us, and on explaining why its nominees should be entrusted with the responsibility to lead the nation?

Everyone knows that wouldn't work. Everyone knows the American people are stupid. Except what if they're not?

—William Kristol

The GOP's '76ers

'America is more than just a place," Paul Ryan told the Norfolk, Virginia, crowd during his first speech as Mitt Romney's running mate. "It's an idea. It's the only country founded on an idea. Our rights come from nature and God, not government." The audience roared at this mention of natural rights. Ryan uses similar language in almost every stump speech. He wins applause every time.

Mitt Romney's selection of Ryan was significant for many reasons, but here is one that hasn't been much commented on: It gives the Republican ticket a newfound and solid grounding in the language of the Declaration of Independence. When Ryan makes the Republican case, he does not limit his argument to economic efficiency, enhanced productivity, cost cutting, or *laissez-faire*. He has expanded the scope of debate to include foundational principles of government.

Is the federal government supposed to cater to our every need or desire, or did the Founders have another purpose in mind? Does government grant us social and economic rights in an ever-evolving process, or do we derive those rights from an unchanging human nature that precedes the institution of government? Does government have the responsibility to redistribute property in accordance with theoretical and arbitrary ideas of fairness, or should it rather concentrate on ensuring that property is earned fairly and in accordance with the rule of law?

These are the questions Ryan asks, and they cannot be dismissed. A recurrence to first principles connects Romney and Ryan to the Tea Party movement. It connects them to Ronald Reagan, who spoke often of "our natural, unalienable rights." It connects them to Calvin Coolidge, who declared that July 4, 1776, "has come to be regarded as one of the greatest days in history" not because the Declaration was "proposed to establish a new nation, but because it was proposed to establish a nation on new principles."

And a recurrence to those principles connects Romney and Ryan to the first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, who said the Founders "meant to set up a standard maxim for free society which should be familiar to all: constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people, of all colors, everywhere."

The task that faces the Republican party as it gathers in Tampa this week is to translate the principles of the Founding Fathers, Lincoln, Coolidge, Reagan, and the Tea Party into public policies equal to America's economic and fiscal crisis. How? One approach would be to frame our current challenges in terms our forefathers would have understood: independence and union.

The American Revolution was fought not only to achieve independence from the British Empire, but also to realize independence for self-governing citizens. But America and Americans have become increasingly dependent in recent years. We are dependent on the government for jobs, for benefits, for pensions, and for health care. We are dependent on overseas energy and on cheap goods from China. We are dependent on consumer debt issued by a consolidated financial system in which the largest, Too Big to Fail institutions and their agents rig the game in their favor (see Rubin, Robert). Our economy seems dependent on an erratic and unaccountable Federal Reserve.

Such dependencies threaten to spiral out of control. Budget deficits and public debt are financed by overseas powers whose interests are not our own. Health expenditures in particular threaten to crowd out other parts of the budget, such as the core government function of national defense, as well as the education, transportation, and research dollars the incumbent talks so much about. Increasing reliance on means-tested government transfers enervates the character of the people and hampers economic growth. Trade deficits send money to potential adversaries, who return the money in the form of asset bubbles. The dangers of big banks are obvious: Excessive leverage and madcap derivative trading not only increase systemic risk, but the political pull of mega-firms also promotes cronyism and inside dealing. As for the Fed, markets lurch back and forth as investors try desperately to decipher what Chairman Ben Bernanke will do next.

Here is what independence might look like: A responsible budget would tame the debt by addressing the unfunded liabilities in Social Security and Medicare through a combination of increasing the retirement age, tying benefits to longevity and inflation, and introducing premium support. Medicaid would be block-granted. Its maintenance-of-effort regulations would be liberalized. The health care system would be improved and costs lowered through competition, the freedom to purchase insurance across state lines, a tough approach to malpractice litigation, and an end to the tax penalty for individuals who do not obtain insurance through their employer. The emphasis of social policy would be on getting families off government assistance, not ensnaring more of them in a safety net that raises effective marginal tax rates.

Full exploitation of America's domestic carbon energy resources—oil, coal, and natural gas—would lessen our dependence on foreign oil and reduce the trade deficit. The sort of retaliatory tariffs against unfair Chinese trade practices and currency manipulation for which Irwin M. Stelzer

has argued in these pages would have a similar effect. A center-right consensus has emerged to deal with Wall Street: Link bank size to increased capital requirements so that financial institutions cannot grow fat on leveraged dollars. Go ahead and audit the Fed, but also increase the pressure on it to commit to a rules-based monetary policy rather than the sort of haphazard discretionary approach it has adopted since the financial crisis began.

So one Republican theme, and goal, could be independence for self-governing citizens. Another could be union.

The idea of union, the concept embodied in our unofficial national motto, "Out of many, one," can inform public policy. The current administration has damaged the ideal of union by slicing and dicing the American electorate into groups—minorities, the young, women, the One Percent and the Ninety-Nine Percent—and pitting each against the other. The appropriate response is to treat Americans not as members of a race or group or class, but as sovereign individuals possessing equal natural rights.

Prosperity and freedom do not benefit one group over another. They benefit us all. So a strong union would have a strong economy. It would also try to tax its citizens equally, which implies a simple and broad-based tax code in which the income derived from investments and the income derived from labor would be taxed at equal rates. Special-interest loopholes, especially those that benefit the wealthy, would be closed in order to lower tax rates for everyone. This was the goal of the 1986 Reagan tax reform, and should be the goal of any tax reform in a Romney-Ryan administration.

Viewing government through the prism of natural rights clarifies priorities. A strong union would promote color-blindness and equality under the law. A Romney-Ryan administration would affirm the right to life, and would eliminate the threats to religious liberty and conscience contained in Obamacare and in other progressive innovations. Assaults on personal property rights, whether they come from the environmental lobby or from the federal government, would be curtailed. The right to free labor—to work where one pleases, for what one pleases, and with or without joining a union—would be expanded at every opportunity. The goal of economic policy would be, as Romney has put it, more jobs for more take-home pay: increasing the worker's return on labor by maximizing demand for workers, by lowering their cost of living, and by protecting them from unfair wage competition.

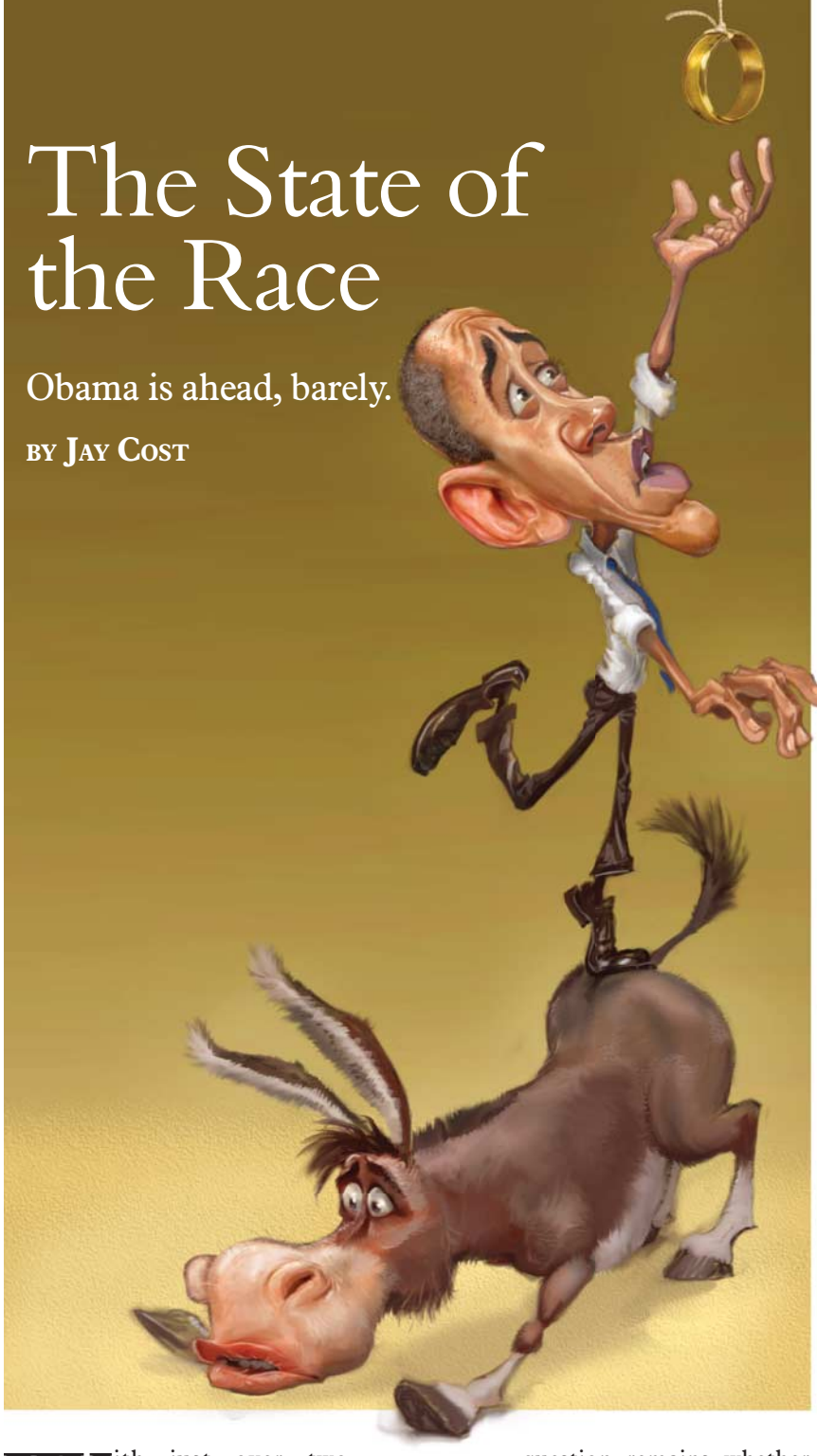
It's a tall order. The election is close. Cynicism and pessimism and declinism are everywhere in the land. But surely the American people will rally to a Romney-Ryan ticket—and will support a Romney-Ryan administration—if it follows a path laid out by the greatest guides of all: Abraham Lincoln, and the American Founders, and the spirit of 1776.

—Matthew Continetti

The State of the Race

Obama is ahead, barely.

BY JAY COST



With just over two months until Election Day, Barack Obama holds a narrow lead over Mitt Romney in the race for the presidency. The lead is shallow, however, and a careful look at the landscape reveals significant weaknesses for the president. The key question remains whether Romney can capitalize on them.

President Obama has enjoyed a lead over Romney in the RealClearPolitics average of national polls every day since October 2011. Yet the president is bedeviled by problems. For one thing, he remains locked at around 47 percent support; for the last quarter-century, this has been roughly the floor for Democratic presidential candidates, suggesting that all the president has done to date is consolidate the Democratic base.

Beyond that, Obama faces substantial roadblocks. His job approval rating has hovered between 47 and 48 percent for months. Given that incumbent presidents rarely win voters who disapprove of their performance in office, this is a red flag for the Democrats. Worse, support for the president among the critical bloc—independents—is anemic at best, clocking in at just 41 percent in the latest Gallup poll. Compounding the White House's difficulties, Obama's job approval on the top issues of the campaign is much lower than his overall approval rating; his marks on the economy and the deficit are quite weak, and a majority of the country still opposes Obamacare.

Yet the president enjoys a lead, even with all of these problems. What accounts for this? Part of the explanation is that summer polls usually survey registered voters, which tends to include more Democrats than actually show up to vote on Election Day. In the Rasmussen daily tracking poll of likely voters, Romney has been mostly in the lead since May.

Still, Obama's narrow lead means that the GOP cannot rest on its oars this cycle. Moving forward, Romney still needs to accomplish two tasks. One will be easy, the other less so.

The easy job is to consolidate the base Republican vote. In presidential elections in the last quarter-century, that has been about 46 percent of the public (controlling for third-party challenges). Romney's numbers have consistently fallen below 45 percent, meaning that he must still pull in the last stragglers of the Republican coalition. The Republican National Convention, combined with the GOP's forthcoming advertising onslaught, should accomplish this task. It is a sure bet that Republican voters will come out strongly for the GOP ticket this year, given their antipathy toward the president.

More difficult is convincing the all-important independents that Romney will make a better president than Obama. There is little the Democrats can do about the president's weak job

GARY LOCKE

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approval with this bloc. After all, independents have had three and a half years to observe the president and formulate an opinion. Instead, the left has taken to demagoguing Mitt Romney in the hopes of scaring the middle of the country away from the Republican party. This strategy has its origins in LBJ's vicious "frontlash" campaign against Barry Goldwater in 1964; Johnson knew that he was bound to face a backlash over the Great Society and civil rights, so he sought effectively to disqualify Goldwater among middle-class moderates by casting the Arizona conservative as a threat to humanity.

This explains why Team Obama has dogged Romney so relentlessly on his tenure at Bain Capital. The hope is to define the GOP nominee as a heartless plutocrat who will make the rich richer and the poor poorer. This is, of course, an argument Democrats typically employ, going all the way back to 1896, but it forms the centerpiece of the Obama attack this cycle.

It is incumbent upon Romney to counter this—and not just by pointing out falsehoods and exaggerations in the Obama message. Instead, Romney will have to aggressively project a positive message over the next few months. That does not mean he has to distribute white papers to the mailboxes of all undecided voters. But he does have to combine a sunny optimism that America's best days are ahead with enough specifics to leave the impression that he actually knows how to execute the turnaround the nation so desperately needs.

This task is at least as important as attacking the president's record, arguably more so. After all, most voters have a well-formed opinion of the president. Further attacks on Obama need not convince people that he has done a bad job—they already think so—but must keep that opinion in the forefront of voters' minds. After a certain point, attacks will not enhance the GOP argument; that's where the positive message must begin.

The good news for conservatives is that Romney seems to understand this. His op-ed in Friday's *Wall Street Journal* focuses on his tenure at Bain, but with a twist. Romney explains in detail what his tenure at Bain taught him about turning around troubled institutions. This is a perfect setup for a fall campaign that connects his biography to the challenges now facing our troubled country.

His vice presidential selection also shows that he understands the need to make a positive case. The "play it safe" strategy called for a vice presidential nominee who delivered votes in a big swing state, like Ohio or Florida. By going with Paul Ryan, Romney has signaled that he sees developing a message for change as his most important job. Ryan has become, without doubt, the intellectual leader of his party. Nobody in America has thought more about what the GOP should do when it returns to power, and by selecting Ryan, the former Massachusetts governor conveys that he will emphasize solutions in the fall campaign.

Many conservatives have been frustrated that Team Romney has not yet launched an aggressive counterattack to the Obama message. After all, the president has spent tens of millions of dollars on negative advertising: Shouldn't the GOP campaign have engaged?

The answer to that question lies in the old military maxim: Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes. Obama's ad blitz over the summer seems largely to have been wasted. Voters were paying little attention, and the polls have actually tightened. Sure, Romney's favorable ratings remain less than stellar; the most recent RealClearPolitics average of polls finds 45.5 percent of respondents viewing him favorably, 45 percent unfavorably. Nevertheless, swing voters likely make up most of the 10 percent who have not yet formed an opinion. The time to get them thinking positively about the GOP ticket begins at the convention. Team Romney may have been right to hold its fire through the summer.

While it is difficult to predict the outcome of a presidential election so far from the big day, the following nevertheless seems like a fair take:

Obama's numbers remain 3 to 4 points short of a nationwide majority, and so far there is precious little evidence that the president can turn that around. This gives the Republicans an opening, but they will have to seize the initiative. Rather than waiting for victory to fall into his lap, Mitt Romney will have to pursue it aggressively. Fortunately, the choice of Ryan suggests that the GOP nominee understands this. ♦

Dirty Harry

Why are Republicans giving Reid a pass?

BY FRED BARNES

Democrat Tammy Baldwin is running for the Senate in Wisconsin, but a TV ad criticizing her opens with a smiling House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi on the screen. Democrat Joe Donnelly is his party's Senate candidate in Indiana. An ad targeting him quotes Donnelly as saying "he's not worried about Nancy Pelosi's politics being tied to his campaign." But he should be. "You can run for the Senate, but you can't run from your record," the ad says. In this case, it's his record of having voted twice for Pelosi as House speaker.

Shelley Berkley of Nevada is also a Democrat running for the Senate this year. A television ad zinging her asks this question: "Whose corner is Shelley Berkley in? She sided with Nancy Pelosi to ram through government-mandated health care, which hurt small businesses."

The tactic of connecting House Democrats to Pelosi was a staple of Republican campaigns in the 2010 GOP landslide. Now, with Baldwin, Donnelly, and Berkley—House members all—seeking Senate seats, Pelosi is still being invoked. "She's the gift that keeps on giving," a Republican strategist says.

But what about Democrat Harry Reid, the Senate majority leader with the egregious record of having blocked the Senate from drafting a budget for the past three years (1,213 days as of last week)? So long as Democrats hold the Senate, and perhaps even if they lose control, Democrats elected in November are likely to be called upon to vote for Reid as their leader. Yet he's not an issue, nor was he in earlier elections.

That Pelosi is toxic and Reid is not—this is one of the peculiarities of politics. They're both aggressively partisan, stridently liberal, heavy-handed, unpopular nationally, and given to committing gaffes. Yet Republicans have exploited Pelosi in campaigns with great success, while ignoring Reid.

There are noteworthy reasons for this. In focus groups conducted by Republicans, swing voters respond negatively to any mention of Pelosi. It's clear she's a drag on Democrats. But when Reid is raised, the reaction is weak.

"Swing voters don't know who he is," a Republican operative says. "He does not move people. But swing voters just can't stand her."

In truth, Reid is barely a national figure at all. "He's not as high profile as Pelosi or as omnipresent," says Karl Rove, the Republican strategist. And he doesn't "spend a lot of time in states that aren't dark blue," a GOP aide says.

Nor do the mainstream media pay much attention to Reid. His gaffes get fleeting coverage, most recently his claim of a secret source who told him that Mitt Romney hadn't paid any federal income taxes for 10 years.

But Reid's abuses as Senate leader are accepted by the press as a given, and thus barely mentioned. He's lucky to be a Democrat. A Republican majority leader would face harsh treatment by the press if he refused to allow the Senate to produce a federal budget, as required by law. With Reid, the federal government has had to limp along with a series of omnibus bills and stopgap spending measures known as continuing resolutions.

Reid has taken this unprecedented step to protect Senate Democrats from being attacked over dicey provisions in a Democratic budget. When Senate Budget Committee chairman Kent Conrad began developing a budget this year, Reid forced him to stop.

Democratic officials appear uncomfortable when asked about Reid's action. They've tried to blame Republican opposition, even though Democrats control the Senate, 53-47.

"You can't pass a budget in the Senate of the United States without 60 votes," Jacob Lew, the White House chief of staff, insisted in a TV interview. "Unless Republicans are willing to work with Democrats in the Senate, Harry Reid is not going to be able to get a budget passed."

This isn't true. It takes only a simple majority of votes cast—51 if the full Senate is present—to pass a budget. Filibusters, by which 41 senators can block a measure, are not permitted on budget votes.

David Axelrod, President Obama's political strategist, acknowledged the simple-majority requirement in an interview with Bret Baier of Fox News—but still blamed Republicans. "We've got deep divisions in the Congress between the House and the Senate," Axelrod said. "That's complicated our ability to get things done." He didn't explain how House Republicans could prevent Senate Democrats from passing a budget.

Nor could White House press secretary Jay Carney. Instead, he noted that Paul Ryan, the House Budget Committee chairman, and two other

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House Republicans on the Simpson-Bowles commission had voted against its budget recommendation. "The only way in modern-day Washington to achieve a significant budget compromise is when both parties are willing to work together," he told Fox News.

Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who heads the Democratic National Committee, declared "it's simply not true" that Reid had refused to send a Senate budget to the floor for a vote.

Barring a budget is but one of Reid's breaches of normal Senate practice. He has cut back substantially on debate, once regarded as the greatest virtue of the Senate, and has done so with impunity. Media coverage has been almost nonexistent.

Reid has exploited a practice called "filling the tree" to limit sharply the number of Republican amendments to legislation, and thus curtail debate and floor votes. He's triggered the rarely used procedure called the "nuclear option" to change Senate rules by a simple majority, further curbing Republican amendments on issues Democrats want to avoid. And he's refused to bring up the defense authorization bill and appropriations bills.

Republican senators have complained in vain. "Do my colleagues not feel a responsibility to tell the American people what their financial plan for the future of America is?" Jeff Sessions, the ranking Republican on the budget committee, asked on the Senate floor recently.

On August 2, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said Reid "has set a historic pace for blocking amendments. No amendments in committee, no amendments on the floor, take it or leave it. That's the story of the Senate under the current leadership."

Reid is still basking in his reelection in Nevada in 2010. His Republican opponent was pathetically inept. But the press congratulated Reid for running a brilliant campaign. *Esquire* magazine devoted 5,000 words to an adoring article on Reid. It was written by the coauthor of Reid's 2008 book, *The Good Fight*. ♦

Citizen Koch Goes to Tampa

Meet the left's public enemy number one.

BY MICHAEL BARONE

Not even the most experienced reporter is likely to recognize him as he takes his seat in the New York delegation or struggles to make his way through the jostling crowds on the floor of the Republican National Convention this week in Tampa. David Koch (the name is pronounced like the soft drink) is likely to stand out only because he's taller (6′5″) than most people. But he's become a key figure in liberal Democrats' demonology, as one of the two Koch brothers, David and Charles, who are supposedly using their vast wealth to make Republican politicians jump like marionettes. Earlier this month, for example, Americans for Prosperity, which the brothers founded many years ago, launched a $25 million advertising campaign against Barack Obama.

David Koch

But most of that money comes from other sources, and David Koch, interviewed in his Manhattan corner office, becomes more animated when the talk turns to things other than politics. Like membrane filtration. Or cancer research. Or a new façade for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. On Koch's list of things he spends time on, business and family come first, he says, followed by philanthropy ranging from medical research to the American Ballet Theatre to the dinosaur exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History. "I grew up falling in love with dinosaurs," he says. Politics comes in somewhere around fifth.

Business, of course, means Koch Industries, of which Manhattan-based David, 72, is executive vice president and his older brother Charles, 76, operating out of headquarters in Wichita, Kansas, is chairman and CEO. Their father, Fred Koch, majored in chemical engineering at MIT in the 1920s and invented a superior method for converting heavy oil to lighter elements. Oil refineries were the original Koch Industries business; after Fred's death in 1967, Charles and David, both also chemical engineering majors at MIT, expanded the business to oil pipelines, fertilizer, financial trading, artificial fibers, and lumber. *Forbes* says Koch Industries is the nation's second-largest privately held firm (behind Cargill Inc., which offers agricultural, financial, and industrial products and services), with annual revenues over $100 billion. David says it is "very profitable." *Forbes* pegs David's and Charles's net worth at $25 billion each. Bloomberg estimates that each is worth $36.4 billion.

The Koch brothers' wealth thus seems not to come from reaping the profits of a longstanding monopoly but owes much to technological advances. Most of the businesses they are in are highly competitive and subject to disruption by technological innovation.

NATE BEELER / WASHINGTON EXAMINER

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Take membrane filtration, about which David Koch speaks with boyish enthusiasm. It means purifying liquids with films or filters. "It's a $2 billion a year business," Koch says. "We have the best technology of any membrane company, competitive with Siemens and General Electric, based on research in Boston, started by professors at MIT." Koch says he subscribes to "all the technical magazines" and reads them, searching for new ideas that have "the biggest potential" for profit. Koch lights up when he talks about how membrane filtration means "we can purify water, take the salt out, purify human sewage." He's upbeat about the potential for saving lives and advancing public health—and about the profit potential in huge markets like India and China.

Koch says he takes a similar approach to cancer research. In 1992 he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and he has had radiation treatment, surgery, hormone treatment, and most recently oral treatment in a clinical trial. He has donated $40 million for cancer research to Memorial Sloan-Kettering, $30 million to the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, $35 million to Johns Hopkins, and $120 million to create the David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at MIT. The idea is to generate cooperation between engineers and biological scientists, with life scientists defining problems and engineers trying to find solutions, such as using nanoparticles to target chemical toxins directly at cancer cells. MIT researchers say Koch has stayed closely involved with their research, and is willing to invest in commercial offshoots.

Koch grins as he describes his cancer research philanthropy, never more than when he shows a picture of the "brilliantly well-designed" building housing his institute at MIT. If he seems to have a zest for engineering problems, he also has an aesthetic impulse. He's proud of having hired David Childs—whom he remembers as "a quiet guy" a year behind him at Deerfield Academy and now considers "America's greatest architect"—to design buildings he has funded. He describes with gusto how he convinced his fellow members of the Metropolitan board that the venerable museum needed a friendlier façade, with fountains flanking the entrance and spectacular lighting—and how he agreed to pay for it all himself.

This is not the milieu in which the Koch brothers grew up. Fred Koch raised his sons on a farm near Wichita, with horses, cows, and pigs. "When I got to be 10 he put me to work," David recalls. He worked summers as a field hand there or, during one memorably hot summer, near Durant, Oklahoma. From public school in Kansas he was sent to Deerfield in Massachusetts; though he was "unmercifully teased" as a hayseed, he has since made the largest gift ever to the elite boarding school (upwards of $50 million for an 80,000-square-foot facility for the study of science, math, and technology). At MIT, he found that the veneer of prep school sophistication gets you only so far when you major in chemical engineering. After college he worked in Cambridge and New York designing petrochemical plants and lived on an annual salary of $8,000. He joined Koch Industries in 1970, after his father's death, but stayed in New York, while Charles ran the firm in Kansas.

It was Charles, he recalls, who prompted him to seek the Libertarian party nomination for vice president in 1980. Their father had worked in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s, selling his refining process, and had come to detest the Communist regime and to fear it would take over Europe and the United States. David and Charles shared his support of free enterprise and opposition to big government (though not his support of the radical John Birch Society). Koch admits that he was nominated for VP because candidates could spend unlimited amounts—"we spent $3 million, I put in $2 million"—and notes that he campaigned for 14 months in 27 states. But the Libertarian ticket got only 1 percent of the popular vote, and later in the 1980s, when he posed for a photo with George H.W. Bush, Bush was surprised to learn that Koch had run against him for vice president.

"The Libertarian party got a little too radical for us," Koch says. Instead, he and Charles started creating and funding institutions to further their ideas. These include the Cato Institute, where they recently settled a dispute over control with longtime president Edward Crane, and Citizens for a Sound Economy, later renamed Americans for Prosperity. This was the beginning of "the Kochtopus," a term David uses himself, and of the twice-a-year Koch Brothers conferences, where attendees hear progress reports on their attempts to promote their ideas through political activity, public advocacy, think tanks, and academic programs. The conferences have grown from a dozen people a decade ago to "an amazing number of people" who want to attend now. But "you'll never find a senior executive of a publicly held company. They're afraid the government is going to punish them" if they go.

The Kochs don't reveal how much money they give to these organizations, but David insists that Americans for Prosperity and its 34 state chapters have involved some 2 million activists, many of them driven by Tea Party-type opposition to the big government policies of the Obama administration. AFP says it has 90,000 contributors, and Koch says the amount he and his brother contribute is "very small, around 10 percent." This is in line with my own observation, having spoken to two AFP chapters and at two Koch Brothers conferences, that institutions the Kochs gave birth to and incubated have attracted mass followings. The brothers have also attracted mass opposition, from liberal commentators and politicians and from the president of the United States. "It does not feel good," Koch says. "He has the ability to influence bad people to go after the people he attacks." There have been multiple death threats, and Koch and his family have security guards. When he held a fundraiser for Mitt Romney at his Southampton beachfront house, Occupy movement people came up from the beach and did "all the vulgar things."

He sounds offended, but the sunny mood soon returns. David Koch did not marry until he was 56. He and his

wife Julia, now 50, have three children aged 6 to 14. He has been battling cancer successfully for 20 years, but he is also thinking about what he will some day leave behind. "I like to engage where my part makes a difference," he says, speaking of those dinosaur halls. "I have a point of view. When I pass on, I want people to say he did a lot of good things, he made a real difference, he saved a lot of lives in cancer research." Next to that, being a delegate to the Republican National Convention—and getting jostled by the packed crowd on the floor—is not such a big deal. ♦

Generation Ryan

The first post-boomer nominee.

BY BYRON YORK

Mitt Romney's vice presidential short-list came down to a choice between a baby boomer, Rob Portman (born 1955), and a Gen Xer, Paul Ryan (born 1970). Romney's decision to pick Ryan—the first post-boomer ever to run on a national ticket—was widely described as bold, in large part for highlighting entitlement reform in a campaign that had been mainly about jobs. But it was also a generational statement. If the Republican team wins the White House, a non-boomer's ascendancy could prove the key to solving the most daunting problem of the boomers' legacy: the crippling burden their retirement will put on the nation's finances.

The first boomer turned 65 in 2011, and another 10,000 boomers will reach retirement age every day until 2030, according to the Pew Research Center. By then, Pew writes, "fully 18 percent of the nation's population will be at least that age. . . . Today, just 13 percent of Americans are ages 65 and older." At current rates of expenditure, Social Security and Medicare—especially Medicare—will someday eat the entire federal budget.

Described in a 2003 WEEKLY STANDARD profile as "young but devoid of Gen-X cynicism," Ryan has made a simple appeal to his own generation: Unless something changes, there will be nothing left for us. "If you're under 55, those of us in my X generation and everybody else, we know we're not getting the program as it's currently structured," Ryan said at a House Budget Committee hearing on Medicare and other entitlements in March 2010. "So why don't we come up with an idea to save the program, to make it sustainable, to give us a benefit, my generation, that's something we know we can count on?"

Fans of the GOP ticket in Virginia

Now Ryan and Romney are advocating reform in purely generational terms. If you're 55 or older, they promise, your Medicare coverage will never be affected as long as you live. If you're 54 or younger, you'll have the option of joining another plan in which you will receive premium support—Ryan doesn't really have a problem calling it a voucher, except that Democrats have made that a bad word over the years—that will pay for most, if not all, of your medical coverage. That change alone, Ryan argues, will mean an enormous reduction in future deficits.

Choosing Ryan—farther from retirement than anyone else on either ticket—instantly elevated Medicare to a top place in the presidential campaign. In a mid-August Quinnipiac University-*New York Times*-CBS News poll of swing states, Medicare ranked ahead of foreign policy, the deficit, and housing as a top concern of voters in the must-win states of Ohio and Florida. That is, at least in part, the result of Romney's decision to choose Ryan.

So far though, Ryan seems to have a reverse generational appeal. In Florida, for example, voters 65 and older—the ones who are on Medicare now—are accepting the assurance that their benefits won't be touched and are strongly supporting Romney-Ryan. Among voters who are a little younger—50 to 64—the race is very close. And among voters under 50, Obama and Biden have a big lead.

In other words, the people who would not be affected by the Romney-Ryan Medicare plan support Romney-Ryan. The people who might be affected are on the fence. And the people who would definitely be affected support Obama-Biden—even though they stand to lose the most if nothing is done to stop runaway entitlement spending.

Of course, there are all kinds of other factors at work in the polls. And even among voters who support Romney-Ryan, it's hard to sort out what support is attributable to Romney and what to Ryan. But the fact is, the Republican ticket in 2012, with its vigorous young vice presidential candidate, strongly appeals, as it has in years past, to older voters. Changing the minds of younger voters—not 20-somethings, but those approaching

NEWSCOM

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middle age—is a hugely important job for the Republican candidates.

When Romney selected Ryan, some observers suggested that, in addition to all the other considerations, Ryan simply looked to Romney like one of the bright young men he used to hire at Bain Capital. Ryan apparently has that effect on other people Romney's age. It's his contemporaries who need more convincing.

The vice presidential debate, set for October 11 in Danville, Kentucky, will be, among other things, a generational showdown. There is a 28-year age gap between Ryan and Joe Biden, born in 1942 (a gap even larger than the 22 years that separated Biden and Sarah Palin, born in 1964). Looking back a few years for comparison, Dick Cheney, born in 1941, and John Edwards, born in 1953, could have been brothers with a 12-year age difference. The Ryan-Biden gap will be obvious to anyone who watches.

In Danville, both the young candidate and the old candidate will try to convince voters 55 and older that they don't have anything to worry about personally and voters 54 and younger that they do. But in the end, it's possible that the generational differences over entitlements won't really be resolved until the older generation goes away.

In early April 2011, as Ryan prepared to unveil his first budget proposal, which included the Medicare premium support plan, he met with a small group of journalists at a Washington restaurant. He laid out the plan in a sharp, succinct presentation, then took questions. After a lot of discussion, a reporter asked when the plan would balance the federal budget. Ryan said that would take many years, until the late 2030s. The reporter then wondered whether the Ryan plan would, in essence, balance the budget only after a large number of the baby boomers were dead. Ryan would never say such a thing, but he didn't disagree.

Mitt Romney didn't choose Paul Ryan simply because of his age. But the first Gen Xer on a presidential ticket is raising generational issues that are likely to be with us as long as the boomers are on the scene. ♦

Reince Rules

It's a high-stakes election for the GOP chairman. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Reince Priebus, left, with Paul Ryan, Mitt Romney, and Scott Walker

Green Bay, Wisc.

It's a good time to be Reince Priebus. Beyond the obvious—that he's from Wisconsin and the Green Bay Packers are once again a favorite to win the Super Bowl—the chairman of the Republican National Committee will spend much of his party's convention week in Tampa collecting attaboys for his recent success: the dramatic turnaround of the RNC, the successful defense of Scott Walker's recall challenge, the record-breaking pace of GOP fundraising, and the selection of Paul Ryan, a longtime friend and political ally, as Mitt Romney's running mate.

The 40-year-old has already gotten credit for the changes at the RNC and his role in helping to ensure Scott Walker remained Wisconsin's governor. But even if Priebus had the least direct influence on the last of these—Paul Ryan's joining the GOP ticket—it might well best represent the kind of change he has brought to his party.

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Even through their success in the 2010 midterm elections, party leaders were wary of embracing entitlement reform. This is no longer true. Though the legion of strategists, pollsters, mail vendors, and media consultants who run GOP campaigns counseled caution, Priebus urged his party to figure out how to run and win on the issues championed by his friend. At the debate before RNC members shortly before they elected him, Priebus was asked what it means to be a Republican and what the party should focus on. His response was telling: "We're about to walk off a fiscal cliff and I think the RNC chairman ought to take a chance and promote that conservative platform every chance they get to do it."

Despite historic Republican gains in the 2010 midterm elections, the RNC was a broken institution when Priebus took it over in mid-January 2011. The staff was demoralized. Bills were unpaid. Big donors were fuming.

One year earlier, I sat across the table from a former Republican

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party chairman who explained in great detail that some of the GOP's top contributors had never heard from Michael Steele, then the party chairman. His claim wasn't that they hadn't been coddled in the way that they'd been accustomed to, but that these contributors, including individuals who had previously made six-figure donations to the party, had not been contacted at all. Steele hated to make those calls.

Priebus doesn't. He spends most of his time on the telephone with donors—he guesses 70 percent. At the committee meetings before the election that elevated him to chairman, Priebus sold himself as someone willing to do the unglamorous spadework required to rebuild the party. In a speech before he was elected, Priebus spoke of the importance of money. "The next chairman is going to be sitting in that office for five or six hours a day running through major donors lists," he said. "That is going to be the big challenge—whether it be technology, whether it be get-out-the-vote, whether it be a 50-state strategy—it will all come down to money."

It's the blocking and tackling of modern American politics—it's not glamorous but it needs to be done. The first part of Priebus's two-step pitch is simple: He explains what's at stake in the 2012 election. The second part is more complicated: He has to convince would-be donors that they should give their money to the RNC rather than to the growing number of outside groups involved in campaigns. The RNC, he explains, is the only entity that can coordinate with the presidential campaign, which ensures a consistent message.

When Priebus took over, there was talk, perhaps exaggerated, that the committee would not be able to make payroll, and the direct mail program was so overused that its benefits barely outweighed its costs. The RNC is now swimming in cash and seems to break records with each new campaign finance report. Some of this is happening because of the intense feelings people have about Barack Obama. But those feelings existed before Priebus took over and did not automatically translate into dollars.

The RNC has outraised the DNC every month in total individual contributions since March 2011—Priebus's second full month in charge. In January 2011, the RNC had $2.1 million cash on hand and debt of $21.4 million. The DNC, by contrast, had $9.1 million cash on hand and was $16.8 million in debt. By July 2012, those numbers had changed dramatically. The RNC had $88.7 million in cash on hand and debt of $9.9 million; the DNC had cash on hand of $15.4 million and debt of $4.5 million. That's a cash-on-hand advantage of some $73 million.

Regardless of what happens in November, Priebus will get credit for turning the RNC around. The more interesting part of his legacy is still an unknown. What will come of the Republican party's embrace of entitlement reform and its elevation of Paul Ryan, the man who embodies it?

Priebus was officially neutral as Mitt Romney decided on his running mate. But since his first day as chairman Priebus has taken every opportunity to showcase Ryan and mainstream his policy arguments among skeptical political pros. The two men have known each other well for some 15 years. Priebus got his start in grassroots Republican party leadership as chairman in Wisconsin's First District—the seat Ryan has held since 1998. (Priebus has been friends with Ryan's chief of staff and closest adviser, Andy Speth, even longer—dating back to their undergraduate days at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.) After Ryan decided against a presidential bid, the RNC chairman tapped Ryan as head of the RNC's Presidential Trust, and the two men traveled the country raising $21 million for the party this spring.

Priebus's embrace of Ryan goes beyond their shared background and friends. Priebus is a conservative who has long had an interest in policy. He was one of the first state party chairmen to embrace the Tea Party and seek to integrate its efforts into those of the party. In part, he recognized early what a political force it could be, but, as important, he agreed with the arguments Tea Partiers were making.

Priebus's role in the election of Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin best illustrates his approach to these issues. Johnson met with Priebus in February 2010, as he considered jumping into an already-crowded race against Senator Russ Feingold. The two men chatted, and Priebus put Johnson in touch with the well-regarded team of strategists at On Message, Inc.—a Republican firm.

But Johnson says his most valuable help came after that. "We talked on a regular basis at 7:30 in the morning to discuss issues," Johnson recalls. Johnson knew what he believed, of course, and knew why he wanted to run, but Priebus could help him shape his message. "He'd say: 'Here's the current thinking among conservatives on this issue.' He helped me frame what I wanted to say, and he knew the issues cold." Johnson credits him jokingly, "There's just no way I could have done this without him. So I put a lot of the blame on him."

Priebus's role as the enabler of conservative reformers is a positive. But with some grumbling from (anonymous) Republican professionals about the challenges of selling the Ryan budget to voters, it's a safe bet that Priebus will be blamed for his advocacy of Ryan if Mitt Romney loses in November. He doesn't seem terribly concerned.

"If you lose, there are a million things to point to to explain the loss. They can tell you 'I told you so' on lots of things—you shouldn't have had the convention in Florida, you should have gone to North Carolina."

Priebus has little patience for those anonymous Republicans who think their party should have again avoided any discussion of serious entitlement reform. "We don't have any more time to have this conversation. If you think we can wait four or eight years, you're not living in reality."

His job requires him to focus on November, but the urgency of the problems makes him look beyond that. "We not only have to win, but we need to win with a mandate to change the economy and the unsustainable path of the country." ♦

Who's the Extremist?

Obama's radical position on social issues.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Long before Missouri Republican Senate candidate Todd Akin flapped his gums about the female body's magical ability to prevent pregnancy in the case of "legitimate rape," Democrats were conducting an aggressive campaign to cast Mitt Romney as an extremist on social issues.

First, the Obama campaign claimed in the spring that Romney was waging a "war on women" by opposing Obamacare's contraception and abortifacient mandate. Romney would "deny women access to birth control," the Obama campaign claimed, as if an employer's failure to provide a free lunch would amount to "denying workers access to food."

In July, the Obama campaign launched a television ad claiming that "Romney backed a law that outlaws all abortion, even in cases of rape and incest." The ad was blatantly false. Since his pro-life conversion, Romney's official position has always been that there should be exceptions in cases of rape, incest, and when the mother's life is endangered. Even PolitiFact, the left-leaning "fact checking" website, declared the Obama ad was a "Pants on Fire" lie.

But that hasn't stopped the Obama campaign from repeating this lie in TV ads and direct mail to voters. When Paul Ryan was announced as Romney's vice presidential pick, Democratic operatives attacked and distorted Ryan's position on abortion almost as much as they attacked and distorted his plan to reform Medicare. As one liberal columnist at the *Washington Post* observed last week, Obama has "emerged as the most vocal culture warrior of the election."

The odd thing about the 2012 culture war is how one-sided it has been. When the Obama campaign has falsely accused Romney of trying to "deny women access" to contraception, the Romney campaign has not responded by going on offense against Obama's extreme record—which includes support for taxpayer-funded abortion-on-demand and third-trimester abortions. The Romney campaign has responded with silence in hopes that their refusal to engage will keep the election focused on the economy.

Affirming late-term abortion rights in 2003

"Every moment between now and November should be spent talking about the No. 1 issue for women and men, and that's the economy," Romney campaign adviser and former Massachusetts lieutenant governor Kerry Healey said in an interview with the *New York Times* last week. "Anything that distracts from that is not what we should be talking about."

The problem is the Romney campaign doesn't get to decide that the economy is the only issue in the race. As last week's frenzied guilt-by-association campaign to link Todd Akin to Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan has shown, the Obama campaign and the press get a say, too.

If Mitt Romney or Paul Ryan gets asked a difficult question about Medicare or foreign policy, he can't respond by pointing out that the unemployment rate is 8.3 percent. He has to discuss the issue at hand. And to their credit, Romney and Ryan were quite effective at going on the offensive against Obama's Medicare rationing and cuts. Why not go on the offensive against Obama's radical position on social issues too?

A Quinnipiac poll asked voters in December 2009: "Do you support or oppose using public funds to pay for abortions under a health care reform bill?" Seventy-two percent of voters opposed public funding of abortion and 23 percent supported it. The November election will determine whether abortion-funding under Obamacare—the issue that nearly took down the bill in an overwhelmingly Democratic Congress—actually takes effect.

Obama's support of a legal regime that permits late-term abortion-on-demand is also deeply unpopular. According to the most recent Gallup poll, 86 percent of Americans think third-trimester abortions should be illegal. Obama's with the 14 percent.

So extreme is Obama's commitment to abortion-on-demand that as an Illinois state senator he opposed measures to protect infants who had been born alive during botched late-term abortions. The president is so dedicated to "women's rights" that this summer he opposed a ban on gender-selective abortions—the abortion of girls because they are girls. During a speech to students at Sichuan University in 2011, Vice President Joe Biden condoned China's brutal one-child policy, which includes forced abortions. "Your policy has been one which I fully understand—I'm not second-guessing—of one child per family," Biden said, before arguing that the policy was making the country demographically unstable. The Obama administration has sent U.S. tax dollars to support "family planning" initiatives in China and elsewhere.

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The press would much rather focus on the issue of banning abortion in the case of rape—an issue on which three-quarters of the electorate is pro-choice—than on any of the abortion questions that would hurt the president. But there's a big difference between banning abortion in the case of rape, a policy Romney does not support and that has no chance of becoming law, and permitting late-term and taxpayer-funded abortions—existing laws that President Obama actively supports.

The Romney campaign's silence on abortion stands in contrast to successful Republican presidential campaigns of the past. Although the Iraq war and the economy were front-and-center in 2004, John Kerry ran TV ads warning that another Bush term would lead to the end of *Roe* v. *Wade*, and the Bush campaign hit Kerry with ads about the Massachusetts senator's support for partial-birth abortion. According to the exit poll, 22 percent of voters in 2004 cited "moral values" as their most important issue, and these voters broke 80 percent to 18 percent in Bush's favor. Those voters haven't disappeared in eight short years.

A significant number of working-class voters are leery of big business and changes to Medicare, but they might vote for Romney because of social issues. The Pew Research Center calls these socially conservative, economically liberal voters "disaffecteds." They supported John McCain over Barack Obama by a 16-point margin in 2008—and that margin swelled to a 38-point advantage for Republicans over Democrats in 2010, helping to account for the GOP's landslide that year.

Romney also needs to improve his margin among Latino voters in states like Colorado, and Latinos are more socially conservative than the electorate at large. Even many pro-choice suburban women, the primary population the Romney campaign seems to think of when it imagines "swing voters," are not supportive of Obama's positions on social issues. But don't expect many voters to find out about Obama's out-of-the mainstream views if Republicans and the Romney campaign don't talk about them. ♦

Where Does It End?

The illogic of Obama's attack on Romney.

BY NOEMIE EMERY

Boy, that Mitt Romney can screw up your life. Or possibly end it. To hear the left tell it, he is not merely a vampire and/or vulture capitalist, getting rich while leaving millions of people in misery, he is also able to give people cancer, at a distance of thousands of miles and after the passage of quite a few years.

We first learned of his powers way back in May, when the *Washington Post* ran a long—very long—piece about Mitt's schooldays at Cranbrook, a posh prep school in Michigan where he led a posse that forcibly trimmed the long, dyed golden locks of a schoolmate, giving that schoolmate not only an unpleasant few minutes but laying a curse on the rest of his life. The piece does not say, but strongly implies, that it was largely due to the trauma of this experience that he was thrown out of Cranbrook (he was ejected for smoking) and led an itinerant existence living and working all over the world before succumbing to cancer while still in his 50s in a hospital in Seattle months before Romney, then a millionaire and a governor, was honored at Cranbrook's graduation ceremonies with a distinguished alumnus award.

Joe Soptic

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The story not only implied that it was unfair that the perpetrator of the affair of the hair was a millionaire and a governor and praised by the school while the victim of it died neither rich nor remarked on, but that the two events were interrelated: that a nonconformist had somehow been sacrificed so that an establishment figure like Romney could thrive.

The second instance of Romney's unique voodoo powers came to light a few weeks ago, in an ad made by a liberal super-PAC that featured a man named Joe Soptic who seemed to blame his wife's death from cancer on the fact that he lost his health insurance when Bain Capital closed his steel mill, that she became ill "a short time after," went to the hospital with what she thought was pneumonia, was diagnosed instead with stage 4 lung cancer, and died two weeks later. But it turned out that "a short time after" was in 2006, five years after the plant closed and seven after Romney had left Bain for the Olympics; that Soptic was offered a buyout and chose not to take it; that his wife had her own health coverage for several years after; that he had the chance to buy his wife coverage and chose not to do so; and that while he suggested she had felt ill earlier and not sought treatment sooner because she thought she could not afford it, he does not quite say this, and she might not have realized how sick she was until near the end.

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Challenged on this, Democrats say they aren't blaming Romney *exactly*, just pointing out that he wasn't quite sensitive enough to the impact upon innocent people that some of his decisions had. Said Bill Burton, who created it: "The point of this ad is to tell the story of one guy . . . and the impact on his life that happened for years" as the result of Mitt Romney's doings. As Debbie Wasserman Schultz, chair of the Democratic National Committee, put it on Fox News, Romney "bankrupted companies, laid off workers, cut their benefits, and made millions of dollars. . . . That ad points out that there are consequences to actions like that that impacted people's lives in a significant way."

There are indeed, but this ad transgressed the bounds of all reason: It assumed that employers are directly responsible for the health, wealth, and well-being of all employees, not only during their employment but in perpetuity; and it suggested that the defects of capitalism stem directly from the will and intentions of Romney, and are his fault and his fault alone.

Capitalism, let us be clear here, has been a glorious thing. It has, as Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner tell us in *City of Man*, "produced two things that for much of history were regarded as inconceivable: a large middle class and intergenerational wealth-building," lifted millions out of poverty, and enabled stunning medical and scientific advancements that have prolonged and enriched all our lives. "Free markets," they say, "also go hand in hand with free societies [and] where capitalism has not yet taken root we find destitution, widespread misery and illiteracy and much early death."

All this is true, but it also has its downsides: The market is capricious, subject to boom-and-bust cycles, and, while it does tend to reward hard-work and performance, it leads to outcomes that are often seen as unjust, in which hard working and competent people can suffer through no fault of their own. A competent worker can work for a firm whose incompetent management makes it go out of business. A competent worker can work for a firm with competent management, which fails when its products are made obsolete by advancing technology. Capitalism works by a process of creative destruction, in which firms open and close, hire and downsize, fail, and spin off in whole new directions, creating a large, changing number of winners, but also of people who lose. Bain Capital, which specialized in startups and in rescuing troubled assets, created an unusually large number of winners and losers, and it was tales of the latter—people whose firms were closed down by Bain Capital—that Ted Kennedy turned into the heartrending commercials that rescued his Senate seat in 1994 when Romney challenged him. And so it is the current project of the Obama campaign to separate the "creative" and "destructive" facets of capitalism and assign the destructive elements to Mitt Romney and Mitt Romney alone. If a firm he bought closed, it wasn't because of market forces: *He* wanted to close it. Not only that, but he may have liked doing it. He's a vulture and vampire capitalist, isn't he? Case closed, the end.

But more than a few things are left out of this story, one being that while Romney sometimes made money when plants closed, he would have made more if they had succeeded, and had no incentive towards seeing them fail. Point number two is that there was nothing done by Romney or Bain that hadn't been done many times over by Obama's donors, such as Jonathan Lavine, an Obama bundler who headed Bain Capital in 2001 (after Romney had left), when Soptic's plant closed. (Barack Obama has raised $152,000 in donations from Bain and its employees.) Point number three is that if employers are responsible for their employees' lives seven years after the connection is severed, it stretches the idea of the social contract beyond all sustainability and raises the question of where it all ends. Can anyone morally fire anyone without making provisions for his health and well-being many years into the future? For how long must the former employee be covered? When are the obligations of the employer, moral and otherwise, considered fulfilled? If employers are to be held responsible for the health of their former workers' families for years into the future, this is an expansion of the social contract that will make it impossible for commerce to survive. (Let us recall that General Motors began its long slide into bankruptcy when it stopped being a car company and became a retirement program with a car company attached to it.) Indeed, can anyone ever be fired at all?

And then, assuming that the Democrats are right, and employers are responsible for the lives of their ex-employees in perpetuity, the question of fairness intrudes. If Romney is tied to the destruction side of "creative destruction," the creative side needs to weigh in.

Bain Capital surely created more firms and more jobs than were destroyed when it controlled them, and hired more people than it let go. If some people who lost jobs had the effects of these losses shadow their lives long after they lost them, then the people who got jobs, raises, promotions, and health care must also have benefited greatly years after the fact. People with jobs found themselves able to marry, buy houses, provide educations for their children that helped them realize their dreams and ambitions: By the standards employed by the Democrats and their media people, these were the consequences of Romney's decisions and acts.

If Romney deserves blame for stunting the lives of some people, then he deserves credit for enriching the lives of others, who, without his far-ranging powers, might have led less happy and prosperous lives. Not to mention having had lives at all. How many people over the years, insured by companies saved or established by Romney, contracted cancer, were treated, and are now living long lives? Given the far-reaching Bain investments, and law of averages, their numbers must be in the thousands. And Mitt Romney "saved" every last one. ♦

If Sweden Can Do It . . .

. . . the United States can reform entitlements, too.

BY ROLAND POIRIER MARTINSSON

During his long reign, Tage Erlander, Swedish prime minister between 1946 and 1969, spoke grudgingly of the impending "discontent of growing expectations." He was referring to how the Swedish labor movement, after decades of expansive welfare reforms, rather than being gratified, seemed incessantly focused on what it had not yet received from the perennial Social Democratic government.

Erlander's misgivings turned out to be accurate. The entitlement society is indeed a beast that feeds on itself. From 1959 to 1977 the total tax burden in Sweden grew from a moderate 25.2 percent to a staggering 47.5 percent, topping out in 1990 at 52.3 percent. During the same time, the public sector share of GDP doubled, while private payrolls fell, predictably causing a decline in economic growth. In 1970 Sweden's growth was second in the world only to Japan's; in 1990 it was second-lowest in the OECD, even as entitlements and the public sector kept growing. Hence, a familiar choice: Either stop spending, or keep borrowing on the backs of future generations.

But making such a choice is no simple thing. A universal welfare state has consequences that run deeper than the economy, and are more difficult to reverse even than a two-decade-long economic disaster. Fundamental structures of civil society wilt when human responsibilities—including those towards future generations—are subsumed under government entitlements (in Sweden, giving to charity, absurdly, came to be considered a lack of solidarity, since it undermined the need for the welfare state); a sense of passivity spreads when people feel that personal happiness or despondency is independent of their own actions. The bureaucratic framework of the welfare state also locks in electoral support as a growing share of the voters move from private to public payrolls—why vote yourself out of a job? All of these factors made the prospects for Sweden to break the vicious spiral bleak indeed.

Expect less: Erlander

Turn, now, to the elated reaction from the Obama campaign when Mitt Romney announced Paul Ryan as his running mate. Essentially, it followed from the combination of two settled convictions. First, that Medicare is the untouchable third rail of American politics, charged with voters' fear and anxiety. Second, that campaigning is always about making slogans, never about making your case. Sloganizing about "ending Medicare as we know it" seemed a safe bet compared to Romney and Ryan's task of educating voters on a complex issue.

In other words, the Obama camp's reaction was a wager that Erlander's prophecy would come true also in the United States; that the discontent of growing expectations is an emotion too strong to overcome, even in the face of economic emergency, and that the paralysis of dependency would make it impossible to address the nation's long-term, structural challenges.

So how did it turn out for Sweden? Against all odds, voters defied political expectations. In 1991 they removed the Social Democratic government, and put in place a center-right government that promised to attack the fundamental problems of the welfare state. When the Social Democratic party was voted back in three years later—as a consequence not of the reforms, but because the economic recovery was not coming soon enough—it continued on the road to reform, keeping in place the essential transformations.

The hallmark of this period was a sweeping reform of the social security system, allowing individuals to invest part of their social security tax in private funds. The reform was an across-the-aisle agreement, including the Social Democrats, and secured the solvency of the system for future generations. Today, more than half of the population has, at some point, actively chosen to participate in the private market (the money for those who choose not to participate goes automatically into a state-run investment fund).

In addition to the system's market-based aspects, it also contains a circuit-breaker that kicks in when the economy is in recession, which in effect means that retirees receive a lower pension in hard times. Lately, in the midst of a popular uprising around

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Europe against raising the retirement age to 60 or 62 years, the Swedish prime minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt (of a center-right government), has even suggested that some people may need to work until the age of 75. While this has caused concern on the left, there is a widespread understanding that the welfare state can survive only if it is managed responsibly by each and every generation.

How was such a transformation possible? Almost every major reform in Sweden over the last 20 years would have been described as a third rail issue in the United States, on exactly the grounds that make Democrats so eager to put Ryan's plan for Medicare reform at the center of debate—yet voters accepted and embraced the need to make changes.

One reason was that the whole political spectrum acknowledged the failure of the system, which gave voters a sense of confidence. If any major party had decided to embrace fear, with an eye to winning the next election rather than fixing the system, it is quite possible that the Swedish success story never would have occurred.

It is not easy to say whether all of this happened because of good political leadership, or if it was a case of popular sentiment forcing politicians to take action. Either way, a retirement reform with clear similarities to the Ryan plan for Medicare stands as the symbol of a remarkable development in a country that only 30 years ago was on the brink of socializing corporate profits so as to continue down the road to ruin. It is all the more remarkable considering that Sweden was the paradigm of a European entitlement society.

Thus the real question is not whether Erlander's misgivings about the discontent of growing expectations applies also in the United States—it does, everywhere, most of the time. The question is whether 2012 is one of those rare years when conventional wisdom doesn't apply to voter behavior. As Sweden has shown, such moments can not only swing elections, but change the course of a nation. ♦

Sound Money Gains a Champion

Paul Ryan, good as gold.

BY JUDY SHELTON

What are the chances that President Barack Obama and his Treasury secretary, Timothy Geithner, will ever have anything meaningful to say about monetary policy—beyond continuing to try to coax Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke to print ever more dollars to buy up ever more U.S. government debt? About the same as the interest rate you are receiving on your savings: zero.

Back to the future?

That's why it matters so much for the future of the United States—indeed, the future of the global economy—that Paul Ryan is now on the Republican ticket. Because it's not just the fiscal fiasco, caused by political cowardice and dithering, that has put our nation on a path to eventual bankruptcy. It's also the loss of a monetary compass. The value of the dollar has been so compromised through loose Fed policies that it no longer functions as a trustworthy money unit. Instead of providing a reliable tool for measuring what something is worth, or for deciding whether to consume now or save for the future, the dollar has become yet another policy instrument of government.

One notable who'd be a severe critic of our monetary situation today is Thomas Jefferson. In his *Notes on the Establishment of a Money Unit and of a Coinage for the United States*, written in 1784, Jefferson focused on the need to protect the integrity of the American dollar. A dependable currency would not only unite the former colonies and facilitate commerce throughout the fledgling nation, it would also facilitate individual endeavor and economic opportunity. For the first time, for example, Jefferson argued, a nation's monetary standard would be based on the decimal system so that business calculations would be simple, honest, and straightforward.

For Jefferson, the notion that the value of the U.S. dollar might one day be subordinated to a perceived need in the nation's capital to accommodate budgetary failures would be a betrayal of the American promise. The money unit of the United States should represent an "unchangeable" standard of value, Jefferson firmly believed, that would remain "accessible to all persons, in all times and places." A sound dollar underscored America's commitment to free people

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and free markets, to a self-governing nation dedicated to economic freedom and equal rights under the law.

Discussing monetary issues, Paul Ryan sounds Jeffersonian:

> Money whose future value is unpredictable cannot serve its most important purpose, to provide a common rule to equate goods, services, and labor. When social transactions are undermined, people lose trust in one another, and the vacuum must be filled with the power of government. Our Founders experienced this firsthand, so they laid their foundations to provide for limited government with a maximum of entrepreneurial freedom and sound money.

You can be sure that detractors of the presumptive Republican nominee for vice president will brand this sort of thinking as "extreme" and "radical"—a threat to monetary policy as we know it. Certainly, Ryan's views represent a *different* approach from what is currently practiced in Washington, where the dollar's value is merely a consequence of interest-rate decisions and banking regulatory tweaks made every six weeks or so, entirely at the discretion of unelected officials appointed to the board of governors of the Federal Reserve.

But when Ryan emphasizes the need for sound money in the context of civil society and free markets under limited government, he is not only invoking the ideals of Jefferson. He is also building on the insights of Friedrich Hayek, the great free-market economist whose *Constitution of Liberty* (1960) carries this ominous warning: "All those who wish to stop the drift toward increasing government control should concentrate their effort on monetary policy."

By questioning the boom-and-bust policies of the Fed and challenging its lack of accountability, Ryan is trying to do just that. In his role as House Budget Committee chairman, he has pointedly asked Bernanke during congressional testimony to acknowledge "the long-term repercussions of . . . a weak currency policy" and to explain how the Fed can presume to quash future inflation in the wake of unprecedented monetary stimulus. Ryan is highly skeptical that Fed officials can precisely calibrate the money supply to the needs of the economy through the creation of unwarranted dollars to purchase government debt; he deems it "a fatal conceit." He would sooner trust in the aggregate wisdom of hundreds of millions of free market participants—buyers and sellers, consumers and savers—operating under a stable monetary standard anchored to the real economy.

For Jefferson, the notion that the value of the dollar might one day be subordinated to a perceived need in the nation's capital to accommodate budgetary failures would be a betrayal of the American promise. The money unit should represent an 'unchangeable' standard of value, he firmly believed.

Ryan is also aware that Americans increasingly sense unfairness—unequal treatment—in the way monetary policy is conducted. Sophisticated investors and privileged financial institutions seem to be the main beneficiaries of Fed largesse, borrowing at cheap rates while savers earn virtually nothing. Equity markets have become subject to the pronouncements of Bernanke, hoping for some hint of further "quantitative easing" to goose stock prices. Meanwhile, the amount of bank holdings of Treasury obligations and government agency debt has more than doubled this year over 2011, reaching an all-time high of $1.84 trillion. If community banks are now going the way of money-center banks, gaming interest rates on Treasury instruments rather than lending to businesses, it's because the Fed has made that the more lucrative endeavor.

Our discretionary monetary policy has brought about a rupture between financial intermediaries and the actual engines of productive growth, with high finance operating on a different track than the organic economy. This is undermining growth prospects for the United States and the world; it is distorting the natural process of economic recovery by manipulating price signals. After all, the whole point of capital investment is to channel financial "seed corn" into productive economic enterprise that will yield higher future returns—meaning improved living standards. But the Fed's activist policies are guiding those resources into government instead.

Monetary policy should not play favorites. And Ryan's campaign to restore sound money is as much about reasserting the principles of equal rights and equal treatment as it is about reconnecting the value of the dollar to the real economy. "Our currency should provide a reliable store of value—it should be guided by the rule of law, not the rule of men," Ryan notified Bernanke at a hearing last year. "There is nothing more insidious that a country can do to its citizens than debase its currency."

It's an expression of faith in our nation's founding principles wholly consistent with Jefferson's own view that the integrity of our currency is a reflection of our commitment to personal freedom under limited government—and that a reliable dollar is the only money unit worthy of the American idea. ♦

Numbering the Days

Memories of Strat-O-Matic baseball

By Joseph Bottum & Alan Davison

He kept a diary—a friend, a boy we knew when we were young, all those years ago—and at the end of most entries he would assign himself a line from a baseball box score, defining each day as though it were part of some classic pennant race against . . . well, who knows? The general malevolence of the universe, maybe, or the daunting future and his own adolescent doubts, glaring down at him from the pitcher's mound. *June 2—Sue Mercer stopped to talk while I was sitting on the steps, so cute I couldn't think of anything to say. Read a little, not much. Mowed the lawn. Shot hoops in the driveway; okay but inconsistent. Won at cards with my brothers. Today: 4 at bats, 1 hit, 1 walk, 1 RBI, 1 error.*

And then, at the end of the summer, Glen would add up how his days had gone, totaling his box scores to make a card for the season: 512 at-bats with a .291 average. 25 doubles, 5 triples, and 17 home runs. 57 walks and 48 strikeouts. 32 steals (he was always a fast kid) and a .972 fielding average (but a flawed fielder). Quick on the base paths, some power down the alleys, and he kept the ball in play. Too many fielding mistakes, but they weren't from lack of trying, and his range to the ball made up for most of them.

A good player, in other words, is how Glen quantified himself: not a star, exactly, but the kind of solid hitter any manager could use in his lineup. Several wins above replacement. If he wasn't headed for the Hall of Fame, he wasn't about to be sent down to the minors, either. He was in the game.

But the card he made—that was the fun part, because it wasn't just a bubblegum card: some lifeless piece of Topps or Fleet cardboard, good mostly for clothes-pinning to your bike so the spokes would rattle and roar as you rode along. Or for collecting, naturally, but that was the kind of thing old men like your friend's dad did, getting angry every time he saw the neighborhood kids handling their cards because it lowered their value—and if he'd had the sense to keep his Phil Rizzuto card untouched in plastic, instead of pinning it to his own bike when he was a kid, it would be worth a thousand dollars now. Or more, he'd always add. *Or more*.

A 1960s Strat-O-Matic ad in Baseball Digest

No, the card Glen would make was a Strat-O-Matic card. Remember Strat-O-Matic? You'd see advertisements for the statistics-based board game in the back pages of comic books, the blurry newsprint of the *Sporting News*, and those annual baseball previews that seemed to sprout like flowers on the magazine racks early each spring.

Maybe a friend had a Strat-O-Matic set, with its red box and the previous year's Major League teams, each player with his own statistical card, and you'd go over to battle it out on the front porch. Or maybe you had your own set, and you'd sit up late to play by yourself—Game One of the Red Sox hosting the Reds in the 1975 World Series: Fenway Park spread out on the floor before you, under the light of a gooseneck lamp. Luis Tiant on the mound, and the hard-driven Pete Rose leads off with a fly ball to center, easily pulled in by Fred Lynn for the first out. The incomparable Joe Morgan follows with a single slapped to left, and the crowd groans as the all-star, all-time, all-everything catcher Johnny Bench steps into the batter's box to try to drive him home.

What brought the cards to life was a roll of three dice,

IMAGES COURTESY OF STRAT-O-MATIC

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one white and two red. In the basic game, each card had three columns: three on the batter's card and three on the pitcher's card. If the white die came up 1, 2, or 3, you looked for the result in the corresponding column on the batter's card; 4, 5, or 6, and you turned to the proper column on the pitcher's card. Each column had 11 entries, labeled 2 through 12, and you used the sum of the red dice to find which of those entries to use—one of 216 possible chances for each at bat. The Strat-O-Matic game designers would start with the league average for any given year, and then adjust Joe Morgan's batting card to give him the results that revealed his skill above an average batter's. And Luis Tiant's card to show his skill above an average pitcher's.

Of course, baseball offers more than 216 possibilities for any particular at-bat. What about a pulled hamstring, while the runner tries to stretch a single into a double? What about a balk, a hit-and-run, or a fielder's choice? A pop-up hitting a pigeon in midair, for that matter? Besides, 216 possibilities equal chances only around 0.46 percent each—and baseball's record-keeping allows much finer statistical divisions than that. So Strat-O-Matic added various ways to complicate the game: entries that would be outs against good fielders but hits against bad ones. Charts to look up the result of certain special situations. A few lines that would read something like *TRIPLE 1–4, DOUBLE 5–20*, with the result determined by a deck of small cards numbered 1 to 20, shuffled before the game.

All in all, the setup was ingenious. It felt *right*, somehow, that basic 50-50 chance of the white die directing you to results based either on the batter's skill or the pitcher's. At its best, Strat-O-Matic offered a kind of small aesthetic perfection, walking the narrow line between accuracy and ease of play. The history of baseball board games is littered with homemade box sets, shipped from the garages of Strat-O-Matic players who thought they could re-create baseball even more accurately if only they invented a board game that used, say, *12 dice and 66 look-up charts!* And so they could, but the result was always dull and too complicated to be worth the effort.

The making of Glen's card at the end of every summer required unlocking Strat-O-Matic's secrets—and learning more math in the process than school ever taught. But once he'd calculated the frequency of each type of hit, the frequency of each type of out, there he was, card in hand, ready to slot himself into the outfield for the Red Sox and discover whether moving Yastrzemski to first base earlier in the Series would have made the difference.

Or maybe he could have helped the Pirates derail the Reds in the National League championship. He could play anywhere—play, for that matter, in any era for which Strat-O-Matic sold historical sets. The 1924 Washington Senators, for instance: Now there was a great team, a fun team, but they had a hole in the outfield that the likes of Nemo Leibold, Wid Matthews, and Showboat Fisher couldn't fill. Glen could, however: His card from the year he was 13 would provide exactly the extra-base power the Senators needed to help Joe Judge and young Goose Goslin back up the pitching of Walter Johnson.

And what about Bing Miller, a weak link on Lefty Grove's 1931 Philadelphia Athletics? Glen could swap him out with another of his own cards—the one from the year he was 12, for instance—and try to push the A's past the Cardinals. Or he could see if, with his help, the 1945 Cubs could slip by the Tigers and break the Chicago team's curse. He could play alongside Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle. Bat with Jimmie Foxx and Al Simmons. Join Duke Snider and Jackie Robinson. He could travel in time and play on any field of dreams.

Or he could stand back and let the original players fight it out—lacing up their cleats to run and throw and hit, coming to life again in a way the past so rarely does for children. And that, in the end, may be the best thing Strat-O-Matic achieved. It brought the past into the present for its young players and kept that past alive.

That's not to discount the ways the game introduced its young fanatics to probabilities, the easy first entry into statistics that comes from calculating dice rolls. We learned very quickly why the number 7 turns up once in every six throws of a pair of dice, 9 once in every nine throws, and 11 once in every eighteen. One of the striking things about *The Numbers Game*, Alan Schwarz's wonderful 2004 history of baseball record-keeping, is how many of the past two generations of baseball's mad number-crunchers got their start playing Strat-O-Matic and being drawn into its mathematics. Fantasy baseball was thought up by Strat-O-Matic player Daniel Okrent, and Electronic Arts's popular baseball video game was invented by his fellow fan Trip Hawkins. All those innovative statistics baseball has gained over the past fifty years, from On Base Percentage to Wins Above Replacement—they sprang from seeds planted that winter day in 1961 when Strat-O-Matic first appeared.

The board game may even have helped change the physical game it tried to model, although evidence for any direct influence is sketchy at best. Mickey Mantle is supposed to have complained in a radio interview that his Strat-O-Matic card had nothing but "homers and strikeouts," but no one has a transcript of the interview, and anyway his card couldn't hold a candle to the quintessential Strat-O-Matic arrangement of homers and strikeouts generated by Dave Kingman in 1973.

In his 2005 book *Strat-O-Matic Fanatics: The Unlikely Success Story of a Game That Became an American Passion*, the journalist Glenn Guzzo enthusiastically pours out everything he could discover about the game's impact,

and yet it all proves sadly slight and circumstantial. Some Hollywood types—Tim Robbins, for instance, and Spike Lee—have said they loved Strat-O-Matic (and the game appears in Lee's 1994 film *Crooklyn*). The broadcaster Bob Costas occasionally mentions that he used to play, as do other sportswriters when indulging in nostalgic recollections of their baseball-loving childhoods. In the Major Leagues, Lenny Dykstra and Keith Hernández would pull out the cards and dice on long road trips. Avid Strat-O-Matic player Doug Glanville roars with laughter as he tells the story of fans jeering his Phillies teammate Gregg Jefferies with "You're a 5, Jefferies, you're a 5" (the worst Strat-O-Matic rating for a fielder).

More credible evidence of the game's impact comes in the form of occasional bits of praise from baseball executives. In 2002, when he was named to head up the Red Sox—28 years old, the youngest general manager in baseball history—Theo Epstein was often derided in the Boston press for treating the team's players like "a set of Strat-O-Matic cards," keeping or dealing them to other teams based on their statistics. (Those complaints quickly disappeared when, in 2004, the Red Sox won their first World Series in eighty-six years.) Glenn Hoffman, the coach who briefly managed the Dodgers in 1998, reports having played Strat-O-Matic, as do others in the crop of game-changing general managers who relied on the power of modern statistics, from Oakland's Billy Beane (the hero of Michael Lewis's *Moneyball*) to the Orioles' baseball blueblood, Andy MacPhail.

An early box design

Even so, there's no suggestion that baseball's executives actually played Strat-O-Matic while running their teams, much less that they used it to make real-life decisions. Despite its enthusiasts' claims, Strat-O-Matic's influence on Major League diamonds is indirect, at best, flowing through the interest in statistical analysis that the board game awakened.

But awaken that interest the game did—and something more as well. Deep in the psyche of boys lies a hunger for order and a world that makes sense, an intelligible universe of rankings and meaning. Deep in the psyche of girls too, maybe, although girls were alien creatures, at best, and we didn't know any who played Strat-O-Matic when we were young. Besides, the inner lives of adolescent males hold other things—monsters and nightmares—that need to be starved even while the blessèd rage for order is fed on numbers. Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of boys? But some of it, surely, wasted away from inattention during the hours spent deciding the best way to set the batting lineup of the 1961 Tigers.

The tumbling dice did reveal plenty of randomness, a disorder that populated the game with strange outliers and statistical freaks. Given enough chances, Casey Stengel's comically inept 1962 Mets would win—*must* win—a game against the Murderers' Row of Babe Ruth's 1927 Yankees. With a different roll of the dice, the fan Steve Bartman stays home with the flu and Moisés Alou makes that outfield catch in 2003, letting the Cubs escape with a victory. Managed with a clearer eye (as Theo Epstein understood), the Red Sox could have won—in Strat-O-Matic *did* win—a World Series well before 2004.

And yet, in the end, over a long-enough set of games, the play would work out pretty much as you would expect from the players' statistics and the teams' strengths. The Cincinnati Reds were a powerhouse in the mid-1970s, and only the most inept play was going to hurt them much. The Seattle Mariners were very lucky to win 116 games in 2001, in exactly the way you knew they were while watching them. Over thousands of dice rolls, Mantle's 1960 Yankees would usually beat Mazeroski's Pirates, Hank Aaron would typically hit around 44 home runs in a season, and Dennis Eckersley would almost never hang a 1988 slider to Kirk Gibson. The world Strat-O-Matic created was an orderly one, and meaningful—and it gave life to the cold statistics of current players, first learned from bubblegum cards.

Maybe that combination of stern order and wild exception is what made Strat-O-Matic so fun, so *fitting*, to play. Curious to think of all the game did. It introduced its young players to decision-making and gauging the odds, laying the groundwork for later, more portentous decisions. It occupied hours that might otherwise have been filled with things less playful and innocuous. It brought previous generations back in view, re-creating the past and valorizing the lives of old players, the giant race before the flood. Unlike the video games that began to spread like poison ivy in the 1990s, it spurred the imagination and encouraged

exactly the fascinations of boys that prove socially productive—even while it displaced the fascinations that, in any culture, make young men a threat to social order.

It's not difficult to realize, in retrospect, that Strat-O-Matic was a time-filler, a device for having fun that also taught a little about baseball. Along the way, however, it also proved a doorway to the inner game of baseball and, through baseball, to the game of life. A small but useful tool of civilization. Hard to say, really, what more you could ask of a board game.

The Reds' Don Gullett toes the rubber in the bottom of the first, and the Red Sox's Dwight Evans steps into the batter's box—3 on the white die, 9 on the red dice, for a single. Denny Doyle lays down a bunt, but Evans is out at second, and Carl Yastrzemski strides to the plate—white die 2, red dice 9, for a walk. Carlton Fisk digs in. White 4, red 10, a strikeout. Fred Lynn's turn—white 5, red 5, and Gullet's pitching card shows Lynn sending a slow roller to Joe Morgan at second. Three outs and the inning's over.

We played a lot of board games when we were young: Monopoly and Life and Battleship and silly contests we'd invent ourselves involving Yahtzee dice and football scores. A lot of card games, as well. Mostly gin rummy, but then there was that summer the collective mind of the neighborhood kids decided we needed to learn bridge, and—in memory, at least—July and August were consumed in rounds of bidding. We had pickup basketball games in the driveway, and books devoured in a gulp, and bicycles ridden to friends' houses. Whiffle Ball when we couldn't field enough players for a real game, and kick-the-can as an excuse to hide alongside the girls, and afternoons to rock away in a sleepy hammock.

Baseball, as well, down at the local park with the rusted backstop and dirt bases worn in the grass, home base defined with a paper plate. The puddle of water in the batter's box from the morning sprinklers, and the taste of salt on your lip as you trotted out to centerfield. Foul balls that deflected off the trees and into the street, chased down before they disappeared through the grill in the gutter. The angry family, when a long fly ball landed on the blanket they'd spread for a picnic. Playing one last inning, even though it had grown too dark to see, until the third-baseman's parents sent his little sister down to call her brother home, and the game ended in a tie.

And then at night you could hear the crickets through the open window. Moths fluttering at the screen, the evening's descending cool after the afternoon heat. Glen would sit at his desk and mark down how he'd done in the baseball game that day—how we'd all done. The summers were long, like an extra-inning game, with endless hours to fill. Sundial days, they all seem now, looking back. Days lived in the cycle of the sun unmeasured by clocks, and we seemed to have time enough for anything—time enough to *have* time, if that makes any sense. Time enough, anyway, to play entire seasons of Strat-O-Matic and soak in their lessons.

The dice clicking on the inside lid of the game's cardboard box offered, in their way, an escape into order from the middle school chaos of hormones and emotional brutality. A 10- or 11-year-old boy could run around outside only so much. And when the few television channels had been exhausted, Strat-O-Matic was there to fit in with the established summer ritual: Get up when the sun warms your room, open a box of cereal, read the box scores in the newspaper. Without a Major League team nearby, and not all that many professional games on the radio, Strat-O-Matic connected us to the players and their statistics—giving life to the shadowy profiles of past and present greats and the myths that surrounded them.

George Foster, top of the second inning for Cincinnati—6 on the white die, 5 on the red dice, and Tiant's pitching card gives Foster a single to center. Dave Concepción slips off the batting donut and steps to the plate. White 1, red 4: HOME RUN 1, DOUBLE 2–20, the line on the card reads. The split deck comes up a lucky 1, and Concepción rounds the bases with a home run. The Reds lead 2–0.

It was out on Long Island in 1948, in the town of Great Neck, that Hal Richman sat down and rolled a set of dice 5,000 times, recording every outcome—just to make sure he had calculated the odds correctly. He was only 11 years old, which perhaps explains why he didn't trust his math, but once the dice confirmed his calculations, he designed a baseball board game to take advantage of his newfound probabilities. He adjusted the game after trying it out with his friends at summer camp, adjusted it again after playing it with his fellow math students at Bucknell University, and finally in 1961 he thought he was ready to have some copies printed and start selling the game.

Disaster was pretty much the result. The game still seemed unpolished in design, and the two-color printing, the best Richman could afford, was sloppy and off-register. Even the small-text advertisement he purchased in *Sports Illustrated* cost more than he could really pay for. The game made no inroads into the market of baseball board games dominated by APBA (which had begun production in 1951) and Cadaco's All-Star Baseball (a 1941 game with the advantage of being distributed through toy stores). Add to all that the fact that the name—Strat-O-Matic, an odd attempt to work a hint of the word *statistics* into the 1950s buzzwords *stratosphere* and *automatic*—felt dated even by the early

1960s. If its creator couldn't see how amateurish and hokey the hyphens around that capital *O* seemed, potential buyers could. The game barely sold in the dozens and left the recent college grad $2,500 in debt.

Richman's response was to double down. In 1963, he redesigned the game into the form it still has, borrowed $5,000 from his father (on condition that if he didn't succeed this time, he would join his father's insurance firm), and bought a better advertisement in the cheaper pages of the *Sporting News*. Fifty years later, the game is still going: Total sales over the years, the cautious Richman reluctantly admits, are in the millions. (In 2011, Strat-O-Matic issued a special anniversary edition, reprinting that first version of the game. It flopped, too.)

Always run on a low advertising budget, Strat-O-Matic spread mostly by word of mouth and whatever boys it could lure with text-heavy magazine ads. Its greatest exposure came when NBC's *Today Show*—in protest over the postponement of the All-Star Game because of the 1981 players' strike—broadcast a Strat-O-Matic game played with cards for all-stars from the previous year. (Strat-O-Matic fan Bryant Gumbel reportedly came up with the idea, and he acted as the play-by-play announcer, calling the game in breathless segments through the course of the show.)

In subsequent years, Richman and his eight Great Neck employees settled into a small but reasonably profitable niche in the game market, ahead of such competitors as APBA, Statis, and the set of baseball games distributed by Avalon Hill. Their research into the Negro Leagues produced a successful set of player cards, and although their attempts to move into the computer-game markets have not been particularly well received, the historical card sets the company has produced since the 1970s—classic teams from the 1927 Yankees to the 1954 Giants, the 1906 Cubs to the 1957 Braves; notorious teams from the 1919 Black Sox to the 1962 Mets, for that matter—have always sold well.

The rise of fantasy baseball and other group games, together with the easy calculations that computers allow (sharply shifting the old line that Strat-O-Matic walked between accuracy and ease of play), are mortal threats to the board game, and too much of its current play seems to be fueled by baby-boomer nostalgia. Still, the company survives, much as its 75-year-old founder does. And every year a few hundred diehard fans show up at the company's offices in Great Neck on the last Friday in January—the day, by fifty-year-old tradition, the new season's cards go on sale.

Bottom of the sixth, the Reds 2 and the Red Sox 0. Rico Petrocelli steps in. White 3, red 7: a walk. Rick Burleson follows—white 3, red 5: a single, with Petrocelli moved along to second. Gullet stares down Cecil Cooper. White 5, red 8: a pop-out to first base. Tiant spits tobacco and waddles to the plate. White 4, red 5: TRIPLE 1–4, DOUBLE 5–20, the corresponding entry reads, and the card from the split deck is a 6. A double for the Red Sox's pitcher, and Petrocelli scores. Burleson tries for home. His running speed is listed as 1 to 12, and the next split card is a 7. Burleson crosses the plate, tying the game 2 to 2.

We tend to over-interpret and overvalue the things that fascinated us when we were children: the books, the toys, the music, the games. Because memory makes them shine so brightly, we imagine they still possess their own, interior light.

They don't, more often than not. Oh, Roger Kahn's account of the 1950s Dodgers, *The Boys of Summer*, really is a marvelous book, worth rereading, but that pet chicken in *The Kid Who Batted 1.000* can only make you cringe, if you're foolish enough to take a look at the book again in adulthood. Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop.*—a tragicomic novel about a man who invents a dice baseball game much like Strat-O-Matic, only to find himself drawn into life inside the game—was a great adolescent read, but even at the time you could feel it dissipating the innocence of game play, the postmodern metanarrative of the story a kind of guilty pleasure. Too great an awareness of what we do weakens our ability to do it; the boy who rises to consciousness of the fact that he's being taught a lesson gradually ceases to learn that lesson.

And somewhere along the line, what seems to slip away is time—the time to have time for losing yourself in such things as baseball seasons played out with dice rolls. The world intrudes, the boy grows, and the games prove less enthralling. Still, the lessons of Strat-O-Matic were real and vital, in their day. A realization of the interplay of order and randomness, for instance. A grasp of the sheer reality of the past, the truth that others lived before us. The civilizing of boys by appealing to their impulses to forget themselves in the mathematics of the world and the inner secrets of a game like baseball.

Score tied 2–2, bottom of the ninth, 2 out, no one on base. Don Gullet still stares from the mound as Jim Rice, his wrist heavily taped, emerges from the dugout to pinch-hit for Cooper. Maybe he can give the team one good swing. White 1, red 7—a home run, and the Red Sox take the Series opener 3–2.

Late at night in those long summers, Glen would sit—each of us would sit—alone on the floor of a darkened room with a single light focused down on the finished game. Even afterward, in bed, the numbers and images swirled in our minds. And the only real questions were how the Series would come out, and whether there was time for one more Strat-O-Matic game before tiredness overtook us and carried us down to sleep. ♦

Sally Quinn, Benjamin Bradlee, Ali Wentworth, and George Stephanopoulos, 2009

A Celebrated Editor

The curious case of Benjamin Bradlee. BY JUDY BACHRACH

Grey Gardens itself is a marvel. . . . Like Ben and Sally's other two homes, it's ritzy and historic and perfectly restored and all of that, but more than anything it's just a beautiful place. The gardens take up an entire acre and are as lush as you can imagine, full of archways and hydrangeas and picturesque seating arrangements that nobody ever uses. . . . Time spent there is an idyll. You get up whenever you want. . . . Evelyn cooks your breakfast to order. . . . In the Hamptons, there's always a party, and Ben and Sally are always invited. . . . One of Ben's favorite aphorisms, taken from the Jewish elders, is "Love work, hate domination, and steer clear of the ruling class."

Judy Bachrach is a contributing editor to Vanity Fair.

Yours in Truth
A Personal Portrait of Ben Bradlee
by Jeff Himmelman
Random House, 512 pp., $27

One of my favorite aphorisms is: Never cite Jewish aphorisms on the perniciously seductive ruling class when you're writing an extended mash note to Benjamin Bradlee and his various residences, all of it stuffed with words like "lush," "idyll," and "hydrangeas." I don't know what Evelyn feels about the whole thing as she cooks my breakfast to order, but personally, as a former *Washington Post* employee, one of those handpicked by Ben Bradlee to his eternal regret, I felt that *Yours in Truth* had very little to do with the T-word in the title or, least of all, with the former newspaper editor and his third wife, and far more to do with the aspirations of its author. *The Great Gatsby* may have been written almost a century ago, but Jeff Himmelman, the author of this lengthy tribute, has spent many years and many, many pages trying to jump into Nick Carraway's shriveled skin.

But let's start with the headlines. Bob Woodward, the famed Watergate scandal unraveler and lone remnant of the *Washington Post* from its glory days still *in situ*, is really angry with Himmelman, who used to work for him as an assistant. Woodward says Himmelman "shamelessly used" Bradlee in the book, but what Woodward really means is that Himmelman shamelessly used Woodward—sucked up to him for years, in other words, and then tossed him to the sharks, in Woodward's view. This bears some analysis.

PAUL MORIGI / WIREIMAGE / GETTY IMAGES

In the book, Bradlee confirms to the author that he always entertained some doubts about Woodward's veracity in certain details, specifically about how the reporter went about meeting with his chief Watergate scandal source. That source was of course Deep Throat, so labeled because Throat's words were imparted on rules governing deep background (meaning he couldn't be named and couldn't be quoted). In years to come, the world would learn that Deep Throat was actually an FBI higher-up named Mark Felt, and I bet you don't care a bit whether or not Woodward moved a plant on his balcony 40 years ago as a signal to meet with Throat.

(An aside: Many of us at the *Post* back then always suspected that certain details regarding the enticing source were purposefully . . . muddied, shall we say . . . in order to hide Throat's true identity. For instance, practically all of us suspected he didn't drink scotch. A similar point can be made about a grand juror who, as Himmelman discovers, in defiance of the law and a judge's instructions provided material information about the scandal to the *Post* reporters, and was never mentioned back then in order to protect the source.)

The point is that Woodward cares about all this. He cares deeply, passionately, and insanely because, Woodward intimates to the author, if you start doubting the motile plant on Woodward's balcony, you start doubting the truth of the whole shebang: Richard Nixon's culpability, the rationale for his resignation, the involvement of his top subordinates. In other words, Woodward takes himself, as men past their golden moments so often do, a bit too seriously. Nixon didn't resign because of a plant or a garage encounter; he resigned because he and those he led were all guilty, either of the Watergate crimes or the cover-up, and two young men on the outside had found them out.

So the problem with *Yours in Truth* is not Woodward's beefs, which are petty; it's the truth itself that's in jeopardy. Ben Bradlee was, very often, a great leader and a brave and innovative editor until after Watergate, when he gave up those qualities for—I don't know, really. Maybe for "ritzy historical" homes, maybe for the prospect of an eternity at Grey Gardens, maybe for a life where courage and leadership would no longer make demands and be the obstacles to personal happiness they once had been.

All this abandonment occurred shortly after the more significant Watergate articles had been written (and defended), and also shortly after my arrival at the *Post* as a Style section writer, so I know a bit about it. Bradlee's negligence came as a shock, a severe one, and the *Post* never recovered.

I had been aware of certain Bradlee shortcomings well before I started working at the *Post*, because during my year at Columbia's graduate school of journalism I had worked part-time for French television, and in that latter capacity had interviewed Bradlee for a documentary. Naturally, after meeting him—he was already becoming legendary for his daring, as was the *Post*—I peppered him with letters begging for employment, and each one of these pleas was answered in pretty vague terms until the end of the response, at which point the great editor would always ask, pointedly: *When is the program with my interview airing in France? And when can I see the documentary?*

He was, in other words, a lot vainer than other famous journalists I had met (the CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite, interviewed for the same show, never sent me those queries), maybe a lot more superficial, and underneath everything—the patrician air, the WASPish bearing that Himmelman pants about quite embarrassingly and at length—fairly insecure. Bradlee, I sensed, *needed* to see himself on television.

What took me aback, what really struck me most forcefully on finally arriving at the *Post* a few years later, was Bradlee's calculated and dangerous distance from most things and most people in the newsroom, with the notable exception of the Style writer Sally Quinn who, by then, was his acknowledged girlfriend (she had previously been his unacknowledged girlfriend). You could see Bradlee—the door to his office was made of glass—but unless you worked in the Style section, you didn't get to see him up close. So I can say for a certainty that, in my five years there, the only time I knew Bradlee to take a stance or hold a strong opinion on anything I or most people wrote—anything at all—was when I interviewed a transsexual former FBI agent.

"How *could* you have allowed me to shake hands with her?" Bradlee asked, his voice rising. He wasn't kidding. He was mad. I had interviewed the transsexual at the Madison Hotel's restaurant, where Bradlee also happened to be eating. But once back at the *Post*, when told my subject's history, the editor stared at the hand that had shaken hers with unfeigned horror. Then he set about editing my copy, and all words pertaining to details of the gender change were as cleanly excised as the ex-agent's sexual organ.

Once upon a time, as Woodward recalls in the book, Bradlee was famous for coming up to his favorite reporter, absorbing every last detail "in two minutes," and then saying, "Where is this coming from? How sure are you?"—as though, Woodward adds, "what you're doing is blessed."

Well, that was then.

Katharine Graham, the *Post*'s publisher, wasn't the only one struck by the impropriety of his visits to the Style section; but aside from Howard Simons—the managing editor who made no secret of his loathing for Bradlee and Quinn both, a loathing that unsettled everyone—Graham was the only one who dared voice her concerns. For the rest, almost all editors fell into line. For years and years, for hours and days on end, Quinn's every sentence would be parsed, pored over by an array of editors, scrubbing, polishing, buffing her words into whatever they thought Ben might like to read during his drop-bys, or over breakfast.

(Some of this extraordinary treatment faded when Shelby Coffey became Style editor in 1976. So much so, in fact, that Sally Quinn invited me to lunch—a unique experience in our relationship—to beg me to join her in

her fierce campaign to unload Coffey. I demurred, but did ask, "What does Ben think of what you're doing?" She swallowed a tranquilizer before replying: "He told me if I don't like Shelby I should just quit.")

Himmelman writes about none of this, for two simple reasons. One, he doesn't appear to have interviewed, likely by choice, anyone willing to discuss much that would detract from the purity of the Bradlee legend. And two, he can't bring himself, even when the facts indicate this might be appropriate, to criticize the subjects of his ardor. I imagine that's what happens when you have a biographer who writes of his subject: "He's bigger than you are, than everyone is." And: "I would be content if the picture I have of him grinning and holding my newborn daughter is the only thing that I keep with me for my time spent working on this book."

Here, for example, is Himmelman's take on the aftermath of the Janet Cooke affair, a true debacle and, unmentioned by the author, an almost inevitable outgrowth of the fact that the identity of Woodward's source was never revealed to Bradlee until after Nixon resigned. Cooke was a *Post* reporter who invented a story about a child heroin addict, her sources never identified, questioned, or verified before publication. It won the 1981 Pulitzer Prize, which, when the jig was up and the enormity of the fabrication discovered, had to be given back. The *Post* immediately deployed a kindhearted ombudsman, Bill Green, to examine what went wrong. (Evidently, not much: "The *Post* is one of the very few great enterprises in journalism, and everybody associated with it ought to be proud of it," was the astonishing conclusion. "Green, you ungrateful son-of-a-bitch, I salute you," Bradlee commented on finishing the piece, doubtless with considerable relief.)

"That was one for the ages. It ranks high among my private treasures," the ombudsman later wrote to Bradlee. Himmelman allows this particular treasure to pass untarnished—evidently without realizing, or at least without mentioning, that the *Washington Star*, significantly, was the first to report on the fabrication.

But aside from the fearful neglect of editors (Bradlee included) in failing to check the unbridled imagination of a new, untried reporter, there were other issues at the *Post*, unmentioned by Himmelman. Quinn committed a grievous error in 1979, reporting that President Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, had unzipped his fly in front of a female journalist (he had not). The newspaper had to retract Quinn's claim after its terrified editors were summoned to the White House the following day. In other words, the very employees who had been pretty much cornered, nudged into accepting without challenge all the *aperçus* of a favored reporter, found their heads on the chopping block.

Himmelman doesn't appear to have interviewed, likely by choice, anyone willing to discuss much that would detract from the purity of the Bradlee legend. He can't bring himself, even when the facts indicate this might be appropriate, to criticize the subjects of his ardor.

And there were other problems, as serious but more general. No one ever expected the *Post* to top the days of its Watergate revelations. But there was a general feeling, always, that it should be doing *something* new and challenging—an ambition Bradlee referred to, however obliquely, when I said goodbye to him on quitting the *Post* for its local rival, the *Star*, which had offered me a political column.

"They'll never read you in New York City, kid," were the editor's parting words. And they surprised me—not because Bradlee had just dashed whatever hopes I cherished that everyone in New York would be aching to read my columns in the *Star*, but because no one I knew in New York, outside of a few journalists who skimmed it occasionally, actually read the *Washington Post*. Bradlee had had his chance to make the *Post* a national paper, and he had blown it. Simons, the managing editor, had a horror of going national, but Simons could easily be overridden by Bradlee, and often was. Bradlee could do as he pleased. The problem was not simply that he no longer appeared to know what was best; the problem was that he had instincts without vision.

Of course, now that the *Post* is online, things have changed. People read it—for free. And that brings me to my final point, one that Himmelman never mentions: With every passing day the *Post*, the daily edition, grows more and more anorexic and malnourished. It contains little that is new, astonishing, or memorable. The writing is often poor. Its average daily circulation numbers have dropped by more than 42,000 since the beginning of this year. Its Sunday edition is down more than 15 percent. Since 2003, two years after Bradlee's departure, there have been five buyouts, and it now has a publisher, a granddaughter of Katharine Graham, who thought it a good idea to charge lobbyists thousands of dollars in admission to her soirées where they could meet and impress *Post* reporters at her home.

The sadness of this is not that none of this had to happen—almost certainly it *did* have to happen—but that the decline began with Benjamin Bradlee, long before the Internet moved in and gobbled up print. The triumph and the tragedy were both Bradlee's. And the *Post*'s decline began much earlier than its rivals', at first imperceptibly, and then markedly.

What makes me most unhappy these days, as I glance at the *Post*, is that after glancing at it, I move on. And so does everyone else. ♦

B&A

Healthy Trend

First, do no harm—and then repeal Obamacare.

BY WILLIAM ANDERSON

Thirteen years ago I co-authored a book that I thought could cut the Gordian knot of the health care dilemma. The dozens of copies sold proved insufficient to promote the needed revolutionary change. John C. Goodman has now written the book that can do the job. He presents as clear an answer as we are ever likely to see, along with examples from the real world. It's now our job to make the case in a politically effective way.

Priceless
Curing the Healthcare Crisis
by John C. Goodman
Independent Institute, 392 pp., $24.95

New thinking is necessary, and Goodman provides it. He argues that a free-market approach is essential; health care must be bought with money that most consumers have reason to see as their own. And while most people would respond to such a proposal with an incredulous roll of the eyes, this perception must change.

Many reject the notion that the free market is a morally sound mechanism for health care delivery. Strong strains of contemporary political thought refuse to accept limits imposed by economic reality. Some say that too many people are incompetent to make the right decisions. Ignoring demographic necessity, some assume that there is no natural limit to the endless escalation of borrowing.

To see the results of this muddled thinking in operation, we need only look at our acceleration of national debt, the death spiral of states like California, and the feckless response of our politicians. In the real world, goods and services are evaluated in three dimensions: quality, cost, and availability. It is not possible to optimize all three at once. A free-market approach recognizes this and provides a compromise that most people can accept. Errors are self-correcting. A command, top-down approach for medical care, now assumed to be inevitable, does not meet this test. It depends on the wisdom and probity of self-styled experts. This is not a stable state, and it guarantees an endless turmoil of shortages and misallocated resources.

Goodman's wonderful volume considers both the theoretical and the practical. Economic principles, clearly stated, form the basis for discussion. Policy recommendations include strategic thinking and tactical objectives. Goodman tells us how it all can work, and what political decisions will be required.

Essentially, a successful system must facilitate competition among providers of care, thus producing the price signals crucial to resource allocation. This means that people at large, not experts, must decide what a particular service is worth.

And the beginning of practical wisdom is to know that insurance is not a proper funding mechanism for wants and needs that are certain to occur. We wouldn't want insurance coverage for food. A properly functioning system will accumulate money under individual control for routine care, while insurance will protect against unusual and expensive events. A safety net for the needy will complete the picture.

This requires a system of medical savings accounts, similar to individual IRAs, buttressed by insurance coverage for catastrophic events. Sums equal to current insurance premiums, prudently invested, would produce an ample pool of funding. These would accumulate tax-free, roll over yearly, could be used or saved as necessary, and could provide a health care legacy to be passed on to the individual's heirs. Goodman tells us, in detail, how to make this happen.

A cornerstone of his analysis is that incentives are more efficient than rules for channeling behavior toward optimal solutions. Yet, curiously, this perspective is controversial: Many prefer the authoritarian approach, assuming that incentives will not protect us from individual folly, and will not lead us where they intend us to go.

What Goodman offers is not merely a bundle of theory. Since 2005, Indiana has allowed state employees to opt for health savings accounts. These have proved to be both popular and cost-reducing; by 2010, 70 percent of state employees were choosing them. Indiana's Medicaid program has also operated along these lines. Singapore, South Africa, and other countries Goodman cites have had similar successes.

The free-market approach is not without critics, some of whom have vested interests in the status quo. The massively powerful insurance lobby, for example, opposes such plans with vigor. Advocates of more expansive government disdain free-market reforms as unfair, unworkable, and biased against the disadvantaged. Rent-seekers find their potential sources of income to be limited. Opponents of federalism decry the competition among states for the best operational plans. Believers in top-down management view it all with alarm.

The usual pandering to entitlement and envy will persist. Yet Goodman argues persuasively that a private-sector approach is the only solution for the long term. He is cautiously supportive of the budget perspective of vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan, recognizing its superiority to President Obama's plans, while pointing out that a fully effective program will take years to be realized. The last chapters aim to help us understand the details of the new health care act and the priorities for repealing and replacing it. This is no easy task, given the arcane and opaque language of the law, but Goodman is a master of clarity.

William Anderson is a retired physician.

Simply put, our country and the world are coming up against the natural limits of borrowing. In this situation, demography is destiny: We are reaching the end of an era of economic solutions through bigger government. Our deficits and accumulating debt, largely driven by health care costs, cannot continue.

There are only two paths available. We can maintain a government entitlement approach and face rationing and price control by law, with inevitable delays and shortages, quality decline, and continued cost pressure. Or we can adopt rationing by price, controlled by the competition of providers and the choices of consumers, some of them subsidized by government, which allows for equilibrium of quality, availability, and cost.

Once again, policy choices are driven by divergent worldviews. The vigorous pursuit of equality alone ultimately produces poverty, misery, and oppressive government. On the other hand, the vigorous pursuit of individual liberty produces a self-correcting system in which increasing equality can occur. John C. Goodman has charted the path. ♦

B&A

Smart Writing

It's good to be published, and better to be understood.

BY BARTON SWAIM

Modern academics are not celebrated for the clarity and felicity of their writing. One of the most important lessons a postgraduate student can learn—and if he doesn't learn it soon, he's doomed—is that academics generally do not write books and articles for the purpose of expressing their ideas as clearly as possible for the benefit of people who don't already understand and agree with them. Academics don't write to be read; they write to be published. Typically, the only people who actually read academic books and articles are other academics, who only read them to know what they need to reference in their own books and articles. And that's not reading; that's trawling.

Helen Sword, associate professor at the Centre for Academic Development at the University of Auckland, wants to persuade her colleagues that they can do better. She has written *Stylish Academic Writing* in order to "give courage to academics who want to write more engagingly but fear the consequences of violating disciplinary norms." But surely the point is that the vast majority of academics *don't* "aspire to write more engagingly and adventurously."

Stylish Academic Writing
by Helen Sword
Harvard, 240 pp., $21.95

The reasons for this perversity have been debated in the pages of intellectual magazines (like this one) for decades. Academics in the humanities and the social sciences, it's sometimes suggested, too often wish to give their fields the legitimacy and public authority of science, and so write in highly technical, jargon-laced prose. Academics in the hard sciences, for their part, are too concerned with factual correctness to worry about making their productions agreeable, even to co-specialists. Then, of course, there is the really uncharitable interpretation: Many academics simply haven't got anything useful to say, but if they say it in a sufficiently complicated fashion and use all the vogue terms, they'll get credit for having said something without saying anything worth defending.

The really troublesome thing about all this is that many academic writers, even in the humanities, have legitimate and important insights to convey. Yet they genuinely believe, whether for one of the aforementioned reasons or for some other, that it doesn't serve their interests to write straightforward English sentences. I have before me a book entitled *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* by Jon Klancher (University of Wisconsin Press, 1987). The book is deservedly influential in its field; indeed, I have profited from it myself. But here is a typical sentence, drawn more or less at random:

> What will finally distinguish the new middle-class audience of the nineteenth century from its radical antagonists and the mass public's fascination with commodities is the activated interpretive mind in its power to reincarnate everyday life: to form a "philosophy" of one's encounter with the street and the city, with fashion, with social class, with intellectual systems and the mind's own unpredictable acts.

No normal person can read that once and feel he knows what Klancher means. And yet, all he means is that, in the 19th century, industrialization was changing the look and social dynamics of British cities at an unprecedented speed, and periodical writers assumed the role of interpreting those changing circumstances for an increasingly wealthy middle-class audience.

A fair and interesting observation, but not one that's particularly difficult to express. So why did Klancher feel he needed to go on about "the activated interpretive mind" and "the mind's own unpredictable acts"? I don't know. But I feel pretty confident in saying that Klancher wasn't trying to write a clear sentence; he meant to write it precisely as he did—opaquely.

Which is why I suspect Sword's mission to improve academic writing is doomed. Bad writing is (to use a once-fashionable term) institutionalized. She herself says roughly the same thing when she points out that academics learn how to write from three principal

Barton Swaim is the author of Scottish Men of Letters and the New Public Sphere: 1802-1834.

sources: their doctoral supervisors, their academic peers, and the academic journals in which they wish to be published.

> Supervisors typically preach stylistic caution [to their postgraduate students]; they want their students to demonstrate mastery of disciplinary norms, not to push against disciplinary boundaries. Editors and referees, likewise, are often more intent on self-cloning than on genuine innovation or empowerment. Peer-reviewed publications, meanwhile, offer a range of stylistic models that are at best unadventurous and at worst downright damaging. . . . Academics who learn to write by imitation will almost inevitably pick up the same bad habits.

Academia, if I can give Sword's observation the sting it deserves, encourages the worst kind of conservatism: a conservatism that values correctness over creativity, and sameness over originality.

But although her mission may be doomed, she acquits herself well. Her counsel is wise, efficiently written, and infectiously winsome. She advises academic writers to use anecdotes and carefully chosen metaphors, and to write opening sentences that encourage readers to keep reading. She has drawn from a massive array of academic articles (more than a thousand) and given particular attention to authors known for writing readable material.

I was not impressed by her conscientiously balanced criticisms of academic jargon. Sword seems to think of jargon as the overuse of technical language or, at worst, the pretentious use of big words, whereas I think it's always and only the use of stock verbiage to camouflage the absence of thought—the academic equivalent of political talking points. But I interpret this as Sword's need to speak to academics as they are, not as they should be, and her emphasis is on clarity and the simple expression of complex ideas.

Like most, or all, guides to writing, this one sometimes gives the impression of trying to teach the unteachable. Sword suggests, for instance, that her readers can "bring intangible concepts to life by pairing abstract nouns with animating verbs." Her example, drawn from an actual academic article, is this sentence: "*Substantive differences* also *lurk* in this confusion." Well, okay. But while it's probably true that "pairing abstract subjects with animating verbs" can put life into an otherwise lifeless sentence, that's the sort of thing a writer either knows without being told, or not at all.

Still, Helen Sword's book contains much wisdom. Leaving aside her irritating use of the word "stylish"—surely no good writer wants to be thought of as "stylish"—*Stylish Academic Writing* contains superb counsel for academics who want to write with greater clarity and skill.

Too bad there are so few of them. ♦

B&A

One-China Syndrome

The self-deception that believes the lies about Taiwan.

BY CHARLES HORNER

Taipei by night, 2010

In the past three decades, there have been three big stories in East Asia.

The first is the Thirty Years' Peace. The decades prior had seen both cross-border and internal violence on a grand scale but, as seemingly arbitrarily as the violence had begun, it stopped. The second big story—the rise of China—has certainly not been underreported; but in its deep origins, China's 30-year rise is as thinly understood as Asia's 30 years of peace.

Why Taiwan Matters
Small Island, Global Powerhouse
by Shelley Rigger
Rowman & Littlefield, 232 pp., $32.95

Charles Horner, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, is the author of Rising China and Its Postmodern Fate.

And there is a third story—the rise of democratic Asia through the consolidation of multiparty democracies in "Confucian" Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, in the Catholic Philippines, and in Muslim Indonesia and Malaysia. A common political trend in places so different ought to be stimulating widespread discussion, but the Great Democratization is as understudied as the Great Peace.

It is indisputable that, between 1949 and 1979, New China failed in its efforts to create several little people's republics in its own image, and also had to abandon its attempts to create a socialist paradise at home. For many in the West,

NEWSCOM

this seemed almost as big an embarrassment as the collapse of the Soviet Union. We should thus be grateful that Professor Shelley Rigger of Davidson College has written an excellent introduction to a place that not only is significant in its own right, but also illustrates how the rise of China and Asia's democratization are now linked. Her book, like the area of Taiwan itself, may seem undersized, but, in both cases, size is not wholly predictive.

Rigger is rare among China-interested academics in focusing on Taiwan at all. She describes how the 23 million people in Taiwan have come to run an economic powerhouse with an annual gross domestic product of $500 billion and foreign exchange holdings of about $400 billion, the world's fourth-largest. Taiwan has also invested billions in China, and Taiwanese companies employ millions of Chinese workers who make the world's smartphones and notebook computers.

Beyond economics, Rigger also stretches our minds regarding what is possible in politics and international relations in a once-exotic Asia. In a reversal of the fortunes of 1945-49, Beijing's one-party dictatorship, on the verge of collapse in 1979, had little choice but to import Taiwan's many financial and managerial competencies. Conveniently for Beijing at the time, the island which China had ritualistically promised to "liberate" had already been "liberated"—and in proper Leninist fashion: Under the control of the Kuomintang, Taiwan was living under a one-party dictatorship. When it allowed closer relations with Taiwan, China's Communist leadership did not anticipate that the Kuomintang would combine economic success with a Great Leap Forward in politics that would put Taiwan far in advance of China itself.

In 1987, it became legal for Taiwan's opposition parties to contest elections. Taiwan's president is now directly elected and, last January, in the most recent of five consecutive elections, the incumbent, Ma Ying-jeou of the Kuomintang, was reelected. (In 2000 and 2004, Chen Shui-bian of the opposition Democratic Progressive party had won.) Today's Kuomintang descends from the Chinese Nationalists who lost the civil war to the Communists and fled to Taiwan with the stated intention of recovering the mainland. (Indeed, Ma Ying-jeou's father had been a high-ranking official in China before leaving.) The opposition descends from the people who were living on Taiwan when the Kuomintang showed up at the end of World War II to take control of what had been a Japanese colony. This "liberation" of the island by a mainland-based government went badly: There was an uprising against it in 1947, many thousands were killed, and, for the next 45 years, a place hailed as "Free China" was also a very tough dictatorship.

To be sure, life on Taiwan was paradisiacal compared with what was happening across the strait, and the people on the island knew it. Their sense of the harshness of Kuomintang rule was also mitigated by what became known as Taiwan's economic miracle. But this *modus vivendi* between the Kuomintang and Taiwan's citizenry came under pressure in 1972 with the beginning of the Washington-Beijing rapprochement, and under even more pressure after the United States withdrew formal recognition of the government of Taiwan in 1979. Since then, Taiwan has had to adopt a variety of tactics to retain its de facto independence, but its post-1987 political liberalization turned out to be a masterstroke.

Both Washington and Beijing have been confounded by it. American expectations were scrambled as soon as the people who lived on Taiwan gained a real say in any "settlement" between Taipei and Beijing. "Realists" who had expected that, over time, this "irritant" in U.S.-Chinese relations might be removed now have to cope with Taiwan's institutionalized right to self-determination. Meanwhile, Beijing's Communist leadership knows that the workings of Taiwan's democracy are routinely seen in China on satellite television and widely discussed on blogs. In recent months, especially, the entire Chinese-speaking world has observed the contrast between Taiwan's open politics and China's thuggish intra-politburo struggle. We may be nearing the denouement of modern China's long and bloody struggle over politics and governance. Taiwan now matters very much to this big story, and Shelley Rigger's book is a fine primer for understanding how that has come to be.

There is another theme as well. In a speech in Singapore last June, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta described what has been interpreted as America's "strategic shift to Asia [that] aims to use traditional allegiances, as well as budding partnerships with countries such as Vietnam and India, to offset China's rising military power and assertiveness" (*Washington Post*). Panetta went on to visit an American naval vessel which just happened to be calling at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam, but neither the man nor the ship would go to Taiwan. Yet today, maritime security is another reason why, in Rigger's apt phrase, Taiwan matters. If the United States continues to act on its now-outdated verbal position—no, we ourselves do not say that Taiwan is a part of China, we just say that we will not argue with those who do—it will be China's navy that will be making the visits to Taiwan, not ours. To be sure, Taiwan does not help either us or itself by clinging to its own antiquated maritime claims; instead, it should be joining with the like-minded democracies nearby that are increasingly resistant to China's pressure tactics.

In a brilliant article in March's *China Heritage Quarterly*, the Australian sinologue Geremie Barmé traces the history of written and spoken Chinese since the late 19th century and its submergence, since 1949, into the PRC's officially sanctioned way of speaking and writing:

> New China Newspeak was and is used by the Party, its propaganda organs, the media and educators to shape (and circumscribe) the way people express themselves in the public (and eventually private) sphere, and to enable the party-state apparatus to inculcate its ideology by means of relentless verbal/written imposition and repetition. . . . [I]t is also commonly employed in creating what I call "translated China," that is the English-language Party *langue* that has evolved over many decades to present China to the outside world.

Barmé goes on to describe how, in the best Orwellian fashion, Beijing

seeks to control not only what Chinese think and say about China, but what everyone else does, too.

Accordingly, we need to guard against what the late Fred Iklé called "semantic infiltration," which starts with using the language of enemies and adversaries to define reality, and ends with accepting their definitions. America's discussion of Taiwan—indeed, almost all the world's discussion of it, not least that of the government of Taiwan itself—has been thoroughly infiltrated by New China Newspeak. For example, there is the term "reunification"—except that Taiwan has never been part of the People's Republic of China, not even for an hour. There is the notion that, historically, Taiwan has been part of "China," even though there was no political entity with the word "China" in it until 1912. (Before then, what we think of as "China," and what we now call Taiwan, were both parts of the Qing Empire.) In fact, Taiwan was a part of the Japanese empire from 1895 until the end of World War II.

Beyond this, even though Taiwan is de facto an independent country, neither the adjective nor the noun it modifies is mentionable in routine diplomatic discourse. The United States recognizes and supports the independence and United Nations memberships of Kosovo (population, 1.8 million; GDP, about $6 billion), East Timor (population, 1.2 million; GDP, less than $1 billion), and even Tuvalu (population, 10,000; GDP, $32 million). We do this to prove a point. But what point are we proving when the United States government bars the democratically elected president of a country of 23 million (with a GDP of more than $500 billion) from entering our country?

Even Shelley Rigger tends to get caught up in Newspeak and its cant of "peaceful reunification over the long term." This piety evades the source of the problem: China's one-party dictatorship. The dictatorship speaks ritualistically of "peace" and "stability," but China itself is the real threat—the sole threat—to both. The better formulation is "no peaceful association without prior cross-strait democratization," not least because it also allows us to write Asia's three great stories as one. ♦

B&A

Washington on Fire

Why the War of 1812 is our second war of independence. BY RYAN COLE

'A boxing match, or another bloody nose for John Bull' by William Charles (1813)

Louis Serurier, a French diplomat stationed in Washington in the early 19th century, observed that the War of 1812 lent America "what it so essentially lacked, a national character founded on a common glory to all." The American war effort was hardly flawless, and the final outcome may have been inconclusive, but battling Great Britain to something resembling a draw gave an adolescent country a sense of national purpose, some international prestige, and a final, definite separation from the Crown.

But the two intervening centuries have been unkind to that legacy. The war's bicentennial, now upon us, has so far mostly offered commentators a chance to reflect on how little Americans care about their second war of independence, and how the little they do know is stitched together from questionable sources (Johnny Horton's "The Battle of New Orleans," for example).

1812
A Nation Emerges
National Portrait Gallery
Through January 2013

Perhaps fittingly, Congress, regarding the occasion as less important than the 200th anniversaries of the Lewis and Clark expedition and Abraham Lincoln's birth, declined to give this bicentennial the lavish, taxpayer-funded treatment afforded to its predecessors. So with no national commemoration, the relevant states, cities, sites, and museums are organizing various smaller activities to mark the occasion. Whether the results will be a string of reminders about (and handwringing over) our indifference to the war remains to be seen.

One of the first efforts, however,

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EVERETT COLLECTION

currently on view at the National Portrait Gallery, opens the festivities on a promising note. "1812: A Nation Emerges" gathers paintings, prints, and artifacts to present an exciting and remarkably coherent account of a complicated conflict.

Unsurprisingly, given the venue, a sizable portion of the show is dedicated to portraits. Some of these depict well-known personages: Andrew Jackson, the bristly hero of the Battle of New Orleans, captured in an uncharacteristically serene gaze by Charles Willson Peale; and Gilbert Stuart's elegant 1804 renderings of a youthful James and Dolley Madison, the improbable wartime commander in chief and his vivacious first lady.

Other faces, though less familiar, are no less striking. Stuart's likeness of General William Hull, painted years after his surrender of Fort Detroit to the British and his subsequent court-martial, catches a touch of humiliation in Hull's weary eyes. In sharp contrast, the young and rising cohort of American military men—Stephen Decatur, William Henry Harrison, Winfield Scott, Oliver Hazard Perry—appear heroic, dashing, and resplendent in their uniforms. Two of the exhibit's most arresting images are of the enemy: Thomas Lawrence's breathtaking portrait of the British foreign minister, Viscount Castlereagh, and John James Halls's magnificent painting of Admiral George Cockburn posed jauntily in front of his handiwork, the city of Washington engulfed in flames and burning to the ground.

This collection alone would make for a worthy exhibit. But "A Nation Emerges" skillfully supplements the portraits with a wealth of documents and objects that link the actors to the war's origins, course, and aftermath: a battered copy of Madison's proclamation of war, with its echoes of the Declaration of Independence; Dolley's velvet dress; a copy of the president's personal catalogue of government receipts (swiped from the Capitol by an invading Redcoat); a Congreve rocket that inspired the red glare of Francis Scott Key's "Star-Spangled Banner"; the war's concluding document from 1814, the Treaty of Ghent, with its red wax seals and signatures still lustrous and clearly legible 200 years later. Contemporary engravings, cartoons, and paintings of crucial battles contextualize the war's political underpinnings and capture its drama.

Rear Admiral George Cockburn by John James Halls, ca. 1817

The objects not only narrate, they also offer a physical, three-dimensional connection to a largely forgotten segment of our history. Especially absorbing are the glimpses of the British invasion and burning of Washington in August 1814. Contemporary engravings and paintings of the chaotic flight from the city, as well as the shelled and burnt White House and Capitol building, are jarring to American eyes—even in our post-9/11 world.

The exhibit also touches on the involvement and plight of the Native-American tribes of the Midwest who, at war's end, were pushed west to make room for white settlement. Ferdinand Pettrich's sculpture of the "Dying Tecumseh" captures the last moments of the Shawnee chief, and serves as a fitting symbol for the death of the resistance movement ignited by the warrior and his half-brother, Tenskwatawa. The interpretation of this important aspect of the war's legacy is not, however, overwhelming or grievance-laden: Those looking for an account of American wartime atrocities and injustices will be disappointed. The accompanying didactics are clearly written, jargon-free, and devoid of any overarching political agenda. And though the curators do not ignore the public's largely episodic understanding of the war, they never resort to lecturing or scolding.

Indeed, if the theme of the bicentennial of the War of 1812 is historical amnesia, and the purpose of the corresponding commemorations is to revive that memory, "A Nation Emerges" is a great success. Those who wander into the exhibit with only a tenuous understanding of this chapter of American history will likely leave with a fuller appreciation of a conflict that was much more than a skirmish that occurred between our Revolutionary and Civil wars. The War of 1812 not only gave us a national anthem and a shot of national confidence, it also introduced a set of military heroes and political figures who reshaped our political landscape and announced America's rise to the rest of the world.

Other bicentennial exhibits and events may seek to illuminate this legacy, but few will likely do it as well. ♦

B&A

A Fan's Notes

This movie masterpiece comes in printed form.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Tom Mankiewicz, who died in 2010, was a Hollywood hack of limited abilities. He found his greatest success as a screenwriter of several second-rate James Bond pictures and as a director of the very weird big-screen comedy version of *Dragnet*. So it comes as a stunning surprise to discover that Mankiewicz's memoir—which was largely dictated to Robert Crane and has been published two years after his death by (of all places) the University Press of Kentucky—turns out to be one of the best personal accounts of show business ever published.

My Life as a Mankiewicz has none of the Dickensian grandeur of Moss Hart's *Act One*, nor the narrative scope and scorching honesty of Elia Kazan's *A Life*. But it is, in its way, a more revelatory book than either of those American masterpieces. Mankiewicz knew in his marrow how the system worked, how corrupt it was, how casually it could destroy people—yet he could not help being as starstruck by its personalities and as dazzled by its glamour as any teenage girl poring over *People* magazine.

Like the peerless memoirist the Duc de Saint-Simon, who was born and spent much of his life at Versailles before writing the ultimate insider account of life at court, Mankiewicz was an insider, a scion of Hollywood's elite who became a member of that elite in his own right as an adult. His father, Joseph L. Mankiewicz, was one of the most celebrated writer-directors in Hollywood history—his *All About Eve*, the ultimate showbiz movie, won him two Oscars alone.

My Life as a Mankiewicz
An Insider's Journey Through Hollywood
by Tom Mankiewicz
University Press of Kentucky, 400 pp., $39.95

As a 11-year-old, Tom got drunk with Humphrey Bogart. Ava Gardner was going to take him to the movies in Rome before his father, knowing Gardner's reputation as a nymphomaniac, intervened. Later, in his early 20s, Tom found himself being propositioned by the actress Jean Simmons—who had had an affair with his father during the filming of *Guys and Dolls* some time earlier. He was ready to take her up on the offer when Gene Kelly, his "self-appointed godfather," warned him off. "Cut it out before you get in over your head, if you're not there already," Kelly said, and he did.

Joseph Mankiewicz's career took a catastrophic turn when he helmed *Cleopatra*, the Elizabeth Taylor vehicle that took three years to film and was (until the last decade) the most expensive picture ever made. Taylor was in the middle of her notorious affair with costar Richard Burton, and one night she invited Tom to join her for dinner at the villa she shared with her then-husband, Eddie Fisher.

They ate, and then Burton entered. "I realized," Mankiewicz writes, "that in some strange way I was meant to be a 'beard' for them so that Richard wouldn't be alone with her in Eddie's house." The three were drinking "fast and furious" when "there was a noise from the staircase." It was Fisher, who calmly told Burton to go home. Drunk, Burton cheerfully told the man that he had turned into the 20th century's most famous cuckold, "I just came by to see my girl."

Tom's mother, a beautiful Austrian actress, was a schizophrenic who committed suicide while Tom was away at boarding school. As a result, Tom often found himself in the thrall of crazy women he would try to save, as he had not been able to save her. Such women included several famous and several not-so-famous actresses, and, in pursuing them and every other woman he could, Mankiewicz ensured that he would end his life alone, childless, and largely forgotten.

Why? Why wouldn't someone as savvy as this man, whose own father had managed (after his mother's death and the disaster of *Cleopatra*) to straighten out, marry well, and retire happily after a final success with the 1972 film version of *Sleuth*, know that when the makeup comes off, an actress is just a woman and Hollywood is just another industry?

There's a clue in his account, midway through the book, of meeting Burt Lancaster for the first time. Tom was 30 years old, and had probably already encountered every other big name in Hollywood. No matter. He was agog. "I don't care whether my father was in the movies or not," he writes, "when you run into one of your heroes, it elicits the same reaction every time, like when I was seventeen and turned around and there was John Wayne. You're a movie fan."

A movie fan Tom Mankiewicz was, more than he was anything else. Though he made a fortune doing mediocre work, none of it will be remembered. And that makes *My Life as a Mankiewicz* all the more touching. He did well in Hollywood in part because people liked him, enjoyed his company, and loved to listen to his stories. So he ended his career producing not a lousy TV show or an indifferent comedy but a genuinely fascinating memoir that reveals the machinations inside America's pop-culture version of a royal court and its undying seductions—even for those who have every reason to resist them. ♦

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

"And let's not forget that this is the commander in chief who finally led the mission that brought Osama bin Laden to justice."
—Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), August 18, 2012

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White House denies leaking records showing president to be 'total badass'

KICKED BIN LADEN THROUGH WINDOW

Rescued SEALs from ambush

BY ALLISON KLEIN

WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

His shirt shredded by enemy fire, President Obama was first to enter bin Laden's compound in Pakistan, according to leaked documents.

President Barack Obama did in fact lead the mission that brought Osama bin Laden to justice, according to documents found in a blank manila envelope on the front steps of the New York Times building yesterday. The envelope contained several shirtless photos of Obama and reports filed by SEAL Team Six members summarizing the events of the raid and confirming that President Obama personally took down bin Laden. The White House confirmed the accuracy of the documents, but denied any knowledge of who might have released the classified reports.

"Did President Obama 'scissor-kick two guards at the gate of the complex like a total badass'? Yes, yes, he did. Did I, er, did the White House have anything to do with this leak? Absolutely not, ha ha, no, no way, that's, ha—that's crazy talk," White House spokesman Jay Carney nervously explained, as he wiped some sweat from his brow. Mr. Carney did acknowledge that he was in midtown Manhattan yesterday, but was attending "a bar mitzvah or something," and gave the names of several people who could "totally vouch for my whereabouts… seriously."

The reports themselves offer incredible details on the president's efforts in taking down the mastermind of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. "POTUS, by then unarmed and surrounded by four machine gun-wielding guards, did a wicked awesome backflip over one guard, kicked him on the way down, took his gun, and mowed down the remaining three guards," one report explains. Then, as another guard approached from behind with a sword, "POTUS evaded the attack with this sweet spinning move where he, like, kicked the sword guy to the ground, grabbed him by the beard, used the sword to cut his throat, and said, 'That was a close shave.'"

When asked about the reports outside a diner in Charlotte, the president, blushing a little, downplayed his heroics. "Heck, I just did what any president—shucks, any American—would

KUNG FU CONTINUED ON A12